

Literary Acts of Decolonisation: Contemporary Mapuche Poetry in Santiago de Chile

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Introduction

The Mapuche achieved legendary status in the Americas for being one of the only indigenous peoples to defeat the Spanish conquistadors militarily and to secure formal recognition of their political and territorial independence during the colonial period: over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Mapuche and Spanish authorities signed more than twenty treaties acknowledging the Bío-Bío River as the official boundary between the Kingdom of Chile and autonomous indigenous territory.¹ This frontier was also accepted by the Chilean republican state, which signed similar treaties with the Mapuche in the early independence era. The precarious peace did not last for long, however: no formal treaties were signed after 1825; in 1852 the state created the province of Arauco; and colonisation of Mapuche territory began in earnest in 1862, with the Chilean army's occupation of Angol. It was concluded when General Cornelio Saavedra marched on Villarica in 1883. Following these euphemistically named "pacification campaigns," the Mapuche were reduced to approximately 5% of their territory, which was divided up into 3,078 state-demarcated reservations during a protracted process (1884-1929) known as "*radicación*" (*Informe de la Comisión* 350-351). The shortage of land (each Mapuche family was given just over 6 hectares and even this was subject to encroachment by colonist farmers who seemed to

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¹ Mapuche territory, as recognised in these treaties, encompassed most of the lands between Concepción and Valdivia—what are now the provinces of Bio Bio, Araucanía, and Los Lagos.

be immune to state laws) and increasing impoverishment, which resulted from the “*radicación*” process, led to mass migration of Mapuche from the rural communities to urban centres across the country. This started in the 1930s; by 2002—according to the National Institute of Statistics—62.4% of Chile’s Mapuche population (604,349 in total) lived in towns and cities, and almost half of these (30.37%) lived in Santiago.² The urbanisation of Mapuche society is therefore intimately connected to colonial structures of power in Chile. As Enrique Antileo (Mapuche anthropologist and member of the urban organisation *Meli Wixan Mapu*) insists, it was not a voluntary decision to move to Santiago or any other city; instead, he argues, the Mapuche diaspora needs to be understood as a process of “forced exile and territorial dislocation” (201).

Since the census of 1992, which was the first to acknowledge that a large proportion of Mapuche society lived in Santiago, a growing number of Mapuche and non-Mapuche scholars have become interested in the phenomenon of urbanisation—what it means for the Mapuche autonomist project (which itself was becoming increasingly prominent during the early 1990s, in the context of re-democratisation, after almost two decades of military rule, and continent-wide indigenous protests against the official celebrations of Columbus’s so-called “discovery” of the Americas) and for Mapuche cultural identity. To Antileo’s mind, the distinction between rural and urban is less important than “being situated or not in historic Mapuche territory” (196). Several Mapuche academics have elaborated the concept of (and asserted the need for “exiled” Mapuche to) “return” to that territory (Ancán and Calfío; Víctor Naguil cited in Antileo 199). The authors of *Escucha winka!* developed this one step further with the notion of “repatriation” (Marimán et al. 261). For José Ancán and Margarita Calfío, the experience of living, or just trying to survive, in Santiago has entailed the “successive and subtle masking or disguising” of Mapuche identity (for example, the changing of surnames); indigenous presence and agency, they argue, has been rendered invisible in the capital city (cited in Antileo 202).

I would argue that Mapuche presence in present-day Santiago *is* visible and that it is becoming increasingly *more* visible, although this is not to say that there are no limitations to such visibility, particularly when we consider which Mapuche people or what aspects of Mapuche culture can be seen. The noble Araucanian warriors of old (eulogised by the Spanish soldier-cum-poet Alonso de Ercilla in the sixteenth century) have, for a long time, had a place in the metropolitan urban landscape—Nicanor Plaza’s bronze statue of Caupolicán, sculpted in the 1860s, has stood out against the Santiago skyline on the top of Cerro San-

² The full census information is available at <www.ine.cl>.

ta Lucía since the centenary of Chilean independence in 1910;³ more recently, Mario Toral made the impaling of Caupolicán a central feature of his monumental collection of murals that occupy the walls of the University of Chile metro station. Folkloric images of the rural, traditional Mapuche of the nineteenth century (just as their autonomous idyll was about to be invaded by the Chilean army) abound too, mainly in the postcards on sale in museums and at tourist stop-off points such as the Plaza de Armas. Shoppers might also notice the Mapuche entrepreneurial initiatives celebrated by the neoliberal multicultural state: the first chain of Mapuche pharmacies, Makalawen, created in 2000, now has several stores in Santiago, which offer a wide range of natural cosmetic and medicinal products from the southern regions, and are tended by traditionally dressed Mapuche women.⁴ And just last year, the BBC reported on a new social housing project inspired by the Mapuche *ruka* (rural dwelling) that was commissioned—apparently at the request of Mapuche people themselves—in the area of Huechuraba; even the architecture (albeit only one small development) is becoming “Mapuchized” (“Chile: Social housing”). Perhaps more significant still are the growing number of *rewes*—sacred carved trunks (usually of the laurel tree) symbolising the connection between the physical and spiritual worlds—that can be found in the capital city, especially in areas with a high proportion of Mapuche inhabitants, such as Cerro Navia and Peñalolen (Consejo Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena). These *rewes* are used for ceremonial rituals such as the *nguillatún*; in most cases, they have been constructed and installed by Mapuche individuals and/or Mapuche organisations in Santiago, and are on full view to the public.

Most of these initiatives make visible traditional, rural Mapuche culture in—or tell something of Mapuche history to residents of and visitors to—the capital city. Mapuche people themselves are largely absent from view here, and, when they are present, as in the case of the Makalawen pharmacies, it is again the traditional, rural Mapuche that we see. Less visible in some ways, but most definitely present and asserting their political agency, are the many urban Mapuche organisations. Since the 1930s, when mass rural-urban migration began, Mapuche people have formed their own organisations in Santiago. Their existence is nothing new but their quantity is: according to the aforementioned Antileo, there were six Mapuche organisations operating in Santiago in the early 1990s; today, he says “there must be at least a hundred” (Painemal). Members of

³ The Chilean essayist, novelist, and playwright Ariel Dorfman claims that Plaza’s statue was inspired by and supposed to depict *The Last of the Mohicans*, but the US embassy, which commissioned the work, would not have it; they did not want to publicise their own country’s troubled indigenous history. It was then re-labelled as Caupolicán and purchased by the Chilean government instead (117-118).

⁴ See, for example, “The Boom of Mapuche Medicine.”

these organisations have taken to the streets to publicly denounce what they see as firmly entrenched and institutionalised practices of racial exclusion and marginalisation in Chile (despite – or in conjunction with – official discourses of neo-liberal multiculturalism): amongst other things, the lack of access to a free, high-quality education, which is the only way to enable social mobility; the mega-development projects undertaken in southern Chile, which have steamed ahead either without or by ignoring consultation with the indigenous communities that they affect, indeed, sometimes destroy; the criminalisation of Mapuche political activism linked to the ongoing land conflicts in the south (through the anti-terrorism legislation re-enacted by President Ricardo Lagos in 2002); and police violence against Mapuche political activists (at least four young Mapuche men have been killed in confrontations with police since 2000). These public protests are often a joint effort with other organisations, as we saw with Mapuche participation in the student protests that captured the world’s attention in 2011 and 2012. And they are sometimes quickly suppressed in the name of law and order, such as when a group unravelled the flag of the Mapuche nation during the bicentennial celebrations of Chilean independence, just as a giant Chilean flag was being raised in front of La Moneda presidential palace. In sum, Mapuche people and the Mapuche “question” have claimed a place in the public space of the capital city, even if only temporarily – we are talking about irruptions rather than a constant presence.

My article investigates the role played by Mapuche poetry in this political scenario. There are more than twenty Mapuche poets publishing their verses in Chile today, and scores more who are writing poems but have not yet secured publishing contracts. They are a diverse group, both in terms of their literary creation and in themselves – male and female, of different generations, bilingual (Spanish/Mapudungun) and monolingual (Spanish), rural and urban based, and with different territorial roots (Mapuche-Huilliche, Mapuche-Pehuenche, Mapuche-Lafkenche, etc.) – but they all proclaim their Mapuche origins, assert the independence of the Mapuche people (although the kind of autonomy they talk about varies), and denounce historic and contemporary state policy towards the Mapuche. A significant number of these poets live and work in Santiago. Those who live in the south frequently travel backwards and forwards to Santiago, in order to read their poems in public or to participate in other cultural events. The poetry can also be present without the authors – in bookshops; in school textbooks; as part of museum displays; in posters advertising the publication of a new book of poetry or a conference on poetry; on newspaper stands when a periodical includes an interview with the poet or a review of their work.

Crucially, poetry makes the Mapuche both visible *and* audible in Santiago. The writers perform their poetry. They read (or sometimes sing) it in public, thereby returning orality to poetry, and they do so in a variety of different settings: in cafés and bars, on the street or in public squares, in cultural centres, in

schools and universities, in the National Library. This article concentrates on two poets: David Aníñir (b. 1970) and Jaime Huenún (b. 1967). Aníñir has always lived in Santiago. He grew up in “Intendente Saavedra,” Cerro Navia, a poor *población* on the outskirts of the city, which arose as a result of a land seizure by desperate, homeless (Mapuche and non-Mapuche) migrants recently arrived in Santiago in the mid-1960s. Those migrants included Aníñir’s parents. Huenún was born in Valdivia and grew up in a *población* in Osorno, (ironically) called Nueva Esperanza. He studied at the university in Temuco and, after graduating, lived in the nearby town of Freire. He moved to Santiago in 2006. Both poets write *in* Santiago, but only Aníñir really writes *from* Santiago. His poetry is notably and distinctly grounded in his (and many other Mapuche people’s) poor urban reality, whereas Huenún’s verses are rooted in his family’s and his community’s lived experiences in southern and often rural Chile. In what follows, I explore the motives behind and significance of these writers’ poetic interventions in intellectual and political debates. Drawing on their poetry (in particular, *Mapurbe* by Aníñir, and *Reducciones* by Huenún), interviews with the authors, and other written statements by the authors, my argument follows two main threads. First, I outline their divergent responses to the literary establishment—Aníñir’s intervention, I argue, works primarily (though not exclusively) through rebellion, whereas Huenún’s intervention works through negotiation. Second, I discuss their participation in and contribution to the Mapuche “political project” of nationhood that Antileo talks about, particularly the concept (and struggle for recuperation) of Mapuche territory. Territory, as articulated by Aníñir and Huenún, is spiritual as well as physical. Their poetry also opens up a new cultural territory that transcends, without eliding, political discourse and the Mapuche question.

Precarious Relations with the Chilean Literary Establishment

Aníñir and Huenún have both had an urban upbringing, but they have lived very different educational trajectories and, likely for this reason, have developed markedly different relationships with the literary establishment in Chile. Aníñir—as he himself repeatedly affirms—has had no academic training. He is a construction worker and self-educated poet, who attended night school in order to complete a secondary education that was denied him as an adolescent. Until 2003, Aníñir’s poetry was disseminated only through photocopied pamphlets, the Internet and public readings. That year, three poems from his collection *Mapurbe: Venganza a raíz* [Mapurbe: Deep-Rooted Revenge] were included in an anthology compiled and edited by Huenún, who was keen to increase public awareness and appreciation of Aníñir’s (together with other Mapuche poets’) verses. This anthology was published by Ediciones LOM, established in 1990

during the transition to democracy “as a cultural project which promotes ... creativity, reflection, memory, and critical thinking through the written word” (*Historia de LOM*).⁵ Two years later, *Mapurbe* was published as a complete book of poems by Odiokracia Autoediciones—a self-funded, independent endeavour, very much “on the margins of the great educational centres and printing presses of the capital” (Sánchez 92). In 2009, Editores Pehuén published a new edition of this book. Pehuén does not quite count as a “mainstream” publishing company but it, like LOM, is a well-known one of long-standing acclaim and has published the work of many prestigious scholars and writers. Undoubtedly, this printing press’s decision to take on *Mapurbe* has led to more media coverage and formal recognition of Aníñir’s literary talents.⁶

In the prologue to the new edition of *Mapurbe*, José Ancán stated that Aníñir had found this transition—this “doing-business” with a “real publishing house” and having to play “by the rules” of the publishing game—problematic (18). Indeed, Aníñir often seems reluctant to proceed much further down the traditional literary route. He still prefers publicising his poetry through his own and others’ blogs and websites, rather than the costly printed page, and in the brief biography printed on the inside cover of the Pehuén edition of *Mapurbe*, Aníñir expressly referred to himself as a cultural activist, rather than a poet or a writer, and highlighted his other (i.e. visual, musical) projects, especially his work with Mapuche artistic collectives such as Millaleufu and Odiokratas. On other occasions, he has described himself as a “pre-poet”—affirming that he has not read much Chilean or Latin American poetry (not because he does not like it, but because he has not had access to or time to be able to read it), and that he has no pretensions of forming part of or following a prestigious poetic tradition (Echeverría and Castelblanco).

In his poems and public statements, Aníñir vehemently denounces what he sees as the hierarchical classification of knowledge in contemporary Chile. On 21 February 2008, he published—via *Mapuexpress*—a “Carta abierta” in response to a letter by Rodrigo Rojas, the Director of the School of Literature of the Universidad Diego Portales, that had been published in *El Mercurio* on 11

⁵ The translation to the English is the author’s. For more information about this publishing company’s aims and objectives, see <www.lom.cl/historia.aspx>.

⁶ I first wrote about Aníñir in an article on “Mapuche Poetry in Post-Dictatorship Chile,” which was published in the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* in 2008. At that point, I described his work as being “eclipsed” by the likes of more established and internationally renowned Mapuche poets such as Leonel Lienlaf and Elicura Chihuailaf. Aníñir is yet to win any literary prizes in Chile, but his work is much more widely discussed now, not least by academics (see, for example, the studies of Juan Guillermo Sánchez, Andrea Echeverría, and Sandra Collins, all published in esteemed international journals).

February 2008 which was, in turn, a response to a recent article by the very conservative and intentionally provocative historian Sergio Villalobos, who claimed that there are no longer any “real” Mapuche left in Chile. Seemingly, Aníñir misread Rojas’s letter, which was supposed to be an ironic criticism of Villalobos, and, immediately after Aníñir’s intervention, Rojas apologised for not making his point more clearly. I am not so much interested in the details of the polemic itself as in what Aníñir wrote about his poetry:

I am a labourer and I write poems ... My incipient craft stems more from a historic pipe dream that is buried deep in the heart of my people than from a proper academic calling. It is inspired by the great creators of poetry, music and popular art of this country, and for that reason it should come as no surprise that an inclination towards punk forms a fundamental part of my journey. As for my appearance, don’t worry, I have no Mohican (I don’t want to scare you), just the attitude, ... [anger about] the current problems and the pride of my Mapuche ancestors, [who defended] themselves against the *winka*. (“Carta abierta”)⁷

He finished the letter—after ridiculing the argument that Mapuche poets are making a fortune from state funding agencies—by arguing that *Mapurbe* was surely “not unworthy of being published by a state institution”; “the reward must be great in order not to want to publish me at all, no?” More illustrative still is Aníñir’s poem “Autoretrato” [Self-portrait], published on his blog in 2011 (in Collins 33). Here he pronounces his exclusion from, and demeans, one of the most prominent bodies of the literary establishment—the Sociedad de Escritores de Chile [Society of Writers of Chile]. “Los poetas desconfían de ti [Poets don’t trust you],” he says, “te ven muy flayte / en la Sociedad de Escritores de Chismes [they perceive you as a chav / in the Society of Writers of Gossip].”⁸

Aníñir’s poetry is angry, burlesque, irreverent, and sarcastic. He himself describes it as “corrosive, foul, crude” (Wadi). See, for example, “I.N.E. (Indio

⁷ This and all other translations to English are the author’s own. When quoting the poetry of Aníñir and Huenún, I have included the original Spanish *and* the English translation, because much is potentially lost in translation, particularly in the case of Aníñir, with his play on words and mixture of languages. I would like to thank Carmen Brauning and Luis Bustamante for helping me with the translation of Huenún’s poem “Alonso de Ercilla parlamenta y fuma frente al levo alzado de Chauracahuin” from *Reducciones*.

⁸ For a compelling discussion of the term “flayte” (or “flaite”) see Collins, especially pp. 32-34.

No Estandarizado)” [N.S.I. (Non-Standardised Indian)],⁹ which both condemns and mocks the prejudice and racism of Chilean society, particularly of the Chilean state apparatus:

Según el Censo de población y vivienda realizado de Chile
Usted se considera;
Flojo
Hediondo
Borracho
Piojento
Malas pulgas
Aborigen
Incivilizado
Canuto
Delincuente
Post Punx Rocker
Autóctono
Folklórico
Indígena (indigente)
Terrorista
Quema Bosques
Exótico
Ilícito Asociado
Camorrero
Muerto de Hambre
Desterrado
Natural
Salvaje (Sur bersivo)
Arcaico
Mono Sapiens
Mal Vividor
Mal Moridor
Analfabeto
Bárbaro
Inculto
Nativo
No Nato (siempre kisistes eso)

⁹ By changing the acronym to match the English translation of “Indio No Estandarizado” I unfortunately lose the allusion to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística [National Institute of Statistics].

Polígamo
Guerrero
Indómito
Raza inferior, guerrera pero inferior
Indio Kuliao
O
Araucano
Acepciones nunca consultadas a bocas mapuche, Que otro des-
calificativo más te queda por nombrar
Racista Fuck Triñuke...
Que te quede claro,
Demórate un pokó más y di Mapuche,
La boca te quedará allí mismo.

[According to the population census carried out in Chile
You consider yourself;

Lazy
Foul-smelling
Drunken
Lice-ridden
Flea-bitten
Aboriginal
Uncivilised
Stoned
Criminal
Post Punk Rocker
Autochthonous
Folkloric
Indigenous (indigent)
Terrorist
Arsonist
Exotic
Illicit associate
Hooligan
Starving
Exiled
Natural
Savage (South-versive)
Archaic
Sub Human
Mal vividor
Mal Moridor

Illiterate
 Barbarian
 Uneducated
 Native
 Unborn (you always wanted this)
 Polygamous
 Warrior
 Indomitable
 Inferior race, warrior but inferior
 Fucked Indian
 Or
 Araucanian
 Definitions never uttered by Mapuche
 What other disqualifiers
 or declassifications are left to name?
 Racist Triñuke Fuck...
 Let's be clear about this
 Take a little longer and say the word Mapuche
 Treat me with respect] (Aniñir, 2011)

The poem condemns and criticises, but it also makes demands; it almost pleads with Chileans to abandon the racist, disqualifying language and to recognise the Mapuche as Mapuche, to say it out loud and accept what this entails (i.e. that this is a politically conscious collective which sees itself as distinct from Chilean society, without such distinctions making them inferior or a threat to that society). To be sure, the poem is aggressive, but in order to force open a conversation.

Aniñir has always conversed with others. He frequently engages with, and acknowledges how he has been influenced by, the highly acclaimed Mapuche poets Leonel Lienlaf and Elicura Chihuila, while at the same time stressing that his work is very different to theirs. More significantly, he has also spoken of the great influence that writers such as Nicanor Parra, Mauricio Redolés, and Roberto Bolaño have had on his poetry (Echeverría and Castelblanco).¹⁰ Furthermore, Aniñir's readiness to read out his poetry in public is certainly not a rejection of the "traditional" literary world; the orality of poetry can be traced back to the most canonical of Latin American poets, not least Pablo Neruda. And *where* Aniñir has read his poetry is also worthy of note: on the street, in public demonstrations (the politics of which I'll return to in the next section of this article), as part of the "Decentralización poética" initiative (October 2012), but also in

¹⁰ See also Sánchez, (97), who argues that the influence of Cesar Vallejo and Oliverio Girondo is obvious in Aniñir's verses.

Pablo Neruda's house and the National Institute (the first state-founded school in republican Chile). In short, Aníñir's interventions may be irreverent but he has something to say; he wants to contribute to public debate.

Critically, Aníñir makes an important linguistic as well as political contribution. He refuses to adhere to linguistic etiquette (if there is such a thing as linguistic etiquette in poetry). He dissects, disrupts and interrogates language. He inserts colloquial speech and swearwords into his poems, as shown in "I.N.E." above. They are also full of neologisms—most notably, the title of the book, *Mapurbe* (Mapuche from the *urbe*), but also "Mapunky," "Mapuheavy," "mierdópolis" (shit-filled metropolis), and many others—and he plays around with existing words (the "sur bersivo" in "I.N.E.," for example) which makes his verses difficult to translate. Aníñir has quite literally re-constructed the Spanish language. He deftly mixes Spanish together with—in his own words—"a babble of Mapundungun and popular English words" (Wadi). As Juan Guillermo Sánchez has highlighted, he also "breaks up the grammar, spelling, and syntax of Spanish" (106).¹¹

Aníñir's poetry is not easy reading. And yet, for the most part, he reaches out to readers rather than cutting them off. In "Temporada apológika" (*Mapurbe* 25),¹² a fragment of which follows (and in several other poems such as "Arte peotika" and "Poesía a los que escribo"), Aníñir makes a concerted effort to explain where his poetry comes from and what it is about:

Auspiciado por mí mismo
Traído desde el periférico cordón umbilical,
Que da vida a los cabros que escuchan mis poemas
Levanto este universo poético,
Desde el río Mapocho hacía abajo.

[Self-supported
Carried along the peripheral umbilical cord,
That gives life to the kids that listen to my poems,
I launch this poetic universe
From the Mapucho River downwards]

Mis tristemas se fecunden en el vientre
De la madre más puta
Mis putesías son como gotas de semen

¹¹ We see this in "Temporada apológika" and other poems cited in the next section.

¹² For an interesting discussion of the possible motives behind and meanings of Aníñir's use of the letter "k" here (instead of "c") see Rojas (esp. 121-122).

Cómicas cuestiones que SEMENacen

[My sad poems are fertilised in the womb
 Of the most whorish mother
 My sluttish poems are like drops of semen
 Comical questions that COME to me]

Aniñir writes “tristemas,” not “poemas,” and “putesías” rather than “poesía.” He is the bastard of the literary sphere. What he narrates is a harsh, violent world, but he cannot help it; this is where he comes from and it spurts out onto the page. Aniñir does not entirely reject the Chilean literary establishment. He frequents some of its most renowned sites, such as the National Library (in one interview, Aniñir recounts meeting Huenún there and being recognised by a young man—a “crazy guy, twenty or twenty-five years old, with blood-shot eyes, like those of someone who reads a lot”—who told him he liked his poetry (López)), he has chosen to have his work published by well-regarded printing presses, and at least two anthologies in which his verses have appeared have only been made possible with funding from state cultural agencies.¹⁵ Ideally, if he could afford to give up his labouring job, Aniñir would dedicate himself to his poetic endeavours, but he feels uncomfortable with the possibility—or more often the reality—of his own literary notoriety (López). He acknowledges and seems pleased that young urban Mapuche identify with and feel represented by his poetry—see his interview of 2012 with Andrea Echeverría and Daniel Castelblanco in *El Hablaɖor*, and note how in “Temporada apológika” it is the “cabros” who listen to his poetry—but, as he describes it, “I don’t write for anyone, it is more a personal craving of mine ... I am my most avid reader.” Thus, Aniñir does not so much seek to be understood (by the establishment, by Mapuche people or by society more broadly) as to open up alternative spaces in which he can be himself.

In contrast to Aniñir, Huenún is university educated and now teaches about indigenous literatures in Latin America as part of the Creative Literature degree course at the Universidad Diego Portales in Santiago. He has also received funding from and been acclaimed by a number of cultural institutions, in many cases government-sponsored institutions. In 1996, for example, he received a writers’ grant from the Fondo de Desarrollo del Arte y la Cultura [Development of Art and Culture Fund]; in 1999, he was given funding by Chile’s Consejo Nacional del Libro y la Lectura [National Book and Reading Council]; in 2000,

¹⁵ *20 poetas contemporáneos* (2003), compiled and edited by Huenún, for example, was supported by the Culture and Education Area of the National Council of Indigenous Development (CONADI), and the anthology *Martes de la poesía*, published by Ediciones UCSH in 2007, was sponsored by the National Council of Culture and the Arts.

he won the Premio de Honor [Prize of Honour] from the Municipality of Santiago; in 2003, he won the Premio de Poesía Pablo Neruda [Pablo Neruda Poetry Prize]; and most recently—in 2013—he was awarded the Premio Consejo Nacional del Libro for poetry. He has published several anthologies of Mapuche poetry (for example, *20 poetas mapuche contemporáneos* [20 Contemporary Mapuche Poets] in 2003 and *La memoria iluminada* [Enlightened Memory] in 2007) and three books of his own poetry (*Ceremonias de amor* [Ceremonies of Love]; *Puerto Trakl*; and *Reducciones*). He has also been editor of the literary journals *Pewma* and *Ul Mapu, literatura y arte indígena*, has organised various conferences on indigenous literature, has created a website (<www.ulmapu.cl>) dedicated to Mapuche literature, has written columns for mainstream newspapers such as *Las Últimas Noticias*, and has recently set up his own publishing house.¹⁴ Thus, Huenún is one of the main critics writing about Mapuche poetry as well as an author of poetry books himself; he has also taken on the responsibility of disseminating and publicising the work of a great diversity of Mapuche writers (including Aníñir). In sum, this poet seeks to decolonise the literary establishment in Chile, and he does so from *within* that establishment.

And yet Huenún would never describe himself as part of an intellectual elite. Certainly, he has not made much money from his literary activity, hence the necessity of teaching in order to get by, and his employment contracts have—like those of too many others working in universities in Chile, Latin America, and beyond—mainly been temporary ones. After winning the Pablo Neruda Poetry Prize in December 2003, Huenún was keen to explain to readers of *El Siglo* that for him the award meant “receiving a fragment of the Nerudian legacy, [which was] not just poetic, but also economic” (Osorio and Muga). He was very open about the amount of money he was awarded (3000 dollars), and, while recognising the importance of the award, he stressed that it did not add up to much in monetary terms, if one took into account the two or three years that it took to produce the work (that was the object of the award), and broke it down to a monthly salary: “it is a prize that disappears almost immediately in economic terms,” he stated; “literary prizes are [nothing more than] momentary inducements, particularly nowadays when poetry only gets press coverage for extraliterary reasons.”

The “extraliterary” controversies surrounding the Pablo Neruda Poetry Prize of 2003 are well known. The sponsor of the award was the Pablo Neruda Foundation. The institution was chaired by Juan Agustín Figueroa, a landowner and former government minister who firmly supported—and, indeed, helped to

¹⁴ The website and printing press do not seem to have published many works as of yet, but this says more about the precariousness of independent literary endeavours in Chile, rather than Huenun’s desire to participate in such a way.

instigate—the re-enactment of Pinochet-era anti-terrorism legislation against Mapuche political activists involved in land conflicts in the south. There were, unsurprisingly, many allegations that the poetry prize was an attempt to clean-up the Foundation’s image. There were also calls for Huenún to reject the prize. The poet told José Osorio and Ana Muga that it was “a difficult situation” for him; after lengthy discussions with his wife, he decided to accept the prize, mainly because *not* to do so would have caused more controversy, and he had no interest “in being part of the news” (Osorio and Muga). Huenún also made two other important points with regard to this “difficult situation.” First, that the jury which awarded this long-standing prize (2003 was its fifteenth year) did not include anyone from the Pablo Neruda Foundation; it *did* include—amongst others—a representative of the Chilean Academy of Language, a member of the Society of Writers of Chile, and a previous recipient of the National Literature Prize. It was therefore a significant accolade, and one bestowed previously on Raúl Zurita, Diego Maquieira, Clemente Riedmann, and Gonzalo Millán. Huenún was proud to be associated with this rich poetic lineage. Second, Huenún by no means elided the denunciations of Figueroa and the Foundation. Indeed, he openly condemned the anti-terrorism legislation, which had recently landed several Mapuche *lonkos* [community leaders] in jail with five-year sentences. He also stressed that a poetry prize could never absolve any of the historic or contemporary injustices committed against the Mapuche people. Overall, Huenún sought to prioritise the literary history behind this prize, and explain how he saw himself and his own writing in relation to the work of Neruda, rather than become embroiled in the political polemic.

This episode serves to reinforce the point that Huenún’s literary trajectory has not been an easy one—either in socioeconomic or political terms (and I will return to his relationship with the Mapuche resistance movement shortly). Nonetheless, it is fair to say that he has embraced the academic and literary establishment, and he detects changes afoot within this establishment. In a 2010 interview with María Eugenia Góngora and Daniela Picón, Huenún claimed that the “ethnic literary manifestation” of which he was part was slowly altering “the dominant conception of poetry” in the country (Góngora and Picón). Not least, Mapuche poetry raised and forced other writers to engage with fundamental questions about the status of the author. It asserted the legitimacy, he said, of (the Mapuche tradition of) collective authorship, in opposition or as an alternative to the “Western” obsession with the individual.

Polyphony is a defining feature of Huenún’s prize-winning *Reducciones*. The first section is entitled “Entrada a Chauracahuín” [Entrance to Chauracahuín]—Chauracahuín is the Mapuche-Huilliche name for the province of Osorno—and it starts with the words of Manuel Rauque Huentro from Chiloé (as an epigraph). It continues in Huenún’s poetic prose:

Una noche de mi niñez, a fines de la década del 70, supe por boca de mi abuela que un árbol ya entonces polvoriento y moribundo, desflorado para siempre en la raíz y el agua, era el canelo que Lucila Godoy había plantado en la señorial Plaza de Armas de la ciudad de Osorno.

[One night of my childhood, at the end of the seventies, my grandmother told me that a dusty, half-dead tree ... was the cinnamon that Lucila Godoy had planted in the illustrious main square of the city of Osorno.] (23)

In just the first few lines, then, we read the words of Manuel Rauque (transcribed by Huenún) and Huenún's grandmother (remembered and retold by Huenún), as well as Huenún's own words. We are also introduced to Lucila Godoy—the original name of Chile's first Nobel laureate Gabriela Mistral. The book continues like this throughout. It is comprised of many different kinds of texts: poems; short direct quotations; longer fragments of stories told by others; Huenún's own reflective prose recalling stories told by others; songs he has heard people sing; photographs; newspaper articles (documenting the massacre of fifteen Mapuche *comuneros* at Forrahue in 1912, for example); government documents; and scientific reports. *Reducciones* thereby rewrites history through existing documentation, obliging multiple (contradicting) texts to interact with one another.

One especially poignant text is the first of the "Cuatro cantos funerarios" [Four funerary songs]. It is not, in fact, a song at all, but rather a report by the German anthropologist Robert Lehmann-Nitsche on what happened to the remains of an indigenous girl named Damiana:

La edad de la india en 1907 al morir, era de catorce a quince años; en enero de 1897, el señor C. de la Hitte le daba más o menos dos años, el señor Ten Kate tres a cuatro años ... y la fotografía parece representar una niña de la edad indicada por nosotros.

En el mes de mayo de 1907, gracias a la galantería del doctor Korn, pude tomar la fotografía que acompaña estas líneas, y hacer las observaciones antropológicas; e hice bien en apurarme. Dos meses y medio después murió la desdichada de una tisis galopante ...

La cabeza de la indiecita, con su cerebro, fue mandada al profesor Juan Virchow, de Berlín, para el estudio de la musculatura facial, del cerebro, etc. El cráneo ha sido abierto en mi ausencia y el corte del serrucho llegó demasiado bajo. Aunque por este motivo la preparación de la musculatura de la órbita no será posible, que era lo que quería hacer el profesor Virchow, el cerebro se ha conservado de una manera admirable. La cabeza ya fue presentada a la Sociedad Antropológica de Berlín.

[The Indian girl was about fourteen or fifteen years old when she died in 1907; in January 1897, Mr. C. Hitte estimated that she was two or three years

old, and Mr. Ten Kate [estimated] three or four years old ... and the photograph seems to represent a girl of the age we indicate here.

In May 1907, thanks to the generosity of Doctor Korn, I was able to take the photograph that accompanies these lines,¹⁵ and to make the necessary anthropological observations; and it was just as well that I hurried to do so. Two and a half months later this poor girl had died of a virulent [form of] tuberculosis.

The skull of the Indian girl, together with the brain, was sent to Professor John Virchow of Berlin, in order [for him] to study the facial musculature, the brain, etc. The brain was cut open in my absence and the handsaw went in too low. Despite the fact that—as a result of this [mistake]—it is now impossible to [investigate] the musculature of the socket, which is what Professor Virchow wanted to do, the brain has been impressively-well preserved. The skull has already been presented to the Anthropological Society of Berlin.] (69)

This is the original text, as written in 1907. To a certain extent, Huenún lets the report speak for itself and thereby spotlights perhaps all the more effectively the horrors of the scientific racial discourses which were widely endorsed by European and Latin American intellectual elites at the turn of the century: the categorising and measuring of the exotic native; the treatment of indigenous peoples primarily as scientific booty for investigation and research. Compared to the preceding section of the book, entitled “Ceremonias” [Ceremonies], the reader is struck by the complete absence of poetry here, possibly reflecting the absence of humanity in the scientific world of the early 1900s. However, the epigraph to this section, as Enrique Foffani notes, is an extract from a Paraguayan (Aché-Guayaki) indigenous song, and in this way Huenún *does* intervene in the text (Foffani 175). First, through the words of the song itself—a warning of what is to come on the next page (a way to read what is coming) and the assertion that indigenous peoples are observing the “white man” and are fully conscious of what he is doing, just as he is observing them:

Los Blancos, lo que caracteriza
a los eternos Blancos
es que ahora viven examinándonos,
a nosotros, los muy viejos,
a nosotros, los ya muertos.

[The White men, what characterises
the eternal White men
is that they now spend their lives examining us

¹⁵ This photograph is included in *Reducciones* alongside the text.

us, the very old people
us, the people who are already dead.] (Huenún, *Reducciones* 67)

Second, the poetic epigraph makes the absence of poetry in the first “canto” all the more blatant. Poetry then reappears immediately after the “Cuatro cantos funerarios” in “Cisne de mí” (176), which is printed in both Spanish and Mapudungun,¹⁶ suggesting a re-appropriation of poetry by Mapuche society, the affirmation of the historical prominence of poetry within Mapuche culture, and therefore the humanity of that culture.

Huenún does not attack colonialist discourses, as Aníñir does. It is, for Huenún, more a question of trying to understand those discourses and thereby understand what happened in southern Chile during and after the process of colonisation. Similarly, Huenún is not as openly antagonistic towards the literary establishment as Aníñir: he works with it; he uses it in order to communicate with and have an impact on as many people as possible.

Precarious Relations with the Mapuche Resistance Movement

From the perspective of the Mapuche in Santiago, the fundamental question is how we—in our urban reality, more than 700 km from Mapuche territory—can participate in a struggle over Mapuche issues. (Antileo in Painemal)

Critics writing about Mapuche poets are keen to underline their allegiance to the Mapuche political movement. As a brief preamble to their 2003 interview with Huenún, for example, Ana Muga and José Osorio described him as “a poet of Mapuche Huilliche origin, [who is] firmly committed to his people’s struggle for political-territorial autonomy from the Chilean state” (Muga and Osorio). In the same interview (which, not insignificantly, discussed the aforementioned controversy surrounding the Pablo Neruda Poetry Prize), Huenún affirmed “I’m not political; I don’t speak for any organisation,” but he has also stated on many occasions that Mapuche poets are representatives of, and have an obligation to, their community (Góngora and Picón 2). In his “Carta Abierta desde el País Mapuche” [Open Letter from Mapuche Territory], published in September 2010, just before the official celebrations of the bicentenary of Chilean independence, he urged people to “make a journey” (i.e. to open up their eyes) to Araucanía, where “the violence of the police and landowners rampages on.” Poetry, he wrote, “cannot ignore the current frictions and conflicts”; it cannot allow the tragic facts—police raids of communities, injured and traumatised children,

¹⁶Victor Cifuentes did the translation from Spanish into Mapudungun, as he has done for many bilingual editions of Mapuche poetry.

imprisoned political activists on life-threatening hunger strikes—to go unnoticed. At the same time, though, he stated, “all of us who exercise this profession have hope” because “we want to live in a country where poetry facilitates empathy and union, rather than merely denouncing all that is wrong.” Even when he writes of the death of Jaime Mendoza Collío (shot by a police officer in August 2009), it is to pay tribute to this young man’s life—so full of potential, with so much left to experience at 24 years old—and to give assurance that his memory lives on, rather than to attack his killer or the system that allowed the killing to take place:

¿De dónde viene el hilo de la larga mirada?
¿Y el color de la muerte en las flores del mar?

...

Las máquinas terrestres me saludan apenas
cuando busco en el barro afiebrado de mi padre.
Huesos que resuenan, lunas que circulan
sobre niños huyendo de tábanos azules.
Ya pronto ordenaré a las islas a existir,
ya pronto partiré a la Tierra Arriba.

...

La muerte casi al alba arde en las cordilleras,
la luz, como una herida, rompe el ventanal.¹⁷

[From where comes the idea behind a long gaze?
And the colour of death in the flowers of the sea?

...

The terrestrial machines barely greet me
when I search in the feverish clay of my father.
Bones that reverberate, moons that circulate
above children running away from blue horseflies.
Soon I will command the islands to exist,
soon I will leave to the Earth Above.

...

Death just before dawn burns in the mountains,
the light, like a wound, breaks the window pane.] (Huenún, *Reducciones* 155)

¹⁷ The title of this poem, which is part of *Reducciones*, is “Jaime Mendoza Collío se pierde y canta en los bosques invisibles de Requém Pillán” [Jaime Mendoza Collío loses himself and sings in the invisible forests of Requém Pillán]. Requém Pillán is the name of Mendoza’s community.

For Huenún, poetry is exploratory—it opens up debates rather than shutting them down, it asks questions rather than imposing answers. *Reducciones* is full of questions. The poem about Jaime Mendoza above begins with them. So too does “Alonso de Ercilla parlamenta y fuma frente al levo alzado de Chauracahuin” [Alonso de Ercilla reflects and smokes, as he watches the community of Chauracahuin rise up]:

¿Qué zapato en la locura pisa y llora?
 ¿Por qué caminos las estrellas se quedan
 en los ojos que las vieron morir?
 ¿En qué tiniebla se cierran los párpados
 de los que aún no nacen
 germinados de muerte
 y cruel velocidad?’

[Whose shoe stomps and cries in madness?
 Through which paths do stars remain
 in the eyes of those who saw them die?
 In what darkness do the eyes
 of the unborn close,
 the ones spawned by death and vicious speed?] (35)

Huenún imagines the soldier-poet posing these rhetorical questions, while watching the Mapuche rebellion against colonial rule unfold in front of him. Huenún tries to get inside his head, to understand what it must have been like to be Ercilla—who participated in but was also critical of the Spanish conquest campaign. Huenún re-reads Ercilla’s poetry; earlier, in “Los viajes, las vigiliass” [Travels, vigils], he quite literally re-writes Ercilla’s poetry, slightly altering some of the lines from *La Araucana* (28-30). (He is also co-editor of a larger, collective literary initiative, entitled *Memoria poética: Reescritura de la Araucana*, published by Cuarto Propio in 2010, which incorporates many different re-workings, by Mapuche and non-Mapuche writers, of this epic poem.) We see here how Huenún’s emphasis on polyphony intersects with his belief in the importance of dialogue. To his mind, Mapuche poets are responsible for trying to generate dialogue with other members of (Chilean) society; they are fundamentally “cultural mediators” (Góngora and Picón 2).

Huenún consistently proclaims his own—and writes about Chile’s—mestizo identity. He is critical of what he sees as the overly “purist” sector of the Mapuche movement: “On the one hand, there is a tendency among Mapuche intellectuals and political leaders to lay claim to an idealist ancestry, ... [and to comment on] who is more Mapuche or less Mapuche. On the other, I have to live in a contemporary Chilean society, to which in one way or another we all belong

... we all have to deal with the public bureaucracy, we all watch TV, we all live within the cultural, political, and economic framework of the Chilean present” (Muga and Osorio). *Reducciones* tells the history of *mestizaje* and inter-cultural interaction in southern Chile—not just between Mapuche and Spanish/Chilean *criollos*, but also between Mapuche and German and Italian migrants who arrived in the provinces of Osorno and Valdivia in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The key words in the previous sentence are “southern Chile.” *Reducciones* is written from southern Chile and often, more specifically, the rural south. In Huenún’s own words, “the book is anchored in the south” (P. Echeverría). After winning the Consejo Nacional del Libro Prize in 2013, the writer spoke of plans to re-launch *Reducciones* in Osorno; he sought to “return” his poetry to “its place of origin” (P. Echeverría).¹⁸ Such emphasis on the origins of his poetry (and the original territory of his people), however, does not mean it is divorced from the urban present of Santiago de Chile; far from it. As commented by Sergio Mansilla Torres, who wrote the “notes on how to read *Reducciones* by Jaime Huenún,” this poet shares with others a “long, cruel” history of “dispossession of land, memory, and language,” a chain of events that ends up with the “*ruka* reducida a rancho o a barracón municipal o a callampa urbana en barrios que no son barrios” [traditional rural home reduced to a shack, to a municipal barracks, to an urban slum in suburbs that are not suburbs] (Mansilla 12). Huenún was brought up in the “suburbs that are not suburbs” (in that they lacked the necessary facilities to be described in proper residential terms) of Osorno, but the penultimate poem of *Reducciones*, entitled “En la *ruka* de David” [In David’s *ruka*]—possibly a direct reference to David Aníñir—depicts the “eternal suicidal tour / of the wide and filthy Mapocho valley” (Mapocho is the river that runs through Santiago), the “groupies of Nuñoa, Plaza Italia, and La Chimba, / injecting heroin and metaphysics” (Nuñoa, Plaza Italia, and La Chimba are all neighbourhoods of Santiago), and the Colo Colo flags that are brandished in the “arcane slums of Lumaco / and La Pintana” (160-162). In these latter two lines, the poverty of the south (Lumaco) and the capital city (La Pintana) come together.

¹⁸ It is worth noting that this region’s history is distinct to that of Araucanía, in that it *was* conquered by the Spanish; the Mapuche did not manage to expel the *conquistadores* from Osorno and Valdivia, as they did from Temuco, Villarica, Angol, Lebu, etc. Still, the local Mapuche leaders held *parlamentos* with the Spanish colonial authorities, in a similar way to Mapuche leaders north of Valdivia. In other words, there was some room for negotiation far from the colonial seats of power in Lima and Mexico City. Furthermore, the region is part of what was Mapuche ancestral territory, because this includes lands occupied by the Mapuche before the arrival of the Spanish.

Aniñir also maps out a direct connection between the present of the globalised, neoliberal city that is Santiago and the past of the rural communities of ancestral Mapuche territory, but he comes at it from a different angle. Huenún starts off in the southern rural communities of the past and works his way up to the present-day urban metropolis. Aniñir, in contrast, starts in Santiago (he is the “indio de la selva gris” [Indian of the concrete jungle])¹⁹—with a fundamentally urban narrative of drugs, sex, violence, and poverty—and traces this reality backwards in history, with constant references to the south and the reasons why Mapuche people left their historic homeland:

Somos mapuche de hormigón
 Debajo del asfalto duerme nuestra madre
 Explotada por un cabrón.
 [...]
 El mercado de la mano de obra
 Obra nuestras vidas
 Y nos cobra
 Madre, vieja mapuche, exiliada de la historia
 Hija de mi pueblo amable
 Desde el sur llegaste a parirnos
 Un circuito eléctrico rajó tu vientre
 Y así nacimos gritándoles a los miserables
 Marri chi weu!
 Padre, escondiendo tu pena de tierra tras el licor
 Caminaste las mañanas heladas enfriándote el sudor
 Somos hijos de los hijos de los hijos
 Somos los nietos de Lautaro tomando la micro
 Para servirle a los ricos
 Somos parientes del sol y del trueno
 Lloviendo sobre la tierra apuñalada
 La lágrima negra del Mapocho
 Nos acompañó por siempre
 En este santiagóniko wekufe maloliente

[We are the Mapuche of concrete
 Under the pavement sleeps our mother
 Abused by a son of a bitch.
 [...]
 The labour market

¹⁹ This is a line from the poem “Acullá nieva pus” [Over there it’s snowing pus].

Runs our lives
 And costs us dear
 Mother, elderly Mapuche woman, exiled from history
 Daughter of my beloved people
 You arrived from the south to give birth to us
 An electric spark ripped open your womb
 And thus we were born screaming at the miserable wretches
 Ten times over we will vanquish!
 Father, hiding his pain of dispossession behind alcohol
 You walked on those freezing cold mornings, cooling down the
 sweat
 We are the children of the children of the children
 We are the grandchildren of Lautaro taking the bus
 To serve the rich
 We are relatives of the sun and thunder
 Raining down on the wounded land
 The black tear of the Mapocho
 Has always accompanied us
 In this debauched, dilapidated, foul-smelling Santiago. (*Mapurbe*
 175-176)

Aníñir writes the Mapuche into the very foundations of Santiago de Chile: he and thousands of others are the “Mapuche of concrete” whose mother sleeps “under the pavement.” Santiago is home, but it is a home enforced on them through the expansion of the capitalist economic system which accompanied the military occupation of Mapuche territory: the father in the poem has lost his land and comes in search of work; the mother accompanies him, banished from history—expelled from her historical territory and discarded as an agent of historical development. The children (or sons) are born in the city, but were conceived in (and thereby come from) the south, for their mother brought them in her womb when she came to Santiago. The poem impresses upon us the exclusion and exploitation, the poverty and the violence, which the “Mapuche of concrete” suffer on a daily basis, and in that context the heroic warrior of colonial times, who fought to the death to defend his homeland, is revived. The “hijos” here are direct descendants of Lautaro, they carry on his struggle, riding by bus to serve the rich instead of by horse to serve the Spanish; neither the Spanish nor the rich (Chilean) employers are truly their masters.²⁰

²⁰ According to the dominant historical narrative, Lautaro was captured by the Spanish as a young boy and became a personal servant of the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Valdivia. He learned the war techniques and strategies of the Spanish—not least their

Aniñir thereby brings the contemporary conflict to Santiago. The noble warriors of old are reborn or, rather, their legacy lives on, in different innovative ways, through younger generations. In *Mapurbe*, Lautaro becomes “Cyber Lautaro” who gallops “en este tiempo Tecno-Metal” [along to Techno-Metal rhythm]—“Tu caballo trota en la red / Las riendas son un cable a tierra” [Your horse trots on the Internet / The reins making a cable to earth]; “Cabalgas en la noche / ... Chateando cerebros y conciencias” [Your ride at night / ... messaging consciences and minds]—and “Neo Lautaro,” “Peñi pasajero de este viaje / Cachaste que hay vida después de la muerte” [Brother traveller on this journey / You grasped that there is life after death] (80-81). Aniñir also creates new urban warriors such as “María Juana La Mapunky de la Pintana” [Mary Jane, the Mapuche Punk Girl of La Pintana]. La Mapunky symbolises an identity in crisis: she is “la mapuche ‘girl’ de marca no registrada” [the Mapuche ‘girl’ of an unknown brand], “la negrura oscura de Mapulandia street” [dark blackness of Mapulandia street], who has no land, whose bed has been taken over by the “empire,” whose life has been “crucified” in a prison cell (32-33). But this leads to a critical consciousness and the potential for rebellion: “tus pewmas conducen a pasos disidentes / ... amuley wixage anay / Mapunky kumey kuri Malèn / LA AZCURRIA ES GRATIS” [your dreams lead to dissident steps ... Rise up / Mapuche punk girl, you are okay / POLITICAL AWARENESS IS FREE] (33-34).

For some Mapuche political activists based in the south, such as Héctor Llaitul who is one of the leaders of Coordinadora Arauco Malleco (CAM), a radical, militant arm of the Mapuche autonomist movement, this critical consciousness or political awareness raising is not enough. The urban space, for Llaitul, is not the appropriate setting for Mapuche resistance; in order to fully commit to the struggle, he says, one needs to return to and re-connect with the rural communities, and work from there to recuperate ancestral Mapuche territory (“Llaitul, el mapuche más temido”; Llaitul and Arrate). Aniñir has no lived experience or memory of the “traditional, rural” Mapuche way of life: in his own words, “my knowledge does not come from within the Mapuche community, where I could defend and revalue my rights” (cited in Sánchez 92). He cannot “return” to that community, in the sense that he has never been there, and it is certainly possible to see comments such as these, and indeed much of his poetry, as a determined rejection of the necessity of return; he is quite literally stuck in the cement mix of the capital city. In one interview with Ramona Wadi, Aniñir describes his writing as a “poetic revenge on everything” (Wadi). That everything includes the exclusionary and hierarchical internal power structures of

use of the horse—and then turned this against them, ultimately defeating them on the battlefield and killing Pedro de Valdivia.

Mapuche society. It includes those supposedly “true” Mapuche who think not speaking Mapudungun, or not living in a rural community, makes someone “less Mapuche,” and thus not qualified to speak publicly as a Mapuche or about Mapuche issues. It also includes those who think commitment to the Mapuche movement is only meaningfully enacted in political militancy. As Aniñir sees it, the struggle for Mapuche self-determination can be fought in many different ways, and poetry is one of them: “My poetry,” he says, “is a trench from which I can throw thousands of stones and do not have to escape, [a place] where I can stay to defend myself and my people” (López).

And this is the crucial point. Poetry enables Aniñir to participate in the so-called “Mapuche conflict.” The word is his weapon. The poetic word, the verbal revenge enacted by Aniñir, is both spoken and written; often, his written words seem to be conceived with a live (sometimes musical, hip-hop style) performance in mind. Aniñir has read or sung his verses on numerous politically charged occasions—not least at an event organised in honour of Patricia Troncoso, a member of the CAM imprisoned on charges of terrorism, when she went on hunger strike in 2012. His commitment to the Mapuche movement is clear. So too, is his self-identification as Mapuche. His poetry is fundamentally urban, but it is also fundamentally Mapuche, both in content (the subject matter, some of the vocabulary) and in origin (as Aniñir said in his “Carta abierta” to Rodrigo Rojas in 2008, it sprouts from his Mapuche ancestry). To be sure, it is not *just* about being Mapuche—as Aniñir has repeatedly stated, “I do not want my poetic work to be classified only as Mapuche” (López)—but nor can one possibly ignore the Mapuche thematic. Indeed, the first poem in *Mapurbe*, entitled “Yeyipun” (not authored by Aniñir) is a Mapuche prayer written entirely in Mapudungun, despite the fact that Aniñir does not speak Mapudungun (21-22).²¹

Aniñir himself is not the “traditional, rural” Mapuche that we find described in textbooks or museums but—as indicated in “Yeyipun” and as Andrea Echeverría writes about in more detail—traditional cultural practices certainly exert a presence in his poetry. We read of the *machi* [spiritual authority, faith healer], for example, the *pewma* [dreams] and the *werken* [messenger]. Aniñir translates these traditional Mapuche figures and cultural practices for non-Mapuche readers and, more importantly, for urban Mapuche, for whom they have lost or never had any meaning. He restages them, but not as static entities—not so as to simply bring the past into the present or to bring the rural to the urban space. Rather, he troubles them (as they were), transforms them, recreates them anew in confrontation with the (transcultural) reality of poverty, racism, and violence in the metropolis. As explained by Sandra Collins (drawing

²¹ Aniñir explains his choice of this poem in his interview with Echeverría and Castelblanco.

on Guillaume Boccara's work), the process of urbanisation—and particularly the relocation to faraway cities like Santiago—is often understood as the antithesis of the very meaning of Mapuche, for the “che” [people] are separated from the “mapu” [earth or land] (27). Aníñir, Collins argues, is able to reconnect them, not by simulating the laws or rituals of the land, such as the *nguillatún*, in the capital city, but by creating new cultures that allow assuming the Earth through spiritual means. To be sure, the line between the two is a fine one, but such poetic machinations are what makes it possible for the highly acclaimed poet Leonel Lienlaf to detect a “camino de retorno” [path of return] in Aníñir (Prologue to *Mapurbe* 19).

Conclusions

Neither Aníñir nor Huenún act “outside” or “against” literature” (Beverley). Theirs is not a non-literary form of cultural practice, but, in different ways, they both seek to decolonise and thereby revolutionise literature. To some extent, they have succeeded: as a result of their and other writers’ interventions, a Chilean literary history is no longer possible without the inclusion of Mapuche poetry. But “inclusion of” is not necessarily “engagement with”; Mapuche writers may be speaking to a wide audience in the capital city, but not everyone is listening. The audibility and visibility of Mapuche poetry in Santiago de Chile is partly made possible by its particularities. Ethnic difference, as Jean Franco says in *Decline and Fall of the Lettered City*, has become marketable (272). The poetry of Aníñir and Huenún is often sold as “ethno-literature.” This is a limiting, patronising category, which the writers themselves, particularly Aníñir (in his denunciatory statements), but also Huenún (through his universal cultural and intellectual references) reject and defy.

For Aníñir poetry is a space of combat. For Huenun it is a space for dialogue, but that dialogue can be a conflictive one. Both challenge their readers and listeners. They are sometimes difficult to understand and certainly to translate (Aníñir because of his neologisms, use of street slang, play on words etc., Huenún because of the ambivalence and opacity of some of his verses and the highly sensorial imagery) and both pose troubling questions about contemporary Chilean society, not least its democratic credentials. They both conceive territory beyond its geographical specificity. The “south” or the “frontier” region is never entirely absent—Huenún’s poetry is explicitly rooted in it—but territory is also conceived as a place of histories and memories, of symbols and worldviews, and thereby shifts as these are contested and re-narrated. Like the literature that Cornelia Gräbner and David Wood discuss in a recent special issue of *Cosmos and History*, the poetry of Aníñir and Huenún has become “an arena in which to develop political imaginaries and to re-construct political language” (12). But just as poetry exists outside the conditioning of grammatical and lexical eti-

quette, so too can it exist outside the constraints of political discourse. The verses of Aníñir and Huenún do not all or always focus on decolonisation. To suggest that they do would be to homogenise and curtail Mapuche literary creativity. They are also about language, history, and memory more broadly. They embrace aesthetic as well as political concerns. The Mapuche struggle in contemporary Chile is certainly an important theme in their poetry but not the catalyst for it.

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