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To cite this article: Rebecca Jarman (2023) When worlds converge: geological ontologies and volcanic epistemologies in Colombian literature after the 1985 eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz, *Textual Practice*, 37:12, 1932-1962, DOI: [10.1080/0950236X.2022.2150290](https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2022.2150290)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2022.2150290>



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Published online: 28 Nov 2022.



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When worlds converge: geological ontologies and volcanic epistemologies in Colombian literature after the 1985 eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz

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ABSTRACT



The 1985 eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz was one of the deadliest disasters in Colombian history. It caused a debris flow that buried the town of Armero, killing the majority of its 25,000 inhabitants. The legacies of the Armero tragedy, as it has come to be known, have been obfuscated by the Colombian state, which did little to prevent the catastrophe. Disenchanted with institutional politics, some survivors instead return to the volcano, with recourse to writing as a vehicle for recovery. Examples include *We Weren't Going to Armero* (*No íbamos para Armero*, 2015) by Víctor Hernán Cubillos Quintero, and *From the Ashes She Speaks* (*Murciélagos de oro*, 2015) by Patricia Díaz Daza. Examining these texts, I build on scholarship in the geologic turn, decolonial studies, and postcolonial environmental humanities. I argue that in approximating the Ruiz, these texts convey pluralistic forms of knowledge that stem from intimate encounters with the volcano. These epistemologies are predicated on the geological ontologies, or the world-making practices, that are co-created with the Andes as a geophysical formation. In enacting these ontologies, Cubillos Quintero and Díaz Daza create new worlds that form part of what theorists term the pluriverse.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 2 November 2021; Accepted 5 October 2022

KEYWORDS Volcanos; disaster; Colombia; decolonial studies; geological humanities; literature

Introduction

The 1985 eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz is often considered to be the deadliest ecological disaster in Colombian history. Written records beginning in the sixteenth century document four eruptive episodes prior to 1985 (1595, 1828–1829, 1832–1833, and 1845), although at least ten major eruptions are

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This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

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thought to have occurred over the past ten millennia. Again, the Ruiz showed signs of life in November 1984, when local residents reported minor earthquakes near the summit of the volcano.¹ Before long, these tremors increased in frequency and intensity, and were accompanied by small explosions.² This activity soon attracted the attention of engineers, geologists, and disaster relief co-ordinators from further afield. Over next twelve months, observers arrived from around the world to produce hazard maps, install seismographs, and draft evacuation plans for the nearby states of Caldas and Tolima.³ But their efforts to calculate and convey the risks of eruption were largely met with indifference among ministers in Bogotá, some 200 km east of the volcano.⁴ The first major pyroclastic eruption occurred on 11 September 1985, when the Ruiz began to churn out gas and rocks. In the days that followed, the mayor of Armero, a small, cotton-producing town near its base, gave a speech to Congress that warned of the risks faced by his constituents. His warnings went unheeded; no evacuation was effectuated, despite plans prepared by scientists and local authorities. On 13 November, the Ruiz erupted twice, first at 3.05pm and again, at 9.09pm. From the crater there surged three lahars that flooded El Sirpe, a glacial lake that had formed behind a natural dam which had been created, in turn, by precursory earthquakes. Armero was inundated shortly before midnight. The volcanic debris flows killed ninety per cent of its inhabitants, taking the lives of some 23,000 victims.⁵

The years surrounding the thirtieth anniversary of the disaster, in 2015, provided occasion for commemorative events, televised tributes, memorials, homages and reflective publications. But few, if any, of these, were overseen, or sponsored, by the Colombian government. Instead, they were created by survivors, the bereaved, journalists, artists, intellectuals, sympathisers, and witnesses. Often undercut with anger and resentment, these narratives typically blame the state for the destruction wrought by the volcano.⁶ They balk at the number of needless deaths that might have been avoided with the implementation of the emergency measures recommended by specialists. They point towards the state's neglect of the disaster victims, both in its immediate response and in the lengthy aftermath. They condemn the absence of aid, compensation, political inquiries, and national memorialisation.⁷ The Ruiz, then, is often cast as the secondary culprit in a disaster whose principal cause was political indifference. While many of these materials foreground the anthropological domain, some place the volcano at the centre of their narratives. This is the case for *We Weren't Going to Armero* (*No íbamos para Armero*, 2015), a testimony by Víctor Hernán Cubillos Quintero, who survived the disaster in Armero, and *From the Ashes She Speaks* (*Murciélago de oro*, 2015), a novel by Patricia Díaz Daza, dedicated to a friend who was killed in the tragedy. Finding little comfort in the field of institutional politics, instead they return to the volcano, with recourse

to writing as a vehicle for rehabilitation. In their approximations of the Ruiz, they understand its eruption as a lamentable historical catastrophe. But it also represents just one instant in a larger cycle that makes life in the volcanic region known as the *macizo*.⁸

By examining these texts, and their sustained engagements with the Ruiz, this article sets out to deepen and decolonise volcanic epistemologies. It analyses the pluralistic forms of knowledge that converge around geological landmarks in the central Andean *cordillera*. Inspired by the work of Mario Blaser, Marisol de la Cadena, Arturo Escobar, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, I use the verb decolonise to indicate a dismantling of the universalising ontology that is bound to the monoculturalism of imperialist capitalism which dominates geopolitics. I also draw on scholarship that constitutes the geologic turn, a movement developed by Kathryn Yusoff and Nigel Clark, which interrogates the relationship between human and planetary formations, and on research undertaken by the Warwick Collective into the geopolitics of disasters as they unfold in postcolonial narratives. Assembling a dynamic theoretical framework from these three interrelated strands of thought – the geological turn, decolonial studies, and postcolonial environmental humanities – I create a structure which supports my claim that the volcanic epistemologies documented in these texts are predicated on the geological ontologies of their authors. By geological ontologies, I mean the diverse ways of making life, and the connections between these lives, that are created in encounters between the anthropic and the geological.⁹ When set out in creative writing, I argue, the enactment of these ontologies facilitates recovery from the eruption. Strengthening the ties that bind people and planet, storytelling summons into being new worlds and worldviews where healing is possible. By foregrounding the insights of those whose lives are enmeshed with tectonic activity, this article lays the ground for decolonial research into the production of geological ontologies and volcanic epistemologies, particularly in the aftermath of ecological crisis.

Decolonising geological narratives

Before taking a closer look at recent attempts to decolonise the geological humanities, it is important to consider the context that has given rise to this movement. The so-called geologic turn is closely associated with interdisciplinary debates surrounding the onset of the Anthropocene.¹⁰ Now in common parlance, the ‘Anthropocene’ has its etymological roots in the Greek *Anthropos* (human) and *kainos* (new), and is used to designate the incumbent geological epoch in which humans have become ‘geological agents’¹¹ and ‘the determinate form of planetary existence’,¹² threatening radical changes to the climate. Although the concept has taken hold in the

collective imaginary, little consensus exists around the attribution and the investigation of the phenomenon. For some, Anthropocene research as it pertains to the earth sciences furthers 'a worldview or ontology that arises in a particular location', namely, the Global North, 'and yet purports to be universal or context-free', inasmuch as it stakes a claim to objectivity and overlooks its own political positioning.¹³ In advancing a universalising view of the Anthropocene, while devaluing other modes of knowledge, this strand of Anthropocene science fails to acknowledge that its causes and effects are variable and uneven.

As much recent scholarship has taken pains to point out, this variability is dependent on the erratic thrusts of colonisation and industrialisation as the historical processes that ushered in the Anthropocene, and on the populations that are differently privileged and exploited in these machinations. According to Yusoff, Anthropocene science 'proclaims the language of species life – *anthropos* – through a universalist geologic commons' in such a way that 'erases histories of racism that were incubated through the regulatory structure of geologic relations'.¹⁴ With 'geologic relations', she refers to the social structures that were institutionalised by the regimes of enslaved and indentured labour that drove colonisation, laying the groundwork for industrial capitalism that, in turn, altered the physical composition of our planet. She calls for a materialist line of inquiry that grapples with the legacies of 'the extractive grammars of geology that labour in the instrumentation and instrumentalization of dominant colonial narratives', so that Anthropocene research might account for the systemic inequalities that heighten vulnerability to climate change among historically maligned communities, such as the descendants of enslaved and those robbed of their ancestral territories.¹⁵

Yusoff's demands to 'socialize the anthropocene', which resonate in the Marxian thought of Jason Moore and Andreas Malm, are echoed in calls for the 'geologization of the social'.¹⁶ This is the founding premise of an influential essay titled 'Earthing the Anthropos' whose authors, Nigel Clark and Yasmin Gunaratnam, engage with questions of positionality, intersectionality, and identity as these are entangled with geophysical processes. Noting that 'all forms of human agency should be socially, culturally and historically "situated"', Clark and Gunaratnam argue for 'the value of extending the idea of situatedness or positionality to the geological or planetary context'.¹⁷ Just as we consider how different peoples may have left their marks on the earth, or how they relate otherwise to the planet, so, too, should we analyse how tectonic activities determine the evolution of discrete social formations. Along similar lines, Clark and Gunaratnam remind us the geologic is 'a dynamic and excessive subtending of human life', and that the planet does not lend itself to homogeneous, chronological, or uniform development.¹⁸ Instead, earth systems are subject to abrupt and nonlinear change

– such as volcanic eruptions – as they transition between alternative states that can be cyclical, incremental, or retrogressive. Occurring at multiple scales and of multiple durations, these geological transformations generate profusions of energy and matter that are infused with biological life and permeate social compositions.

In attuning to this multiplicity, Clark and others in the geologic turn have turned to the work of decolonial thinkers.¹⁹ This makes a welcome departure from the staid recourse to Deleuzian thought that previously dominated the subdiscipline.²⁰ Instead of operating within what Escobar terms ‘the universal world of individuals and markets’²¹ that is linked to the origins of institutional scientific enquiry, decolonial thought encourages us to think of ‘a world of many worlds’,²² where the singular geological ontology of imperialist capitalism co-exists with many others.²³ De la Cadena and Blaser refer to this space as the pluriverse, where, as Escobar puts it, ‘struggles for the defense of territories and difference are best understood as ontological struggles’, and where the fight for plurality – or the fight against the universality of imperialist capitalism – is always-already political.²⁴ The pluriverse is an expansive dimension that is produced by contact between worlds that, in turn, transform its integral properties. If we are to take the concept of the pluriverse seriously, as researchers we must pay heed to the ontologies and epistemologies that diverge from, or contradict, our own experiences.

In the Global North, this means overcoming our tendency to acknowledge the critical importance of unfamiliar life-forms and social practices but, by the same sleight of hand, to consign these to the realms of spirituality, religion, Nature, myth, representation, and the imagination.²⁵ Such an approach creates a duality that pits ‘the authority of western science’ against ‘indigenous or traditional ways of knowing’ or ‘locally generated, spirit-infused cosmologies’ without accounting for possible exchanges between them that may, in some instances, be egalitarian.²⁶ In its structure of thought, the pluriverse rejects dichotomous constructs in favour of heterogenous assemblages, whereby worldviews are created not by looking inward, but instead by looking outwards, towards the interface of difference.²⁷ By being more attentive to the dynamics of these ontological encounters, and of our own positioning within them, we might assist in the creation of what Sousa has termed ‘the ecology of knowledges’, which confronts ‘the monoculture of scientific knowledge and rigor by identifying other knowledges and criteria of rigor and validity that operate credibly in social practices pronounced nonexistent by metonymic reason’.²⁸ If we place the ecology of knowledges in the matrix of the pluriverse, we can begin to elucidate the co-dependencies that exist between divergent epistemologies, the hierarchies that serve to order this ecology, and the lines of thought that contest those which govern.²⁹

Where might we best perceive the pluriverse, its ontological differences, the ecology of knowledges, and the relations that they engender? I would like to suggest that one especially fertile site is that of literary narrative. To sustain this idea, I analyse two books written by Colombian authors whose lives altered course with the Ruiz eruption. The first is a survivor testimony, *We Weren't Going to Armero*, written by Cubillos Quintero, who is also a geo-scientist, and who was studying for a degree in geology when he was caught up in the Armero disaster. The second is a novel by Díaz Daza, *From the Ashes She Speaks*, that is dedicated to the memory of Carolina Guarnizo Miekel, a filmmaker and ethnographer who died while making a documentary with the Pijao, a people autochthonous to Tolima. Guarnizo Miekel's work serves as inspiration for the novel's central thematic interests, drawing, as it does, on regional oral histories and ethnographic research.³⁰ For both authors, writing about the Ruiz is an active form of recovery: their stories create new possibilities of co-habiting with the volcano that do not negate the impacts of its eruption, but, instead, approximate the eruption as a mode of life-making that becomes fundamental to the healing process. At the same time, their texts nurture multiple volcanic epistemologies in a vibrant ecology of knowledges that is predicated on the many different geological ontologies that converge in the pluriverse of the *macizo*, as they too are transformed by the eruption.

***We Weren't Going to Armero* (2015)**

Writing with Bronislaw Szerszynski in *Planetary Social Thought*, Clark argues that the bodies of those who are exposed to extreme telluric forces, such as miners, volcanologists, or disaster survivors, are organs for the geo-psychic excesses that fascinate continental philosophers and physical scientists.³¹ Accordingly, we must be open to a 'diversity of viewpoints and experiences' in our approaches towards the geologic in questioning how it shapes – and defies – behaviours, experiences, and imaginations.³² Such diversity is characteristic of *We Weren't Going to Armero*, which negotiates the author's intersectional identity as a disaster survivor, a geologist, a writer, a musician, and a born-again Christian. Narrated in loose chronological order, the text centres on Cubillos Quintero's story of surviving the 1985 eruption of the Ruiz, although it positions this fateful day, and the rest of his life, in a longer, geological timespan that transcends his individual experience. Proffering fertile soils, mineral wealth, explosive spectacles, historic artefacts, and ancient rock formations, the *macizo* has attracted traders, travellers, colonisers, miners, geologists, archaeologists, and cultivators from around the globe for hundreds of generations. These societies have established different modes of co-habiting with the Ruiz, which, in turn, has generated particular ways of understanding its existence. Like all of the

inhabitants of the *macizo*, the author's ontology is conditioned by this difference in making life with the mountain. As David Blaney and Arlene Tickner note, 'difference is *not* about engaging across perspectives or in a single world. Rather, it is about struggling and working to craft encounters across ontological difference'.³³ This is one of the struggles that underlies Cubillos Quintero's attempts to recover from the disaster, and that, in turn, drives the narrative mechanisms of his writing as he explores the pluriverse of the volcano.

The chronology of the book encompasses both the before and the after of the disaster. It narrates how, in 1985, Cubillos Quintero was studying Geology at the University of Caldas, which is located in the foothills of the Ruiz, in a small, industrial city that is known as Manizales. His was a new course at the University that had proved popular among young people in the region. On the day of the eruption, along with 27 of his fellow students, Cubillos Quintero was taking part in a palaeontology fieldtrip. Their goal was to identify some of the marine fossils that were scattered at the base of the volcano. Millions of years ago, in a different geological epoch, this land once sat at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. Gradually it was pushed to the surface of the earth by the force of tectonic uplift. On their excursion the students were not monitoring volcanic activity, then, but were inspecting the remnants of continental formation. Having set out to learn about the geophysical formation of the Andes, these were scientists in the making. That night, the group had planned to stay in the city of Ibagué, the departmental capital of Tolima. But a series of delays meant that these plans went awry, and they stopped instead at a hostel at the outskirts of Armero, which was located in closer proximity to their field site. Hours later, after the students had retired for the night, the town would be destroyed by the lahar that descended from the Ruiz after its second eruption. The climactic moment of *We Weren't Going to Armero* relates how Cubillos Quintero managed to escape from the hostel moments before it was engulfed by the debris flow. Along with five others, he climbed atop a block of concrete that carried them to the safety of *terra firma*. Surrounded by muddy swamps, they were stranded for two nights before being rescued.

Following Clark and Szerszynski, this direct exposure to volcanic matter, alongside his expertise in geology, mean that Cubillos Quintero's text merits special attention from those seeking to understand how the planet gives shape to lives both individual and collective. His survivor story demonstrates how the infinitesimal course of an individual, human life is governed by the laws of physics. In this way, the text defies those literary scholars who have voiced concerns that humanity simply does not have the capacity to envision the deep space-time of planetary history or to imagine the expansive origins of the Anthropocene and its potentially catastrophic impacts.³⁴

In conveying the steady pace of Cubillos Quintero's common life events, *We Weren't Going to Armero* bears resemblance to the genre that has come to be known as the geological memoir.³⁵ The narrator reflects on his career, his friendships, his passions, and his hobbies as these all link somehow to the volcano and its sedate, long-term activities. At its more epic scale, the text comes closer to the survivor testimony as a register that dramatises the ordeal of survival. Although it reveals how the Ruiz is always present in everyday life, the book ultimately follows a narrative arch that climaxes with the eruption. Published independently, *We Weren't Going to Armero* forms part of a larger, multimedia body of work that Cubillos Quintero has created about the Armero tragedy, including original poems and songs, and dozens of interviews with reporters. The author has created a personal website to showcase this living archive, to which he adds on a regular basis.³⁶ The book's formal premise, when placed alongside this digital archive, is to resist an understanding of recovery as a finite, retrogressive process. This is not about returning to life as though the disaster never happened. Instead, it means placing the 1985 eruption of the Ruiz at the centre of Cubillo Quintero's lifespan.

Viewed as a single corpus, this body of work thus represents a persistent effort to return to the volcano. *We Weren't Going to Armero* is based on a series of diary entries that Cubillos Quintero wrote immediately after the disaster while recovering from his injuries in hospital. Soon after he was discharged, he participated in a group therapy session with a psychiatrist who recommended that the survivors take every opportunity to talk through their trauma. The author took this advice to heart: the act of storytelling has been, for him, a 'kind of catharsis'.³⁷ It has permitted him to create a new outlook on life as he continually works towards rehabilitation. In repeatedly recreating the day of the disaster, and recalling his close contact with the lahars, Cubillos Quintero establishes a critical analytical distance between his present emotional state and that of that fateful night in November. So much is apparent in the preface to the book, where he sets out his unique positioning as a geologist and a survivor. He explains to the reader that his primary-aged son calls him a 'rock doctor', and that, one day after school, he came home with a book about volcanos that contained an entry on the 1985 eruption.³⁸ This is what prompts Cubillos Quintero to revisit his memories of Armero and commit this experience to writing. 'In the lines that follow', he writes,

I embark [...] on a journey back in time and space, reassembling the images that remain forever instilled in my memory. I am animated by the desire to re-write this part of my life that is forever with me, so as to distil those hand-written scribbles in those simple notebooks [...] with the maturity that comes with age.³⁹

From the outset, then, Cubillos sets out how his life and identity are entangled with geology; his redrafting of his diaries represents an attempt to make sense of this entanglement.

While this unpicking of what Clark and Gunaratnam call the ‘geologization of the social’ is oriented by Cubillos Quintero’s personal story, it also extends more broadly to the collective. *We Weren’t Going to Armero* interrogates how the eruption has marked contemporary Colombian history and how this history has accounted – or not – for the fallout of the disaster. Again in the preface, the author describes an enormous boulder that sits at the outskirts of Armero, having been transported to the town by the lahar. The rock has since become iconic in representations of the tragedy, but when he first came across it in November 1986, it was just one more landmark in a panorama of destruction. ‘On the rock at the entrance there was an inscription’, he writes,

that I barely managed to read from the moving vehicle in which I travelled. The first line said something like ‘Here lies neglect and abandonment ...’ and it was entirely true. The next time I visited, the inscription was no longer there. Instead, I was confronted with the presence of people postulating as survivors to sell their testimonies and offer their services as tour guides.⁴⁰

Like many survivors, Cubillos Quintero is dismayed at the state’s reluctance to conserve the disaster zone, and at the paltry support that has been offered to survivors in Armero during the decades since their monumental losses. This places the town at risk of disappearing from the national historical landscape, just as it was wiped from the physical toponomy of Tolima.⁴¹ It exposes how the state seems oblivious to the ways in which society is imbued with geological life while seeking to conceal its role in exacerbating the disastrous effects of the eruption. Here, Cubillos Quintero’s writing draws attention to what Yusoff terms the ‘geological relations’ that are obscured as people are alienated from the planet. The author’s transcription of an inscription that no longer exists in its original form pronounces a faith that, in its propensity for translation into new forms, literary discourse can resist this obfuscation to reveal the co-dependencies between the mineral and the anthropic.

As such, *We Weren’t Going to Armero* can be read a device that sets out to act against this erasure in safeguarding the memories of Armero survivors. In years to come, Cubillos Quintero hopes that the book might be discovered by future readers, thus working against amnesia and preventing similar calamities. As the author puts it:

I hope at least that our descendants will know how to care for the records of these experiences and to conserve the testimonies that many of us have left as pillars of our culture and our society, incorporating these into the annals of our country’s intangible heritage.⁴²

In conceiving of his book as a pillar, or a material remnant of the past, the author allows for comparison to be drawn between text and fossil. If geological relics can resist the destructive passage of time to assist with the production of scientific knowledge, so, too, might the printed word defy obliteration to enlighten the next generation. Recalling this link between geology and history, Cubillos Quintero reverts to the interdisciplinary borrowing that was practiced by earth scientists in seventeenth-century Europe. This is the first of many intriguing connections that the author establishes between seemingly disassociated epistemologies. At the beginnings of geognosy as a field of inquiry (one that, today, we know as geology), Enlightenment thinkers used historiographical methods to decode the geophysical evolution of the planet. ‘This deliberate transferring of concepts and methods from culture into nature’, writes Martin Rudwick, ‘was essential for the development of habits of reasoning that could turn rock and fossils, mountains and volcanoes, into the intelligible traces of the earth’s deep history’.⁴³ Initially, this history was interpreted according to Biblical scripture, and came to constitute the ‘diluvial theory’, whereby the parable of Noah’s flood was used to decipher the formation of mountains. Adapting this strategy, Cubillos Quintero turns to storytelling to make sense of the tectonic events that have become a part of his biography, while allowing the form of his narrative to mimic this telluric movement. Like the Ruiz, his testimony has evolved slowly, across multiple iterations. His memories are construed on the basis of previous recollective strata. In their hybrid form, they take the shape of multiple components, mimicking the volcano as a multifaceted, multidimensional structure.

This relationship between earth and text recalls the foundational logic of geology as an epistemology that has its origins in the lettered cultures, and that would later lay the ground for the global expansion of the extractive industry. But the geophysical science that underpins *We Weren’t Going to Amero* is not of the singular, monocultural order that is critiqued by Yussof, De la Cadena, Blaser, Sousa and Escobar. Rather, it demonstrates how the ecology of geological knowledge in the *macizo* stems from many different ontologies, and not just one that is inclined towards the accumulation of profit. While resembling a fossil as defined by geologists, Cubillos Quintero’s framing of his book also recalls the Andean artefact known as the *guaca*. The *guaca* is a valuable item that is usually buried underground, for preservation or inheritance, only to resurface centuries later.⁴⁴ The term refers both to the item itself, which might (but not necessarily) be gold or silver, and to its protective container, which often takes the form of a ceramic vessel. A *guaca* has transformative properties: it can act as a talisman, as a portal to the past, and as a source of wealth or destruction. The fortune that it brings can be good or bad, depending on the motives of its finder.⁴⁵ Colombian anthropologist Luis Suárez Guava observes that,

among communities in the *macizo*, the Ruiz itself can be taken as a *guaca*. The volcano contains the innards of the earth, which harbours precious minerals, and the land of the dead, home to restless spirits. When Armero was buried by the lahar in 1985, it, too, became a *guaca*. It was transformed into an underground chamber that holds the remains of the town's inhabitants, and that contained treasures valuable to the bereaved and to looters.⁴⁶

We Weren't Going to Armero is a *guaca* inasmuch as it is a fossil. Indeed, these items can be one and the same, according to the worldview of their beholders. It is an object sent by Cubillos Quintero to his descendants as a reminder of the volcano's destructive powers. But it also places emphasises on the volcano's productive, world-making properties: it brings the pluri-verse into its orbit. Cubillos Quintero explains how the Ruiz is a dynamic entity that creates life and community in the region, by stimulating economic activities and urban identities in Manizales:

The history of Manizales has been constructed around the volcano. The Ruiz has inspired traditional nomenclature for commercial brands (La Voz del Ruiz, Flota El Ruiz, Distribuidora El Ruiz); in its surroundings and around Manizales it has fomented the development of a mining industry, principally in precious minerals (Maltería). It's a crucial reference point for local tourist industries, especially in promoting the thermal springs [...]. It's highly likely as well that the volcano inspired the idea of creating a Faculty of Geology at the University of Caldas.⁴⁷

In highlighting the ubiquity of the Ruiz as a regional symbol, Cubillos Quintero also comments on its stimulation of the domestic economy. Over centuries, the volcano has fomented markets in mining, tourism, geology, and higher education. He does not expose the potentially harmful aspects of these industries, as is decried by thinkers like Yusoff, but instead notes how they are beneficial for the population of Manizales. Its inhabitants are empowered by their acquisition of geological knowledge and by others' curiosity about the volcano, which translates into business and income. The scientists trained at the University of Caldas make important contributions to geology as it has become a global discipline. In this regard, Cubillos Quintero's stance demonstrates how a decolonial approach to geological ontologies does not necessarily benefit from a set political position that can be characterised as liberal, anti-capitalist, and anti-extractive. When we understand the decolonial to mean prioritising the plural over the singular with Escobar and De la Cadena, it is possible to transition between multiple worlds and wield several modes of knowledge, those produced by extractivist science among them.

Reading Cubillos Quintero, we also learn that the Ruiz is an integral component of life-forms to the extent that it conditions the biological metabolisms of those who inhabit its surroundings. As such, the volcano's agency transcends ideology. After the disaster, the author recalls that he

‘drank some sips of [...] boiled water that contained grains of sand or lithic ash from the volcano’.⁴⁸ With this, he reminds the reader that the volcano gives chemical substance to the composition of the human body which acquires the compound properties of its geophysical environment.⁴⁹ The volcano is therefore more than a source of profit. It is also a fountain of life and a site of intellectual satiation, especially for Cubillos Quintero as a passionate geologist. ‘Finding a fossil is like discovering a piece of treasure’, he tells me in an interview, inviting further comparison with the *guaca*, and likening the geologist to the *guaquero* – a figure comparable in Anglophone cultures to the scavenger or the mud lark.⁵⁰ After the first eruption on November 13, while they were on their excursion, Cubillos Quintero and his classmates witnessed the ashfall from the heights of the Cerro Grande. For some commentators, writing after the disaster, this was a warning for the second eruption and thus an indictment of a state that failed act in time to save its citizens.⁵¹ In his reflections on this episode, however, Cubillos Quintero recalls feelings not of fear or concern, but rather, of curiosity and marvel. To the students, it was a joy to witness this rare and beautiful phenomenon that was experienced, first and foremost, as a bodily sensation:

Suddenly, we all felt something irritating our skin, something itchy. It felt as though we were being sprinkled with grains of sand that mixed with the sweat in our hair and that momentarily caused our eyes to sting. [...] We all, without exception, felt fortunate and privileged to be able to contemplate and feel this unique natural phenomenon. We weren’t struck by fear or premonition at any point. For us this routine volcanic behaviour was exciting.⁵²

In his telling, it was an event that was magical, not in spite of their scientific knowledge, but precisely because of their deep-seated academic interests. The ancient dust that fell from the sky made of the mountain a world of wonder, and this, in turn, is conveyed by Cubillos Quintero’s animated discourse that carefully describes the physical and emotional responses invoked by the lapilli, inviting the reader to share in his embodied memories.

Cubillos Quintero’s curious response to this remarkable natural episode was in keeping with his scientific education. At the Faculty of Geology, he was taught that the earth was a stable and consistent entity that moved in times and spaces so vast so as to be almost inconceivable. This understanding followed the geophysical principles that were established by nineteenth-century Scottish geologist, Charles Lyell, who is regarded as one of the founders of the discipline.⁵³ Based on his examinations of extinct Alpine volcanos, Lyell developed the ‘uniformist’ theory, which interpreted the earth as ‘a cyclical or steady-state system’ in which ‘apparently catastrophic change happens slowly or gradually’, and not in single, sudden incidents. This contradicted the findings of the catastrophists before him, who ‘seemed to turn up more and more evidence for [the planet’s] directional and *historical*

character', created by major events such as eruptions, floods, and earthquakes.⁵⁴ 'We knew of [the volcano's] power', Cubillos Quintero states, in accordance with uniformist theory, 'but equally we'd been taught since the first semester that geological processes are slow and gradual'.⁵⁵ When eventually the violent lahar swept through Armero hours later, the geologists were just as stunned as the town's inhabitants. In these pivotal passages of the book, Cubillos Quintero describes how he was paralysed with shock by the initial impact of the debris flow. Upon his escape from the hostel, he depicts the scenes around him as a hellish spectacle, using similes to convey the otherworldliness of this sudden transformation: 'everything seemed like a dream, a performance, a cinematic scene, like I was awake but living a nightmare'.⁵⁶ This is the inverse of his experience of the ash fall at Cerro Grande: the world of wonder has become infernal, while quotidian life has become apocalyptic.

In the pages that describe the descent of the lahar upon Armero, Cubillos Quintero transports his readership to the dimension known in the Colombian Andes as *el final de los tiempos* (the end of time). This, according to ethnologist Beatriz Nates Cruz, is a place 'where time and space change direction, according to the cyclical conception of time: that which is below shifts to above, and vice versa'.⁵⁷ Now a *guaca*, the volcano reveals its innards and absorbs history into a chaotic vacuum. Armero is turned upside down, as it becomes a scene of devastation that defies the limits of representation. In the darkness of night, the author first hears the crescendo of the avalanche, 'like a giant bulldozer coming closer, razing everything in its path'.⁵⁸ Soon it arrives, 'an immense swampy wave that is loaded with rocks' and that shatters roads and buildings.⁵⁹ The language of Cubillos Quintero's testimony is stark, reflecting the author's prospects of survival: 'I stand on the balcony', he recalls in the present tense, as though the moment still engulfs him, 'paralysed, in shock, immobile, totally unaware of what's happening around me. I can do nothing: no decisions, no actions, no movement'.⁶⁰ For all this negativity, emphasised by repetition and heavy punctuation that creates a weighty rhythm, Cubillos Quintero maintains that his intimate contact with brute planetary matter also instigated a religious awakening that would lead to freedom. When immobilised by fear in the building that was collapsing all around him, he saw a ray of light that led him out of the hostel to safety. He writes:

[In] our first geology classes, [our professors] insisted that divine creation did not exist and that the universe is the product of a sequence of cosmic processes [...] that take place over billions of years of stellar and planetary evolution. That night, however, I realized that there's something more than that: fathomless, incomprehensible, superior and infinitely powerful [...]; that there exists a force, a power, a light ... the same light that for me made the difference between life and death.⁶¹

This encounter with the sacred, materialised in ‘that saviour light’ ultimately led to the author’s rebirth as a devout Christian.⁶² The volcano almost took the author’s life, although it also showed him a new way to live. In this, the eruption was not a disaster. To the contrary, it was his salvation.

By the end of the text, then, we have a meeting of theology and geology as an encounter that is frequently disregarded in the collective imagination. Our present-day thinking of science as a secular epistemology has forgotten the faith of the early geologists who, we will recall with Rudwick, used the Bible to interpret planetary activity and regarded the earth as an expression of divine creation.⁶³ Following the convictions of geologists before him, Cubillos Quintero sees the cosmos as the work of an omniscient God. Only His all-powerful force creates the mysteries of the universe. The eruption prompted this realisation, and gave Cubillos Quintero access to the realm of the sacred – first physically, as he escaped from the hostel, and then metaphysically, in prayer and worship during his recovery from the eruption. As the author remembers it:

In that moment I felt the presence of God [...] and I was no longer afraid, because deep down I knew that I had been saved. The truth is that I learnt the greatest lesson of my life: God exists, He is real, even though, after all this time, I don’t know exactly what He is.⁶⁴

Consequently, for the author, the volcano is a transcendental entity that brought him into proximity with the holy: in his witness testimony, God and the Ruiz are synecdochic.

As well as instigating this religious awakening, the Ruiz has also stimulated Cubillos Quintero’s curiosity, has instigated his career as a geologist, has afforded him an identity as a survivor, and has supported his recovery in the spiritual world that he entered after the eruption. In carefully outlining these different ways of co-habiting with the Ruiz, *We Weren’t Going to Armero* works in tandem with decolonial thought to uncover the different epistemologies that are created by world-making in volcanic habitats. Rather than highlight the contradictions and conflicts that emerge in this ecology of knowledges, the text instead affords equitable co-existence to the insights that inform its narrative. This, in turn, evidences a pluralistic geological ontology that, much like the Ruiz itself, rejects a singular, universalising logic. As set out in the intricate narrative threads that comprise *We Weren’t Going to Armero*, it champions a dynamic, inquisitive, and open relationship with the brute stuff of our planet.

From the Ashes She Speaks (2015)

Disaster testimonies like *We Weren’t Going to Armero* grant access to geo-physical dimensions in time and space from ontological perspectives that,

for some, are difficult to conceptualise. Writing of the challenges in imagining the causes and effects of the Anthropocene, Timothy Clark notes that 'human perception and thinking are bound to the "normal" scale of embodied experience on the Earth's surface, and [...] we live with no intuitive or significantly internalized sense of the Earth as a planet'.⁶⁵ Here, Clark seems to refer to the 'normality' that characterises quotidian life for urbanite professionals in the Global North. He assumes that his readers of this demographic, united in the plural pronoun, have an abstract relationship with their planetary surroundings. By looking at narratives from the Global South we have seen how Clark's positioning, if universalising, is far from universal. While literary recollections of catastrophe and a first-hand witnessing of volcanic activity can serve to amplify our perceptions of geological scales, so, too, can a similar role be played by narrative fiction.

This much is argued by scholars in the field of postcolonial studies, who champion artistry, storytelling, and interstitial readings in breaching the confines of a monocultural imaginary, and in making visible phenomena that are otherwise obscured or inaccessible.⁶⁶ In this vein, the Warwick Collective has examined postcolonial literatures that scrutinise the Anthropocene as it unfurls at the marginalised sites of extraction on which the edifices of capitalist imperialism are constructed. This school of thought probes creative and artistic responses to the ecological disasters that are linked to the Anthropocene, identifying 'possibilities for imaginative recuperation that are compatible with anticolonial politics'.⁶⁷ As it seeks out perspectives that challenge dominant geopolitics and epistemologies, the movement typically favours 'irrealist registers'⁶⁸ and 'alternative ways of thinking and representing',⁶⁹ including magical realism, the Weird, and the gothic. These are genres that summon multiple universes and alternative realms, animating characters who are long dead, or who visit from the future. Operating in this mode, they are committed to 'viewing the [...] world, [...] and revaluing all forms of life' beyond capitalist exploitation, using the medium of literary narrative.⁷⁰

It may be said that the Warwick Collective has begun to archive an ecology of knowledges that has been produced in the Anthropocene, highlighting pluralist epistemologies while commenting on postcolonial geopolitics. So far in this article, by offering a critical reading of *We Weren't Going to Armero*, I have sought to contribute to this archive. But in drawing attention to ontologies as well as epistemologies, I have also contended that this work must be developed further. Rather than approach literary discourse as *representations* of the Anthropocene, as is suggested by the tropes of knowing, viewing, and depiction that is often deployed by the Warwick Collective and its preoccupation with 'representational dilemmas', I have proposed that we should view such texts as worlding *practices* that create new *realities* at times of crisis.⁷¹ Here, I adhere to De la Cadena's definition of

worlding, meant 'to refer to practices that create (forms of) being with (and without) entities, as well as the entities themselves. Worlding is the practice of creating relations of life in a place, and the place itself.'⁷² In the shadow of the Ruiz, Cubillos Quintero's writing seeks to create a place in which he can continue his recovery while effecting change in Colombian society: he wants the Armero tragedy to be remembered, and for the Colombian state to be rendered accountable for the consequences of its inaction.

Similarly, Díaz Daza's *From the Ashes She Speaks* sets out to write into being another world; one where the pluriverse is afforded greater weighting. Unlike Cubillos Quintero, whose decolonialism is implied in his exploration of the pluralist worlding practices that have come to co-exist with the Ruiz, Díaz Daza adopts a decolonial position that is ideologically explicit and that aligns with the politics of decolonial thinkers. She speaks against the legacies of the Spanish occupation that have thrown up conflict, violence, and discrimination, all of which are entangled with the struggles to capture the value harboured by planetary resources such as fossil fuels, precious minerals, and agricultural landmass. With this in mind, Díaz Daza begins by exploring the tensions between the Global North and the Global South that come to a head in Tolima. If for the most part, *We Weren't Going to Armero* transitions smoothly between the worlds that converge around the Ruiz, *From the Ashes She Speaks* foregrounds the 'collaborative friction' that is created in their contact. This is a phrase used by Tsing to refer to the 'heterogeneous and unequal encounters [that] can lead to new arrangements' in the creation of the ontologies and epistemologies that intervene in the constitution of the pluriverse.⁷³

The main events of *From the Ashes She Speaks* circle around a golden pendant of a bat that was forged, in the sixteenth century, for Pijao leader, Mohan Tulima, from gold mined in the *macizo*. Four centuries later, the pendant conjoins the fates of protagonists Clay and Herminia who, born in Devon and Putumayo, respectively, meet by chance in London. They are both, in different ways, affected by the Armero tragedy: Clay loses a loved one and Herminia interprets the event as a premonition. Together, in search of inner peace, they embark on a journey across Britain, Italy, and Colombia that culminates at the summit of the Ruiz, where they return the golden bat to its place of origin. Some elements of this journey are kinetic and physical, and are motored by excavations, inquiries, and investigations. Others are psychological, and consist of memories, dreams, visions, desires, and hallucinations that offer glimpses of alternate dimensions. Throughout, they are guided by geological landmarks and precious objects that serve to aid their navigation, and that generate new forms of knowledge which are created in collaboration with the more-than-human. The volcano is approximated in its manifold components, from its smallest stones to its cavernous entrails.

The Ruiz thus gives structure to the novel's narrative development, while also intervening in its characterisation. The volcano informs the characters' geological ontologies that are, at the same time, expressions of structural politics. In this way, the author is concerned with political ontologies, which, as Escobar explains, refer to 'the power-laden practices involved in bringing into being a particular world or ontology' and 'a field of study that focuses on the interrelations among worlds, including the conflicts that ensue as different ontologies strive to sustain their own existence in their interaction with other worlds'.⁷⁴ Díaz Daza uses geological symbolism to signify the power-laden interactions that are personified by her characters and that shape their ontologies, while exploring how such interactions are moulded by geopolitics in capitalism. The nomenclature of the characters is taken from the geophysical environment, serving both to decide their fates and represent their outlooks. Clay's name is an allegory for the Biblical Adam, who was fashioned from clay in the book of Genesis. Like Adam, our protagonist is an arrogant and melancholy figure who is often inward-looking and egocentric. A conservationist at the British Museum, he is fascinated by ancient history and works to rescue archaeological artefacts from the destructive passage of time. Still, he is most interested in these items as objects of the distant past; they bear little relevance to the making of the present moment. He is largely dismissive of viewpoints other than his own: his existence is constrained by the confines of everyday life in London and by phenomena that have a sound scientific explanation. Space, for him, is limited to his immediate material surroundings and time is unidirectional and linear. It is this monocultural perspective, underpinned by a perceived superiority over others, that makes Clay's world and choreographs his movements in it.

In spite of Clay's rationalism, which informs his individualism, his personal tragedies are linked to a planetary catastrophe that brings into question this ontology. The novel opens with a letter addressed to Clay from Chía, a Colombian woman who he met as a student in his early twenties and with whom he developed an intimate friendship after the end of their romantic relationship. As a doctoral student of archaeology, Chía was excavating a site in El Paraíso, in the surroundings of Armero, when the Ruiz erupted in 1985 and resulted in her disappearance. Named after the Chibcha moon goddess of the Muisca people from the Colombian highlands, Chía moves effortlessly between different points in time, tracing concentric circles that connect past, present, and future. Unlike Clay, she has a nuanced connection with the earth and spends her life with her head in the ground in a bid to exhume and protect the remains of her ancestors. Clay recalls a day

when an old looter of tombs, a *guaquero*, had taken them to witness an excavation carried out by amateurs. Chía was on the verge of fainting when she saw how an enormous earthen vessel that had held indigenous remains for three thousand years disintegrated in seconds.⁷⁵

Subsequently, Chía recruits the *guaqueros* as salaried assistants for her archaeological digs, drawing on their knowledge of the region to safeguard her heritage, and eventually gives her life to this calling. Over two decades later, Clay receives another piece of life-changing correspondence, now written by his estranged girlfriend, Alma. Frustrated by Clay's reluctance to commit to having children, Alma suggests that they should end their relationship. While Chía's letter speaks indirectly of Clay's inability to accept past losses, Alma's ruminates on his fear of the future. As Alma threatens to leave, so, too, does a part of Clay's soul – his *alma* – derived from the Latin *almus*, meaning to nourish or to nurture. Alma's desire to raise a child, contrasted with Clay's ambivalence towards fatherhood, is revelatory of his inability to look beyond the narrow confines of his own existence.

The characters in this love-triangle, then, are bound inextricably to bodies of mud, water, rock, and soil, although their ontologies are distinctive. While Clay exists firmly and rationally in the material present, Chía and Alma represent the possibility of making lives with people from the past and from the future. It is perhaps because of this that the novel's characters are brought together by the Ruiz and its composite parts, which act as gateways between the worlds that they inhabit. The volcano is a place where 'divergent worldings constantly [come] about through negotiations, enmeshments, crossings, and interruptions'; it is a place that is created in their convergence, and where conflicts create new dimensions in the pluriverse.⁷⁶ Correspondingly, Díaz Daza casts volcanic minerals and precious stones as plot devices that permit transportation between the novel's interconnected spheres of action. Upon reading Alma's letter, Clay falls into a deep depression and spends a week at an intensive psychiatric unit in Highgate. When he is discharged, he takes a walk in the nearby Highgate Cemetery. There he finds a fragment of obsidian, an organic form of volcanic glass that is produced by lava as it cools on the earth's surface.

The obsidian, cold and bare, was large enough to act as a mirror. [...] Another face emerged from his own. In his chest, he felt his heartbeat grow stronger. He recognised Chía, smiling at him from the depths of the stone.⁷⁷

Clay's discovery of the obsidian, which we might liken to a *guaca*, leads him to Doña Herminia, a Colombian shaman who runs a store in nearby Camden. Of the stone, she says: 'You have to be very careful with it ... it's a magnet that attracts change'.⁷⁸ Through Herminia, Díaz Daza alludes to obsidian's transformative chemical properties and gives it a transformational

function in the narrative. It is upon this chance meeting, initiated by the obsidian, that Clay begins to enquire into other possible realities. As his guide in this new world, Herminia will accompany Clay on a voyage of self-discovery that results in a change to his ontology.

The first stage of this journey takes place in the abstract, as Clay is transported from the soporific streets of London to the depths of his subconscious. In this, Clay and Herminia are aided by the hallucinogenic properties of the medicinal plant *yagé*, known more commonly as ayulhasca.⁷⁹ As a subscriber to pharmacological medicine, Clay is initially sceptical of *yagé*, but eventually Herminia persuades him to participate. In the *yagé* ceremony, Clay revisits the years of his youth, where he finds deep regret, unfulfilled desires, and hurtful memories. He returns to a scene in Herculaneum, while on a romantic holiday with Chía, where he surprised her in a passionate embrace with the Italian archaeologist who would later become her husband. In this vision, he notes how their upright forms are reflected horizontally in the ground by two fossilised figures that were preserved by the Vesuvius eruption. During the same hallucinatory sequence, he relives another episode after their separation, when Chía discovered the skeletal remains of a couple buried in a similar position, now in El Paraíso, Colombia. As structural narrative co-ordinates, these forms that are mirrored across different worlds signify the fleeting nature of life and the universality of love, loss, and disaster. Chía's association with these couples foreshadows her own death and, with it, the disappearance of Clay's youth and innocence. But it also shows how, even in death life triumphs, as bodies in decomposition leave their imprint on mineral substance. In coming to this realisation, Clay begins to process his grief at losing Chía, both as a girlfriend and, later, as a friend in the eruption. On this psychosomatic journey, Clay acquires greater respect for *yagé* as an alternative form of medicine, which comes to replace his anti-depressants. In the words of Sousa, his 'finding credibility for nonscientific knowledges does not entail discrediting scientific knowledge. It implies, rather, using it in a broader context of dialogue with other knowledges'.⁸⁰

Although Alma and Chía both endeavour to shift Clay's perspective, it is perhaps Herminia who most radically challenges his outlook. The relationship between them can be said to symbolise a meeting between the Global North and the Global South where uneven power dynamics bring into being new worlding practices. Herminia, we learn, was born in the Colombian lowlands to a mother who died in childbirth and a shamanic father of Pijao heritage. Forced from Tolima by the armed struggle that took hold of the region in the 1950s, their family – like thousands of others – led a nomadic existence of dispossession and displacement. In the early 1980s, Herminia's father was killed in a robbery in Bogotá, when thieves tried but failed to steal his golden pendant. Instead, the golden bat passes down to

Herminia who must return it to Tolima, as instructed by her ancestor, the Mohan Tulima, who appears in a premonition that foreshadows the Armero landslide: 'I began dreaming that I was drowning and that masses of water came down from the snowy summit of the volcano'.⁸¹ This dream, that offers a vision of the future, soon evolves into a memory as Herminia remembers that Tulima, who was the leader of a Pijao community, was challenged to a battle by her rival, the Mohan Eliani, that culminates in the mouth of the volcano. From Tulima's *guaca* – a term now used to mean her temple and her throne – they come head-to-head during a decisive *yagé* ritual in competition over territorial possessions. Herminia describes how Tulima, in the form of a bat, lures Eliani, as an eagle, into opening of the volcanic crater, where he remains trapped as Tulima escapes victorious.

Díaz Daza's inclusion of this story-within-a-story fulfils several functions, the first drawing attention to the political ontologies that revolve around gold as a precious mineral. Gold, so the Pijao teach us, conserves energy from the sun, the star from which it originates, that is transmitted to the bowels of the earth's molten core and that, when extracted from the ground, is disseminated on its topmost surface. Representing base physical matter and pure chemical substance, gold is an elusive, chimerical, and powerful mineral that can act as an agent of good or evil. Its provenance connects it to the bat, a creature that, in its lines of flight, travels from the depths of subterranean caves to the peaks of mountains.⁸² The golden bat was created for the Mohan Tulima as an act of devotion by a faithful subject: its form represents her powers and its material, her godlike status.⁸³ In telling the tale of the golden bat, Díaz Daza tracks Herminia's genealogical lineage to comment on the pivotal role played by gold in the creation of life in the *macizo*. Doing so, the author also comments on a regional history of colonisation that is driven by a desire to conquer expansive territories and extract the valuable resources that they harbour. This capitalist appreciation of gold hinges predominantly on its market value, even as this too is dictated by metaphysics, and has resulted in attacks on the ontologies and epistemologies that fall outside such modes of extraction. Like the volcano, then, the pendant is an object around which different worldviews gather, and from which divergent histories can materialise, sometimes in conjunction, but oftentimes in conflict. It is a plot device that transforms 'the concept [of politics] from one that conceives politics as power disputes within a singular world, to another one that includes the possibility of adversarial relations among worlds: a pluriversal politics'.⁸⁴

If the first function of the *mise en abyme* is to draw attention to tensions between different worlds, the second is to highlight their points of convergence. As Herminia's memory of Mohan Tulima's struggles comes to her in a dream, which also anticipates the future, Díaz Daza suggests that time takes a cyclical form, and that recollections are omens that emerge from

the subconscious. Her reference to this Andean cosmivision, in which temporality has a recurrent form, resembles the cyclical notion of time that is championed by many contemporary geologists.⁸⁵ This understands volcanic eruptions to be unpredictable events that nevertheless are repetitive, and that contribute to the creation of landmass in broader cycles. Moreover, this section of the novel illustrates how, in accordance with *macizo* epistemologies, volcanoes are home to the *ánimas*, or the spirits who have been expelled from the world of the living, and whose anger and frustrations can cause eruptions.⁸⁶ So, too, was the classical world organised around similar volcanic co-ordinates:

To the Greeks, volcanoes were a direct conduit to Hades. The Romans believed the entrance to hell was in the Phlegraean Fields, next to Vesuvius, where gases poured out of hundreds of fumaroles. Vulcan – the Roman god of fire – lived deep inside a mountain on Vulcano, in the Aeolian islands. [...] The Icelanders, living on an island that was but a mound of volcanoes, believed hell's gateway was the crater of the massive fire mountain Hekla.⁸⁷

Placed against this backdrop, the Ruiz is interpolated into common ways of knowing volcanoes that retain their integral specificity even as they replicate key features over different contexts. Herminia's approximations of the Ruiz from Tulima's point of view thus serve to highlight the interface between multiple modes of knowledge without collapsing the difference between them.

The third and final function of Herminia's story is to reveal the ontologies that come out of the contact between the worlds that are made with the volcano. Eliani's avarice and anger that spurs his attack on Mohan Tulima pre-empts her death at the hands of the Spanish and their occupation of Tolima, which constitutes another catastrophic episode, inasmuch as it gives rise to a new world of exploitation, genocide, and conflict. In their lust for land and gold, the Conquistadors burn Tulima at the stake, seize her power, kill her people, destroy her legacies, and plunder her possessions. Still, the golden bat remains in the hands of the Pijao and is passed along generations, as the colonial era gives way to a neocolonial modernity that is dictated by savage contests for power and capital. Once the bat reaches Herminia, she understands that the necklace must be returned to the mountain as a means of placating the greed that has fuelled this violence. Like Clay, Herminia receives a message from the volcano that appears in a piece of obsidian.

I felt the stone drawing me in with a strange energy and I looked at it for a long time, until I saw the Mohan Tulima standing there, in the depths of this black mirror [...]. She said it was time to return the richness that had been robbed from her entrails.⁸⁸

Eventually, it is this mission that unites Clay and Herminia, and that creates the possibility of another world where the pluriverse is recognised and respected. This possibility acts on Clay's fixed outlook so that he acknowledges the ground occupied by Herminia, bringing the characters together in a pluriversal politics.

At the close of the novel, both characters are drawn separately to Armero, as Clay understands after the *yagé* ceremony that he must visit the disaster site to continue his grieving process. When he arrives in Armero, he observes that it is a 'ghost town [...], an immense cemetery that still bears the traces of its main streets, now converted in solitary paths flanked by acacias and quickstick'.⁸⁹ He walks tentatively around these broken homes, aware of the people who rest beneath his feet, while marvelling at the abundance of flora and fauna. At one ruined house, he stops to observe a tree that is laden with purple fruit, and picks a piece to sample. Just as Cubillos Quintero describes how he ingests ash from the volcano, so, too, does Clay consume the remnants of the eruption:

Testing his memory, he went over the names of exotic fruits he could remember trying with Chía: guava, papaya, guanabana ... but he could not recall eating this one. He decided to call it 'Chía's fruit'. After all, it was like her, sweet and fresh, round and smooth. A sinister yet lucid thought overwhelmed his mind. The fruit he now held in his hand *was* Chía. Her cells, her blood, her skin had been recycled in the mud and ashes of the volcano, taking shape in this fruit.⁹⁰

In an inversion of the Adam parable, Clay is enlightened upon eating a piece of forbidden fruit that, rather than deliver him to primordial sin, instead, leads to a moment of self-transformation. Here, he comes to appreciate that Chía has been preserved by the Ruiz, even as it took her life, thanks to the persistence of energy and the transduction of matter. She is still alive, in a different form, in his present. As if summoned by this realisation, Herminia appears in Armero to ask that Clay help her with her mission to return the golden bat to the volcano. Although Clay cannot fully rationalise the reasoning behind her request, he is now of the disposition to accept this challenge without questioning the premises of its logic. After Clay and Herminia fail to reach the crater by foot, they commission the assistance of a helicopter pilot. At the climax of the novel, Clay lets the pendant drop into the mouth of the Ruiz. It is a palliative gesture, from a representative of the European empire, that seeks to create a divergent path from Colombia's violent modern history as it has been blighted by division and warfare.

In uniting Herminia and Clay at the very peak of the Ruiz, *From the Ashes She Speaks* ends by creating an allegory for 'a political conflict among worlds, one of them demanding symmetrical disagreement'.⁹¹ The collision of worlds that arose with the colonial occupation now, through dialogue and conversation between Clay and Herminia, becomes a more equitable

convergence at Herminia's insistence. The Andean world of the Pijao and the imperial system of extractive capitalism that are personified by each character share certain traits, objects, landmarks, and principles. Still, they differ in their geological ontologies, in the epistemologies that these engender, and in the hierarchies that result from encounters between them. In Díaz Daza's imagination, the volcano acts as a threshold between these dimensions that are viewed kaleidoscopically as interconnected realms of the pluriverse. Over the course of her novel, Clay and Herminia's worlds become 'partially connected', a phrase used by De la Cadena to mean relations that '[do] not depend on sharing single, cleanly overlapping notions' or 'on making [...] different notions equivalent'.⁹² By entwining the fates of the British conservationist and the Colombian healer, without concluding that one worldview should dominate over the other, Díaz Daza demonstrates how plural worlds can co-exist without collapsing into singular dimensions. The novel's final narrative event may thus be read, optimistically, as an assertion that, if we are open to other ontologies, another world, or a recovered world, may still be possible, marking a departure from generations of exploitation and conflict.

This message is reinforced by the closing passages of *From the Ashes She Speaks* that, again, draw attention to Chía's endurance after her physical disappearance. In its epilogue, Chía arises from the dust of the text to describe her disembodiment in death as particles of bones, tears, rain, fire, and crystals:

I have not died, nor have I been born. I flow in subterranean rivers of fire. My heart beats within an amoeba. I rise in the oil that emerges, lustrous. I fly in the butterfly with its incandescent wings of blue; and I am incarnated in the mango-steen you took in your hands, and which you wanted to name after me. I watched you from there, smiling. I'm here, in the subterranean layer of earth that descends towards the lithosphere.⁹³

Speaking directly to Clay, and now using her own voice, Chía asserts that she has come from the earth to return to the earth, carried in her journeys on the wings of a butterfly. Felicitously, a picture of a blue *eunica norica* also adorns the cover of Cubillos Quintero's testimony, chosen to represent the beauty and fragility of humanity at times of crisis.⁹⁴ With the curious repetition of these wing-bound images, it is as though Chía has been transported from the fictional world of *From the Ashes She Speaks* and, on the cover of *We Weren't Going to Armero*, is placed into the hands of the reader. There she is released into the world that they create after coming into contact with Cubillos Quintero and Díaz Daza. Much like the butterfly, then, these texts search for openings between worlds in their quest for recovery after disaster. This is the power of the literary imagination, they both seem to say: to

guide their readers towards alternative realities that otherwise seem incompatible.

Conclusion

The stories contained in both *We Weren't Going to Armero* and *From the Ashes She Speaks* were instigated by the catastrophic 1985 eruption of the Ruiz volcano. Against the official disavowal of the Armero tragedy, these texts seek to preserve its memory and honour its victims. But while their authors lament the devastation that was caused by the disaster, and the state's failures to mitigate its impacts, this is not their sole point of interest. Disenchanted by the reach of institutional recovery, this writing instead approaches the Ruiz as a means of transforming geological ontologies. Making use of interlocking narrative spheres and pluralist frames of reference, Cubillos Quintero and Díaz Daza invite us to contemplate ash, mud, rocks, and fossils as features of the Ruiz at its smaller scale, and to explore the labyrinthine tunnels and subterranean chambers that constitute its grandest structures. These vast geological spaces that span the depths of time can be navigated using its talismanic objects which, in turn, allow those affected by the Armero tragedy to create worlds where relief is plausible. In this, *We Weren't Going to Armero* and *From the Ashes She Speaks* offer teachings about the Ruiz that draw from, and contribute to, what we might regard as theological, geological, historical, sociological, anthropological, and archaeological traditions. These epistemologies, they demonstrate, are produced in the ecology of knowledges that flourishes in the *macizo*; with Escobar, they can be understood as tools in 'struggles over a world where many words [*sic*] fit; they aim to foster the pluriverse'.⁹⁵

By this token, storytelling is, in itself, is a political act, inasmuch as it negotiates a geological ontology that refuses the dominance of a single, universalising world-system. And yet, while both texts are decolonial in their heterogeneous approaches to the Ruiz, their politics are somewhat different. In *We Weren't Going to Armero*, Cubillos Quintero makes smooth transitions in the ecology of knowledges to uncover the connections that surface with the volcano. Throughout his book, he affords equitable importance to the different epistemologies that have shaped his relationship to his geophysical surroundings. As such, his critique of the colonial worldview is not explicit in his rhetoric. Instead, it is to be found in the even weighting that he places on differential means of knowing and existing. This is not a text that supports the dualistic distinction between the Global North and the Global South, or between western science and indigenous knowledge. Rather, it pursues lateral exchanges between these dimensions. Meanwhile, *From the Ashes She Speaks* more clearly outlines the power dynamics that structure the epistemologies and ontologies which inform its narrative. Díaz Daza contests the

hegemony of Eurocentric perspectives that, in turn, produce epistemologies which disregard alternative worldviews as unfounded or illogical. At the same time, her text militates against the development of imperialist resource capitalism that stems from this ontology, generating centuries of violence in Colombia. Ultimately, *From the Ashes She Speaks* explores how an openness to decolonial ways of being might be put to work in creating a pluriversal politics that allows for meaningful encounters across difference.

While Cubillos Quintero and Díaz Daza adopt contrasting positions towards the political ontologies in their texts, they largely coincide in the geological ontologies that they engender. Together, the authors share the conviction that in returning to ‘the Earth as a source’, they might create new worlds after disaster.⁹⁶ These new worlds are places where geological relations are premised not on marginalisation and exploitation, but on dialogue, memory, curiosity, respect, reciprocity, and self-reflection. The inhabitants of these worlds recognise that they are made in partial connection, or collaborative fiction, with the inhabitants of other realms in the pluriverse. Such worlds are created by the characters and the authors of the texts, who, in telling their stories, perform the perpetual task of processing their traumas. In enacting individual stories of transcendence after the Armero tragedy, they also gesture towards collective modes of recovery that advocate a reconciliation with the Ruiz after its eruption. This reconciliation does not presuppose a disavowal of the earth’s destructive properties, the culmination of a finite grieving process, or a prescriptive idealisation of autochthonous Andean cosmologies. It does, however, advocate epistemological agility and an openness towards unfamiliar worlding practices. This approach may offer inspiration for the academic community as we investigate the construction and deconstruction of geological relations during a tumultuous telluric period. If we wish to comprehend the complexities of planetary formation in the Anthropocene, we are duty-bound to challenge its dominant logic.

Notes

1. B. Voight, ‘The 1985 Nevado del Ruiz Volcano Catastrophe: Anatomy and Retrospection’, *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research*, 44 (1990), p. 352.
2. D. Herd, ‘The 1985 Ruiz Volcano Disaster’, *Eos*, 67.19 (May 1986), p. 457.
3. Monitoring and mapping activities were initially convened by a local power station, the Central Hidro-Eléctrica de Caldas (CHEC) who, in turn, contacted Colombia’s national geological survey, the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Geológico-Mineras (INGEOMINAS). Over the following twelve months, CHEC and INGEOMINAS observed the volcano with the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-Ordinator (UNDRO), UNESCO, the US Geological Survey, the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Colombia’s National

University and the University of Caldas. Support was also extended by teams of geologists from Iceland, France, Switzerland, Italy, New Zealand, and Costa Rica. Throughout 1985, they offered public lectures in nearby cities to educate residents about the risks of disaster and published reports in Colombia's leading national newspapers.

4. A National Emergency Committee was founded in Bogotá by the Minister of Mines and Energy, Iván Duque Escobar (father to Iván Duque Márquez, the former Colombian president), and, on 24 September, the dangers of the Ruiz were debated in Congress. There exist many theories as to why these strategies failed to prevent such catastrophic loss of life. Most blame the corruption, ignorance, and complacency of federal politicians, and their indifference towards rural populations. See Herd, 'The 1985 Ruiz Volcano Disaster', Voight, 'The 1985 Nevado del Ruiz Volcano Catastrophe', and A. Zeiderman, *Endangered City: The Politics of Security and Risk in Bogotá* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).
5. Herd, 'The 1985 Ruiz Volcano Disaster', p. 462.
6. Such critiques form the basis of major feature-length films (e.g. *Soplo de vida; Armero*), documentaries (e.g. *Volver a nacer; Raíces del olvido*), radio productions (e.g. *Los niños perdidos*), autobiographies (e.g. *El barro y el silencio; Armero, un luto permanente*), works of fiction (e.g. *Los sordos ya no hablan*), journalistic chronicles (e.g. *Avalancha sobre Armero; No morirás*) and installations (e.g. *Antes del Presente*), which have found broad dissemination across Colombia.
7. Where they exist, most governmental efforts made to commemorate the disaster have come from municipal, not federal, initiatives, and are led by civic groups and grassroots initiatives. In Armero Guayabal – the neighboring town where many survivors settled after the Armero tragedy – there is a visitor centre, a memorial park and a museum in a complex named after Omaira Sánchez, the young girl whose slow, muddy death was captured by film crews and broadcast live on international television. The complex was closed when I visited in March 2017.
8. The *macizo* is the geological term for the Andean mountain range that was formed by the subduction of the oceanic Nazca plate beneath the continental plate of South America.
9. My understanding of geological ontologies as a concept differs somewhat from Elizabeth Povinelli's notion of 'geontology', which she uses in the singular as shorthand to refer to the distinction between nonlife (*geos*) and being (ontology) that is sustained by the logic of late liberal governance (E. Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 9.). Although I share Povinelli's conviction that the geological is a life form, and should be recognised as such, my use of geological ontologies instead probes such means of making life with the geological in the multiple. This pluralism contests the dominance of liberalist thought in the academy, and reveals other forms of co-creation between human and more-than-human agents.
10. Jeremy Davies's summary of the link between these fields is helpful: 'Discussions of the "Anthropocene" have been central to the geologic turn. The two discourses, however, are not identical to one another. The debate about the Anthropocene has primarily addressed the modern environmental crisis – which has spurred new anxieties about geological agency and geologic-scale

- change – and the relatively immediate political, cultural, and conceptual sources and implications of that crisis. By contrast, the geologic turn itself involves a broader range of inquiries into ways of thinking and representing telluric force, provoked by but not restricted to the theme of the Anthropocene’ (J. Davies, ‘Lyric’s Diurnal Course: Reading with Geology’, *Mosaic*, 52:3 (2019), p. 2).
11. D. Chakrabarty, ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’, *Critical Inquiry*, 35 (2009), p. 206.
 12. Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p. 9.
 13. N. Clark and B. Szerszynski, *Planetary Social Thought: The Anthropocene Challenge to the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020), p. 37.
 14. K. Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), p. 2.
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
 16. N. Clark and Y. Gunaratnam, ‘Earthing the *Anthropos*? From “Socializing the Anthropocene” to Geologizing the Social’, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 20.1 (2017), p. 155. According to Jason Moore, a more appropriate term than the Anthropocene would be the Capitalocene, designating, as it does, the industrial mechanisms that have polluted the atmosphere, that have extracted value from environmental resources, and that have scarred the planet’s surface. See J. Moore, ‘The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of our Ecological Crisis’, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 44.3 (2017), pp. 594–630 and A. Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London; New York: Verso, 2016).
 17. Clark and Gunaratnam, ‘Earthing the *Anthropos*?’, p. 155. A similar argument is made in R. Irvine, ‘Deep Time: An Anthropological Problem’, *Social Anthropology*, 22.2 (2014), pp. 157–72. Irvine, however, assumes a universal anthropic position without acknowledging the effects of regional material histories.
 18. Clark and Gunaratnam, ‘Earthing the *Anthropos*?’, p. 159.
 19. See Clark and Szerszynski, *Planetary Social Thought*.
 20. This use of Deleuzian thought tended to make somewhat tokenistic gestures towards pluralism, without reference to thinkers from beyond the Global North, while extricating case studies from their material contexts. For examples, see N. Clark, A. Gormally and H. Tuffen, ‘Speculative Vulcanology: Time, Becoming, and Violence in Encounters with Magma’, *Environmental Humanities*, 10.1 (2018), p. 275; N. Clark and K. Yusoff, ‘Geosocial Formations and the Anthropocene’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 34.2 (2017), pp. 3–23, C. Colebrook, ‘The Time of Planetary Memory’, *Textual Practice*, 31.5 (2017), pp. 1017–24, and K. Yusoff, ‘Geologic Life: Prehistory, Climate, Futures in the Anthropocene’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 31.5 (2013), pp. 105–27.
 21. A. Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics, the Real and the Possible* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), p. 73.
 22. M. Blaser and M. De la Cadena, ‘Pluriverse’, in Blaser and de la Cadena (eds), *A World of Many Worlds* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 4.
 23. Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*, p. 73.
 24. *Ibid.*, p.68.
 25. As Martin Savransky puts it, ‘[a] decolonial, sociological imagination, thus, is one concerned with affirming not only the realities of others, but the realities of others for whom reality itself is in the making, for whom the cry “another

- world is possible!” can never be reduced to a simple metaphor’ (M. Savransky, ‘A Decolonial Imagination: Sociology, Anthropology and the Politics of Reality’, *Sociology*, 51.1 (2017), p. 22).
26. Clark and Szerszynski, *Planetary Social Thought*, pp. 8, 148.
 27. A. Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018). For the design theory that influenced these lines of thought, see John Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research* (London: Routledge, 2004).
 28. B. Sousa, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2014), p. 188.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
 30. As Díaz Daza puts it, ‘I was surprised when I finished, that my book seemed less like a tragedy and more a story of hope, healing and reconciliation for the characters’. See ‘Cosmic Connections’. <https://www.latinolife.co.uk/articles/cosmic-connections> [Date accessed: 17 June 2020].
 31. Clark and Szerszynski, *Planetary Social Thought*, p. 47.
 32. Clark and Gunaratnam, ‘Earthing the *Anthropos*?’, p. 157.
 33. D. Blaney and A. Tickner, ‘Worlding, Ontological Politics and the Possibility of a Decolonial IR’, *Millennium*, 45.3 (2017), p. 298.
 34. For Amitov Ghosh, ‘novels do not usually bring multiple universes into conjunction’, ‘rarely extend beyond a few generations’ and are ‘constricted in their spatial configurations’ (A. Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 59). In concurrence, Timothy Clark notes that novels tend to impose boundaries on time and space as a means of containing place, making this accessible to its readers: ‘[It is] difficult to imagine what a novel’s interior monologue would look like if one tried to present it over a geological time scale’ (T. Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 73).
 35. For recent examples of the geological memoir, which have been marketed as such, see E. Burnett, *The Grassling* (London: Penguin, 2020), G. Pálsson, *Down to Earth*, trans. A. Yates and K. Downs-Rose (London: Punctum, 2020), T. Nield, *Underland* (London: Granta, 2015).
 36. See <http://noibamosparaarmero.weebly.com/no-iacutebamos-para-armero.html> [Date accessed: 17 June 2020].
 37. V. Cubillos Quintero, *No íbamos para Armero. Testimonio de un sobreviviente* (Manizales: Grafitel, 2015), p. 31. All translations are my own, except where indicated.
 38. Cubillos Quintero, *No íbamos para Armero*, p. viii.
 39. *Ibid.*, p. viii.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. x.
 41. In one conversation that I had with the author, he recalled a recent conversation with a young Colombian who knew nothing of the Armero tragedy.
 42. Cubillos Quintero, *No íbamos para Armero*, p. 115.
 43. M. Rudwick, *Earth’s Deep History: How It Was Discovered and Why It Matters* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 303.
 44. B. Nates Cruz, *De lo bravo a lo manso: Territorio y sociedad en los Andes (Macizo colombiano)* (Quito: Abya-yala, 2002), p. 69.
 45. On planetary thresholds in the context of the Anthropocene, see N. Clark and B. Szerszynski, *Planetary Social Thought*, pp. 14–32.

46. L. Suárez Guava, 'Lluvia de flores, cosecha de huesos: Guacas, brujería e intercambio con los muertos en la tragedia de Armero', *Maguaré*, 23 (2009), pp. 371–416.
47. Cubillos Quintero, *No íbamos para Armero*, p. 3.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
49. So writes Craig Childs: 'Archaeologists of the future might remove layers of enamel from your teeth and detect isotopes that reveal where you were born, where you lived most of your life, and where you likely died. Your name may not survive you, but the geology you lived in will. Every place has a unique isotopic signature that writes itself into us every time we eat an apple, every time we breathe, or drink the water' (C. Childs, *Atlas of a Lost World: Travels in Ice Age America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2019), p. 136).
50. Interview with author, 16 July 2020.
51. J. Darío Restrepo, *Avalancha Sobre Armero: Crónicas, reportajes y documentos de una imprevisión trágica* (Bogotá: El Áncora Editores, 1986), p. 12.
52. Cubillos Quintero, *No íbamos para Armero*, p. 31.
53. On Lyell's legacies among geologists, particularly James Hutton, who is often credited with the 'discovery' of deep time, see Irvine, 'Deep Time'.
54. Rudwick, *Earth's Deep History*, p. 171.
55. Cubillos Quintero, *No íbamos para Armero*, p. 33.
56. Cubillos Quintero, *No íbamos para Armero*, p. 59.
57. Nates Cruz, *De lo bravo a lo manso*, p. 70.
58. Cubillos Quintero, *No íbamos para Armero*, p. 56.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 53–4.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
63. The schism between science and religion, embodied by figures such as Charles Darwin, is often overlaid in the contemporary Anglican imagination. In twentieth- and twenty-first century history, many authoritative scientists have been people of the Church, including Georges Lemaitre, Charles Walcott, and Arthur Compton, to name just three salient examples.
64. Cubillos Quintero, *No íbamos para Armero*, p. 55.
65. Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 36.
66. On creativity, visibility, climate change and the extractive economy, see E. Barrios, 'This is Not an Oil Novel: Obstacles to Reading Petronarratives in High-Energy Cultures', *Textual Practice*, 35.3 (2021), pp. 363–78, and E. DeLoughery, 'The Sea is Rising: Visualising Climate in the Pacific Islands', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 2.2 (2018), pp. 185–97. On imagining the Anthropocene more broadly, see D. Higgins, T. Somervell, and N. Clark, 'Introduction: Environmental Humanities Approaches to Climate Change', *Humanities*, 9.3 (2020), p. 3; and J. Page, 'Planetary Art Beyond the Human: Rethinking Agency in the Anthropocene', *The Anthropocene Review*, 7.3 (2020), p. 274.
67. E. DeLoughrey, J. Didur, and A. Carrigan, 'Introduction: A Postcolonial Environmental Humanities', in DeLoughrey, Didur, and Carrigan (eds), *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 2. On disasters in the postcolonial imaginary, see A. Carrigan, '(Eco)catastrophe, Reconstruction, and Representation:

- Montserrat and the Limits of Sustainability', *New Literatures Review*, 47–48 (2011), pp. 111–28, and A. Carrigan, "Out of This Great Tragedy Will Come a World-Class Tourism Destination": Disaster, Ecology, and Post-Tsunami Tourism Development in Sri Lanka', in E. DeLoughrey and G. Handley (eds), *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 273–90.
68. M. Niblett, 'Oil on Sugar: Commodity Frontiers and Peripheral Aesthetics', in DeLoughrey, Didur, and Carrigan (eds), *Global Ecologies*, p. 268.
 69. S. Deckard and K. Oloff, "'The One Who Comes from the Sea": Marine Crisis and the New Oceanic Weird in Rita Indiana's *La mucama de Omicunlé* (2015)', *Humanities*, 9.3 (2020), p. 11.
 70. Deckard and Oloff, "'The One Who Comes from the Sea'", p. 12.
 71. Niblett, 'Oil on Sugar', p. 276. As Blaney and Tickner rightly state: 'It is not only that people *believe* different things about reality, but that *different realities* are enacted by different practices' (Blaney and Tickner, 'Worlding, Ontological Politics and the Possibility of a Decolonial IR', p. 303).
 72. M. De la Cadena, *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practices Across Andean Worlds* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 291, n. 4.
 73. A. Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 5.
 74. Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*, p. 74.
 75. P. Díaz Daza, *From the Ashes She Speaks*, trans. Isabella Woolford-Díaz (n/d), p. 5. Note that the translation is unpublished, and is based on the author's self-published e-book, *El murciélagó de oro* (2015).
 76. Blaser and de la Cadena, 'Pluriverse', p. 6.
 77. Díaz Daza, *From the Ashes She Speaks*, p. 18.
 78. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
 79. The use of hallucinogenic plants in Amazonian regions has attracted increasing artistic attention in the global cultural sphere. See M. Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 39–65 and J. Whitfield, 'Communicating Beyond the Human: Posthumanism, Neo-Shamanism, and Ciro Guerra's *El Abrazo De La Serpiente*', in L. Bollington and P. Merchant (eds), *Latin American Culture and the Limits of the Human* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2020), pp. 177–200.
 80. Sousa, *Epistemologies of the South*, p. 189.
 81. Díaz Daza, *From the Ashes She Speaks*, p. 45.
 82. Interview with author, 6 August 2020.
 83. The gifting of gold and golden objects from subjects to their leaders was common in prehispanic cultures, not within an economic regime of trade but, rather, as a form of worship. See M. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), pp. 182–7.
 84. M. De la Cadena, 'Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond "Politics"', *Cultural Anthropology*, 25.2 (2010), p. 360.
 85. P. McAleer, 'A Reader-Response Study of the Relationship Between the Wayuu Peoples and the Literature of Gabriel García Márquez: The Influence of Ethno-Education on Language Use and Narratives of Identity in an Indigenous Bilingual Context', *The Modern Language Review*, 114.1 (2019), pp. 79–102.

86. Nates Cruz, *De lo bravo a lo manso*, p. 66.
87. S. Williams, *Surviving the Volcano: One Man's Battle to Tame the Earth's Power* (London: Abacus, 2002), p. 5.
88. Díaz Daza, *From the Ashes She Speaks*, pp. 126–7.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
91. De la Cadena, 'Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes', p. 352.
92. De la Cadena, *Earth Beings*, p. 3.
93. Díaz Daza, *From the Ashes She Speaks*, p. 139.
94. See <https://youtu.be/U7PIevjktBA> [Date accessed: 17 June 2021].
95. Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*, p. 68.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Víctor Hernán Cubillos Quintero and Patricia Díaz Daza, for generously sharing their time and insight in interviews, and for allowing me access to their portfolio of work. In its various iterations, this article has benefitted from the incisive commentaries of Cherilyn Elston, Peter Watson, Rhys Machold, David Higgins, Tomás Usón, and Clare Martynski. Additional support was provided by Barry Voight, Francisco González, Luz García, and Santiago Reyes. The reviews of this piece were especially instructive and I am thankful to their anonymous authors. Any errors that remain are mine alone.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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