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World Exhaustion and Aesthetic Activism

Cultural Restitution in Contemporary Mapuche Poetry

Introductory Considerations: The Exhaustion of Which World?

World exhaustion in the post-global era and the end of the modern project can already be seen as a *fait accompli* (cf. Loy/Müller 2023). Without a doubt, climate catastrophe seems imminent and is already taking place, wars are threatening world peace, democracies are increasingly vulnerable, social inequalities are intensifying, and the global economic crisis is becoming more acute and widespread since the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020–22.

However, despite the undoubted danger and catastrophic situation that we are facing socially, environmentally, economically, and politically, the discourse of world exhaustion in the post-global era implies at least three major contradictions:

- 1) While the causes and effects of world exhaustion are clearly ascribed to so-called modernity (centered on Western concepts such as progress, accumulation, optimization, exploitation, extraction, etc.), the same criticism of such concepts usually adopts a nostalgic or apocalyptic tone (cf. Derrida 1983). For all its ambivalence, it risks turning the lament of the end of the globalized world into the prolongation of the same modern Western tendency to divide itself between the longing for a full, unattainable future and the nostalgia for a past irretrievably lost. As a result, the experience of the present or of an immediate world is constantly deferred, and the present is installed as the great lack or eternal ellipsis of an immediate experience.
- 2) At the same time, talking about world exhaustion in the post-global era tends to repeat the same gesture of the logo-ethno-anthropocentric thinking of modernity. For if it is obvious that the consequences of the modern project threaten to literally destroy the planet, it is also evident that the topos of exhaustion and the end of the world obliterates taking into consideration other, non-Western visions or experiences of the world. Despite projecting a catastrophic end, it continues to correspond to Western teleological thinking of history, without managing to provincialize it (cf. Chakrabarty 2000) or to consider other temporal conceptions that, like the indigenous idea of time, es-

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cape the dichotomous opposition of the linear versus cyclical and see in time an overlapping “variety of shapes, scales, and uses” (Clifford 2013: 27).

- 3) Furthermore, this discourse does not consider that for many non-European peoples, the “end of the world” has already occurred – and that it is precisely associated with the “modern” expansion of the West and its concealment of other world regions. This is highlighted e.g. by Enrique Dussel in chapter “8.2. El ‘Fin del Mundo’ (el ‘Tlatzompan’, el ‘Pachakuti’...)” from his study *1492: el encubrimiento del Otro* (Dussel 1994: 136–138), or when citing the story of the Franciscan missionary and chronicler Fray Juan de Torquemada:

Extendiose por toda la tierra la llegada de gente tan extraña [...] no por temor de perder sus tierras sino porque entendían *que era acabado el mundo* [...]. Decían que las señales y prodigios que se habían visto [...] no podían significar (sino) *el fin y acabamiento del mundo*, y así era grande la tristeza de las gentes. (Torquemada 1975 [1615]: 91)

Dussel adds:

Es interesante anotar que para Hegel la historia de Europa es “origen y fin de la Historia”, mientras que para los indios la presencia “modernizadora” de Europa era “el fin y acabamiento del mundo”. Lo mismo tiene un sentido exactamente contrario desde la “otra cara” de la Modernidad. (Dussel 1994: 45)

In this reasoning, talking about world exhaustion in the post-global era obscures the re-emergence of indigenous life projects that, since the end of the twentieth century, have affirmed alternatives to the *modus vivendi* imposed by modernity. These alternatives are constituted and make themselves known by the strategic visualization and framing of worldviews, epistemologies or ontologies subalternized and made invisible by the arrival of the West. For many non-Western peoples, and especially “para os povos nativos das Américas, o fim do mundo já aconteceu, cinco séculos atrás. [...] O genocídio dos povos ameríndios – o fim do mundo para eles – foi o começo do mundo moderno na Europa” (Danowski/Viveiros de Castro 2014: 138, 141). If Deborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro use the fable of the extraterrestrial invasion and the aliens that enter to conquer the world (cf. Danowski/Viveiros de Castro 2014: 142) as a way to talk about endings, the indigenous peoples already underwent this invasion – and they are still struggling with its consequences. This is also stated by Carmen Calcupan, the Mapuche elder and singer of the *Ñamku tayül* (sacred song of the *ñanco* bird) when speaking of songs and customs prior to the time of “when the world

was lost”:¹ that is, when talking about the ways of life corresponding to the happy times before the reduction of indigenous cultures occurred – a perfect time in which people still lived according to their own cultural norms, in balance with the human and non-human, animal, botanical, mineral world. This balance or beautiful order was exhausted with the appearance of white people: be they the Spanish *conquistadores* of the 16th century or – as happened especially in the Mapuche case – the armies of the emerging nation-states of the nineteenth century.

However, if the indigenous world was already exhausted and lost a long time ago, it is currently experiencing its rebirth in multiple ways.

On the following pages, I will try to show how, particularly by forms of material and symbolic restitution and the strategic reconstitution of bodies of knowledge, practices, and ways of conceiving the indigenous world, today its relational and territorialized onto-epistemology is continuously being revived, emanating from the need to recover a world that has been invaded and lost. Due to its very respectful posture towards the earth, this onto-epistemology can serve as an antidote to the exhaustion and end of the world as we understand it in the post-global era from a Western perspective. Specifically, I will focus on the strong Mapuche cultural movement and the intents to reconstruct the *az mapu* (order of the earth)² in contemporary Mapuche poetry and song, which I understand as acts of resistance or aesthetic activism.

Brief Contextualization of Contemporary Mapuche Poetry

One of the central topics of contemporary Mapuche poetry is individual and/or collective pain and grief over the violence committed against the Mapuche people (or “the people [*che*] of the earth [*mapu*]”)³ who lived and live in Wallmapu. Wallmapu is the “Mapuche ancestral territory” from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean (cf.

1 The quote comes from “Ka Kiñe Nütram”, her song recorded on the album *Feley* (track 15, 3’ 30”), where she evinces: “Así dice que hicieron kamaruko los viejos en Chile, antes, cuando se perdió el mundo y ahí hicieron kamaruko...” (cf. Calfupan 2005).

2 The Mapuche concept of *mapu* refers to the earth. As we will see, *mapu* must be understood in a much broader sense than only in its geological and material dimension, and refers to spiritual conceptions like life after death, the presence of the ancestors, and the co-presence of different worlds (cf. Quidel Lincoleo 2016).

3 *Mapu* is multidimensional and involves all dimensions, material and immaterial, of the Mapuche world (cf. Quidel Lincoleo 2016).

Moyano 2016), this immense region that in Chile covers what today constitutes the Eighth to the Tenth Regions (or the Biobío Region to the Lakes Region) and that in Argentina goes from the Salado River to the Chubut River (cf. Melin/Mansilla/Royo 2020: 22). The occupation and colonization of this vast transnational region – a product not of the Spanish conquest (which failed in its attempt to take Wallmapu), but of the emerging nations of the nineteenth century – was carried out through military invasions such as the misnamed “Pacificación de la Araucanía” in Chile (1861–1883) (cf. Bengoa 2000, Cayuqueo 2017) and the “Campaña” or “Conquista del desierto” in Argentina (1878/79–1885) (cf. Bayer et al. 2010; Delrio 2005; Marimán Queménado 2006; Moyano 2017; Pigna 2017). The subsequent expulsion and enslavement of the Mapuche, the policy of seizure and colonization through the promotion of European immigration, and the delivery of Mapuche territory to large domestic and foreign farmers constitute the basis of the painful Mapuche history in the emerging nation-states of Chile and Argentina (cf. Bayer 2010a).

The violations of human rights and crimes against the “people of the earth” – the different forms of physical violence, deterritorialization, “reduction”, or enslavement to which they were exposed – were long silenced in the “official” historiography of Chile and Argentina. Only since the turn of the millennium have they begun to be recognized as genocide.⁴

Against this long silence of “official” historiography, contemporary Mapuche poetry imposes the inscription of pain. The cruel and long-invisible history of the Mapuche people constitutes the basis of a literature that began to emerge in the 1980s and that – for its quantity, quality, and immense political and aesthetic interest – was affirmed and made visible in the following decade. It is closely linked to 1992 and the visualization of indigenous movements protesting the so-called Quincentenary of the Discovery of the Americas.

Obviously, in this process of protest and indigenous self-affirmation of the 1980s and 1990s, the recovery or reconstruction of the individual and collective memory of the ancestors acquires primary importance, as it constitutes the basis of the cultural identity that allows the subalternized subjects to recognize themselves as members of a community with a shared tradition and the right to practice and continue that tradition. This is what the Mapuche–Huilliche poet Jaime

4 Osvaldo Bayer, together with his group Awka Liwen (Rebel Dawn), was one of the first historians to analyze the Mapuche genocide and highlight the analogies between the culmination of the *Proceso de Organización Nacional* by Julio A. Roca’s “campañas al desierto” and the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* under Videla’s dictatorship a hundred years later. The title given to the book that brings together the works of this group already makes a strong political statement: *Historia de la crueldad argentina. Julio A. Roca y el genocidio de los pueblos originarios* (Bayer 2010).

Huenún (*huilliche* – southern Mapuche) states in his important anthology *La memoria iluminada: poesía mapuche contemporánea*:

Esa es la razón por la que hoy los hijos de un pueblo condenado al pauperismo territorial no puedan sino recuperar dramáticamente esa difícil y sangrante memoria. Ese torrente de dolor, nostalgias, antiguas conversaciones y ritos es el que gravita y fluye por la escritura de los poetas aquí incorporados, quienes se han entregado a la tarea de reconstruir el territorio simbólico de sus ancestros. (Huenún 2007: 22)

In the case of the Mapuche people, this process of reconstructing or reinventing a way of life in natural-cultural balance – or “reconfiguración de una matriz cultural propia del mundo mapuche antiguo, en conflicto con el sistema-mundo moderno colonial” (Spíndola 2021: 13), called *az mapu* – has been especially intense and painful. Due to the genocide perpetrated by the emerging nation-states of Argentina and Chile, the Mapuche culture had been extirpated or made invisible to the point of surviving only in “reductions”: remnants, vestiges, or traces (which necessitate what Ana Ramos calls an “ethnography of the fragments”; Ramos 2020). Only since the 1990s, and especially through the Mapuche artistic-poetic praxis, has the old order of Mapuche life, or *az mapu* (*az* as order, mediation, healing, beauty; *mapu* as earth, territory; cf. Spíndola 2021: 168), been once again articulated, reconstructed, and projected as a poetic-political category of *buen vivir*, *küme mongen* or “good life” in a Mapuche understanding.

Both in Spanish and in a self-translation into a sometimes deficient *Mapuzugun* – the Mapuche language banned since the so-called *Huinca Malón*, or white people’s military invasions of Wallmapu – much of contemporary Mapuche poetry attempts to recover what was extirpated and to reconstruct the Mapuche ancestral worldview or cosmovision. Whether seeking to give new visibility to the *Mapuche kimün* (Mapuche knowledge/wisdom), the *küme mongen* (the good life), the *Ñuke Mapu* (mother earth) or the *itro fill mongen* (the totality of all living beings without exclusion), or by making life visible in the *warria* (city) or the *mapurbe* in which a large part of the Mapuche youth live (“Somos los hijos de los hijos de los hijos / somos los nietos de Lautaro tomando la micro”, states David Aníñir in “Mapurbe”; Aníñir 2018: 93): contemporary Mapuche poetry, precisely from the acute awareness of its wounds and losses, attempts to performatively restore or reconstruct the *az mapu*, the “deber ser” (ought-to-be), or the balanced order of the pluriversal Mapuche world.⁵

⁵ This is how the poet Elicura Chihuailaf puts it: “**Az Mapu** se dice en *mapuzugun*, y en castellano: las costumbres de nuestra Tierra, el rostro de nuestra cultura. [...] Es la manera que tiene el pueblo mapuche—por lo tanto, cada identidad territorial en su diversidad—de entender, de dar

It is along these lines, of restituting what was pillaged, of recovering the time before the catastrophe of the military invasions “when the world was lost”, of reconstructing the cultural memory made invisible, and of projecting into the future, that I propose reading two representatives of contemporary Mapuche poetry: Liliana Ancalao and Anahí Mariluan.

Liliana Ancalao, or the Poetics of Loss

One of the Mapuche poets who most openly attempts to transform the traumatic experiences suffered by her people into a performative act of mourning is Liliana Ancalao. Her poetry is ostensibly and explicitly *kuñifal* (cf. Mellado 2014), orphan of a lost cultural tradition and language, written by a poet who only learned about her ethnic heritage in her thirties, after it had been silenced by her family to protect their daughter from social stigmatization and the shame of belonging to a discriminated ethnic group.⁶

Since her late reunion with her culture, Liliana Ancalao’s writing has been lamenting absence, the loss of cultural roots, and trying to reconquer her lost world. Making the invisible visible, recognizing the violent cultural void on which she had built her life until her return to her robbed world, and trying to reconquer her stolen culture would become the ethical and aesthetic program of her work:

Reconocer la propia ignorancia es un gran paso para avanzar hacia el conocimiento, asumirnos como aprendices de la propia cultura nos lleva al encuentro con los kimche, los sa-

impulso y desarrollar su organización. [E]s nuestro ‘deber ser’ en la *Nag Mapu*, la Tierra que Andamos, el espacio territorial que reproduce la *Wenu Mapu*, la Tierra de Arriba. Son las normas que ordenan la reciprocidad, el espacio en el que es posible alcanzar el intercambio con el fin de otorgarles continuidad a los equilibrios duales que dicen relación, por ejemplo, con el día y la noche; salud y enfermedad; arriba y abajo; alegría y tristeza; anciano y joven; mujer y hombre; vigor y debilidad [...]. Es la *Az Mapu* lo que determina la continuidad de nuestra manera de comprender el mundo y, por lo tanto, establece nuestros conceptos de organización cultural como visión totalizadora” (Chihuailaf 2017: 48).

⁶ In an interview, Liliana Ancalao highlights: “Encontrarme con mi identidad fue conmovedor. Fue una casualidad, con mi hermana Mirta que me dice vamos a ver un documental en la Cámara de Comercio que habla sobre los mapuches. Era un documental que mostraba el kamaruko en Anekon y las imágenes que yo vi las tenía guardadas de lo que me contaba mi abuela y mi mama. Entonces lo que veía en esa pantalla a mí ya me lo habían contado, con mi hermana salimos llorando, fue el descubrimiento de que en todo momento se hablaba del pueblo mapuche, y nosotros éramos parte de ese pueblo. Y empezamos a atar cabos con un discurso familiar” (Ancalao, en *Del Origen* n.d.: w.p.).

bios dispuestos a enseñar, y nos lleva a los espacios de práctica. El aprendizaje se realiza a través de la práctica de nuestra cultura y se enriquece con el estudio de otras culturas originarias. (Ancalao 2018e: 63)

In her talk “Ankalaufken mew – en el medio del lago”, given on October 30, 2018 at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena, she highlights that since her chance reunion with her cultural roots, she very soon and consciously opted for the “oralitura” (“oraliterature”) as proposed by Chihuailaf (cf. Hammerschmidt 2024):

[E]n 1997 fui invitada por Elicura Chihuailaf a un encuentro de escritores de pueblos originarios que se hizo en Temuco, y ahí me enteré de que existía la oralitura, que es el nombre que Elicura Chihuailaf le da a esta propuesta de los pueblos originarios de escribir lo que hemos aprendido desde la oralidad, escribirla en literatura, es decir buscando una belleza estética para transmitir este conocimiento. (Ancalao 2018a: w.p.)

She had to learn *mapuzungun* and *Mapuche kimün* (the Mapuche language and wisdom) in an arduous process of restitution, self-translation, and making a “foreign” language her own:

La autotraducción de mi poesía al *mapuzungun* está siendo parte de un proceso de construcción de mi identidad mapuche, una identidad personal y al mismo tiempo una identidad de pueblo originario. [...]

[C]onsidero ‘autotraducción’ a este proceso de volver a ser, afirmando mi identidad mapuche, sin dejar de ser contemporánea. Recuperando cada palabra escuchada en la infancia, aprendiendo frases sueltas, practicando los rituales de la espiritualidad. (Ancalao 2020: w.p.)

This “self-translation” corresponds at the same time to an individual process of personal search for lost genealogical traces, as well as to a collective project of the Mapuche people who, since the end of the twentieth century, have demanded the cultural restitution of their lost, raided world. In this way, Liliana Ancalao’s texts carry not only inscriptions of deep pain for the very personal lack of belonging linguistically, culturally, or communally to the concepts and practices of Mapuche life, but also marks of Mapuche collective mourning for genocide and epistemicide suffered by the whole people. Topics such as loss, the shame of not naturally handling *mapuzungun*, and the distance that still separates her from the *Mapuche kimün*, characterize and distinguish her writing and make her yearn for (and poetically return to) the mythical time before “when the world was lost” – a still transparent time-space, not damaged or forbidden, to which it is necessary to return. This inverted utopia, which imagines a non-idyllic, but private and self-determined *chronotope*, is both a poetic dream and a political project, where the poet’s very personal wounds overlap with the Mapuche cultural struggle and that of indigenous peoples in general.

Thus, she emphasizes in her essay “El idioma silenciado”:

[L]a muerte que desde 1492 venía cercando a los pueblos originarios de América cerró su círculo en el sur. La guerra del desierto, el malón winka, significó la derrota militar, la ocupación del territorio por parte del Estado argentino. “Cuando se perdió el mundo” hace cien años.

El mapuzungun se volvió el idioma para expresar el dolor, el idioma del desgarró cuando el reparto de hombres, mujeres y niños como esclavos. Un susurro secreto en los campos de concentración. El idioma del consuelo entre los prisioneros de guerra. El idioma para pensar.

Fue el idioma del extenso camino del exilio, la distancia del destierro. La larga marcha de nuestros bisabuelos hacia las reservas. Ka Mapu.⁷ (Ancalao 2018b: 66–67)

And in “La memoria de la tierra sagrada”, she once again underscores the decisive, traumatic moment of the military invasion, the genocide, the cultural annihilation – the crucial moment that separates a *before* from an *after*: the catastrophe of “when the world was lost”:

La catástrofe de “cuando se perdió el mundo”. Cuando pisotearon la tierra. Cuando destruyeron el puente de la cordillera con fronteras, cuando los latifundistas clavaron los postes del alambre y parcelaron el territorio. Hace poco más de un siglo. Silenciaron nuestro idioma, desarmaron nuestra organización política, desmembraron nuestros lazos amorosos, desparramaron a nuestros parientes, delimitaron nuestros espacios, trajeron una religión y una educación ajenas a la naturaleza. (Ancalao 2018d: 53)

The world before the catastrophe, the moment before “when the world was lost”, becomes the explicit goal of her writing – without this meaning anchoring herself in the past. For this moment, to which we must return, is the necessary condition to make things transparent: to encompass past, present, and future, and to place the present in its diachronic and synchronic horizon, in order to re-root what has been eradicated and reterritorialize what has been deterritorialized. Transparency from the time before “when the world was lost” is at the same time a moment of demystification and sacralization, of analytical elucidation and analogical enchantment. The act of “transparentizing”, making the past and present transparent to achieve a better future, sum up the ethical-aesthetic function of Mapuche poetry according to Ancalao:

Escribimos hoy en un territorio de límites difusos y en proceso de transparentarse. [...]

Transparentar es desmitificar, descolonizar, recuperar y resacralizar. [...]

7 “Tierra lejana” (Ancalao 2018b: 67).

Transparentar el territorio es volverlo a sacralizar, recuperar las ceremonias y los rituales para venerar las fuerzas del planeta e instalarnos en el ciclo natural. [...]

La función de la poesía hoy, al sur del sur, es hacer transparente nuestro tiempo y nuestro espacio usando el arma poderosa en que se transforma la palabra, cuando la estética hunde su raíz en la ética.

Ser poeta originario mapuche es ser investigador, historiador, antropólogo, semiólogo, lingüista, celebrante [...]. (Ancalao 2018f: 58–60)

This desire to make transparent is also equivalent to the desire to restore what is missing: what is absent, stolen, murdered – named by the poems to make it visible or audible in the performative present of the poetic word. However, obviously this poetic act is never sufficient: it makes transparent, recovers, restores what has been made invisible – but at the same time it is aware of its insurmountable distance from a full presence, or a definitive, healing recovery of what has been lost.

This dilemma of always insufficient recovery runs through Ancalao's poetry and marks it with a melancholic tone that contradicts her explicit poetics proclaimed in her essays. Her poems, while seeking to be transparent, always also indicate the distance that separates the lyrical subject from what she is trying to look at. This “quiebre ontológico” (Quidel Lincoleo 2016) is even part of the triumph of an achieved restitution, as pointed out in Ancalao's important poem “Esperando a Inakayal”. This poem refers to the return in 1994 to Tecka of the remains of the great Mapuche *lonko* (head, or leader) Inakayal from the Museum of Natural Sciences of La Plata. After having been herded to Buenos Aires by the Argentine army under Julio A. Roca, Inakayal, like so many other *lonkos* and their families, had been exhibited alive by the “Perito” Francisco Moreno and other so-called scientists, and kept in display cases after death.

inakayal taiñ üngum nefiel mew

esperando a inakayal

Volvió Inakayal. Los huesos del lonko habían permanecido desvelados demasiado tiempo en la vitrina de un museo. Volvió para descansar en la tierra. Mis paisanos lo esperaban en Tecka. Puntuales estaban allí: Fabiana y Silvia.

ngüne kintufiñ kallfü
ti külangen ti küpam mew
ti piwke ñi ngenoa felüw külen

las imagino celestes
el frío en las polleras
el corazón desandando la impaciencia

pefiñ kallfü
 furitulen küyen mew
 ngünel külen ti mapu pengel kimuam
 pekan ngenon ka ngenozungun mew
 rulmenon kiñe witan no rume
 ti kuyfi tren mew
 ñi wiñomum feychi antü

ñüñmaafiel ñi küwü ka ñi nge
 ka puliwen pefi
 ñi entulel nofiel nge kürüf

kimfal ngen
 chezungun mew
 ... inakayal ... lonko ... piwke ...
 mewlen mew
 küme newe nofiel ti üngüm külen

ti kallfü ponwi
 inazafiñ ñi chumlen
 ka küpalfiñ
 kuyfi mew
 ka ti afpulu mew

antüngür
 kayupange
 anay lamngen

las veo celestes
 de espaldas a la luna
 atentas a los signos de la tierra

sagradas y en silencio
 por no perderse ni un latido
 del tiempo aquel que regresó ese día
 a tocarles las manos y los ojos
 y las halló tempranas
 sin esquivarle la mirada al viento

merecedoras del rumor en chezungun
 ... inakayal... lonko... piwke...
 en remolinos
 hasta aquietar la espera

del fondo azul
 recorto sus figuras y las traigo
 desde antes y hasta el horizonte
 antiñir
 cayupán
 anay hermanas

(Ancalao 2010: 40–41)

In this poem⁸ about an attempt to repair crimes against humanity, about an act of recovery and material-symbolic restitution of a great *lonko* who died in captivity, the body's return to its land takes on sacred dimensions. From the very first verse, everything is transfigured and flooded by deep blue, the sacred color of the Mapuche world. Inakayal returns, the great *lonko* returns to his *mapu* – and *not* the bones of a body, died in 1888 in captivity in the La Plata Museum, “‘descarnado’ en la Facultad de Medicina para su exhibición, espectáculo morboso que se prolongó durante décadas” (Moyano 2017: 229), specifically until 1994, the moment of his re-

⁸ As Ancalao explained in the aforementioned conference at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena in October 2018, this poem, which corresponds to her first collection of poems and therefore to the early phase of her poetic production, was not self-translated by her, but rather translated by a *lamien* (brother) in Temuco, when Ancalao had been invited by Elicura Chihuailaf to the “Taller de Escritores en Lenguas Indígenas de América” that he organized in 1997 (cf. Ancalao 2018a). For the analysis, I will only refer to the poem in its Spanish version.

turn to Tecka.⁹ With Inakayal's return, so too returns the hope, strength, and pride of a *Kuñifal* people that has been orphaned, stripped of its traditions and its ancestors. As does Mapuche spirituality, the blue, transmuting the time of waiting into a moment of full realization and the consummation of a sacred act.

However, the poetic speaker of Ancalao's poem who describes the situation does not share the scene of restitution. Quite the contrary, the speaker *imagines* the setting (line 1) just as she *imagines* the friends who are waiting – whom she looks at or *sees* (4) from afar, from a distance that separates the lyrical speaker from the moment of transfiguration: “las imagino celestes / [...] / las veo celestes / de espaldas a la luna / atentas a los signos de la tierra”. While friends or sisters (*anay*) become “sacred” (7) and “merecedoras del rumor en chezungun /... inakayal... lonko... piwke...” (14), the speaker that imagines or sees them from a distance cuts them out “del fondo azul” (17) and brings their cut-out figures “desde antes y hasta el horizonte” (19). The sacred belonging, the return of the *piwke* (heart) of the *lonko* to the *mapu*, the sacralization of those who are attending the magical and transparent moment in which the signs of the earth are revealed and understood – all pertain only to the others, to Fabiana and Silvia, not to the speaker, who observes them, against the light, from outside, alone, separated from *Mapuzungun*, trying to bring or translate the scene to the present moment of the enunciation. The last verse, however – the only one in both Spanish and *Mapuzungun* – seems to bear the promise for a future restitution: of speech, as well as of the possibility of communicating and reuniting with those awaiting the return of Inakayal and *az*, the beautiful and healing order of the *mapu*: friends, community, “anay hermanas” (line 22).

The *Ül* as an Art of De-Silencing: Anahí Mariluan, or the Multiple Facets of Sound Restitution

Another return to the *az mapu* as a restitution of invisible remnants or fragments of the lost Mapuche world, as a reconstitution of a balance endangered by colonialism, is being carried out by the Mapuche singer-songwriter Anahí Mariluan.

Everything in the way of self-conceiving and conceptualizing art in Anahí Mariluan moves between the archaeological recovery of the past and its transfor-

⁹ As Moyano highlights, in 2006 it was discovered that the restitution was only partial, and that Inakayal's brain and scalp had remained in the La Plata Museum. Its restitution was completed in 2014 (Moyano 2017: 229–230).

mation into contemporary art, in an act of militancy for a better future through sweetness or tenderness.¹⁰ Her holistic art, based on the beauty of *itro fill mogen* (“everything alive”), is poetry that returns to its roots – and with this to the song or *ül* mapuche.

The singer-songwriter, who is also an ethnomusicologist, clarifies:

El canto del pueblo mapuche, denominado *ül*, es un medio de expresión humana, enlazado con el sonido de todos los *newen* (poderes o energías de la comprensión del mundo mapuche) que se hacen presentes, además de la música, en la ‘lírca’, en el cuerpo y, por ende, en el universo. [...] Inserto en una lógica decolonial, el *ül* no se percibe en soledad [sino que corresponde a; C.H.] la concepción [...] colectiva del canto [...]. Cantar es una forma de construir memoria que actualiza formas comunitarias de transmisión de conocimientos. (Mariluan 2019: 285)

The *ül*, unlike a song in the sense of Western music, has a structure dedicated to the instantaneous expression of the voice of the *ülkantufe* (singer). It does not respond to any Western way of understanding sound as an aesthetic phenomenon. Thus, in the cycle about the *ül* that she published on YouTube, Mariluan explains:

ÜL es la definición de canto para el pueblo mapuche (gente de la tierra) ubicado hoy entre el sur de Argentina y Chile. La palabra pertenece a su lengua, el *mapuzungun*, cuya traducción literal es el habla de la tierra.

Para nuestro pueblo, tanto la palabra hablada como la cantada, representan las formas del decir en que entienden no solo las personas humanas sino todas las formas de la vida.

El *ÜL* se ha conservado en la voz de muchas mujeres que han reservado esta práctica no solo en marcos ceremoniales, sino también en cantos libres que condensan grandes historias. De esta manera, decimos cantando lo que no podemos decir hablando.

Estos micros son de libre circulación para reponer estas definiciones del *ül*, del canto (Mariluan 2023e).

Mariluan sees herself as an activist for the sound restitution of the Mapuche heritage, that is, of the songs, languages, sounds and instruments that were taken from her people and that today are part of archives, museums, or private collections around the world. Thereby she affirms the importance not only of tangible territorial recoveries, but also of the intangible, immaterial ones, which she pursues with her artistic search and ethnological research.

¹⁰ This tenderness is not a circumstantial element, but quite central to Mapuche ontology and corresponds to the expression of the interrelationality of all living beings. It is the expression of complicity with the material and immaterial world that surrounds us, and of an inherent correspondence to the cosmos (cf., regarding the poetics of Elicura Chihuailaf, Hammerschmidt 2024).

As both an artist and ethnomusicologist, she searches colonial archives for the songs and instruments lost since the genocide suffered by her people at the end of the nineteenth century in order to de-silence them, make them sound again, restore them, and return them to her people.

These sound restitutions are carried out through different decolonial methods or practices, such as the revaluation of relegated knowledge, the remembrance and recomposition of forgotten songs and instruments, the reanimation of silenced objects such as Mapuche jewelry, the reading “against the grain” of colonial archives (chronicles, travel diaries, missionary reports, museum collections, etc.), the online publication of the results of her research in scientific journals and popular media, and, above all, her artistic production, which she understands as a poetic condensation of sounds and voices silenced and rediscovered both in the *mapu* and in colonial archives. She listens to all these sounds and voices and takes them out of silence, “unpeels” them, replaces them in their territories of origin in order to rebuild the *az mapu*, and reconnects them and restores them to her people through her songs.

A clear example of her aesthetic activism or “artivism”, understood as sound restitution, is the combination of her work as an ethnomusicologist and singer-songwriter as practiced in her field research. On her frequent trips to the Mapuche communities of Gulumapu (the territory west of the Andes, today part of Chile) and Puelmapu (the territory east of the Andes, today part of Argentina, where she lives), she usually conducts interviews with old Mapuche and *machi* women (the highest Mapuche spiritual authorities), considered living archives of wisdom and the singing tradition. In obvious opposition to the asymmetries of traditional ethnography, where *Huinca* missionaries, scholars, or scientists interviewed Mapuche “informants” who were often held in captivity, Mariluan tries to reconstruct the looted tradition of her own people by respectfully collecting the knowledge distributed throughout the Mapuche territory and archiving it in freely accessible recordings. Through her authority as a Mapuche singer-songwriter, she gets the old Mapuche women to sing to her the almost forgotten *ül* (songs) and *tayül* (sacred songs), which Mariluan records and restores to her people by making them part of contemporary Mapuche culture through respectfully saving tradition and composing new songs. Concrete examples of this work of restitution are her early award-winning documentary *Cantos de la memoria – cantos con sentido* (Mariluan 2009), which includes interviews with singers from Neuquén, as well as her field work recording *ül* and *tayül*, which she later transformed into a didactic series on YouTube about

the *ül* in four episodes¹¹ and also into contemporary songs, which take up the voices of the ancestors and translate them to the present-day world.¹² With these restitutions and translations of ancient voices, she not only archives the Mapuche cultural past for the present and future, but also distances herself from the Western concept of the individual, solitary, genius artist, to underline the community function played by the Mapuche *ül*, contextualize it in its own cultural tradition, and at the same time make it visible in the contemporary world. Following this idea, the fourth album of Mariluan is called (and is dedicated to) *Futrakecheyem Zomo* (ancestors): the entire female genealogy (*kupalme*) whose wisdom survives in the present. In the homonymous song on the album, the singer-songwriter points out explicitly: “Taiñ futrakecheyem zomo ñi ülkantum ngeyiñ / Somos cantos de nuestras ancestas” (Mariluan 2020, Booklet).

Also worth highlighting is the cultural recovery incited by Mariluan through the sound (and material) restitution by rebuilding and using traditional Mapuche instruments. Many of these, such as the *kinkulkawe* or *koolo*, had fallen into disuse, or had almost been completely forgotten by the Mapuche people. In her archival work as an ethnomusicologist, the Mapuche singer-songwriter and researcher rediscovers them in photos (Fig. 1) or descriptions kept in archives such as the Lehmann-Nitsche archive at the IAI (Ibero-American Institute) in Berlin, taking photos herself, or when she comes across the instruments themselves in ethnological museums, tracing them directly to make them visible in a more physical way so that she can take at least their contours back to their territory of origin.

Returning to Bariloche (Furilofche, in its original Mapuche name), she reconstructs these instruments with her group of women “Kultruneras” in order to make them sound again in today’s Wallmapu:

Decimos restitución sonora cuando buscamos la revinculación afectiva de archivos, objetos que han sido sacados, saqueados, al pueblo mapuche y que estamos tratando de revincular o reponer en sus territorios de origen. Entonces nos encontramos mujeres mapuche quinceñalmente en Bariloche en un grupo que denominamos “Kultruneras” o “Pu zomo ulkantufe”.

11 Cf. “Ül – definiciones del canto”, accessible via her pages <https://www.anahimariluan.com.ar/>, <https://de-de.facebook.com/anahi.maryluan/>, <https://www.instagram.com/anahimariluan/>, or via YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/c/AnahiMariluan>.

12 Cf. episode 3 of the series, with an interview with Raquel Felipin Pillan Kuze, from Lof Felipin Chachil Mapu (later published in Mariluan 2023f), and the song “Mongen” (life) from Mariluan (2018), about which she explains: “el canto para mí [...] nace de un tejido colectivo y de pies en la tierra. Es el canto en nosotros aquello que se dice de a muchos, aunque el pájaro sea uno solo” (Mariluan 2018, Booklet).



Fig. 1: Casimiro, playing the Kolo. Photography by R. Lehmann-Nitsche (cf. Lehmann-Nitsche 1908: 930).

Aquí les dejo las noticias de este maravilloso hallazgo y recuperación que hicimos sobre este instrumento que se llama el *kinkulkawe* o *koolo* [...]. Es un arco musical que adoptaron el pueblo mapuche y *günuna kūna* hasta donde hemos encontrado en las antiguas crónicas. [...]. Lehmann-Nitsche fue un investigador que fotografió al *lamien* Casimiro [...] en 1905. La ficha original del instrumento con sus descripciones se encuentra en Berlín. De allí partimos para restituir a este instrumento que perteneció a nuestros pueblos y que cayó en desuso hasta hoy [...] en estos espacios en donde nos encontramos mujeres a restituir no solamente cantos, memorias, palabras, sino también los instrumentos de nuestro pueblo. (Mariluan 2023b: w.p.)

Another type of sound restitution practiced by Mariluan focuses on *Mapuche rüxan* (Mapuche jewelry). The *Mapuche rüxan* expresses the *Mapuche kimün*, Mapuche wisdom and knowledge, specifically the “pertenencia cosmológica en cuanto al origen de la vida en general y de la vida humana mapuche en particular, así como la relación entre la vida y la muerte y los diferentes momentos y espacios en que transitamos los mapuche por los mismos” (Painecura Antinao 2011: 16). But it is in the *keltatuwe* (pin, Fig. 2), above all, that “se condensa la filosofía y la espiritualidad mapuche” (Painecura Antinao 2011: 46).



Fig. 2: *Keltatuwe* (cf. Painecura Antinao 2011: 75).

There, an upper plate, composed of a bird body with two heads, which represents the Mapuche dual principle and contains incisions indicating the *tuwün* or origin of the person who wears the jewel (cf. Painecura Antinao 2011: 46–47), is connected by three chains to a lower plate, which represents human life in the *Nag Mapu* (earth on which we walk) and expresses “la subordinación que tenemos los mapuches a los *newen* que generaron la vida”. The chains, however, not only join both plates, but also “lograron darle movimiento a la pieza completa, equilibraron la pieza dejando un poco más corto la cadenilla central y obtuvieron también un sonido melodioso (*ragaw*)” (Painecura Antinao 2011: 49). Thus, Painecura Antinao concludes, the *keltatuwe* “expresa la armonía, el equilibrio, el movimiento, la sonoridad, la alegría y la unidad de sus partes en un todo único e irrepetible” (Painecura Antinao 2011: 53).

Many pieces of ancient *rūxan* were looted from the Mapuche people and are today found in Chilean, Argentine, or European anthropological/ethnological museums. Beyond the necessity of them being restored as material objects of the Mapuche cultural tradition, Mariluan also demands their sound restitution, which implies the return of the silenced sound of the *rūxan*:

Pienso que muchas piezas de la platería mapuche tienen además otra función, que es la del canto del material obrando sobre el cuerpo de las personas. Esa dimensión tampoco se tiene en cuenta cuando los archivos suspenden para siempre la posibilidad de seguir diciendo desde el sonido “aquí estamos”.

Cuando una tiene la posibilidad de ver los almacenes y colecciones, sucede como cuando ves un *kultrun* que reposa en silencio detrás de una vitrina. Se trata de la “extensión” de personas que ya no están y de piezas que no han sido concebidas para estar cumpliendo una función exotizante para el mundo occidental.

La gente que hoy trabaja en los archivos, lo sabe. Estamos frente a un momento en dónde todos nos preguntamos acerca del destino de las políticas positivistas que condenan a un estado de silencio a mucha cultura material. La restitución sonora implica la posibilidad de la reparación. El pueblo mapuche fue víctima de muchos tipos de saqueo, pero su lucha actual protagoniza un camino de reintegración, de la dignidad. (Mariluan 2023d: w.p.)

The Mapuche singer-songwriter also works with the photographic archive to which she has access during her research stays at European and North American libraries and museums. At the IAI’s Lehmann-Nitsche archive in Berlin, she discovered, touched, and digitized photos of the Inakayal family in captivity. In a personal communication, she explained to me:

Sucede que la fotografía analógica tomó la luz de aquel presente. Tocar esos revelados de alguna manera permite un contacto afectivo que se pierde al mirarlos solo por pantalla [...]. Pero aquellas personas de todos modos nos siguen mirando. La foto me surgió inmediatamente la pregunta “¿Dónde están los tres bebés” que estaban delante de la cámara. (Mariluan 2023c: w.p.)

From this question comes her song “Küla llüshü”, a song incorporated into the album *Futrakecheyem Zomo* (Mariluan 2020) and also published as an experimental video clip (Mariluan 2021). The video clip uses procedures such as fading-in and photographic superimposition. In a snowy landscape, Mariluan, on the left side of the image, is mirrored in the Neuquén singer Noe Pucci, on the right, who like an echo repeats the question of the Mapuche singer-songwriter “¿Chew müleygün külake llüshü pornacen? ¿Dónde están los tres bebés?”. Amidst the women, the image of snow-covered trees is suddenly interpolated, from which the photo found in the archive gradually emerges and becomes increasingly clear. Thus, the clip returns the portrayed family into the territory and natural context from which it was exiled, and the singing of Mariluan and Pucci gives voice to the mute faces through an elegiac question with no other answer than the same fading-in of the sad and accusing appearances of the Inakayal family. In terms of Western rhetoric, both the clip and the song function as *prosopopeia* (De Man 1984), or a trope that gives voice to the dead in the photo, who also touch us through the photographic *punctum* described by theorists such as Barthes (1994). In Mariluan’s terms, these *proso-*

popeia and *punctum* are the performative condensation of the sound restitution operated by the Mapuche *ül* and the image with the three babies, who, as the songs and silenced instruments, are rising from their anonymous graves and speaking again to the communities.

A Very Short Conclusion

Like all aesthetic productions, Mapuche poetry is complex and multidimensional. It includes topics as heterogeneous as deterritorialization and cultural orphanhood, the difficult recovery of *Mapuzungun* (the silenced Mapuche language), the trauma of genocide and exile experienced by the ancestors in the various military campaigns to *Wallmapu* (the Mapuche ancestral territory), or the current subalternization of the Mapuche in the great cities. It uses very different formal, methodological, and performative resources such as explicit re-traditionalization or “oralitura”, formal experimentation, intertextual proliferation, intermedial combination, and the explicit and highly visible transgression of the boundaries between scientific research and art. It is based both on ancestral tradition and a contemporaneity always to be reconquered, and considers and co-actualizes different territorial, temporal, experiential, and perceptual dimensions from an abiding and very deep respect for everything that exists in the *mapu* (earth). However, this entire range of themes and resources has as a common denominator the desire to recover a lost world. By putting into practice thematically and performatively the need for balance or an indispensable reterritorialization as the basis of “buen vivir” (good living) that must be recovered, it proposes a remedy to the exhaustion of the world, the damage of the earth, and the wounds caused by the arrival of so-called modernity.

Much of today’s Mapuche poetry takes place as aesthetic activism or “artivism”. It carries out a struggle that is at once political, ontological-epistemological, and aesthetic to restore the *az mapu* threatened by the West. Instead of lamenting world exhaustion in the post-global era, it recovers its agency and cultural memory from the sound restitution of the absent, or the staging of a mythical world prior to the *Huinca* invasion “when the world was lost”. It heals and restores this lost world and brings it into the present and future.

The *mapu* in all its diversity, beauty, and order, the *az mapu*, the (Mapuche) world, the pluriverse, today, in these works, is definitively not exhausted, but reborn.

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