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Topographies

*Problematizing a Century of Central American
History, Geography, and Subjectivity*

A Conversation with Ana Patricia Rodríguez

Brian Davisson & Karina Zelaya
University of California, Davis

In November 2010, Prof. Ana Patricia Rodríguez was invited to the University of California, Davis as part of the Cultural Studies Colloquium Series. On November 4th, Prof. Rodríguez gave a talk on campus entitled “ ‘Los 30’: Documenting Thirty Years of the Salvadoran Diaspora, 1980-2010.” On November 5th, Professor Rodríguez was kind enough to hold the following discussion with Karina Zelaya and Brian Davisson. The interview makes reference to her talk given the previous day, as well as to her book *Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures & Cultures* (2009, University of Texas Press).

Brian Davisson/BD: First of all thank you very much for your willingness to help us with the interview for the next issue in *Brújula*, and welcome, of course, to UC Davis.

Ana Patricia Rodríguez/APR: Thank you for inviting me to be interviewed and of course for the invitation to speak at UC Davis for the Cultural Studies Colloquium Series.

Karina Zelaya/KZ: Going back to your talk yesterday and the idea of “historical amnesia,” you had said that it is important to revisit the 80s, and in particular, something that came up throughout your talk was that we cannot think of Central American history without the U.S. involvement in it. So, I was wondering if you could expand on that by pinpointing a period in earlier Central American history, keeping in mind U.S. involvement, and not separating each country within the isthmus. Because in your book you also highlight the idea that it is important to look at the specificities, but still with the need to look at the isthmus as a whole.

APR: Right. I think that the idea that we need to revisit different periods is particularly important for writing a historiography of Central America, because I think we are barely at the beginning of articulating a criticism, at least from the North, on Central America. So, building that record is very important right now, and there is actually a great number of people that are working on that in different periods as you know, because you, Karina, work on the earlier period, and there is very little written on that in terms of criticism, in terms of theorizing that period, in terms of recovering a lot of the texts. So a lot of archival work needs to be done. A lot of us who have been working on Central America and cultural criticism have focused probably on the contemporary moment because it

is a bit more accessible. Although it always very hard to work on Central American history, literatures, and cultures because a great number of the texts are very hard to come by, especially in the United States. You are having to do a lot of recovery work, a lot of archival work, a lot of legwork, plain and clear. So in my work I focus on the more contemporary moment and I do find that even as recent as the 1980s there is a historical amnesia in terms of historicizing that period that was so crucial for understanding the recent migrations and overall diaspora of the United States and especially Salvadoran and Central Americans in the United States. But, I think you can draw up a genealogy (and I am thinking in foucauldian terms), a genealogy that is not trying to establish a linear history of Central American, but looking at these historical gaps and trying to explain them for Central America, and particularly in our case for El Salvador. It is very interesting to think about them as irruptions of silences and omissions in the historical record in a field where most of these historical moments are “amnesiac,” if you want to call it that, are very much produced as byproducts of or in conjunction with moments of great repression. So, you are asking me when I can pinpoint some other of these moments, right, and yesterday when you asked me to reflect on 1932 (and obviously that is a big moment that had been historically silenced in El Salvador in terms of the massacre, in terms of the aftermath, in terms of the military dictatorships during and after), but I think we can trace these historical amnesiac moments going back to the nation-building period. What made it into the canon? What made it into the historical record? Very particular authors, but we are in need of recovering in many others, people I can’t identify because I’m not aware of them. But I think it would require a re-laborating of the Central American archive. But I feel that throughout Central America there are gaps. If you think of Costa Rica, there is a lot of literature around William Walker, because he is a great historical marker between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. There is also a need to recover other texts from the

60s, 70s, and 80s, and it seems to me that the jump from that period, and the authors we're missing, that then we come into the 20th century and then start to establish a record of literary histories...

KZ: ...Yes, and that is important because in Central America, in some countries, you also have some women writing as early as the turn of the 20th century. I know this is the case in El Salvador as I have come across some women's poems in newspapers of the time, but I do not know if this was the case in other Central American countries.

APR: Sure, I would imagine, I know that there is, but then how do you find out about them? I would imagine that in your work you see an author but his or her work might not be available, so that will send you in search of where those holdings are.

BD: I was wondering on that same historical level, if we talk about aesthetics, in contemporary aesthetics in Central American writing it seems that there is quite a turn toward the idea of cyclical histories, and the idea of creating or shifting frameworks within a lot of historical texts. I'm thinking of Sergio Ramírez, for example, and Gioconda Belli in Nicaragua. But even Costa Rica didn't have the same type of history of armed conflicts in the second half of the 20th century. You have writers like Fernando Durán Ayanegui that also play with those alternative historical frames, and I wonder if maybe that feeds into that idea of recuperation in some way, or if you see some other element at play?

APR: So you are asking about drawing parallels in trying to...?

BD: I mean works by Sergio Ramírez, where he establishes parallels between the return of Rubén Darío to Nicaragua, I think in *Margarita, está linda la mar*, and also I think between more contemporary issues in Nicaragua dealing with the 60s, 70s, and 80s. There is this interplay of him sort of shifting narratively between these two historical frameworks throughout the text, so it seems to create this sense of parallel histories, as if there is something to be gleaned from looking at Darío's return to Nicaragua and also how we interpret more contemporary issues in Nicaraguan politics or aesthetics. But it seems to me that is something that is fairly common in Central American literature, in the 90s and the first part of the 21st century. This is not really a mode that is so common in a lot of the other works of historiographic significance or of a historiographic bent in other parts of Latin America. So I am wondering to what degree is that unique to Central America, or to what degree that feeds into the idea that there is a gap that needs to be filled in some way?

APR: Ok, now I think I can reinterpret your question. I do think that this idea of texts that read or reinvent these historical or literary figures of another period seem to come up a lot. I've been thinking about this topic in terms of the new historical novel that goes back to the figures and kind of creates pastiches in a manner of questioning the canon, but also in a manner of interrogating the construction of history. And so these figures will come up again and they have been re-situated so they are telling, they are playing off different moments in history against one another, contemporary and past moments. A lot of the texts seem to use this mode: Sergio Ramírez, Gioconda Belli with *The Inhabited Woman*, a few texts that re-created or re-elaborated *la conquista*. Those seem to be significant moments, nation-building moments. Again, I think that is a questioning of that construction of history. And I saw it a lot in the new historical moment, reinterpreting the historical novel, in Seymour Menton's theorizing of

that type of novel. I don't know, perhaps we've moved away a little bit from that at this moment. The turn towards literature that is dealing with the contemporary moment in time seems to be very popular right now.

BD: Talking about some more contemporary writers, and thinking maybe more in terms of intellectuals, it seems to me that there is a lot of... I mean, I don't know that this is necessarily unique to Central America, but the idea that migration even amongst intellectuals is paradigmatic. I'm thinking of a writer like Castellanos Moya, who is born in Honduras but moves to El Salvador and then feels forced to leave, or Claribel Alegría has a similar history, being born in Nicaragua and then ending up in El Salvador. But even earlier than that, with writers like Máximo Soto Hall, who was born in Guatemala, then moved to Costa Rica, then to Argentina, and then more contemporary writers of the *Generación Comprometida* or the *Generación del 20* or *del 30* in Guatemala. There seems to be this overwriting, almost, of intellectual movements as being sort of pan-Isthmus or pan-Latinamerican to some degree. So, I am wondering how we should understand the role of the nation versus the isthmus versus Latin America in some sense when we talk about the intellectual production of the region? It doesn't seem like "patria grande/patria chica" is so much in the discourse anymore, but it feeds into the same idea. I am wondering what role we should assign to the nation as a specific region as opposed to the isthmus or as opposed to Latin America?

APR: That is an interesting question because as you signified with these writers, there has always been movement, Rubén Darío, right, the writers associated with *mondernismo*, *vanguardismo*, and so forth. So exile has always been part of the intellectual experience, perhaps because a lot of the writers were constrained by the nation-state, and so a lot of them were in conversation with larger

movements. To me, and part of the argument in my book, is that Central America has always been a region but also an imaginary of crossings, intellectual crossings, and we need to understand the production of literature beyond those national confines that really tend to be artificial. There are traditions, but traditions are about establishing canons and supporting structures of power. What these authors have in common, the ones that you mentioned precisely, is that they crossed boundaries or challenged power, and are far reaching in terms of their discourses. They have existed since the nation-building period, but also in a matter of resisting their own construction as national authors. They have always been in connection with larger trends, if you think for example with *vanguardismo*. Miguel Ángel Asturias being in Paris and associating with all the vanguard writers and bringing that back. Rubén Darío traveling and being in connection first with the writers in El Salvador.

KZ: Yeah, with Máximo Soto Hall and Asturias, it is interesting that even in the isthmus some of these writers became very known, at least in Central America, but then writers like Arturo Ambrogi, who did travel to Japan as early as the beginning of the 20th century, all those writings about Japan specifically, or in which he wrote on El Salvador with Japan in mind, have essentially been forgotten. I am not sure if that is due to the regimes not really being interested in paying any attention to the literary and cultural production altogether of those years. It seems as if that literature was not taken seriously at the time and therefore was not considered worthy of studying. As time passed we never went back to look at that period. Do you think this is something that has happened in other Central American countries as well?

APR: Yeah, canon formation, right. You have texts that define the nation, that articulate certain traditions. So it is interesting now that you are reading these

texts that might have not been incorporated into the canon, these texts that sound sort of orientalist, right, and so...

KZ: He [Ambrogi] was writing those texts about Japan while in Paris, and came back to El Salvador and was still writing about Japan, and there is no discussion of that anywhere, so I am just kind of encountering this as I am going through the archives and think "oh?!" being surprised...

APR: What does this mean, right? But it is telling that they were not read as part of the tradition, they were not defining "salvadoreñidad" at the moment. Máximo Soto Hall is an interesting case, he's read because he published in all of these countries, and in the last part of his life lived in Argentina, died in Buenos Aires. He became part of that intellectual circle. But I find it very interesting that in Costa Rica, *El problema* is read as part of the national canon and yet in Guatemala, where he also published, he is not necessarily read as part of their canon because in those text he was addressing issues that were relevant to Costa Rica at that moment. So, what I find fascinating is that they are canon breakers, and perhaps that is why they are not fully integrated into the tradition of that country. Claribel Alegría, she is read as a Salvadoran writer, a lot of her writings are recuperated within the Salvadoran canon, especially concerning the post-war period.

KZ: I guess Felipe Toruño would fall into that as well, as a Nicaraguan that moved to El Salvador?

APR: But how is Claribel Alegría read as a Nicaraguan writer? I am not sure. She is one of the writers that says "El Salvador is my *matria* and Nicaragua my *patria*" or something like that, it might be vise-versa. So she even posits herself within a

certain tradition. And so if anything, all the writers that I've mentioned are those that break those confines and write within a larger isthmian tradition and that has been what I've been interested in in the work that I am doing. Trying to re-map, re-landscape, re-read these writers in other spaces that are producing different spaces, different imaginaries for the isthmus rather than focusing on the national canon, the national tradition that has always been about confining, containing the nation, the imaginary to whatever the tradition is to that particular geopolitical space. It would be fascinating to write a book about these canon breakers! If you want to call it that, and...

BD: Where would you situate Horacio Castellanos Moya in that dialogue?

APR: That is a perfect example for the contemporary moment! A writer who refuses to be pinpointed, pigeon-holed in the Salvadoran canon. And all his books are about pushing those limits.

KZ: Pushing a lot of limits!

APT: Pushing lots of limits and boundaries and eliciting reactions, but also meta-reflections on what is the nation, the discourses, you know, what is a Salvadoran writer? Can we talk about that these days when we have these writers that are writing outside of the nation and are being very critical about the nation, and then whole other nations or multiple nations that are the diasporas? So I think we have gotten to the point that I don't know that you can really speak about national literatures not even in maybe the United States. I am not sure.

BD: I think this sort of puts a Central Americanist in a strange position in that case, that is by contributing in an academic setting to a Spanish course or to a

Latin American Studies course or something along those lines. If it hadn't been for me making a very specific effort, I would not have known anything beyond Darío, because that is really all that is taught in a survey course of Latin American literature. And so the idea of trying to integrate into a curriculum a larger body of Central American writers is not necessarily in national terms, because it does not function that way, but in terms of simply more writers that deserve to be discussed in those contexts. I do not know how to quite balance that idea that we are dealing with those who are breaking down those national boundaries, and yet we are still saying, well, there are Salvadoran writers that need to be discussed, there are Nicaraguan writers that need to be discussed, and so forth.

APR: You are right, because we are also deconstructing the notion of what Latin America is, and until now if you do a survey of all the surveys you will have the same usual suspect writers included, right? Miguel Ángel Asturias, Ruben Darío, maybe Sergio Ramírez. I am thinking of the book we use at Maryland, *Huellas*, and then your *Rigoberta Menchú*. And then if you wanted to teach Central American literature you are put in the position of having to supplement. But if you think in the notion of supplement, the supplement is about constructing whatever the corpus is, and so supplementing Central American literature I think has been healthy for teaching Latin American literature, because then you noticed that Latin American literature has also had an amnesia about Central American, and the big question is "why?" Why the exclusion, because if you really truly believe in Central American lit. is not about quality, it is not about the lack of, so what is at stake? What is involved? The power, right, power again in constructing canons. So I think we are in a position to be able to take that apart when we say: "oh, we should read Claribel Alegría, we should read Horacio Castellanos Moya, etcetera."

BD: In a similar vein, you mentioned earlier the idea that migrations challenge power in some way, and I'm wondering about different ways of looking at that, how the idea of movement, or the idea of a shift in some of the discourses comes into play.

APR: Well, migrations are always about exiting some place, right? So the question is, why diaspora has been such a large part of Central American history. We tend to think of diaspora and migrations in their contemporary moment, but if we look at Central America historically, it's been a narrative of dispersion, right? But if you look at this region as a movement of peoples, it really produces a reconfiguration, that movement of diaspora has always been a characteristic of the isthmus as a passageway. And so if we articulate it this way, see literature, see cultural production as a flow, and see connections between productions across the region rather than isolated instances, so this opens up and permits us to read something that might be happening in Panama with something that might be happening in Guatemala, rather than looking only at Panamanian literature, looking only at Guatemalan literature. So, I've been looking at making those connections between material and cultural production, so when we think of it that way, i.e. banana production, and the whole literature that dealt with it, you can look at different works throughout the isthmus, with the exception of El Salvador, you can see how this genre came about directly because of certain power structures, interventions, etc. And migration then becomes one of these flows, right? Now in Central America, I think virtually throughout the isthmus, we have a production of literature that is related to this migratory flow. So now migration literature becomes a genre of its own. And since migration is not only a byproduct of Central America, we have migratory literature from throughout the hemisphere and the world in the context of globalization. So I think literature then can be looked at in a different way, as flow, as a circuitry or a circuit that

connects different places, and we can talk about translocalization of literatures, and the transnationalizations of literatures, rather than looking at literature in its national containers. So I think that migration is one of the prevalent discourses of this decade.

BD: Do you notice when we're talking then about the idea of migrations and how they are certainly central to contemporary discourses about Central America, and since in your book you trace from the canal and banana production and up until the contemporary age, how do you notice those discourses shifting in terms of migration?

APR: Focusing primarily on migration?

BD: Well, anything in those discourses that you see as key.

APR: Well, what I find interesting these days is that literature that you can relate to a certain location, to a certain country, is produced outside of that country. So, for example, the literature of "Departamento 15," of the diaspora of El Salvador, is talking about Salvadorans in other locations, so then you can have a production of literature in California that might be Salvadoran-American literature, that might be dealing with issues related to the country, but not necessarily. And so now you have an extra-national literature existing outside of the countries. So to answer your question, then, can we call this Salvadoran literature? Is this now American literature? What is this, right? The migration, not only as a people, but of cultural products, and the expansion of the notion of "salvadoreñidad." We can tease out and think of how you might talk about the constructions of "salvadoreñidad," "guatemaltequidad," whatever you call it, outside where it no longer exists, or is germane to a certain place.

BD: It's sort of interesting, because Karina does work with Mario Bencastro, and thinking about just the trajectory of his career, that he's writing his first texts...

KZ: ...Yeah, I haven't looked at that closely right now, but his writing certainly changed, not only as far as what he was trying to share at that particular moment. His earlier short stories deal with the war and a recollection of testimonies. The second collection is more myth, and a little more traditions in El Salvador, whereas the more contemporary works deal with Salvadorans in the US and the children of Salvadorans in the US, and their struggles in high school. And then the latest one is really more for children, and sort of reclaiming Salvadoran myths, but told in the US context. His writing has shifted a lot.

APR: Do you want to think about it? Because his latest work, *Paraíso portátil*, right? I mean, I think the title is very telling: the portableness of identities, the portableness of these myths. So in that book I'm very fascinated, I'm ending my class with one of the stories in that book, when in the story you have the migration to Australia. I have relatives who immigrated to Australia, and for me, I haven't been able to go to Australia, but I've been thinking about what is the *salvadoreñidad australiana*?

KZ: I wonder about that myself, because my uncle Chepe, he always talks about this one sister that moved to Australia in the 80s, and I was really surprised the first time he said he had relatives in Australia. It was a different world for me. There is a community of Salvadorans in Australia, and there has been for about three decades now. We don't know much—I grew up in El Salvador, and I don't remember hearing anything about it.

APR: But there is the diaspora, with Europe and so forth, and Bencastro would move his texts, as you've been talking about, with *Árbol de la vida*, and then *Odisea del norte*, and now this latest book, with the idea of a "portable paradise." It's about nostalgia, how you remember, but I think the book is dealing with very interesting issues, like with migrants who go back, and their relationship with the country when it's been fractured, and your notion of what El Salvador was. El Salvador no longer exists, and so what you're left with is a "paraíso portátil" that you carry with you and reconstruct it elsewhere as a diasporic subject. In the story that I've been referring to in Australia, he's talking about migrants who are communicating through email, and what it means to recreate the nation now through these other electronic, virtual means. And so he is taking it to another level. And so the idea of "portátil-ness," if you want to call it that, I think is very appropriate and very... I think it's a great sign for the diaspora and how it functions. I think it's a great symbol for them in these other places.

KZ: I know last night we were talking about possible traits or characteristics of Central American literary production, and one of the things Brian had pointed out was, going back to the 70s and 80s, Salvadoran writers had this technique of always jumping from the present to the previous decades, or the past, and then coming back abruptly, and we wanted to know if that was something that is particular to Central America, do you think, as something that writers adapted as the only way of telling the history of Central Americans, because it's not very common in other parts of Latin America.

APR: It's another interesting question, because it might have to do with that idea of historical amnesia, and I think the important function of literature in a place like Central America, where other texts have been obfuscated or archives have been destroyed. A lot of times I feel that literature stepped in and told these

stories, and are very historical in nature. So, the books that you're mentioning from the 70s and 80s, I'm thinking of...

KZ: ...Like Manlio Argueta, with *Cuzcatlán*, is a big marker...

APR: Right, it's revisiting, and oftentimes he goes back to the *conquista*, and he relates it to the current period, so he's really telling about 450, 500 years of colonial history. So he's revisiting that history and bringing it up to date, and he's questioning the whole process in between, in lieu of history, in lieu of history as a discipline, which has taken the responsibility of telling history. If you recall, places like El Salvador, I believe, didn't have history as a discipline...

KZ: ...It wasn't a major until 2002 at the UCA.

APR: So, the state has been cognizant of curtailing the process of history, and literature has taken up that role, and so we do have novels that do this. It's an important function that it has had up until now.

KZ: So writers, you feel, have had this function.... They're fiction writers, but they've taken up the responsibility to historicize these processes in their literature?

APR: Right, so I'd like to think of literary texts as historical records as well, where all of this has been silenced or not given a disciplinary space. I think Central American literature has always been important in different ways that it may not be in other places, because they've had other spaces for representing history and the things that have occurred.

BD: When we were discussing yesterday the idea of Central American literature, we were also touching on the idea of social realism, and the role that it seems to play. It's very strong, I would think, in Central American literature, and it seems that, in some way, it might form a part of the occlusion of Central American literature from the larger canon of Latin American literature. With the Latin American boom, a lot of these texts that were magical realist, or inheritors of surrealism and the *vanguardias*, had a way of becoming accessible in the United States or in the academy, whereas the works of social realism don't seem to have had as much marketability. We were thinking of why it would be that there's such a heavy... well, you mention in the book at one point, because I think I've cited it somewhere, that looking at the *bananero* novels is very important in getting at something of great social relevance in these works, and that they're not simply a repetition on a theme, and that there are very unique ways of looking at them. So, with Asturias's *bananero* trilogy, or even with the works of [Miguel Ángel] Espino, and *Hombres contra la muerte*, that there are very dynamic ways of looking at history, and they get sort of shunted away as simply social realist works, or that they don't have anything to tell us. It's very shortsighted, of course, to simply assume that they don't form part of the canon of what should be read, but we were wondering why social realism became the norm for so long in Central America.

APR: I think that, yes, right, because of their explicit nature, their repetitive nature, they've been put away... they're almost template in form, so I think a lot of critics have put them aside. But, I think that there's a way of re-reading them, and in the case of Miguel Ángel Espino's *Hombres contra la muerte*, I just re-read that, and I attempted to use it in class...

KZ: It's maybe a little much to use in a class for undergrads.

APR: And, yeah, it may not work for undergrads, but I gave them just an excerpt of the first part. But, what I found really interesting, and I want to revisit that book, is that again, you read it and find other discourses that maybe haven't been analyzed enough, or taken seriously enough. So, in the case of these texts, i.e. Miguel Ángel Asturias's *Trilogía bananera*, you can look at them, instead of for their social realist content or form, which has been analyzed quite a bit in the criticism, and acknowledge that these were texts about getting their knowledge across, which is why they're repetitive and almost template in form. So that function was served, and we might understand that there's little appeal for that. But there's other things going on, for example in these *bananero* novels, the issues of early migrations, labor migrations, or the ways that these areas were reconfigured and the stories of, besides labor movements, but the labor migration itself is being told there. You get insight into the racialization of certain regions. I don't think we've nearly read these texts for that issue. The ways that trans-isthmian societies were established early on and are represented in these texts, where you have communities of *bananeros* that are *hondureños*, *panameños*, Jamaican, all being represented in Miguel Ángel Asturias's *Viento fuerte*, and in *Los ojos de los enterrados*. In reading Espino's text, I was really fascinated that a Salvadoran would be writing about Belize...

KZ: ...and he had never been to Belize.

APR: Right, he had never been to Belize, but he certainly had knowledge, and so it would indicate that there were conversations going on about this migration, this labor migration to Belize. But I found fascinating in reading that text, that merits more discussion, is the equivalent of barbarism and civilization, that are being posed there, and that are very much about the turn of that century, about the role of Europeans in the hinterlands, such as the Germans. There's almost a

Doña Bárbara figure there, the Irish daughter, so issues of gender in the hinterlands. And, I think, a eugenics discourse that is very much articulated. So what I'm calling for is going back to those texts, not dismissing them, but finding other things in them. So with these social realist texts, yes, the content, but there's more to them that needs to be re-read. And Miguel Ángel Asturias is just a fascinating case, that he could write that trilogy and write these other texts, so he's straddling different genres, he's straddling different discourses, winning the Lenin prize and winning the Nobel literature prize...

BD: But he's also a figure of migration, of course, because he left after the Guatemalan Revolution, and wasn't even in Guatemala at the time that the Árbenz government is overthrown...

APR: Right, and the great impact that he has in successive writers, I'm thinking of Roque Dalton and all the *generaciones* that came after him, whether they were critical of Miguel Ángel Asturias, or were putting themselves in that tradition.

BD: You mentioned one other thing, and I don't know, we're getting toward the end, so this might be the last question to look at, but I was wondering... you mentioned yesterday, and I would agree, the impossibility of telling the history of Central America without understanding the role the United States has played. I'm wondering about the possibility of inverting that in some sense, and the impossibility of telling the history of the United States without the presence of Central America in some way. It obviously has some connection when talking about figures like William Walker, who you mentioned at the beginning of the interview, so as early as the mid-1800s, and the desire to build a canal, or the desire to subjugate the region. So, certainly it's not a discourse that we enter into a lot in the United States, certainly not in educational systems—the idea that we

need to know about Central America in the United States, but I'm wondering what would that look like if we were to do that. How should we engage the idea of US history with Central America as a part of it?

APR: Good question, and great inversion. I think, starting with its geography, it's a land connecting the continent, so its very integral positioning in the Americas is there, and yet in "Americas" discourse, for example in Comparative Literature or Latin American literature, or US literature, it phases out, or is never really taken into consideration. I like to say, and I have said it in a couple of pieces that I've written, that Central Americans, Salvadorans, intervene in the US imaginary, or the global imaginary. So, what you're asking, what would it look like, how is Central America integral in the history of the United States and the world? It certainly is if we go back to the colonial period. It's very telling when we look at the production of *añil*, indigo, that was one of the great industrial products that made the Industrial Revolution possible, of course, in Europe, with synthetic blue dyes that were produced elsewhere. Central America particularly, in El Salvador, Guatemala, and southern Mexico, that's where the material was extracted and exported. Going back to the colonial period, and looking at the way that Panama served as a trans-isthmian bridge for the gold from Peru to the Atlantic. So, Central America has always been positioned as integral for the flows of all of these materials that have gone elsewhere. I think you can map out the periods, but also products that were being moved and that were extracted to create wealth elsewhere. And now, one of the most recent but ongoing cases, are migrants. So, how they intervene in the United States, in Australia, or in the rest of the world, to create capital elsewhere. So, yes, Central America is very significant. Its population is dispersed throughout the world, and they contribute to other countries and other places and other peoples, and contribute to the isthmus as well. It would be interesting to integrate that into the larger history,

into a world history, and look at the place of Central America, beyond the construction of the United States, but to the world as a whole. That would be a really fascinating revisioning of history.

KZ: Well, thank you, Ana Patricia, for sharing your thoughts with us, and for visiting UC Davis.

APR: Well, again, thank you for inviting me.