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An Ecocritical Approach to Mexican and Colombian Brief Fiction, 2000-2015

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by

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Dedication

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

An Ecocritical Approach to Mexican and Colombian Brief Fiction, 2000-2015

by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Spanish

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Dr. Raymond L. Williams, Committee Co-Chairperson

Dr. Christina Soto Van der Plas, Committee Co-Chairperson

This dissertation analyzes Mexican and Colombian brief fiction published after 2000, focusing on four authors from the Generation Zero Zero, Mexican authors Alberto Chimal and Heriberto Yépez and Colombian authors María Paz Ruiz Gil and Gabriela A. Arciniegas. The Generation Zero Zero consists of Latin American authors born in the 1970s who have published their major works after 2000. Agustín Cadena, Lorena Campa Rojas, Dolores Corrales Soriano, and Lauro Zavala separate the Generation Zero Zero from the writers of the *Crack* and claim that the group is heterogeneous in their lived experience in a time of crisis, their dismantling of utopic ideas, and their literary creations within the fantastic, science fiction and horror genres. This dissertation analyzes four authors of this generation to identify underlying ecocritical trends, an environmental unconscious, and the representation of human and non-human characters within this group of authors. Through an ecocritical approach to their writing and an exploration of their use of brief literary forms, I analyze Chimal, Yépez, Ruiz Gil, and Arciniegas' representation of the environment and the non-human to reveal both anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives within their publications, demonstrating a possible divide in the Generation Zero Zero in regard to environmental discourse.

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Chapter I

Introduction

An Ecocritical Approach to Mexican and Colombian Brief Fiction, 2000-2015

*Much ecocriticism has taken for granted
that its task is to overcome anthropocentrism,
just as feminism seeks to overcome androcentrism.*

- Greg Garrard

In this study, I analyze Mexican and Colombian brief fiction published after 2000, focusing on four authors from the so-called “Generation Zero Zero” – Mexican authors Alberto Chimal and Heriberto Yépez and Colombian authors María Paz Ruiz Gil and Gabriela A. Arciniegas. The Generation Zero Zero consists of Latin American authors born in the 1970s who have published their major works after 2000.¹ The term Generation Zero Zero was coined by Nelson de Oliveira when he published the *Geração Zero Zero: Fricções em rede* in 2011. Agustín Cadena, Lorena Campa Rojas, Dolores Corrales Soriano, and Lauro Zavala have also identified the group of 1970s-born authors and refer to them as the *Jóvenes creadores de provincia* (Gordon). Cadena, Campa Rojas, Corrales Soriano, and Zavala distinguish the writers of the Generation Zero Zero from the writers of the *Crack* and claim that the group is heterogenous in their lived experience in a time of crisis, their dismantling of utopian ideas, and their literary production within the genres of the fantastic, science fiction, and horror (Gordon 69-100). In this dissertation, I analyze four authors of this generation to identify ecocritical topics, an environmentality (as coined by Lawrence Buell), and the representation of human and non-human characters within these writings. In this introduction, I offer a brief overview of the critical literature on Alberto

Chimal, Heriberto Yépez, María Paz Ruiz Gil, and Gabriela A. Arciniegas, as well as a theoretical framework for the analysis of Latin American *minificción* using ecocritical criteria. Finally, I offer an outline of the four subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

There are numerous extensive critical histories on Latin American, Mexican, and Colombian literature leading up to the Generation Zero Zero.² However, there is not a complete critical account for this Generation in Latin American literary criticism. Rather, there are brief studies on some of these writers. In reference to Mexican literature, Heriberto Yépez was mentioned in the *Diccionario de escritores mexicanos* (2007) in an entry by Angélica Arreola Medina. Both Yépez and Alberto Chimal were mentioned in *A History of Mexican Literature* (2016) by Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado, Anna M. Nogar, and José Ramón Ruisánchez Serra. However, the two authors were excluded from Christopher Domínguez Michael's original publication of *Diccionario crítico de la literatura mexicana (1955-2005)* (2007). Their exclusion is somewhat surprising because Domínguez Michael does mention Luis Vicente de Aguinaga, Luigi Amara, and Julián Herbert, all of whom were born in the 1970s and could be considered part of the Generation Zero Zero. Upon further consideration, the three writers that Domínguez Michael mentioned are all well known for their poetry, rather than their narrative, at the time of publication. However, in the second edition, published in 2012, Domínguez Michael did include Heriberto Yépez, but still neglected to mention Alberto Chimal. The absence of Chimal is notable because he has more publications than Yépez and is more nationally and internationally known.³ Javier Perucho's *Poéticas de la brevedad: el cuento brevísimo en México* also neglects to mention Alberto Chimal's work in *minificción*, and, even though the work was published

in 2008, the authors Perucho analyzes all belong to previous generations. Pushkin Press' *México 20: New Voices, Old Traditions* (2015) also neglects to mention Chimal and Yépez, choosing instead only to include a handful of authors born in the 1970s and focusing more on authors born in the 1980s.⁴

Other critics have mentioned Chimal and Yépez as young authors in their critical analysis of contemporary Mexican literature. There have been a few critical analyses of Alberto Chimal's work; Lauro Zavala, in his "El cuento mexicano contemporáneo," mention Chimal's robust publication of *minificción*, and Samuel Gordon compiled *Mito, fantasía y recepción en la obra de Alberto Chimal* which included articles analyzing Chimal's body of work by Virginia Caamaño Morúa, David Baizabal, Graciela Monges Nicolau, Soad Lozano Peters, and Lorena Campa Rojas. There have also been several critical analyses of Heriberto Yépez's work as a border writer, but there has yet to be an ecocritical analysis of his work. Viviane Mahieux and Jake Nabasny wrote an article with Yépez, referencing his work in connection with the United States and Mexican border. Other critics who have analyzed Yépez as a border writer include Will H. Corral, Édgar Cota-Torres, Michael Davidson, Paul Fallon, Frauke Gewecke, Jennifer Insley, George Luna-Peña, Francisco A. Lomelí, Diana Palaversich, Jungwon Park, Miguel Angel Pillado, Alberto Ribas-Cassasayas, and Elena Ritondale.

María Paz Ruiz Gil has been mentioned in Raymond L. Williams' (editor) *A History of Colombian Literature* (2016) and both Ruiz Gil and Gabriela A. Arciniegas have been included in Williams' *The Columbia Guide to the Latin American Novel Since 1945*

(2007). Ruiz Gil has been mentioned as an emerging, woman writer in Colombia by Claire Taylor and Raymond L. Williams. Additionally, she has been mentioned in Fernando Valls' work, due to her current residence in Spain. Even though Gabriela A. Arciniegas has received awards and recognition as a writer, there have yet to be academic articles published on Gabriela A. Arciniegas' work.

The critical analysis and inclusion of this generation of writers in these histories of literary criticism demonstrates their growing presence in Latin American literature. As this generation begins to solidify, their inclusion in future critical histories of Latin American, Mexican, and Colombian literature, as well as potential for both in-depth analysis and a broader readership, is promising. Furthermore, there have already been a variety of articles and anthologies on scholars and readers following the Generation Zero Zero. All in all, widespread recognition and more critical analyses of their work seem likely to emerge.⁵

The four Generation Zero Zero authors included in this dissertation experiment with brevity in their narrative. Their use of brevity and publication of brief forms is not new to literature but has become more dominant with the use of modern technology and digital platforms.⁶ Brief forms in Latin American and Peninsular literature have been dated back to the *refranes* of Don Sem Tob de Carrión in the fourteenth century but they can be traced even before then (Lagmanovich). From its long history and various forms, brief narrative has continued to grow in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Of the pioneers, one of the briefest and most canonized works of *minificción* in the twentieth century is Augusto Monterroso's "El dinosaurio" which was published in 1959. The text in its entirety is

“Cuando despertó, el dinosaurio todavía estaba allí” (73). This brief, seven-word narrative called for a new era of brevity in fiction. Stories such as “El dinosaurio” and the work of Monterroso in general, as well as a vast range of earlier brief fiction that includes Robert Walser and Ernest Hemingway, led to an entire body of short fiction scholarship of Latin American literature’s *minificción*.⁷

New forms of social media have also increased the production of brief literature in the form of blogs, YouTube videos, Twitterature and posts on Instagram.⁸ Due to this technical era, J. A. Rodríguez Ruiz informs us that the writer and reader are no longer separate entities; she writes, “con la cibercultura el lugar de la obra se dispersa. Los roles se configuran y ya no se puede hablar de un escritor y de un lector como entidades separadas, sino de un escribitor...” (Seoane 78). This increase of contact with the author and the reader has caused a shift in literary production; now writer and reader can collaborate and operate together, allowing for *Twitternovels* to become entangled threads of creativity and feedback between the authors and their readers.⁹ Another outlet that allows for the vast publication of brief fiction are cellphones which allow for quick distribution of literary works online. In Japan, there is a form of writing dedicated to literature that is written entirely on the cellphone.¹⁰ This literature can be *minificción* or consist in the production of a long novel. Despite the massive production of brief fiction, long epic novels continue to appear in print in a variety of ways; George R. R. Martin’s recent epic fantasy series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, sold millions of copies worldwide and became so popular that it was made into the television show *Game of Thrones*.¹¹ Additionally, Roberto Bolaño’s long novel, *2666* (2004), has already been acclaimed

worldwide as a major piece of fiction published in Latin America—perhaps a “modern classic”.¹² The internet provides a space to produce all forms of narrative, from *minificción* to longer forms – that some readers call the “epic novel.”

Many writers, including Miguel de Cervantes, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, and Jorge Luis Borges, were already fascinated by the possibility of short fiction. Nevertheless, the idea of *minificción* had not been seriously studied until the 1980s. In 1981, Dolores M. Koch first published her studies on Mexican *minificción* in which she claimed *minificción* to be an autonomous and postmodern genre. Additionally, short fiction writers are seldom taken seriously as writers until they have produced novels and this is also the case of the writers of *minificción*.¹³ The celebrated novelist Mario Vargas Llosa is hardly known at all for his short stories. Rather, he is known for his epic novels. García Márquez is also more widely known for *Cien años de soledad* (1967), even though, in the discipline of Hispanic Studies, his short stories are well known, taught, and studied. Miguel de Cervantes’ *Novelas ejemplares* (1613) are also left behind as his novel, *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1615), stands the test of time. Franz Kafka, Edgar Allan Poe, Ernest Hemingway, and Jorge Luis Borges are some of the most notable for their innovative and brief forms at the forefront of the production of brief fiction. Monterroso has famously claimed that once one has read these writers it is impossible to return to what one knows as “literature.”¹⁴

Of course, narrative relies on a plethora of strategies; surprise is frequently a successful narrative technique in *minificción*.¹⁵ This element of surprise allows for the use

of non-human characters, animal characters, conscious inanimate objects and metamorphosis. Monterroso's "El dinosaurio" does not mention a human character, rather leaves the main character ambiguous – although it could implicate both a possible human character and a possible non-human character. The use of animal characters, nature, and the fantastic are elements that lend themselves to more impressive and surprising *minificción*. In future studies, I would like to continue studying how contact with technology and virtuality has transformed how we view animals and other non-human entities. In this dissertation, however, I analyze how animals, non-human entities, and the human are represented in Alberto Chimal, Heriberto Yépez, María Paz Ruiz Gil, and Gabriela A. Arciniegas' brief fiction.

From the time of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, brevity has been an important aspect in literature. Even Shakespeare wrote in *Hamlet*, "brevity is the soul of wit," although a well-known proverb of his time it serves our purpose here (62, 2.2.90). Brief, concise, short works of narrative have been produced for ages. Brevity has been praised and admired as a literary technique, but not taken seriously as narrative. Now, however, there are numerous academic works, anthologies, and entire journals dedicated to Peninsular and Latin American *minificción*, including the extensive online journal *El Cuento en Red: Revista electrónica de teoría de la ficción breve*, a plethora of anthologies by Irene Andres-Suárez and Antonio Rivas, Ángeles Encinar, and Javier Perucho, theoretical works by David Lagmanovich, Dolores M. Koch, Ana Rueda, Lauro Zavala, and Henry González Martínez, and many decalogues written by *minificción* writers such as Augusto Monterroso, Guillermo Bustamante Zamudio, Edmundo Valadés, Raúl Renán, José de la Colina, Juan

Villoro, Josefina Estrada, Rosa Beltrán, Mónica Lavín, José María Merino, and many others.¹⁶ These dialogues show a larger production of brief narrative and evaluate how to define, analyze, and include *minificción* in the greater context of literary studies.

David Lagmanovich, Dolores M. Koch, and Javier Perucho examine *minificción* in Peninsular and Latin American literature. These three critics differ in their definitions of *minificción*, but agree on many characteristics found within these extremely brief forms. Some wish to separate *minificción* as its own genre and argue that it is an innovative narrative form, while others consider *minificción* to be a stylistic experiment in narrative. Even though the discussion surrounding the question – what is *minificción*? – is vast and continuously growing, these three critics are fundamental in the study and definition of *minificción* in Latin American literature. Other critics have also written critical analyses of *minificción*, but their analyses have not been as complete.¹⁷

Lagmanovich begins his discussion by differentiating *microtexts* and *minificción*. He states that *microtexts* are brief forms that are not literary, using the examples of graffiti, publicity, newscasts, and commentary (23). He then distinguishes *minificción* by stating that it consists of brief forms that are fictional (24). He further clarifies that *microrrelatos* are *minificción* “cuyo rasgo predominante es la **narratividad**” (26). In this dissertation, I will use Lagmanovich’s definitions of *microtexts*, *minificción*, and *microrrelatos*, although I will take into account the other terms and their uses later.

Lagmanovich identifies key features of *minificción*. He first identifies brevity, but instead of placing specific word limits, he prefers to speak of concision in *microrrelatos*. His detailed explanation follows:

La concisión característica de los microrrelatos no procede de tachar palabras, sino de agregarlas sobre la hoja de papel o la pantalla del ordenador. [...] La escritura consiste en crear una cadena de símbolos [...] que puedan suscitar en un lector otra imagen, la de cierto significado o significados que muy probablemente estarán más allá de las palabras, en la hondura de la comprensión por parte de ese ser humano. [...] El truco del escritor de microrrelatos consiste en agregar todas las palabras necesarias y ninguna de las innecesarias. El criterio no debe ser el de “poner menos palabras,” sino el de “no poner palabras de más” (41).

Clearly, the importance of brevity is to be concise and precise with one’s words, rather than attempting to limit the narrative to a set number of words or phrases.

This criterion is completely negated, however, in *Twitternovels* in which the exact limit is 140 characters, the reason for which all Chimal’s 83 *novelas* are of this length or shorter. However, when exploring the limitations of *minificción*, the criteria that Lagmanovich outlines are useful and begin to demark possible subgenres of *minificción* – *Twitternovel* possibly being one, and *minificción* of three lines or less being another.¹⁸ Lagmanovich further identifies five specific types of *minificción*: *reescritura y parodia*, *el*

discurso sustituido, la escritura emblemática, la fábula y el bestiario, and el discurso mimético.

He first identifies *reescritura y parodia* defining it as “un procedimiento ampliamente usado en la literatura de los siglos XX y XXI, que vuelve a los textos y a los mitos clásicos con la intención de narrarlos de otra manera” (127). This type of *minificción* can be seen in many *microrrelatos* that refer to fables, legends, and biblical stories which use common characters such as The Big Bad Wolf, Little Red Riding Hood, The Three Little Pigs, the animals of Noah’s ark, and others. The story can then quickly develop without the need for extensive explanation, character development, or plot structure. An example of this *reescritura* is the mention of José Luis Zárate Herrera by Chimal as an author who created an entire series based on the rewriting of *Little Red Riding Hood* which was published in *Nexos* (“Sobre 83 Novelas,” 2).¹⁹

Lagmanovich then discusses *el discurso sustituido*, which he states began with the avant-garde movements in the early twentieth century that Hispanists typically identify simply as *la vanguardia*. He defines *el discurso sustituido* as “una alteración de la sustancia lingüística que produce la extrañeza (aunque no necesariamente la falta de comprensión) ante ciertos fenómenos manifestados por el texto” (133). Texts written as “fluir de la conciencia,” the use of invented language, spoken language, neologisms and “agrammatical” writing structures as seen in *literatura de vanguardia* are some examples (129-33). He identifies Enrique Jardiel Poncela, Luisa Valenzuela, and Julio Cortázar as authors who contribute to this type of writing.

The third type of *minificción* he identifies is *escritura emblemática*, which is writing whose “manifestaciones proponen una visión trascendente de la existencia humana. A veces retoman los mitos cosmogónicos de la Humanidad; otras, parecen estar creando sus propios mitos” (133-4). Lagmanovich selects José Emilio Pacheco and Cristina Peri Rossi as authors who use this element in their short fiction. Even though Lagmanovich does not mention Chimal, he is another example, not only for many of his *microrrelatos* in *83 Novelas* (2011), but also *Gente del mundo* (1998), and many short stories and *microrrelatos* in *Grey* in which he creates his own mythical tales and characters.

Lagmanovich’s fourth type of *minificción* is *la fábula y el bestiario*, which consists of writing that has a constant reference to “el mundo animal” (135). Lagmanovich admits that both *la fábula* and *el bestiario* are old genres that have been recovered by twentieth century fiction writers, especially those of *minificción* (135). He argues that *la fábula* and *el bestiario* are two separate genres, clarifying that *fábula* makes use of animals that behave and speak like humans, to teach us (humans) about our sins and behaviors and that *el bestiario* “es una sucesión de textos que se propone describir los seres que pueblan el mundo animal, ya en la realidad, ya en la fantasía” – examples of *la fábula* are easily identified as children’s fairytales (135). He identifies Juan José Arreola, Jorge Luis Borges, and René Avilés Fabila as writers who have written *bestiarios*. Gabriela A. Arciniegas’ collection of short stories *Bestias* (2015) is a recent Colombian publication of this type as well, which I will analyze in my dissertation.

Finally, Lagmanovich identifies a fifth type of *minificción*, *el discurso mimético*, which he defines as the act in which the author uses “una modalidad lingüística que se esfuerza por recrear con la máxima fidelidad posible las características de un determinado nivel – por lo general, no demasiado elevado – del habla vernácula” (137). He mentions Pedro Orgambide, Mario Benedetti, Jorge Luis Borges, and Adolfo Bioy Casares as authors who use this element in some of their short fiction.

In his definition and analysis of *minificción* Lagmanovich disagrees with Koch’s proclamation that *minificción* is a subgenre of the short story. Rather, he considers *minificción* its own narrative genre. Even though Koch defines *minificción* and clearly separates it from the known *cuento*, she does not claim that *minificción* is its own genre. Instead she explains:

En la actualidad, aparece insistentemente en nuestras letras un tipo de relato extremadamente breve. Se diferencia del cuento en que *carece* de acción, de personajes delineados y, en consecuencia, de momento culminante de tensión. [...] Este tipo de relato no se incluye el cuento muy breve que cae dentro de los parámetros establecidos, según los definiera Edgar Allan Poe y, para nosotros, Horacio Quiroga y Julio Cortázar [...] No se ajusta a las formas breves de la narración tradicional como la leyenda, el ejemplo, la anécdota (5).

Though she agrees on the contenders of the creation of *minificción*, she does not specifically identify it as a separate genre. She continues:

A diferencia de éste, el relato al que se refiere este estudio carece generalmente de acción. Como juego ingenioso de lenguaje, se aproxima al aforismo, al epigrama y a la greguería. Posee el tono del monólogo interior, de la reveladora anotación de diario, de la voz introspectiva que se pierde en el vacío y que, al mismo tiempo, parece querer reclamar la permanencia de la fábula, la alegoría, el apólogo. El desenlace en este relato es generalmente una frase ambivalente o paradójica, que produce una revelación momentánea de esencias. [...] Se acerca más bien a la circularidad y autosuficiencia del soneto. [...] Se *distingue* de éste, sin embargo, porque algún detalle narrativo lo descubre como ficción (5).

Koch places *minificción* under the category of *relato*, describing *minificción* as a type of subgenre, different from *el cuento*, but not a separate, independent genre. She does, however, begin to distinguish types and styles – such as *la fábula* and *la parodia* – much in the way Lagmanovich does.

In Javier Perucho's anthology of Mexican *minificción*, he argues against Koch, claiming that *minificción* merits its own genre as it is more than a subgenre of *el relato* or *el cuento*. He claims:

A partir de ella [Koch], intentaré demostrar que el microrelato no es un “subgénero”; es un género literario en sí mismo que se subordina a las reglas de oro que, aunque no se han sistematizado hasta ahora en una retórica o decálogo alguno, gobiernan toda manifestación cuentística cuya característica más evidente son los artificios de la brevedad (14).

Perucho then defines *minificción* and many of the other terms that are often associated with it: *minificción*, *minirrelato*, *microrrelato*, *cuento breve*, *cuento brevísimo*, *cuento corto*, *cuento mínimo*, *ficción mínima*, *ficción rápida*, *microcuento*, and *relato hiperbreve*.

He sets forth to extensively define the different names and types of *minificción*, using Lauro Zavala, Jorge Luis Borges, Edmundo Valdés, Guillermo Bustamante, Harold Kremer, and other critics and writers to clarify the different names that *minificción* has acquired.²⁰ Lauro Zavala also attempts to clarify the various names given to *minificción* in his “Glosario para el estudio de la minificción” which contains a list of eighty terms from “Adivinanza” to “Zinger.” As one might imagine, the list is extensive, detailed, and is only a small portion of the many different terms that have come to represent *minificción*. One can understand Lagmanovich’s exhaustion in the debate of exact numbers and varying definitions of *minificción*.

When approaching Perucho’s list, the consensus suggests that *minificción* can be considered any narrative under 2,000 words, and, depending on the critic, can then be divided into many subcategories of various lengths. This causes difficulty in defining what

minificción is in terms of length, causing the term to continue to be unclearly defined. In opposition to the attempt at defining *minificción* in terms of word-length, Lagmanovich argues that defining a specific length only calls for more debate and limitation, which he calls the “corsé del cómputo” (38). He calls for an approximation, rather than declaration of what the term “brief” might signify. He does not imply that length should necessarily be discarded entirely, but that it is more important to focus on concision; an act “que consiste en agregar todas las palabras necesarias y ninguna de las innecesarias” (Lagmanovich 41). I agree with Lagmanovich; structure, characteristics, and content are more important in defining *minificción* than exact word length. In this dissertation, I choose to follow Lagmanovich’s criteria for *minificción* and *microrrelatos* rather than dividing texts into different categories based on exact word count. I do discuss the varying length of these works. Nevertheless, I do not aim to do so with the intentions of categorization.

Perucho’s categorization is still useful; the list of terms creates a snapshot of the debate on *minificción* and what limits have been placed on this type of writing. Additionally, Perucho outlines five defining characteristics of *minificción* that have been quite consistent with Lagmanovich, Koch, and Encinar. The five characteristics that he defines are brevity, concision, condensation, ellipsis, and epiphany.²¹ These characteristics help define how *minificción* differs from other brief forms, such as the *fábula*, *refrán*, fairy tale, joke, riddle, legend, newspaper clip, and other brief forms. As Lagmanovich reminds us, the most important element of the *microrrelato* is its narrative ability, differentiating it from poetry, textual non-narrative short forms, anecdotes and statements (21).²²

These key terms and distinctions form the basis for my analysis of Chimal, Yépez, Ruiz Gil, and Arciniegas. The clear definition of the terms is discussed in order to determine what these *microrrelatos* represent, rather than the trivial, but frequent matter of word count. Within this dissertation I refer to these terms and characteristics to identify and discuss contemporary brief forms within an ecocritical perspective. In this dissertation, I rely on the ecocritical approaches of Lawrence Buell, Greg Garrard, Cheryll Glotfelty, Gisela Heffes, Ursula Heise, Louise Hutchings Westling, and Adrian Taylor Kane and the writings of Eduardo Galeano, Arturo Escobar, and Raymond L. Williams.

George Perkins Marsh's *Man and Nature* (1864) was one of the first scientific works to present issues of sustainability and Man's destruction and exploitation of its natural resources, but it took nearly a century for people to realize the exhaustibility of earth's resources and a few decades longer for these ideas to be incorporated into literary criticism.²³ Today, however, there have been numerous publications regarding Ecocriticism, the study of environment and literature.²⁴ Ecocriticism's origins and predecessors have been disputed, but Adrian Taylor Kane and Gisela Heffes discuss ecocriticism in Latin American literary criticism, tracing the beginning of ecocritical studies of Latin American landscapes back to Alexander von Humboldt's documentation of the American landscape in 1808.²⁵ An early work analyzing Latin American landscapes in dialogue with Latin American literature and culture is Germán Arciniegas' *El continente de siete colores*, or, in English, *The Green Continent* (1944). In his book, Arciniegas outlines the landscape and man, the construction of cities, and indigenous populations in Latin America. In part one, he presents a brief description of his idea of the jungle, the

mountains, the rivers, and other landscapes and then includes excerpts and short stories that represent that particular aspect in Latin American literature. Part two is much more historical in its attempt to outline the conquest of Latin America, both its people and its lands, and its ultimate transformation. The third part is an outline of texts that deal with the various revolutions across Latin America. Then, part four analyzes the development of cities in Latin America and includes texts describing the major cities of Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Lima, and Cartagena, each prefaced with a brief history of the cities' creation. The final section describes the various peoples and ethnicities throughout Latin America and their representation in various literary works. Although the scope of analysis of each text is minimal, this work does serve as a type of anthology of various Latin American works that are of ecocritical interest.

More recently, Adrian Taylor Kane has argued that the “imagery of the natural world has played varied and important roles in Latin American literature,” from Christopher Columbus' letters and their representation of the imperial gaze to postmodern narrative and the destruction of the natural world through globalization and exploitation of natural resources (Kane 1). Gisela Heffes states that many ecocritical analyses of Latin American literature were labeled as “regionalismo, literatura pastoral, frontera, ecología humana, ciencia y literatura, o representaciones del paisaje” before a general term had been widely used (Heffes, “Introducción” 14). Ecocriticism and its definition are still being determined as the expansion of the production of environmental literary analyses continues. Among many who search for a definition are Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, Greg Garrard, Louise Hutchings Westling, and Lawrence Buell. Some have referred to

ecocriticism as literary ecology, green studies, environmental studies of literature, ecopoetics, environmental literary criticism, and green cultural studies.

Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm define ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies” (Glotfelty and Fromm xviii). For Glotfelty and Fromm the role of the ecocritic and the ecotheorist is to examine how nature and the physical setting are represented within a literary text and what that means for human-nature relationships. They argue that “all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it” (Glotfelty and Fromm xix). Glotfelty and Fromm also point out that the term *literary ecology* was termed by Joseph W. Meeker in 1972 in *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*, whereas the term *ecocriticism* was most likely coined by William Rueckert in 1978 in his publication “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” (Glotfelty and Fromm xix-xx).

William Howarth offers a long definition and exploration of what it means to be an ecocritic, stating that an ecocritic is “a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action” (Glotfelty and Fromm 69). Howarth implies that an ecocritic is not only responsible for analyzing the

representation of nature and its treatment in literature, but also must engage in some political action to draw attention to the exploitation and mistreatment of nature. Glotfelty and Fromm seem to agree, to an extent, with Howarth. They claim that “most ecocritical work shares a common motivation: the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet’s basic life support systems” (Glotfelty and Fromm xx). The concern for human’s environmental impact has indeed appeared more and more in contemporary literature, creating various literary genres, such as Ecofiction, Climate Fiction (Cli-fi), and Environmental Activist Literature.²⁶

Louise Hutchings Westling’s *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment* (2014) dates human record of animals and nature to prehistoric times, describing paleolithic caves in the Dordogne which are “filled with luminous paintings and carvings of aurochs, horses, mammoths, ibex, salmon, snakes, and flowering and seeding plants” (Westling 1).²⁷ She states that tribal communities and cultures lived among animals and nature, until domestication of plants and animals became common practice in order to serve growing human populations and needs. She even acknowledges the current fear of “global ecological collapse” due to the domestication of nature and human population growth (Westling 1). Westling states that literary representation of environmental damage can be found, in English literature, since Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times*, published in 1854. She points out correctly that literature and environment studies “first became formalized in American universities in the 1990s” and even makes note of ecocritical

studies in Latin American literature, referencing *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* (2005) (Westling 1).

Westling acknowledges that ecocriticism is extant for a few decades, but argues that “rich traditions in all major cultures have focused on the human place in the natural world” and that ecocriticism is a vast and growing field (Westling 2). She gives various examples of texts referencing nature from Mesopotamian and biblical texts to the Mayan *Popol Vuh* and European pastoral writing. For Westling:

Ecocriticism reevaluates those traditions in light of present environmental concerns, examines a wide range of recent literary works that engage environmentalist perspectives or imagine ecological catastrophe, questions the very categories of the human and of nature, probes theoretical positions that can offer rigorous grounding for ecological thought, and necessarily turns toward the life sciences to restore literary culture to the fabric of biological being from which it has emerged and within which it will always be developed (Westling 2).

The evaluation of literary texts from an ecological and environmentalist perspective, she argues, is then necessary in order to reevaluate human’s place in the world as humans continue to change and disrupt their natural environment. This evaluation of human place within the natural world and among animals is of particular interest to this dissertation, as I will be evaluating the representation of human, non-human animals, and non-human non-animal relations in Alberto Chimal, Heriberto Yépez, María Paz Ruiz Gil, and Gabriela A.

Arciniegas' narratives. Furthermore, the examination of Latin American literature's place among English and American literature in the discussion of ecocritical studies is of great importance if ecocriticism is to be considered a global movement and theoretical framework as Westling suggests it is. Additionally, Latin American ecocritical studies could shed light on non-Western perspectives of nature and give voice to the ideas and portrayals of nature within their cultures and literatures.

Greg Garrard's definition of ecocriticism is a much more inclusive one; he defines ecocriticism as an exploration of "the ways in which we imagine and portray the relationship between humans and the environment in all areas of cultural production, from Wordsworth and Thoreau to Disney and BBC nature documentaries" (Garrard i). Garrard includes not only literary works, but cultural production as well. He argues:

environmental problems require analysis in cultural as well as scientific terms, because they are the outcome of an interaction between ecological knowledge of nature and its cultural inflection. This will involve interdisciplinary scholarship that draws on literary and cultural theory, philosophy, sociology, psychology and environmental history, as well as ecology. The study of rhetoric supplies us with a model of cultural reading practice tied to moral and political concerns, and one which is alert to both real or literal and the figural or constructed interpretations of 'nature' and 'the environment'. Breaking these monolithic concepts down into key structuring metaphors, or tropes, enables attention to be paid to the thematic,

historical and geographical particularities of environmental discourse (Garrard 14).

The “historical and geographical particularities of environmental discourse” to which he refers serve as a jumping point to discuss Latin American literature’s inclusion in ecocritical analyses. If cultural production and the metaphors and tropes within it call attention to historical and geographical differences in environmental discourse, then Latin American literature’s portrayal of nature and the environment may reveal differences from that of other cultural production in other literatures around the world and, perhaps, may reveal unique solutions to the environmental issues the world faces today. His inclusion of all cultural production and its ties to moral and political concerns also serves to initiate a conversation of other cultures and communities’ representation of nature in terms of their moral and political compasses, opening up for future discussions in these areas.

Lawrence Buell also extends his definition to include all cultural production. He defines ecocriticism as “the environmentally oriented study of literature and (less often) the arts more generally, and to the theories that underlie such critical practice” (*Future* 138). He quotes William Rueckert when stating that the term Ecocriticism was coined in the 1970s. However, he reminds us that nature writing and the study of it dates back much further, providing examples of works by scholars of nature writing Norman Foerster and Leo Marx. He also contributes the example of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Nature* written in 1836 as one of the oldest American precedents.²⁸ After establishing the beginnings of nature writing and its evaluation, he provides an extensive list of the beginnings of

Ecocriticism, mentioning Marx, the British theorist Raymond Williams, Joseph Meeker, Jonathan Bates, Konrad Lorenz, William Howarth, Glen A. Love, Ursula Heise, N. Katherine Hayles, and many others.

Buell then divides ecocriticism into two movements or *waves*. He distinguishes between “first-wave” and “‘second-wave’ or revisionist” ecocriticism in recognition of the rapidly growing field. He defines the first as a moment in which ecocritical research was concentrated on “such genres as nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction,” while the second shifts toward expanding this research into “engagement with a broader range of landscapes and genres” containing “a greater internal debate over environmental commitment that has taken the movement in a more sociocentric direction” (*Future* 138). Buell admits that this shift was not sequential and is not definite. However, the distinction and expansion of ecocriticism is crucial for this dissertation, as my research forms a part of what he defines as “second-wave or revisionist” ecocriticism.²⁹

Buell comments on the need of this “second wave” as it expands our ecocritical studies to include the “metropolis and outback” and the “anthropocentric as well as biocentric [or ecocentric] concerns” in order to better understand the human and its relation to environment (*Future* 23).³⁰ He claims that the *first-wave* ecocritics were concerned with the “primordial link between human and non-human” and that the *second-wave* ecocritics prefer to define the human by social categories and the environment as constructed (*Future* 23). Those from the first category focused on “green wisdom” and the “ecological Indian” – indigenous peoples who were one with nature and contained sacred knowledge pertaining

to it. Arturo Escobar identifies the moment in which “green wisdom” or the “ecological Indian” was first taken seriously in Latin America at the international meeting “Conceptos de los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros del Pacífico Colombiano,” in 1995 (3). The second focused on “locating vestiges of nature within cities and/or exposing crimes of eco-injustice against society’s marginal groups” and denouncing “modernization’s aggressive, accelerating, inequitable transformations of ‘natural’ into ‘constructed’ space” (Escobar 24). Laura Wright refers to the relocation of indigenous populations, creation of wildlife preserves, and privatization of water and natural lands in her book *“Wilderness into Civilized Shapes”*: *Reading the Postcolonial Environment*.³¹ Donnie Sackey spoke of a similar phenomenon currently happening in Flint, Michigan where marginalized groups have been forced to leave their cities due to lead in their water supply which was caused by careless city planning and irresponsible waste removal (Sackey). This constant abuse and aggressive transformation of landscape and cityscape continues to lead to the relocation of marginalized peoples.

In 1995, Buell defined environmental texts as works that include these four elements: 1) “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,” 2) “The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest,” 3) “Human accountability to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation,” and 4) “some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text” (*Imagination* 7). However, as ecocriticism has evolved, so has Buell’s idea of the environmental text. In a later book, instead of limiting oneself to environmental texts,

he promotes the inclusion of “environmentality as a property of any text” and advocates that “all human artifacts bear such traces [of environment]” (*Future* 25). This thought leads to the expansion of ecocritical studies to include all forms of literature.

This final point is crucial to this dissertation, for the texts that I am analyzing here are not necessarily to be viewed as environmental texts. Rather, they are representative texts of brief fiction that I have selected to be studied. Within these texts I look at the environmentality (taking into account many of the issues described above) of the text and the place of the human within them. Recently, while transcribing Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo’s political text, I discovered many passages referring to the vast countryside, the abundance of animals, and even a passage detailing accounts of pollution from oil lamps in California in 1822 (477, 289).³² This text is not necessarily concerned primarily with the environment, nor has it yet been considered standard ‘nature writing.’ Rather, it has been considered a political and historical text in which Guadalupe Vallejo attempts to correct Hubert H. Bancroft’s *History of California*. Nevertheless, this text does indeed reveal ecological changes over time, showing acts of deforestation, purging of animals, displacement of indigenous populations, construction of towns and new environments, and air pollution. The next step is addressing texts that have no overt mention of nature and to determine ecological approaches to such texts, an approach already explored by Diana Dodson-Lee and Raymond L. Williams in their published studies on supposedly “urban” fiction writers such as José Emilio Pacheco.

The ecocritical research of non-ecological texts and texts that only mention built or constructed environments led to Buell's distinction between ecocriticism and environmental criticism. Buell stated that the connotations and limitations of the "eco" in ecocriticism is too limiting. He now prefers the term environment so that Ecocriticism may focus not only on natural environments but on built ones as well. He asks, what does the absence of nature and natural environments say about these texts? Does the presence of constructed and built environments, in place of natural ones, indicate a separation of the human and the non-human? Even though the study of the four authors included in my dissertation cannot answer these questions fully, I will examine these questions throughout their works and particularly in the works of Yépez.

In Chimal, Yépez, Ruiz Gil, and Arciniegas' work I evaluate the different environments and the characters' interactions and projections of those environments. This involves an analysis of the natural world and its inhabitants within these texts. The evaluation of both natural and built environments also involves a broader perspective and view on how the natural and built worlds are colliding – how humans continue to manipulate their environments, transforming even green "natural" spaces into constructed environments more pleasing to the human. One noteworthy example of this is the construction of gardens and parks by state funded departments within city limits.³³ The mere existence of such state-funded departments not only reveals the human need for green spaces, but also the need to construct and control these spaces. As Greg Gerrard reminds us "a 'weed' is not a kind of plant, only the wrong kind in the wrong place" as determined by human beings (Wright 9). As the world becomes more global and modernized, the

destruction of natural spaces for the creation of constructed ones persists and the choice of which plants are worth keeping, cultivating, and displaying is made. The need to recreate nature to be more pleasing to humans may stem from a Western desire to conquer nature; for nature is seen as a threat to human survival.

Buell argues that the texts' environmentality is deeply embedded within a text. What this means is that each text reveals its views on environment "as a condition of personal and social being," much like Guadalupe Vallejo's text reveals the carelessness of early pollution, mining, and urbanization (*Future* 142). Therefore, the constructed or built environments, as well as the natural environments, that are represented in a text will reveal a certain level of environmental consciousness. Environmental texts have a clear message and are consciously aware of their environmental perspectives, however, other texts also reveal a view or message about the environment – although they do not attempt to on any conscious level.

This invites us to rethink nature and environments, both rural and urban, and what they convey in narrative.³⁴ In *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, two articles discuss the shift in representation of the physical, natural world to that of urban development. Cynthia Deitering "finds contemporary [American] novels to be littered with references to garbage, signaling a fundamental shift in historical consciousness, a shift from a culture defined by its production to a postindustrial culture defined by its waste" (Glotfelty and Fromm xxx). This representation of waste is apparent in Heriberto Yépez's two novels, which I discuss in chapter three of this dissertation. Dana Phillips claims that

“in modernism the roots of culture lie in nature, whereas in postmodernism nature is replaced by commodified representation,” a connection that also parallels with Latin American literature and the shift from regional novels to universal imagery and urban representations in literature (Glotfelty and Fromm xxx).

One example in Latin American literary studies is Raymond L. Williams ecocritical reading of *Cien años de soledad* (1967) in which he presents various ways in which nature has been represented in different novels. In *Cien años de soledad* he explains that nature serves as a threat to Macondo in the five-year-long rainstorm, but also that it serves as a connection to “other literary texts, from those of Alexander von Humboldt to those of Isaacs, Rivera and a host of others” (“An eco-critical reading” 72). Additionally, nature is linked to culture and history in the novel; Williams uses the example of José Arcadio and Ursula’s conversation of the earth being “round, like the orange” (73). He shows that the presence of the orange is not “natural” at all, as the orange was “brought to the Americas by Columbus on his second trip to the New World and first arrived in Haiti in 1493” (73). He also identifies that the use of an orange as a reference shows “closeness to nature” (73). This brings us to a defining moment, had José Arcadio used an urban object in his metaphor of the earth being spherical it would have implied a distance from nature, but instead, he used a fruit, a natural object that was within his surroundings.

The opposite is the case for many of the texts that I examine in this dissertation. A distance with regard to nature exists in many modern texts as there are fewer and fewer references to nature and natural objects. Contemporary characters refer to Walkman,

computers, cars, and the “concrete jungle.” Modern metaphors have already begun to reverse the process by using manmade built environments and objects to describe nature. Geologist Ellen Churchill Semple described that “the river is a great natural highway” that controls and “channels easy movement of humanity” back in 1911 (5). Where Williams describes the highways like rivers, Semple does the opposite.³⁵ Even though she draws the same conclusion – that rivers and highways serve as links of travel and communication for society –, she does so in a way to connect with current points of reference in the first half of the twentieth century.

However, nature is not completely absent in these comparisons; just as Williams indicates substitutions for rivers in his work, Galeano refers to the highway as a “río de luces de los automóviles en la avenida” (*Úselo y tírelo* 141). Nature and animals persist in our metaphors and descriptions of our urban environments. Galeano compares humans to ants demonstrating how we communicate through the antennas of the television, just as ants do with their physical antennas. He shows how modern-day workers are slaves to the “queen ant,” working endlessly while the “queen ants” – the superpowers of the world – enjoy life.³⁶ William James described the city and its inhabitants after an earthquake as “busy ants in an uncovered anthill, scurrying to save their eggs and larvae” (335). Again, we see a superimposition of nature in the urban setting through metaphor. Humans may not be centered around rivers, but have rather constructed a new kind of river to be centered around. Humans may live in apartments or houses, but humans still construct a habitat in which to live and establish themselves in society as non-human creatures do – much like Galeano and James describe. Humans construct parks to be “close to nature,” yet destroy

the natural habitat that was there in favor of a controlled park with specific plants in specific formations. But what happens when there are no ants to be compared to and only dry riverbanks?

Galeano illustrates that as human beings work to modernize and construct new environments, these same humans destroy the natural environments that existed in their place. He states that if we continue to consume and construct at the rate in which we currently do, we will quickly pollute, exhaust, or destroy all our natural resources. Even though the focus of my work is not to enter the conservationist debate, one must remember what urban environments imply. These texts – although they are not environmental texts nor do they specifically indicate facts, dates, or figures of pollution or environmental destruction – do contribute to the image of the modern environment – one without anything “natural.” The absence of all things natural in Yépez’ texts, for example, is a superimposition of the modern and constructed environment over the natural environment that once existed in those spaces, which I will evaluate in chapter three of this dissertation.

Additionally, in a Latin American context, there have been various critics looking at Latin American literature through an ecocritical perspective.³⁷ In their respective anthologies, Adrian Taylor Kane and Gisela Heffes attempt to define ecocriticism within the study of Latin American literature, searching for the ways in which it differs from ecocritical studies of Anglo American and British literature. In addition to critical anthologies and publications, there have been other academic articles addressing Latin American literature in an ecocritical context.³⁸

In 2010, Taylor Kane compiled *The Natural World in Latin American Literatures: Ecocritical Essays on Twentieth Century Writings* where he compiles ten articles pertaining to ecocritical analysis of Latin American Literature. He divides the collection of articles into three parts: Nature, Modernity and Technology in Twentieth-Century Latin American Fiction; Environmental Utopias and Dystopias; and Ecology and the Subaltern. He includes articles by literary critics Mark D. Anderson, Martín Camps, Gustavo Llarull, Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, Marisa Pereyra, Dora Ramírez-Dhoore, Traci Roberts-Camps, Jonathan Tittler, Raymond L. Williams, and himself.

The preface of his collection is to transcend “national boundaries by presenting analyses of literary and cultural production ranging from Patagonia to Amazonia to the Chihuahua Desert, and in doing so [the anthology] attempts to convey a sense of the ecological, cultural and linguistic diversity of Latin America” (Kane 5-6). He argues that “imagery of the natural world has played varied and important roles in Latin American literature,” from Christopher Columbus’ letters to postmodern narrative (Kane 1). He claims that the majority of ecocritical studies of Latin American literature lie in the analysis of the 1920s and 30s Spanish American regional novel (Kane 1). He then mentions various critics from Alfred Coester to Jennifer French who have contributed to the expansion of ecocritical studies of Latin American literature.³⁹ He also mentions various journals who have dedicated volumes and publications to environmental studies of Latin American literature.⁴⁰

The three sections of the anthology explore various aspects and methodological approaches to ecocriticism in Latin American literature. The first section consists of four articles by Jonathan Tittler, Adrian Taylor Kane, Raymond L. Williams, and Gustavo Llarull respectively. Tittler's article focuses on the concept of ecocriticism and presents a re-reading of regional novels of the 1920s to Mario Vargas Llosa's *El hablador* (1987). He suggests that the Latin American novel has shifted from the "regional *novela de la tierra* [a] novel of the land" to a "*novela de la Tierra*, or novel of the Earth" (Kane 3). Kane's article discusses 1920s works in terms of the discourse of modernity and its representations of the environment. The first half of the article "examines ways in which avant-garde fiction moves away from nineteenth-century realist and naturalist traditions," and the second half of the article "is dedicated to the relation between nature and urban spaces as represented in texts from this period," the late twentieth century. Williams' article focuses on the importance of land in Latin American fiction and how representations of nature and technology show a connect, or a disconnect, with the natural environment. Finally, Llarull conducts a comparative study of three novels showing the relationship between portrayals of nature and technology throughout the twentieth-century. His article "seeks a more profound understanding of the rhetoric that has shaped cultural attitudes toward nature and guided historical projects that have ultimately led to today's environmental crises" (Kane 4).

The second section contains three articles by Lizabeth Paravisini-Gerbert, Marisa Pereyra, and Martín Camps respectively. Paravisini-Gerbert focuses on the relation between activism and creative productions of writers, artists and musicians in the

Caribbean. Pereyra's article discusses ecofeminism and how "environmentalist and feminist discourses converge to subvert the patriarchal power structure and create a common utopian project for a society in which women and nature are liberated from oppression" (Kane 4). Lastly, Camps presents a comparison between the Argentinian landscapes of *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926) and contemporary writers Héctor Tizón, Juan José Saer, Osvaldo Soriano, and Mempo Giardinelli. He sees the return to regionalism "as a reaction to the forces of globalization, which seek to erase heterogeneity" (Kane 4).

In the final section of the anthology, there are three articles written by Dora Ramírez-Dhoore, Traci Roberts-Camps, and Mark D. Anderson respectively. Dhoore's article exams resistance narratives focusing on racism and environmental injustice. Roberts-Camps discusses the oppression of indigenous groups in Mexico and Guatemala. She compares Rosario Castellanos' *Oficio de tinieblas* (1962) with the *Popol Vuh*, the Mayan book of creation, in which she finds "non-Western representations of nature as articulate and inspirited" (Kane 5). This section ends with Anderson's article on Brazilian literature and addresses the issue of nationhood and its basis "on the trope of abundant nature" (Kane 5). Overall, Kane refers to this section as addressing, what T.V. Reed refers to as "environmental justice ecocriticism" (Kane 5).

The anthology as a whole covers many different regions and literature of Latin America while attempting to represent various methodologies of ecocritical study. In the epilogue, Kane suggests the need for future ecocritical study of the "representation of nature in indigenous cultural production, intersections between environmentalism and

popular culture, the effect of natural disasters on culture, and the roles of race and class in environmental issues” in Latin America (Kane 235). He also mentions Lawrence Buell’s observation of “second-wave ecocriticism.” Kane ends his anthology in hope of growth of ecocritical analysis of Latin American literature as ecocriticism itself grows.

In 2013, Gisela Heffes published *Políticas de la destrucción / Poéticas de la preservación* where she attempts to place ecocriticism within Latin American literature and discusses three major issues that ecocriticism currently faces.⁴¹ In “Introducción para una ecocrítica latinoamericana” she outlines the beginning of ecocritical studies in North American and British literary studies while incorporating many critics of Latin American literature who, though not explicitly, participate in ecocritical analysis of Latin American literature and culture. She first defines ecocriticism as “una disciplina relativamente nueva cuyo objetivo, en términos generales, consiste en el análisis de la relación entre literatura y cultura y el medio ambiente” (Heffes 11). She then begins her historical review with Cheryl Glotfelty’s *The Ecocriticism Reader. Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) and ends her historical analysis with Laura Barbas-Rhoden’s *Ecological Imaginations in Latin American Fiction* (2011) and a mention of Heffes’ own publication *Políticas de la destrucción / Poéticas de la preservación* (2013).⁴²

Heffes overviews various threads of ecocriticism from the study of natural environments, environmental activism, and deep ecology, to Ecofeminism, Ecomarsixm and even “ecofilosofía heideggeriana” (Heffes 18).⁴³ Ultimately, she presents the argument that the ecocritical study of Latin American literature differs from that of its northern

counterpart because Latin America is inherently linked to “la naturaleza y su explotación, la recuperación de cosmogonías indígenas, [y] la creciente contaminación que afecta por igual tanto a la tierra como a los sujetos que la habitan [los indígenas]” (Heffes 19). The study of Latin American literature through an ecocritical perspective, then, must be studied within the context of colonialism, globalization, local and global economics, history, ecology and other scientific areas, subaltern studies, anthropology and other pertinent related interdisciplinary studies. The treatment of nature and the culture that surrounds it is bound together with the history of exploitation of Latin American communities and will therefore most likely be reflected in its literature. Finally, Heffes argues that there is a need for more than just an ecocentric study of Latin America and, instead, calls for a “bioecocrítica” of Latin American literature.⁴⁴

In this dissertation, I draw on Gisela Heffes and Adrian Taylor Kane’s call for exploration of different approaches to ecocritical analysis of Latin American literature to evaluate brief contemporary works from Mexico and Colombia. Brief fiction has often been ignored in general literary criticism and appears to have been so in ecocritical studies as well. As previously mentioned, there are various online literary magazines that publish literary criticism on *minificción*, but there have yet to be major works of ecocritical analysis of *minificción*. For this reason, I have included three authors’ *minificción* work in this dissertation in order to situate their work within the ecocritical studies of Latin American literature.

The second chapter, “The Non-human in the Brief Fiction of Alberto Chimal: An Ecocentric Reading of *83 Novelas*,” identifies an ecocentric representation of non-human and human characters in Alberto Chimal’s *minificción* collection *83 Novelas* (2011). The work is composed of 83 *microrrelatos*, each 140 characters or less. Despite their extreme brevity, Chimal is able to construct an ecocentric world in which non-human and human characters interact, influence, and communicate with one another. Chimal attributes many human-like characteristics to non-human animal and non-human non-animal characters which portray these characters as equally competent, emotive, and logical. These abilities raise the non-human characters to the human characters’ level of intelligence and sentience, establishing equality between the human and the non-human characters. Additionally, the human character is removed from the central focal point of the narratives, allowing non-human characters to be primary characters in the *microrrelatos*. The decentralization of the human figure and the equality presented in the work reveals an underlying environmentality that counters anthropocentric representations typically found in contemporary writing.

The third chapter, “Fragment and Nature: An Anthropocentric Reading of Two Novels by Heriberto Yépez,” identifies a dominant anthropocentric representation within Yépez’s experimental novels, *Wars. Threesomes. Drafts. & Mothers.* (2007) and *41 Clósets* (2005). These two novels portray a human-centered narrative that contrasts with Chimal’s writing. The human characters in both fragmented novels ignore the non-human and natural environments around them, focusing entirely on their own existence and difficulties within it. The neglect of the non-human and nature represents an extreme

anthropocentric view in which the non-human and natural environments exist only as resources for the human characters to exploit. Additionally, the fragmentation in the two novels creates a distance between the reader and the narrators which is reflected by the distance that exists between the human protagonists and their natural environments. The opposite of what Raymond L. Williams discovered in *Cien años de soledad* in regard to the characters' closeness to nature, which is projected through their interaction with and reference to natural objects.

The fourth chapter, "The Anthropocene in the Smallest Forms: María Paz Ruiz Gil's *Micronopia* and *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*," also portrays an anthropocentric perspective in which humans dominate and exploit the world's natural resources for their own benefit. However, both *Micronopia* (2011) and *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* (2014) include moments of ecocentrism in which non-human characters are given the ability to think, desire, and feel. Her publications predominately focus on human characters and generally employ non-human characters to create irony or surprise, however, there are a few *microrrelatos* which portray sentient and independent non-human characters. Even though her writing is primarily anthropocentric, these works reveal a merging of both anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives, revealing a dominate human-centered viewpoint, while accepting some non-human-centered ideas.

The fifth chapter, "Beasts and Humans: Metamorphosis and the Non-human in Gabriela A. Arciniegas' *Bestias*," shows another representation of ecocentric narrative. Human characters are portrayed as violent, unemotional beasts, while beasts are portrayed

as victims of circumstance. However, the non-human and human beasts in *Bestias* (2015) are indistinguishable in terms of sentience and intelligence. The inability to separate the two types of beasts questions the anthropocentric perspective of human superiority, what inherently makes a beast a beast, and the possibility of a non-polarized view of human and animal. Additionally, the metamorphosis in the *cuentario* allows for a reversal of the typically accepted relationship between human and animal, questioning their binary relationship.

Each chapter addresses the forms used in the narratives and how these various forms contribute to the representation of anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives. Through the use of brevity, fragmentation, and experimentation, these four Generation Zero Zero authors present a divided representation of human and non-human characters. Even though Chimal, Ruiz Gil, and Arciniegas present sentient non-human characters, Yépez maintains a strong anthropocentric narrative that silences and ignores non-human characters. These varying representations of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism could reflect a division in the generation, exemplifying the differing ideas the authors of this generation have about non-human sentience, their rights, and the interactions humans should have with them.

In the conclusion, I discuss these four authors' treatment of the non-human and what it reveals about the environmentality found in their texts. In both Alberto Chimal and Gabriela A. Arciniegas' texts there is an ecocentric perspective in which both humans and non-humans are treated equally – through their ability to speak, empathize, emote, and

suffer. These texts draw attention to the anthropocentric viewpoint of human superiority over non-human beings, both animal and non-animal. The natural world, its animals, plants, and objects are treated as equally valuable and central to the narratives that Chimal and Arciniegas create. These texts question the anthropocentric perspective and present worlds in which all beings are equal by giving sentience, intelligence, and independence to non-human protagonists.

The use of non-human characters can be seen throughout the history of short forms, such as the use of non-human animal characters in *fábulas* and *parábolas*. However, these texts generally employ the non-human animal as a representation of the human reader. On the other hand, the ecocentric texts I discuss in this dissertation do not simply employ non-human characters in order to teach a human character a lesson of morality. Rather, the non-human characters act on their own volition and interact with other human characters – sometimes uncharacteristic to how humans have represented non-human animals in writing (similar to the artistic fly in Chimal’s “Pathos”).⁴⁵ On the contrary, novels predominately portray human protagonists and human interests, employing non-human characters to contribute to the evolution of the plot, development of the human characters, or as a resource. Then, by not employing the non-human character in this way, the texts I study in this dissertation question the dominance of anthropocentric writing and the tradition of human characters in narrative by breaking from it and portraying an alternative, ecocentric style of writing.

María Paz Ruiz Gil's publications present an anthropocentric worldview while acknowledging the existence of nature and its beings and, occasionally, giving voice and emotion to non-human animals. However, her use of animals overall shows a human-centric perspective in which non-human animals are mostly used as a resource, either for the human characters' consumption or as a literary tool for her narrative. Finally, Heriberto Yépez' texts portray an extreme anthropocentric narrative in which, not only are human characters superior to nature and non-human beings, using them as resources for their basic needs, but also, nature has completely disappeared from the texts.

Finally, these texts take place in modern and urbanized settings which abandon any and all descriptions of nature. Overall, the analysis of these four Generation Zero Zero authors through an ecocritical perspective reveals a divide in perspectives regarding human and non-human characters and their treatment within their narratives. This divide, between anthropocentric and ecocentric views in the Generation Zero Zero parallels cultural and political divides concerning nature, its treatment, and its protection in the twenty-first century.

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Endnotes

¹ These four authors all began publishing in the early 1980s and 1990s, however, they were not picked up by major publishing houses until after 2000 and have published the majority of their work after the year 2000.

² A few critical histories and dictionaries of Latin American literature that predate the Generation Zero Zero but discuss twentieth-century and/or twenty-first-century Latin American literature are: Robert Bazin's *Historia de la literatura americana en lengua Española* (1958), Enrique Anderson Imbert's *Spanish-American Literature: A History* (1963), *Nueva Narrativa Hispanoamericana* (1971), David William Foster's *Modern Latin American Literature* (1975) and *Handbook of Latin American Literature* (1992), and Foster and Altamiranda's *Spanish American Literature: Twentieth-Century Spanish American Literature since 1960* (1997), Jean Franco's *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana: a partir de la independencia* (1975), John S. Brushwood's *The Spanish American Novel: A Twentieth-Century Survey* (1975), Gordon Brotherston's *The emergence of the Latin American Novel* (1977), César Fernández Moreno's *América Latina en su literatura* (1980), Giuseppe Bellini's *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana* (1985), Angel Rama's *Novela en América Latina: Panoramas 1920-1980* (1986), Carlos A. Solé and Maria Isabel Abreu's *Latin American Writers* (1989), Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez's *Manual de literatura hispanoamericana* (1991), Naomi Lindstrom's *Twentieth-century Spanish American Fiction* (1994), Raymond L. Williams' *The Novel in the Americas* (1992), *The Modern Latin-American Novel* (1998), and *The Twentieth-Century Spanish American Novel* (2003), Verity Smith's *Encyclopedia of Latin American Literature* (1997), Judith Solís Téllez's *Aspectos de la literatura latinoamericana, siglos XX y XXI* (1997), and Cedomil Goić's *Historia y crítica de la literatura hispanoamericana* (1997).

There have been a few critical histories and dictionaries of contemporary Mexican literature published that precede or exclude the Generation Zero Zero are: Carlos González Peña's *Historia de la literatura mexicana desde los orígenes hasta nuestros días* (1929), Julio Jiménez Rueda's *Historia de la literatura mexicana* (1953), John S. Brushwood and José Rojas Garcidueñas' *Breve historia de la novela mexicana* (1959), Brushwood's *Mexico in its Novel: A Nation's Search for Identity* (1966), and his *La novela mexicana (1967-1982)* (1984), Alberto Valenzuela Rodarte's *Historia de la literatura en México* (1961), Sergio Howland Bustamante's *Historia de la literatura Mexicana: con algunas notas sobre la literatura de Hispanoamérica* (1971), José María Vigil's *Estudios sobre literatura Mexicana. Recopilación, introducción y notas de Adalberto Navarro Sánchez* (1972), Felipe San José G.'s *La literatura mexicana: autores y sus obras desde la época prehispánica hasta la actualidad* (1983), Josefina Choren de Ballester, Guadalupe Goicoechea de Junco, and Rull de Pulido's *Literatura mexicana e hispanoamericana* (1985), David William Foster's *Mexican Literature: A History* (1994), Raymond L.

Williams and Blanca Rodríguez's *La narrativa posmoderna en México* (2002), Christopher Domínguez Michael's *Diccionario crítico de la literatura mexicana (1955-2005)* (2007), and José María Espinasa's *Historia mínima de la literatura mexicana del siglo XX* (2015).

In Colombian literature, there have been a handful of critical histories and works that predate the Generation Zero Zero: *La literatura colombiana: estudios críticos de Antonio Gómez Restrepo, Juan Valera, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, Antonio Rubío y Lluch* (1952), Antonio Gómez Restrepo's *Historia de la literatura colombiana* (1953), Antonio Curcio Altamar's *Evolución de la novela en Colombia* (1957), Donald McGrady's *La novela histórica en Colombia: 1844-1959* (1962), Eduardo Camacho Guizado's *Estudios sobre literatura colombiana* (1965) and his *Sobre literatura colombiana e hispanoamericana* (1978), José A. Núñez Segura's *Literatura colombiana: sinopsis y comentarios de autores representativos* (1969), Raymond L. Williams' *The Colombian Novel 1844-1987* (1991), Karl Kohut's *Literatura colombiana hoy: imaginación y barbarie* (1994), and Kevin G. Guerrieri's *Palabra, poder y nación: la novela moderna en Colombia 1896-1927* (2004).

³ Alberto Chimal's work has been published internationally and has been translated into English, Italian, French, German, Hungarian, Farsi, Hebrew, Zapoteco and Esperanto. Whereas, Heriberto Yépez's work has only been published in English and Spanish.

⁴ The authors included in Pushkin Press' collection of translated short stories are: Juan Pablo Anaya (1980), Gerardo Arana (1987), Nicolás Cabral (1975), Verónica Gerber Bicecci (1981), Pergentino José (1981), Laia Jufresa (1983), Luis Felipe Lomelí (1975), Brenda Lozano (1981), Valeria Luiselli (1983), Fernanda Mechor (1982), Emiliano Monge (1978), Eduardo Montagner (1975), Antonio Ortuño (1976), Eduardo Rabasa (1978), Antonio Ramos Revillas (1977), Eduardo Ruiz Sosa (1983), Daniel Saldaña París (1984), Ximena Sánchez Echenique (1979), Carlos Manuel Velázquez (1978), and Nadia Villafuerte (1978).

⁵ One of the collections of the generation of writers that follows the Generation Zero Zero is *México 20: New Voices, Old Traditions* (2015).

⁶ All four authors, Gabriela A. Arciniegas, Alberto Chimal, María Paz Ruiz Gil, and Heriberto Yépez, use digital platforms to publish, promote, and, occasionally, produce their writing.

⁷ Robert Walser was a German-speaking Swiss fiction writer that influenced Franz Kafka ("Robert Walser Zentrum"). Ernest Hemmingway, a Nobel Prize in Literature recipient, was an American short story writer who had an influence on twentieth-century fiction for his brief and economical forms (Dearborn).

⁸ Twitterature or *Tuiteratura* was originally defined as an “amalgamation of ‘twitter’ and ‘literature’; humorous reworkings of literary classics for the twenty-first century intellect, in digestible portions of 20 tweets or fewer” by Alexander Aciman (Aciman and Rensin). However, Twitterature now defines a much larger corpus of narrative and poetry. Twitterature is now any written work produced in 140 characters or less and published through Twitter – Twitter is a microblogging website that allows its users to post status updates of 140 characters or less.

⁹ Chimal has discussed publishing entire threads of Twiternovels as a comprehensive piece because the comments and discussion that followed some of his Twiternovels became an important part of the text.

¹⁰ This form of writing is so popular that there is a Japanese word, Keitai, dedicated to the art of writing entire novels on a cellular device. For more information on this form of fiction see Brianna Erban’s *Ketai Shousetsu: A Study of Japan’s Mobile Phone Fiction* (Erban).

¹¹ Laura Miller reported that George R. R. Martin’s book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* sold over 15 million books worldwide in 2011 (Miller). Martin was also listed as one of *Forbes*’ highest-paid authors in 2012 (Robehmed).

¹² According to the article “Bolaño-Mania: Hymn to a Dead Chilean” in the *Economist*, Bolaño’s *2666* was considered the best book of 2008 by Time Magazine and it was reported that 75,000 copies of the book were sold during the first few days of the second release of the book in English.

¹³ Due to this very prejudice, I have chosen to examine authors who have published novels which have been printed and distributed in the traditional paper, book-store model of literary publication, as well as digital publications of brief fiction.

¹⁴ Augusto Monterroso lists many of his influences in his short essay “Beneficios y Maleficios de Jorge Luis Borges” (Monterroso, *Antología*).

¹⁵ Even though surprise is not limited to *minificción* alone, it plays an important role in creating a narrative element in *minificción*. *Calila e dimna* (1251) comes to mind.

¹⁶ For further reading, please see: Dolores M. Koch’s *El micro-relato en México: Torri, Arreola, Monterroso y Avilés Fabila* (1981), David Lagmanovich’s *El microrrelato: teoría e historia* (2006), Javier Perucho’s *El cuento jíbaro: antología del microrrelato mexicano* (2006), Ángeles Encinar and Carmen Valcárcel’s *Más por menos: Antología de microrrelatos hispánicos actuales* (2011), Henry González Martínez’s *La minificción en el siglo XXI: aproximaciones teóricas* (2014), Irene Andres-Suárez’s *Antología del microrrelatos español (1906 - 2011): El cuarto género narrativo* (2013), and Lauro

Zavala's *Glosario para el estudio de la minificción*. The decalogues cited were published in *El cuento Jíbaro: Antología del microrrelato mexicano* (Perucho). Even though this is not an exhaustive list of theorists and critics in Latin American *minificción*, it is the framework behind my dissertation research.

¹⁷ Other critics researching the issue of *minificción* in Latin American and Peninsular literature are: Cristina Álvarez, Adrián Chávez, Cristo Rafael Figueroa Sánchez, Guillermo Tedio, and Carmen Valcárcel.

¹⁸ Cristina Álvarez suggests that a subgenre of *minificción* could be *micronouvelles*, which she defines as three line novels – “nouvelles en trois lignes” (170).

¹⁹ Luis Zárate Herrera is a Mexican writer of Twitterature.

²⁰ A list of the many definitions that Javier Perucho outlines in his book is as follows:

Minificción, minirrelato, microrrelato: Any text that is less than 200 words (32-3).

Relato hiperbreve: Texts between 10 and 200 words, as defined by the *Circulo Cultural Faroni* in Madrid; these are also synonyms for *cuentos ultracortos* (18).

Cuento breve: Fragments anywhere between 10 and 400 words as defined by Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares. Lauro Zavala would equate this with his definition of what is a *cuento corto* (15).

Cuento brevísimo: Raúl Brasca defines *cuento brevísimo* as texts that range from 50 – 400 words, are generally paradoxical, and contain an epiphany. This term is sometimes used as a synonym for *minificción*, and for *microcuento* (16).

Ficción mínima: Texts between 100 and 400 words as defined by Gabriel Jiménez (17).

Cuento corto: Defined as any text between 10 and 1,000 words by Guillermo Bustamante and Harold Kremer. Zavala, however, uses this term to define any texts between 1,000 – 2,000 words (17).

Cuento mínimo: A term commonly used as a synonym for *minificción*, or *cuento muy corto*, *micro-stories*, or in English, tiny stories, or Flash Fiction, which is used to define any text between 200 and 1,000 words (17).

Ficción rápida: Any text that can be written in five minutes. This term was defined by Roberta Allen and refers to the author's perspective rather than the text itself (18).

²¹ The five characteristics that Perucho outlines in his anthology are:

Brevedad: “Una tendencia a la mengua de la extensión, el incremento en el gradiente elipsis y la mayor interacción entre texto y lector” (19).

Elipsis: “Estrategia retórica principal de la narrativa cinematográfica y de la minificción, que consiste en eliminar aquello que el lector o espectador debe dar por supuesto para apropiarse del texto y resemantizarlo en función de su propia interpretación” (19).

Epifanía: “Súbita revelación de una verdad narrativa, ya sea al personaje o al lector” (19).

Concisión: “La economía verbal; como elemento básico de toda minificción, está generalmente acompañado de recursos paradójicos, como la precisión y la ambigüedad” (19).

Condensación: “Una estrategia narrativa propia de la minificción, [...] acompañada por la existencia de un incidente repentino, propio del minicuento clásico²¹” (19).

²² Lagmanovich identifies key features of *microrrelatos*: the ellipsis, brevity, concision, and specific internal and external structures.

²³ One of the first works of environmental discourse in dialogue with literary criticism is Asher Horowitz’s *Rousseau, Nature, and History* published in 1987.

²⁴ Some of the most recent publications in ecocriticism are Nancey Easterlin’s *A Biocultural Approach to Literary Theory and Interpretation* (2012), Timo Müller and Michael Sauter’s *Literature, Ecology, Ethics: Recent Trends in Ecocriticism* (2012), Gisela Heffes’s *Políticas de la destrucción, poéticas de la preservación: apuntes para una lectura (eco)crítica del medio ambiente en América Latina* (2013), Louise Hutchings Westling’s *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment* (2014), Timothy Clark’s *Ecocriticism on the Edge: the Anthropocene as a threshold concept* (2015), Adam Trexler’s *Anthropocene fictions: the novel in a time of climate change* (2015), and Antonia Mehnert’s *Climate Change Fictions: Representations of Global Warming in American Literature* (2016).

²⁵ Alexander von Humboldt. *Ansichten der Natur: mit wissenschaftlichen Erläuterungen*. Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1849 / Alexander von Humboldt. *Aspects of Nature, in Different Lands and Different Climates; with Scientific Elucidations*. Trans. Mrs. Sabine. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1850.

²⁶ Eco-fiction is nature-oriented or environment-oriented literature.

Climate Fiction, or Cli-fi for short, is a literature whose focus is climate change and global warming, either taking place in today’s world or in a projected world of the future.

Environmental Activist Literature is literature whose focus is on environmental change, those who invoke change, and an overall call for activism in support of ecological movements.

²⁷ See *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment* complements its predecessor *Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Environment* (2011) by Timothy Clark.

²⁸ It is possible to go back much further when looking at texts dealing with nature, if one considers Alexander von Humboldt's *Ansichten der Natur* (*Aspects of Nature*) published in 1807, accounts of voyages such of those from Christopher Columbus and Marco Polo, and passages on nature and animals in the Quran and Bible.

²⁹ A few authors associated with Buell's second-wave Ecocriticism, that I will include in my research, are literary critics Raymond L. Williams, Mark Anderson, Enrique Salas-Durazo, and Laura Wright, and a key Latin American writer and intellect on environment, Eduardo Galeano.

³⁰ Gisela Heffes defines anthropocentrism as the idea that there is "superioridad a los hombres respecto a la naturaleza (por ejemplo, en la posesión de una alma inmortal o de racionalidad)" (Heffes 15). Luc Ferry argues that anthropocentrism maintains the human figure at the center and negates intrinsic value to any other object or thing outside of its own species, and argues that all beings which can feel deserve equal consideration (Ferry).

Boris Zeide defines ecocentrism as the proclamation "that all entities (including humans) should have the freedom to unfold in their own way, and fully realize their inherent potential, unhindered by human domination" and that "ecocentrism enhances and expands upon the most cherished values: unselfishness, justice, and equality" (Zeide 121). Lawrence Buell defines biocentrism and ecocentrism within literary studies as "the environmentally oriented study of literature and (less often) the arts more generally, and to the theories that underlie such critical practice" (Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* 138).

³¹ Roman Bartosch's *EnvironMentality: Ecocriticism and the event of postcolonial fiction* (1994) also includes a short section on "Postcolonial Texts and the 'Event of Fiction'."

³² The first number in this citation refers to the frame in Calisphere where the unedited manuscript is digitally preserved. The second number in this citation refers to the original page number in the manuscript.

³³ Central Park in New York city, which was created in the 1850s by the Department of Parks and Recreation, serves as an early example of constructed green spaces in developing urban environments ("Parks" 1).

³⁴ For further reading on the incorporation of urban environments in ecocriticism see Michael Bennett and David W. Teague's *The Nature of Cities* (1999) and Ashton Nichols's *Beyond Romantic Ecocriticism: Toward Urbanatural Roosting* (2011).

³⁵ Raymond L. Williams describes the highway as a river in "Rural and Urban Rivers in the Modern Latin American Novel: An Introductory Overview."

³⁶ Eduardo Galeano's book *Las venas abiertas de America Latina* is also of interest to the topic of environmental discourse in Latin America.

³⁷ Adrian Taylor Kane mentions the following critics who approach Latin American literature through ecocritical analysis: Carlos Alonso, Wendell Aycock, Niall Binn, Alfred Coester, Jennifer French, Greg Garrard, Ursula K. Heise, Sharon Magnarelli, Jorge Marcone, Patrick Murphy, Janet Pérez, Mary Louise Pratt, José Ramón Naranjo, Scott Slovic, Jonathan Tittler, Arturo Torres Rioseco, and Fred Waze.

Additionally, Richard Kerridge includes an essay by M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer on "Ecopolitics and the literature of the borderlands: the frontiers of environmental justice in Latina and Native American writing" in his book *Writing the Environement: Ecocriticism and Literature* (1998). In *Where the Wild Books are: a field guide to ecofiction*, Jim Dwyer includes a small section titled "Ecofiction from All Around the World" in which he includes a paragraph on Caribbean ecofiction, one on Central and South American ecofiction, and one on Mexican ecofiction before continuing to list various countries around the world and ecofiction found there.

³⁸ One example is Raymond L. Williams' "An Eco-Critical Reading of One Hundred Years of Solitude" (2010).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ The journals Adrian Taylor Kane mentions are: *Hispanic Journal* (fall 1998), *Hispania*, *Anales de literatura hispanoamericana* (2004), *Teaching North American Environmental Literature*, and ASLE's (*The Association of the Study of Literature and Environment*) *ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment)*.

⁴¹ Heffes' identifies three major issues with ecocriticism in her book *Políticas de la destrucción / Poéticas de la preservación* (2013): "El primero se deriva de la supuesta división que opone naturaleza y cultura en tanto entidades o construcciones de realidades separadas; el segundo se relaciona con el énfasis que la misma ecocrítica debe colocar en el hecho de que un aspecto de la crisis medioambiental es cultural y que, por lo tanto, el investigador o académico debe incorporar estas cuestiones dentro de su proyecto – o

‘agenda’ – de investigación. Finalmente, la ecocrítica debe considerar otro reto, esta vez desde las mismas humanidades, como son todos los aspectos bioculturales del comportamiento humano” (Heffes, *Políticas de la destrucción* 37-42).

⁴² Heffes mentions Joan Martínez Alier, Joni Adamson, Laura Barbas-Rhoden, Julia Barella Vigal, Marisol de la Cadena, Laurence Coupe, Arturo Escobar, Mei Mei Evans, Carmen Flys Junquera, Greg Garrard, Cheryl Glotfelty, Ramachandra Guha, Terry Hoeg, Graham Huggan, Bruno Latour, Glen Love, Jorge Marcone, José Manuel Marrero Henríquez, Benjamín McLean, Timothy Morton, Gabriela Nouzeilles, Jorge Paredes, Val Plumwood, Beatriz Rivera Barnes, Ileana Rodríguez, Lúcia Sá, Adrian Taylor Kane, Helen Tiffen, Arnold Toynbee, and ASLE (*The Association of the Study of Literature and Environment*) and its biannual journal ISLE (*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*). In a footnote, she also mentions Giorgio Agamben, Matthew Calarco, Álvaro Fernández Bravo, Gabriel Giorgi, and Fermín Rodríguez as important critics in relation to “lo humano” and “lo no humano” (Heffes, “Introducción” 31).

⁴³ Heffes defines Ecofeminism as the recognition of male dominance over nature and the constructed relation between females and nature, in which nature has been feminized and represented as inherently female. She mentions the critic Val Plumwood who states the importance of the questioning of this dualism between reason, the male, and nature, the female.

Heffes defines Ecomarxism as the combination of Marxist and ecocritical theories, identifying the cause of environmental issues as capitalism. She states that Ecomarxists associate degradation, pollution and exploitation of the environment with poverty, marginalization, and segregation.

Heffes defines “ecofilosofía heideggeriana” as a Heideggerian approach to ecocritical studies which criticize industrial modernity.

For further reading on deep ecology, see Bill Devall and George Sessions *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (1985).

⁴⁴ Heffes coined the term “bioecocrítica” to describe the study of both ecocentrism and biocentrism within Latin American literature.

⁴⁵ Chimal, Alberto. “Pathos.” *83 Novelas*. Mexico City: Mauricio Alberto Martínez Chimal, 2010. (51). Web.

Chapter II

The Non-human in the Brief Fiction of Alberto Chimal: An Ecocentric Reading of *83 Novelas*

Equality among humans and non-humans is seen in Alberto Chimal's collection of 83 *microrrelatos*, for the human and non-human, living and nonliving, animate and inanimate all co-exist together with the same abilities of consciousness, speech, and action.¹ Chimal creates this ecocentric narrative through use of non-human and non-central human characters, language, ellipses, and a cyclical and infinite representation of time. In *83 Novelas* (2011), Chimal presents a world in which the non-human and human figures are equivalents and anthropocentrism is overthrown for ecocentrism.² Buell defines ecocentrism as "the view in environmental ethics that the interest of the ecosphere must override the interest of individual species" (*Future* 137). Buell elaborates by quoting Eckersley, "the world is an intrinsically dynamic, interconnected web of relations," one that has "no absolute dividing lines between the living and the nonliving, the animate and the inanimate" (*Future* 137). Elizabeth Grosz asserts that "what separates one species from another are not differences in kind but rather of degree, variables that proliferate without hierarchical order or fixed value," implying that humans and non-humans have non-hierarchical relations, and thus an equality that has been ignored in anthropocentric views (Coleman 698). This equality and ecocentrism is prevalent in *83 Novelas*.

83 Novelas (2011) is a collection of 83 *microrrelatos*, each 140 characters or less. The length of each *microrrelato* was determined by the limitations of *Twitter* where the *microrrelatos* were originally published. Chimal put together the collection of

microrrelatos in 2010 and published them for free online through his website, where they are still available.³ Geraldine Juárez reported 1,073 copies downloaded in PDF format, 93 downloaded in E-pub format, and 46 downloaded for the Kindle e-reader in the first hours of digital publication.⁴

83 Novelas is divided into five parts: “Muchedumbre (1)”, “Libros”, “Muchedumbre (2)”, “Aventuras”, and “Muchedumbre (3).” Each part has varying numbers of *microrrelatos* and touch on various topics.⁵ The “Muchedumbre” sections each have similar topics pertaining to human and non-human characters. Many of the topics included are the supernatural, cyclical and infinite time, multiple and parallel universes, religious sects, and others. Many of the *microrrelatos* in this section contain seemingly random numbers in their title, which Chimal explains were part of “una selección de series en progreso” (Inicial, *83 Novelas*). The sections “Libros” and “Aventuras” each pertain to a specific topic. “Libros” is the smallest collection and discusses different types of books, specifically books of the elements earth, air, fire, and water. “Aventuras” is a slightly larger collection which contains ten *microrrelatos*, each repeating the same first nine words “un equipo de exploradores se perdió en mi garganta” (*83 Novelas*).

There have been few academic articles pertaining to Chimal’s corpus of fiction and within those there has yet to be an ecocritical study of his work.⁶ Chimal has been publishing short stories since the late 1980s; nevertheless, he did not publish any *minificción* until 2011, the probable reason for which Javier Perucho does not mention Chimal in his *Antología del microrrelato mexicano* – an anthology he published five years prior to Chimal’s first publications of *minificción*. In fact, despite Chimal’s vast

publications and significant readership and recognition, there is relatively little published on his work, and even less on his *minificción*.⁷ Other than Samuel Gordon's publication compiling five literary articles focused on the work of Chimal, there are only a handful of other literary publications and a large collection of various non-literary online interviews, blogposts, and articles analyzing and discussing Chimal's work.⁸

Samuel Gordon's *Mito, fantasía y recepción en la obra de Alberto Chimal* opens his collection of articles with one of his own, in which he discusses the fantastic, mythology, and form in Chimal's *Gente del mundo* (1998).⁹ *Gente del mundo* is an excerpt of the Chimalean history of 2375 *pueblos* that were on the earth prior to our current era acquired by Damac de Jeramow, a fictional character in *Gente del mundo*. The work consists of 42 narrative passages and 21 *láminas* (visual fragments) that survived from the Kadousi *el Magnífico* era. The *láminas* are not actual images, as the text explains, the images have been lost, rather they are descriptions of what the images were (Gordon 19). Gordon defines the texts in *Gente del mundo* as *microrrelatos* or "una serie de textos breves" (19). He refers to these works as a collection of *microrrelatos* and explores the structure of the work, noting the use of *microrrelatos* and *láminas* – which he refers to as another form of *microrrelato* in which Chimal mixes both literature and visual media through his descriptions of the lost images. Although he defines *microrrelatos* and comments on the choice of form for the work, he does not engage with the debate of or comment on the use of *microrrelatos* as more than a narrative technique.¹⁰ Gordon focuses instead on the neomythological world that Chimal has created.

Graciela Monges Nicolau, the author of the second article in Gordon's collection of articles, also discusses *Gente del mundo* and comments on its use of *minitextos*.¹¹ Monges Nicolau does engage, however briefly, with the text's ecocentric topic. She discusses the *armonía* that is found in "Los Que Somos Amigos [*sic.*]" and "*tenghanos* o Los Que Tenemos [*sic.*]," texts I will discuss later when analyzing Chimal's creation of an ecocentric world.¹² Although her primary focus is the mythical in Chimal's work, she does note harmony and equality among "los animales, las plantas, la gente, las cosas... pero también los hechos, las ideas..." when discussing *Gente del mundo* (Gordon 39). Monges Nicolau does not identify this *armonía* as ecocentrism. Rather, she points out the importance of harmony throughout the work, not only among things and beings, but also through music and rhythm in other stories within the work. Her comments on harmony between beings and things, which I will discuss later, approach an ecocentric reading of the text. Like the others in this collection of articles, she identifies the fantastic, the mythical, and the creativity in Chimal's writing. She closes her article with a positive note on the Chimalean universe, saying that Alberto Chimal offers us a "particular visión mágica de la realidad" (Gordon 49).

Soad Lozano Peters shares an enthusiasm for Chimal's work as well, but focuses on the potential of *Gente del mundo* as an *obra abierta* rather than the mythical and mythological within the work. Lozano Peters, as Gordon does, discusses briefly the use of *minificción* in *Gente del mundo*, but uses Lauro Zavala's argument that *minificción* allows for various interpretations in order to argue for *Gente del mundo* to be considered an *obra abierta*.¹³

Lorena Campa Rojas presents an extensive piece on the reception of Chimal's work, but does not engage with Chimal's texts. The annotated bibliography she creates is divided into three sections in which she discusses newspapers articles that deal with Chimal's work, various academic articles that mention him as part of the 1970s-born generation – Generation Zero Zero – or the *Jóvenes creadores de provincia*, and, finally, a plethora of webpages in which Chimal has published or posted his work.¹⁴ The article shows that even from a young age Chimal was considered a noteworthy creator of literary worlds; he was already considered a creator of worlds equal to those of J. R. R. Tolkien by Fernando Islas; an “hacedor de grandes historias concentradas y bien distribuidas en un espacio pequeño como es el cuento” by Verónica Lomelí, Brenda de la Teja O. and Ana Cecilia Morales; and a “creador de mundos dentro del mundo y de sutilezas verbales que le permiten traslapar géneros literarios en el espacio de un solo cuento” and as “el Henry James de su generación” by Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz (Gordon 91).

Campa Rojas then discusses Chimal's place among other authors of his generation – Generation Zero Zero. She refers to Agustín Cadena when referring to this generation in Mexico, stating:

los protagonistas de esta generación, nacidos en la década de los setentas, se convierten en los *antitestigos*, cómplices ausentes de los valores de antaño y de su propio tiempo. Se trata de un grupo heterogéneo [*sic*] debido a la falta de comunicación y retroalimentación entre sus miembros, que comparten un bagaje similar de experiencias y lecturas. Se caracterizan por ser “hijos de la crisis” y por “el desmantelamiento de las ideologías y

utópicas,” lo que los llevó a la búsqueda de nuevos espacios alternativos a la ya muy gastada realidad (Gordon 87).

She then mentions Alberto Chimal within this group, affirming:

son jóvenes cosmopolitas, introducidos a temprana edad en el mundo de las letras. La mención a Alberto Chimal se encuentra en ese contexto: “son representantes de una literatura culta, fantástica en el sentido más literario – *libresca*: Gerardo de la Cruz González, Alonso Ruvalcaba, Merlina Rubio, Alberto Chimal...” (Gordon 87).

Lauro Zavala identifies the group more specifically, mentioning three characteristics of the generation, which Campa Rojas describes:

Realiza un corte transversal en el panorama literario con los nacidos a partir de 1969, porque según él: 1) Ninguno tendrá la edad mayor a la que tuvo Cristo al morir – filiación cuya única justificación parece ser el título de su discurso, “Los legionarios de Cristo”, con el cual ya ha clasificado (quizá sin querer) a los narradores jóvenes y les ha otorgado la cualidad mesiánica de ser “creadores de mundos” – , 2) los separa de los integrantes del *Crack*; y 3) porque a esa edad (33 años) falleció un gran escritor Ramón López Velarde (Gordon 94-5).

She defines, through the other authors’ texts, the Generation Zero Zero – or the *Jóvenes creadores de provincia* – as having been born in the 1970s, before discussing aspects of the generation. She also identifies various trends within this generation through the use of

different authors, adding Carlos Antonio de la Sierra and Ernesto Herrera's perspective, proposing that this generation focuses on the fantastic, science fiction, and gore genres, pop culture and music, and various other contemporary themes. She also mentions Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz when discussing the form used by the writers of this generation and paraphrases him stating "la herramienta que estos jóvenes creadores emplean para manifestar estos universos es, por excelencia, el cuento," noting the use of brief forms employed by the Generation Zero Zero (Gordon 91).

Finally, Gordon's work closes with Lorena Campa Rojas' detailed list of articles, websites and sources on Alberto Chimal. All of the critical work included in Gordon's collection of articles deal primarily with Chimal's work *Gente del mundo*, a compilation of *microrrelatos* that deals with the recreation of fictitious indigenous communities and their archeological representation in a museum-like environment with pseudo-academic prose.¹⁵ Although *Gente del mundo* is entirely made up of *microrrelatos*, none of these articles deal with the use of brevity as a medium for the telling of these complex fictitious societies. Many deal with the neomythological, intertextuality (a major component to much *minificción*), and other various topics within the work.¹⁶ Other non-literary sources mention Grey (2006), a compilation of short stories and *minificción*, mostly focused on religious topics, but also including various pieces regarding conscious coconuts, nail clippers, and crucifixes.¹⁷ Other articles and interviews mention Chimal's other works. However, none of them touch on the non-human presence, nor the issue of brevity as more than a stylistic choice.¹⁸

Alberto Chimal admits that the *novelas* in *83 Novelas* “no son novelas, en efecto, en el sentido convencional del término. Ninguna mide más que unos pocos renglones..., pero esto significa que se atienen al significado original de la palabra, que proviene del italiano de hace muchos siglos: *novella* era una nota pequeña, una noticita, un aviso breve” (Chimal, “83 Novelas”). Chimal invites the reader to further contemplate the use of the word *novela* to describe these “mini-historias” in “Inicial” – the prologue of *83 Novelas* – clarifying that “el título no miente. Lo que sigue son 83 novelas. No se deje engañar por las ideas recibidas;” He then includes a list of nine things to consider when thinking about the collection (*83 Novelas*).¹⁹ Chimal plays with the notion of what should be considered a novel and invites the reader to do the same.

David Baizabal does not seem to be convinced by *minificción*'s literary worth, although he admits that there are benefits to reading *tuitertura* or Twitterature.²⁰ Baizabal states outright:

la brevedad en literatura es un terreno de mucho cuidado, pues si es cierto que “lo bueno, si breve, dos veces bueno,” también lo es que la mayoría de textos de no más de ciento cuarenta caracteres, de cualquier autor, no van más allá del ejercicio de estilo (84).

Though he praises Chimal's *83 Novelas*, claiming that the work “puede parecer un gigante de la innovación y el futuro de la escritura virtual,” he is skeptical of *minificción* and its literary worth (84). Baizabal's comment implies that *minificción* is not worthy of literary analysis, as it is merely a “stylistic exercise.” Nevertheless, I intend to demonstrate, in this

chapter and in upcoming chapters, that *minificción* and publications including *minificción* contribute to and demonstrate different perspectives on the limitations of literature and form. In addition, the *minificción* discussed presents various topics, such as gender divides, environmental perspectives, technology, multiple universes, man versus beast, and other topics worthy of consideration as the Generation Zero Zero is more thoroughly examined.

Fortunately, there are others who seem more enthusiastic about *83 Novelas*, praising its irony, parody, and ingenuity. Adrián Chávez finds Chimal's use of the term "novelas" to describe his *minificción* as ingenious and recommends the work solely for this reason. He claims that *83 Novelas* "se escandalizará con la osadía de llamarlas 'novelas'," but claims that it is well-deserved and that the *minificción* included in the work are "casi todos grandes piezas de la ficción hiperbreve" (2). Chávez uses, as Chimal does, the term *novela* in the original sense of the word as it was used in Italian, meaning "una nota pequeña, una noticia, un aviso breve" (Inicial, *83 Novelas*).

Lorena Campa Rojas' work predates the publication of *83 Novelas*, but alludes to Chimal's use of fragmentation and *minificción* in his works. She identifies Lauro Zavala's article "El cuento mexicano contemporáneo" and his mention of Chimal as one of the new *Jóvenes creadores de provincia* (Gordon 93). In a brief paragraph, she quotes Zavala's record of Chimal as integrating *minificción* into his works – referring to his publication *Gente del mundo*. Campa Rojas does not refer to Lauro Zavala's book *Cartografías del cuento y la minificción*, published in 2004, in which Zavala directly mentions Chimal as a contributing author to what he refers to as the "boom" of *minificción* (Zavala 113, 131).

Although David Lagmanovich, Javier Perucho, and Dolores M. Koch do not remark on Chimal's work, his *minificción* makes use of the many characteristics they outline.²¹ In the prologue of *83 Novelas*, Chimal mentions his intentions for his *minificción*, outlining many of the characteristics presented by Lagmanovich, Perucho, and Koch. First, Chimal claims that "Los mundos narrados son pequeñísimos en la página pero se amplifican en la imaginación" and that "los personajes tienen toda su vida alrededor (arriba, abajo) de lo que se dice de ellos," alluding to the use of *brevedad*, *concisión*, *condensación*, and *elipsis* (5). These four characteristics are used to continuously describe *minificción* by the three critics mentioned above as well as others.²²

Chimal's extremely brief forms, ecocentric topics, and use of the non-human character in *83 Novelas* makes him an author of interest for this dissertation.²³ Recurring topics in Chimal's work are the representation of the non-human character as sentient, the supernatural, the representation of time as infinite and non-linear, and the world or universe as multiple and parallel. As previously mentioned, *83 Novelas* shows a shift from the anthropocentric to the ecocentric. In the Chimalean universe, the human is no longer the central focus and is placed alongside its creations, its fellow animals, and its environment as an equal part, as a mere blip, in the vast universe. The use of *minificción* as the form for these stories allows the author to create worlds and scenarios without having to explain them in depth, leaving it up to the reader to interpret and explore these new worlds. The placement of these non-human characters in a microscopic literary form also draws attention to the minute interest generally given to non-human characters. In this dissertation chapter, I explore the ecocentric world that Chimal creates in order to draw attention to this

shift in narrative and focus on the non-human, while commenting on the form that has been chosen for its creation.

Chimal uses many non-human central characters, such as ants, flies, phantoms, chairs, doors, mirrors, storms and more. Although he uses human characters as well, the number of narratives that contain human characters is much smaller than those that contain non-human characters. Throughout the entire work there are fourteen *microrrelatos* that portray a human character and within these there are a few that are ambiguous to whether the character is indeed human.²⁴ In contrast, there are more than thirty-one *microrrelatos* that use non-human characters as the main character of these extremely brief narratives. That is nearly forty percent, thirty-seven percent to be precise, that represent non-human protagonists, to a mere seventeen percent that portray human protagonists.²⁵ Among these characters are those mentioned above, as well as, walls, books, ambiguous explorers (possibly interpreted as bacteria), supernatural beings, angels, gods, and abstract ideas – such as “Ermitaño.” Additionally, the remaining *microrrelatos* contain characters that are ambiguous, absent, literary, mythical, or spiritual. If we add these ambiguous characters to the total of stories that are not centered around a human figure, we arrive at a striking eighty-three percent of *microrrelatos* in the collection that do not directly focus on a human protagonist (see Appendices A-G for full lists of *microrrelatos* and protagonists in *83 Novelas*).

These percentages reveal an ecocentric perspective in which the human character is not the dominant one. However, it is possible to interpret many of the ambiguous stories as having a human protagonist, if one assumes an anthropocentric view in which sentient

thought is a characteristic solely of human characters. It is also possible to interpret the ambiguous protagonists as non-human, if one adopts an ecocentric perspective in which all things are sentient. An anthropocentric view would raise the percentage of human characters in the work to sixty-six percent, whereas an ecocentric view would drop that percentage to nineteen. What these percentages reveal is that the shift in perspective creates a drastic shift in how the stories are interpreted (see Appendix G for a list of *microrrelatos* containing ambiguous protagonists).

The remaining stories present a multiple and parallel universe, an idea of infinite non-linear time, and ideas on spirituality and the afterlife. The presence of the non-human is impressive. One can see a non-anthropocentric view, in which the human is removed from its central point and replaced or accompanied by objects, animals, nature, and the supernatural. Although many environmental texts may present a negative view of the human, *83 Novelas* does not. One will not find the recurring image of humans destroying, polluting, or negatively altering the world in which they live, nor will one find the human completely removed from nature in order for natural order to be restored.²⁶ Rather, one finds a world in which nature is, indeed, powerful but humans and non-humans live alongside one another in this vast universe. The supernatural, humans, animals, and objects share an equal level of awareness, importance, and place in the world that Chimal has created in *83 Novelas*.

Heretofore, I have used the terms “human” and “non-human” without discussing their use. Priscilla Cohn separates the two terms into practical categories for her argument in favor of the inherent value of animals. She uses the terms “animales humanos” and

“animales no-humanos,” arguing that the terms “animal” and “human” are not clear, for humans themselves are animals as well and should not denote a separate category (Cohn 87). She debates at length the need for better classification, arguing that the two categories are uneven due to the group of the human animal containing only one species – the human – against the non-human animal’s group which contains millions of species. This point exemplifies the anthropocentric ideas of our species, separating the human from its animal state in order to elevate it to a position of power – much like Cohn argues Greeks and colonizers did against the “barbarians” in order to justify their enslavement (Cohn 87). In accordance with Cohn, the positioning of the human above other animals and justifying that position of power is to ignore the intelligence and inherent value of animals. However, her argument about humans choosing to eat meat and being able to obtain sufficient nutrients from plant materials might well be too simplistic (Cohn 99).²⁷

In accordance with Cohn, I too have issues with the dichotomy of these two categories; however, given the great weight of the Anthropocene and anthropocentric history, I think it a fair divide as the non-human animals are vastly unequal, in terms of representation, treatment, and living conditions to humans. The separation of humans from the category of animals allows for an examination of this immense inequality. In this chapter, I expand the non-human category to include all sentient and non-sentient, living and non-living objects and organisms, man-made or natural, into the category of non-human to further pose this inequality between the human and the non-human.

Cohn might disagree with the inclusion of objects in the non-human category, because she directly states that things (objects) are non-sentient and unable to feel and reason. She states:

las cosas no pueden sentir. No pueden ponerse tristes, no pueden aburrirse, sentirse solas, recrearse en aquello que les rodea, o experimentar placer o dolor de alguna manera. Las cosas carecen de intereses puesto que no tienen conciencia: a la roca no le importa si se la parte con un martillo pilón puesto que no tiene la más conciencia de sí misma, su entorno o cualquier otra cosa (88).

She also mentions that “las cosas, ya sean objetos naturales o hechos por el hombre, no son, estrictamente hablando, seres vivientes. Son simplemente cosas u objetos” (89). For Cohn, *cosas* do not belong in the category of non-human animals, because they are not animals, and rightfully so. However, in the Chimallean universe of *83 Novelas* this declaration does not apply, for all things, *cosas*, *humanos*, and *no humanos* are capable of life, feeling, pain, and thought. Chimal’s attribution of such characteristics to these three classifications of beings creates inherent value in them.

In *83 Novelas*, the equality between the living and non-living is obtained through the use of language and imagery in each of the 83 *microrrelatos*. First and foremost, Chimal gives inanimate objects a voice in many of his *microrrelatos*. In “Asientos contiguos,” for example, Chimal creates a pair of chairs that are so consumed with themselves and

finding the love of their lives, that they do not realize their situation or form. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Asientos contiguos

Estaban tan absortos pensando «¿Dónde, dónde estará el amor de mi vida?» que ni por un segundo notaron que eran siameses (21).

The chairs have feelings, are self-consumed, and unaware of their surroundings, comparable to a teenager walking in the street with their cell phone in hand. Even though the reader knows nothing of the physical characteristics of the chairs – their color, size, brand, shape, location – it is immediately understood that they are sentient beings. The use of verbs such as *pensar* and *notar* invites the reader to identify the sentient qualities of the chairs, but the chair's thoughts reveal their ability to feel emotions. The chairs are not thinking about what is in front of them. Rather, they are focused on an internal preoccupation, specifically where the love of their life may be. Thus, it is evident that the chairs have emotions and can feel a sense of longing and desire for love – a desire so strong that they themselves are unaware of their surroundings and state of being. This quality is one previously denied to the inanimate objects, as declared by Cohn. However, it is a common belief in *Animismo* or Animism, a belief held by many indigenous groups in Latin America, in which all objects are believed to have a soul and life of their own.²⁸ The physical characteristics of the chairs, then, are less important than the ability to be self-aware and thus self-consumed. This line of thought takes the idea of the capability of

sensitivity and intelligence about human and non-human animals one step further to include previously identified non-sentient, inanimate beings to be sentient.

The structure of “Asientos contiguos” uses ellipsis to invite the reader to speculate about the absent details in the story. A few questions come to mind from this ellipsis: are these sentient characteristics found in all furniture, only in chairs, or in specific types of chairs like *asientos contiguos*? Would the physical characteristics determine or affect these sentient abilities? Would it matter if the chairs were purple, beige, maroon, large, small, or found and/or located in a specific region? Or is the omission of such details a way to imply that such details are unimportant and instead the essence of the story is in the fantastic ability for chairs to feel and think? There are no clear answers to these questions, as the entirety of the *microrrelato* does not provide context or further information. Therefore, the reader is left to question the possibility of intelligent and sentient inanimate objects, while considering why humans have been deemed the only animals and objects given this ability.

In “N,” Chimal gives life to a statue, for it is ever so slowly escaping. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

N

La estatua se está escapando. Muy, muy despacio (100).

Fixed, inanimate structures, are understood to be incapable of movement, but this statue is able to *escapar*. The statue is given this ability and property – although it is noted to be a very slow one – which implies the possibility of free-will, movement, and a desire for freedom. Again, Chimal uses this brief form to focus on the action of the story, in this case

the ability of movement given to an inanimate object, and chooses to omit description of the statue. Additionally, Chimal chose the verb *escapar* rather than move or run. This verb, *escapar*, instills the possibility of feelings of fear, restriction, and entrapment, which may motivate one to escape. The ellipsis in “N” questions the motives and abilities of the statue. If a rock does not care to be parted in two, for it is not a conscious being – as Cohn pointed out in her article – then why would a statue, a non-conscious being, feel the need to escape? If the statue were indeed impartial, it would not move, nor have the impulse to abandon its current position. Chimal demonstrates this need through the animation of the statue. If the statue can escape, there must be an underlying feeling or reasoning the statue has in order to take this action. The statue, then, must be a sentient being, capable of desire, emotion, and movement.

There are other *microrrelatos* in *83 Novelas* in which objects and the space around them are given a voice. In “«Politesse» 6,” a mask, that is not hiding a face, greets the reader/narrator with a “buenas noches.” Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

«Politesse» 6

Buenas noches, dijo (con dificultad) la máscara que no escondía rostro (61).

Yet again, the physical description of the mask is omitted and instead emphasis is given to the mask’s ability to speak. Although it speaks “con dificultad,” the mask greets an ambiguous other, raising the question, with whom or what is the mask speaking? Is the mask greeting another face-less mask, a human, animal, or object? Do all masks in this Chimalean universe have the ability to speak? Or has the mask been enchanted? The

extremely brief narrative does not elaborate on these questions, instead it invites the reader to contemplate these questions for themselves. However, given the amount of work that Chimal has published dealing with this topic, it appears that all inanimate objects in the Chimalean universe have the ability to think, interact, and emote. It is not merely the human character that has the privilege to think, speak, or feel, but all objects, with or without physical forms, that may have these abilities.

In *83 Novelas*, in the *microrrelato* “Fractura,” Chimal does not give life to an object, or even language to a non-human animal, but rather gives voice to a space, more specifically, to the space, the crack, between the bookcase and the wall. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Fractura

Buenas noches, dice el espacio entre el librero y la pared. Es raro: quien habla suele ser el hueco tras la puerta del baño (26).

In this *microrrelato*, the space greets the reader/narrator with a “buenas noches,” much like the mask does in “«Politesse» 6.” However, the narrator emphasizes that it is not usual that this space speaks, and not because it is a space without form that speaks, but rather because it is the space behind the bathroom door that usually does. The space itself has no physical characteristics, for it is in the abstract, but it does have a location – it is between the bookshelf and the wall. This location is important because it differentiates this space from other spaces in the house. This characterizes the spaces as different entities, rather than one large, voiceless, empty space. Each space is able to communicate individually with the narrator of the story. The spaces cannot be the same entity, having simply moved to a

different location in the house, because the narrator refers to the space as being a different *quien*. This implies the existence of conscious, speaking, spaces within the house. Not only can inanimate objects have sentience, but bodiless objects can as well.

This strangeness is common in the horror or fantastic genres, but is usually explained by some supernatural experience, or by some inner-story logic. In “Fractura,” there is no explanation to the fantastic ability given to the space, rather a general acceptance of its ability as normal and expected.²⁹ The narrator does not elaborate on how or why the spaces speak to her/him/it, but the narrator is not frightened nor surprised by this ability, showing a sense of normality – at least in the world that he/it/she lives. In the horror or fantastic genres, the ability of a speaking-space is cause for alarm, because it is not normal or accepted in our anthropocentric society. This reiterates the assumed inability of consciousness of spaces and inanimate objects within our reality, further exemplifying how Chimal’s use of these abilities in his inanimate characters questions this anthropocentric assumption.

Chimal continues to question the assumption of assumed unconsciousness in inanimate objects in many of his other publications as well. In *Grey* (2006), the *microrrelato* “Siempre” gives feelings to all of the objects in the story. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Siempre

– De todos es, en verdad, el matrimonio – dijo el paste.

– Sí, sí – replicaron las arras.

– No cabe duda – agregó la llave de la *suite* nupcial.

La hermana de la novia (para quien ningún hombre había sido lo bastante bueno) sólo asintió, conmovida.

– Siempre estaremos juntos – dijo el anillo grande.

– Siempre – repitió el pequeño.

Las nueces de la bolsa (se deslizan subrepticamente en el equipaje para apoyar los dispendios de vigor de la “primera noche”, tan celebrada por los vates y los padres de los vates) temblaron de emoción.

– Todos estos años – gritó, de pronto, el tío del novio, aquel que siempre lo había visto como su propio hijo, más aún, como su hermano, más. Él tenía algunas dudas, pero se unió a los demás cuando la feliz pareja entró por la puerta de la iglesia y todos se les echaron encima, como desde lo más alto del contento. Él órgano ahogó los gritos con su música (Chimal, *Grey* 71).

The wedding rings, bows, wedding coins, the key to the nuptial suite, the cake and wedding nuts all communicate openly; each of the objects rejoice in the wedding alongside the family members (71). Similar to the *microrrelatos* in *83 Novelas*, these common wedding objects do not require a description. What is instead identified are the feelings, actions, and

abilities of these typically inanimate wedding objects and foods. The act of rejoicing requires one to have emotions and the ability to identify and express them; giving this act to inanimate objects animates and gives them voice, raising them to the sentient level of the human. Again, this invites the reader to question the ability of thought and emotion in inanimate objects, without removing that ability from the human subject. Both the human and non-human can be sentient; the ability in one, does not remove the ability in the other.

In another collection of short stories by Chimal, *Éstos son los días* (2004), many objects are sentient and emotive as well. In various short stories, there are beds that have the ability to speak, move, and teleport the recurring character Horacio Kustos. In the short story “Clínica Ellis, Keetmanshoop (Namibia),” in the section “Camas de Horacio Kustos,” there is one bed in particular that houses the spirits of those who died lying in the bed. This bed becomes so influential for a young girl – who spent weeks recovering in the bed after a terrible accident – that she returned to buy the bed so that it could travel with her. The beds in this collection have varying abilities, but they each interact with the human characters in a way that shows their opinions, knowledge, and emotions. Once again equalizing or raising the objects inherent value and abilities to those of the human character.

In the short story titled “Veinte de robots” included in the anthology *Siete: los mejores relatos de Alberto Chimal* (2012), the author compiles 20 *microrrelatos* about robots, their consciousness, their feelings, and their life with and without humans, further exploring non-human forms and their sentient and conscious existence apart from human life. The continual use of movement, emotions, consciousness, and sentience in inanimate objects, throughout Chimal’s publications, shows a recurring ecocentric theme within his

work. These Chimalean objects invite the reader to question the human's sentient ability and to reevaluate objects and non-human animals' worth and abilities.

Just as objects and spaces have sentience, non-human animals are also given the same qualities in Chimal's publications. In *83 Novelas*, many non-human animals are central characters who experience pain, frustration, and happiness, attempt to overcome obstacles, and contemplate their own existence. In two *microrrelatos*, titled "Futbol 1" and "Futbol 2," ants face the difficulty of being football players.³⁰ In the first *microrrelato*, the footballer ants cannot figure out how to head butt the ball, nor how to move the ball in any other way. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Futbol 1

Las hormigas futbolistas no han resuelto el problema de cabecear el balón.

Ni de moverlo de cualquier otro modo (46).

Though the human is present in this *microrrelato*, due to the presence of the man-made object –the ball – the ants are the ones that have become footballers. This could imply that the ants exist around a football that has been left behind by humans, either temporarily or permanently – implying misplaced man-made objects in the natural world or implying human extinction – and are imitating human interactions, having emerged from their anthills in search of entertainment. This second possibility would imply that the ants have progressed past their existence of survival and into an evolved and sophisticated society allowing for the exploration of desires and extracurricular activities or sports. As the second *microrrelato* will show us, the ants, in *83 Novelas*, are indeed looking for a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

In “Futbol 2,” the ants play alongside an opening match in an attempt to search for the creation of consciousness. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Futbol 2

A la hora del partido inaugural, 22 hormigas jugarán uno “paralelo” en la misma cancha. Su sacrificio, dicen, busca crear conciencia (35).

This implies that the ants are aware of human interactions and seek a more meaningful and fulfilling life. These ants struggle in their attempt to be human and participate in a sport in which the ball is 1000xs larger than them, but they choose to do so, implying a conscious act and decision, and a level of intelligence equal to the human footballers.

Similar to the previously mentioned objects, these *microrrelatos* do not describe the ants’ physical forms; the ants could be weaver ants, fire ants, bullet ants, carpenter ants, or any number of species of ant, but Chimal chooses not to specify their species or characteristics. The size of the ants is also not identified. The ants could be real-life ants that we are familiar with today or they could be gigantic radioactive ants the size of humans or larger, but, again, the author refrains from adding any supernatural or natural description to the ants. Instead, the reader can imagine whatever type of ant they wish, for the important aspect is not their size nor species. Rather, their ability and desire to play football and to search for consciousness. Additionally, the ants are playing a “paralelo,” a game alongside the inaugural match. This placement of the ants’ game, alongside that of the humans, also aligns them with the human. This placement implies a parallel existence between the ants and humans, where the ants are also sentient, emotive beings, capable of recreational or competitive sports.

“Pathos” is a story where a fly is artistic and creative enough to find the exact words to speak of its beautiful and tragic life, just before being squashed. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Pathos

En el instante en que la aplastan, la mosca acaba de dar con las palabras justas para contar la belleza y la tragedia de su vida (51).

Again, the human presence could be assumed, or perhaps those that squash the fly are other beings – other animals that crush or eat flies or some object in the world that happened to fall and squish the fly. The exact nature of the fly’s demise is ambiguous and open-ended, but the striking aspect of the story is not the fly being squashed. Rather, it is the fly being eloquent and artistic, capable of recounting his/her life-story. And not just that, the fly is aware of his/her life, and capable of identifying beauty and tragedy to be able to recount these aspects of his/her life before being smashed, by something. This self-awareness and ability to distinguish trivial and important life-events is something usually reserved for humans, and although it has been thought that other species are capable of complex thoughts, emotions, and even song or art, it is rare and odd that these characteristics would be attributed to flies.³¹ The title, “Pathos,” also redirects the reader’s preconceived notions of the fly, identifying the fly’s death as something tragic. The *microrrelato* invites the reader to question the hierarchy of living beings, to reconsider their own anthropocentric views, and to pity the fly, drawing attention to the fly’s existence – an existence that is just as meaningful, beautiful, and tragic to that of human life.

In an ecocentric worldview it would not be necessary to draw attention to or attribute sentience to flies or other non-human animals and objects, because their inherent value would already be known, understood, and accepted. It would not be surprising or noteworthy that a fly is capable of being artistic and experiencing tragedy in his/her life. However, from an anthropocentric perspective, these qualities are both surprising and cause for contemplation. The implications of sentience in non-human beings challenges the hierarchy that is established in an anthropocentric society and questions that hierarchy.

In two other stories by Chimal, found in *Grey* and *Siete*, the author attributes sentience and belief to coconuts. In the *microrrelato* “El fisiólogo,” as well as in the short story “Navidades alrededor del mundo,” coconuts have identities, consciousness, and the ability to feel, sing, and believe in a higher power. In “El fisiólogo,” the coconuts have been converted to Christianity by a “minucioso misionero” and await the arrival of Jesus (Chimal, *Grey* 21). Finally, one of the coconut disciples falls to the ground and breaks into pieces, while the others question “¿por qué el buen Dios creó un mundo que permite el mal?” (Chimal, *Grey* 21). In “Navidades alrededor del mundo,” the coconuts also refer to themselves as disciples and are described as “individuos sumamente amables e inofensivos” by the traveling journalist who has come to their island to visit them over Christmas. The coconuts invite the visitor to pray and sing with them, and, upon his departure, wish him a “feliz año nuevo” (Chimal, *Siete* 234). The act of singing and praying identifies the coconuts as conscious beings, but the ability to believe in a higher power and devote their lives to that higher power, indicates thought, judgement, and faith. The coconuts do not simply repeat what the missionary taught them, but they believe and worship independently,

even questioning their God. Additionally, the coconuts exist independently and alongside humans, interacting with them – through prayer and song – and independently through self-evaluation and thought. These *microrrelatos* about sentient coconuts, offer an opposing view to the accepted and dominant anthropocentric one. Chimal creates literary worlds in which all objects and animals are sentient and emotive beings, thus creating an ecocentric focus in his works overall, repeatedly questioning the hierarchy of thought and value imposed on non-human animal and non-human non-animal entities.

This is by no means the first time that animals, or even objects, have had the ability to speak in narrative works; talking animals have been present in fables, biblical stories, and oral traditions throughout many different cultures and periods; there are even entire genres dedicated to sentient plants, called Botanical Fiction, and to animals, called Bestiaries.³² Animal representations in popular books and films, such as Harry Potter and Alice in Wonderland, and in children's stories throughout time (Mother Goose, Humpty Dumpty, The Three Little Pigs, and more), do not speak for themselves, rather speak and represent humans to teach lessons to the reader. These humans – represented as animals – teach the reader through representation, mirroring and emphasizing human characteristics to draw attention to positive or negative human behaviors. In these stories, the animals are representations of humans; they do not have an identity, nor tell their own stories.

Benoît Duteurtre remarks on this trend as well, noting that the:

mirror game between man and animal goes back to the beginning of time, from Aesop's fables to those of La Fontaine, from Reynard the Fox to

George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. An old recourse of the imagination, it animates the talking animals of Tex Avery or Walt Disney: those pigs in butchers' smocks and dogs in police uniforms. But the old world of Chantecler and d'Ysengrin is also perpetuated by other portrayals of the human barnyard in the plays of Molière or the novels of Balzac: authors primarily attached to the comedy of characters, the struggle for meagre fare, the pecking, the daily pains, and farces. [...] Proust, too, observes this theater of creatures so like fish in a fishbowl (Duteurtre 872).

As I have mentioned, he sees the mirror effect of animal representation. Different animals are used for different symbolic representations of humans. Wolves are usually associated with sneaky and dangerous people, foxes with those of sly and clever behavior, owls with those of wisdom, pigs with those who are dirty and disgusting, snakes are represented as evil and contorted, rabbits as innocent and simple, and the list continues.³³ One difference that we see in Chimal's work is that the spaces, statues, and animals do not exist to teach us about ourselves through direct representation, but are given a voice to explore their own lives, situations, feelings, and language. It is difficult to deny that our creation of these objects and animals is not, in at least some way, reflective of ourselves, for we tend to remain in a perpetual cycle of anthropomorphism.³⁴ However, the representation of sentient objects, plants, and animals is changing as more Botanical Fiction and authors like Chimal are giving voice to them.³⁵

Chimal presents the idea of equality among objects, plants, animals, and humans in other books as well. In *Gente del mundo* (1998), Chimal recreates an archive of past

civilizations as a commentary on the classification and study of indigenous populations currently being done in the field of anthropology. Although this work as a whole does not directly relate to the topic at hand, the pieces included in the work are short enough to be considered *minificción* and, in various *microrrelatos* within the compilation, the idea of equality among all things is evident.

In “Las cosas propias,” a *microrrelato* in *Gente del mundo*, Chimal writes “piedras y diamantes, astillas y sedas, ratas muertas y sabrosos frutos, todo es para ellos [los tenghanos (Los Que Tenemos)] igualmente precioso” (27). Here one can see the beginning of an idea, an idea that each object, animal, fruit, and otherwise are equally valuable in their own light. Graciela Monges Nicolau observes:

Los seres y los objetos adquieren una cualidad fantástica cuando se observa en ellos alguna especie de comportamiento poco acorde con su calidad normal, pero esos mismos seres y objetos pueden tener un significado totalmente inocente o inocuo cuando aparecen en otras situaciones (Gordon 41).

Monges Nicolau applies an element of the fantastic to the objects in order to explain their ability to talk and participate in the human world, and notes the *armonía* among all things in *Gente del mundo*. This ability is what Chimal uses in order to bring equality to all things – humans and non-humans alike. As seen in the previous *microrrelatos* from *83 Novelas*, this representation of objects questions anthropocentric perspectives, because the quality

is not attributed to the objects through fantastic abilities given to them. Rather, the objects and non-human animals inherently have these abilities.

This concept is further explored in the short story “Armonía del mundo,” another story in *Gente del mundo*, in which, not only are all things equal, but all things are conscious beings. The story opens with this statement:

Los tengo levings [Los Que Somos Amigos] creen que todo (los animales, las plantas, la gente, las cosas... pero también los hechos, las ideas, el transcurrir del tiempo, aun los estados diversos del cuerpo y el alma), todo posee una voluntad secreta capaz de bondades y daños. [...] Todo es consciente, todo es capaz de acción, todo es aciago o propicio según su propio deseo (*Gente del mundo* 70).

This passage reveals Chimal’s perspective of non-human life and explains his many representations of objects, plants, and animals in *83 Novelas* and other short stories and *microrrelatos*. These objects are not seen as having fantastic abilities, rather these characteristics are part of the Chimallean universe. The characters within the *microrrelatos* are not surprised by the abilities of these objects or the equality among them, it is merely part of their world – as seen in “Fractura” when the narrator of the story is not surprised, nor in fear, that the space can speak to her/him/it. Again, these characteristics are not fantastic at all, rather they are innate abilities that all objects have. As with the mask in “Factura,” there is no alarm, questioning, or disagreement with the sentience of objects, rather an acceptance of the ecocentric perspective.

One *microrrelato* from *83 Novelas* that touches on the ability for all things to be sentient is “Neurosis.” In this *microrrelato*, a skeleton and soul communicate with one another without the consultation of the owner of their physical forms. The two, separate, and conscious parts exist apart from the human forms they inhabit. One even expresses that their analyst believes the two to be incompatible. This could imply the input of the human in which it inhabits, or it could imply that the world in which these two conscious parts live is just as complex as the human’s. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Neurosis

El esqueleto de él besuquea al alma de ella. De pronto se detiene. – Mi analista – dice – cree que no somos compatibles (31).

The striking aspect of this *microrrelato* is the skeleton – an entity which is generally accepted as inanimate and non-sentient – that is capable of emotions and desires and who has his own conscience, similar to the way that “Armonía en el mundo” describes is possible.

Additionally, if skeletons and souls have a conscience of their own and exist apart from their human counterparts, it is not surprising that phantoms, spirits, and the dead have their own presence in the Chimallean universe as well.³⁶ In many of the *microrrelatos* of *83 Novelas* the spiritual world is represented; among a few of them are “Uno 2,” “Biología 3,” “La cita 2,” “Ada 3,” and “Z.” In these *microrrelatos* phantoms, spirits, and the dead communicate and participate in the world, speaking directly with humans, and partying, playing, and existing among, alongside, or around the living. This perspective, one of a world in which all beings, inanimate, non-human, and human, coexist, is common in Latin

America as well as in non-occidental cultures.³⁷ The union of the two worlds is not only common and accepted, but also esteemed and deemed highly important to human existence.³⁸ Therefore, it is expected that this aspect would appear in Chimal's narratives. However, his idea and perspective is extended to objects, plants, animals, and abstract ideas and space, in which all things are sentient and communicative.³⁹

The following question remains: what is the role of the human character in the Chimalean universe? Human characters are not the focus in *83 Novelas*, as seen in their lack of dominance as a central character throughout the work; nevertheless, they are still of importance in Chimal's work – the human character is indeed a difficult one to avoid. In *83 Novelas*, Chimal plays with human consciousness and existence in many of his short stories and shows their infinitesimal presence in the vast universe.⁴⁰ However, there is one particular *microrrelato* in this collection that hints at anthropocentrism, “La prueba.” Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

La prueba

Esperó un segundo con los ojos cerrados. Los abrió: como todas las veces anteriores, el mundo volvió a existir instantáneamente (25).

This *microrrelato*, with its ambiguous subject, is difficult to translate and is open for interpretation.⁴¹ If one chooses the subject to be male or female and imply that it is human, then one could assume that the story implies that the world only exists “when that subject opens their eyes,” making that subject the center and creator of the universe. If one chooses the subject to be an ambiguous “it,” it could imply that the subject is not human, but rather an animal, machine, plant, or object, making that subject the center of existence and creator

of the world. If one chooses to refrain from assigning a subject at all, then it could be interpreted that this is “God” – or the equivalent of a “great creator” – and only whilst alert and with eyes open does the world and all its contents exist, as a mere thought, idea and/or vision of its creator. As it stands, the story is very open to interpretation; nevertheless, it questions who or what is the center of the world and universe.⁴² Chimal creates a world that accepts and embraces the human and the non-human, the living and the dead, the spiritual and the non-spiritual as all having an equally important and unimportant place in the world.

Additionally, parallel universes, supernatural beings, and a cyclical and infinite time are other aspects that decentralize the human figure in these *microrrelatos*. These Chimalean ideas could be viewed as an alternative perspective, in contrast with the concept of a unique and linear existence.⁴³ By placing human beings in a parallel universe and infinite and cyclical time, Chimal removes the human character from the anthropocentric role, and places it in a universe or environment where it is not the central focus nor in a role of power.

A few of the *microrrelatos* that discuss this infinite and cyclical time are: “Suicidio,” “Plaza,” and “Espiritual 7.” In these *microrrelatos*, time is cyclical and never-ending. In “Suicidio,” the protagonist waits an eternity, minus a few years, to impede his/her own conception. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Suicidio

Como el universo se repite, le bastó esperar la eternidad menos unos años para impedir aquel coito de sus padres (20).

The opening line explicitly states “el universo se repite” (20). The *microrrelato* may seem negative as the opening line indicates the possibility of waiting an eternity to prevent the subject’s own existence, but a cyclical-time-model is established. In a linear-time-model the act of preventing one’s parent’s coitus would not be possible, in fact, it would be inconceivable. In relation to the text as a whole, it is noteworthy that the main character is in control of his/her own existence and has the power to wait and interfere with his/her own procreation and existence. This appears to give power to a human protagonist to affect and interfere with the world, but, again, the protagonist is ambiguous. Although it could easily be determined that the protagonist is human – as suicide and parents tend to be associated with human behavior and existence –, it is still possible that, given the ecocentric Chimalean universe we have encountered thus far, the protagonist is non-human.

The protagonist is debatable; nevertheless, the repetitive nature of the universe is not. The beginning of the *microrrelato* identifies the universe as a repetitive force. However, if the universe is cyclical, then how could any being – human or not – control any aspect of his/her own existence? Would this defy the idea of a powerless protagonist who only exists for a brief moment? Or does it support the possibility of one’s control over one’s own existence and undermine the cyclical nature of the universe? Even though the ideas seem to be incompatible, they are not. The universe is presented as cyclical, but it is not specified that each cycle will be identical to the last. Indeed, it is possible that the

universe's cycle could vary slightly or altogether. This reiterates the idea of the universe being ever-lasting and cyclical, while presenting the idea that its beings are finite.

“Plaza” also begins by setting up a cyclical world in which time passed, then passed again, and by the third time the character acted out the scene depicted in this *microrrelato*.

Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Plaza

Pasó el tiempo.

Pasó otra vez.

A la tercera fue a gritarme que yo era un patán, que se había puesto ese vestido sólo para mí (68).

This *microrrelato*, similar to “El suicidio,” appears to portray a human protagonist in control of his own destiny and each life as he comes to live it, but it is not evident. If ants can play football and search for greater consciousness, masks without faces and abstract spaces can talk, and chairs can long for love, then why couldn't a non-human declare that it was a “patán” and choose to wear a dress? Yet again, we find an ambiguous character stuck in the infinite and cyclical universe.

In these two *microrrelatos* the concept of time is non-linear. These stories indicate that time is cyclical and place humans inside this time-frame in correspondence to their own moment of existence. In “Suicidio” it is not clear whether an eternity includes other human existence or is nothing but mere darkness until the character returns – this is left for the reader to interpret – but it does show, in a Chimalean world at least, that humans exist

within the cyclical structure of the universe – a structure they cannot affect or control. The human characters, then, can only affect their particular existence, and not the overall cyclical time-line of the universe.

In other *microrrelatos*, Chimal presents a world of spirits, phantoms, and the dead reunited alongside our world, implying that death is more than a darkness of eternity or limbo in which one must wait until their time comes again, begging the question: does each sentient being – human or not – exist eternally in various forms along with the universe? In many of the *microrrelatos* it is unclear what happens to the human and non-human protagonists after death, but there are a few which discuss the possibility of life after death, either by reliving life, being reincarnated, or existing as a spirit.

In “Espiritual 7,” the cyclical time is more complex. Instead of the idea of a mere cyclical, non-changing time, the idea of reincarnation is presented. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Espiritual 7

Renacidos en la muerte, los humanos reciben como nuevo destino la vida de su peor enemigo. O la de su tía más empalagosa (47).

Chimal uses humor in the last line of this *microrrelato* while presenting the idea of reincarnation after death. More specifically, in this scenario, humans could be reincarnated as their worst enemy, or their most sickeningly sweet aunt. If time is cyclical and humans are reincarnated or repeat their lives in the grand never-ending timeline of the universe,

then they are by no means the center of the world, much less the center of the universe. Rather, humans are but mere beings, equal to plants, animals, objects, and ideas.

If humans do not have control or influence in the vast history of the universe, they are no more and no less important than any of the other characters Chimal has created. The human and non-human characters in this *microrrelato* are equally important and unimportant in comparison with the universe. Nevertheless, they are not completely powerless – some may be condemned to living the life of their “tía más empalagosa,” while others may choose to impede their own existence. Ultimately it will not matter much, as the universe will inevitably repeat itself and continue to do so indefinitely. All things are conscious, important, and but a mere speck in the vast unknown universe. This idea draws attention to the flaws of anthropocentrism, because ultimately, all beings, inanimate, non-human, and human, are equally insignificant in the perspective of the universe.

Chimal is not the only writer creating stories such as these. Science fiction often uses these topics to create new and exciting perspectives on the human existence within different galaxies. The horror genre relies on spirits and talking objects and spaces to create terror in their stories. Children’s literature uses talking animals to portray their message and represent humans in various animal forms. However, Chimal’s ability to use these ideas in *minificción*, creating worlds in two lines or less, is impressive. Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* took nearly 100 pages to develop, yet in two sentences Chimal creates and destroys an entire world with the blink of an eye.

The brief, captivating form of *minificción* invites the reader to explore worlds, concepts, and ideas in which the human character is not the only sentient, conscious being that has an important place in this world. Chimal creates this ecocentric universe in 83 *Novelas* through the representation of objects, spaces, animals, and humans as sentient emotive beings and through a lack of human-dominant narrative. This ecocentric Chimallean universe questions anthropocentric views while using the microscopic form of *minificción*. Through his use of *minificción*, Chimal represents non-human characters through a minute literary form. This reduction in form reflects the reduction of non-human characters in an anthropocentric perspective. By reducing the form to match the preconceived notions of relevance and importance of the non-human characters, Chimal once again draws attention to the immense inequality between humans and non-humans. However, Chimal's restructuring of the human to non-human hierarchy extends much further than the texts themselves, as do his *microrrelatos*, which expand in the minds of the reader.

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Appendices: Protagonist Charts for 83 *Novelas*

Appendix 1.1

Non-Human Protagonists in 83 *Novelas*

Title of <i>microrrelato</i>	Name or type of Protagonist
Geografía	Los (ciudades sobre la cama)
Asientos contiguos	Asientos contiguos
Fractura	El espacio entre el librero y la pared
Biología 10	Seres diáfanos
Neurosis	El esqueleto y el alma
Vida real	Las malas historias
Natural 2	Las perlas de la virgen
Futbol 2	22 hormigas
Todo saldrá bien	El doctor (con 3 brazos)
Libros	Los libros de tierra y Los libros de agua
Libros	Los libros de fuego y Los libros de aire
Futbol 1	Las hormigas futbolistas
Pathos	La mosca
«Politesse» 6	La máscara que no escondía rostro
*Lo moderno	Luna, la cédula
*Ermitaño	Vivía precariamente entre dos letras
*Aventuras (75)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo
*Aventuras (76)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo, la TV
*Aventuras (77)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo, la gente
*Aventuras (78)	Un equipo de exploradores, dinosaurio, yo
*Aventuras (79)	Un equipo de exploradores, la niña de mis ojos, yo
*Aventuras (80)	Un equipo de exploradores, Julio Verne, yo
*Aventuras (81)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo
*Aventuras (82)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo
*Aventuras (83)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo, enemigos, pérdidas
*Aventuras (84)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo
*Para qué 5	Las claves
*Proveerán	Los rezos, Dios
N	La estatua
	*Contains multiple types of protagonists

Appendix 1.2

Human Protagonists in 83 Novelas

Title of <i>microrrelato</i>	Name or type of Protagonist
Crawl	El nadador
Imperfecciones	Lisa, Alma, Luz, Mía
Espiritual 7	Los humanos (renacidos)
*Espiritual 2	Jesús, los diablos
Fin	El último hombre en el mundo
«Politesse» 4	Ellos, personas de tu familia...
Para qué 8	6661 personas
*Aventuras (77)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo, la gente
*Aventuras (80)	Un equipo de exploradores, Julio Verne, yo
Esperó nueve meses...	(a human gestation cycle)
Crónica	Una mujer, yo
*Espiritual 13	La Virgen del Completo
*Espiritual 14	La Virgen del Cristal
*Espiritual 15	La Virgen de los Locos
	*Contains multiple types of protagonists

Appendix 1.3

Mythical Protagonists in 83 *Novelas*

Title of <i>microrrelato</i>	Name or type of Protagonist
La cita	Judith, Perseo, Holofernes

Appendix 1.4

Literary Protagonists in 83 Novelas

Title of <i>microrrelato</i>	Name or type of Protagonist
La cita 2	Annabel Lee, Dorotea
*Love Craft (o: La cita 3)	Love Craft, el autor, el dios primordial
	*Contains multiple types of protagonists

Appendix 1.5

Spiritual Protagonists in 83 Novelas

Title of <i>microrrelato</i>	Name or type of Protagonist
Biología 3	Los ángeles
Uno 2	Los fantasmas, yo
Anuncio	Creador fatigado
*Espiritual 2	Jesús, los diablos
*Espiritual 5	Las devotas, el predicador, él, demonios
*Espiritual 4	Las devotas, el predicador, los demonios
*Espiritual 8	Las devotas, el predicador, los demonios
*Espiritual 9	1st/3rd person singular imperfect, Dios
*Love Craft (o: La cita 3)	Love Craft, el autor, el dios primordial
*Espiritual 13	La Virgen del Completo
*Espiritual 14	La Virgen del Cristal
*Espiritual 15	La Virgen de los Locos
*Para qué 6	Tú, (texto sagrado de todas las religiones)
*Proveerán	Los rezos, Dios
*Z	Los hijos de los muertos, los vivos
	*Contains multiple types of protagonists

Appendix 1.6

Absent or Non-Specified Protagonists in 83 Novelas

Title of <i>microrrelato</i>	Name or type of Protagonist
Para qué 8	Absent Protagonist
*Lo moderno	Luna, la cédula
*Para qué 5	Las claves
*Proveerán	Los rezos, Dios
	*Contains multiple types of protagonists

Appendix 1.7

Ambiguous Protagonists in 83 Novelas

Title of <i>microrrelato</i>	Name or type of Protagonist
Leyenda	Los, ellos, uno
Oracular	Tú
Cuento infantil	Yo, amigos
Antropología 1	Los miembros de la meta-secta
Antropología 2	Aquella otra secta
Antropología 3	Aquella secta
Suicidio	Le
Patología 2	El caníbal
Uno	Yo (fui)
El narrador	El narrador, un crítico
La prueba	3rd person singular (esperó)
Cosmología 8	Los pobladores
Ada	Yo, las muchas que no fui
*Espiritual 5	Las devotas, el predicador, él, demonios
*Espiritual 4	Las devotas, el predicador, los demonios
*Espiritual 8	Las devotas, el predicador, los demonios
Antropología 6	Los barsu (invented people/creatures)
Espiritual 11	3rd person singular preterite (cayó...)
Espiritual 10	1st/3rd person singular imperfect (caía...)
*Espiritual 9	1st/3rd person singular imperfect, Dios
Brutalidad	3rd person singular preterite, policia
Plagio	A, B, C
Sorpresa	El naufrago (la mano)
El engaño	3rd person singular, el otro, ella
Plazo	Yo
Indivisos	"fueron uno los dos"
*Ermitaño	Vivía precariamente entre dos letras
X	Los sueños, nadie, una voz
*Aventuras (75)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo
*Aventuras (76)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo, la TV
*Aventuras (77)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo, la gente

Appendix 1.7 cont.

Ambiguous Protagonists in 83 Novelas continued

Title of <i>microrrelato</i>	Name or type of Protagonist
*Aventuras (78)	Un equipo de exploradores, dinosaurio, yo
*Aventuras (79)	Un equipo de exploradores, la niña de mis ojos, yo
*Aventuras (80)	Un equipo de exploradores, Julio Verne, yo
*Aventuras (81)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo
*Aventuras (82)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo
*Aventuras (83)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo, enemigos, pérdidas...
*Aventuras (84)	Un equipo de exploradores, yo
Tarde	Command form, tú/usted
Desenlace	1st person plural (podremos)
Cosmología 10	Ustedes, absent narrator
*Para qué 6	Tú, (texto sagrado de todas las religiones)
Oracular 1	Tú, absent narrator
*Z	Los hijos de los muertos, los vivos
*Contains multiple types of protagonists	

Endnotes

¹ In this chapter, as outlined in the introduction, I will use the terms *microtexts*, *minificción*, and *microrrelatos* as David Lagmanovich defines them. Lagmanovich states that *microtexts* are brief forms that are not literary, using the examples of graffiti, publicity, newscasts, and commentary (Lagmanovich 23). He then distinguishes *minificción* by stating that it consists of brief forms that are fictional (24). Finally, he specifies that *microrrelatos* are *minificción* “cuyo rasgo predominante es la **narratividad**” (26). There are many synonyms and varying debates on each specific term for *minificción*. For further reading see Lauro Zavala’s “Glosario para el estudio de la minificción,” Dolores M. Koch’s article “El micro-relato en México: Torri, Arreola, Monterroso y Avilés Fabila,” Henry González Martínez’ *La minificción en el siglo XXI: aproximaciones teóricas*, Ángeles Encinar and Carmen Valcárcel’s *Más por menos: Antología de microrrelatos hispánicos actuales*, Irene Andres-Suárez’ *Antología de microrrelatos español (1906 – 2011)*, Cristina Álvares’ article “Nouveaux genres littéraires urbains en français,” Catuxa Seoane’s article “Del papel a la web: nuevas formas de lectura, escritura, y acceso a la información,” Javier Perucho’s *El cuento jíbaro: Antología del microrrelato Mexicano*, and the web database <http://cuentoenred.xoc.uam.mx/>.

² Gisela Heffes defines anthropocentrism as the idea that there is “superioridad a los hombres respecto a la naturaleza (por ejemplo, en la posesión de una alma inmortal o de racionalidad)” (Heffes 15). Luc Ferry argues that anthropocentrism maintains the human figure at the center and negates intrinsic value to any other object or thing outside of its own species, and argues that all beings which can feel deserve equal consideration (Ferry). I use this definition in order to show the ecocentrism in Chimal’s writing, as he attributes reason, souls, and other characteristics to non-human entities that are usually reserved for humans.

Boris Zeide defines ecocentrism as the proclamation “that all entities (including humans) should have the freedom to unfold in their own way, and fully realize their inherent potential, unhindered by human domination” and that “ecocentrism enhances and expands upon the most cherished values: unselfishness, justice, and equality” (Zeide 121). Lawrence Buell defines ecocentrism within literary studies as “the environmentally oriented study of literature and (less often) the arts more generally, and to the theories that underlie such critical practice” (Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* 138). I use the term ecocentrism to mean equality among human and non-human entities, and identify said equality in Alberto Chimal’s writing.

³ Alberto Chimal’s website and the location of digital publication of *83 Novelas* is www.lashistorias.com.mx (Chimal, “Las Historias”).

⁴ It is currently unknown how many copies have been downloaded via the website and through other forms as the work is still being shared through other websites, e-mail, and PDF files.

⁵ The breakdown of each section is as follows: “Muchedumbre (1)” contains 26 *microrrelatos*, “Libros” contains four, “Muchedumbre (2)” contains 28, “Aventuras” contains 10, and “Muchedumbre (3)” contains 15. The majority of the *microrrelatos* are in the Muchedumbre sections.

⁶ There have been a small number of literary articles analyzing the work of Alberto Chimal. Among them are Samuel Gordon’s compilation of scholarly articles *Mito, fantasía y recepción en la obra de Alberto Chimal*, and articles by Virginia Caamaño M., David Baizabal, Graciela Monges Nicolau, Soad Lozano Peters, and Lorena Campa Rojas. There are also a small number of non-literary sources, such as online articles, blogposts, and interviews. See Lorena Campa Rojas’ bibliography “Bibliohemerografía Razonada” for a complete list prior to 2006 (Gordon).

⁷ Alberto Chimal has published novels, short stories, essays, graphic novels, plays, poetry, and *minificción*. His most recent publication is a long novel, *La torre y el jardín*. His first novel was published in 2009 and is titled *Los esclavos*. He has many short stories published in various anthologies, as well as his own collections of short stories: *Gente de mundo*, *Siete: Los mejores relatos de Alberto Chimal*, *El último explorado*, *Mando fuego*, *Éstos son los días*, and many others. He has also published three collections of *minificción*: *83 Novelas*, *El Viajero del tiempo*, and *El gato del viajero de tiempo*. His essays focus on digital literature and writer’s workshops on how to write short stories. He has published three graphic novels which focus on his recurring character, Horacio Kustos: *Horacio en las ciudades*, *Kustos: Libro 1: La puerta Secreta*, and *Kustos: Libro 2: ¡Todos juntos ya!* He has also written plays and books of poetry.

⁸ There are also a small number of non-literary sources, such as online articles, blogposts, and interviews. See Lorena Campa Rojas’ bibliography “Bibliohemerografía Razonada” for a complete list prior to 2006 (Gordon).

⁹ Samuel Gordon and Graciela Monges Nicolau note that *Gente del mundo* was originally published under the title *Vecinos de la tierra* in 1996 by the Ayuntamiento de Toluca, and later, after extensive editing and restructuring, under the name *Gente del mundo* in 1998 and 2001 (Gordon).

¹⁰ Samuel Gordon defines *microrrelatos* as “los cuentos o narraciones con una extensión sensiblemente menor a lo habitual, como es aquí el caso, han despertado en los últimos años nuevas clasificaciones. Una narración breve convencional oscila entre las 2 000 y las 10 000 palabras. Aquellos con una extensión inferior entran en las categorías de *micro* o *minificciones* si poseen un desenlace o epifanía como los cuentos tradicionales o *micro* o

minirrelatos si la narración no se resuelve a manera de cuento. Escogemos entonces dicha nomenclatura [para describir *Gente del mundo*.]” (Gordon 19).

¹¹ Even though Graciela Monges Nicolau uses the term *minitextos* instead of *microrrelatos* it appears that she uses the term in the same manner that Samuel Gordon uses *microrrelatos*.

¹² Samuel Gordon notes that directly below the names of each fictitious civilization in *Gente del mundo* is their direct translation to Spanish. “*Tenghanos*” is one such name which is accompanied by its literal translation “Los Que Tenemos” (Gordon 21).

¹³ Lozano Peters basis his argument on Lauro Zavala’s discussion of *minificción*. Zavala discusses the appearance of the term *minificción* in contemporary literary studies. He writes “el surgimiento del término *minificción* es consecuencia directa de este nuevo contexto de lectura, donde las posibilidades de interpretación de un texto exigen reformular las preceptivas tradicionales y considerar que un género debe ser redefinido en función de los contextos de interpretación en los que cada lector pone en juego su experiencia de lectura (su memoria), sus competencias ideológicas (su visión del mundo) y sus apetitos literarios (aquellos textos con los cuales está dispuesto a comprometer su memoria y a poner en riesgo su visión del mundo)” (Zavala, *La Minificción Bajo El Microscopio* 18).

¹⁴ Nelson de Oliveira, a Brazilian writer, has already denoted and labeled this group *Geração Zero Zero*, in his anthology *Geração Zero Zero: Fricções em rede*, when referring to authors born in the 1970s who publish their major works in 2000 and after. Alberto Chimal is a part of the Generation Zero Zero.

¹⁵ Lauro Zavala refers to *Gente del mundo* as one of many “novelas formadas por minificciones integradas” in his article “El Cuento Mexicano Contemporáneo” and also lists the work as one of “una docena de títulos de minificción” (Zavala, *Cartografías del cuento y la minificción* 131).

Zavala defines *minificción* as a genre of its own, which is distinguishable from other genres for its “extension, la cual afecta dramáticamente el empleo de recursos literarios específicos (como la elipsis, la condensación, la alusión, la anáfora y otros). Y, también a diferencia de lo que ocurre en otros géneros, cada texto de minificción suele formar parte de una serie (o puede ser incorporado a una antología genérica), lo cual hace natural que cada texto esté acompañado por otros con extensión similar. Este último determina la naturaleza fractal del género, es decir, la posibilidad de que cada texto pueda formar parte, alternativamente, de varias series textuales” (Zavala, *La minificción bajo el microscopio* 8).

¹⁶ The main topics discussed are memory, loss of ancient cultures, and recreation of Chimal’s mythical world. These topics are discussed in Samuel Gordon’s compiled articles *Mito, fantasía y recepción en la obra de Alberto Chimal*, Kristie Rodríguez’ online article “Gente Del Mundo de Alberto Chimal”, and Héctor González’ interview with Chimal

“Alberto Chimal habla de su nuevo libro *Gente del mundo*: el escritor mexicano reflexiona sobre la memoria y las posibilidades creativas de internet.”

¹⁷ Arturo Jiménez, “Alberto Chimal combina humor y religiosidad en *Grey*” *La Jornada: DEMOS: Desarrollo de Medios* 1996.

¹⁸ Lorena Campa Rojas mentions and critiques a plethora of interviews, articles, and internet posts on Alberto Chimal. Among them she mentions, Héctor Carreto, Marco Aurelio Chávez, Dolores Corrales Soriano, Renato Galicia Miguel, Benjamin García, Fernando Islas, Arturo Jiménez, Iodia Leal, Verónica Lomelí, Agustín Monsreal, Marisela Naranjo, Ricardo Pacheco Colín, Cynthia Palacios Goya, H. Pascal, Federico Patán, Gabriel Roviroso, Guillermo Samperio, and Nahum Torres and Nadia Islas Navarro. She also mentions Carlos Antonio de la Sierra, Irving Ramírez, Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz, and Lauro Zavala for their mention of Chimal in the generation of young Mexican authors born in the 1970s, or as previously defined, the Generation Zero Zero.

¹⁹ The nine things Alberto Chimal asks his reader to consider are:

1. Los mundos narrados son pequeñísimos en la página pero se amplifican en la imaginación.
2. De la misma manera, los personajes tienen toda su vida alrededor (arriba, abajo) de lo que se dice de ellos.
3. No hay que dejarse engañar por las semejanzas entre algunos comienzos o algunos finales, que por lo demás son evidentes en los textos agrupados en las series “Libros” y “Aventuras”. Este tipo de novela pequeñísima tiende a escribirse en series de versiones y variaciones y a refinarse no tachando y agregando, sino desechando el texto entero y volviendo a comenzar.
4. Por esta razón el grueso de las novelas, apodado aquí “Muchedumbre”, tiene historias con títulos numerados de forma aparentemente caótica: son una selección de series en progreso.
5. Las series en progreso son ensayos de diferentes versiones de un mundo, o de muchos mundos diferentes pero cercanos: lo que cuenta es la mutación.
6. Más de cuatro novelistas convencionales se beneficiarían de tirar a la basura, todas juntas, nueve de sus once novelas de 748 páginas; es sólo que no se atreven.
7. ¿No dice usted que las novelas revelan el carácter de quien las escribe? ¿Que se refieren a su tiempo? ¿Que se dejan leer fácilmente?
8. Cosas más feas y farragosas, de menos corazón y peor cabeza, se venden como novelas y usted va y las compra.
9. En el peor de los casos, siempre puede agregar agua y agitar violentamente hasta que salte el tapón y los otros mundos se derramen sobre éste, todos espuma y olor de letras y sonidos visibles.

(Inicial, 83 *Novelas*).

²⁰ *Tuiteratura* or Twitterature was originally defined as an “amalgamation of “twitter” and “literature”; humorous reworkings of literary classics for the twenty-first century intellect, in digestible portions of 20 tweets or fewer” by Alexander Aciman (Aciman and Rensin). However, Twitterature (o *tuiteratura* in Spanish) now defines a much larger corpus of narrative and poetry. Twitterature is now any written work produced in 140 characters or less and published through Twitter (Twitter is a microblogging website that allows its users to post status updates of 140 characters or less.).

²¹ See David Lagmanovich’s *El microrrelato: Teoría e historia*, Javier Perucho’s *El cuento jíbaro: Antología del microrrelato Mexicano*, and the web database <http://cuentoenred.xoc.uam.mx/>, and Dolores M. Koch’s article “El micro-relato en México: Torri, Arreola, Monterroso y Avilés Fabila.”

²² See also Lauro Zavala’s *La minificción bajo el microscopio*, Henry González Martínez’ *La minificción en el siglo XXI: aproximaciones teóricas*, Ángeles Encinar and Carmen Valcárcel’s *Más por menos: Antología de microrrelatos hispánicos actuales*, Irene Andres-Suárez’ *Antología de microrrelatos español (1906 – 2011)*, Cristina Álvares’ article “Nouveaux genres littéraires urbains en français,” Catuxa Seoane’s article “Del papel a la web: nuevas formas de lectura, escritura, y acceso a la información,”

²³ Additionally, Alberto Chimal is part of the Generation Zero Zero which I have used as the basis for choosing which authors to include in this dissertation.

²⁴ Although many of Alberto Chimal’s other publications focus on human characters, this publication is an example of the common topic of the non-human in his writing.

²⁵ Percentages were rounded to the nearest ten.

²⁶ Lawrence Buell defines environmental texts as works that include these four elements: 1) “the non-human 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,” 2) “The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest,” 3) “Human accountability to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation,” and 4) “some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text” (*Imagination* 7).

²⁷ There has been extensive debate concerning meat consumption and our need for meat-based nutrients. For more on this topic see *Should We Eat Meat? Evolution and Consequences of Modern Carnivory* by Vaclav Smil, *Mexico’s Agricultural Dilemma and “Food Resources and Human Needs”* by P. Lamartine Yates, “Meat in the Genes” by Adrian Peace, and *Animal, Vegetable, or Woman?: A Feminist Critique of Ethical Vegetarianism* by Kathryn Paxton George.

²⁸ See Edward B. Tylor's *Primitive culture: researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art and custom*.

²⁹ It could be argued that the spaces are not actually speaking, but that the protagonist is imagining them or projecting inner voices to various shapeless, empty areas about his home. It could then be argued that this voice is linked to hallucinations, paranoia, or even schizophrenia, but I would like to refrain from psychoanalysis.

³⁰ The terms football, footballer, and football player all refer to the European definition of football, also referred to as soccer in the United States. The *microrrelatos* are not referring to the sport of American Football.

³¹ Priscilla Cohn uses the fly as an example of an animal that does not feel pain and thus is a lower-order animal (89).

³² Timothy S. Miller compiled a database for botanical fiction on his webpage *The Fish in Prison* and presented this corpus with his paper "Vegetable Love: Sex, Desire, and Emotion in Botanical Fiction" at the 132nd MLA Annual Convention in January of 2017.

The Bestiary first appeared in medieval literature and has continued to be produced throughout the centuries. A recent Bestiary, titled *Bestias: once cuentos de Gabriela A. Arciniegas*, written by Gabriela A. Arciniegas, was published in 2015 in Colombia. I will be analyzing this Bestiary in the fifth chapter of this dissertation, "Humans to Beasts and Beasts to Humans: Metamorphosis in Gabriela A. Arciniegas."

³³ The Quran also identifies animals that are worthy of our care and others who are dirty or evil, such as the pig and cat. The representation of the snake as evil has been present since Genesis 3 in the Holy Bible. Benoît Duteurtre also notes the hierarchy of animals and their use when representing human characteristics in his article "The Question of the Cow."

³⁴ Anthropomorphism is the thought that animals are psychologically like humans (see *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals*, Mitchell, Thompson, and Miles).

³⁵ Additionally, Stefano Mancuso and Alessandra Viola published a book in 2013, *Verde brillante. Sensibilità e intelligenza del mondo vegetale*, which explores the intelligence, communication, and evolution of plants and the vision we have regarding such intelligence in the plant world.

³⁶ The presence of phantoms, spirits, fantastic beings, and the dead are recurring subjects in the corpus of Chimal. A few examples are "Los salvajes" in the anthology *Festín de muertos*, "The Waterfall" a translation included in the anthology *Flash Fiction International*, and throughout *Gente del mundo*.

³⁷ *Nature Across Cultures* compiles 23 different articles on perspectives on nature in various cultures; it includes articles about indigenous populations and their connections to nature and beliefs about it. The collection includes indigenous cultures from the Amazons, Andean, and American regions (Selin and Kalland). This serves as a reference to their knowledge, understanding, perspective, and representations of nature and how they believe one should live in it. *Disaster Writing* is another resource that speaks of indigenous beliefs about their land and how politicians use natural disasters in a way that reveals their own perspectives on the relationship between humans, animals, and the natural world (Anderson).

³⁸ An example of an article that talks of the importance of the human and natural coexistence in Latin America is “La armonía animal-hombre entre los maya” by de la Garza.

³⁹ Kelly Sultzbach argues that Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, and W. H. Auden also give language to non-human subjects in order to demonstrate their ecocentric values within their literature in her work *Ecocriticism in the modernist imagination: Forster, Woolf, and Auden*. She specifically identifies this quality in Woolf, stating that “Woolf deemphasizes human language as the *sine qua non* by extending communication to include the exchange of nonverbal meanings” (104). Although Chimal takes this further by giving verbal communication to all beings – human or non-human, it is evident that this characteristic has been given and used in other texts to equalize humans and non-humans and to further the ecocentric message of equality among all things.

The idea of communication between inanimate objects is also being studied in the field of Quantum Mechanics and has been discussed since the 1930s. It has been observed that two, separate, and distant, particles somehow communicate or affect one another instantaneously without any evident forms of communication. Einstein’s paper, “Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?,” described the phenomenon as “spooky action at a distance” or “special relativity” in which, when one particle is measured, another, entangled particle is altered and its spin the opposite of the first particle, communication between particles at great distances and without contact with one another is implied (Nikolić; Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen). This supports the idea that all things are able to communicate. Although it has not been possible to prove or explain, it shows contemplation of all things being sentient and communicative, much like Chimal mentions in “Armonía del mundo” in *Gente del mundo* and portrays in *83 Novelas*.

⁴⁰ Chimal also plays with the role of the human character in *Gente del mundo*, giving them new rituals, ideologies, concepts, and spaces.

⁴¹ The translation of “La prueba” is complex due to the third person singular form in Spanish, which can be ambiguous and imply many different subjects, such as, he, she, it, and one.

⁴² Per Edwin Hubble, as well as other scientists, everything and nothing is the center of the universe. Arthur Eddington, Albert Einstein, Fred Hoyle, Carl Friedrich Gauss, and Georges Lemaître explored the possibilities of a vast, infinite, and expanding universe that has no identifiable center (Gibbs).

Raymond L. Williams identifies the scientific discussion of the center of the universe as one that changed Latin American literature in his book *The Postmodern Latin American Novel*.

⁴³ Some of the *microrrelatos* in *83 Novelas* that represent the idea of multiple realities are: “Cosmología 8,” “Cosmología 10,” “Para qué 8,” and “Anuncio.”

Chapter III

Fragment and Nature: An Anthropocentric Reading of Two Novels by Heriberto Yépez

*The beauty of a fragment
is that it still supports the hope
of brilliant completeness.*

- Tobias Wolff

The purpose of my writing is to destroy myself including everything.

- Heriberto Yépez

In the twenty-first century, literary forms vary and continue to be experimental. Nevertheless, in many cases, the human's place in narrative has not altered much.¹ While Alberto Chimal's narrative evaluates and represents other lifeforms with which we share the planet, one should recognize that the interest in the human being as a character and center of narrative plots is still dominant – be it brief, experimental, or more traditional in form.² Heriberto Yépez's novels, *Wars. Threesomes. Drafts. & Mothers. (W3DM)* (2007) and *41 Clósets* (2005), follow this anthropocentric model, in which the human is still the central focus of the narrative.³ These texts contrast with Alberto Chimal's *83 Novelas*: they present an anthropocentric narrative and take place in purely urban environments. *W3DM* and *41 Clósets* do not contain any non-human protagonists, reminding us that Chimal's use of the non-human character is not yet the norm in this generation of writers.⁴

In the works of Yépez, there are predominantly urban environments, which poses the question: does contemporary human-protagonist-dominant literature neglect the natural world and non-human entities? Some contemporary works maintain a human being as the protagonist, narrator, or character, while presenting the needs of non-humans and the

natural environment.⁵ However, many contemporary works in Latin America reveal a distance from nature, similarly to Yépez's novels, which focus on human protagonists and their struggle with identity and the creation of literature. Much like *W3DM* and *41 Clósets*, these texts lack natural environments, plants, animals, and other non-human entities. The absence of nature reveals either a disregard for nature and non-human entities or a lack of contact with them. What these texts reveal, then, is the human distancing from nature as society evolves, globalizes, modernizes, and urbanizes, while, at the same time, it destroys nature to build new cities and infrastructures, reconstructs nature into desired natural forms such as parks, green spaces, and constructed habitats for animals – like zoos –, and loses touch with the natural world.

The lack of nature in Yépez's work is expected, for he is also a literary critic who focuses predominately on the search for identity and sexuality, on border literature, and on literary forms and genres and the need for rupture of these forms.⁶ Yépez not only wishes to separate the characters from the natural world, but also from the physical one in order to better contemplate literature and identity. Yépez's radicalism and his focus on border literature has been pointed out by the literary critic Christopher Domínguez Michael and many others.⁷

Many of Yépez's publications deal with Tijuana as a way to discuss border issues and represent what he calls “post-experimental” writing that breaks with the “Oxidental”.⁸ Viviane Mahieux offers a brief commentary on Yépez's work reminding us that “Yépez is from Tijuana” and:

the experience of living in the U.S./Mexico borderlands informs [Yépez's] writing on many levels, and he continually experiments with the delicate balancing act of speaking for a local culture while addressing a broad and often distant public. Some of Yépez's best-known works deal specifically with Tijuana and how the city oscillates between two contradictory imaginaries: it is either condemned as the junkyard of postmodernity, or singled out as a promising laboratory for cultural hybridity (Yépez, Mahieux, and Nabasny 1).

Mahieux draws attention to two publications in particular that directly correspond to Yépez's representation of Tijuana – *A.B.U.R.T.O.* (2005) and *Tijuanologías* (2006). Even though she does not mention *W3DM* or *41 Clósets*, she notes that Yépez's essay "Against Telephysics" is "composed of short sentences, maxims and aphorisms. In a fragmented style that reads a bit like a Twitter feed," a structure and style that also reiterates the technological and globalized world in which we live (2). Many other critics have noted Yépez's strong interest in Tijuana as a topic for his discussion of border issues as well.⁹ However, none of these critics analyze Yépez's literature from an ecocritical perspective, ignoring the lack of environment and non-human presence in his work.

Frauke Gewecke also published two articles referencing the work of Heriberto Yépez. Both articles recognize the work Yépez has put forth regarding border literature and the *frontera*. He quotes Yépez's views on Tijuana and the "realidad vivida en el lado mexicano de la frontera," quoting that the border "no se define por su fusión sino por su fisión" (Gewecke, "Introducción" 77). Gewecke also quotes Yépez's views on the city,

referencing “La calle Revolución” as “el símbolo consagrado de Tijuana” (Gewecke, “De Espacios...” 116-7). Like Mahieux’s analysis, these articles do not discuss *41 Clósets* or *W3DM*, but they do draw attention to Yépez’s focus on the city, the border, and issues that Mexicans living on the border face.

Édgar Cota-Torres first mentions Yépez in the epigraph of his article, quoting from Yépez’s article “Tijuana: Procesos de una ciudad de ciencia ficción sin futuro”: “Tijuana juega a la baraja de estereotipos. La mascota de Tijuana es un burro pintado con rayas negras y blancas. Una cebra simulada. Su nombre es ‘Zonkey’” (Cota-Torres 106).¹⁰ Cota-Torres uses Yépez’s image of the “zonkey” as a metaphor for Tijuana as the “imagen híbrida (realidad/farsa) del burro-cebra [...] un enlace entre un pasado tradicional y el presente: un hito en la condición fronteriza entre lo propio y lo ajeno, lo real y lo imaginario” (Cota-Torres 109). He then argues that the acceptance of this “burro-cebra” as the image of Tijuana, creates a cultural hybridity in the border-town that becomes an active movement of “zonkeismo revolucionario” in which the citizens re-appropriate the image to represent a type of resistance to the stereotypes of Tijuana. Cota-Torres maintains that this is a “manifestación” through literary creation and a questioning of “los estereotipos bajo los cuales se cataloga a las ciudades de la frontera Mexicana como la cuna de la violencia, de los vicios, y de la ‘leyenda negra’” (111). He identifies four major authors that contribute to this resistance: Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz, Rosina Conde, Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, and Heriberto Yépez. Cota-Torres ends his article analyzing the works of Humberto Crosthwaite and does not identify in which way Yépez contributes to the resistance against the stereotypes of Tijuana.

Perhaps the hybridity found in Yépez's writing, and not the subject matter of the writing, is seen as a form of resistance through its acceptance and fusion of various forms of writing, languages, and cultures.¹¹ The fusion that occurs in Yépez's literature is a blending of both the culture of the United States and Mexico. The resulting fused culture is then based in consumerism, anthropocentrism, and narcissism. The implementation of these ideologies, however, is different, and creates a separation between the two cultures. This fusion, and fission, of cultures, then, is one that could be the cause for identity crisis of individuals living between the two geographical and conceptual spaces, for they do not identify entirely with either culture, nor do they have a clear culture of their own. This lack of stable identity is apparent in Yépez's characters.

One of the first critics to analyze Yépez's novels was Diana Palaversich in 2012. Palaversich discusses the role of Tijuana in four authors: Federico Campbell, Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, Francisco Morales, and Heriberto Yépez. She argues that Yépez's work contrasts that of the other three authors, stating that he represents Tijuana "como epítome de posmodernidad y globalización" while the others attempt to "desconstruir la imagen cliché de la ciudad como lugar de paso, sustituyéndola por una Tijuana de pertenencia, historia" (Palaversich, "Ciudades Invisibles..." 100, 106). Palaversich then analyzes Yépez's novel *Al otro lado* (2008) and the fictitious city depicted in it, "Ciudad de Paso," which functions as a metaphor for not only Tijuana but also for Mexico as a whole. She argues that the city can be identified as Tijuana, due to Ciudad de Paso's location on the northern border of Mexico, the geography within the novel, and details of

the problems of “la frontera” found in the novel. Yépez also represents Tijuana, globalization, and post modernity in *W3DM* and *41 Clósets*.

Furthermore, she argues that Yépez presents a post-narco, postmodern, post-apocalyptic world in *Al otro lado* in which everyone has become addicted to the drug “phoco” – a cheap form of cocaine. Palaversich claims that the novel creates an extreme concept of a city that has been “antropomorfizada” (Palaversich 106).¹² In the novel, people have contaminated the land so much that it has become toxic, and this toxicity has become part of the drug “phoco,” which will be consumed by the inhabitants of the city, whom will ultimately be devastated because of the consumption of the dry land. She also draws on Yépez’s article “Cómo actúa una post-narco-cultura” in which he deems Tijuana to be a representation of the economic, violent, and narcotic problems of Mexico.

Miguel Angel Pillado analyzes the various myths surrounding Tijuana as represented in *Al otro lado*. He comments that *Al otro lado* is more “tradicional” in the sense that it is less experimental than Yépez’s previous works – *El matasellos* (2004), *A.B.U.R.T.O.* (2005), and *41 Clósets* (2005) (Pillado 440). Pillado describes these previous novels as having “una escritura colmada de juegos estructurales y situaciones narrativas discordantes, que bien se puede decir, terminan por sobreponerse a la trama en sí” (440). The structures Pillado mentions are indeed found in *41 Clósets* and continue to be employed in *W3DM*. Pillado also references Yépez’s essay collections *Tijuanologías* (2006) and *Made in Tijuana* (2006); these essays, as well as *Al otro lado*, are centered around Tijuana and the various myths surrounding the city.¹³ The premise of Pillado’s

article is to discuss how *Al otro lado* confronts and questions these myths, while commenting on Yépez's use of metaliterature as an overpowering element in his literature.

Elena Ritondale also dedicates an entire article to Yépez's novel *Al otro lado*. She chooses to analyze “los cuerpos marcados, heridos, y destrozados” in the work and sees them as metaphors for “el cuerpo social que ha ido perdiendo su unidad y sentido” and for “la destrucción del territorio” (Ritondale). She argues that Yépez's work tears down institutions, social and family relations, as well as the land itself. She views the mutual relation between land and its inhabitants as a sort of cannibalistic relationship in which each consumes the other. Ritondale does not address *41 Clósets* or *WSDM*. Nevertheless, the two novels could be said to continue to represent the consumption and use of land – which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Other critics have mentioned Yépez's work briefly in relation to other border writers. Michael Davidson includes Yépez in a list of Latino poets who use “Spanish/English interlingualism” and “multiple idiolects and technobabble of a globalized world” (Davidson 608). Will H. Corral lists Heriberto Yépez as one of many “worldly heretic Mexican” authors named in Christopher Domínguez Michael's *Critical Dictionary of Mexican Literature* (Corral). Jennifer Insley identifies Yépez, along with other writers, who have “put Tijuana on the literary map by using the city not only as their base of operations but also as the setting of their novels, short stories, and poems” (Insley 108). She also identifies Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz, Roberto Castillo, Hugo Salcedo, Ursula Tania, and Luis Humberto Crosthwaite as the main figures of this representative group of Tijuana-based writers.

When discussing the Mexicali Valley and the erasure of “other settler colonial contexts” George Luna-Peña mentions Yépez (Luna-Peña 82). He reminds the reader that Yépez notices a similar issue with Tijuana and the common “cover-up of the real etymology” of the city. Yépez identifies the legend of the city being named after “a woman named Tía Juana who owned a large ranch in the area during the nineteenth century” as “idiotic” as Tijuana “most likely derives from the Yumana word for ‘dry land’ (*yanti-juana*)” (Luna-Peña 98). Luna-Peña argues that this erasure of indigenous symbols and history is also present in Mexicali, using Yépez’s argument to reinforce his findings. The dry, uninhabitable land and extremely hot environment is found in Yépez’s novel *41 Clósets* and is deemed, by the narrator of the novel, as undesirable, hot, dry land. However, Luna-Peña does not identify any ecocritical or anthropocentric elements in Yépez’s portrayal of Tijuana or Mexicali.

Francisco A. Lomelí also briefly mentions Yépez when discussing the “chicanización” of the literature of the “North.” He quotes Yépez’s article “Todos contra todos (¡Lea y vea cómo la tijuanoología mató a la recién nacida postmodernidad!)” in which Yépez argues against “chicanización” and instead identifies a “antichicanismo o chicanofobia” in border literature (Lomelí 135). He uses Yépez’s argument that “en Tijuana todo que tenga contacto con lo gringo o chicano se ensucia; se discrimina incluso a los mexicanos que trabajan allá, tienen parientes o viven part time en USAlandia” in order to conclude that those who live on the border do not identify with either culture and are discriminated against by both cultures (Lomelí 135). This harsh separation of culture and

dual or split identity is explored by the narrators in *W3DM* who live along the United States and Mexican border.

Jungwon Park also mentions Yépez's presence in border literature, when analyzing the works of Luis Humberto Crosthwaite. He states that Yépez:

ofrece la crítica más dura contra el acercamiento posmoderno a los fenómenos de fronterización. Para [Yépez], Tijuana ha sido aprovechada para promover la teoría de la "hibridación", que solamente puede dar explicación a una parte de las diversas dimensiones de la ciudad. Por lo tanto, le interesa registrar otras realidades de control, violencia y conflictos, en lugar de sobreevaluar las ideas abstractas como flujo, movimiento y deslocalización sin reflexionar en la relación de poder con los impactos socio-culturales (Park 67).

Jungwon is referencing Yépez' work *Made in Tijuana* (2005), and draws similar conclusions to those of the previously mentioned critics who have analyzed Yépez's corpus regarding Tijuana and the hybridity of Yépez's literature.

Paul Fallon analyzes the issues with Border Literature and border authors in the 1980s and 1990s, discussing their concerns with the rise of electronic media and their constant battle for recognition in Mexico City, the hub of literary production in Mexico. This friction between authors from Mexico City and authors on the border is also reflected in the friction between Abigail Bohórquez and the professor in *41 Clósets*. Fallon mentions authors Luis Humberto Crosthwaite, Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz, Rosario Sanmiguel, and

Federico Schaffler as major players in the fight for national recognition of border literature. He also identifies Heriberto Yépez, Rafa Saavedra, Carlos Gutiérrez, and Fran Ilich as young authors who have embraced electronic media to fight “national literature.” Fallon quotes Yépez’s ideas that the internet “enables writers to attack ‘the literary politics of Mexico City’” and overthrow “borders on how age, prior status, geography ... etc., affect literary ‘role playing’” (Fallon 63). Fallon argues that these young authors, through electronic media, “go beyond the local infrastructure to rework the bounds of traditional literary texts and reading publics” (Fallon 64).¹⁴ Fallon argues that these initiatives to (re)create border literature readership locally and across the globe signal growth and health of the literature of the region. Fallon does not discuss Yépez’s novels which have contributed to the fight of creating the idea of “border literature,” but he does seem in favor of Yépez’s ideologies of creating a new border literature against the “literary politics of Mexico City” (63).

Alberto Ribas-Casasayas discusses Yépez’s literature and agrees that his work resists the centralization of the literary politics of Mexico. Ribas-Casasayas identifies Yépez as “el autor más significativo de la generación ‘posthíbrida’” and analyzes four of his novels: *El matasellos* (2004), *A.B.U.R.T.O.* (2005), *41 Clósets* (2005), and *Al otro lado* (2008) (Ribas-Casasayas 78). He outlines how *El matasellos* is a novel that “viene a ser una alegoría de la literatura, de las mafias literarias, la academia y la crítica, sus hábitos y manías profesionales y un mercado de la imprenta en decadencia en el cambio de milenio” (Ribas-Casasayas 80). He argues that:

El matasellos es una obra coparticipante en el ambiente de protesta de las letras mexicanas en el cambio de siglo y expresa un reproche al arte literario establecido, el de las mafias y cenáculos literarios, el del libro producido mecánicamente por vía de la subvención estatal y el acceso a ciertos círculos de poder discursivo, un arte que, a pesar de su accesibilidad y de la pérdida de su aura, carece de lectores y se encierra en un esoterismo estéril (Ribas-Casasayas 81-2).

Ribas-Casasayas shows that *El matasellos* is a work that, through its hybridity, makes use of academic language, style, technique, and metaphor, and fights against the rigid structure of academic publishing. In contrast, Paul Fallon relates Yépez's beliefs and ideologies with creating a new literary model and resisting central literary politics, Ribas-Casasayas clearly identifies the texts where the author attempts to pursue his beliefs on the matter.

Ribas-Casasayas also analyzes Yépez's novels *41 Clósets*, *A.B.U.R.T.O.*, and *Al otro lado*. He speaks about each novel's relation to Tijuana and the different ways in which Yépez resists central politics and history. This critic also notes how Yépez's work questions globalization and the "inescapabilidad y opresión del entorno inmediato para quienes viven en el lado más desfavorecido de la sociedad globalizada" (Ribas-Casasayas 88). Ribas-Casasayas agrees with Palaversich that "Ciudad de Paso" in *Al otro lado* serves as a metaphor for Tijuana, outlining problems that Mexicans on the border face. He also dedicates an entire section to *41 Clósets* which I will address when analyzing the novel later in this chapter.

The novelist Elmer Mendoza commends Yépez's work, stating that in "un país tan conservador como el nuestro [México] donde se asustan de todo requiere de voces como la de Yépez que no teme cuestionar a los iconos de papel que alcanforizan nuestra cultura y nuestra política" (Mendoza). Other authors, however, seem less enthusiastic about Yépez's contribution to border literature. Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz compares Yépez to Fran Ilich, who he deems is the better author from Baja California. Trujillo Muñoz places Yépez in relation to Ilich's writing:

en contraste con la posterior melancolía *cool* de [Rafa] Saavedra o la exaltación del costumbrismo cínico de Yépez, Ilich es un viajero natural del ciberespacio, un surfero intuitivo/instintivo en la ola del cambio virtual, que no piensa volver al universo unidimensional de la escritura (Trujillo Muñoz 89).

He argues that Yépez's writing limits itself to an audience of "académicos postestructuralistas" due to the "mezcla genérica, donde el ensayo y la crónica de situaciones, estados de ánimo o recursos híbridos le ganan a la narrativa en sí" (Trujillo Muñoz 90). The structure that Trujillo Muñoz notes in *El matasellos* and *Al otro lado* is also prevalent in *W3DM* and *41 Clósets*. *W3DM* is littered with quotes, writing techniques, and poems by other authors in various languages, while *41 Clósets* repeatedly references literary critics and academia.

Trujillo Muñoz may be correct in stating that Yépez is greatly limiting his audience to academics, or those interested in experimental and hybrid forms that surpass the actual storylines. Yépez is not concerned with the plot, rather with the questions: what is it that constitutes a novel, a fragment, and a narrative, and what is “post-experimental” writing? Regarding this, Yépez argues that it departs from the kind of experimental writing that “resultó de la gradual despolitización, des-izquierdización, des-radicalización de las vanguardias” (Yépez, “Notas sobre Post-Experimentalismo” 5). He continues to argue that post-experimental literature fights against national literature, a type of “literatura fronteriza de Tijuana” that others have tried to imitate and hide (5). According to Yépez, “experimentalismo” focuses only on form and structure while post-experimental literature “es una escritura que lucha,” that has a political position, a message, and continuously fights against national literature (5).¹⁵

Jose-Luis Moctezuma notices a similar resistance and ideology from Yépez. Moctezuma writes that “Yépez [*sic*] resists the ongoing ‘Americanization of the world’ – Hollywood romanticism and cultural imperialism under a single topology – through a disintegrative praxis that embraces a poetics of difference, disorder, forgetfulness” (Moctezuma 141). He also claims that Yépez’s book of essays, *The Empire of Neomemory* (2013), is an “implicit manifesto of liberation, one that eschews the theology of political breakage in favor of a cosmic-poetic freedom from Oxidental [*sic*.] ‘thinking through accumulation’ without pretending to offer solutions nor guidelines for action” (143). According to Moctezuma, *The Empire of Neomemory* may not “offer guidelines for action,” but I have seen, in Yépez’s novels, a ruptured structure, a blending and recreating of forms,

and the use of multiple, various genres which may serve as an example of Yépez's personal resistance to "National Literature." Whether or not he succeeds in creating a new form of writing in which he fights against the "empire" and imperialism, creating what he considers "post-experimental" writing, is a debate for future research, but the discussion is indeed present in his work.

Charles I. Glicksberg questions "what is experimental" and reminds the reader that "the novel, since its inception, has proved to be the most flexible and accommodating of genres" (127).¹⁶ Ronald Sukenick, an experimental writer, also proclaims:

the "experimental novel" isn't experimental anymore. The experiment has been a success and we now have a large, solid complex alternate tradition for fiction that, far from the suffocating agoraphobic conception of the novel in the fifties, presents an enormous number of options (41).

Naturally, Yépez's literature would focus on experimentation and include characters who are also concerned with "rupturing form." His characters are repeatedly searching for understanding and a written form that better expresses their concerns. For example, the narrator in *41 Clósets* debates and explains his use of various genres and forms throughout the novel, continuously searching for a better literary form; later in this chapter, in the analysis of *41 Clósets*, I will further discuss the use of various genres and the narrator's perspective.

Here, it is important to mention that Yépez's implementation of "post-experimental" form caused him to publish *W3DM* through a digital publisher.¹⁷ According to Catuxa

Seoane, this is what makes web publication so valuable, because “estamos ante un nuevo concepto de lectura y escritura: es posible leer y escribir de manera personal o en colaboración, en donde no tenemos la necesidad de someternos a exigencias editoriales” (79). This freedom invites further experimentation and creation of new and shorter forms.¹⁸ Whereas, the current establishment for print publication does not permit such drastic changes in formats.

Michiko Kakutani states that digital and experimental literature is not worthy of literary study, just as David Baizabal does with *minificción*.¹⁹ Stuart Moulthrop argues that Kakutani’s remarks “seem intended as a desultory putdown: hypertext fictions are not really literary but belong to a lower order, the computer games” (184). N. Katherine Hayles acknowledges this resistance to digital literature in her book *Writing Machines*. Hayles cites W. J. T. Mitchell who stated that “the only two important signifying components of a literary text are words and images; nothing else really counts” (43). According to Hayles, this comment limits literature, because it does not include structure, form, sequences, silences, or any other characteristic of narrative that formalists and structuralists utilize in their literary analyses. Hayles extends this idea to digital literature pointing out that there is also digital literature that cannot be published in traditional print form due to the need of a computer program to be read.²⁰

Kakutani’s comment mirrors comments made in the twentieth century regarding the *cuento*. During this time, the *cuento* arguably dominated much Latin American literature and some critics even signaled the death of the novel.²¹ Fredric Jameson cited Ken Russell’s prediction of the death of long forms of cultural production in “Culture and

Finance Capital.” Russell predicted that films produced in the twentieth century would not exceed fifteen minutes, as the modern spectator would not want to sit through a full-length feature film. Jameson agreed with this acknowledged limitation, proclaiming that “the preview is really all you need” of twentieth century action films (261). This argument may apply to fiction, as the appearance of electronic texts, *Twitternovels* and Flash Fiction prevails throughout the internet while traditional print sales decline.²² However, there are numerous other studies pointing to the viability of long forms, as well as far more readers worldwide of Bolaños’ *2666* (2004) than much of Latin American *minificción*.

As mentioned previously, in the quote by Glicksberg, the novel is inherently experimental. The fragmented novel is one example of how the modern and/or contemporary novel has deviated from its “traditional” form.²³ The fragment has appeared in print and in electronic texts throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century. For example, in her book *Fragmented Novel in Mexico: The Politics of Form*, Carol Clark D’Lugo analyzes fragmentation in Mexican novels, claiming that the fragmented novel served different purposes at different times. Furthermore, D’Lugo identifies different elements of the fragmented novel written in Mexico between 1915 and 1989.²⁴ In addition, numerous studies of experimental and postmodern fiction point to the existence of novelistic experiments beyond the scope of this study.²⁵

In this dissertation chapter I discuss the fragmented novels, *Wars. Threesomes. Drafts. & Mothers. (W3DM)* (2007) and *41 Clósets* (2005). *W3DM* tells the story of three, intertwined characters: a pair of twin brothers, Antonio and Norman, and Emily, their lover. The story is composed of various fragments, while the two brothers take turns telling the

story about their relationship with Emily. Some of the fragments are incomplete, others could be considered poetry or *minificción*, and others are exercises in writing. Many of the various parts address the reader and have little to do with the advancement of the plot of the novel, but they all vaguely relate to the topic of the story – identity. The narrators of the story are more concerned with story-writing and exploring their identity than with telling the story. The story progresses through this exploration of self, ending the love triangle between the three main characters and beginning an incestual love affair between the twin brothers.

41 Clósets is told from the protagonist's perspective and switches between various literary genres: prose, poetry, *minificción*, and academic writing that discusses literature, literary genres, and the art of writing. The protagonist is a university professor who tells the story of his love affair with Daniel, while exploring his sexual identity. The professor uses different literary genres when he deems them more appropriate for self-expression. For example, the professor chooses to use *minificción* and poetry when expressing particular emotions, because he feels that prose is too restrictive of a genre. Unlike *W3DM*, each fragment directly adds to the progression of the story, either through expressing the emotions the professor experiences or analyzing the events that happen within the plot. The story and all its fragments, then, relate directly to the progression of the relationship between the professor and his lover. The story begins with the professor's attempt to understand his homosexual feelings and ends with the termination of his relationship with Daniel.

In *W3DM* there is a deviation from the concept of the novel as explained by both Yépez and D'Lugo. This deviation occurs in the structure and format of the novel and its experimentation with different literary genres within it. Additionally, in *W3DM*, the narrators clearly identify and reveal “gaps in their structures,” asking the reader to fill in the voids found in the story (D'Lugo 228).²⁶ *W3DM* and *41 Clósets* have a circular and open-ended structure, either beginning with the end of the novel or bringing the reader full circle back to the beginning.²⁷ Each text presents a narrator or main character who attempts to deal with “complex narrative or being within a complex society” (D'Lugo 229). *41 Clósets* and *W3DM* present “characters who look to the past with a critical eye, reassessing childhood and ‘institutionalized’ national history,” each in an attempt to make sense of their current situations, emotions, and lives (229). These texts invite the reader to be a coparticipant in the story-making process, giving them “the freedom to personalize their interpretations” (230); *W3DM* asks the reader to invent parts of the story that the narrator refuses to or no longer wants to imagine.²⁸ For example, Norman and Antonio ask for the reader to imagine what happens to Emily when she is not in their presence. They claim that, because she is not with them at that time, they cannot know what she is doing, and therefore they cannot include it in the story. However, they ask the reader to remember that Emily is a person, somewhere out in the world, doing something (Yépez 58). Both narrators admit the incompleteness of storytelling and thus, ask for reader participation.

The question remains: has the fragmented novel changed in the 21st century? If Yépez's works include six of seven characteristics of the fragmented Mexican novel according to D'Lugo in the twentieth century, has he created a new literary form? Has

writing in a fragmented manner become the new norm? As previously quoted, Sukenick argues that the experiment has been a success and that the “experimental novel” isn’t experimental anymore. If there is ultimately a unification of the fragments into a coherent whole, can the fragments be autonomous? Is there any difference between an autonomous fragment, poetry, and *minificción* that has been inserted into a novel or a longer text?

As previously mentioned, Jameson discusses fragmentation, stating that the contemporary reader or spectator would prefer shorter texts. In the same text, “Culture and Finance Capital,” Jameson also distinguishes between two types of fragments – those which are autonomous and retain meaning outside of the text and those that are incomplete and are meaningless without the text. These two types of fragments are also found in *W3DM*. Jameson explains that these two types of fragments entail different writing strategies – either a minimalist strategy or an infinite and expansive strategy (262). According to Jameson, the fragment and its effect and meaning has shifted in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries because “each former fragment of a narrative, which was once incomprehensible without the narrative context as a whole, has now become capable of emitting a complete narrative message in its own right” (264).²⁹ Jameson refers to this technique as decontextualization where the text or fragments are taken out of their contexts and “reendowed with a [new] cultural mediative meaning” (264). What this means, then, is that fragments can shift between the two categories, either losing or gaining meaning within and outside of the text.

Fragments within fragmented novels can also be divided in the same way, they can be “autonomous” or “incomplete.” Additionally, fragments that were once “incomplete”

without the context of the work can also become “complete” and “autonomous” over time. For example, there is a fragment of only four words – “Sábado era mi vientre” – in *41 Clósets* (16). This fragment, a brief sentence, does not acquire meaning until much later in the novel and entirely loses its meaning outside of the text. However, as the text builds on itself, this fragment obtains greater meaning. If the text were to become well-known, it is possible that this tiny decontextualized fragment of the novel could be of greater importance and become autonomous and representative of this novel.³⁰

“Autonomous” and “incomplete” fragments are both part of Yépez’s novels. These “autonomous” and “incomplete” fragments can be shorter or longer, but the length of the fragment does not denote autonomy or incompleteness. For example, the longest fragment in these two novels is a seven-page fragment found in *41 Clósets*, which is incomplete if located outside of the context of the novel.³¹ The fragment – “Sábado era mi vientre” – becomes autonomous and representative of the text later in the novel.³² The second shortest fragment of the two works appears in *W3DM* and is written in English – “If I feel life I feel ill” and is considered incomplete, having no meaning outside of the text and acquiring no representative meaning later on (25).³³ Many other fragments in the text are also “incomplete.” These fragments draw attention to brief moments, thoughts and feelings of the narrators, or are metaliterary. Other fragments seem to be autonomous, and, if we were to identify the genres of them, some could be considered *minificción* and others micropoetry.³⁴

However “incomplete” or “autonomous,” the fragments in Yépez’s works serve other purposes within the text. Many fragments purposefully interrupt the structure of the

novel to speak to the reader – inviting the reader to participate in the story and writing process –, while others impose silences and moments of doubt and experiment with various literary forms – exploring similar thoughts and emotions but through different genres. In *W3DM* both narrators use fragmentation and breaks in the narration to ask for assistance in creating the story, for they are either no longer willing to do so, or are unsure of the details concerning other characters. For example, the first time that Antonio speaks directly to the reader appears at the beginning of the novel. He directly asks the reader to decide what will happen to Emily:

I have a question for you. / How much time are Emily and my brother going to spend together this second time? [...] How much time before they separated again? Two hours? Two days? Two weeks? Nine years? Two deaths? / Taking control of a story causes anxiety. Telling what happens, describing it, making it up requires becoming responsible, and I want to take some of that anxiety from you. I won't leave all the deciding in your hands, I will describe a big part of the story, I will let you sort out mainly the non-anxious parts of storytelling (16).³⁵

Here the narrator specifically draws attention to the difficulties in storytelling and even confesses that he will leave much of the story in the hands of the reader, letting them decide the “non-anxious parts.” He wishes for the reader to participate in the writing of the story to alleviate some of the stress it causes him when determining the fate of the characters.

Norman also asks for the reader to participate. Norman's request, however, is different from Antonio's because he wants the reader to fill in the missing information that he claims not to have or does not remember. One example of this is when he explains: "I fell asleep. I do not know what happened after that. Maybe she slept too for a couple of hours, and then fled. Or she immediately left my place. I do not know. That part of the story I leave for you to decide" (58). He also asks the reader to "remember [that] Emily's life continues today. And at this moment she's doing something someplace in the world" and to "try to imagine what she is doing right now. And then imagine how that relates to your own patterns of storytelling" (58). Not only do both narrators ask for reader participation in the creation of the story, but they also suggest that the reader imagine him or herself as authors writing their own stories. Both Norman and Antonio draw attention to the difficulties of writing and how their own perspectives of reality are limited to what they know and of what they are aware. Furthermore, they admit the incompleteness of storytelling – an incompleteness that Yépez addresses in both works.

The act of addressing the reader is one that D'Lugo identifies as a characteristic of the Mexican fragmented novel between 1915 and 1989, but in Yépez's works, both published after the year 2000, it serves a dual purpose. On one hand, the narrator asks for reader participation, but, on the other hand, he is drawing attention to the ellipsis or absence of information in his writing.³⁶ Frequently this ellipsis is assumed through the absence of information and the silent plea for the reader to fill in the blanks or imagine the rest of the story. Neither the act of ellipsis and elicitation of reader participation or the act of addressing the reader is new to narrative.³⁷ David Lagmanovich, Dolores M. Koch, and

Javier Perucho have all argued that the ellipsis is a common feature in short fiction that allows for the author to do more with less.³⁸

Additionally, Charles I. Glicksberg and Raymond L. Williams argue that a characteristic of post-modern novels is an author or a narrator that assumes the impossibility of knowing anything outside of his perspective or observation.³⁹ The characteristic mentioned by Glicksberg and Williams appears in *W3DM* but does not appear in *41 Clósets*. In *W3DM*, it seems that Antonio and Norman have grown weary of wondering what Emily is up to or may be doing, and, in a sad and distant way, ask for the reader's help in filling in the story, for they are too tired, too hurt, and cannot decide for themselves. This invitation to the reader to decide the fate of the character draws attention to the incompleteness of that character's storyline. The narrator is not omniscient and does not know, cannot know, what another character is doing once that character has left his vicinity.⁴⁰

In *41 Clósets* the metadiscourse and the invitation to meditate on the writing process is also prevalent.⁴¹ Ribas-Casasayas describes the novel as “autoficción o pseudonovela constituida por un cruce de géneros narrativos de ficción, autobiografía, metacrítica y poesía” (Ribas-Casasayas 82). He argues that the format and various uses of literary genres in *41 Clósets* exemplify that “el estado natural de la literatura es la hibridez, lo transicional” (83). Ribas-Casasayas discusses what Yépez attempts to do in *41 Clósets*: “Los géneros no son formas puras. El cuento, el ensayo, el poema, la novela surgieron gracias a hibridaciones de formas preexistentes, sólo que ahora no solemos recordar ese origen”

(Yépez, *41 Clósets* 24-5). Ribas-Casasayas also mentions how Yépez cites Mikahil Bakhtin when discussing the hybridity of the novel:

Los géneros poéticos del verso (los géneros líricos, por ejemplo) cuando son introducidos en la novela pueden tener la intencionalidad directa, la total carga semántica de la poesía. Tales son, por ejemplo, los versos de Goethe introducidos en el *Wilhelm Meister*. Los Románticos incorporaron sus propios versos en su prosa – y, como es bien sabido, los Románticos consideraron la presencia de versos en la novela (versos tomados como expresión intencionalmente directa del autor) como uno de sus rasgos constitutivos [...] Finalmente, los poemas incorporados en una novela pueden también ser completamente objetivizados [*sic.*] como son, digamos, los versos del capitán Lebyadkin en *Los poseídos* de Dostoievsky. Una situación similar es la incorporación en la novela de máximas y aforismos (Yépez, *41 Clósets* 78-9).

Ribas-Casasayas sees a deliberate execution of hybridity and use of aphorisms in Yépez's novel. This hybrid form problematizes the novel, its structure, format, and existence as a "novel."

41 Clósets, as previously mentioned, is about a professor and his journey of acceptance of his sexuality and identity.⁴² Throughout this journey the narrator interrupts the story to discuss his writing process and what constitutes a novel. In chapter twenty-eight, the narrator discusses the need for fragmentation, explaining how fragmentation, *minificción*, metadiscourse, and works of poetry grant freedom through blank spaces, a

freedom that is not granted in prose (92-7). Ribas-Casasayas also notes the silence implemented by Yépez and argues that it demonstrates the “expresión fronteriza última: la ausencia de sonido en el límite de la experiencia predicativa” (Ribas-Casasayas 84-5). He argues, as the narrator does, that the use of silence assists in the expression of the author because it allows the author to explore emotions without the limitation of structured prose. According to the narrator, this form of writing better represents the human experience and real-life, and therefore, better expresses his own existence and emotions. He articulates:

En el espacio vacío superior, ¿quién se oculta? ¿qué yace en ese vacío, un vacío siempre falso? Se manifiesta un silencio o un espacio vacante, y algo-alguien ya está ahí. El silencio o el vacío son zonas de la realidad donde la realidad ha sabido burlar a la percepción. / Espacios de transformación. Clósets. Escondites. / La prosa, por otro lado, con su continuidad paragráfica nos chantajea de modo enorme; nos chantajea para no transgredir o traicionar el orden natural del discurso occidental: la línea recta. La infrecuencia de la desaparición (93).

Here, Yépez, through his narrator, discusses the need for breaks and silences by purposefully incorporating them within his novels. For Yépez, the use of fragments, silences, poetry, *minificción*, and metadiscourse is a way of “breaking from traditional western prose,” it is an approach to better represent life and the human experience.⁴³ Prose is then seen as a form of extortion, a restriction of the author and of his/her expression. It is of no surprise then, that Yépez’s works employ this form of writing by incorporating silences, to hide, to uncover, and to represent his characters and his story.

The works examined in this chapter use metadiscourse and fragmentation as well as poetry. Yépez argues that the inclusion of poetry is a way in which to better represent the emotions and feelings of his characters. According to him, without *minificción* and poetry in *41 Clósets* many of the raw emotions of the narrator would be lost. The narrator states:

los libros de poesía o de fragmentos se parecen más a la vida, la cual siempre es recordada de manera desordenada o parcial, y para comprenderla sencillamente escogemos unos cuantos momentos dentro de toda la totalidad de vivencias (95).

For him, a linear and cohesive representation of life would be to negate our human experience and existence. It is then necessary to represent and question life through poetry, *minificción*, fragments, and silences.

As previously mentioned, Raymond L. Williams draws attention to this element in postmodern Latin American literature. Twentieth and twenty-first century authors are aware of the incompleteness of their perspective of reality and within literature. Additionally, Glicksberg writes:

The twentieth-century writer probed areas of experience that had hitherto been unknown; he peered unaffrighted into the murky, pullulating depths of the unconscious; he stripped off the veils of convention, not held back by the taboos his culture imposed. He struggled to give birth to his profoundly altered version of reality (131).

Yépez is no different from the writers that Glicksberg and Williams identify. He continues the strategy of the twentieth-century writer, not only questioning and drawing attention to the literary form itself, but also experimenting and manipulating it within his texts. He shows the reader what he is doing through commentary, applies these ideas through form, and invites the reader to participate in the creation of his narrative. Yépez's fragmented novels are not merely broken episodes, rather they can take any form – *minificción*, poetry, a writing exercise – explore any topic, and represent any aspect of reality.⁴⁴

The professor, the narrator of *41 Clósets*, then experiments with these different forms of writing to better represent his experience and feelings and to experiment with the literary confinements to which he finds himself restricted. I have already mentioned the brief fragment “Sábado era mi vientre,” which has no meaning without the rest of the novel, but expresses a sense of excitement in the professor's life (16). The fragment signifies the professor's new relationship with his lover, Daniel, in an intimate way. Only for him, and then for the reader, does this fragment mean something. In turn, it begins to represent his happiness, his exploration and acceptance of his sexuality, and his feelings toward his new relationship – one that develops, in the beginning, only on Saturdays. Later, another fragment of twelve words, much like this one, reveals his ever growing and developing relationship with Daniel. The fragment “Pronto todos los días eran sábado / y ya no llegaban los domingos” begins to function as an extension of the first fragment (45). These fragments, incomplete without the rest of the text, reveal, suddenly and quickly, the feelings of the narrator and the progression of his relationship. An explanatory chapter is not necessary; the reader immediately understands that he is spending more time with

Daniel. These brief fragments disrupt the flow of narration and explore the professor's feelings and relationships – an exploration and expression that the professor/narrator does not feel is possible within the constraints of “traditional western prose”.⁴⁵

There is another fragment that has the possibility to function autonomously in which the professor explores his sexuality and feelings. This short poem reveals a harsh reality that even the professor was not yet ready to face. Below is the micropoem in its entirety:

Hacer el amor
con mujeres me daba frío.
Por eso quise probar
besos masculinos (46).

This micropoem quickly expresses the sentiment of the narrator without the need for long and elaborate prose. It is immediately understood that he no longer and possibly never was interested in having relations with women and that he longed for something more. Even though there are instances where these short fragments are followed by longer sections contemplating the emotions expressed in them, they denote another type of expression that gives a “more complete” and poetic view of the narrator and his sentiments.⁴⁶

The exploration of sexual and personal identity, the constant reference to the reader, and metadiscourse on writing is also seen in *W3DM* and it develops through fragmentation and quotes inserted in the text. However, there is another function of the fragment that I have yet to mention. In *W3DM* fragmentation is also used to create a dual narration.⁴⁷ There are two separate narrators that develop inconsecutively throughout the fragments.

Fragmentation in *W3DM* allows for the exploration of different facets of each narrator, whereas, in *41 Clósets*, the dual narration represents the various emotional stages of the professor in his journey for self-acceptance.

In *W3DM* there are two main narrators – the twin brothers, Norman and Antonio – and other minor narrators – Emily and her friend Teresa. The narration constantly shifts between the two brothers without directly specifying who is narrating, leaving small clues for the reader to deduce who is speaking. For example, one can imagine who is narrating by examining the way in which he addresses the other brother or refers to Emily. To make matters more difficult, both brothers are writers, so the fragments that speak about writing, form, and writing exercises and strategies, could be narrated by either brother. Additionally, both brothers are in love with Norman’s ex-girlfriend, Emily, and thus many fragments dealing with her are ambiguous and only sometimes refer to her in a way that reveals who is narrating. Finally, as if the fragmentation of the novel, the love triangle between Antonio, Norman, and Emily, and the constant references to literary critics were not enough, there is a love affair between the twin brothers at the end of the novel.

The fragmentation in the novel creates ambiguity and uncertainty in the work. There are shifts in time, narration, and characters, with the narrators constantly questioning their own story. This ambiguity between the narrators creates the impression of instability, uncertainty and frustration.⁴⁸ D’Lugo would argue that this frustration, instability, and uncertainty in literary representation depicts the instability in Mexican politics, identity, and economy, as well as people living on the Mexico/United States border.

The narrator addresses this instability, explaining that he speaks English or Spanish when it best suits his mood or feeling and when he identifies with either the United States or Mexico. The fragmentation within the novel seems to represent a lack of clarity and completeness that the narrator feels when he reflects upon both his Mexican and United States identities. These dual identities are then represented in the novel through fragmentation and thus invites the reader to experience a state of uncertainty much like the narrators are experiencing in the text. Again, the use of fragments, *minificción*, micropoetry, and quotes in this work creates a “more complete” representation of the characters – pairing form and structure with the emotions of the narrators.

In these works, the employment of fragments draws attention to the writing process, portrays Yépez’s characters’ sexual desires and relations, and experiments with forms of brevity. The sudden jumps out of linear narration draw attention to the literary concerns, inner turmoil, distress, crisis, and exploration of identity present in many of Yépez’s novels. For these narrators, the full representation of themselves would not be possible without fragmentation, as a linear non-fragmented storyline would not reveal their intimate thoughts and preoccupations. By employing and introducing short *microrrelatos*, micropoetry, critical theory about literature, and thoughts on his own process of writing, Yépez creates a “more complete” representation of his characters and demonstrates what he believes is a “more realistic” narrative – a narrative that reflects reality and the lived experience. The fragmentation and use of brevity in Yépez’s work also dictates the reader’s participation in the work, inviting the reader to fill in and question the silences within the story. Yépez’s experimental novels focus on the human experience in the twenty-first

century; an experience that, according to his novelistic representation, is fragmented, incomplete, dictated by our own observations, and predominately urban.

The need and desire to “better represent the human experience” brings our attention back to the human figure and its environment. It is noticeable that both of Yépez’s novels take place in urban environments and have little reference to nature and the non-human. Even though many of the fragments are brief and environment-less or non-environmental, many of the ones that directly advance the plot evolve around man-made objects and locations.⁴⁹ Thus, the presence of this urban environment in Yépez’s works portrays characters who live in modernized areas.

Even the title, *41 Clósets*, portrays a man-made space – the closet. *41 Clósets* not only refers to the metaphorical closets in which one hides, but also to physical spaces in which the narrator seeks refuge. This implies a certain comfort within constructed environments, for it is safer to be inside and to be closed off and hidden, rather than running away to the forest to avoid socializing altogether. Even though the title is clearly referring to the repression and hiding of his homosexuality, I find it noteworthy that the professor continuously chooses the man-made and constructed environment for security and not the natural world.⁵⁰

The title *Wars. Threesomes. Drafts. & Mothers. (W3DM)*, does not contain any words that refer to nature either. This title, though not specifically identifying any particular man-made object, refers to wars, threesomes, drafts and mothers – all of which relate to the human existence in a complex society.⁵¹ Both titles, *W3DM* and *41 Clósets*, indicate a strong connection with humans, their creations, their objects, and their environments. In

contrast to *83 Novelas*, there is a continual absence of nature and natural environments in Yépez's novels. Each character in *W3DM* and *41 Clósets* is confined to an urban setting, is concerned with and exists around man-made objects, and is preoccupied with their own life rather than the non-human life around them. While Chimal's *83 Novelas* portrays non-human consciousness, Yépez focuses on metadiscourse, identity crisis, and the inner turmoil of his characters. One will not find ants, mosquitos, coconuts, plants, or anything that is not concrete, plastic, metal, paper, or directly referring to the human. In Yépez's work, there is a continual reference to human emotions, constructed environments, and the human existence within these constructed environments.

Much of *W3DM* takes place in a “non-environment” – the abstract space of thought – through the form of writing exercises and contemplation of the literary form. More concretely, the story takes place, much like *41 Clósets*, in apartments, cars, Tijuana, Mexico City and ambiguous places around these “built environments”.⁵² The characters must go outside at some point to transition from one place to the next, but the fragmentation of the novel skips over these moments in the story, because they are seemingly unnecessary to the advancement of the plot and to the metadiscourse on writing. The characters and narrators are not concerned with their environments, but rather focused on their own issues, stories, and writing – so much so that there is not a single episode in which the characters look upward or outward from themselves to see anything outside of their existence. The absence of nature and the non-human denotes its lack of importance to the characters and the story. Neither this novel, nor the others, is by any means an environmental text, as defined by Lawrence Buell.⁵³ However, these texts are equally important when analyzing

the presence of nature within contemporary texts, because they show a completely modernized society, disconnected from the natural environment that had once been in its place.

Yépez's novels represent this urbanized society through the characters' disconnection with the natural world. Moreover, Yépez creates an even greater distance through his use of metadiscourse in his writing. The narrator's constant attempts to escape reality through metadiscourse reveals a desire to detach from the natural and physical world. The characters are not only disconnected from their natural environments and non-human entities, but they are also disconnected from their constructed environments, trapped inside their own contemplative meditations. The author further establishes distance through the void created between the reader and himself. A void created by the absence of information, plot-holes, and constant references to academic critics and theorists. Perhaps this void reflects the space being created in an urban society that is disconnected not only from the natural world and its non-human beings, but that is also disconnected from the physical world and other human beings.

There are a few mentions of the non-human in *W3DM*. The first mention of the non-human comes on page nine when the narrator refers to his ability to "hook like a spider" (Yépez, *Wars. Threesomes. Drafts. & Mothers.* 9). The second mention is on the following page, when the narrator refers to his brother's use of his car "like a turtle uses its shell" (10). Another on page thirteen, when birds are used to characterize how people of the south talk (13). Two other references appear on pages 35 and 36 when the narrator refers to Americans as "pigs" (35-6). In all cases the appearance of the animals in the novel is not a

true presence or representation of the animals as animals, rather a representation of a human construct or characteristic. The spider refers to the ability to weave a story together, the turtle is used to describe the narrator's brother's mannerisms, and the bird is used as a means of expressing a pattern and cadence of speech, rather than an actual representation of a bird. The pig is also reduced to a human construct, referring to the dirtiness and disgusting and excessive acts of the individual to which it refers – in this case Americans. The animals are used to characterize the human protagonists; they are not present physically, nor are they fully represented as animals.

The use of animals as symbols continues later on when the narrator is called an “animal” by his mother (*W3DM* 38). In this instance, the mother is using the term to refer to the barbaric behavior of the narrator as a child when he would hunt and irritate the lizards.⁵⁴ The use of the term *animal* also identifies the separation of the human animal and the non-human animal, inferring that being human and being animal are different. It is further implied that the human animal is different from the non-human animal due to its humane ability to refrain from harm of other creatures.⁵⁵ The act of calling the narrator an *animal*, then, is a way in which to express that he is violent, inhumane, and savage. This subtle representation of the animal reveals the environmentality of the character, one that places the non-human animal below the human, while simultaneously raising the human to a place of higher morality.⁵⁶

The only other animals mentioned in the *W3DM* are sharks and dinosaurs. The sharks are represented, much like the lizards, in a literary excerpt and as subjects to inhumane treatment and domestication by the humans. The shark is mentioned in a German

poem by Paul Celan, which the narrator translates to Spanish. The poem is titled “Der Reisekamerad,” in English “The Travel Companion,” which tells the story of “your mother’s soul” whipping the sharks and helping the night sail across the sea (*W3DM* 55).⁵⁷ Unlike the other poems in the novel, the narrator does not rewrite or incorporate the poem within the rest of the text, instead, it stands alone. The poem seems to be referring to the narrator’s own mother, who he references in context with the poem. The poem further represents an anthropocentric scene in which not only does the mother whip the sharks, but she helps the night sail across the sea. In this poem, the human is the powerful force that manipulates the animals and the night sky. Other than the anthropocentric theme and the reference to the narrator’s mother in context with the poem, the poem seems to be out of place in the narrative.

However, the representation of yet another animal being harmed, or “whipped” into submission, is yet again revealing of the underlying message that animals are lesser and below humans. The image of the mother whipping the shark presents us with an idea of dominance over animals, similar to the image of the boy harming the lizards. The dinosaur is also merely mentioned in passing in a reimagining of their existence by Emily and not mentioned again thereafter. None of the animals, the dinosaur, the lizards, or the sharks exist on their own; the animals live in accordance with and for the narrators to explore other self-involved matters, such as their identities and relationships with one another.

Additionally, the animals remain in the abstract space of thought and literary form. These animals do not participate in the story in any direct fashion, nor are they present alongside the human protagonists in their constructed environments – with the exception

of the lizard which exists on its own, even though the narrator harassed and tormented it. The narrator utilizes the animals to tell his story, to characterize other protagonists, or within an exercise of thought. The humans are the only animals that are present in the story and merit contemplation by the narrators. Unlike their animal counterparts, each protagonist lives in both the abstract space of thought and in the physical world that Norman and Antonio narrate.

There is but one reference to the non-human as a worthy entity and not as an abstraction or representation of the human. In *W3DM*, on page 46, the narrator refers to the “animal mouth” and its ability to “see” truths and transform how we, humans, see the world. In this case, the “animal mouth,” though disembodied, represents a “third eye” that would see and examine the human in a way that the human is incapable of seeing for himself (46). This discussion of the animal and its ability to see “truths” and “secrets” is unexpected of the work, as the narrator(s) have only been interested in their own “truths” and experience, and their understanding of that experience. The “animal mouth,” removed from any particular animal, and its ability to reveal something unknown to the human, is the first, albeit small, acknowledgement of animal intelligence and worth in the novel. It should be mentioned, however, that this disembodied mouth would express truths and educate the human, thus serving the human once more. Thus, the “animal mouth” is only interesting to the narrator, because it might enlighten him.

The non-human representation in the novel can also be extended to include vegetation, land, and other non-human, non-animal entities. The natural world in *W3DM* is also utilized to describe events, characters, and as a means to explore abstract ideas,

much like the non-human animals are used. For example, there is one reference to a mushroom in the work, but it is used as an adjective to describe a nuclear bomb – a well-known image of the weapon of mass destruction (*W3DM* 46). Cliffs are adopted to describe eyes, as the eyes lead to a type of falling into the unknown and losing one’s balance (45). The sun is present in order to juxtapose its artificial counterpart, the lamp (44). The earth and world are mentioned, but in abstract, broad, literary terms. The “semilla” is used to refer to the root of the narrator’s existence, him becoming his own mother, and as a representation of the human existence (57). Nearly all the non-human entities found in *W3DM* are used as symbolic abstract elements.

The only reference that appears to give a physical quality to a non-human entity is the use of the “ground” (*W3DM* 51). The narrator describes the ground as “pressing a certain point on [his] sole,” which seems to show a point in the novel that represents the human protagonist’s existence within the natural, material world, and gives the ground the power to affect and touch the human protagonist (51). However, the ground is immediately referred to as the point of contact that the narrator has with his father, as the “ground is pressing a certain point on [his] sole, where [his father] is located” (51). In this case, the ground is converted into an agent the narrator uses to connect with his father, and again, does not exist on its own or as a moving force on the protagonist. Once again, the natural world is a means for which the narrator can explore his own existence, self-consciousness, and connect with his distant father. This exploitation of the ground implies an anthropocentric use of nature and exemplifies the narcissistic needs of the narrator. Rather

than looking at the ground, the narrator moves through it, without any regard to its existence.

In a flashback the narrator has about his childhood, the exploitation of nature and its use as a tool reoccurs. The narrator remembers a rock that his mother threw at him when he tormented lizards (*W3DM* 41-2). At first glance, the rock appears to exist on its own and to be a part of the natural surroundings of the narrator's childhood. However, the rock is but a mere agent, a tool for the mother to throw at her son to make him stop being cruel to the lizards. The rock inflicts damage on the narrator as a child and his "head is torn in two" (41). The rock is further reduced by the narrator's thoughts, just as the river, mentioned on page 56, is reduced to and superimposed by words.

The narrator quotes Albert Rothenberg, stating that:

concrete entities such as rivers, houses, human faces, as well as sound patterns and written words are superimposed, fused, or otherwise brought together in the mind and totally fill its perceptual space – the subjective or imaginary space experienced in consciousness. We generally describe this space as that in the *mind's eye* (*W3DM* 56).

The narrator refers to this superimposition as lovers and as motherhood, as the mother and child erase each other when they occupy the same space. This, in turn, describes the process of erasure of the rock and river in the novel. The act of flattening the objects to exist in the narrator's "*mind's eye*" robs them of their physical existence, reducing them to entities that exist in the "imaginary space experienced in consciousness" (56). The fragmented quality

of the novel continuously creates this erasure of objects, distancing the characters from their nature and built environments, and the author from the reader.

This is more clearly seen in the second discussion of the rock-story. The narrator uses the rock-story as a way to re-write it, both by adding pieces to the story and by deleting parts of it. In one moment, the narrator refers to the rock, stating “if the rock the mother threw is real, the head of her son is now bleeding, but if the rock is just a word, the head of the son is becoming several phrases or two opposite characters” (*W3DM* 41). This re-writing of the story calls into question the realness of the rock: is it in fact a reference to a physical object or a flattening of the object into literary and abstract existence? The narrator consistently uses non-human objects and beings in order to contemplate his own writing and existence. This can be seen as a narcissistic or anthropocentric perspective, in which all things exist in order to serve the narrator, and/or as a distancing from the natural and physical world as the narrator searches for his own identity.

There are only two elements mentioned within the novel – air and water. Emily washes her hands in the bathroom and then steps out to get “some fresh air” (*W3DM* 57). The elements only serve human needs and are not represented as more than that. Water is not even mentioned directly, but is filtered through an imagined sink in the bathroom of the narrator’s apartment and is used to wash Emily’s hands. The air is also shown as a momentary need, the need for Emily to get “some fresh air,” and does not exist for any other purpose within the novel (57). This reflects a purely anthropocentric view in which nature exists to be consumed by the human when he/she so desires. Each non-human object

and animal exists around the human-protagonist; any other non-human entity has been completely omitted from the novel, while the narrators continuously focus on themselves.

The distance that exists between the human-protagonists and nature is alarming and projects an urban-centric and non-natural environment. The urban settings, use of man-made objects and vehicles, and replacement of natural landscapes with urban ones continually reveals this distance. This separation mirrors the space the author creates when he criticizes literature. Just as the narrators attempt to remove themselves from their surroundings to better contemplate their identity, situation, and emotion, the author, by distancing himself, can enter the metaliterary discourse and criticize the novel, its forms, structures, political character, and so forth. Literature then, for the author, functions as a sort of non-human entity used as a platform for self-contemplation and metaliterary discourse.

The characters maneuver through their world via cars and planes, travel from one urban environment to another (Mexico City, Toluca, Tijuana, San Diego, etc.), communicate through the T.V. and their cell-phones, and prefer to exist in a virtual and figurative place, just as Yépez does in his digital publications and blog “Border Destroyer.” The brothers prefer to exist within the digital realm of their cell-phones and state that they allow it to “interrupt” their lives, in an attempt to escape their “real life” (*W3DM* 36). He exists as a disembodied figure in his “other domain” – the virtual, cell-phone realm (36). He abandons the real world through its erasure in literature and through his own storytelling, purposefully escaping reality to enter a literary and contemplative state. Thus projecting a strong preference for the immaterial and unnatural or man-made world.

Ironically, the dismissal of the natural world and existence in a completely constructed environment depends on the use of it as a resource. The representation and depiction of these issues in the novel, reflect current problems in consumerist culture. The cars that the narrators constantly drive rely on the destruction of forest and land for the extraction of oil. The cell-phones depend on the construction of towers and cables, all of which are also derived from natural resources. The artificial lights rely on coal extraction, or, if the energy is from renewable sources, then the artificial lights may actually be powered by real, natural sunlight or wind, but, still, they must project that light through man-made devices which must be constructed with natural resources. Their rejection of and preference for a constructed environment over a natural one is not actually sustainable; as resources run out and are exploited, these constructed environments will also cease to exist. But perhaps that is what the narrator ultimately seeks, because he constantly refers to his desire to escape the real world.

The settings in *41 Clósets* are also predominately urban and are limited to restaurants, theaters, the professor's office, his apartment, and other locations within the city. The narrator does not seek peace in natural environments, nor concern himself at all with nature in any way; he is much more comfortable in the city. Much like *W3DM*, there is little mention of the natural world and the non-human. The professor is interested, rather, with his own distress, his identity, and his writing, similar to the human-protagonists in *W3DM*. One could say that the environmentality of these works is minimal, revealing a complete disregard to all things natural and non-human and a preference for the man-made over the natural.⁵⁸ Similar to Yépez's other writing, the distance between the narrators and

the natural world reflect the distance between the author and writing, through metadiscourse.

Nearly all the animals mentioned in *41 Clósets* are used in the same way that they were in *W3DM* – to characterize humans and their behaviors. The animals that appear in the first chapter of the novel are “pescados fritos,” an “oveja negra,” and a “lobo de mar” (*41 Clósets* 11, 12, 15). These animals describe the characters present at the celebration the professor is attending. The “pescados fritos” refer to clichés and phrases that one will use in the future, for they will be ready-made and easy to use, much like “comida rápida” (11). The “oveja negra” refers to Abigail Bohórquez, a Mexican writer who is attending the celebration as well. The “lobo de mar” also refers to Bohórquez and his showmanship and need to perform.⁵⁹ These animals are not mentioned or represented in a natural way, they are not participants in the story, but rather tools through which the other characters are developed and characterized

The same goes for the other animals mentioned in *41 Clósets*. In chapter two, the Professor refers to himself as a magician who pulls “conejos” out of open orifices of his body, which he claims is an act of birth or abortion. He then creates a metaphor in which the body, him, is the author, and the “conejos” are the reader. For him, this act is the “novela” or the “circo” (*41 Clósets* 17-8). Much like the previously mentioned animals, the “conejos” are not animals that accompany him or exist literally within his story, rather they serve as a metaphor for other humans.

The “cerdo,” “ratas,” “moscas,” and “simios” are represented similarly. The “cerdo” is used to characterize a postmarxist nihilist and the “ratas” are Paquita la del Barrio’s representations of men. As the Professor emphasizes: “El hombre para Paquita podía definirse sencillamente como: ‘rata de dos patas.’ / Ni siquiera una rata. Una rata lisiada” (41 *Clósets* 52). The “moscas” describe the people of Calexico, and the “simios” are mentioned through their representation in the movie “*remake: El planeta de los simios*” (102). These animals are represented in a negative light, each one portraying an appalling quality of a person or entire group of people. Again, these animals do not exist alongside the human, nor do they speak for themselves, rather they are used to depict human protagonists.⁶⁰

Merskin and Freeman’s stance on presenting animals in entertainment, media, and other cultural forms is that animals should be portrayed in their own light, should not be framed “*as the problem*,” and that “misrepresenting other animal species and creating unrealistic expectations for how real animals should behave” should be avoided (Merskin and Freeman). As we continue to portray and use animals to characterize humans, negatively or positively, we are robbing animals of their individuality and existence. By pigeonholing animals into particular frames, we alter and influence the perspectives of the reader by reinforcing or teaching him/her how to think about and/or imagine particular animals. The representation of animals in these ways creates a greater distancing between humans and non-humans. But perhaps this way of referencing animals is the only literary mechanism that we have in order to characterize and portray other human characters, using

animals to easily identify particular characteristics in humans in a way that the reader will quickly and easily understand.

Outside of the previously mentioned framework, there are two types of animals that are mentioned – “palomas” / “aves” / “pájaros” and “peces” (*41 Clósets* 103, 125, 87).⁶¹ The Professor seems to admire the “palomas” and “pájaros” because he envisions them as free beings who are able to fly through the sky at will. Immediately thereafter, however, he imagines the birds as being depressed by the limitation of their flight because, ultimately, the sky has a limit. He later wishes himself to be a “pájaro” escaping from his mouth. Even though this portrayal of a bird does not characterize the protagonist – though it could be argued that he relates to and is characterizing himself as these birds – they are represented and imagined through a human perspective. The Professor gives the birds human-like qualities like depression and the desire to buy Prozac, but the birds do not speak for themselves, nor do they exist in a realistic manner. Rather, the birds are tools, like the rock and objects found in *W3DM*, the author uses to contemplate his identity and existence.

The “peces” mentioned are not characterized at all. Rather, their absence in the water basin of Mexicali due to drought and urbanization of the area represents the effects of the Anthropocene.⁶² The Professor even comments that “no debiera haber más vida que peces, agua” in Mexicali (*41 Clósets* 87). The Professor portrays the Anthropocene throughout the novel, occasionally mentioning its superiority to the natural landscape and climate around him.

There are four instances in the novel in which the Anthropocene is directly portrayed in *41 Clósets*. Each one appears in chapter twenty-six when the narrator is describing La Rumorosa, a street in Tijuana. The first description of La Rumorosa being affected and changed by human presence is on page 86 in a prose-poem. The narrator describes rocks that are covered with graffiti and then describes the broken glass present in the valley.

He notes that the glass is even more beautiful than real water, stating:

A un lado pavimento, sobre la tierra,

los cristales de los vidrios rotos de los carros brillan

y son gotas o copos

más bellos que los producidos por el agua real (*41 Clósets* 86).

Here the narrator shows a preference to the man-made and discarded, broken shards of glass over the natural water, as the glass shines more brightly than water itself.

The narrator then continues describing the infused landscape in the same prose-poem. He shows that the trash, metal waste, graffiti, and man-made objects are a part of the landscape and have been for some time. He depicts the landscape at the end of his prose-poem:

Toda esa basura metálica es ya parte del paisaje. Así debe ser tomada. Esto no debe sorprender a nadie. La fusión ya fue hecha hace tiempo, desde la apertura misma de la carretera.

En La Rumorosa el pavimento es tan natural como las montañas.

El smog es tan natural como la Laguna Salada.

/

La asociación entre lo natural y lo artificial no debe escandalizarnos:

La Rumorosa nos deja claro que alguna vez las rocas también fueron consideradas desechos industriales (*41 Clósets* 87).

The scene that the narrator depicts is a common one across urban, developed landscapes; Man-made structures and waste litter the hillsides of mountains, the valleys, and cover much of the earth. The narrator is not ashamed of this destruction or change in the environment of La Rumorosa. Instead, he claims that it is completely natural – “tan natural como las montañas” and “La Laguna Salada” (*41 Clósets* 87). The acceptance of the altered landscape shows an acceptance of the Anthropocene and human impact on nature. It is not condoning the presence of the constructed environment in the natural one, nor presenting it in a negative way – something an environmental text would be sure to do – instead the narrator accepts the fate of La Rumorosa, as it currently is, a mixture of the natural and the man-made.⁶³

The narrator seems to even enjoy or prefer this altered state of nature. Much of the language that the professor uses to describe his environment is negative. He uses charged verbs: *matar*, *huir*, *molestar*, *impedir*, *pegar*, and *sofocar*. He also uses negative adverbs and adjectives to describe the natural world around him: *áspero*, *quemado*, *repugnante*,

incómodo, asquerosamente, and molesto. ⁶⁴ In contrast to this negative language surrounding the environment, the professor is relieved and prefers his man-made, controlled environment. In chapter eight, he writes in a poem:

Para sobrevivir en Mexicali

(ciudad por debajo del nivel del mar)

hace falta aire acondicionado

(para soportar el calor)

y no sentir frío en la soledad

[...]

El mundo externo es molesto,

pegajoso, húmedo, chicloso.

El mundo externo es la camisa

untada al cuerpo.

(Sudor vuelto vestido) (*41 Clósets* 40).

The outside world is uncomfortable, *insoportable*, and in order to survive, one must live in a controlled environment. Later in the novel he also refers to an air-conditioned environment, stating “la refrigeración del centro comercial realmente hacía que todo estuviera perfecto” (102). Again, showing a strong preference for the air-conditioned

interior over the “ciudad tan asquerosamente calurosa” and the “calor habitual, repugnante” that he experiences in Mexicali (57-8, 122).

The preference for a man-made environment, distanced from a natural environment, is not a new concept in Yépez’s writing.⁶⁵ Many of his novels describe and take place in or around Tijuana – as discussed in the previous part of this chapter. This tendency may indicate an environmentality that reveals an aversion to the natural world, or at least, a preference for the man-made one. The lack of presence, or an extremely inferior presence, of nature and non-human animals shows a disregard, or at least a lack of concern, for them. This should come as no surprise as Yépez prefers to focus on border issues, identity, and metaliterary discussions in his academic and creative writing. Yépez’s concerns lie with Tijuana, its habitants, and border culture, not with environmental battles. The distance he constructs between the narrator and the reader reflects that of the distance he creates between his characters and the environment.

Despite a greater production of climate fiction and environmental texts in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, there is still a strong presence of urban environments and modern technologies in Latin American literature today. Many writers are setting their novels in the urban, constructed environments in which they live. Raymond L. Williams’ work also focuses on both natural and “built environments,” showing the importance of urban environments and their implications within an anthropocentric society. He shows that rivers “were essential sources of water and transportation” and that now, “with the invention of the train and other motor-driven vehicles, the river began losing much of its central role in Western society and culture” (Williams, “Rural and Urban

Rivers...” 65). However, new “rivers” have risen to central focus in the modern Latin American novel. These new “rivers” are highways, railroads, and constructed viaducts or man-made rivers in cities. He identifies authors Roberto Arlt, Juan Filloy, José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo, Jaime Torres Bodet, Gilberto Owen, Vicente Huidobro, and José Felix Fuenmayor as two separate groups of:

pioneer urban writers [...] who employed substitutes for rivers that corresponded to the modernization of Latin America: the trains, cars and other vehicles that took over the roles of rivers in a variety of ways, but primarily as the new vehicles of transportation and communication (70-1).

This can be seen through forms of transportation in Yépez’s writing as well; roads, bridges, and concrete sidewalks are used, rather than rivers and trails.⁶⁶ Even though the texts do not specifically refer to the road as a “new river,” the roads connect the characters with their destinations and can be paralleled to the use of rivers in the past – similar to what Williams describes. In Yépez’s novels there is not a single mention of a river, tree, forest, or anything remotely natural that exists in its own right. Each use of natural objects and non-human entities is used to characterize the human protagonists, or as a means to discuss the human protagonists’ thoughts or ideas. The characters move through their environments driving their cars to transport themselves from one place to another without any mention of their surroundings. This not only reveals a distance from nature, but a preference over it. The disregard for nature could imply a lack of interest, but it could also imply that the urban environment in which the protagonists live lacks natural objects – animals and plants alike.

This invites us to rethink nature and environments, both rural and urban, and what they convey in narrative. The use of modern objects, technology, and man-made constructs was purposefully used in narrative in Latin America in the early twentieth century.⁶⁷ The use of man-made objects and the omission of the natural world was an attempt to be universal, choosing locations that were easily identifiable, could exist in any country, and that readers everywhere would be able to connect with and understand. Jorge Luis Borges specifically used train stations, bars, and other common locations in his short stories to make his texts universal. For example, novelists and short story writers Julio Cortázar and García Márquez who wrote in the 1950s and 1960s, incorporated technology: the train, the phone, the printing press/newspaper, and other urban constructs as projections of modernity.⁶⁸ These elements continue to be represented in the production of brief fiction, novels, and other narratives being published today and signal a shift toward a greater focus on the technological, the urban, and the constructed over the natural and rural. Just as the early twentieth-century authors used technology and urban environments to denote Latin American's modernity and to emphasize its distance with the jungle, contemporary authors reveal a greater disconnect from the natural world. This distance could be due to the continual expansion of cities, globalization, and advancing technology, all of which use natural resources in order to build constructed environments. Yépez's texts reflects this distance between human and nature, showing the disconnect from the land and nature that his characters experience.

These experimental novels focus on the human experience in the twenty-first century; showing that the natural world is not present, or is scarcely found in some, if not many, contemporary texts. They also use various forms of fragmentation from poetry, criticism, and *minificción*, to quotes and excerpts from other authors or the author's own work. Even though Alberto Chimal and Gabriela A. Arciniegas are among the few authors who do focus on non-human forms, characters, and perspectives, as I will argue in other chapters, Yépez reminds us that much literature produced in the twenty-first century, be it online or in print, still focuses on the human subject and its fascination with its own existence and experiences. These narcissist tendencies create a disconnect between the human protagonists and their non-human environments, while continuously creating a distance between the narrator and the reader. The disconnect with land-ties in Latin American literature represents a shift in literary production, as many previous works portrayed strong ties with the land and its people. The contemporary novels that ignore or portray non-natural environments, project a growing disconnect between those living in urban environments and nature. This distance, then, represents the characters' feelings, revealing an environmentality of apathy toward the natural environment.

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Appendix : Environment in *41 Clósets*

Appendix 2.1

Words used to describe the environment in *41 Clósets*

Word Type	Word	Quotation	Page Number
Verb	Ponerse de buen humor	Parecía que la noche lo ponía de buen humor.	13
Verb	Matar	La temperatura nos mataba.	15
Noun	Calor	Hacía calor.	15
Adjective	Calurosa	En esta ciudad tan calurosa	20
Noun	Sudoración	Ciudad de sudoración continua	20
Verb	Huir	Cada vez que caminaba por los pasillos de la universidad huyendo del clima, me acordaba del maestro Fernando.	26
Verbs	Soportar, Sobrevivir	Para sobrevivir en Mexicali / (ciudad por debajo del nivel del mar) / hace falta aire acondicionado / (para soportar el calor) / y no sentir frío en la soledad.	40
Adjectives	Molesto, Pegajoso, Húmedo, Chicloso	El mundo externo es molesto, / pegajoso, húmedo, chicloso. / El mundo externo es la camisa / untada al cuerpo. / (Sudor vuelto vestido).	40
Verbs	Descansar, Cabizbajear	La gente es delgada / y entra a los centros comerciales cerrados / para descansar del pesado aire / que cabizbajea por las aceras.	40
Adjective	Pesado	La gente es delgada / y entra a los centros comerciales cerrados / para descansar del pesado aire / que cabizbajea por las aceras.	40
Adverb	Abajo	Allá fuera hace 40 grados / y el sol parece estar más abajo / que en cualquier otra ciudad o tierra.	40
Verbs	Atrapar, Convertir	Mexicali es un valle subterráneo / que atrapa al aire / y convierte a la ciudad en un desierto	40
Adjectives	Áspero, Quemado, Caliente	Al salir de nuevo a la calle / - sea de noche o sea de día - / nos espera (áspero) el olor a quemado / el viento caliente y la nostalgia por la lluvia.	42

Word Type	Word	Quotation	Page Number
Noun	Nostalgia	Al salir de nuevo a la calle / - sea de noche o sea de día - / nos espera (áspero) el olor a quemado / el viento caliente y la nostalgia por la lluvia.	42
Verb	Sentirnos Felices	Podríamos sentirnos felices [...] no hacía mucho calor.	48
Noun	Grados	Apenas unos 30 grados.	48
Adverb	Asquerosamente	Una ciudad tan asquerosamente calurosa impide todo trato y todo visitante interesante.	57-58
Verb	Impedir	Una ciudad tan asquerosamente calurosa impide todo trato y todo visitante interesante.	57-60
Adjective	Calurosa	Mexicali es una ciudad calurosa. Calexico es un poco menos caliente, pero su prestigio de ciudad desagradable o insípida es comparable al de Mexicali.	66
Nouns	Barrancos, Cerros, Rocas	La Rumorosa / (el paso entre las montañas / situado al oeste de Mexicali) / un lugar lleno de barrancos, / cerros y rocas gigantes	85
Verb	Parecer	Se trata de un paisaje / que no parece terrícola // Una naturaleza que parece la naturaleza de otro planeta.	85
Noun	Nieve	En La Rumorosa constantemente cae nieve	85
Adjective	Lleno	Los barrancos están llenos de llantas / y de fósiles mecánicos	86
Adjective	Cubierto	Las grandes piedras entre las cuales fue abierto / el camino / están cubiertos de <i>graffiti</i> .	86
Verb	Caer	La nieve cae en esos sitios [en La Rumorosa].	86
Verb	Pegar	El sol pega ahí.	86
Verb	Brillar	A un lado del pavimento, sobre la tierra, / los cristales de los vidrios rotos de los carros brillan / y son gotas o copos / más bellos que los producidos por el agua real.	86

Word Type	Word	Quotation	Page Number
Adjective	Bajo	Toda esta zona estuvo alguna vez bajo el agua.	87
Noun	Fusión	Toda esa basura metálica es ya parte del paisaje. Así debe ser tomada. Esto no debe sorprender a nadie. La fusión ya fue hecha hace tiempo, desde la apertura misma de la carretera.	87
Adjective	Natural	En La Rumorosa el pavimento es tan natural como las montañas. / El smog es tan natural como la Laguna Salada. // La asociación entre lo natural y lo artificial no debe escandalizarnos: / La Rumorosa nos deja claro que alguna vez las rocas / también fueron consideradas desechos industriales. // Las caricias.	87
Noun	Cavidad	Por eso Mexicali es una cavidad a la que llega poco aire fresco.	87
Adjective	Pesado	En pozo el aire más pesado se estanca, sofoca.	87
Verbs	Estancarse, Sofocar	En pozo el aire más pesado se estanca, sofoca.	87
Verb	Reposar	Mexicali está allá abajo, donde debiera reposar agua, donde no debiera haber más vida que peces, agua.	87
Verb	Marcharse, Retirarse	Pero el agua se marchó lejos de Mexicali, el mar se retiró de este sitio.	87
Adjective	Fresca	La noche estaba casi fresca y la refrigeración del centro comercial realmente hacía que todo estuviera perfecto	102
Adjectives	Habitual, Repugnante, Incómodos, Molestos	Allá afuera el calor habitual, repugnante. Ni siquiera de noche deja la ciudad de producir ese calor extra-solar que nos tiene a todos lejos, odiándonos unos a otros. Incómodos de nuestra piel, molestos de poseer un cuerpo.	122

Endnotes

¹ Wai Chee Dimock's article, "Introduction: Genres as Fields of Knowledge," gives a summary of Benedetto Croce and Jacques Derrida's concept of genre as a simplistic idea and literature as too "dynamic" to be contained into permanent categories. Therefore, experimentation, shifts, changes, and styles are inevitably always present and changing, even within the categories and genres that critics create.

² For an analysis of Alberto Chimal's *83 Novelas*, see chapter two of this dissertation "The Non-Human in the Brief Fiction of Alberto Chimal: An ecocritical reading of *83 Novelas*." In the proceeding chapters, I will also analyze the use of the non-human figure in María Paz Ruiz Gil's *minificción* and Gabriel A. Arciniegas short story collection *Bestias*.

³ Yépez's collection of short stories, *Cuentos para oír y huir al Otro Lado*, also focuses on human characters and urban environments.

⁴ Heriberto Yépez and Alberto Chimal belong to the Generation Zero Zero; the generation consists of authors born in the 1970s who publish in the 2000s. María Paz Ruiz Gil and Gabriela A. Arciniegas, the two other authors presented in later chapters of this dissertation, are also a part of the Generation Zero Zero.

⁵ Some protagonist-dominant literature still revolves around the non-human world and its needs. A few examples in Mexican literatura are: Luis Lomeli's *Todos santos de California*, Francesca Gargallo's *La marcha seca*, and Daniel Rodríguez Barrón's *La soledad de los animales*. These novels focus on human protagonists who fight for environmental and animal protection and concern themselves with the non-human and non-urban environment (even if their own environments are urban).

⁶ Many of Yépez's publications are essays, chronicles, short stories, novels, and poetry. *Made in Tijuana*, *El imperio de la neomemoria*, *Sobre la impura esencia de la crítica*, and *El libro de lo post-poético* are just a few of his essay collections and critical works.

⁷ Most of the articles published on Yépez focus on his writing of and presence in Border Literature. Some of the critics who have examined this element of Yépez's literature are Alberto Ribas-Casasayas, Paul Fallon, Diana Palaversich, Max Parra, and Miguel Angel Pillado.

⁸ Yépez clarifies that by "Ocidental" he does "not want to say only the (Euro-American) Occidental, but all citizens of any culture in its late stage, in its globalized "hybridization"" (Yépez, Mahieux, and Nabsny 4).

⁹ The critics who have noted Heriberto Yépez's use of Tijuana are: Frauke Gewecke, Édgar Cota-Torres, Diana Palaversich, Miguel Angel Pillado, Elena Ritondale, Michael Davidson,

Will H. Corral, Jennifer Insley, George Luna-Peña, Francisco A. Lomelí, Jungwon Park, Paul Fallon, and Alberto Ribas-Casasayas, and authors Elmer Mendoza, and Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz.

¹⁰ Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz, another author from the border, who states similar things about Tijuana, is also mentioned by Édgar Cota-Torres.

¹¹ Gewecke, “Introducción” 77.

¹² Palaversich’s mention of the anthropomorphic quality of the land in *Al otro lado* is the only mention, out of the critics who have published on Yépez’s work, of anthropocentric presence or evaluation of the environment in Yépez’s novels.

¹³ The two myths that Miguel Angel Pillado addresses in Yépez’s *Al otro lado* are: “Tijuana as violent and perverted, a capital of sin,” and “Tijuana as the height of globalized cultural hybridity” (Pillado 439).

¹⁴ Heriberto Yépez declares himself as an opposing force to Mexican politics on his blog “Border Destroyer.” He states on his page that, through his blog, he can publish without editors, institutions, or colleagues, and that from this platform he can combat “las fuerzas centrípetas de las literaturas (ideológicamente) nacionales de México y Estados Unidos” and that he uses the internet to “detener el avance del neoliberalismo cultural” (Yépez, “Border Destroyer”). Yépez argues that his literature, essays and novels serve as his “praxis guerrillera” (Yépez, “Border Destroyer”). Yépez’s website offers links to events, contact information, publications in Spanish, and critics and authors who oppose his work.

¹⁵ On multiple occasions, Yépez has stated that the purpose of literature is “hacer que la profesión del escritor permanezca y sea un contrapeso tanto simbólico como práctico al discurso dominante” (Yépez “Domesticación de La Escritura,” 7). For him, the Mexican writer is “domesticado,” for it worships and adores the “Canon” (7). Thus, the purpose of creating meaningful literature is to break with the form, structure, and repetition of the Canon. That is why, for Yépez, reading “es enterarse de una realidad desconocida, tener bases para crear un pensamiento propio y crítico, dialógico, polémico, sustancial” (7). He believes the role of an author and a professor is to “crear situaciones en que los jóvenes también se percaten de que los libros pueden utilizarse para salir del orden dominante y para propagar ideas y estructuras que tumben definitivamente este orden” (7).

¹⁶ Charles I. Glicksberg also reminds us that many acclaimed authors, Franz Kafka, James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, and Samuel Becket, paved way for our current literary forms that deviate from traditional narrative forms.

¹⁷ *W3DM*’s experimental form, extreme fragmentation, and plural narration would not have made it easily accepted through a traditional publisher. Viviane Mahieux also stated that

Yépez's "online presence has effectively counterbalanced the limitations that often accompany publishing in small regional presses" (1).

¹⁸ The same applies for Chimal's experimental digital publication of *83 Novelas*, which he published online for free.

¹⁹ To see David Baizabal's comment and the full analysis, see chapter two "The Non-human in the Brief Fiction of Alberto Chimal: An Ecocentric Reading of *83 Novelas*."

²⁰ The Electronic Literature Organization defines digital literature as "work with an important literary element that takes advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer" (Hayles 3). When I refer to electronic texts or digital literature, I am using this definition. The most cited digital novel is *Afternoon. A Story* by Michael Joyce, written in 1986 (Bennet).

²¹ There is a genre of criticism referred to as "The Death of the Novel." In this genre there are a plethora of essays and articles declaring the death of the novel since the 1920s. Additionally, there are critics, like Robert Clark Young, who disagree with the proclamation of the death of the novel. Young's article "The Death of the Death of the Novel" proclaims the vital position that novels still hold in publication today and refutes the entire genre of the death of the novel. Roberto Bolaño's novel *2666* and Alberto Chimal's most recent publication *La torre y el jardín* are examples of the continual production of the long novel in Latin America. George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Fire and Ice* saga serves as an example of the prevalence of the long novel in popular American culture in the twenty-first century.

²² Mario Bellatín wrote *El hombre dinero* entirely on his iPhone, specifically calling attention to this fact at the end of his work, ending the text with the statement "enviado desde mi iPhone" (127).

²³ Friedrich A. Kittler's novel *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* evaluates and identifies three crucial phases in the transformation of literature: 1) The American Civil War and the production of film, the gramophone, and the typewriter; 2) WWI and the creation of the radio and television; and 3) WWII and the invention of computers.

²⁴ Her seven characteristics are outlined at the end of her book *The Fragmented Novel in Mexico: The Politics of Form*. The seven characteristics of the Mexican fragmented novel as outlined by D'Lugo are:

- 1) There is a fundamental movement away from the traditional notion of story: Fragmented novels that break with narrative norms flaunt their status as a nonwhole by laying bare the gaps in their structure (228).

2) The city is presented as a locus of atomization; from Azuela through Puga, authors have privileged the depiction of the sprawling, venal, and atomizing city (228).

3) There are open endings and circular structures that foster a reconsideration of the text. The reader is forcefully removed from a position of potential passivity as mere receivers of story. They are sent back to the beginning of the novel to reevaluate the already read, asked to provide closure when none is supplied, and invited to interrogate the text's systems (229).

4) There is an inscription of authors, narrators, readers, and "citizens"-in-the-text who present a model, whether positive or negative, of ways of dealing with a complex narrative or ways of living within a complex society (229).

5) There is a dramatization of the responsibility of the individual to reassess the past and a revisionist effort or rereading of history from a nonphallogocentric point of view. Beyond being encouraged to question elements of narration or the assumption of authorial control, the reader is presented with characters who look to the past with a critical eye, reassessing childhood and "institutionalized" national history as a means through which to achieve personal growth and to effect change (229).

6) There is a focus on the reader, whether by addressing them directly or forcefully dislodging them from previous narrative assumptions. There is a directness in the novels of the twentieth century that goes far beyond the notion of a "dear reader" of earlier times. Many works are marked by an intimacy between narrator and the reader, particularly from the *Onda* fiction to the present (229). The reader is invited into the novel as coparticipants and are allowed the freedom to personalize their interpretations (230).

7) There is a presentation of stimuli pointing toward a coherence within narrative that suggests ways of unifying the fragments (230).

Additionally, Guy Bennett, in his article "Ce livre qui n'en est pas un: le texte littéraire électronique," comments on the phenomenon of the fragment in electronic literature and identifies three main elements of digital literature's fragments: indecision, multilineality, and the absence of an inherent medium.

²⁵ Raymond Williams addresses this in *The Postmodern Novel in Latin America*.

²⁶ Another novel by Yépez, *El Matasellos*, even includes a blank chapter, titled "Capítulo innecesario."

²⁷ Even though the structure may be circular and the endings open-ended, *41 Clósets* and *W3DM* have linear storylines. *El matasellos*, another publication of Yépez, with its occasional flashbacks and circular plot structure, also has a linear storyline. *El matasellos* begins with the line "Nadie sabía, a ciencia cierta, cómo habían muerto los miembros del

club filatélico de la ciudad” and even though it immediately jumps back in time to the forming of the *club filatélico*, it then develops in a linear fashion (11).

²⁸ *El matasellos* asks questions about the novel and information regarding the characters in footnotes. Craig Dworkin quotes Yépez stating “Nobody is going to believe that footnotes changed Writing and Reading. But they did” (1). Yépez deliberately uses footnotes, quotes, and citations in his writing to draw attention to the writing process and as a form of rupture.

²⁹ This concept has been previously mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation in the discussion about *minificción* and is referred to as *reescritura y parodia* (Lagmanovich 127).

³⁰ As previously mentioned in the introduction, the same occurs in *minificción* when the stories on which they build are canonical.

³¹ Later in the chapter, I will refer to the fragments as chapters due to their numeration in the text.

³² On average, the fragments oscillate between a few phrases and two pages in length.

³³ In another publication, *El matasellos*, one chapter consists of a single word – “Toc” – written in fourteen different ways on the page (95).

³⁴ The Micropoetry Poetry Society defines the micropoem as “a genre of poetic verse which is characterized by its extreme brevity. In other words, a micropoem is a short poem” (“Micropoetry: Short Enough for Twitter & Sms”). Joanna Kavenna remarks on Winfried Georg Sebald’s publication *Unrecounted* – a publication of 33 micropoems – in her review of Sebald’s writing.

³⁵ *Wars. Threesomes. Drafts. & Mothers.* is a bilingual novel which contains both English and Spanish; all quotes are reproduced in their original language.

³⁶ This absence, or ellipsis, is present in all short fiction, be it short story, *cuento*, or *microrrelato*.

³⁷ Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish have discussed the power and place of the reader. Julio Cortazár also identifies two types of reader; the passive and the active reader. Additionally, Roland Barthes claims the death of the author, giving the reader the power of interpretation.

³⁸ Even in create-your-own-adventure books the active reader chooses previously determined paths that the author has chosen, but does not actually create the story, nor is asked to do so. An example of adult literature of this type is *Choose Your Own Misery: The Office Adventure* by Mike MacDonald & Jilly Gagnon. In *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*, N. Katherine Hayles also mentions these types of works – also known as Interactive Fiction (IF) – in digital publications. Additionally, in his article

“Misadventure: Future Fiction and the New Networks,” Stuart Moulthrop points out this element in online video games that have extensive story-like plotlines

³⁹ Raymond L. Williams addresses this issue in his discussion of literary truths in his book *The Postmodern Novel in Latin America*.

⁴⁰ Miguel de Unamuno’s *Niebla*, published in 1914, serves as an example.

⁴¹ Here I use metadiscourse to refer to the act of referencing the writing process and writing itself within a literary text. This is a recurring characteristic of Yépez’s writing.

⁴² Ribas-Casasayas denotes that the narrator of the novel and the author are extremely different empirically, he states that, in comparison with Heriberto Yépez, “el narrador es por lo menos una década mayor, es homosexual, vive en Mexicali, tiene barba” (82).

⁴³ This is in reference to Yépez’s article “Notas Sobre Post-Experimentalismo” and what he considers “traditional western prose.”

⁴⁴ This type of fragmentation is seen in the fragmentation in *Pedro Páramo*, where the fragments are broken episodes.

⁴⁵ See endnote 43.

⁴⁶ The presence of complex narrative and representation of a complex society is one of D’Lugo’s characteristics of the fragmented Mexican novel in the twentieth century. See endnote 25.

⁴⁷ There is a dual identity present in *41 Clósets* – the respected professor and the closeted homosexual – however, these two identities are not separate narrators to the story, rather two facets of the same character.

⁴⁸ This frustration is depicted in the image of a black spot and entangled strings on the cover of the novel.

⁴⁹ I define “environment-less,” “non-environmental,” and a “non-environment” as anything that lacks a physical environment; this can take the form of abstract thought that does not occur outside oneself and/or in voids or empty spaces created by the authors in their works. Diana Palaversich makes note of the use of “no-espacio” and “no-lugar” in Mexican authors Christina Rivera Garza and David Toscana (Palaversich “La Nueva Narrativa Del Norte: Moviendo Fronteras De La Literatura Mexicana.”). She describes this “environment-less” space in Rivera Garza’s novel as the space in which “se apartan del mundo extraliterario para desenvolverse enteramente en ese espacio abstracto, el no-lugar de la ficción, donde se eliminan todos significantes que aludan a la ubicación temporal o geográfica de los hechos” (15).

⁵⁰ *El matasellos* also has a title which refers to a man-made object – the postmark. These stamp collectors evolve around tiny man-made objects that they collect in their local post office. The emphasis on collecting physical objects that represent specific moments in history and time, again, shows a reliance on and strong connection with the man-made over the natural.

⁵¹ Due to the content within the novel, the word “drafts” in the title seems to refer more to the literary form rather than a military draft.

⁵² Lawrence Buell defines “built” or “constructed” environments as environments that are constructed by man, either to reconstruct natural environments, or to create entirely man-made urban environments (Buell, *The Future...*).

⁵³ Lawrence Buell defines environmental texts as works that include these four elements: 1) “the non-human 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,” 2) “The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest,” 3) “Human accountability to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation,” and 4) “some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text” (Buell, *The Environmental...* 7).

⁵⁴ The lizards are the only animals that are represented as themselves in the novel. However, it should be mentioned that they are used and tormented by the author for his amusement.

⁵⁵ I find this particularly ironic, as humans have consistently been more violent systematically to their own species, other species, and their environment, than any other non-human animal. Here, I have also purposefully used the term “humane” to further draw attention to the depiction of the human animal as a force of care, tenderness, and compassion toward other animals and people.

⁵⁶ Environmentality refers to Lawrence Buell’s concept that all texts have and reveal a perspective on environment, even though that view may not be explicit (Buell, *The Future...* 142).

⁵⁷ Celan, Paul. *Works. Selections. English & German*. Trans. John Felstiner. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.

⁵⁸ See endnote 51.

⁵⁹ The conflict the professor, a Northern writer, has with Abigail Bohórquez, a writer from Mexico City, could be seen as a reflection of the friction that exists between Northern and Mexico City authors in Mexico.

⁶⁰ There is also a moment in the novel when humans are converted into “criaturas sin porvenir, sin trascendencia y sin posible disimulo” when they participate in “los *one-night-stands*” (21).

⁶¹ There is only one more reference to animals in the novel and that is when the narrator refers to “El poema en prosa” as a “forma anfibia” (93). Even though it is not pertinent to this current research, the use of the adjective amphibious to describe the hybridity and duality of poetry in prose may be of future interest.

⁶² The Anthropocene refers to the geological age in which humans have been the dominant influence on climate and the environment.

⁶³ See endnote 54.

⁶⁴ For a full list of words used in *41 Clósets* to describe the environment see Appendix A.

⁶⁵ In Yépez’s essay “Against Telephysics” he admits that “the telephysical is an anthropocentric fantasy” one in which “man no longer becomes inside of the ecological process,” arguing that this process was created when “a distance appeared between man and world that surrounded it” (Yépez, Mahieux, and Nabasny).

⁶⁶ This is common in urban environments, and is therefore common in texts whose setting is an urban environment. Nevertheless, there are constructed green spaces in most urban environments, which makes the absence of nature remarkable in these works, because the texts do not mention constructed, “natural” environments either.

⁶⁷ A primary goal of McOndo literature was to include technology and urban settings to distance themselves from the Macondo.

⁶⁸ It is important to note, however, that during the 1950s and 60s there were also many authors publishing novels entirely focused on *el campo*, *la nación*, and *la tierra*, while publishing within the *costumbrismo* and *regionalismo* genres. These works denoted a strong connection and tie with the land and those living within those regions. Therefore, the shift in representation of nature and land is noteworthy, because it shows a shift away from land-ties toward a greater globalized society and characters that have limited or no ties to the land.

Chapter IV

The Anthropocene in the Smallest Forms: María Paz Ruiz Gil's *Micronopia* and *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*

The new age of twenty-first century technology has brought with it ongoing anthropocentric views, exploitation of resources, and ever-growing urban, constructed spaces, as well as social media platforms, excessive consumption, and a disconnect from the natural, non-human world. *Micronopia* (2011) and *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* (2014) by María Paz Ruiz Gil portray this anthropocentric perspective and its effects, using humor and anthropomorphism to explore the new age. The two works utilize human, non-human animal and non-human non-animal protagonists, such as birds, butterflies, cows, the sea, souls, phantoms, the universe, and a plethora of others to create this perspective. Despite the overall anthropocentric view found in the works, there are also moments of ecocentric perspective when non-human animals, as well as non-human non-animals are given the will to think, desire, and feel; exploring the world through their own perspectives. Ruiz Gil blends digital platforms, humor, metafiction, and human and non-human protagonists to create a microscope of a world that represents the Anthropocene, anthropocentrism, and ecocentrism.

The few critics and authors who have mentioned and reviewed Ruiz Gil's work have done so in a somewhat historical fashion, portraying her as part of the new generation of authors coming out of Colombia, or as a new author or *minificción* in Spain, but none of them discuss her works in full, nor do they analyze her works from an ecocritical perspective. In this chapter, I analyze *Micronopia* and *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*

in an attempt to show the anthropocentric perspective in her work, as well as to point out a few *microrrelatos* that contradict this perspective and offer an ecocentric one. Finally, I look at the built and constructed environments, non-environments, and the lack of natural environments within the two works to demonstrate a distance between the protagonists and nature.

Claire Taylor and Raymond L. Williams mention María Paz Ruiz Gil as one of the Colombian authors of the twenty-first century who makes “use of existing digital platforms for literary purpose” (Taylor and Williams 158). They present a brief history of Colombian literature in the twenty-first century, presenting three generations of writers in Colombia, discussing major topics within the literature of these generations, and, finally, examining hypertext fiction and literature on digital platforms.¹ They discuss the works of Mario Mendoza, Jorge Franco, Santiago Gamboa, Efraím Medina Reyes, Fernando Vallejo, Laura Restrepo, Héctor Abad Facciolince, Darío Jaramillo, Roberto Burgos, Tomás Gonzalez, Eduardo García Aguilar, Oscar Collazos, William Ospina, Ramón Illán Baca, Juan Gabriel Vásquez, Ricardo Silva Romero, Virginia Mayer, Juan B. Gutiérrez, Jaime Alejandro Rodríguez, and Santiago Ortiz, before briefly mentioning Ruiz Gil’s digital publications on her blog “Diario de una cronopia.” This is their only mention of Ruiz Gil, but the inclusion of her in the article, published in *A History of Colombian Literature*, is worth mentioning. Ruiz Gil’s publication *Ojos de tinta* would have been noteworthy in their chapter, as it was published in 2014 and was the author’s first publication of illustrated Tweets.² Her most recent publication, *#Femituits* (2016) would also have been well worth mentioning since the work is compiled entirely of texts written in Tweet format – despite

the texts never actually having been published on Twitter – but it was published in 2016 shortly after *A History of Colombian Literature* was released (Williams).³

Claire Taylor presents a history of women writers in Colombia spanning across the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. She identifies the major women writers of each century and offers a brief analysis of their work. When discussing nineteenth century women writers in Colombia, she names only one author: Soledad Acosta. She states that Acosta is “Colombia’s most significant woman writer in the nineteenth century” (Taylor 322). Subsequently she identifies Sofía Ospina de Navarro, Meira Delmar, Maruja Vieira, Blanca Isaza, Elisa Mujica, and María Helena Uribe as the predominant women writers in Colombia in the twentieth century. She then analyzes women writers Albalucía Ángel, Fanny Buitrago, Marvel Moreno, Helena Araújo, and Helena Iriarte, identifying them as women writers of the Post-Boom era. Taylor ends her discussion of the twentieth century by presenting authors Silva Galvis, Laura Restrepo, Patricia Lara, Carmen Cecilia Suárez, Nana Rodríguez Romero, and Consuelo Triviño. Finally, Taylor discusses twenty-first century women writers in Colombia, identifying a trend in “combining journalism or academia with a writing career” (Taylor 344).⁴ She identifies María Paz Ruiz Gil, along with Margarita Posada, Carolina Sanín, and Ángela Becerra as women writers who contribute to this type of writing.

Taylor presents an overview of women writers across three centuries and identifies genres – *crónica*, the novel, poetry, drama, the short story, and the *microrrelato* – and commonalities – questioning of language, literary representation, and women’s identity in literature, journalistic tropes and historical novels – across the generation.⁵ Taylor

identifies María Paz Ruiz Gil as part of the new generation of Colombian writers publishing in the twenty-first century. She places Ruiz Gil among the authors who have managed to blend their literary and journalistic careers. Taylor does not mention the title of the volume of *microrrelatos*, published in 2011, but it is likely she is referring to *Micronopia*, which was Ruiz Gil's volume of *microrrelatos* published that year.⁶ Taylor chooses to brush over the volume in order to mention her first novel – *Soledad, una colombiana en Madrid* (2012). Unlike the other authors mentioned in the article, Taylor does not summarize nor analyze the works of Ruiz Gil. Instead, she briefly mentions her publications prior to 2012 and quickly moves on to discuss the works of Ángela Becerra.

Similar to Taylor and Williams' article, María Paz Ruiz Gil is only briefly mentioned, but not discussed – even though the author has published many other works proceeding the publication of these two articles. Her publications have included other volumes of *microrrelatos* and *tuits ilustrados* – *Pop Porn* (2013), *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* (2014), *Ojos de tinta* (2014), *Redes sexuales* (2015), and *#Femituits* (2016) –, a non-fiction book – *Sexo sin comillas* (2015) –, and various short stories – “La hija del Caribe”⁷ (2012) and *Los amantes de la vagina magistral* (2012).⁸ The author has also been included in various anthologies: *201, Ellas cuentan menos: panorama del minicuento colombiana escrito por mujeres*, and *Mar de pirañas: nuevas voces del microrrelato español* (Donayre, Roas, Bernal, and Valls). As previously mentioned, in this chapter, I analyze two of her *microrrelato* collections – *Micronopia* and *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*.

Fernando Valls includes three *microrrelatos* by María Paz Ruiz Gil in his most recent anthology – two of which were published in *Micronopia* –, but does not mention her in his introduction. Ruiz Gil is showcased with *minificción* authors: Ángel Zapata, Fernando Iwasaki, Francisco Silvera, Pilar Adón, Isabel Mellado, Javier Puche, Manuel Espada, and Andrés Neuman.⁹ Valls proceeds to define and defend *minificción*, but neglects to give a clear history of the genre and to present works and other academic resources which analyze and critique *minificción*. Additionally, a few critics come to mind when thinking of Peninsular and Latin American *minificción*: David Lagmanovich, Dolores M. Koch, Lauro Zavala, Ángeles Encinar, and Carmen Valcárcel.¹⁰

Valls does define *microrrelato* similarly to how Lagmanovich and Zavala would define it; Valls declares that:

el microrrelato es un texto narrativo breve que cuenta una historia, a pesar de no ser la brevedad el rasgo distintivo que lo singularice, sino su estructura condensada, producto de la precisión, la intensidad y la concisión narrativas, siendo su particular forma la consecuencia lógica de esos rasgos definitorios (Valls 10).

He also mentions *intertextualidad*, *reescritura*, metafiction, hybridity, ambiguity, humor, satire, parody, and several other elements that Lagmanovich, Koch, Zavala, and Encinar have identified in their research.¹¹ Unfortunately, he does not give a clear history of the genre, leaving the reader wondering from where the genre originates. Valls does mention *aforismo* and *fábula* briefly, but does not explain anything further about the brief forms.

He does, however, note that there seem to be two types of publications of *microrrelatos*: the works that publish an accumulation of *minificción*, dividing certain works into various categories within the work, and those that attempt to elicit or create a particular theme or motive, or repeat a character throughout all of the *minificción* pieces included in the work. A few examples of contemporary Spanish publications that I would add to Valls' would be Patricia Esteban Erlés' *Casa de muñecas* (2012), Fernando Iwasaki's *Ajuar funerario* (2004), José María Merino's *El libro de las horas contadas* (2011), Andrés Neuman's *Hacerse el muerto* (2011), Julia Otxoa's *Un extraño envío* (2006), and Luisa Valenzuela's *Juego de villanos* (2010).

Valls also includes a biography of Ruiz Gil, along with the other sixty-nine authors included in the collection, but does not comment on her work directly. The three *microrrelatos* included in the anthology are "Los olores del mundo," "La vida sexual de las palabras," and "Muñecos de Playmobil" (Valls 294-6). "Los olores del mundo" can be found in both *Micronopia* and *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* and on Valls' blog *La nave de los locos* and "La vida sexual de las palabras" can be found in *Micronopia*, but "Muñecos de Playmobil" is listed as previously unpublished and does not appear in any of her other, current publications.

Leticia Bustamante reviews Fernando Valls' anthology of *microrrelatos* in Spain, listing María Paz Ruiz Gil as one of the authors included in the anthology. Bustamante admits that the anthology could better differentiate the *microrrelato* from the *cuento* and could have included major *microrrelato* writers in Spain such as David Roas, Francisco Rodríguez Criado, Miguel Ángel Muñoz, and Patricia Esteban Erlés. However,

Bustamante also praises Valls on creating a clear and varied collection of *minificción* written in the twenty-first century in Spain. She notes that Valls does not limit his anthology to strictly Spanish writers, but includes many authors living and publishing in Spain. This is important because this is how Ruiz Gil, a Colombian author, was included in the anthology.¹²

Bustamante commends Valls in his ability to clearly define and defend *minificción* and its publication and academic study. She also indicates that Valls portrays an array of elements, structures, and themes trending in *minificción* publications in Spain. Bustamante lists various tendencies that Valls identifies in the collection:

lo simbólico, lo fantástico y lo maravilloso; versión, subversión e inversión de personajes, tópicos y motivos pertenecientes a nuestro acervo cultural y literario; y reflexión sobre la propia literatura, sobre el acto creativo o sobre el lenguaje (Bustamante 321).

The latter element, the “reflexión sobre la propia literatura,” is when Bustamante categorizes the writing of Ruiz Gil, specifically identifying the *microrrelato* “La vida sexual de las palabras” as a metaliterary piece. Bustamante ends her review recommending Valls’ work as an anthology that serves as a resource for understanding the *microrrelato* in Spain in the twenty-first century. Even though the anthology is missing some key elements when outlaying the historical and critical background of the *microrrelato*, it does present a variety of authors publishing *microrrelatos* in Spain.

Darío Hernández also reviews the anthology, stating “la importancia de esta antología reside en que presenta una excelente muestra de lo más representativo de la micro-narrativa española más reciente” (Hernández 237). Hernández praises the anthology for its ample collection of *minificción* writers, but does little more to analyze its academic value. He does list, in alphabetical order, all of the authors included in the anthology, in which María Paz Ruiz Gil appears, but he does not analyze or speak of any of the individual works. Finally, he refers to the “mini-universos” created by the writers as an ocean the reader may dive into, alluding to the title of the anthology as well as the epigraph included in the anthology by Ana María Shúa.¹³

Various non-academic reviews, interviews, and articles have been written on María Paz Ruiz Gil. Daniel Vivas Barandica published a review of Ruiz Gil’s publication *Ojos de tinta* (2012) in which he classifies Ruiz Gil’s writing as part of the *post-feminista* movement and describes the work as a collection of *microrrelatos* featuring “niñas atormentadas que buscan algo de esperanza en sus grandes ojos de trazados con finas líneas de tinta china” (Vivas Barandica). He claims that Ruiz Gil is attempting to transform the typical *tuit* from “estados de ánimo, frases sarcásticas, crítica a la Sociedad, o lo que están haciendo en X o Y momento” into a literary artform (Vivas Barandica). He states that her *tuits* are instead “pensamientos o frases cortas que reflejan los delirios, gustos, miedos, pasiones, frustraciones, sueños, sentimientos, deseos, vivencias, y expresiones artísticas de la autora” (Vivas Barandica). He even declares that the *tuits* in *Ojos de tinta* are “VERDADEROS MICRORELATOS [*sic.*]” (capitalization is from the original text) (Vivas Barandica). Vivas Barandica claims that these types of publications do not have as

many reviews, likes, or interactions as other *tuits* but states that it may be due to the lack of exposure to literary *tuits* on Twitter's social media platform.

Vivas Barandica also mentions Ruiz Gil's non-fiction publication *Sexo sin comillas*. As might be expected from this type of publication, Vivas Barandica does not engage with the texts themselves or mention other authors who are also writing *microrrelatos* on Twitter – Alberto Chimal and Jose Luis Zarate are two Mexican authors who use Twitter for *microficción* that come to mind. Overall the article mentions little of the contents of *Ojos de tinta*, but provides a classification of the publication as *minificción*.

A small publishing company, Veronica Cartonera, published a short story by Ruiz Gil, *Los mini egos* (2013). The company follows the tradition of *cartonera* publications – handmade publications created using only cardboard and recycled materials – in Latin America.¹⁴ The editorial promoted *Los mini egos* in an online article on their own webpage and, like Daniel Vivas Barandica, referred to the author as a *post-feminista* writer. The article also mentions Ruiz Gil's blog, *Diario de una cronopia*, as do Taylor and Williams, but here the editors of Veronica Cartonera claim that the blog is “le seul blog de microrrelatos Pop” (the sole blog of Pop *microrrelatos*) (Batille). The article also mentions two other publications by Ruiz Gil – *Micronopia* (2011) and *Los amantes de la vagina magistral* (2012). The editorial also points out the use of *cartonera* publishers used by Ruiz Gil, specifically mentioning Meninas Cartoneras – the company in Madrid who published *Micronopia* in 2012.

Meninas Cartoneras published an interview with Ruiz Gil on their editorial's blog, asking the author about her use of *minificción*, her choice to publish with them – a *cartonera* publisher – and her future publications. Ruiz Gil alludes to the long history of *minificción* and its “great” authors, but does not mention any authors by name. She also refuses to admit who her influences were in *minificción*, saying “cargo mis influencias dentro, me gusta que mis lectores las identifiquen solos y las descubran por contagio” (“UNIVERSO”). Ruiz Gil claims to have chosen short forms in order to “jugar con el lector” and “dispararle su imaginación mediante la elipsis,” a characteristic she employs in her *microrrelatos* and a common characteristic found in *minificción* in general (“UNIVERSO”).¹⁵ Ruiz Gil also defends *minificción*, stating “la brevedad en literatura es una virtud, pero no debe confundirse con vagancia o mediocridad” (“UNIVERSO MENINAS (I). El Escritor: María Paz Ruiz Gil”). Finally, the author speaks of upcoming publications, mentioning her first novel, *Memorias de soledad*, later titled, *Soledad, una colombiana en Madrid* (2012). She alludes to future *minificción* publications, but does not mention any concrete projects at the time.

In another interview, Evlin considers that María Paz Ruiz Gil is a “mujer tan arriesgada” for publishing erotic as well as non-erotic literature, implying that being taken seriously as a writer after publishing erotic literature can be difficult.¹⁶ Ruiz Gil confesses that she does not see herself as an erotic writer, but that the sensual is a common element to her literature. This element can be seen in the *microrrelatos* in *Pop Porn* (2013) and *Redes sexuales* (2015). Later in the interview, Ruiz Gil confesses that she is driven by words and then personifies “la palabra” saying that “ella [la palabra] es mi aliada, mi

estreptococo, siempre la llevo dentro como un bicho del que no me puedo deshacer, ni queriéndolo” (Evlin). The personification of *la palabra* is also seen in her *microrrelatos*, which I analyze later in this chapter.

In an interview with *Entretiens Lectures d’ailleurs*, María Paz Ruiz Gil discusses a few of her *microrrelatos* – specifically, *La mujer mono* (published in *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*) which I analyze later in this chapter, *Apuesta entre asesinos* and *Dios y el poeta* – which have been translated into French.¹⁷ The interviewer asks Ruiz Gil her opinion on modern technology and its use in her publications, in which Ruiz Gil acknowledges her critique of the dehumanizing factor of technology (“María Paz Ruiz Gil (Espagne)”). She also mentions the challenges that writing faces now that videogames and animated films have become so popular. She admits that this competition has brought her to create works of *tuits ilustrados* – possibly alluding to, but not mentioning directly, *Ojos de tinta* (2014) and *#Femituits* (2016), as they were published well after the interview took place. Ruiz Gil’s criticism and desire to compete with new technologies may also explain why her two publications of *tuits ilustrados* – mentioned previously – are not actually published on Twitter. Her criticism could also point to why she has chosen many times to publish with *cartonera* publishers who produce books by hand – painting and sewing the recycled materials together for each publication. However, it could also be exclusivity that she seeks when publishing with these publishers, because only a small number of publications are made.

María Paz Ruiz Gil discusses her own creative process for *Internacional Microcuentista*, describing her three *minificción* publications, *Micronopia*, *Pop Porn*, and

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos. She defends her publication *Micronopia* against Fernando Valls' claim that it is impossible to find the publication, saying that the artisanal format of the work limits its availability. She also discusses the construction of the work, confirming its accordion-like form, recycled paper, and hand-drawn cover. She promotes the digital publication of *Micronopia* which includes images and a recording of each *microrrelato*. Ruiz Gil identifies Ricardo Bada, Carmen Boullosa, and Carolina Muñoz as the voices and singers that appear in the digital version.¹⁸

Finally, Ruiz Gil examines *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*, stating that the work allowed her to portray her fascination for “la casualidad, la muerte, el absurdo, la locura, la maternidad, la complejidad del amor y los universos ficticios que se tejen en Internet” (Ruiz Gil, “María Paz Ruiz Gil o el arte de la versatilidad”). She also expresses her gratitude for having the prologue of the work written by Guillermo Bustamante Zamudio.

Ruiz Gil also speaks of her choice of the *minificción* genre, stating “los microrrelatos, en cambio [de la novela], me permitían verter toda mi creatividad en un solo cazo, y trabajaban desde la sugerencia, lo que los convertía en platos súper atrevidos y condensados, platos que podía probar y probar y, en cada cucharada, cambiaban de sabor” (Ruiz Gil, “María Paz Ruiz Gil o el arte de la versatilidad”). Her most recent publication, *#Femituits*, shows her continual employment of the *tuitera* genre for her literary publications. Her blogposts in the blogs *Bienestar en tiempos de drones* and *Diario de una cronopia* also promote and showcase her *minificción*.

María Paz Ruiz Gil published *Micronopia*, one of her collections of *minificción*, through Meninas Cartoneras in 2011. The collection contains eight *microrrelatos* in total and is made entirely of recycled paper and cardboard. It is noteworthy that the publisher Meninas Cartoneras operates with an ecological-impact awareness, using recycled paper, cardboard, and other similar materials to construct their books. This limits the number of publications that are released, but does add value to the books in terms of ecological impact. The format in which it was published also adds an element to its study as an ecological work, if it is indeed deemed one. María Paz Ruiz Gil also published *Los amantes de la vagina magistral* in 2012 through Meninas Cartoneras and *Redes sexuales* through Meninas Cartoneras and Zoográfica in 2015. Additionally, Ruiz Gil has published *Cenar sin televisor: tres relatos digestivos* in 2013 through a similar publishing company, La Veronica Cartonera in Barcelona, Spain. Ruiz Gil's choice for publication indicates, at least to a small extent, her desire for her works to be published in an ecologically-friendly manner. Despite her texts indicating a strong anthropocentric perspective.

Most of the *microrrelatos* in *Micronopia* are less than a paragraph in length; the longest *microrrelato* being composed of just sixteen sentences and the shortest, two. Alberto Chimal performed a digital prologue for the collection on YouTube, stating “[h]ay que encontrarnos a nuestros mismos en ese lugar extraño que se llama literatura. Tal vez un libro como *Micronopia* pueda ayudarnos en el trayecto para encontrarnos en esos símbolos, para entender lo que significa ser humano ahora” (“Alberto Chimal prologa micronopia digital”). His invitation to reflect on human existence draws attention to the themes and ideas found in the work. This collection of *microrrelatos* tells the story of

human protagonists, non-human protagonists, and one story about God and his childhood friend, the devil. The *microrrelatos* display many uses of wordplay to create humor and intrigue in the texts, as well as surprising twists of perspectives. Even though the non-human protagonists included in these *microrrelatos* appear to exist of their own volition, they tend to imitate human characteristics and are mainly used to describe other human characters, kept as pets, or used as a resource – mainly as a food source. The rest of the *microrrelatos* lean toward an anthropocentric perspective and project an assumed built environment, or an electronic and virtual environment.

Only three of the *microrrelatos* in the collection deal with non-human protagonists: “Confesión de una tartamuda,” “La vida sexual de las palabras,” and “Los cuernos de los amantes.” The first and last *microrrelato* both employ non-human animals in order to create a surprising twist to their plot-lines. The first, “Confesión de una tartamuda,” tells the story of a woman who has a speech impediment. While she describes her disgust living with what appears to be a sloppy male partner, it is revealed that the messy person she speaks of is her talking pet bird. The bird is given the quality to speak and criticizes the woman’s speaking exercises. The bird exists alongside the human character, but one must remember that he is her pet. The bird is not free, nor does he appear to choose to live with the woman. Additionally, it is implied that the bird is living in a cage of some sort in the house with which he shares with the female protagonist. The domestication of the animal shows an underlying aspect of anthropocentrism. The reader is meant to feel bad for the *tartamuda*, but ultimately, she has chosen to keep captive and keep this bird in her home.

The bird is not free, and thus, must endure living with her (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix A).

The last *microrrelato* mentioned above, “Los cuernos de los amantes,” is the shortest *microrrelato* in the entire collection – measuring two sentences, or twenty-four words, in length – not including the title. This *microrrelato* employs the use of epiphany, one of the five characteristics Javier Perucho outlines as the main characteristics of *minificción* (Perucho).¹⁹ He defines epiphany as the “súbita revelación de una verdad narrativa, ya sea al personaje o al lector,” which in this case is the use of the rhinoceros. The use of the *rinoceronte* in this *microrrelato* creates this effect. The female rhinoceros as a character creates a unique situation to evaluate the wordplay used in the *microrrelato*, as well as creating humor in the text. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Los cuernos de los amantes

Cada vez que se acostaba con su pareja, le ponían los cuernos. Pero la hembra rinoceronte disfrutaba cada noche como si fuera la única (Ruiz Gil, *Micronopia*).

Even though the text uses a non-human animal protagonist, a protagonist that exists on its own and is given the ability to have lovers, be aware of their lover’s betrayal, and enjoy sexual relations with their partners, the rhinoceros is only used in order to create the double entendre. Unlike the *microrrelatos* in *83 Novelas*, the rhinoceros does not exist within the context of the story as an individual, but is rather a rhetorical tool in which to create humor and epiphany in the text.

In the *microrrelato*, “La vida sexual de las palabras,” words are brought to life as a means to explore the evolution of language and how words change, are replaced, and are discontinued throughout that language’s history. The main character is a *coleccionista de palabras* who cares for the *palabras* and helps them grow and live on their own. The words are represented first as plants for which he cares and then as humans, growing, evolving, and existing amongst human characters. This is the only *microrrelato* in *Micronopia* that gives will and life to non-human non-animal protagonists. The words exist as their own entities, much like the masks, spaces, walls, couches, and other non-human non-animal protagonists mentioned in chapter two of this dissertation, “The Non-human in Alberto Chimal: An Ecocentric Reading of 83 *Novelas*.”

The *palabras* are also given a physical form which allows them to get tattoos and piercings. The *palabras* even compete amongst themselves to become popular and new, while foreign words invade the patio of the *coleccionista* in order to replace the old, never-changed, outdated ones. *Palabras* have feelings, are described as *rebeldes*, *promiscuas*, and *ancianas aburridas* depending on what type of “word” they are. Each *palabra* has a different personality and acts according to its own free will.

The *microrrelato* explores, in a physical and human environment, how language evolves. This *microrrelato* shows how a language is alive, changing its shape – through orthographic changes, represented as cosmetic surgeries, tattoos and *hache* and *ka* piercings in this *microrrelato* –, staying the same – archaic words, represented as *vírgenes* –, and experiencing an invasion of foreign words from other nations – represented as the *alienígenas* who teach the *coleccionista* foreign languages and uproot the archaic,

unchanged words in his patio. The *palabras* represent, in a narrative form, the organic aspect of language. Language evolves, changes, and grows over time, many words are revised to adjust to spelling changes that occur as time passes, and words are added or forgotten as society needs them. Just as *palabras* in “La vida sexual de las palabras” do.

Nevertheless, this representation of living, free-willed *palabras* does not show an ecocentric or biocentric perspective. The representation of language as an evolving and living being does not give emotions or free-will to non-human animals, or non-human non-animals, instead the words reflect and represent human language and its evolution. *Palabras* are not objects that exist in the human world. Rather, they are figurative representations derived from life. The changes that the *palabras* take in the *microrrelato* reflect an already existing phenomenon in the human world. However, it could be argued that some kinds of animals have language and that it too evolves with the world around it, but this *microrrelato* represents human language, portrayed through the roman alphabet (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix B).

Leticia Bustamante mentions María Paz Ruiz Gil’s *microrrelato* “La vida sexual de las palabras” when reviewing Fernando Valls’ anthology of *microrrelatos*. She categorizes the text as metaliterary and lists it among other authors’ works included in the anthology, such as Ángel Olgoso and Manuel Espada. The length of the review does not permit a comprehensive analysis of the *microrrelato*, but she does note the text’s use of metalanguage and symbolism.

An anthropocentric representation of the world is seen in other *microrrelatos* in this collection as well. The rest of the *microrrelatos* portray a human protagonist, with the exception of one, which uses *Dios* and *el diablo* as characters. These *microrrelatos* portray built environments and the use of nature as a resource, similar to what was seen in *41 Clósets* and *Wars. Threesomes. Drafts. & Mothers. (W3DM)*, which I analyze in the previous chapter “Fragment and Nature: An Anthropocentric Reading of Two Novels by Heriberto Yépez.” Similar to Yépez’s novels, Ruiz Gil represents a modern, urban, and built environment in which her protagonists live and interact. Additionally, many of the *microrrelatos* are only concerned with the human protagonists and not with the environment around them, very similar to Yépez’s works.²⁰

The four *microrrelatos* which deal exclusively with human protagonists are “Los olores del mundo,” “Putamente enamorado,” “Estimulación sexual,” and “Argentino.” The first three take place in built environments, while the final one makes reference to *manglares* and snow. Each of the *microrrelatos* mentions various animals which function as pets, resources, or are described as a hindrance, with the exception of “Estimulación sexual” which does not reference a single animal, plant, or natural environment. This *microrrelato* is about the planned betrayal of the husband character, who finds his wife sleeping with his younger brother. “Estimulación sexual” takes place in an assumed built environment, the house of the protagonist, *el cornudo*. The only aspects of the house that are mentioned are the *nevera* which *el cornudo* opens to take a beer from it, the *cama* on which his brother and wife have intercourse, and the *baño* which his brother uses after the act. This *microrrelato* portrays a built environment, which in itself is scarcely described,

and ignores any natural environment. The corpus of the text concerns itself primarily with human relations – the planned betrayal and positive emotions regarding said betrayal. Similarly to Yépez’s characters, these characters are only concerned with themselves, ignoring not only their natural environment, but also their built environment – as it serves no purpose to them in this event, except that of a place for the event to happen (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix C).

On the other hand, “Argentino,” does not take place in any specific location. Rather, it explores various locations as the protagonist discerns and changes his identity. It is said that he spent his adolescence exploring the “manglares infestados de lagartos y trochas casi líquidas” (“Argentino,” *Micronopia*, María Paz Ruiz Gil). The language used to describe the animals implies a negative tone and/or disgust in relation to them. The use of *infestados* implies perceived nuisance and an overabundance of the lizards and trout. This is the only reference to animals in this *microrrelato*, and the only mention of a natural environment in the whole collection of *Micronopia*. The lack of interest in the natural environment, as well as the negative tone used toward the animals leans toward an environmentality that favors the human over the natural and animal.²¹

Another noteworthy aspect of this *microrrelato* is the protagonist’s inability to be anything other than Argentinian. This permanent attribute is one that is strictly tied to the land. In order to be Argentinian, the protagonist would have had to have been born to Argentinian parents, who at some point, acquired their Argentinian heritage by being from the land of Argentina. The idea that a human can change everything about themselves, including their sex, but not be able to change their cultural identity, implies a strong

connection to the heritage and land from which one comes. Additionally, the protagonist cannot become of another nationality simply by changing where he lives. Rather, it is acquired at birth and impossible to eliminate from a person's identity. The heritage of the protagonist will follow him and even his children will be, in part, Argentinian. Therefore, the human cannot be separated from the land from which its ancestors come. Despite this tie to the land, the protagonist is disgusted by the natural world around him, still implying an anthropocentric view (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix D).

The other two *microrrelatos* in *Micronopia* also portray this anthropocentric perspective. Both *microrrelatos* take place in assumed built environments as well as allude to a virtual environment. The *microrrelato*, "Putamente enamorado," portrays a virtual environment where the protagonist watches and falls in love with a prostitute online – hence the play on words in the title *putamente enamorado*. The woman he watches keeps an *anguila* as a pet and moves through various built environments, including a restaurant, her home, and the metro. Meanwhile, the main character watches her within his virtual environment, existing "detrás de su cámara" ("Putamente enamorado," *Micronopia*, María Paz Ruiz Gil). The only mentions of animals in this *microrrelato* are for the enjoyment or nourishment of the woman – the eel as a pet and salmon as nourishment – and when the male protagonist describes the woman as a *boa*. The two characters exist, though in their own and separate spaces, entirely in built environments. It is likely that there are some plants, animals, and other natural elements in the environment they inhabit. Nevertheless, these elements are completely omitted from the description in the text (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix E).

“Los olores del mundo,” employs plants, animals, and non-human and electronic objects to describe the smells of the world and other human characters in the story. The narrator mentions two fruits, a tortoise, and various material objects in order to better describe her environment and parents. She describes the interior of eyes as smelling “a melón recién abierto,” her bed as smelling of “aliento de tortugo,” her fingernails as “uvas pasas con leche desnatada,” the *sombrero* of her father as a “libro de 1984,” and so on and so forth (“Los olores del mundo”, *Micronopia*, María Paz Ruiz Gil). She uses the tortoise’s breath and fruits in order to describe herself and her environment – much like in *W3DM* animals do not exist alongside the narrator, but are rather employed to portray a particular setting, feeling, or, in this case, smell.

At the end of the *microrrelato* the narrator uses electronic devices to describe the smells of Aníbal – a presumed ex-partner. The narrator describes the first scent of Aníbal as a “delicioso teclado de ordenador,” but later describes the scents as negative as the relationship goes sour (“Los olores del mundo”, *Micronopia*, María Paz Ruiz Gil). The noteworthy mention of this use of language is the adjective used to describe the computer’s keyboard – *delicioso*. This adjective is quite different to that of the *infestado* adjective used to describe the lizards and trout present in “Argentino.” The use of the adjective *delicioso* to describe an inanimate object, and the lack of positive adjectives when speaking about the tortoise’s breath – which is used to describe “madrugadas rotas por ladridos de niño,” an image not generally related with happiness and fervor – and the lizards and trout, implies a preference and enjoyment from man-made objects. This small and subtle use of adjectives, along with the general lack of positive adjectives when mentioning the other smells along

with an overall absence of the natural environment, its plants, and non-human animals, presents an anthropocentric view in *Micronopia* (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix F).

The anthropocentric view seen in *Micronopia* continues in *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*, published in 2014. The work contains sixty-five *microrrelatos* and seventy-two one or two-line *microrrelatos* included in what is labeled the Bonus Track.²² The *microrrelatos* are fragmented into seven sections, not including the Bonus Track. Each section has seven to eleven *microrrelatos*, ranging from two to forty sentences – one-half page to two and a half pages in length. The six shortest *microrrelatos*, not including the Bonus Track pieces, ranging two to three sentences in length, are: “Despedida,” “La celda a medida,” “O,” “Falso seudónimo,” “Genialidad,” and “Rito para dormir.” The two longest *microrrelatos*, forty and thirty-eight sentences in length respectively, are: “Método para convertirse en el mayor de los tristes” and “Chic dolls”.²³ Various *microrrelatos* in *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* were originally published in *Micronopia*; these *microrrelatos* are “Argentino,” “Los olores del mundo,” and “La vida privada de las palabras” (originally titled, “La vida sexual de las palabras,” and edited with a small punctuation change).²⁴ Many of the Bonus Track one to two-line *microrrelatos* were later published in *Ojos de tinta* (2014) where they are accompanied by illustrations.²⁵

Overall, the work shows an anthropocentric view, referencing material objects and human desires and needs over natural ones. However, there are a few *microrrelatos* that combine both human and non-human characters, characterize humans as non-human animals, or treat non-human animals and entities as human-like. Of the 137 *microrrelatos*

in *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* 108 of them refer only to human protagonists, nine refer only to non-human protagonists, and twenty include both human and non-human protagonists. There is a striking preference for human protagonists – a seventy-eight percent use of human protagonists, to be exact. Compared to a mere six and a half percent use of non-human protagonists and a fourteen and a half percent use of both human and non-human protagonists together. The amount of human protagonists contrasts with that of Alberto Chimal's publication *83 Novelas* which has an eighty-three percent use of non-human and ambiguous characters.²⁶ María Paz Ruiz Gil's publications align more with the anthropocentric view that is seen in Heriberto Yépez's writing.²⁷ However, there are a few tendencies in Ruiz Gil's writing that represent non-human subjects with the same regard and interest as human subjects, despite the low number of *microrrelatos* included that directly portray non-human protagonists.

There is also a lack of natural environment, use of non-environments and use of urban or constructed environments.²⁸ Similar to Yépez's use of non-environments and preference for the constructed environment, Ruiz Gil makes use of many technological materials, interfaces, and mediums. Ruiz Gil mentions: plastic, laptops, UVA cameras, photos, beds, tea kettles, pans, books, pens, markers, a blackboard, cars, an automatic Toyota, pools, tennis shoes, belts, bicycles, buses, helicopters, airplanes, watches, telephones, mobile phones, email, television, movies, radio, music players, social media, Facebook, Twitter, Whastapp, Books4pocket, Wikipedia, the internet, and Google throughout the publication. In contrast, she only mentions a few animals, plants and non-human entities: a horse, elephants, a hippopotamus, a giraffe, a serpent, giant rats, snails, a

donkey, monkeys, fish, a cow, sea lions, swallows, butterflies, mayflies, a skunk, plants (in general), flowers, trees, cypress trees, waves, the ocean, stars, the sky, the earth, the sun and the Milky Way. At first glance, it seems as if Ruiz Gil is employing both human and non-human animals and non-human non-animals in her *minificción*, however, much like Yépez utilizes non-human animals and elements, Ruiz Gil uses these animals and elements to characterize human protagonists. Similarly to Yépez's work, but not as evidently, the non-human entities exists as a resource, either for the human characters to use, or to be used as descriptors of the human characters. In this chapter, I analyze many of the *microrrelatos* utilizing non-human animals and non-human non-animals as resources. Additionally, I look at Ruiz Gil's use of technology, constructed environments, and non-environments, showing an absence of the natural world in her work.

Guillermo Bustamante Zamudio also noted the use of technology in Ruiz Gil's *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*. Bustamante Zamudio authored the prologue to the work, praising María Paz Ruiz Gil on her ability to write “con desenfado, con soltura, con inteligencia, con humor” (Ruiz Gil, *Microscópicos* 7). He admits that remnants of the technological era in which we live appear throughout the text, naming the “Internet, Google, Facebook, Wikipedia, Twitter, WhatsApp, Books4pocket” as the most identifiable pieces of this era (Ruiz Gil, *Microscópicos* 5). Bustamante Zamudio also mentions that the *microrrelatos* speak about the “condición humana,” and identifies various topics and ideas found throughout the work (Ruiz Gil, *Microscópicos* 6). Two ideas in particular are of ecocritical interest – his mention of the appearance of “las habilidades antropomórficas que los monos mantienen en secreto” and “la dificultad que tiene la naturaleza para diseñar un

cuerpo que le conviene al ser hablante” – and serve to begin a conversation about the anthropocentric and anthropomorphic elements in Ruiz Gil’s writing (Ruiz Gil, *Microscópicos* 6).

The first element Bustamante Zamudio mentions alludes to the *microrrelato* “La mujer mono” (42). “La mujer mono” tells the story of a successful breeding of a woman-monkey who is taught by scientists how to communicate through writing and sign language. When the woman-monkey is no longer useful to them, they take her to a zoo where she is kept with other monkeys. One day a pencil falls into her cage and she writes “¡Sáquenme de aquí!” The zoo decides to kill her, thus sentencing all of the other monkeys to write in private from then on, out of fear of being executed as well (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix G).

There is a great deal of humor in this eight-sentence *microrrelato*, but the work also shows an anthropocentric society in which the only interests that are worthwhile are those of the human characters – in this case, the scientists. In this *microrrelato*, the woman-monkey is not regarded as a worthy being, for once they are finished using her, they discard her in a zoo, where her intelligence is wasted and she is treated as a lesser “other” – as a non-human animal. Even though she has traces of human intelligence – she did learn how to communicate and do geometry –, she is still treated as a non-human animal.

The negative treatment and final execution of the woman-monkey can be seen as an anthropocentric act of power. If the woman-monkey demands freedom, and is thus granted it, then all animals would have to be treated as accordingly. If the woman-monkey

is silenced through her assassination, then it sends a message of control and power to the other animals. This can further be seen by the monkeys' collective decision to hide their intelligence in order to survive – they understand the message of power and assume their role as subordinates in a human-dominated society. Bustamante Zamudio does not elaborate on the role of this *microrrelato* in the context of the other works, but he does note its anthropomorphic elements.

“La mujer mono” is not the sole anthropomorphic piece in the work; there are six other *microrrelatos* that have anthropomorphic components as well. The *microrrelatos* with this element are: “Un huevo criado en el cielo,” “Golondrinas sin alas,” “Cielo de púas,” “Sireno,” “Chic dolls,” “Diosa Twitter,” and “La vida privada de las palabras” (97, 101, 30, 61, 68, 91, 88).²⁹ Three of these *microrrelatos* blend humans with birds: “Un huevo criado en el cielo,” which tells the story of an angel who is born with a beak and unable to sing, unlike the other angels (97); “Golondrinas sin alas,” which tells the story of immigrants from Colombia moving to Spain, and referring to them as *golondrinas sin alas*, because they are unable to fly, or in this case immigrate (101); and “Cielo de púas,” which tells the story of human-birds who are locked in cages for seven years awaiting their execution (to read the *microrrelatos* in full, see Appendices H, I, and J) (30). The last two *microrrelatos* mentioned give bird-like features to human protagonists, while the first, describes a bird born among human angels who does not have the ability to do the same tasks as the others, but rather stays animalistic, and is therefore captured, beaten, and kept in a zoo, much like “La mujer mono.”

“Chic dolls,” “Diosa Twitter,” and “La vida privada de las palabras” are different in that they give human characteristics to non-human non-animal entities.³⁰ The first gives life and the ability to talk and move to dolls that an artist paints and keeps in her workshop. The second portrays a non-human entity that is the Twitter Goddess, who is fake, ugly, and selfish, much like posts on Twitter. The third is a republication of “La vida sexual de las palabras,” found in *Micronopia* in which words are given human-like characteristics and act out on their own.³¹ These *microrrelatos*, as previously mentioned in the analysis of “La vida sexual de las palabras,” do not reflect entities that exist on their own. The Chic dolls are kept and taken care of by the artist who paints them, but are not allowed the freedom to interact with the human world around them. The Twitter Goddess exists as a strange human-like form of the immaterial Twitter.³² She speaks poorly, is vulgar, ugly, and ignorant, much like Tweets that exist on the social media platform. The Twitter Goddess exists as an embodiment of the social media platform, not as a free-willed entity. Additionally, the Goddess does not have any control or power over Twitter. Instead, she bumbles around until all her loyal followers abandon her and she chokes herself accidentally on her enormous bathrobe. Again, these anthropomorphic beings are deemed lesser, not only in intelligence, but also in their right to live freely among the human characters.

The final *microrrelato* with anthropomorphic elements is “Sireno” (61). This *microrrelato* also shows an anthropocentric perspective in which a Merman is treated much like the woman-monkey previously discussed from “La mujer mono.” “Sireno” is a story of a merman who comes to shore to find love and attend the university. He is able to walk by putting tennis shoes over his fins. He explains to the female human protagonist, the

narrator, that there are not sufficient mermaids in his society, which forced him to leave his ocean home to find love. He falls in love with the female human protagonist and begins to spend more time with her. One day he invites her to his home, where he removes his shoes and releases a smell of warm, fresh fish causing the narrator to immediately want to eat him. The following day she goes to the store to buy ingredients for her birthday – “5 *cabezas de ajo* / 3 *limones* / *pimiento o mostaza* / *un cuchillo afilado*” – all of which will allow her to prepare and eat the Merman (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix K) (62).

In this *microrrelato*, the Merman, a half-man, half-fish being, is still treated as a lesser entity. In contrast to “La mujer mono,” the Sireno is completely human in his ability to think, communicate, make decisions, fall in love, and move freely. However, the Sireno is still treated as a lesser being when the human’s desire to eat him arise. Instead of rationalizing the desire, respecting the Merman as a fellow, intelligent human being, the narrator goes to the store to prepare to eat him. The Merman’s wants, needs, and desires are deemed insignificant in comparison to the human narrator’s desire to consume him. The anthropocentric act of consumption of the Merman places the human above all other beings – even intelligent, free-willed, Mermen.

There are also two *microrrelatos* that portray human protagonists as non-human animals: “Huya de los hombres” and “Infinitesimal.” “Huya de los hombres” is a one-line *microrrelato* included in the Bonus Track (110). Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

HUYA DE LOS HOMBRES. *Las únicas criaturas capaces de morir antes de nacer* (110).³³

In this one-line *microrrelato*, humans are referred to as “criaturas” and are said to be the only creatures capable of dying before they are born. This *microrrelato* may be referring to abortions, natural and elected, or it may be referring to the ability to choose whether or not to be born – an ability seen in other *microrrelatos* in *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*. This ability is seen in “Tres deseos,” which tells the story of a narrator who chooses their mother and their father, but then declines “la invitación a nacer” (112). It is also seen in “Pre,” a one-line *microrrelato* that implies life between being born and dying (to read the *microrrelatos* in full, see Appendices L and M).

The second, “Infinitesimal,” refers to humans as *hormigas*. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

INFINITESIMAL. *Somos las hormigas de la Vía Láctea* (113).³⁴

This *microrrelato* alludes to the infinitesimal quality of our existence in perspective with the Milky Way, referring to humans as ants, diminishes their importance, and rendering them insignificant in comparison to the other elements of the universe. Additionally, using ants in order to portray this idea of infinitesimal existence implies that ants are insignificantly small to us, through our perspective, and thus must be equally insignificant. The *microrrelato* both shows an anthropocentric perspective, implying a great importance of the human over ants, as well as a broader perspective, admitting human insignificance in comparison to the universe.

The second element that Bustamante Zamudio mentioned, “la dificultad que tiene la naturaleza para diseñar un cuerpo que le conviene al ser hablante,” is harder to identify in the work, but could refer to “Diseño equivocado” (73). This *microrrelato* tells the story of a boy who is born with the wrong body. The boy cries and is in pain all of his life, until one day he begins dressing in his mother’s clothes. Gradually, he solely dresses as a woman and no longer cries or is in pain. Finally, he becomes the most beautiful woman in Bahía Solano. Bustamante Zamudio implies that nature is at fault for the creation of inconvenient and uncomfortable bodies. The need for nature to “diseñar un cuerpo que le conviene al ser hablante” alludes to an anthropocentric view that nature must serve human needs (Ruiz Gil, *Microscópicos* 6). The “ser hablante” does not need to adapt to nature, nor be thankful for its current bodily form. Rather, it is inconvenienced and desires nature to create a more agreeable form. However, there is no indication or blame placed on nature for the incorrect design of the boy within the text. There are other *microrrelatos* that speak of two-headed girls, broken human characters, and other ailments, but, again, none of them blame nature as Bustamante Zamudio suggests in the prologue.

The *microrrelatos* that have nature and the non-human as protagonists or characters are: “Saramago para peces,” “Rito para dormir,” “Efímeras,” “Deidad occidental,” “Caninos,” “Pisada,” “Comidos por el mar,” and “La ternura del moho” (17, 105, 112, 114, 71, 111, 109). “Saramago de peces” is about a group of fish who enjoy reading José Saramago (17). The fish can indicate to their owner – a human – when they would like the page to be turned in order to continue reading. The fish are domesticated and live in an aquarium in the woman’s house, indicating an anthropocentric world order in which fish

are dominated by humans and kept as pets in aquariums in their homes. However, the fish seem to be co-inhabitants as they can also influence the actions of their human owner, by asking her for further reading. The ability to read raises the fish to a higher level of intelligence than usually assumed of non-human animals of the fish kingdom. Unfortunately, as with “La mujer mono” and “Sireno,” their intelligence and interest in furthering their education is not deemed significant enough by the human protagonists to free them and respect them as equals (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix N).

In “Rito para dormir,” the *microrrelato* appears to be about a woman and her husband, but the protagonist turns out to be a cow that the farmer owns. Similar to the fish, the cow is capable of higher order thinking and emotions, but is also domesticated by a human. The language used to describe the cow humanizes the non-human animal and creates the illusion that it is a female human. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Rito para Dormir

No era guapo, mucho menos listo, pero a ella le extasiaba verlo entrar por las noches, y escuchar el ruido de sus botas cargadas de excremento de bestia y barro.

Su mano de lija encontraba la postura para darle una caricia donde a ella más le gustaba; justo entre el cuello y la espalda, y entonces se sucedían cuatro o cinco minutos de masaje sin decir palabra hasta que se quedaba dormida y dejaba de chasquear.

Así es como cada noche entraba en un sueño de siete pisos, donde ni el frío ni la lluvia podían despertar a la vaca más anciana del pueblo (105).

Thoughts judging the intelligence and level of handsomeness, verbs such as “extasiarse,” and desire and pleasure are not usually allocated to cows. The use of this lexicon creates the illusion that it is a farmer and his wife. However, the last line indicates that it is a farmer putting his cow to rest at the end of the night. This *microrrelato*, similar to the others, creates and establishes the idea that animals can speak, think, write, learn, and even feel, but ultimately places them below humans, by either domesticating, using, abusing, or killing them.

Another *microrrelato* that implies this anthropocentric hierarchy is “Efímeras,” a story about mayflies, butterflies, and a boy who dies holding his insect net. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

EFÍMERAS. *Murió el más despiadado. Ninguna mariposa asistió al entierro del niño que dormía con una red entre sus manos (112).*³⁵

The *microrrelato* portrays the butterflies as choosing to not attend the boy’s funeral, possibly implying a dislike for the boy and his insect-catching net or simply a disinterest in the boy’s funeral. The death of the boy is ambiguous, but given the title “Efímeras” it is possible that the boy died due to a swarm of mayflies. The butterflies are given attitude, emotion, and choice, which is then used to deliberately avoid the funeral. This attitude is contrary to how butterflies are typically portrayed as beautiful and friendly, and, in many cultures, as reincarnated loved ones. It is unusual that the butterflies would resent the boy

and his net. Nevertheless, it is understandable, for the boy, if he was indeed an insect or butterfly collector, probably killed many of their kind. The representation of butterflies in this way gives emotion to the insects, and also draws attention to the anthropocentric actions of a boy who collects them for fun. It could be seen as a slight criticism on how humans interact with insects and other non-human animals, or a speculation on how butterflies might feel given the circumstances. Nonetheless, the *microrrelato* portrays an anthropocentric hierarchy, similar to that seen in “Saramago para peces” and “Rito para dormir” – in which non-human animals are acknowledged as being intelligent and having emotions, but are still domesticated, captured, killed, and used by humans.

In “Deidad occidental,” a bird is respected as a deity for its ability to speak many languages. It is a one-line *microrrelato* included in the Bonus Track. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

DEIDAD OCCIDENTAL. *Ave que habla todos los idiomas y que está harto de ser macho* (114).³⁶

This *microrrelato* suggests the existence of a speaking bird who wishes to change its sex. The deity is not kept as a pet, nor looked down upon by any other character – because it is the sole protagonist of the *microrrelato*. The *ave* is also not represented as a regular bird, but rather as a Western deity. The *microrrelato* implies that if a bird were to be able to speak every language, then it would not be an average bird, but a sort of idol. Again, although subtly, this implies that birds must not be capable of speaking many languages, for if it were to happen, it would be such a divine act, that the bird would have to be deemed

a deity. An ordinary bird merits no such treatment and respect, because it is not capable of speaking all languages nor capable of desiring a sex change. Once again, the miracle of intelligence of an animal, would either be a great miracle and difficult to accept, or something to be silenced – similar to what is seen in “La mujer mono” and “Sireno” – in order to maintain the anthropocentric order in which society is ran.

In contrast, non-human animals capable of malice are to be respected and feared. In “Caninos,” a *microrrelato* that tells the story of a patient who goes to see their psychiatrist about nightmares containing canines, the lack of respect for the power of the animal causes the psychiatrist’s lip to be ripped off by a large black mastiff (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix O) (71). In this *microrrelato*, intelligence is not needed for respect of a creature, but rather power and force. The lack of interest and care that the psychiatrist had for his patient caused the attack of the black mastiff. This implies that respect towards animals, if the animal is strong and capable of harm, is required. This *microrrelato*, alongside “Deidad occidental,” “Saramago para peces,” “Sireno,” and “La mujer mono,” indicates a particular hierarchy of power between human and non-human entities. A non-human animal that is intelligent, but not dangerous, should be kept as a pet, silenced, or eaten, but a non-human animal, regardless of intelligence level, that is powerful, should be respected.

This respect for larger, more dangerous non-human animals can also be seen in the humorous *microrrelato* “Pisada” (111). Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

PISADA. *Debo irme cuanto antes. Monterroso ha despertado al dinosaurio* (111).³⁷

This *microrrelato*, an homage to Augusto Monterroso’s “El dinosaurio,” tells the story of an unidentified protagonist who must flee now that Monterroso has awoken the dinosaur. Similar to the “Caninos,” these animals are deemed threatening to humans and therefore must be avoided, hence the need to leave “cuanto antes.” The title, “pisada,” could also refer not only to footsteps but also being stepped on, implying the small size of the human in comparison to the large dinosaur. However, it could also refer to the tracks left behind by Monterroso’s writing, hinting at his influence on the writing of *minificción*. The use of the extinct dinosaur, alongside humans, is also noteworthy, for extinct, large, mystical creatures can be respected, because they do not pose a current threat to the anthropocentric hierarchy created in these texts. Furthermore, this *microrrelato* also shows the power of the human to wake animals when desired, once again putting human needs and desires before the animals’.

The respect for large, strong, and powerful non-human entities is also seen in “Comidos por el mar” (41). This *microrrelato* tells the story of a step-father who drives him and his family into the sea (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix P). In this *microrrelato* the water is described as “inmensa” with giant waves “de nueve metros” (41). The characters of the *microrrelato* “tiemblan de un lado para otro, abrazados, comidos por

el agua inmensa” (41). The sea is portrayed as terrifying, death-inducing, and powerful – an entity that the humans fear in the *microrrelato*. Similar to “Caninos,” this powerful entity must be respected and feared, because it has the power to end a human’s life. While other entities, entities that humans can conquer, are deemed inferior and should thus fear humans – as the monkeys do in “La mujer mono.” Again, this implies an anthropocentric hierarchy of power within the texts.

There is one *microrrelato* that has non-human characters who act on their own volition and are not domesticated or owned by human characters. “La ternura del moho” is a *microrrelato* about mold, its fungi growth, and the mushroom that wants to have children. This *microrrelato* gives desires and feelings to non-human entities – in this case, fungi. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

LA TERNURA DEL MOHO. *Crió hongos. El champiñón siempre quiso tener hijos (109).*³⁸

The *microrrelato* suggests a complicated relationship between mold and mushrooms. The “moho” is characterized as being tender and kind, raising “hongos,” while the “champiñón” has always wanted to have children. There are no human characters present in this *microrrelato*, just the lives and desires of the various fungi. The creation of fungi that is affectionate and desires to have children is not a common representation of fungi. The fungi are not being consumed by humans, nor being domesticated, they simply exist, in their own right. This contrasts with the other uses of non-human animals and non-human non-animals

in the work, most of which are either consumed, used as resources, or discarded when no longer needed.

However, the consumption of non-human animals and non-human non-animals is evident throughout the work. The *microrrelatos* dealing with the consumption and use of these various entities as resources are “El cuento de los abuelos,” “Usos alternativos de la cuchara de palo,” “Show man,” and “Pablo” (113, 37, 28, 21). These *microrrelatos* reiterate what Bustamante Zamudio’s comment outlined – that nature and non-humans exist to serve human beings. This can be as simple as the use of flowers and wood for mourning and personal use or the keeping of animals as trophies and pets. “El cuento de los abuelos” is about a grandfather in his grave and a grandmother who puts flowers on it. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

EL CUENTO DE LOS ABUELOS. *El abuelo está hibernando desde 1988. La abuela le echa flores para que despierte* (113).³⁹

The *microrrelato* plays with the idea of death, referring to the death of the grandfather as hibernating and the act of the grandmother mourning his death as attempting to wake him up, but what I want to point out is the use of flowers to cover a grave. The use of flowers to put on graves is a tradition seen throughout cultures, but perhaps it has not yet been regarded as an act of consumption of nature. The flowers that one uses to decorate graves have been cut, removed from the ground, and relocated as desired by the humans who use them. The *microrrelato* does not speak about the act of consuming flowers, but it does represent a long tradition of the consumption of flowers for decorative purposes of graves

– in this case, for mourning a loved one. This consumption portrays an anthropocentric perspective, in which the flowers exist in order for humans to use as they wish. In this case the flowers, that were purchased, cut, and ultimately left to wilt and die, were for the purpose of leaving a gift on the grave of the dead husband. The flowers were not left in their natural habitat to live out their lives in their natural cycle. In many cases, flowers are even artificially grown and harvested in greenhouses in order to feed the consumption of flowers in our society – for weddings, birthdays, as gifts, and, as in this story, to decorate the graves of loved ones.

Another *microrrelato* that insinuates the consumption of nature is “Usos alternativos de la cuchara de palo.” In this *microrrelato* a man goes to the store in order to buy materials to commit suicide and is then assisted by a woman who offers to help him. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

Usos Alternativos de la cuchara del palo

- Le cobran en aquella fila de la izquierda, si no le importa.
- Estupendo señora, ¿puede decirme qué hora es?
- Las dos menos cuarto, usted es el último que atiendo hoy.
- De alguna manera puedo decirle lo mismo.
- ¿Tiene pensado marcharse, así, con esa pierna goteando sangre?
- Ya ve usted, la puerta del ascensor no es la mejor opción para matarse.
- Yo tuve un marido al que no le falló la estrategia, si quiere, venga a mi casa y le explico. Traiga un cubo y una cuchara de palo (37).

The consumption of wood in order to commit suicide is subtle. This *microrrelato* shows consumerism in two ways: 1) the existence of stores in which one may go to purchase goods (most likely produced by materials taken from nature or fabricated by man), and 2) the use of wood to make spoons (normally used for cooking, but in this case, possibly used to commit suicide). Again, the *microrrelato* does not directly speak about consumerism, nor the use of trees to create wooden spoons to be used by humans (in one way or another). Rather, it portrays a society that exists within a consumerist model, because the characters encounter one another at a shop, where goods are sold, and ultimately the character purchases items to be used for his suicide.

In “Show man,” one of the characters also uses wood for commercial purposes. The narrator encounters the “primer constructor de palabras,” who once sold his words and ideas on the radio, in books, DVDs and in theaters, but is now on the street selling heart-shaped pieces of wood with phrases on them (28). Similar to the subtle consumerism found in “Usos alternativos de la cuchara de palo,” the consumerism in this *microrrelato* is imbedded within the story. Consumerism is seen through the “primer constructor de palabras” selling his ideas through the radio and other media, and finally, on small pieces of wood. This also creates a hierarchy of consumerism – the more technologically advanced materials, such as the radio and DVDs, are seen as successful ways to sell ideas, while a small piece of carved wood is seen as low-level commercialism. The wooden item, then, is reduced to a lesser good. The consumption of wood is below the consumption of more complex devices that require even more complex materials – all mined and taken from nature, but then constructed to appear distinct from and less natural than simple

products, such as wooden hearts and spoons. Again, without directly portraying an anthropocentric and consumerist society, the texts reveal an environmentality that places human needs above those of nature.⁴⁰

A more obvious example of the consumption and use of non-human animals for human entertainment and desire appears in the *microrrelato* “Pablo” (21). The *microrrelato* tells the story of Pablo Escobar and his incline to power, fame and fortune (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix Q). The culmination of Pablo’s fame in the *microrrelato* is shown through his ownership of exotic animals – specifically elephants, hippopotami, and giraffes. The ownership of these exotic animals as a demarcation of fortune reiterates the use of non-human animals for personal gain and entertainment. Unlike the first three *microrrelatos* discussed in this section, the use of non-human entities to fulfill human desires is much clearer.

Non-human animals are also employed to describe human characters. One example of this is in the *microrrelato* “Manzanilla y anís.” This *microrrelato* tells the story of a young boy who plays with his phantom father. The phantom father is described as “relajado como un pez,” while the son is described as being so honest that “no podía engañar ni a una vaca” (44). Similar to the employment of non-human animals to describe characters seen in Heriberto Yépez’s writing, the fish and cow do not exist as entities on their own, but rather as descriptors.⁴¹ The use of non-human animals in this manner perpetuates the employment of non-human animals as objects to be used for and by humans.

One *microrrelato* that complements and contradicts this idea is “A dieta desde el génesis,” which is the only *microrrelato* that identifies the consumption of non-human plants as wrong. “A dieta desde el genesis” claims that women would not have been responsible for sin in the world, if God had hung chorizo from the tree in the Garden of Eden. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

A DIETA DESDE EL GENESIS. *Si Dios en lugar de manzanas hubiese colgado chorizos de los árboles del paraíso, las pecadoras no seríamos las hijas de Eva (111).*⁴²

Even though the *microrrelato* still shows consumerism – dating it back to the beginning of humanity as represented by the Bible – it reminds the reader that the act of consuming the apple was the origin of sin. Taking from the tree was strictly forbidden, but Eve ate the apple and released sin into the world. The act of taking from nature is one that released sin upon the world, a lesson perhaps forgotten in modern-day consumerism. This *microrrelato* plays with humor and *reescritura* using Biblical characters, Adam and Eve, and changing the biblical tale to be humorous.⁴³ It is important to note that the text does not criticize consumerism. Rather, it adjusts blame on others. The text is not implying that no one should have taken from the tree in order to avoid wrongdoing, but that, had the product being offered been different and more appealing to Adam, than he would have been responsible for consumerism and sin in the world. This could be read as a statement on human nature; it is human nature to take and to consume nature and all it provides.

However, Ruiz Gil does give life and consciousness to some non-human non-animals in *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*. Similar to Alberto Chimal's representation of souls, body-parts, and even bodiless entities that exist and have consciousness apart from their human counterparts, Ruiz Gil gives consciousness and free-will to souls, hearts, characters, hydrogen and oxygen, and even the universe.⁴⁴ In "La celda a medida" a man attempts to let his soul escape, but cannot, as there is no emergency exit built in his body (79). In "Cielo de agua," the soul of a woman sleeps on a beach, because it believes it to be the end of land (110). In "Trasplante" and "Taquicárdica" hearts have a mind of their own and can redirect the body in which they are currently located (67 and 99). "Leyenda moderna del agua" recreates the story of how water was created, personifying hydrogen and water as classmates at an all-boys school. The two entities collide and can never be separated. Finally, in "Miss Universo," the universe finds love and expands to create everything in the universe, expanding with each encounter with her lover (57). The representation of these independent entities is sporadic in the work, and the employment of anthropocentric views and constructed, urban, technological environments is more apparent.

More commonly though are the many *microrrelatos* that refer to technological remnants of our current era, like the ones that Bustamante Zamudio points out in the prologue. "La última cena" mentions Google and Books4Pocket, "La ruina de Facebook" and "RIP" mention Facebook, "Redes que asfixian" makes use of Facebook and WhatsApp, "Diosa Twitter" references Twitter and its millions of users, "Smart Phones" refer to smart phones, and "Cigarrillos humanos" mentions the internet and Wikipedia (38, 56, 86, 92,

91, 109, 84).⁴⁵ What all of these *microrrelatos* have in common is the use of social media and references to our technological society. Each one utilizes social media platforms or webpages to draw attention to issues we face in our technologically advanced society. For example, each *microrrelato* portrays social media as something that which consumes its users. Additionally, each *microrrelato* is anthropocentric and focuses on human protagonists and their needs, desires, worries, pains, and lives, with the exception of “Cigarrillos humanos.”

“Cigarrillos humanos,” however, portrays an apocalyptic world in which humans are becoming extinct and machines are taking over. The only humans left are driven to fighting, cannibalism, and attempting to sell cigarettes to machines. The last five humans on earth speak with one another through the internet, and are unable to notice the moment in which the machines are replying and the other humans have died. In the end, the Internet, a conscious being, refuses the “palitos que se encienden con extrema dificultad” – the cigarettes –, as it has no use for them (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix R). The rejection of the cigarette also signifies the end of the need for humans, and the human finds himself rendered obsolete. This extreme representation of a technological society that advances past the human is a common trend in dystopic literature.⁴⁶ The technological future is also a product of the Anthropocene and the dominate anthropocentric perspective found in Ruiz Gil and other Generation Zero Zero writers’ work.

The Anthropocene and constructed environments can be seen throughout *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*; a few of the *microrrelatos* that serve as examples are: “Método para convertirse en el mayor de los tristes,” “Cupido en china,” “Comida de avión,”

and “Bogotá” (52, 113, 27, 32). “Método para convertirse en el mejor de los tristes” is a list of ten suggestions to become the best, sad person, and takes place completely inside the constructed environment of a home. There are no mentions of nature or the outdoors, instead there is a focus on staying inside, contacting others via telephone or email, and focusing on being sad. “Cupido en China” shows an advancing commercial environment in which things are no longer made of wood, but instead are made out of plastic – in this case, cupid’s arrows. “Comida de avión” refers to the ever-growing global environment that we live in. This *microrrelato* discusses the environment of an airport in Colombia, airports and their relation to the drug trade, and the horrible food served in airplanes. Finally, “Bogotá” portrays the capital of Colombia, describing its concrete buildings, acid rain, horrible climate, and constant traffic.

The representation of the city of Bogotá reveals the effects of the Anthropocene in Colombia’s capital. The streets, pavement, traffic, and tunnels are man-made and represent urbanization. The floods, terrible and everchanging climate, and acid rain are reminders of the contamination, climate change, and effects on the environment that the Anthropocene has caused (to read the *microrrelato* in full, see Appendix S). This *microrrelato* represents the effects of the Anthropocene on a small scale, serving as an example of many environmental issues throughout the globe.⁴⁷ Ruiz Gil does not directly relate the acid rain, climate change, and floods to the modernization of cities and the exploitation of resources, but her juxtaposition of them with the constructed and urban environment of Bogotá seems to imply a correlation. Ruiz Gil does not offer criticism or solutions to the anthropocentric world she creates. Rather, the criticisms stand on their own.

Additionally, many of her *microrrelatos* have no environment whatsoever. Much like the non-environments found in Yépez's writing, these non-environments happen more often when the author writes about writing, plays with words and expressions, and contemplates particular subjects. Most of the longer *microrrelatos* in *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* have some sort of environment, or assumed environment.⁴⁸ Only a few *microrrelatos* in the first part of the work take place in non-environments or make no use or reference to any particular environment; these works are: "Apuesta," "La celda a medida," and "O" (46, 79, 87). "Apuesta" tells the story of two brothers who compete to see who can kill Marina the fastest each week – Marina reincarnates every Tuesday. This *microrrelato* gives no indication of where the action is taking place, nor indicates if the action is taking place in the physical or spiritual world. "La celda a medida," discussed earlier in this chapter, also does not have a specific environment. However, the action takes place inside a human body, one that attempts to help its soul escape, placing it, theoretically, in the physical world. Finally, "O" is a *microrrelato* that employs wordplay. Below is the *microrrelato* in its entirety:

O

La palabra preciosa perdió una vocal y desde entonces es la palabra precisa.

Lo dicho, a la belleza siempre le sobran cosas (87).

This *microrrelato* plays with the word "preciosa," recreating it to be the word "precisa." This act takes places on the paper, in the head of the reader and the author, but does not

physically take place in any environment – physical or spiritual – which leaves only one place for it to take place – in a non-environment in the mind.

This type of non-environment is seen throughout the *microrrelatos* included in the Bonus Track of *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*. In fact, fifty-six out of the seventy-two *microrrelatos* employ this non-environment, a striking seventy-seven percent.⁴⁹ Many of these *microrrelatos* play with words and expressions – as seen in “O” – contemplate ideas or emotions, are about writing or authors, speak with spirits or phantoms, or take place within the mind of the narrator.

Some environments are specified, such as Mumbai, Vancouver, the Instituto Mundial de Meteorología, China, supermarkets, a beach, and the Milky Way. Others, however, are assumed through context. Out of the sixteen *microrrelatos* of the Bonus Track that do refer to an environment, seven contain assumed environments – environments which are deduced through the context of the *microrrelato* but not explicitly described. For example, “A dieta desde el génesis” can be assumed to take place in the Garden of Eden, due to the reference to “los árboles del paraíso,” “Dios,” and “Eva.” In “El cuento de los abuelos,” however, it can be assumed to take place in a cemetery, or at a gravesite, because the grandmother goes to put flowers on her husband’s tombstone. Many of the other environments refer to houses or other built environments, such as hospitals, bathrooms, reading areas, and cities.

The overall lack of any natural environment in Ruiz Gil’s work suggests a preference or a relation with constructed and urban environments. As seen in Yépez’s work,

a distance from nature implies a disconnect with the natural elements and non-human animals and non-human non-animals. The use of the non-human figure as a resource or item for consumption creates an anthropocentric tone in the work, even though there are moments of ecocentric views scattered throughout the novel.⁵⁰ The use of *minificción* to represent the technological and constructed environment we live in is appropriate as well, for as technology advances more things become connected to social media and the internet. The representation of these platforms through texts that could be published within them, such as one and two-line *microrrelatos* and the ability to publish them on Twitter, is a perpetuating cycle; the more technology available, the more they will appear in writing. María Paz Ruiz Gil contributes to the generation of writers who focus on social media, urbanization, globalization, and the Anthropocene.⁵¹

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Appendices: Selection of *microrrelatos* by María Paz Ruiz Gil

Appendix 3.1

Confesión de una tartamuda

Anoche anclé mi mirada en todo lo que hacía y me generó más repulsión. Antes me hacía gracia que viviera conmigo, pero ahora no lo soporto, aparte me parece que está feísimo. A él le gusta comer casi encima de donde hace caca, y yo pienso que eso es asqueroso y que, por más que se lo intente decir con mi voz que va en muletas, él no va a cambiar. Ayer me confesó que a él tampoco le apetece estar en casa cuando practico mis ejercicios contra la tartamudez. No es fácil vivir con un pájaro que habla mejor que yo.

Micronopia, María Paz Ruiz Gil, unlisted page number.

Appendix 3.2

La vida sexual de las palabras

El coleccionista de palabras las regaba por las mañanas, les cortaba las tildes secas, les echaba comida de la buena, y las consentía con las manos de un devoto. Algunas crecieron y se salieron de su patio, de esas hay unas que son malísimas, que se han hecho operaciones, extirpaciones y se cambiaron la cara. Son rebeldes, promiscuas, se ponen haches en el ombligo, kas en las partes más raras, y compiten por sus tatuajes hechos con emoticones; pero las condenadas se

volvieron populares y salen en las revistas. Otras, las que se quedaron con su cuerpo tal cual las parieron, tienen fama de vírgenes, de viejas aburridas que aparecen en los libros y de solteronas. Cada día entran al patio del coleccionista palabras nuevas, hijas que llegan sin padres. Él piensa que tienen cara de alienígenas, pero las quiere en silencio porque muchas son divertidas y le enseñan idiomas, aunque le tiren de las raíces a las ancianas aburridas y les hagan llorar de rabia.

Micronopia, María Paz Ruiz Gil, unlisted page number.

Appendix 3.3

Estimulación sexual

Su hermano se levantó de la cama y lo encontró amasando el vientre de su cuñada, gorda ella, una preciosa cascada de carnes negras sobre unas bragas beige con encajes de oferta. Frenaron los besos en seco, aunque una baba que colgaba entre sus labios decía lo contrario. No se escuchó un grito, ni una mala palabra, solo la sonrisa de la negra revolviéndose de éxtasis en un placer delirante. El cor-

nudo sacó una cerveza de la nevera, y se la bebió entre bostezos. Se acercó a su hermano, le dio una palmada en el hombro para decirle ¡Siempre hemos tenido los mismos gustos!, y el chico, controlando la cocción hormonal de sus quince años, se fue al baño. Los esposos reavivaron su amor carnal, y rieron como niños para celebrar su estrategia de estimulación sexual.

Micronopia, María Paz Ruiz Gil, unlisted page number.

Appendix 3.4

Argentino

Abrió la boca por primera vez, una rabiosa boca gigante que tronó como el eco primigenio de la humanidad. Le dijeron que era varón, argentino, y que su ictericia se desvanecería bajo un chorro de sol. De adolescente recorrió manglares infestados de lagartos y trochas casi líquidas, y se convirtió en el primer traductor del balinés al kurdo. Harto de pensar en dos idiomas diminutos, se hizo catador de nieve, pero

después de haber conseguido ver y saborear los cuarenta tonos que tiene el blanco, pegó un grito y se transformó en imitador de insignes muchachas de pelirrojas que no fueran irlandesas. Consiguió tener una piel tan curtida como un pollo asado y así reírse de la ictericia, cambió su sexo por uno que pudo comprar, más aplastado y misterioso; pero jamás pudo dejar de ser argentino.

Micronopia, María Paz Ruiz Gil, unlisted page number.

Appendix 3.5

Putamente enamorado

Ella es la fascinante combinación de todo lo que no se puede hacer.

¿Has visto cómo se sienta? Abre las piernas sin importarle que la mires ahí, porque le encanta desviar los ojos arrepentidos hacia sus invisibles bragas.

Lo malo es que camina rápido. Claro que come aún más rápido, sin masticar, y le gusta que su garganta suene cuando chupa tequila.

De mascota tiene una anguila que compró en un restaurante y que se trajo en una bolsa de plástico, pero desde mi pantalla parece una manguera de plástico.

No me da asco que se quite los pelos mientras recibe al vendedor del abono de transporte, con quien ha pasado noches que ni ella recuerda, porque es un cliente sin nombre.

Me encanta cuando la veo subrayar los libros, o cuando firma con bolígrafo sobre sus manzanas, y luego se las come sin remilgos, frente a la cámara, abriendo la boca como una boa.

De merienda se sirve un poco de arroz duro al que le tira una botella de soja con salmón, pero ella cree que es sushi. Tiene pendientes, pero no en las orejas. Tampoco pienso contarle dónde los tiene. La persigo por Internet, me escribe desde ocho correos, y en todos figura como hombre, pero la veo en la cámara y sé que existe, que es una mujer delito. Se despide de mí diciendo que tiene que ir a trabajar. Cada trabajo de ella me perfora el alma tantas veces como a ella la perforan por otros sitios.

Cuando termina y se conecta a la red me cuenta que ansía conocer sólo a los que

Appendix 3.5 cont.

están muertos: Churchill, Poe, y ahora a
Liz Taylor.

En el último correo me dijo que no
podría estar conmigo, ella prefiere a los
viejos, a los escleróticos, a los reumáti-
cos, a los pacientes crónicos de pulmón,
incluso a los mudos, a cualquiera antes
que al admirador que vive y respira
detrás de su cámara.

Micronopia, María Paz Ruiz Gil, unlisted page number.

Appendix 3.6

Los olores del mundo

Los ojos por dentro huelen a melón recién abierto. Los regalos que vienen por correo desde Bucarest suelen traer un olor a pecera reconfortante. Mi cama, de lunes a viernes, huele a madrugadas rotas por ladridos de niño, un olor que se parece a aliento de tortugo. El sombrero de mi abuelo tiene un perfume parecido a libro de 1984, el año en que se compraron muchos libros en mi casa porque aprendí a leer. Sé el olor que tienen mis lunares, sobre todo del que está en mi pantorrilla derecha, que huele a uvas pasas con leche desnatada. La

que mejor ha olido siempre es mi mamá. Su mano, huele a natilla recién enfriada, la de mi papá suele oler a freno de mano, aunque es zurdo. Lo más terrible de mi vida olfativa, ocurrió solo una vez, con Aníbal, que en los primeros días olía a delicioso teclado de ordenador, después se enfermó y olió mal, a escá-
ner roto, en sus últimos días olía a red social y de un día para otro su olor desapareció; como su nombre, y pasó a llamarse un numerito inoloro y torcido: #Anibal.

Micronopia, María Paz Ruiz Gil, unlisted page number.

Appendix 3.7

La mujer mono

Y de una noche de copas bestiales nació la primera mujer mono. Orejas peludas, un rabo cortito y unas inquietas manos brillantes le permitían vivir escondida entre científicos maravillados por su rara condición. Aprendió el alfabeto y algo de geometría haciendo uso de su fantástica inteligencia humana y de su instinto animal. Cuando no pudo avanzar más en sus conocimientos la llevaron a un zoológico. Un día cayó por error un lápiz en su jaula. La mujer mono escribió con toda la fuerza de sus dedos “¡Sáquenme de aquí!”

La asfixiaron esa noche. Los monos de su jaula evitan escribir en público para no correr su misma suerte.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 42.

Appendix 3.8

Un huevo criado en el cielo

Era un ángel desgraciado. No solo por sus alas manchadas de estiércol, y esa joroba que le acompañaba desde su nacimiento, sino porque él era el único ángel de su camada que había nacido con pico.

Sus demás hermanos, cuatro rubicundos de bocas con forma de corazón, compartían con temor las horas del desayuno y las clases de canto con él; porque el ángel era incapaz de cantar, o de producir algo dulce al tiempo que batía vigorosamente sus alas negras. Una mañana, cuando desarrolló del todo su pico naranja, no pudo comer lo que sus hermanos bebían del mismo tazón, esa miel lechosa con olor a romero que les manchaba los pelos y las alas.

La camada salía a diario a ensayar en los entierros. Debían cantar un repertorio inaudible, entornar los ojos blancos y volar en redondo como borregos celestiales, acompasados en una coreografía que hacía gala de su clonación divina, de su desnuda redondez.

Pero llegó el entierro en que aquel ángel abrió sus alas sucias y finalmente el pico, engañándolos a todos con que empezaría a cantar, y con toda desfachatez atacó al muerto que yacía en el cofre, rompiéndole para siempre la nariz de un picotazo sangriento.

Appendix 3.8 cont.

Los espectadores corrieron con el pavor en sus ojos, los hermanos de tan extraña criatura lloraron a coro y el ángel fue capturado a golpes y zapatazos por los hijos del difunto.

Ahora es exhibido de espaldas, como casi todos los animales que son conscientes de su cautividad, con un cartel de aguilucho carroñero. Los paseantes lo miran con asco y le meten ramas para ver cuándo piensa comerse esos ratones morados con que lo alimentan en el zoológico.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 97.

Appendix 3.9

Golondrinas sin alas

Corría una guerra estúpida, como todas las guerras. Era apenas una niña, y con las piernas rotas terminó pasando su infancia dentro de una carretilla. Años después, mi abuela aprendió a andar y, desde entonces, no ha parado de corretear el mundo como una gallina. A los veinte años se enamoró de un pintor que la retó a seguirlo por los mares. Se casaron sin verse en países distintos. Se encontraron en una ciudad custodiada por unas montañas húmedas que todo lo ven. Criaron un par de niños a punto de paella y tortilla, vistiéndolos con ropita comprada a catorce mil kilómetros. Cada año mis abuelos van a la ciudad donde se conocieron y, en cada viaje, la ven más impersonal, bulliciosa. Yo les cuento que Madrid ya no es tan distinguida porque se ha vuelto una canalla, pero es pizpireta. Aquí me trajo la vida para que mi piel entienda. Aquí he repetido parte de su historia, pues la cochina guerra, que siempre baila sobre nuestro planeta, me expulsó de ese país en el que ellos cayeron, porque son las jodidas guerras las que vuelven a los humanos golondrinas, y emigrar es muy difícil si no se tienen alas.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 101.

Appendix 3.10

Cielo de púas

En medio de una jaula para pájaros humanos, sobrevivían catorce con una tristeza que les reptaba por la cabeza, igual que la fiebre amarilla que portaban. De día intuían el cielo, lo tenían que ver rayado por el trenzado de su jaula, y de noche se despertaban con los pelos de punta, los músculos batidos con angustia y las miradas grávidas, atentas por ver quién se acercaba a sus reja de púas; quizá fuese una serpiente o una de esas ratas gigantes que cuando se asustan emiten un sonido aterrador. De pronto una sombra con fusil encendió una radio. Supieron la fecha que era, y un gritó convulsionado sentenció que llevaban más de siete años en cautiverio.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 30.

Appendix 3.11

Sireno

Encontré un sireno en la Plaza de la Aduana. Ya sé que suena extraño, porque los sirenos no camina, pero éste se pone tenis [*sic.*] en las aletas y se va andando a la universidad. Yo me pregunté qué hacía una criatura como él en el ajetreo de esta ciudad y él, comiéndose una arepa d huevo, me reveló su secreto: algunos sirenos están saliendo a la tierra. No son engendros nucleares ni radioactivos. Me revela que escapan del océano porque han caído enamorados de una mujer, y que no se quedan en el mar porque las sirenas están escasas; desde hace un año empezaron a extinguirse por culpa de los mismos de siempre.

Sin contarle a nadie he decidido matricularme en la misma materia que el sireno: “Feminismo en la Posmodernidad”. ¿Puede haber algo más bello que un sireno estudiando este tema? – le digo a Eva y a Cristina, mis amigas de los viernes.

No habló mucho en clase. Cerró sus apuntes y me invitó a su casa. Me sirvió un jugo de tamarindo y se quitó los zapatos.

Ya sé curarle las heridas de las aletas con baños de naranja y me enloquece el olor de su cuerpo recalentado por los jeans. ¡Tan apetecible! Me hizo llorar de emoción cuando me reveló que estaba enamorado de mí. Mi sireno es hermoso.

Appendix 3.11 cont.

Hoy es mi cumpleaños y vendrán siete amigas a cenar. Iré al supermercado con lo que he apuntado en la lista: *5 cabezas de ajo / 3 limones / pimienta o mostaza / un cuchillo afilado*

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 61 – 62.

Appendix 3.12

Tres Deseos

Elegir a mi padre, a mi madre, y luego declinar la invitación a nacer.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 112.

Appendix 3.13

Pre

Estoy pre muerte y pre parada.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 113.

Appendix 3.14

Saramago para peces

Los peces creen en la circularidad, tienen más idea de la ligereza y son infinitamente más bellos que nosotros, humanos que perdemos nuestro pelo, nuestros dientes y nunca aprendemos a nadar con gracia, sino que parecemos paquidermos moviendo las patas para no ahogarnos.

Algunos hombres olemos mejor que ellos, pero es igual, porque un pez no se enterará jamás de que su novia apesta.

No necesitan chillar, ni toser, y nunca sufren la alergia. Lo único que no hacen por instinto mis carpas de agua fría es leer, y por eso les he puesto un libro de Saramago abierto por la segunda página. Cuando lo terminan se pegan al acuario y me avisan con sus bocas abiertísimas que quieren más, y yo, con todo el amor de una madre humana, les paso la página, y luego les echo algas por si acaso lo que les pasa es que les duele la panza por el hambre que les da leer.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 17.

Appendix 3.15

Caninos

- Cuando duermo veo perros, doctor.

- ¿Cómo son esos perros?

- Huelen a carbón y respiran sobre mis oídos como bestias enjauladas y sufrientes.

Ayúdeme a no verlos.

El psiquiatra levantó su labio en un gesto de desaprobación, recetó una medicación fuerte, cerró su carpeta con indiferencia y decidió echarse una siesta en cuanto salió su desequilibrado paciente.

Soñó a trompicones, invirtió la postura, un pie se le encalambió, y de la nada un mastín negro se le trepó por la cara y le arrancó de cuajo el labio.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 71.

Appendix 3.16

Comidos por el mar

Sueño que voy en un carro conducido por mi padrastro. Me lleva a una ola de nueve metros y yo le digo que me muero, porque carajo, es que me muero, y el aire escasea, y todo es un sin vivir, dentro de ese coche, y sé que no va a haber aire en cuanto entremos dentro de esa ola, pero allá vamos, con toda, aprieta el acelerador, a toda marcha, entramos en la ola, un crucero nos rebasa, todos los pasajeros tiemblan de un lado para otro, abrazados, comidos por el agua inmensa, el sonido es terrorífico.

Y entonces, mi padrastro, me mira, aprieta el pedal y entramos en el mar. Ya sé que estamos muertos, le digo.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 41.

Appendix 3.17

Pablo

En su cabeza brillaban negocios extravagantes. Nació con los [sic.] ganas torcidas, con una maldad que le hablaba, la misma que le susurró que robara lápidas. Se pasó al cambalache de la droga, transportándola en ruedas de autos. Conoció a otros tipos tan malos como él, pero sin su inteligencia. Se obstinó con tener un millón de dólares antes de cumplir treinta años, y de no conseguirlo, amenazó con suicidarse, pero su fortuna fue tan descomunal como su fama. Quiso tener elefantes, hipopótamos y jirafas en su casa; escuchar los mejores conciertos en directo sin salir de su cama. Pintó el cielo de cocaína con pilotos locos, con submarinos imposibles de rastrear. Para reírse de un país entero llegó a ser representante a la Cámara, con la idea de cambiar la Constitución y no ser extraditado a un país más serio que el suyo. Terminó en una cárcel de cinco estrellas de la que se fugó cagado de la risa. Mató a todo el que quiso, puso bombas como chicles por la ciudad y sembró miles de matones dentro de la tierra. Murió gordo en un tejado, en medio de una cacería que reunió a los militares más precisos en el arte de acribillar. Hay quien todavía lo llora.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 21

Appendix 3.18

Cigarrillos humanos

Todavía quedan ejemplares vivos, pero están al borde de la extinción.

Su último pueblo quedó reducido a dos asesinos peludos y rabiosos que le prendieron fuego a su aldea y aniquilaron a sus congéneres, quizá por información recibida a través de Internet. Uno de ellos cazó al otro y se lo devoró después de celebrarle una misa. Wikipedia publicó que eran marido y mujer.

Quedan cinco habitantes. Uno es deficiente mental después de arrojarse de un peñasco. No se conocen entre ellos y siguen hablando por Internet sin darse cuenta de que ahora les responde una máquina. Se cree que pasan un calor que los asfixia, y que su piel se les rompe porque no tienen melanina, algo que no se encuentra ya en ningún sitio.

Se ha fotografiado a uno de estos habitantes. Este hombre es el único que todavía se deja invadir por las cámaras de la red mientras duerme. Cumplió treinta años y se sabe que habla tres dialectos distintos, pero son escasas sus posibilidades de sobrevivir porque ya no tiene piel ni pelo que lo proteja. Este mismo ejemplar se pasó tres meses vendiendo palitos humeantes que llamaba cigarrillos. Suponemos que ya sabe que estuvo nueve meses hablando con un procesador y que Internet no desea sus palitos que se encienden con extrema dificultad.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 84.

Appendix 3.19

Bogotá

Ven a conocer la ciudad donde las calles se cruzan corriendo desde las seis de la mañana. Donde la lluvia es ácida y abundante. Aprovecha para pasear por sus inigualables aceras para escapar del tráfico. Disfruta de su excelente sentido del humor, aprende lo que es el Pico y Placa y diviértete como candidato en el juego del conductor elegido. Podrás conocer el toque de queda, la ley seca, el contraflujo y muchas atracciones más. Piérdete en su maravilloso túnel de terror, siente que el norte se vuelve el occidente sin que te das cuenta, reinventa tu sentido de orientación más primario y opta por preguntar desde el carro sin bajar por completo la ventana usando el lenguaje de signos y las onomatopeyas.

Elige la temporada que más se adapte a tus necesidades. Si te gusta el agua podrás divertirte en sus inundaciones y ver todo su paisaje anegado por el lodo. Aquí podrás lucir todo tu ropero porque el clima cambio cinco veces al día y presumir de que has estado 2600 metros más cerca de las estrellas, experimentando un soroche sin igual que te dejará sin aire de tanta y tanta felicidad.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 32.

Appendix 3.20

La vida privada de las palabras

El coleccionista de palabras las regaba por las mañanas, les cortaba las tildes secas, les echaba comida de la buena, y las consentía con las manos de un devoto. Algunas crecieron y se salieron de su patio. De esas hay unas que son malísimas, que se han hecho operaciones, extirpaciones y se cambiaron la cara. Son rebeldes, promiscuas, se ponen haches en el ombligo, kas en las partes más raras, y compiten por sus tatuajes hechos con emoticones; pero las condenadas se

volvieron populares y salen en las revistas. Otras, las que se quedaron con su cuerpo tal cual las parieron, tienen fama de vírgenes, de viejas aburridas que aparecen en los libros y de solteronas. Cada día entran al patio del coleccionista palabras nuevas, hijas que llegan sin padres. Él piensa que tienen cara de alienígenas, pero las quiere en silencio porque muchas son divertidas y le enseñan idiomas, aunque le tiren de las raíces a las ancianas aburridas y les hagan llorar de rabia.

Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos, María Paz Ruiz Gil, p. 88.

Endnotes

¹ The major topics discussed are: extreme urban violence, the *sicairesque*, urban neorealism, exile, citizenship, globalization, hypertext fictions and digital genres.

² It is also noteworthy that *Ojos de tinta* was the first publication of *microrrelatos* by the editorial Anilina.

³ *Tuiteratura* or Twitterature was originally defined as an “amalgamation of “twitter” and “literature”; humorous reworkings of literary classics for the twenty-first century intellect, in digestible portions of 20 tweets or fewer” by Alexander Aciman (Aciman and Rensin). However, Twitterature (o *tuiteratura* in Spanish) now defines a much larger corpus of narrative and poetry. Twitterature is now any written work produced in 140 characters or less and published through Twitter (Twitter is a microblogging website that allows its users to post status updates of 140 characters or less.).

⁴ Nana Rodríguez Romero is mentioned as a poet and author of *microrrelato* and Carmen Cecilia Suárez is also identified as an author of *microrrelato*.

⁵ Taylor does not list any titles of *microrrelato* publications, but does mention poetry collection titles, novel titles, and even titles of short stories published by these authors. This can be seen as a subtle way in which *minificción* is slowly being accepted as a written form and genre, but maintains a lack of study and regard for said form.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Ruiz Gil won the Premio Internacional de Relato Corto encarna León for “La hija del Caribe” in 2012.

⁸ A *microrrelato* must have a narrative element, but *tuits ilustrados* do not have to have a narrative element. However, some *tuits ilustrados* are also *microrrelatos*. Additionally, a *tuit ilustrado* will always be 140 characters or less, due to the restrictions of a *tuit*, but a *microrrelato* may be longer than 140 characters. See chapter one, “Introduction: An Ecocritical Approach to Mexican and Colombian Brief Fiction, 2000-2015,” of this dissertation for further information and history on the *microrrelato* form.

⁹ Fernando Valls includes 208 *microrrelatos* in total in his anthology *Mar de pirañas: Nuevas voces del microrrelato español*.

¹⁰ See David Lagmanovich’s *El microrrelato: Teoría e historia*, Dolores M. Koch’s “El micro-relato en México: Torri, Arreola, Monterroso, y Avilés Fabila,” Lauro Zavala’s *El cuento mexicano contemporáneo* and *Glosario para el estudio de la minificción*, and

Ángeles Encinar and Carmen Valcárcel's *Más por menos: antología de microrrelatos hispánicos actuales*.

¹¹ Even though Fernando Valls does not identify Lagmanovich's term *reescritura* directly, he does allude to this characteristic, mentioning Juan Armando Epple's publication *MicroQuijotes*, which is a collection of *microrrelatos* specifically rewriting the story and characters of *Don Quijote* (Valls 14-5).

¹² María Paz Ruiz Gil moved to Madrid in 2000 when she was 22 years old ("Entrevista a María Paz Ruiz Gil").

¹³ The epigraph by Ana María Shúa included in the anthology is as follows: "Para escribir microrrelatos basta con tomar un poquito de caos y transformarlo en un miniverso. Como las pirañas, son pequeños y feroces. Aconsejo descartarlos si no muerden" (Valls 7).

¹⁴ The website <http://redcartonera.eci.catedras.unc.edu.ar/editoriales-cartoneras/> lists various *cartonera* publishers in Latin America. The major *cartonera* publishers mentioned are: Calafate Cartonera (Chile), Eloísa Cartonera (Argentina), Kodama Cartonera (Mexico), La Sofía Cartonera (Argentina), La Vieja Sapa Cartonera (Chile), Murcielagario Cartonera (Ecuador), Olga Cartonera (Chile), and Yerba Mala Cartonera (Bolivia).

¹⁵ For more information on characteristics of *minificción*, see chapter one, "Introduction: An Ecocritical Approach to Mexican and Colombian Brief Fiction, 2000-2015," of this dissertation.

¹⁶ This article does not provide the full name of the author.

¹⁷ *Entretiens Lectures d'ailleurs* is a French blogging site that showcases authors and their work.

¹⁸ The work is still available on iTunes for purchase as a digital publication, featuring recordings of each *microrrelato*, artwork, and a song dedicated to the work.

¹⁹ The five characteristics that Javier Perucho outlines in his anthology are:

Brevedad: "Una tendencia a la mengua de la extensión, el incremento en el gradiente elipsis y la mayor interacción entre texto y lector" (Perucho 19).

Elipsis: "Estrategia retórica principal de la narrativa cinematográfica y de la minificción, que consiste en eliminar aquello que el lector o espectador debe dar por supuesto para apropiarse del texto y resemantizarlo en función de su propia interpretación" (Perucho 19).

Epifanía: "Súbita revelación de una verdad narrativa, ya sea al personaje o al lector" (Perucho 19).

Concisión: “La economía verbal; como elemento básico de toda minificción, está generalmente acompañado de recursos paradójicos, como la precisión y la ambigüedad” (Perucho 19).

Condensación: “Una estrategia narrativa propia de la minificción, [...] acompañada por la existencia de un incidente repentino, propio del minicuento clásico¹⁹” (Perucho 19).

²⁰ To see the full analysis of Yépez’s texts, see chapter three of this dissertation.

²¹ Environmentality refers to Lawrence Buell’s concept that all texts have and reveal a perspective on environment, although that view may not be explicit (*Future* 142).

²² The Bonus Track *microrrelatos* are numbered one through 74, however, there are two numbers that were skipped, either erroneously or intentionally, reducing the number of *microrrelatos* in the Bonus Track to 72 *microrrelatos*. The two numbers skipped in the sequence were 62 and 63 (*Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* 113). There is also a misprint in the table of contents at the beginning of the work. The *microrrelato* Taquicárdica is listed as being located on page 90, however, the *microrrelato* actually appears on page 99.

²³ “Método para convertirse en el mayor de los tristes” also has its own short movie published on *vimeo*.

²⁴ To see the full original text, see Appendix B. To see the updated text in *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos*, see Appendix T. The format of the text has been condensed, and the sentence “Algunas crecieron y se salieron de su patio, de esas hay unas que son malísimas, que se han hecho operaciones, extirpaciones y se cambiaron la cara” from the original text, has now been divided into two separate sentences as follows: “Algunas crecieron y se salieron de su patio. De esas hay unas que son malísimas, que se han hecho operaciones, extirpaciones y se cambiaron la cara” (*Micronopia* 4 and *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* 88). The change is very minor and does not affect the story.

²⁵ The *microrrelatos* that were later published in *Ojos de tinta* and originally appear in the Bonus Track of *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* are: “Lloro así,” “Desidia,” “Tic Tc,” “Daño,” “Cambio climático,” “Virginia Woolf,” “Epitafio,” “Suero fisiológico,” “Amputada,” “Horror,” “Pensar,” “Mi abuela,” “Claustrofóbico,” “Ante la crisis,” “Para mis hijos,” “Para Munch,” “Autopsia,” “Prospecto,” “Cicatriz,” “Espejo,” “Padre,” “Cupido en china,” “Alegría,” “Corazón,” “El cuento de los abuelos,” “Pre,” “Sangre azul,” and “Dijo el niño de dos cabezas.” Many of the *microrrelatos* published in *Ojos de tinta* were republished without the title of the piece. A few of them were rewritten to fit the format of the new book and all of them are accompanied – as are all the works in *Ojos de tinta* – by an illustration. The illustrations were all done by Genoveva Castellar.

²⁶ For further reading on Alberto Chimal’s 83 *Novelas*, see chapter two of this dissertation, “The Non-human in Alberto Chimal: An Ecocentric Reading of 83 *Novelas*.”

²⁷ For further reading on Heriberto Yépez's publications, see chapter three of this dissertation, "Fragment and Nature: An Anthropocentric Reading of Two Novels by Heriberto Yépez."

²⁸ I define "environment-less," "non-environmental," and a "non-environment" as anything that lacks a physical environment; this can take the form of abstract thought that does not occur outside oneself and/or in voids or empty spaces created by the authors in their works. Diana Palaversich makes note of the use of "no-espacio" and "no-lugar" in other Mexican authors such as Christina Rivera Garza and David Toscana (Palaversich). She describes this "environment-less" space in Rivera Garza's novel as the space in which "se apartan del mundo extraliterario para desenvolverse enteramente en ese espacio abstracto, el no-lugar de la ficción, donde se eliminan todos significantes que aludan a la ubicación temporal o geográfica de los hechos" (15).

²⁹ See endnote 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Twitter is a microblogging website that allows its users to post status updates of 140 characters or less.).

³³ Format kept the same as original publication.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Environmentality refers to Lawrence Buell's concept that all texts have and reveal a perspective on environment, although that view may not be explicit (*Future* 142).

⁴¹ *Ibid.* Endnote 23.

⁴² *Ibid.* Endnote 30.

⁴³ This concept has been previously mentioned in the introduction of this Dissertation in the discussion about *minificción* and is referred to as *reescritura y parodia* (Lagmanovich 127).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Endnote 22.

⁴⁵ There is an error in the work, Books4Pocket is spelled incorrectly on page 38; it reads “Boosks4pocket.”

⁴⁶ When publishing this as a book, it would be good to mention a few examples of dystopic literature in Latin American literature.

⁴⁷ When publishing as a book, would be good to mention some of the ecological disasters in Latin America caused by climate change.

⁴⁸ I define an assumed environment as one that can be deduced through the context of the novel. For example, “Rito para dormir” does not explicitly state that it takes place on a farm, however, due to the presence of the farmer, the cow, animal excrement, and other farm-like materials and cues, one can deduce that the action takes place on a farm, or in a similar environment.

⁴⁹ The 56 *microrrelatos* that take place in a non-environment or are environment-less are: Lloro así, Desidia, Anilina, Utopía, Fantasma, Tic Tc, Daño, ¿Maldecirte?, Smart Phones, La ternura del mohó, Dedos de aguja, Huya de los hombres, Epitafio, Suero fisiológico, Cada 28 días, Amputada, Creador, Horror, Pensar, Amor dolor, Mi abuela, Pisada, Ante la crisis, Fealdad, Para mis hijos, Declaración de una novelista, Para Munch, Efímeras, Vértigo, Tres deseos, Autopsia, Error, Prospecto, Cicatriz, Marido flexible, Paralelo 38, Menú, Espejo, Olfato, Padre, En Español, Microrrealista, Secreto, Alegría, Corazón, Hijos, Elemento Erróneo, Pre, Trópicos, Lo que eres, Tatarabuela, Deidad occidental, Sangre azul, Diseño humano, Dijo el niño de dos cabezas, and Equivocarse.

⁵⁰ Lawrence Buell defines ecocentrism as “the view in environmental ethics that the interest of the ecosphere must override the interest of individual species” (*Future* 137).

⁵¹ María Paz Ruiz Gil is part of the Generation Zero Zero as defined by Nelson de Oliveira. Nelson de Oliveira, a Brazilian writer, has denoted and labeled the *Geração Zero Zero* in his anthology *Geração Zero Zero: Fricções em rede*, when referring to authors born in the 1970s who publish their major works in 2000 and after.

Chapter V

Beasts and Humans: Metamorphosis and the Non-Human in Gabriela A. Arciniegas' *Bestias*

The scariest monsters are the ones that lurk within our souls...

- Edgar Allan Poe

Human and non-human characters in Gabriela A. Arciniegas' *Bestias* (2015) are presented as equal, sentient, emotive and intelligent beings.¹ Arciniegas questions what it means to be human and beast through the representation of many non-human characters as human-like, having language, characteristics, emotions and thoughts similar to the human characters in the work. The portrayal of these beasts through language and narrative is consistent throughout the text. Arciniegas' use of language and the portrayal of both human and non-human creatures creates an ecocentric perspective, in which all human and non-human characters, beast, animal, metamorphosed beings, or otherwise, are seen as equal. Her representation of these characters calls into question the anthropocentric views found in much of contemporary Latin American literature.² In this chapter, I explore the human and non-human in *Bestias* and how their portrayal contributes to the underlying ecocentric perspective that Arciniegas employs in this volume. At the end of this chapter, I offer several Appendices to provide a sample of Arciniegas' work, as it is still difficult to acquire in the United States, and for the reader's convenience when discussing these works throughout the chapter.

Bestias (2015) is only one of Arciniegas' publications. She has been recognized for her poetry, short stories, and first novel, *Rojo sombra* (2013). She won first prize in "el

concurso del Museo Rayo” of poetry in 2009. Additionally, she has been deemed the “pionera de literatura de terror en Colombia” for her novel *Rojo Sombra* (Franco, “Gabriela Arciniegas...”). Gabriela A. Arciniegas was also mentioned as part of the Generación 95 – a generation of Latin American Poets born in the 1970s who began their careers in 1995. The Generation 95 did not last long, however, and its mention in literary criticism is scarce. Finally, in 2015, Arciniegas published a collection of short stories, *Bestias: Once cuentos de Gabriela A. Arciniegas*, which I will be analyzing in this chapter.

Currently, there lacks academic articles written on Arciniegas’ creative works, however, Iliana Restrepo Hernández has written an academic article referencing Arciniegas’ critical work.³ Restrepo Hernández published *Yurupary: sociedades patriarcales: camino expedito hacia la misoginia* in which she cites Arciniegas’ thesis “Personajes femeninos en ‘La leyenda del Yurupary’.” Restrepo Hernández identifies a patriarchal society in *La leyenda del Yurupary* and cites Arciniegas’ observations of the text as myth, legend, and story (Restrepo Hernández). Both Arciniegas and Restrepo Hernández approach *La leyenda del Yurupary* from a feminist perspective, identifying a patriarchal society, mysogeny, and “el poder de los hombres sobre el de las mujeres” (Arciniegas, “Personajes Femeninos” 2). However, Arciniegas is not mentioned as a writer in Restrepo Hernández’s publication and none of her creative works are considered.

As a literary critic, Arciniegas published various academic articles, including “Clarice Lispector y Ángeles Mastretta. Dos versiones de la escritura andrógina en latinoamérica” in which she analyzes how the two writers attempt to create an androgynous

form, one that searches for “una escritura más allá de los géneros” (Arciniegas, “Clarice Lispector” 252). Arciniegas writes in her abstract:

Clarice Lispector and Ángeles Mastretta are two apparently different authors. While Clarice’s main concern is to reach the border of the incommunicable of language, delving into the psyche of human being, Mastretta’s is showing the unofficial history of Mexico, Politics [*sic.*] seen from the domestic perspective. However, they both coincide in the pursuit of writing beyond genders. They step aside from traditional parameters imposed by the masculine view of the world and explore other possibilities to tell and be told, to find beauty and truth in the written language (Arciniegas, “Clarice Lispector” 249).⁴

The subject matter of her article veers greatly from her focus on the human and non-human as seen in *Bestias* and her own writing, but does continue to delve into the portrayal of the “other.”

In Arciniegas’ article, preceding the analysis of Lispector and Mastretta’s work is a brief biography on Arciniegas (published in this article as Gabriela Santa Arciniegas) which classifies the author as a “cuentista, novelista, poeta, ensayista, y traductora” (251). The biography portion of the article also lists various publications of Arciniegas: two poetry collections, *Sol menguante* (1995) and *Awaré* (2009); three anthologies in which various *cuentos* have been published, *Oscuro es el canto de la lluvia* (1996), *Granos de arena* (1999), and *Señales de ruta* (2008); and finally, her then upcoming novel *Rojo*

sombra (2013). The article does not mention *Bestias* (2015), because the *cuentario* was released after the publication date of the article. The biography also mentions Arciniegas as a finalist in “el concurso del Museo Rayo” in poetry in the years 1994, 1997, and 2001, in “diario *El tiempo*” as a finalist in *cuento* in the year 2001, and in “Instituto Brasil Colombia” as a finalist in *cuento* in 2008. Lastly, the brief biography mentions Arciniegas’ first prize placement in “el concurso del Museo Rayo” in poetry in 2009 (251). The article’s focus is Lispector and Mastretta’s work, however, and does not further mention the creative publications of Arciniegas.

In December of 2016, the magazine *El Portavoz* selected Gabriela A. Arciniegas as the winner of their short story contest. The magazine published Arciniegas’ winning short story “Silent Night” and gave her Toni Morrison’s novel *God Help the Child* (*La noche de los niños*) as a prize. At the foot of the article and before the magazine lists her previously mentioned awards, an upcoming collection of poems *Legiones de luz*, and her publication *Bestias* (2015), Arciniegas is identified as the granddaughter of Germán Arciniegas, a well-known historian, author and journalist in Colombia. The article also recognizes *Cromos* magazine’s declaration of Arciniegas as the “pionera de la literatura de terror en Colombia” (Franco 3).

In April of 2016, nine months prior to the publication of *El Portavoz*’s article, *Cromos* magazine interviewed Arciniegas (listed in the article as Gabriela Arciniegas), declaring her, as previously mentioned, the pioneer of horror literature in Colombia. The writer was interviewed by Diana Franco and participated in a round table discussion on narrating death (“narrar la muerte”) with Alvaro Robledo, Sergio Ocampo Madrid, and

Andrés Arias. The article mentions Arciniegas' previously mentioned publications as well as *Bestias* (2015), which is erroneously listed as a novel. In the interview, Franco asks Arciniegas about her publication and Arciniegas confesses that she is obsessed with “entender el animal que yace dentro del ser humano” and “entender al ser humano. Verlo como animal, lejos de los ángeles” (Franco 5). This search for understanding the human as animal is found in both *Rojo sombra* and *Bestias*. Franco states that the world Arciniegas creates is one of “monstruos y canívaes,” a world which I will delve into later in this dissertation chapter (Franco 2).

Franco also asked Arciniegas to elaborate on her relationship with her grandfather, the author, public figure, and politician, Germán Arciniegas, as well as her literary influences. Arciniegas listed Edgar Allen Poe as her primary influence for her horror fiction, but also listed Jorge Luis Borges, José Saramago, Chuck Palahniuk, Stanislaw Lem, and directors Quentin Tarantino and Hitchcock. She identifies Germán Arciniegas, her grandfather, as the sole male figure in her life and remarks on his influence on her, one that came from life and himself, rather than his writing or politics. Finally, Franco asked Arciniegas about future publications and she mentioned her poetry collection *Lecciones de vuelo*, released in 2016, and a short novel *Helena* which she said will represent the “guerra de Troya contada por mujeres” (Franco 6).⁵

Laguna Libros and *eLibros*, two editorials, also list Arciniegas and her publications on their websites. *eLibros* only lists three of Arciniegas' publications, *Sol menguante* (1995), *Awaré* (2009), and *Rojo sombra* (2013). However, they do list her major influences as Comte de Lautréamont, Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson, H. P. Lovecraft, H. G. Wells,

Edgar Allan Poe, Patrick Süskind, Steven King, and Jorge Luis Borges, as well as Marvel Comics and Hitchcock films (“Gabriela A. Arciniegas”). *Laguna Libros* lists Arciniegas as an emerging author of science fiction along with authors Juan David Correa and Fernando Gomez, mentioning José Félix Fuenmayor and José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo as “renowned novelists” contributing to the science fiction and crime genres in Colombia (“Gabriela Arciniegas”).⁶

Otraparte, an online magazine, published an article presenting Arciniegas’ novel *Rojo sombra* in August 2013. The article briefly addresses Arciniegas’ publications and work as a translator for Bistra Solutions, Rescorp Translations and BSS Translations, as well as her various academic presentations on Frida Kahlo, José Saramago, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. In addition to the aforementioned publications, *Otraparte* also mentions Arciniegas’ poetry collection *Sol menguante* (1995), incorrectly titled in the article as *Famas y Cronopios*, the publisher of *Sol menguante*. The article also mentions her participation in anthologies *El Brasil de los sueños* (2008) and *Alfabetos narrativos, PEN Colombia de escritores* (2013), her inclusion in *Quién es Quién en la poesía colombiana* by Rogelio Echavarría, erroneously listed as authored by poet, Héctor Rojas Erazo, and, finally, Arciniegas’ novel *Rojo sombra* (Duperly).

The article includes a few brief paragraphs discussing the novel before including a fragment of *Rojo sombra*, the first book of a four-book saga identified by the author as “gore místico” (Duperly 2).⁷ The article claims that the novel is part of the “tendencias híbridas” in the “Nueva Era, la industria del entretenimiento (el cine comercial) y una serie de rituales mercantilistas promisorios” (Los editores, Duperly 2).⁸ The article also claims

that “la modernidad” has repressed the search for “transcendencia,” “la deidad,” “el ritual,” communication through “los sueños,” and recalling “vidas pasadas a través de esos sueños,” but that these practices will return as they are a part of “la humanidad” (Los editores, Duperly 2). The article summarizes the novel and ends with the first few pages of the beginning of *Rojo sombra*.

In *diners Revista*, *Rojo sombra* is listed as one of the five must-read books for the Halloween season. The article classifies the novel as “gore místico” and declares Arciniegas (named Gabriela Arciniegas in this article) “una de las impulsoras del género de terror en Colombia” (Mena 5).⁹ After summarizing the novel and its protagonist, an “asesino caníbal,” the article claims that the novel does not center around violence. Instead, he suggests that violence is but rather a small aspect of the novel (Mena). Neither *Otraparte* or *diners Revista* go into detail about the novel or evaluate its content.

Finally, three articles address Arciniegas’ most recent publication *Bestias* – the collection of *cuentos* analyzed in this dissertation chapter. *Buzón FilBo 2016*, another online magazine, claimed the novel *Rojo sombra* to have “rastros de la influencia de Ray Bradbury, Stanislav [sic.] Lem, Stevenson y Wells,” as well as influences from “Star Wars y La Mosca de Cronenberg” (“Buzón FilBo 2016: Gabriela Arciniegas”).¹⁰ In the last sentence of this brief publication, *Bestias* is mentioned as a “colección de cuentos” (“Buzón FilBo 2016: Gabriela Arciniegas”).

In *Periódico el Vigía*, Jaime Panqueva gives a brief review and summary of six of the eleven *cuentos* in *Bestias*. He summarizes the short stories “Pleistocénica,” “La lengua

de los ángeles,” “Baal,” “Conjurados,” “Rocío,” and “Teratoma” (for his full summaries, see Appendix A). After summarizing these *cuentos*, Panqueva discusses the settings and influences found in the collection. He describes the settings as “clarooscuros” that “se agazapan los demonios propios, los seres que brotarán de las tinieblas” (Panqueva). Panqueva compares *Bestias* to “las ficciones de Lovecraft” (Panqueva). However, he does not analyze the texts any further, individually or as a whole.

Ricardo Rondón published an article on the unveiling of Gabriela Arciniega’s *Bestias* in *La Pluma y La Herida*. Rondón declares Arciniegas as Colombia’s “Lady Macbeth de la posmodernidad literaria” and “una maestra de suspenso psicológico,” praising her ability to create compelling stories that are “fantásticas,” “precisas,” and “magistrales” (Rondón 2, 4). Rondón compares Arciniegas’ characters and *cuentos* to the paintings of “Edvar Munch y Marc Chagall” (Rondón 3). Similar to others in previously mentioned articles, he identifies influences of Edgar Allan Poe, H. P. Lovecraft, Robert Louis Stevenson, Patrick Süskind, Stephen King, Conde de Lautréamont, Borges, and Arciniegas’ grandfather, Germán Arciniegas in her work (Rondón 3). Rondón also mentions the various “descabelladas criaturas” found in *Bestias*, but states that the real “bestias” are:

detrás del monumental escritorio de un plenipotenciario financiero, encabezando la mesa de juntas de un laboratorio farmacéutico, en el púlpito supremo de una dictadura roja en una república del Caribe, o en las antípodas, en el Medio Oriente, al frente de un ejército de niños con fusiles Kaláshnikov al hombro, impartiendo instrucciones para volarse en pedazos de nombre de Alá (Rondón 3).

This observation is one that I will discuss in this chapter in an attempt to assess the use of “bestias” in terms of humans and non-humans. Even though Rondón does not elaborate on this observation, he does include various examples from a few of the *cuentos*, referring to some of them as winged creatures that resemble Kafkaian cockroaches (Rondón 3). The use of metamorphosis is clear, however, Rondón does not further elaborate on the meaning or implications of the use of metamorphosis in Arciniegas’ *Bestias*.

Metamorphosis, both as a physical transformation of characters and as a process, the treatment of non-human beasts as human, and humans as non-human beasts, questions what separates humans and non-humans. Arciniegas seems to ask, is the ability to feel pain and fear what separates humans from non-humans? Is it aggression, fear-instilling behaviors, and ghastly appearances that make beasts, beasts? Or is there something innately beast-like, and non-human at the core of all humans? As Arciniegas stated in the previously mentioned interview, these are the questions that have driven her work, not only in *Bestias* but also in her novel *Rojo sombra* (Franco). In this dissertation chapter, I analyze her use of human and non-human characters, the metamorphosis of one into the other, and the effect it has within the collection.

Bestias was published in 2015, shortly after the release of Arciniegas’ *Rojo sombra*. *Bestias* is a *cuentario* made up of 11 *cuentos* and *microrrelatos* ranging from one and a half pages to twenty-nine and a half pages in length.¹¹ The *cuentos* are titled “La ira,” “Rocío,” “Pleistocénica,” “Baal,” “Blatta,” “Pupila,” “Regido por la luna,” “Conjurados,” “Teratoma,” “Alita,” and “La lengua de los ángeles.” The *cuentos* tell the stories of many human and non-human beings who suffer at the hands of other humans, either through

captivity, manipulation and transformation, or suppression. The characters, human, non-human, and metamorphosed, are united through their suffering, discomfort, and preference for the natural world. Each one fights against some aspect of anthropocentric ideologies and actions of other human characters – with the exception of “Pupila,” which presents a helpless and unaware human character who cannot help the extraterrestrial being who had been disguised as a human female. *Bestias*, instead, criticizes human actions, such as the exploitation of other animals, humans, and metamorphosed beings. The collection presents a different perspective that gives human emotion, higher order thinking skills, and importance to non-human animals. Through Arciniegas’ representation of these non-human characters, she portrays them as equals to human characters in order to discuss human and non-human relations and the current anthropocentric order of society, questioning human dominance and authority over other living beings.

Most of the *cuentos* are told from the point of view of a third-person omniscient narrator, with the exception of “Pupila” and “Blatta” which are told in first-person. Additionally, the characters in each *cuento* remain nameless, with the exception of Rocío and don Edgardo in “Rocío,” Blatta and Blanca in “Blatta,” Kahlím in “Baal,” Mamaía and Grontel in “Recogido por la luna,” Martina in “Teratoma,” and Alita in “Alita.” While the previously mentioned characters and protagonists are given names, the other characters in these stories are not given names, nor are characters and protagonists in the remaining five stories. The characters are usually referred to by pronouns such as “él,” “ella,” “yo,” “tú,” and “nosotros,” ambiguous subjects such as “los Señores,” “las hembras,” “las mujeres,” and “los hombres,” or kept unknown and ambiguous through the avoidance of any use of

pronouns or subjects, such as using the third-person singular and plural conjugations while omitting the specific subjects within the sentences. Through this technique and writing style, Arciniegas manipulates the perspective of the reader, masking whether the characters are human or non-human, giving the reader time to relate to, connect with, or empathize with the characters, regardless of their human or non-human status.

The characters in *Bestias* range from non-human animals to extraterrestrial creatures, including bulls, cockroaches, insects, metamorphosed creatures, aliens, humans and other variations of human and non-human hybrids – such as the fish-girl in “Alita.” The characters, regardless of their human or non-human status, are each presented as emotive, intelligent beings who are capable of enjoyment, passion, rage, vengeance, and suffering. However, the non-human characters are more often than not presented as victims, reacting violently toward their human counterparts out of necessity. The use of non-human and human characters, ambiguous story-telling techniques, and the absence of character names aid in creating equality between the characters. Human and non-human characters are therefore equally visible and relatable in the *cuentos*. Due to the characters’ lack of names, each character is seen as a character in a story, rather than given a pre-determined connotation. For example, “La ira” would not resonate the same had the bull been declared a bull at the beginning of the *cuento*, because the reader would have preconceived notions and ideas regarding the bull. Additionally, the lack of name to the bull creates a generalized image of the character, allowing the reader to imagine the bull as any captive being, rather than a specific one of a particular race, ethnicity, or species. This applies to many of the remaining characters in the collection as well. Their anonymity gives them further

relatability and removes any hierarchy or predisposition a reader may carry with them as they interpret these *cuentos*. This equality between human and non-human characters presents a way in which the reader can view the non-human as human-like and worthy of humane treatment without any preexisting prejudices regarding any particular non-human character.

The ecocentric perspective is much more extreme than the one seen in Alberto Chimal's 83 *Novelas*, for Arciniegas not only equates human and non-human characters, but also portrays human characters as inherently ignorant and harmful to non-human life-forms.¹² Only when human characters transform into metamorphosed beings do they become victims and worthy of empathy. The other human characters are constantly unaware of the non-human creatures' emotions, feelings, thoughts, or intelligence, and repeatedly cause suffering and harm to the non-humans.

The first *cuento* in *Bestias* presents this criticism of anthropocentric ideas and human actions toward non-human animals. "La ira" is a story of a captivated protagonist, presenting him and the other captive characters as male slaves, captured by "los Señores" who separate them from their families and mothers, force them to work, punish them, and abuse them for their own entertainment. The universal story of a slave and his owner allows for ambiguity in the story, but, gradually, it is revealed that the protagonist is a bull and the "Señores" are cattlemen who rear, raise, and sell the bulls. Arciniegas presents the non-human animal as a suffering being, and the human as a beast who tortures, manipulates, and abuses the innocent non-human animal. The personification of the bull creates an image of a tortured and innocent human-like being, while the animalization of the "Señores"

presents an image of ruthless non-human animals who have complete disregard for their captives. Arciniegas establishes this personification and animalization through language, descriptive words, and verbs which would typically be used to describe human attributes, behaviors, and psyche. For example, the story begins with the following paragraph:

No conocía una vida diferente. Desde que tenía memoria, había dormido solo en un cubículo de tierra aplanada y paredes de madera y había pasado los días andando por el campo, conducido por los Señores, atado con cuerdas. Había intentado hablarles, pero ellos le gritaban en esa lengua que él no entendía y le fustigaban las costillas. Él sabía del temor que les despertaba su cuerpo robusto y la fuerza de sus miembros. Por eso lo trataban con cierto respeto. Pero él también les temía a ellos (Arciniegas 9).

Here, the bull is described as having a “cuerpo robusto” and being strong, but the body is not specified as non-human animal. He is not characterized as having “patas” or “cuernos.” Rather, he is described as having a robust and able body. The bull is also attributed understanding, memory, speech, and the ability to be fearful. Finally, the bull’s attempt to speak to “los Señores” shows a desire for communication, understanding, and reasoning with the protagonist’s captors.

On the other hand, the indifference of “los Señores” creates a feeling of dissonance between the two beings. Neither being understands the language of the other. “Los Señores” are in power and control over the lesser, non-human being. “Los Señores” are characterized, then, as being apathetic and ruthless toward the bulls. However, this ruthlessness is further exaggerated by the representation of the bull as human. The reader does not know the

protagonist is a bull until four pages into the five-page *cuento*. Instead, the bull is seen and represented as a captive and slave, stripped of his rights, family, and free will. The reader is placed in captivity with the bull and sees the world through the bull's eyes. The relatability of the bull and his situation is heightened by his representation as human-like, creating the possibility of the reader to identify with the bull. Then, the cruelty of "los Señores" could be read as inhumane, instead of as a part of their duty of cattleman to control, breed, and prepare bulls for bullfighting.

When the non-human animal is represented in this way, it is equalized to the human and can be seen as a fellow being worthy of humane treatment. When non-human animals are represented as animals, per se, it is easier to classify them as lesser and to justify the actions of the humans. This inequality between non-human and human beings is justified in an anthropocentric world. In the anthropocentric perspective, human needs are central and most important. If humans need the bulls' meat, desire bullfights for entertainment, and drink cow's milk to nourish themselves, then their actions are justified. The treatment of the bulls is seen as necessary in this process, because their actions serve human needs, and, from their anthropocentric viewpoint, human needs are the most important. The captivity and containment of bulls for agricultural, entertainment, and breeding purposes is portrayed as a necessary evil to ensure the well-being of humans. The bulls are tools that assist humans in their survival and pleasure.

However, when the bull is represented as a sentient being, the perspective changes and the actions of "los Señores" are questioned. If the bull has feelings, memories, ideas, and is able to speak, then the bull may deserve particular rights and the actions of "los

Señores” could then be seen as incorrect. The separation of male and female cattle could then be read as a separation of family units and as cruel. For example, there are two passages in the story that represent the segregation of the male and female characters. The first example is from the beginning of the *cuento* when the bull describes the treatment of the “mujeres” of his kind:

Las mujeres siempre estaban en otro lugar, lejos de ellos, eso era lo que decían. Quienes habían logrado verlas contaban que los Señores las manoseaban, las penetraban con objetos fríos y duros. Así era como las preñaban y cuando estaban listas para dar a luz, las asistían, dejaban que amamantaran un par de meses y luego se llevaban a los bebés. Algunos tenían el privilegio de crecer entre aquellos de su mismo sexo. A otros no volvían a verlos (9).

In this paragraph, “los Señores” are portrayed as violators, groping, penetrating, and impregnating the females. Upon the first reading, before the reader is aware that the protagonist is a bull, it appears that the story is speaking of slaves in some sort of hierarchical society that takes advantage of women and uses men as slave workers.

This representation is further portrayed on the following page:

a las mujeres, disfrutaban exprimiéndoles los pechos: les gustaba beberse la leche, cosa que no hacían con sus propias hembras, cuyo blanco líquido era privilegio de los más pequeños (10).

The “mujeres” of the protagonist’s kind are described as having “pechos” exploited for their milk, while the “hembras” of “los Señores” are not exploited and are strictly used to

suckle their young. The use of the word “mujer” when describing the female bulls helps to characterize the bulls as human, while the use of “hembra” for the women of “los Señores” characterizes them as non-human animals. This act also “others” the human characters through the switching of perspective. The bull others “los Señores” by referring to them with different terms, terms that the bull does not use to label and identify his own kind. This change in perspective questions the actions of humans and their treatment toward the cattle.

Additionally, the bull desires to escape from his captives, avenge his fellow men and women, and overthrow the “imperio” of “los Señores” (12, 13).¹³ When the bull is thrown into a bullfighting ring, the scene is flipped and the reader perceives the bullfight from the perspective of the bull. Then, the rage of the bull is justified by the vicious actions of his captors. It is in this moment that the reader is fully aware of the protagonist as a bull, but the bull has already been established as a relatable character and the sentiment remains. In this moment, one could feel empathy for the bull and could easily perceive the bullfights as inhumane and cruel.

It is only in the second to last paragraph that “los Señores” are humanized in their fear of the bull. The bull kills the bullfighter and, from then on, is seen as a fear-instilling creature. Heretofore, “los Señores” have been animalized and portrayed as emotionless beasts. The suffering of the bulls is said to “dar más alegría a los Señores” (12). The branding of rebellious bulls who had attempted to escape the compound was said to have been “el mayor de los placeres de los Señores” (10). However, in the second to last paragraph, it is “los Señores” who are horrified and who must run into the ring in an attempt

to distract the bull and protect their own. It is “los Señores” who must tame and control a wild beast who has killed one of their own.

The perspectives of both the nameless bull and “los Señores” can be manipulated to question and to justify each other’s actions and reactions. The portrayal of the bull as a sentient and emotive being helps to represent “los Señores” in a negative and cruel light, which challenges the anthropocentric viewpoint. This *cuento*, however, is just the first of many in Gabriela A. Arciniegas’s *Bestias*. This initiates the beginning of her questioning of what it means to be man and beast, and what divides humans from non-humans, if anything at all.

The exploration of what it means to be human and beast continues in the fifth story in *Bestias*, “Blatta,” a story of a cockroach’s life and encounter with Blanca, the human in whose house she lives. The *cuento* parallels the existence of the two creatures in order to relate and equalize one to the other. Blatta is described as a spiritual, intelligent being who enjoys eating and tasting various types of foods and materials, while Blanca is described as a spiritual, intelligent being who desires to know and learn about everything in the world. The two creatures pursue their desires, Blatta tasting and dreaming of the flavors in the world and Blanca reading all the books she can find. The two are further paralleled in their physical description with Blanca’s hands and arms compared to Blatta’s antennas. Even their names can be said to reflect each other’s existence, with only one syllable difference between them.

Furthermore, Blatta is personified, while Blanca is animalized. These two techniques attempt to compare the two beings and to present their existences as equal

within Arciniegas' symbolic world. First, Blatta is presented as an "alegre" creature who loves "acariciar el piso con su panza ovalada" (47). Then, she is said to have a passion, to which she "había dedicado su vida a probar todas las sustancias que se le presentaran" (48). She and the cockroaches are also said to have "resistido tantos siglos como tú. Han conquistado los mismos parajes hostiles que tú. Han conseguido vadear las alturas [y] [l]os desiertos," referring to the human species and its ability to adapt and survive in the various harsh environments of the earth (48).¹⁴ Additionally, Blatta and "su gente" are shown to be spiritual, as the "ancianas habla[n] de lo importante que [es] seguir haciendo los bailes y los cantos" to which Blatta questions how their devotion could still lead to so many deaths of her kind (49). These characteristics give Blatta a personality and present her as a sentient, emotive being.

Finally, Blatta is portrayed as a curious and intelligent lifeform that is a part of the collective conscious of her species. Blatta learns from both dead and living cockroaches through her collective consciousness and is able to adapt according to new knowledge she obtains from this shared, collective consciousness. Although the cockroaches are admittedly illiterate, they are portrayed as able to read "lo que el Universo escribe," for they are "capaces de predecir tormentas, huracanes, terremotos. Leer al amigo y al enemigo en el olor que dejan sus patas al pasar" (48, 49). These characteristics present Blatta as human-like in her ability to understand, feel, think, and be curious.

Blanca is then paralleled to Blatta, equating the two beings. Blanca is described as part of the species of "gigantescos insectos bípedos," who have learned to read books in order to communicate with the dead, and who use their "palmas como si fueran narices

frenéticas rastreando lo oculto” (50, 49). Blanca is also perceived as intelligent and spiritual as she desires to understand the “esencia de la vida,” which she attempts to obtain by doing a séance to call the “Señor Oscuro” who, most unfortunately, takes her life, leaving her skinless, in pain, and bleeding on the ground (51). It is in this moment, when Blanca is dying and in agony, that she first sees Blatta on the ground next to her, tasting her pooling blood. It is at this time that Blanca desires to be Blatta, and their existence converges.

However, it is in the moment of Blanca’s death that the two creatures are seen as different and a lack of understanding between them becomes apparent. At this time in the story, Blatta notices the great physical difference between the two creatures. Blatta describes Blanca’s epidermis as similar to the epidermis of “las reses y los cerdos” (51). At the end of the story, Blatta wonders “si estaba en la naturaleza de esos animales enormes el cambiar de piel como las serpientes” (52). Blatta’s observations demonstrate the absence of superiority of the human and the perception of them as simply “animales enormes.” To Blatta and her kind, the human is merely another creature who has lived alongside them throughout their existence on the earth. The two types of animals, though extremely different in size and shape, are viewed as parallel in their curiosity, spirituality, and intelligence.

It is through this parallel representation that Arciniegas presents her idea of humans and non-humans as one and the same, a topic she claimed to be an important part of writing *Bestias* in an interview with Diana Franco.¹⁵ Both human and non-human characters are continuously represented as identical, parallel, and/or sentient, emotive beings; the two are not easily identifiable in any of the *cuentos*. Her human and non-human characters are both

complex beings that exist in intricate societal structures. The story of “La ira” may tell that of a bull in captivity, but it also portrays a very real and difficult part of human history and society, that of human enslavement of not only non-human animals, but also other humans. The story depicts the life of a captive, but that captive could easily have been a human character, deemed lesser and “othered” by his or her own kind. The cockroach in “Blatta” could also easily be a human character, representing a homeless person living on the edge of society and eating garbage scraps. Arciniegas portrays human and non-human characters in a way that flattens one’s existence into the other. Through the metamorphosis of many of these characters, they do not only transform into one another, but switch roles within their societies. Through this transformation and role-reversal, the issues of power, control, and dominance become clearer. The questioning of the anthropocentric construct in which human characters are dominant is also apparent and the inequality among beings within that construct is evident.

Her exploration of the representation of human as beast and beast as human continues throughout *Bestias*. The eighth *cuento*, “Conjurados,” tells the story of insects taking back the world from the humans, casting a spell on them and making them tiny while the insects themselves become giants (to read the full *microrrelato*, see Appendix B).¹⁶ This *cuento* presents non-human insects as intelligent, sentient, and powerful beings, while portraying humans as beastly, infestations. The insects slowly hex the main human character, strategically poking him and whispering incantations in his ear. The next morning, the human character addresses the town and, unwillingly, due to the spell he was put under, speaks the names he heard whispered in his ear that night. Slowly, humanity and

its civilization shrink to the size of insects and insects expand to the size of humans. The town diminishes in size and the “galerías” and “torres” of the insect society grow to enormous sizes (77). The only things that do not shrink are “las frutas [y] los árboles” (77).

The treatment of the earth, its trees and plants as objects in “Conjurados” is striking, because it denotes an equal exploitation of the natural world by both the human characters and the insects. The humans and insects depend on and use the earth and its natural materials as nourishment, for construction, and their own gain. This indicates that the ecocentrism in Arciniegas’ *Bestias* does not extend to plants or other non-human non-animal beings and objects. Even though it has been argued by Stefano Mancuso and Alessandra Viola in *Verde brillante: Sensibilità e intelligenza del mondo vegetale* that plants are also emotive beings that sleep, move, and have desires, Arciniegas does not give these abilities to other non-human non-animal beings or objects in her work (Mancuso and Viola). These non-human non-animal beings are portrayed as resources, are used as background, or tools for both human and non-human characters in the collection. It is unclear as to why equality has not been extended to these beings in Arciniegas’ *Bestias*. Perhaps it is their inability to express their pain and suffering through verbal and facial cues due to their lack of eyes, mouth, and face, or perhaps this is where Arciniegas draws the line of sentience. Nevertheless, the focus of the work lies within human and non-human animal characters, their equality, flattening, and existence alongside one another.

However, the representation of humans and their civilization as a “plaga” on earth and the reinstatement of the insects as the rulers of the earth, portrays an extreme ecocritical perspective (77). In this *cuento*, the insects desire to overthrow and destroy humans in order

to take their place in society. This overthrow of power represents a belief and desire for the world to be in the hands of the insects. The “Gran Reina” refers to the humans and claims “la infestación ha sido reducida,” indicating the reduction of the humans to ant-size creatures (77). Additionally, she claims that the earth has always been theirs and that the humans need to be fumigated so that the insects will finally be rid of their ghastly giant guests. The *cuento* closes with the “Gran Reina” addressing her citizens: “Insectos, el mundo es nuestro como hace milenios lo fue” (77).

Arciniegas addresses the egoistic, anthropocentric views of the human at the beginning of the *cuento*, which seems to serve as a justification for the actions of the insects. Humans are described as being ignorant to the intelligent life-forms with whom they share the planet. The second paragraph depicts this ignorance:

La raza de los hombres enormes desconoce la existencia de las diminutas ciudades de largas torres, de altas murallas, donde se albergan las más delicadas artes y la ciencia. Ignora las centenarias dinastías de gobernantes, las discusiones teológicas, no sabe de la terrible mafia que priva de alimento a los débiles. Los descomunales y torpes oídos son incapaces de oír la música melancólica y las alabanzas a la luna de esos seres pequeñísimos. Los colosos piensan que las arduas escaladas por sus cuerpos tienen el simple objeto de alimentarse de su sangre (75).

Not only is anthropocentrism addressed in this paragraph, but it is criticized. The ignorance of the human is presented as insensitive, inhumane, and egotistical. The representation of the insects as sentient beings who have created complex societies, participate in the arts,

have dynasties, governments, mafias, and music presents the insects as creatures worthy of consideration. The shift in perspective places the reader in the experience of the insects, and, like the bull in “La ira,” the violence and aggression of the insects toward the human characters is justified by their proclaimed harsh treatment by the humans throughout previous centuries.

The human, then, is represented as a senseless beast, while the insects are presented as victims of an anthropocentric worldview. Their desire to annihilate the human “infestación” can be read as vengeance, similar to the bull’s murder of the matador. The insects’ reinstatement of an ecocentric world is then paralleled to the ruling of the humans in their anthropocentric one. Just as humans fumigated, senselessly murdered, and destroyed the insects’ homes, the insects will do the same to the humans. The insects seek revenge on the humans and install their own form of hierarchy, with them at the top and the humans at the bottom. Additionally, the insects are ruthless, violent, and unforgiving, just as the humans had been to their kind. This parallel representation further projects the insects as sentient human-like beings, because they are flawed, angry, and vengeful, as humans are. The insects in “Conjurados” are far more complex than the cockroaches previously discussed in “Blatta.” While Blatta was passionate about tasting all the flavors of the world, was spiritual, and sentient, she lived within the constructed human world and was not part of a self-sufficient society as the insects in “Conjurados” are. The insects in this *cuento* live below the human civilization in their own complex society, rather than living off the scraps and in the cracks of it. The insects constructed their own buildings, monuments, governments, and so forth. Their story of a *coup d’état* furthers Arciniegas’

portrayal of non-human beings as complex creatures and questions the representation of non-humans as beasts. The *coup d'état* also challenges the dominance and power relations between the two species, and, in this case, reinstalls the role of the insects as the dominant, ruling species in the world.

The metamorphosis found in *Bestias* also presents an extreme ecocritical perspective and questions what denotes a beast by transforming human characters into non-human forms. The transformation into beast, however, does not automatically make the human character a beast-like being, rather it questions those that create the new creatures, in the case of *Bestias*, the human characters who perform experiments, create metamorphosed creatures, and harm other human and non-human characters. The metamorphosed beings are presented as victims, just like the insects and non-human beings are in the previously mentioned *cuentos*. The new, transformed being is a victim of circumstance and experiences pain, suffering, and fear similar to other non-human creatures throughout *Bestias*.

An example of this metamorphosis into a victimized non-human form is seen in the second *cuento*, “Rocío” (to read the full *microrrelato*, see Appendix C).¹⁷ This *cuento* tells the story of an office worker transformed into a winged insect-like creature. The transformation is explained by an ambiguous “ellos” from whom Rocío “recibía dinero por dejarse inyectar” and had been kept in a “cámara hiperbárica” (16). The *cuento* takes place in an office building and begins with the transformation of Rocío into a cocoon. The *cuento* ends when the transformation is complete and the human protagonist fully becomes the winged creature she was created to be. Although it is unclear who created her and for what

purpose, it is clear that she participated in experiments and was paid by human characters to take part in the chemical conversion into insect.

Rocio's transformation to insect begins with the removal of her name and ability to communicate. The only sound that Rocío is able to utter is "Memmmemeee" thereafter she is completely unable to communicate with her fellow coworkers and even forgets her own name (15). By the end of the *cuento* Rocío is unable to create any human-like sounds, her screams slowly converting into what the security guard describes as the sound of a "perro que había sido atropellado o una sirena de policía a lo lejos" (17). Finally, the only form of communication she has with the others is when Marta, a janitress, makes eye contact with Rocío's new insect form.

The other characters in the story seem unphased by the metamorphosis of Rocío into insect. In fact, they merely hide her cocooned body behind a row of boxes and forget about her. When the transformation occurs and Rocío emerges from her cocoon, the office workers are not moved by the destroyed office scene, littered with slime, paper-like ashes, and debris from the broken window. The security guard does not investigate the noise, the office workers do not report the transformation to anyone, and the janitress does not scream at the sight of a large winged creature hanging from a halogen light on the ceiling.

Even though the coworkers and her boss, don Edgardo, initially reacted to the transformation, their overall lack of surprise seems to imply that the transformation is either commonplace or expected. Their reactions make one wonder in what type of office these people work. The ambiguity of who injected Rocío with an insect-transformation formula also remains a mystery. These two pieces of information are the only clues as to what kind

of situation Rocío was living in and what type of experimentation she was a part of. The metamorphosis and the pain that Rocío experienced through the transformation, a pain which she was told would not occur, questions what kind of people would put a human through an experiment of this sort. Although Rocío ultimately becomes a beast, a winged insect who loses all aspects of her human self, it is the organization and people who created her who remain insensitive beasts. For what kind of human would inhumanely transform another being into a large insect?

The role-reversal of Rocío from a dominant human form into a victimized non-human form draws attention to the backward leading and inhumane treatment that occurs in her society and at her workplace. She then becomes an “other” that will ultimately be ignored and live on the edge of society, misplaced and without purpose in the human workplace. The human’s who created her do not come to her aid, nor do they provide her any escape from her situation. Rather, they continue to watch her and go about their day, business as usual. Similar to other stories in *Bestias*, Arciniegas portrays non-humans as innocent victims of malicious human behavior and indifference.

Humans are further portrayed as insensitive beings in the tenth *cuento* in *Bestias*, “Alita,” which tells the story of a young girl who loves the rain and playing pretend. The narrator wants to be her friend and, one day, when it rains, he takes her outside to play in the water.¹⁸ Alita wants to play a game of pretend where they are fish escaping from a large shark, but the narrator wants to play imaginary space ships. The two disagree and are ultimately taken back inside the school by their teacher. After, the two walk home together and pass by a river where they admire the fish. The narrator suggests they should fish and

cook one of the fish and the girl runs away crying. A week later, the narrator searches for her and finds her sitting by the river, and when she sees him, she stares at him, enters the water, and transforms into a fish.

Similar to the other metamorphoses in *Bestias* the non-human form that the girl takes, the fish, is portrayed as a victim of human actions and insensitivity. The girl suffers and cries when the boy suggests fishing and cooking the fish in the river, presumably her friends and family. The fish, in the narrator's eyes, are there for catching and eating; they serve the sole purpose of providing nourishment. This anthropocentric view hurts the girl and she flees crying; the fish, to her, are much more than objects to be devoured. She views the fish as "gente" (111). The conflict of perspective makes it difficult for the two to become friends, but she attempts to make him understand by revealing her transformation into a fish. The story ends there and it is unclear whether or not this revelation altered the narrator's perspective, because the narrator's only remark is "[e]ra un pez plateado, grande, de aletas transparentes. Nunca he vuelto a ver uno como ella" (114).¹⁹

The narrator, like the coworkers in "Rocío," seems unsurprised by the transformation, merely stating the facts – the girl turned into a fish. The transformation does not destabilize the society or world that Arciniegas has created. In fact, nothing changes at all due to the girl's metamorphosis into a fish. Is it generally accepted that beings morph into and out of varying animal forms in the world that Arciniegas presents the reader? Unlike the metamorphosis seen in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, the surrounding characters are unimpressed, unsurprised, and generally unmoved by these transformations. It almost seems that *Bestias* is a type of cold-narrative that presents these cases as scientific

studies rather than impacting shifts in form. The form of the character seems unimportant, and, instead, the actions, feelings, beliefs, and ideas of the characters are presented as more important. However, the repetition of the narrator's mention of Alita's large, "asombrados" eyes at the end of the *cuento* seems to indicate that the narrator still identifies her as Alita and not as just another fish, giving slight importance to her form. It is possible, then, that the narrator will not regard other fish the way that Alita had. Rather, the narrator will continue to view her as an exception to the existence of fish. Perhaps Alita understands this and that is the reason for her permanent return to her fish form.

The two characters are in constant debate and disagreement about what to play on the playground, how to act in the rain, and their regard for non-human animals. The *cuento* does not offer a resolution between the two, for anthropocentrism and ecocentrism cannot exist in agreement with one another considering they are inherently opposing views. Rather, the two must part ways and exist in their own worlds, the narrator on land and the fish-girl in the water. The inability for one to understand the other does not stem from their inability to communicate, because the girl is given the ability to take a human form and speak the human language. Instead, their inability to understand one another comes from a place of ideological differences, one viewing non-human animals as a resource and the other viewing them as sentient beings. Alita's abandonment of the school and the narrator seems to indicate her resignation and acceptance of their differing beliefs. The two simply cannot and will not see the world in the same way as the other.

The narrator's description of the fish indicates an anthropocentric perspective. The narrator describes them as "moviendo las bocas como cantando una canción que no

podíamos oír” and “cantando, bailoteando, moviendo la cola como perritos bajo el agua” (113). Even though the narrator describes the fish as appearing to sing and dance in the water, giving them human-like abilities, the narrator still compares them to other non-human animals, “perritos.” The narrator does not imagine them as actually singing, rather moving their mouths as if they were singing. Additionally, he suggests “¿por qué no intentamos pescar uno? Yo te lo doy y tú lo cocinas” (113). A suggestion that disturbs and upsets the girl, for reasons that the narrator is unable to comprehend, for he has unknowingly just asked her to cook her own kind.

Alita, on the other hand, constantly wants to be a fish and play games where they pretend to be fish or other aquatic animals. On the playground, she “inventaba juegos de diluvios, de naufragios, de gente que vivía en ciudades sobre cetáceos enormes, inmóviles, benévolo, de ciudades sumergidas, de tesoros perdidos en los fondos abisales del océano” and “quería jugar a que éramos pescados que huíamos de un tiburón imaginario” (111, 112). At the beginning of the *cuento*, it is unclear that the girl is speaking about fish when describing her games, but by the end it seems evident that her games reflect her existence and life as a fish. Alita’s perspective of aquatic creatures is very different from the narrator’s; her description of them as “gente” and fleeing from sharks creates a more dynamic view of the non-human life-forms. The sharks and fish are not merely a part of the circle of life, predator and prey, but are represented as intelligent and emotive beings. The fish are fearful and flee from the sharks; their fleeing from the sharks is not only an automated instinctual reaction, but also one that comes from a place of fear and distress.

Again, the suffering of the non-human characters is what ties them to the other human characters throughout *Bestias*.

Alita's choice to return to the water and her fish form can also be read as an acceptance of her life as a fish and her preference for the natural world over the constructed, human one. She was unhappy among the human characters who did not understand her and even though her transformation was not painful, unlike the other metamorphoses in *Bestias* which were gruesome and agonizing, she seems to experience an emotional distress. This pain and lack of acceptance among the humans also paints the human characters in a slightly negative light, because it is they who are insensitive, unable to understand, simple in their ideas, and selfish in their views toward other non-human animals. Even though none of the characters deliberately tried to cause Alita any pain, unlike the characters who invoked Rocío's transformation, their way of life threatens Alita and her kind. Once again, the human character is the culprit of non-human suffering in *Bestias*.

Arciniegas also presents humans as desiring to be non-human and animal-like in *Bestias*. The final *cuento*, "La lengua de los ángeles," tells the story of a baby twin girl who is disappointed with her human form and wishes to be an angel, which is what she believes chickens to be. Due to her belief that chickens are angels, the girl spends her whole life refusing to be human and opts instead to speak the language of the angels, clucking and crowing like the chickens. From the moment that the girl is born she is disturbed by and dislikes the human world, referring to it as imperfect, dark, and scary. The *cuento* presents the non-human world as superior to the human world and the non-human animal form as angel-like. The protagonist, the baby girl who wishes to be an angel again, continuously

rejects the world of her mother and twin sister. This preference for the natural world and the belief of it to be perfect, complete, and superior to earth further represents the ecocentric views found in Arciniegas' *Bestias*. The closing *cuento* reiterates the world that she has created in the work and, once again, questions anthropocentric perspectives and representations.

Even though the humans in this *cuento* are not intentionally cruel to the protagonist, she feels restrained and attacked by their constant attempts to make her like them. The human characters do not see any issue with their way of living and believe the protagonists' way of living to be incorrect. There is a touch of humor in the *cuento*, for Arciniegas presents the story of a baby who wishes to be a bird. While the description and story-telling in the *cuento* are humorous, there is a questioning of why humans live clothed and confined and why it would be wrong to live like non-human animals. The question is also, why is this way of living seen as uncivilized, un-human, and un-natural?

The baby girl in the *cuento* is in constant battle with the regulations of human society. Instead, she wishes to be naked, eat with her hands, refuses to speak any human language, and prefers to live outside. The baby girl finds the human world to be imperfect, comparing it to the womb in which she lived:

una vez habitó el confortable mundo, la cueva íntima, el castillo en penumbras donde oía los sonidos a través del agua, donde sólo existía ella. Donde sólo habitaban los recuerdos sobre las últimas palabras que los ángeles le dicen a todas las almas antes de ponerles el dedo sobre los labios y empujarlas al mundo. [...] Hasta entonces era perfecta (117).

The girl finds comfort and perfection in the womb, feelings that are met with harsh opposites when she enters the confines of her mother's human home. She wishes to know "en qué se había convertido" and why she was forced to know and live with "los matices de la noche y los temores que traían las sombras" (117). This contrasting image of the womb and the house show her discomfort in her new home. She feels that she is "un ser incompleto" in the new world she has suddenly found herself. This feeling of incompleteness leads to a more challenging idea of human beings as imperfect creatures, lacking something that would make them majestic, angel-like beings. This lack and imperfection criticizes the human characters and identifies an issue with them as the dominant rulers. If human beings are not perfect creatures, why have they been deemed more important than other beings, and why should they decide what life, lifestyles, and reasoning should be dominant, accepted, and implemented by all beings?

As she begins to grow up, her distaste for her mother's home and preference for the natural world and the womb whence she came continues. When she is a toddler she is described as having:

probó el polvo acre que le hacía toser, la sensación seca y clara de la ropa contra la lengua, aunque amargo y salado a veces. Masticar la tierra y sentirla sisear entre los dientes con ese sonido brillante a la vez oscuro (118).

The house and clothing are described as bitter, dry, and tart, causing her to cough, while the soil of the earth is described as bright and pleasant. When her teeth come in she:

adquirió la costumbre de pegarse a la esquina de una pared, a ruñirla hasta sacar migas y oír desde adentro de la boca cómo estallaban. A veces el sabor

de la cal la empalagaba. Entonces se iba a la pata de la mesa a chuparla hasta que se ablandaba y podía arrancarle, primero, tiras, filamentos de madera, y luego, cuando estaba más empapada, trocitos suaves (118).

Again, the constructed house is too sweet and the girl prefers the taste of the wooden table, a man-made object, but one made of natural materials which she finds soft and preferable to the man-made objects in the house she is forced to live in with her mother and twin sister.

When her mother attempts to have her walk, the girl reacts violently, hitting her mother. The girl “le gustaba estar cerca del piso” and did not wish to walk on two feet like her mother and twin sister. Only when she discovers the outdoors and sees the birds walking on two feet does she attempt to stand and walk. Her desire to be like the birds and to escape from the constraints of her home reiterates her discomfort within the constructed, human environment. The first moment of happiness that the girl experiences is when she sees the birds and hears their sounds and language, which she compares to the angels’ voices:

Entonces vio el corral. Supo de dónde venían los sonidos. Adentro del angeo, vio sus picos perfectos. Sus pies escamosos, desnudos, de pocos dedos, pero que se sostenían con maestría. Sus cuerpos casi redondos, sus abrigos brillantes, sus alas. Se preguntó si eran ángeles como los que ella recordaba haber visto antes de nacer (120).

The girl uses the same language to describe the chickens and the world whence she came. She says that their beaks are “perfectos,” just as she labels the place where she lived before she was born. She refers to their scaly, naked feet as masterfully supporting themselves,

something which she has yet to be able to do with her human legs and feet. She depicts their bodies as bright, similar to how she remembers the taste of the soil. The language used to describe the womb and the non-human world shows her preference over the constructed human environment that she does not understand.

From the moment that the girl encounters the chickens, the girl chooses to act and live as they do. She understands that:

si permanecía en ese nuevo mundo, no iba a necesitar vestirse; entre todos le darían el calor que ella quisiera. No le pidieron que se separa del suelo; le enseñaron que era mejor andar acurrucada. Con los brazos plegados, bajando la cerviz hasta el suelo, fue aprendiendo a tomar los granos de maíz, a doblar su dureza (121).

The young girl finds the life of the chickens to be closest to the warm and comfortable environment from which she came. She compares the freedom that the chickens give her, to stay close to the earth, to be free of clothing, and to eat things from the ground, to the restrictions her mother puts on her, to stand upright, to wear itchy, uncomfortable clothing, and to eat with a spoon and fork. She refers to her mother, twin sister, and other human characters as enforcing her to conform to their ways of life. To this, she “les chillaba y aleteaba” and “se rehúsa a aprender la intrincada lengua que tratan de imponerle. Si está feliz, si está triste, si la asustan, grita en su lengua. La lengua de los ángeles” (121, 122). The girl, preferring her previous world and aversion to the human world in which she finds herself, refuses to participate in human activities. Instead, she takes on the actions, language, and characteristics of the chickens, whom she finds warm and welcoming. Even

though the girl does not physically transform into a non-human form, she does transform psychologically.

This rejection of the constructed, human environment, preference for the natural world, and desire to be bird-like, presents a protagonist who rejects the anthropocentric and acquired perspectives of her mother's home and those who live within it. The question presented, then, is why should anyone be forced to live within the constraints of human preferences? Why must the girl conform to their ways and be human-like, when she finds the ways of the chickens to better suit her desires? What denotes the human, anthropocentric lifestyle and viewpoint, the correct and superior one? What separates the human and non-human animal? Is it their intricate language, clothing choice, and built environments? Or are these the things that humans use to convince themselves of their superiority over non-human beings?

Arciniegas has approached these questions throughout *Bestias*, portraying human and beast, human and non-human, as one in the same. She presents us with a work that parallels human and non-human experiences to represent the two beings on equal terms, in order to address and question anthropocentric ideas. The role-reversal created by the metamorphosis in the collection draws attention to human dominance, inequality amongst various types of beings, and aggression and violence towards the "other," in this case the non-human characters. The world that she creates in *Bestias* is an ecocentric and egalitarian world in which human and non-human characters are seen as sentient, intelligent, and valuable beings. Arciniegas does not merely present a collection of short stories that personifies non-human characters. Rather, she deliberately puts into question the hierarchy

in place and presents the reader with the idea that humans are beasts and beasts are humans. She not only parallels the two's existence, but declares them to be the same flawed, aggressive, violent, and suffering entities.

The common element of suffering is seen once again in the sixth *cuento* in *Bestias*, "Pupila" (to read the full *microrrelato*, see Appendix D).²⁰ The characters in the story are again nameless; one character, the second person "tú," transforms and convulses into something non-human, while the other character, first person "yo," watches and thinks back on a moment when "tú" had asked if "yo" would believe them if they told them they were not from this world. The transformation begins when the narrator describes, "te arranca la blusa entre espasmos que te arquean la espalda" and the "tú" carácter saying "ha empezado la transformación" (55). It is unclear into what the character is transforming, but the final line of the story implies that it is non-human – "creí ver que tu pupila se volvía vertical" (56). However, the mention of Sixto Paz, "rigelianos," and "pleyadianos," hints at the possibility of the "tú" character having been a semi-human or human-like extraterrestrial.²¹

Furthermore, the brief conversation that "yo" remembers implies that perhaps the main character, "tú," had never been human at all. "Yo" recalls "tú" telling him/her "¿Me crees si te digo que no soy de este mundo?" (56).²² Additionally, "yo" describes "tú" as having always been "tan rara y tan loca" that the previous question did not faze him/her. It is possible, then, that the main character was returning to her previous, original, and/or natural form and that the metamorphosis into human occurred much earlier on. The metamorphosis into non-human would then be expected and possibly inevitable.

The use of characters “tú” and “yo” is not a mere specular reflection, “tú” and “yo,” you and I, do not converge into one being, nor do they transform one into the other. Instead, the use of the first person singular and second person singular aids in universalizing the characters, implying that “yo” may be I, the reader, or any other particular human, and “tú” may be you, the reader, or any other non-human disguised as someone close to them. The play with you and I as characters furthers Arciniegas’ declaration of human and beast as the same. Are you, the reader? Am I, the reader? Are you the beast? Am I the beast? Who is the non-human and who is the human? What determines the unnaturalness of the human who transforms into an alien lifeform? Why are humans considered the normal life form? Who is the invader, who is the alien, who is the human? These questions are not answered, but “Pupila” seems to reiterate them.

Similar to the other *cuentos* in *Bestias*, the transformation that “tú” undergoes is painful and gruesome. Much like the metamorphosis in “Rocío,” the other characters do not seem disturbed by the transformations. The “yo” character states clearly that he believed to see the pupils of “tú” turn vertical, but does not show any particular emotion towards this observation. It seems that, in the world of Arciniegas, these transformations, metamorphoses, and various creatures are accepted as a part of the narrative she creates in *Bestias*. The humans, non-humans, and metamorphoses of one into the other, is a theme, structure, and tool used throughout the work.

The emotional reactions of beast and human indicates equality between the beings. The non-human, human, and those experiencing metamorphosis all have one thing in common – suffering. All of the beings reach a commonality through their own pain and

existence in the world in which they live. From Blatta's suffering caused by the deaths of her kind through their collective consciousness, to Rocío's gruesome and painful transformation, the humans and non-humans are sentient, emotive beings who experience distress, anger, fear, and pain. Arciniegas also presents both non-human and human characters in the same fashion. The bull in "La ira" expresses his own thoughts, fears, and emotions the same way that "Ella" does in "Pleistocénica".²³ The girl protagonist in "La lengua de los ángeles" finds herself unable to communicate with the human characters, the same way that Rocío does after transforming into a giant insect.²⁴ These characters, beast or not, are also often void of name and gender in the work. Arciniegas' technique of ambiguity equates human and non-human characters, stripping them both of proper names and unifying them through this erasure.²⁵ This shared experience unifies the non-human and human beings, creating a platform on which the two can be perceived as equal. If non-humans also suffer in the same way that humans do, who can argue, then, that they cannot experience love, passion, and happiness in the way that humans can?

In conclusion, the representation of all the beasts, human and non-human, in *Bestias* represents a non-anthropocentric perspective in which Arciniegas, like Alberto Chimal in *83 Novelas*, portrays a world of equality, in which all creatures are seen as worthy, emotive, and sentient beings. Arciniegas declares humans and non-humans as one in the same. Both human and non-human characters could be at either end of the hierarchy, those who are in charge and inflict suffering or those who are victims. Each character, human or non-human, at any moment, can be subject to violence, beast-like or human-like behavior, emotions, indifference, and, of course, metamorphosis. Arciniegas demands the attention of the

reader, portraying a world in which the human is beast and beast is human creating a volume with ecocentric undertones that questions human superiority and the non-human's place within that construct.

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Appendices: Selection of Short Stories from *Bestias*

Appendix 4.1

Summary from “Bestias, de Gabriela Arciniegas” by Jaime Panqueva

“Pleistocénica,” por ejemplo, es una sátira a la sociedad ávida de resucitar seres extintos para hacer un uso comercial muy dudoso. “La lengua de los ángeles” abunda sobre el abandono infantil que torna al hombre en bestia. “Baal,” homenaje borgiano, transporta al lector hacia el lejano oriente a la cacería de una criatura exterminadora capaz de extraer la violencia y talante devastador de sus acechadores para convertirlos en predadores de la humanidad. “Conjurados” perfila un cambio del orden natural donde los insectos dominan nuestro mundo, como una venganza contra la raza que los desprecia y aniquila; mientras “Rocío” reelabora el mito de la transformación ya no en el bicho kafkiano sino en un evocador lepidóptero. [...] “Teratoma,” el cuento más extenso de esta serie, se recrea también en la ruptura de la cotidianeidad a través de una lámpara de Aladino encarnada (nunca mejor dicho) por un tumor no deseado (Panqueva).

“Bestias, de Gabriela Arciniegas,” Jaime Panqueva.

Appendix 4.2

Conjurados

Tres seres oscuros saltan por el suelo de la habitación cúbica, como todo lo hecho por los colosos. Tres, de panzas ovaladas y rostros aguileños, mensajeros de la Gran Reina, vienen, como todas las noches, a hechizar al coloso. Pinchándolo en puntos estratégicos, el dedo gordo del pie, el tobillo, la pantorrilla, el muslo, van sumiéndolo en un estado vulnerable del sueño.

La raza de los hombres enormes desconoce la existencia de las diminutas ciudades de largas torres, de altas murallas, donde se albergan las más delicadas artes y ciencia. Ignora las centenarias dinastías de gobernantes, las discusiones teológicas, no sabe de la terrible mafia que priva de alimento a los débiles. Los descomunales y torpes oídos son incapaces de oír la música melancólica y las alabanzas a la luna de esos seres pequeñísimos. Los colosos piensan que las arduas escaladas por sus cuerpos tienen el simple objeto de alimentarse de su sangre.

El coloso ha despertado sintiendo el cosquilleo de tenues pasos en su hombro y deja caer su mano con un golpe fatídico. Entre dedos groseros lo toma. No oye sus gritos y en cambio se regocija cuando siente el estallido del abdomen entre las uñas enormes de sus pulgares. No se da cuenta de que los jugos y la sangre han salpicado los rostros sobrecogidos de sus compañeros, quienes se han ocultado entre las arrugas de la almohada. Ellos se toman de las manos y contienen el llanto. Les consuela el hecho de que les falta

Appendix 4.2 cont.

muy poco para coronar. Dos sobrevivientes de pieles oscuras, caminan por las dunas y galerías del desierto ceruminoso de la oreja, y apoyándose en el borde del abismo del oído, le susurran, uno a uno, los nombres de todos los habitantes de la Ciudad Escondida. Los nombres secretos. Los nombres sagrados.

Amanece. Los pájaros invocan al sol al tiempo que el alma del coloso, ausente de su cuerpo durante la noche, incauta del hechizo que los seres diminutos han pronunciado en su oído, regresa a los ojos.

El coloso se viste esa mañana, se pone sus vestiduras blancas, su estola, su cofia. Cuando camina por el corredor, los guardias le hacen venias: “Su Santidad”, le dicen. Sale al balcón e intenta leer el discurso que le han preparado, pero no le salen las palabras. Las cámaras y los micrófonos de todas las naciones están ahí, esperando. Carraspea y le van saliendo sílabas, sonidos que su cerebro no ha ordenado. Al hacerlo, en la plaza a varios metros bajo su balcón, los oyentes parecen esfumarse antes sus ojos. Pero no es eso lo que ha sucedido. Se están encogiendo súbitamente hasta alcanzar la estatura exacta de dos milímetros de longitud. Él no puede evitar seguir pronunciando los nombres.

Y en el público todos se siguen encogiendo. Uno. Luego el otro. Y el otro. Luego una casa, un edificio, van haciéndose ínfimos como terrones de azúcar. Y la plaza de los aviones y las estatuas. Los vestidos, las joyas. Las vacas, los gatos, se vuelven del tamaño de hormigas, de pulgones, de mosquitos. Pero no las frutas ni los árboles. Al mismo tiempo, los pequeños seres se crecen, se crecen, con su desnudez reluciente, con sus seis y sus ocho

Appendix 4.2 cont.

patas. Y sus ciudades se hace enormes, como milenios antes. Las torres llegan a tocar el cielo y las ventanas y las galerías. Y la mafia. Los cantos llenan el aire. Pero ya no son de melancolía, son alegres, jubilosos. Pasa una niña comiéndose a mordiscos una manzana, a punto de las lágrimas porque ha podido hacerla caber en su boca. Pasa un muchacho con un perro alado de seis patas atravesando la avenida. La Gran Reina se toma los micrófonos que permanecieron sin cambio, y avisa, haciendo chasquear las mandíbulas: “Atención, atención, la infestación ha sido reducida. Repito, la infestación ha sido reducida. Mañana deben quedarse en sus casas durante la fumigación. Repito, no salgan hasta nuevo aviso. Esta vez sí acabaremos con la plaga. Insectos, el mundo es nuestro como hace milenios lo fue”.

Bestias, Gabriela A. Arciniegas, p. 75 – 77.

Appendix 4.3

Rocío

Sudaba profusamente. Sintió vergüenza y algo de temor. No podía dejar que nadie en la oficina la viera así. Pero necesitaba de las halógenas para poder completar el proceso. Le dijeron que no tomaría tiempo. Que sería rápido, indoloro. Miró hacia la lámpara tubular en el techo, con esa luz blanquecina, y por primera vez en su vida se dio cuenta de que esa luz zumbaba. “Mamá”, pensó sin quererlo. Por un momento se preguntó su propio nombre.

- Rocío – oyó, como en un eco. Volvió a mirar a don Edgardo, su jefe, que apoyaba el brazo contra la pared del cubículo –. Le repito, ¿para cuándo me va a tener esa carta lista?

- Memmmemeee – intentó responder ella.

- ¿Se siente bien, Rocío?

Su respiración era cada vez más agitada y no podía controlarla. Sentía cómo se iba empapando toda, desde dentro de los zapatos hasta el cuero cabelludo, de un sudor espeso que olía a caucho quemado. Se desgonzó. No sintió cuando su cuerpo caía de la silla y rodaba debajo de su escritorio. Oyó el grito de su jefe, las exclamaciones de sus compañeros. Ellos la veían convulsionar. Ella sentía que la baba dentro de su cuerpo buscaba por dónde salir, hacer erupción por los poros, le abría orificios en la piel, le agujereaba las medias, la blusa, la falda. Saltaron mechones de pelo con baba, flotaban un par de segundos en el aire y caían al suelo. Nadie se atrevía a tocarla. Hilos transparentes

Appendix 4.3 cont.

salieron de cuatro orificios simétricamente dispuestos en su zona lumbar y se afirmaron al escritorio y a la pared del cubículo. Ella, cuyo nombre ya no era pronunciado por ninguno, ella cuyo nombre no existía ya, apretaba los párpados en el ardo que producían los hilos de baba. Unos salían como proyectiles, otros iban reptando, esparciéndose sobre su piel. Por sus lágrimas también salía baba. Ya no podía abrir los ojos. Sentía cómo sus huesos se movían, muy lentamente, la composición química, la disposición de las moléculas.

Nadie pudo despegarla. La red, entrecruzadas membranas amarillentas y translúcidas, se quedó ahí. Sus compañeros armaron un biombo con cajas de cartón para rodear el cubículo. No se atrevieron a llamar a nadie. ¿A quién iban a llamar? Nadie sabía que Rocío recibía dinero por dejarse inyectar, ni por someterse a esas largas sesiones en la cámara hiperbárica, ni por esas esas [*sic.*] transfusiones de fluidos. Sólo sabían que donde había estado la muchacha tímida y luchadora, estaba esa cosa que de vez en cuando se movía, tiritaba, chasqueaba, gruñía, como si estuviera en un sueño interminable. La baba había destruido por completo su ropa. La había cubierto todo. Era un capullo gigante. Aunque cuando ya nadie volvió a mirar ahí, cuando los chismes de pasillo fueron otros y los problemas de otros ganaron la atención de los demás, no se fijaron que ese capullo se hacía más pequeño y más duro cada día. Del metro sesenta y tres que era, llegó a ser un metro cincuenta, más o menos. Al final era como una pila de hojas secas o de papel quemado, descascarándose poco a poco todos los días.

Appendix 4.3 cont.

La crisálida llevaba algo cercano a los tres meses bajo ese escritorio cuando una noche los chillidos llenaron toda la habitación de cubículos vacíos. Lo que quedaba de ella aún sentía como un ser humano. Los dolores y el malestar eran tan fuertes que se sintió morir. Los chillidos fueron un poco humanos al comienzo. Luego ya no lo fueron. En el primer piso, el celador de la noche alcanzó a oírlos desde lejos pero pensó que era un perro que había sido atropellado o una sirena de policía a lo lejos. Reconoció que el sueño no lo había dejado saber si era verdad o era una fantasía.

A la mañana siguiente, cuando los primeros fueron llegando al piso, lo primero que sintieron fue una corriente de aire muy fuerte. Había llovido la noche anterior y el agua se había metido por la ventana rota, había mojado el computador, la mesa y los papeles de quien trabajaba ahí y había dejado la silla salpicada de esquirlas brillantes, transparentes. Del techo caían gotas de algo verde, gelatinoso, flotaban migas de polvo café, que bajaban iluminadas como nieve, empapadas del sol de las siete de la mañana. Quienes iban entrando no le ponían atención al biombo de cartón caído en el suelo, a la cáscara vacía bajo el escritorio. Pero cuando Marta, la del aseo, miró hacia arriba, vio posada sobre la luz halógena una medialuna enorme de alas café y opacas que tiritaba y, en el centro, dos ojos redondos de color naranja del tamaño de dos bombillas que la miraban.

Bestias, Gabriela A. Arciniegas, p. 15 – 18.

Appendix 4.4

Pupila

Te arrancas la blusa entre espasmos que te arquean la espalda. Dices, y me cuesta entenderte, que ha empezado la transformación. Te retuerces en el pasto frente a Arquitectura. “Mira”, me dices, “mira mis manos” pero todo lo que veo es cómo crispas los dedos y los mueves como *Manimal*, sin que pase nada. Yo sabía, yo sabía, pienso, que hablar sobre Sixto Paz, los rigelianos y los pleyadianos, mientras nos fumábamos un porro, era pésima idea. Y tú gritas y te revuelcas y tu brasier expuesto se mancha de verde, y tus piernas desnudas. Tu falda se ha perdido en ese teatro. No sé si creer en esos vagidos. Siempre has sido tan histriónica con tus angustias existenciales y tus falsas enfermedades, como esa vez que saliste corriendo por la calle vociferando que se te estaba secando la sangre.

Te quedas quieta y queda el ruido en mis oídos. Tus gritos se repiten en mi cabeza, no sé si buscarte el pulso o hacerte cosquillas. Cómo te pega de mal fumar porro cuando estás deprimida. Siempre te lo he dicho y te lo dije justo antes de darte el *briqué*. Pero tú insististe. Y la verdad es que te vi tan mal, como que habías perdido las ganas de vivir, que pensé, bah, qué daño puede hacerle.

Ahora, subidas las dos en la ambulancia, sostengo tu mano y miro cómo salta el sonido de tu corazón en la máquina. Cómo estás de pálida. Como si ahora sí se te estuviera secando la sangre. Me pregunto si tu amor no es más que otro de tus ataques histriónicos.

Appendix 4.4 cont.

Tu piel parece el envoltorio de algo milenario. Tu piel no se ve tan flexible como antes. Se hincha y se arruga, se hincha y se arruga. Y cada vez que se arruga, es como si tu mano también se arrugara entre las mías, como si se enfriara y dejara traslucir el frío debajo de ella. “¿Me crees si te digo que no soy de este mundo?”, me preguntaste una vez. Te dije que sí, no lo pensé demasiado. Siempre fuiste tan rara y tan loca que no me costó responderte. Pero cuando llegamos a la clínica, en ese breve abismo en que solté tu mano, miré cómo te bajaban en la camilla, abriste los ojos y creí ver que tu pupila se volvía vertical.

Bestias, Gabriela A. Arciniegas, p. 55 – 56.

Endnotes

¹ Gabriela A. Arciniegas has also published under the name Gabriela Santa Arciniegas, Gabriela Arciniegas, and Gabriela Santa before changing her name to Gabriela A. Arciniegas. She has been included, either under the name of Gabriela Santa Arciniegas or Gabriela A. Arciniegas, in the following anthologies: *Oscuro es el canto de la lluvia* (1997) (Díaz-Granados), *Granos de arena* (1999) (Arrázola), *Cuentos cortos* (2001) (“Cuentos Cortos”), *Ellas cuentan menos* (2011) (Bernal), *Señal de Ruta* (2008) (Plata and Alonso), *El Brasil de los sueños* (2008), *Alfabetos narrativos* (2013) (Vázquez-Zawadzky), *Alfabetos Poéticos* (2013) (Vázquez-Zawadzky and Camargo), *13 relatos infernales* (2015) (Cruz Niño, Arciniegas, and Vanegas). Arciniegas has published the following collections of poetry: *Sol menguante* (1995), *Awaré* (2009), and *Lecciones de vuelo (Poemas)* (2016). She has also published one novel, *Rojo Sombra* (2013), and one short story collection, *Bestias: once cuentos de Gabriela A. Arciniegas* (2015). Additionally, the author has translated various children’s books from Portuguese to Spanish, including two children’s books by Maia de Almeida, *Donde viven las casas* (2011) and *No quiero usar anteojos* (2013); and has published various academic articles, including “Personajes femeninos en la leyenda del ‘Yurupary’” and “Clarice Lispector y Ángeles Mastretta. Dos versiones de la escritura andrógina en latinoamérica.”

² Boris Zeide defines ecocentrism as the proclamation “that all entities (including humans) should have the freedom to unfold in their own way, and fully realize their inherent potential, unhindered by human domination” and that “ecocentrism enhances and expands upon the most cherished values: unselfishness, justice, and equality” (Zeide 121). Lawrence Buell defines ecocentrism within literary studies as “the environmentally oriented study of literature and (less often) the arts more generally, and to the theories that underlie such critical practice” (Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* 138). I use the term ecocentrism to mean equality among human and non-human entities, and identify said equality in Alberto Chimal’s writing in chapter two of this dissertation. I will use this definition in the same fashion when approaching Gabriela A. Arciniegas’ work.

Gisela Heffes defines anthropocentrism as the idea that there is “superioridad a los hombres respecto a la naturaleza (por ejemplo, en la posesión de una alma inmortal o de racionalidad)” (Heffes 15). Luc Ferry argues that anthropocentrism maintains the human figure at the center and negates intrinsic value to any other object or thing outside of its own species, and argues that all beings which can feel deserve equal consideration (Ferry). I use this definition in order to show the ecocentrism in Chimal’s writing, as he attributes reason, souls, and other characteristics to non-human entities that are usually reserved for humans in chapter two of this dissertation (see chapter two for full analysis). I will use this definition in the same fashion when approaching Gabriela A. Arciniegas’ work.

³ The critical essay that Iliana Restrepo Hernández utilizes was published under the name of Gabriela Santa Arciniegas, a former name used by the Gabriela A. Arciniegas.

⁴ The abstract was originally written and published in both Spanish and English on the front page of the article. Here is the Spanish version of the abstract: “Clarice Lispector y Ángeles Mastretta son dos autoras de estilos aparentemente disímiles. Mientras la preocupación de Clarice es llegar hasta lo incomunicable del lenguaje, ahondar en los aspectos psicológicos del ser humano, la de Mastretta es mostrar la historia no oficial de México, lo político visto desde el ámbito doméstico. Sin embargo, en lo que ambas coinciden es en buscar una escritura más allá de los géneros, en apartarse de los parámetros tradicionales impuestos por la mirada masculina del mundo y explorar otras posibilidades de contar, de contarse, de encontrar belleza y verdad en el lenguaje escrito (Arciniegas, “Clarice Lispector” 249).

⁵ Diana Franco’s interview with Gabriela A. Arciniegas was also published in *Lifestyle* magazine the day after its publication in *Cromos* (Franco, “Gabriela Arciniegas, La Pionera de La Literatura de Terror En Colombia”).

⁶ *Laguna Libros* lists Arciniegas under the name Gabriela Santa Arciniegas.

⁷ The three preceding novels in the four-book saga are works in progress and have not yet been published.

⁸ The article does not define what it considers the “nueva era,” but seems to imply the 21st century.

⁹ It is pertinent to clarify and identify Gabriela A. Arciniegas, because her aunt, Gabriela Arciniegas, was also a writer and published in the 1970s and 1980s.

¹⁰ This article also lists the author as Gabriela Arciniegas, omitting her middle initial.

¹¹ In this chapter, as outlined in chapter one, “Introduction: An Ecocritical Approach to Mexican and Colombian Brief Fiction, 2000-2015,” I will use the term *microrrelato* as Lagmanovich defines them. He specifies that *microrrelatos* are *minificción* “cuyo rasgo predominante es la **narratividad**” (Lagmanovich, 26). There are many synonyms and varying debates on each specific term for *minificción* and *microrrelatos*. For further reading see Lauro Zavala’s “Glosario para el estudio de la minificción,” Dolores M. Koch’s article “El micro-relato en México: Torri, Arreola, Monterroso y Avilés Fabila,” Henry González Martínez’ *La minificción en el siglo XXI: aproximaciones teóricas*, Ángeles Encinar and Carmen Valcárcel’s *Más por menos: Antología de microrrelatos hispánicos actuales*, Irene Andres-Suárez’ *Antología de microrrelatos español (1906 – 2011)*, Cristina Álvares’ article “Nouveaux genres littéraires urbains en français,” Catuxa Seoane’s article “Del papel a la web: nuevas formas de lectura, escritura, y acceso a la información,” Javier Perucho’s *El cuento jíbaro: Antología del microrrelato Mexicano*, and the web database <http://cuentoenred.xoc.uam.mx/>.

¹² For an analysis of Alberto Chimal's *83 Novelas*, please see chapter two of this dissertation "The Non-Human in the Brief Fiction of Alberto Chimal: An ecocritical reading of *83 Novelas*."

¹³ This attribute is also given to the statue in "N" in *83 Novelas* by Alberto Chimal. Both Chimal and Arciniegas use the desire to escape to personify their characters – Chimal attributes this desire to a statue, while Arciniegas attributes it to a bull. This technique reimagines the non-human as sentient.

¹⁴ The narrator of the story is third person ambiguous, but refers to the reader as "tú" when equating the cockroaches to humans. There are two other moments when the narrator describes him or herself and the reader as "nosotros" and then refers to "nosotros" humans as giant two-legged insects. The use of "nosotros," along with the description of humans in perspective of the cockroaches, alludes to a human narrator.

¹⁵ The interview, "Gabriela Arciniegas, La Pionera de La Literatura de Terror En Colombia," was conducted by Diana Franco and published in two online magazines, *Cromos* and *Lifestyle* (Franco, "Gabriela Arciniegas, La Pionera de La Literatura de Terror En Colombia").

¹⁶ "Rocío" is a three-page short story and can be classified as a *microrrelato* according to David Lagmanovich, Javier Perucho, and Ángeles Encinar's definitions of *minificción*. See *El microrrelato: teoría e historia* by David Lagmanovich for further reading. See endnote ten for a definition of *microrrelato*.

¹⁷ "Rocío" is a three-page short story and can be classified as a *microrrelato* according to David Lagmanovich, Javier Perucho, and Ángeles Encinar's definitions of *minificción*. See *El microrrelato: teoría e historia* by David Lagmanovich for further reading. See endnote ten for a definition of *microrrelato*.

¹⁸ Similar to "Pupila," the transformed character is clearly described as female, but the narrator remains without a specified sex or gender. Additionally, the narrator is nameless, whereas the girl is named Alita.

¹⁹ It is noteworthy that, along with her human form, Alita also loses her gender and identity.

²⁰ This one and a half page *cuento* would be classified as a *microrrelato* according to David Lagmanovich, Javier Perucho, and Ángeles Encinar's definitions of *minificción*. See *El microrrelato: teoría e historia* by David Lagmanovich for further reading. See endnote ten for definition of *microrrelato*.

²¹ Sixto Paz refers to Sixto Paz Wells, the founder of the RAMA Mission, a Peruvian UFO-watch group. "Rigelianos" refers to the Rigelians from Marvel; they were a race of space

colonizers from the planet Rigel. Finally, The Pleadians or “pleyadianos” were known as Nordic aliens or humanoid aliens that came from the Pleiades stars and have been represented in many science fiction narratives, including *Star Trek*.

²² Although the “tú” character is described as female, the “yo” character’s sex is not revealed.

²³ “Pleistocénica” is the third *cuento* in *Bestias*; the story is told from the perspective of a revived woman from the Pleistocene era that has been cryogenically preserved for 20000 years until those in charge deem her necessary to work as a call center sales representative due to her DNA make-up which reveals a low tendency for stress, rage, and violent reactions (24). I have included a summary of the *cuento* here, because I do not analyze it in this dissertation chapter. I have omitted its analysis from the chapter because there is not a transformation, metamorphosis, or emphasis on the human or non-human form found in the *cuento*.

²⁴ The constant lack of character names makes the naming of any character of significance in *Bestias*. Additionally, the majority of the characters and protagonists found in *Bestias* are female. The study of the naming of characters and its importance as well as the gender-bias found in the work is grounds for a future study of Arciniegas’ corpus.

²⁵ The stories that do identify and name characters are: Rocío and don Edgardo in “Rocío,” Blatta and Blanca in “Blatta,” Kahlim in “Baal,” Mamaía and Grontel in “Recogido por la luna,” Martina in “Teratoma,” and Alita in “Alita.”

Chapter Six

Conclusion

In Latin American and Peninsular Literature there is a long history of brief forms, from *parábolas* and *refranes* to *cuentos* and *tuitaratura*.¹ Today, with twenty-first century technologies at many Latin American writer's fingertips, brief forms are appearing all over digital platforms – from blogs and Interactive Fiction (IF) to Instagram and Twitter.² Scholars, critics and readers have noted the use of digital platforms by the *Jóvenes creadores de provincia* as well as by young writers in Colombia (Gordon).³ This new generation of writers, the Generation Zero Zero, as it has been named by Nelson Oliveira, have made use of both digital platforms as well as more traditional print forms for their publications.⁴ The posting of narratives on digital media has also created greater interaction between the writer and the reader, producing new forms of narratives that include reader comments.

Each of the four authors studied in this dissertation – Alberto Chimal, Heriberto Yépez, María Paz Ruiz Gil, and Gabriela A. Arciniegas – have experimented with digital publications and traditional print forms that mimic or play on digital platforms. Chimal and Yépez have produced and posted various digital narratives that are only available online – such as Chimal's *83 Novelas* (2011) and Yépez's *Wars. Threesomes. Drafts. & Mothers.* (2007).⁵ On the other hand, Ruiz Gil has published traditional paper books of *tuitaratura*, composed of Tweets that, paradoxically, have never actually been posted on Twitter or anywhere online. The use of digital formats, but in print form, has been continuing to pop

up in the form of square Instagram books, Twitter-style publications such as *#Femituits* (2016) by Ruiz Gil, and physical transcripts of digital narratives. The mention of various technologies has also been found intermittently throughout each of these authors' works, regardless of the medium used for publication. No matter what the format employed by these authors may be, the effect of twenty-first century technologies on Latin American narrative is apparent.

Additionally, these four writers have experimented with form, which has been used as a tool to draw attention to specific aspects and themes within their narratives. In this dissertation, I have focused on the representation of nature and the non-human in twentieth-first-century brief fiction in Colombia and Mexico – even though representations of nature and the non-human have always been present in Latin American narrative, be it through its use as a scenic backdrop, a marker of identity, or as an external force.⁶ The study of Latin American contemporary literature through an ecocritical approach has revealed varying perspectives on nature and non-human rights. The treatment of nature in Latin American contemporary fiction has shown contrasting, or even new, representations of nature within twenty-first century texts. The analysis of this generation has already begun to reveal challenging and conflicting ideas on how to treat, manage, and protect nature and non-human beings. Comparing contemporary texts with previous generations of Latin American literature has also revealed a shift in ideologies and discussions regarding the environment, plants, and animals in Colombia and Mexico. The use of experimental forms, as well as novels to draw attention to ecocritical themes, has demonstrated a connection between the ideologies around nature and the use of technology in Colombia and Mexico.

The scope of this dissertation project is not wide enough to engage these problems throughout Latin America. Given the obvious time and space limitations, the research of this study has been limited to four authors of the Generation Zero Zero. However, the analysis of these four authors – Chimal, Yépez, Ruiz Gil, and Arciniegas – has shown conflicting ideas regarding the treatment of nature and the non-human. Each author represents nature and the non-human differently, questioning anthropocentric perspectives and presenting ecocentric ideas, or focusing on human-centered writing, and using nature and the non-human as resources. Additionally, each author has chosen an experimental form to tackle this environmental discourse; from *minificción* to the fragmented novel, each author explores their environmentality (as coined by Lawrence Buell) through their writing techniques, as well as other underlying themes.⁷

The Generation Zero Zero also seems likely to publish more creative works in the fantastic, science fiction and horror genres. The debate on the underlying ecocritical themes within their work shall also continue as their publications, be they ecocritical works, experimental or otherwise, are likely to reveal an environmental unconscious, one that is anthropocentric, ecocentric, or the beginning of an exploration of what it would mean to blend the two ideologies. The authors' work as I have presented it in this study reflects the current debate of sustainability and non-human rights that has been present in Western society since the early 1960s and Rachel Carson's landmark book on the subject.⁸ These Colombian and Mexican authors, although not the primary focus of their work, also reveal underlying ecocritical interests.

In the second chapter, “The Non-human in the Brief Fiction of Alberto Chimal: An Ecocentric Reading of *83 Novelas*,” I have explored how Alberto Chimal presents his readers with an ecocentric world where all beings, living or not, have the capacity to think, emote, and communicate with one another. The ecocentrically-oriented narratives found in *83 Novelas* (2011) represent what a world might be like if each being, animate or inanimate, were able to communicate their lived experience. Chimal does not limit any character within the stories in any way; each character may move, speak, and think freely and independently of one another. Chimal’s use of experimental forms, such as *minificción*, draws attention to the ecocentric world he creates. The tiniest and seemingly most invisible characters shine in the spotlight and are given a space for expression. Concentrating each story into a brief narrative invites the reader to focus on the characters, their experiences, and their interactions, and encourages him/her to question their own ideas of sentience. These micro-narratives speak volumes, questioning anthropocentric hierarchies, instilling ecocentric perspectives, and creating a world based on equality for all beings, human and non-human alike.

On the other hand, the third chapter, “Fragment and Nature: An Anthropocentric Reading of Two Novels by Heriberto Yépez,” discusses how Heriberto Yépez presents extremely anthropocentric texts which show a primary concern for human needs and the use of the natural world and its beings as resources. In Yépez’s two publications, *41 Clósets* (2005) and *Wars. Threesomes. Drafts. & Mothers.* (2007), analyzed in the third chapter of this dissertation, he draws attention to his human characters and their existential crises. Nature and the non-human are completely ignored, while the human characters discuss,

scrutinize, and explore their lives and identities. The brief mentions of nature and the non-human are exclusively portrayed as resources or as literary tools in order to discuss the human characters' own lives, thoughts, and emotions. These texts, even though they do not question anthropocentric ideas directly, evoke thoughts of globalization, urbanization, and a dependence on technology that parallel issues in twenty-first century western society. As an adept employment of theme and content, the use of fragmentation in the two novels also parallels comfortably the fragmented personalities of the characters and their separation with the natural world, for each character exists only in a part of their environment and is blind to other aspects of it. Additionally, Yépez's texts are a noteworthy contrast to the ecocentric narratives of Alberto Chimal's writing. The contrasting narratives show a possible divide between the Mexican authors of the Generation Zero Zero and suggest a lack of homogeneity in the generation in terms of environmental focus and representation of nature and non-human beings.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, I analyzed the two Colombian writers María Paz Ruiz Gil and Gabriela A. Arciniegas. In chapter four, "The Anthropocene in the Smallest Forms: María Paz Ruiz Gil's *Micronopia* and *Microscópicos: Cuentos diminutos*," I evaluated how María Paz Ruiz Gil's *Micronopia* (2011) and *Microscópicos: cuentos diminutos* (2014) present both ecocentric and anthropocentric ideas, showing a dominance of anthropocentric writing but also portraying various non-human beings as emotive, intelligent, and independent to humans. Her two collections of *minificción* do not function as homogeneously as Chimal's in terms of ecocentric and anthropocentric perspectives. Rather, the two works involve experimentation in terms of form and narrative technique.

Ruiz Gil employs non-human characters as a source of irony, surprise, and novelty in her narratives, only occasionally giving voice and sentience to them. However, her work does show some initial integration of ecocentric writing and, perhaps, hints at the possibility of anthropocentric narrative that leaves room for inclusion of non-human characters and ecocentric ideas.

In chapter five, “Beasts and Humans: Metamorphosis and the Non-Human in Gabriela A. Arciniegas’ *Bestias*,” I discussed how Gabriela A. Arciniegas posits a strong argument against anthropocentrism in her work, replacing it with new hierarchies led by non-human animals and a constant questioning of the role of the human in the world. Ruiz Gil’s narrative is predominately anthropocentric. In contrast, Arciniegas’ is extremely ecocentric. Many of the *cuentos* found in *Bestias* (2015) are about the overthrowing of anthropocentric hierarchies and the instilling of ecocentric ones. Arciniegas does not seem to represent an egalitarian world, as we have seen in Alberto Chimal’s ecocentric world. Instead, she displays a disgust toward humans and their oppressive ways over the non-human, calling for a drastic change in current anthropocentric hierarchies. All of the non-human characters in Arciniegas’ stories are portrayed as intelligent, emotive victims, preyed on by the human characters. However, human characters can be transformed spontaneously into victims, through metamorphosis or through a shift in hierarchical position. The real beasts in Arciniegas’ writing are always the oppressive human characters and never the actual beast characters themselves. Nevertheless, the use of the term beast in her narrative is not simple word play. Rather, it is a more meaningful technique to provoke

sentiment and empathy toward non-human characters. Additionally, the metamorphosis and role-reversals invite a questioning of one's own anthropocentric views.

The four authors presented in this dissertation obviously represent a small portion of the Generation Zero Zero writers in Latin America. Alberto Chimal and Gabriela A. Arciniegas present ecocentric worlds in short narratives, from *minificción* to *cuento*. These two authors expand small and microscopic narratives into large ideas that invite readers to rethink their perspective of nature and the non-human. Each author uses ambiguity to present non-human characters as human in order to evoke the reevaluation of ideologies the reader may have in regard to nature and the non-human and how they should be protected, treated, and viewed. The result is a thought-provoking narrative that inverses anthropocentric perspectives for ecocentric ideas and viewpoints. On the other hand, Heriberto Yépez and María Paz Ruiz Gil's writing is predominately anthropocentric, each one employing and using nature and the non-human as a literary tool or as a resource for their characters. The two authors experiment with writing, Yépez through fragmentation and integrated *minificción* and Ruiz Gil through *minificción* collections, but the authors' intent with their pieces is not primarily focused on environmental issues. Rather, each author focuses on human-centered experiences. Overall, the four authors vary greatly in regard to their environmentality, literary styles, techniques, and themes.

Other authors of the Generation Zero Zero seem to be divided as well; many authors focus on human-centered writing, others focus on ecocentric narrative, calling for environmental activism, equality, and sustainable living. Overall, Chimal, Yépez, Ruiz Gil, and Arciniegas, though a small selection of Generation Zero Zero writers, represent this

greater divide between anthropocentric and ecocentric ideologies within the Generation. Two authors of the Generation Zero Zero in Mexico, Luis Lomelí and Daniel Rodríguez Barrón, write environmental literature focused on activism and actively discuss non-human rights, either those of natural environments or non-human animals. These two authors show a greater concern for the environmental impact of humans on the world and will, most likely, continue to publish on the matter. On the other hand, Liliana Blum, another Generation Zero Zero writer in Mexico, publishes predominantly anthropocentric novels, focusing on the human experience and employing nature and animals as a story-telling device. Her writing shows, once again, that there is not a consistent use or treatment of nature and the non-human throughout the generation.

In Colombian fiction, Jorge Franco, Óscar Perdomo Gamboa, Juan B. Guitiérrez, Santiago Ortiz, Jaime Alejandro Rodríguez, Juan Manuel Ruiz, Ricardo Silva Romero, and Juan Gabriel Vásquez write anthropocentric fiction, focusing predominately on a main human character and urban environments, much like Yépez' urban-human-dominant narrative.⁹ Two young women writers in Colombia also focus on human characters, Margarita Posada and Carolina Sanín.¹⁰ The generation in Colombia seems to be predominately concerned with human-centered issues and writing, but further analysis of their work is needed to determine any underlying environmental themes and perspectives.

As the Generation Zero Zero authors continue to publish, criticism of their work is likely to follow. In future studies, I would like to continue analyzing the Generation Zero Zero in Latin America in order to further explore how far the divide between anthropocentric and ecocentric writing goes and to see the generation's treatment of nature

and the non-human. It seems likely that the generation will be heterogenous rather than homogenous across cultural boundaries, not only in their environmental perspectives but also in their narrative styles and techniques. In his analysis of twenty-first century writers in Colombia, Raymond L. Williams notes that, although some writers have embraced technological advances and produced digital literature, many have published more traditional forms.¹¹ Due to this observation, it will be appropriate to clarify if experimental forms will continue to be a vessel for ecocentric writing or if ecocentric ideas will be found throughout literary genres and styles.

Furthermore, the topic of environmental literature in criticism is still growing; in just 2017 the University of Minnesota Press produced a collection of ecocritical publications which included titles such as *Anthropocene Feminism* edited by Richard Grusin, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* edited by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Heather Anne Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Budandt, *Ecology without Culture: Aesthetics for a Toxic World* by Christine L. Marran, *For All Waters: Finding Ourselves in Early Modern Wetscapes* by Lowell Duckert, *The Language of Plants: Science, Philosophy, Literature* edited by Monica Gagliano, John C. Ryan, and Patrícia Vieira, *Of Sheep, Oranges, and Yeast: A Multispecies Impression* by Julian Yates and *Veer Ecology: A Companion for Environmental Thinking* edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert. These publications, overall, do not focus on Latin American literature. Rather, they are concerned with interdisciplinary discussions of the Anthropocene, ecocritical literary analysis, and the importance of the combination of biological sciences and the humanities.

Even though the collection of ecocritical publications put out by the University of Minnesota Press this past year did not include texts on Latin American literature, it is still promising to see so many publications focused on an ecocritical approach to literature. I intend to continue my work with the scholars who expand this growth to Latin American literature and seek an approach to Latin American literature through an ecocritical perspective. I plan to begin this expansion through further study of the Generation Zero Zero beyond Colombia and Mexico and their portrayal of nature and the non-human throughout Latin America. I intend to scrutinize additional texts of ecocentric literature that challenge the anthropocentric narrative that seems to be dominating the generation. Overall, this dissertation has become a starting point for the ecocritical study of the Generation Zero Zero, and not an end.

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Endnotes

¹ For full definitions of these terms and David Lagmanovich's history of brief fiction, see chapter one, "Introduction: An Ecocritical Approach to Mexican and Colombian Brief Fiction, 2000-2015."

² For a discussion on Interactive Fiction or IF, see chapter two, "The Non-human in the Brief Fiction of Alberto Chimal: An Ecocentric Reading of *83 Novelas*."

³ Agustín Cadena, Lorena Campa Rojas, Dolores Corrales Soriano, and Lauro Zavala noted the use of digital platforms in the *Jóvenes creadores de provincia*. Raymond L. Williams and Claire Taylor discussed the use of digital media in young authors of Colombia. For more details, see Chapter One, "Introduction: An Ecocritical Approach to Mexican and Colombian Brief Fiction, 2000-2015."

⁴ Oliveira, Nelson de. *Geração Zero Zero: fricções em rede*. 1st ed. Brazil: Lingua Geral, 2011. Print.

⁵ Santiago Eximeno, a Spanish author born in 1973, publishes Interactive Fiction (IF) that is only readable on digital online platforms. One example of his work is *Hazlo* (2011).

⁶ I am referring here to Romanticism, *costumbrismo*, and *regionalismo*'s various employments of nature in the Latin American novel. See Chapter Three, "Fragment and Nature: An Anthropocentric Reading of Two Novels by Heriberto Yépez."

⁷ For full definitions of *minificción* and the fragmented novel, as well as an explanation of Lawrence Buell's term, see chapter one, "Introduction: An Ecocritical Approach to Mexican and Colombian Brief Fiction, 2000-2015."

⁸ Carson, Rachel, Lois Darling, and Louis Darling. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962. Print.

⁹ All Generation Zero Zero authors in this list were taken from Claire Taylor and Raymond L. Williams' chapter "Twenty-first century fiction" in *A History of Colombian Literature*.

¹⁰ These authors are mentioned alongside María Paz Ruiz Gil by Claire Taylor in "Women writers in Colombia" in *A History of Colombian Literature*.

¹¹ Taylor, Claire, and Raymond L. Williams. "Twenty-First Century Fiction." *A History of Colombian Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 143–162. Print.