

Pardo Porto, Cristina E., and Oscar A. Pérez, editors. *Plants and Animals in Latin American Cultural Production*. University Press of Florida, 2025. 324 pp.

Plants and Animals in Latin American Cultural Production brings critical plant studies and critical animal studies into a conversation grounded in Latin America. The volume opens with Ida Vitale's *De plantas y animales* ('Of Plants and Animals', 2003), a bestiary redressing the neglect of plants and animals in daily life. The region's culture has long illuminated such overlooked lives, the editors argue, which makes Latin America "an intellectual and ecological force" (5). The introduction draws on Patrícia Vieira's zoophytography, the imprint of animal and vegetal life on human writing, and on Robin Wall Kimmerer's grammar of animacy, a Potawatomi way of addressing living beings as persons. Biopolitical criticism (Gabriel Giorgi, Julieta Yelin) and histories of botany and empire (Londa Schiebinger, Daniela Bleichmar) count among the fields the volume joins. The book's four parts lead from nonhuman perception to the sociopolitics of multispecies interaction, yet the editors encourage readers "to engage actively with the interconnected threads that weave through its chapters" (16), as this review does.

A first thread concerns perception and the limits of human media. Micah McKay asks what the grass notices in Sara Gallardo's short story "Un césped" ('A Lawn', 1977) and, with Jane Bennett, recovers anthropomorphism as a discipline of attention uncoupled from anthropocentrism. Thomaz Amancio pairs João Guimarães Rosa's story "Conversa de bois" ('Conversation of the Oxen', 1946) with Marília Floôr Kosby's poetry collection *Mugido* ('Moo', 2017); both did fieldwork among cattle and make their mediation of the animal voice explicit. For Brian T. Chandler, biosemiotics, the premise that all life communicates, becomes a poetic resource in Maricela Guerrero's *El sueño de toda célula* (*The Dream of Every Cell*) and Isabel Zapata's *Una ballena es un país* (*A Whale Is a Country*). Zapata ponders the translation of animal voices; Guerrero, more hopeful, celebrates cooperation as life's very activity. Oscar A. Pérez extends the inquiry to Alexis Gambis's Science New Wave films, in which plants and animals figure as co-creators of a grammar of more-than-human entanglement. Beatriz Rivera-Barnes approaches *Amores perros* through the medieval fables of *Calila e Dimna* (*Kalila and Dimna*), a zoopoetic pairing that unsettles the genre's hierarchy of species.

A second thread follows migration. Kate Ostrom finds in Javier Zamora's memoir *Solito* (2022) a kinship of human and nonhuman crossers; its child narrator learns to see the Sonoran Desert's plants and animals as fellow travelers, lives that border wall construction now imperils. Emily Celeste Vázquez Enríquez turns to Irma Pineda, a Binnizá poet from Juchitán, for whom migration crosses species lines. In her poems, plants shape the journey and keep the migrant connected to the land; vegetal stasis is the counterpoint to displacement. Cristina E. Pardo Porto

reaches back to stereographs of the Darién rainforest from the Selfridge expedition of the 1870s, and discovers in the foliage shielding animals from the camera “a form of multispecies solidarity” (70), a resistance to the technologies surveying a future canal. Her chapter gives historical depth to a region known today as a perilous migration corridor.

Extraction and plantation labor drive the most political thread. Jorge Quintana Navarrete compares Luis Rosado Vega’s *Poema de la selva trágica* (‘Poem of the Tragic Jungle’, 1938) with Yulene Olaizola’s film *Selva trágica* (*Tragic Jungle*, 2021), two portraits of chicle harvesting that depict forest flora and Maya workers as inert, exploitable matter; in Olaizola, an alliance of Maya self-determination and plant life points beyond it. Niall A. Peach recovers the potrero, the paddock of Cuban and Dominican sugarcane novels like Francisco Moscoso Puello’s *Cañas y bueyes* (‘Sugarcane and Oxen’, 1936), as a fragile paradise within monoculture’s agribiopolitical management of life. Mauricio Espinoza follows recent coffee narratives by Julia Alvarez and Eduardo Halfon that separate the plant from the plantation and restore an intimate, non-utilitarian relation to coffee. Jonathan Mulki watches Diego Marcone’s documentary *Raídos* (‘Frayed’, 2016) with a family of Afro-descendant yerba mate harvesters and concludes that labor in the yerbal cannot be understood without the plant itself, an agent of endurance the film leaves out of view.

Older archives receive equal care. Víctor Sierra Matute reconstructs an ecocentric ethos in Guamán Poma’s *Primer nueva crónica y buen gobierno* (*The First New Chronicle and Good Government*, ca. 1615), whose texts and drawings measure good government against a multispecies web. Pilar Espitia examines the spiritual autobiography of Jerónima Nava y Saavedra in New Granada, whose visions of doves and serpents, and of the enclosed garden, reveal how colonial mysticism gendered the natural world. Ana Carolina Carmona-Ribeiro traces the palm tree across Tarsila do Amaral’s artworks, from an emblem of coffee prosperity in the *Pau Brasil* (Brazilwood) phase to a protagonist of the anthropophagic canvases, whose plants embody histories of exploitation and overlooked Black and Indigenous contributions to Brazilianness. Vanesa Miseres closes with two turn-of-the-twentieth-century Latin American vegetarian cookbooks, political documents that tie a meatless diet to social emancipation and feminist nonviolence and attribute to plants a language of their own that humans are urged to learn.

Patrícia Vieira’s afterword pairs Maria Esther Maciel’s *Pequena enciclopédia de seres comuns* (‘Little Encyclopedia of Common Beings’, 2021) with Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert’s *The Falling Sky* (2010), hybrids that mingle Western and Indigenous thought and trace human wisdom to more-than-human sources. The pairing suits a collection that treats Latin America as a producer of ecological theory, tracing that tradition from Guamán Poma to Irma Pineda. Plant blindness, the habit of looking past vegetal life, recurs throughout as

a shared diagnosis. The collection keeps plants and animals together on nearly every page, entangled as makers of culture, delivering the convergence of fields that the editors promise in the introduction. Scholars of Latin American cultural studies and the environmental humanities, especially those moving between literature and visual media, will find here an original map of a fast-growing area and an archive in which plants and animals at last advance from scenery to protagonists.

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