



LISTENING TO AND LEARNING FROM BODIES OF WATER IN SEBA CALFUQUEO'S "KOWKÜLEN" AND DANIELA CATRILEO'S *RÍO HERIDO*

Aprendizajes con cuerpos de agua en "Kowkülen" de Seba Calfuqueo y Río herido de Daniela Catrileo

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/mitologias.986>
vol. 28 | julio 2023 | 76-90

Recibido: 03/04/2023 | Aceptado: 06/06/2023

Abstract

In this paper I argue that Seba Calfuqueo's "Kowkülen" (2020) and Daniela Catrileo's *Río herido* (2016) similarly put into action *itrofil mongen* and "critical relationality" by engaging with bodies of water through sensuality and "visceral kinship" (Nelson, 2020). By analyzing how the concept of *itrofil mongen* manifests itself in these different artistic mediums (videoperformance and poetry), we appreciate how the artist-poets grapple with their relationship to Mapuche epistemology as well as with the challenges of putting relationality into practice.

Keywords

Itrofil Mongen, Critical Relationality, Visceral Kinship, *Río herido*, "Kowkülen"



Resumen

En este trabajo mantengo que en “Kowkülen” (2020) de Seba Calfuqueo y *Río herido* (2016) de Daniela Catrileo, les artistas-poetas practican manifestaciones de *itrofil mongen* y “relacionalidad crítica” a través de la sensualidad y *visceral kinship* (o “parentesco visceral”) (Nelson, 2020) con cuerpos de agua. Un análisis de sus obras a través de y junto con *itrofil mongen*, permite apreciar cómo les artistas-poetas intencionan reflexiones críticas sobre la epistemología mapuche y la relacionalidad, y los obstáculos de ponerlas en práctica.

Palabras clave

Itrofil mongen, relacionalidad crítica, *visceral kinship*, *Río herido*, “Kowkülen”

Introduction

During the Constitutional Convention process in Chile, the first elected president, Elisa Loncon, insisted that the Convention was “an opportunity for Chile and the world to adopt values from Indigenous thinking”, emphasizing that “Indigenous people have always had the philosophy that humans are interdependent with nature” (Mohor, 2021: s/p). For most of her adult life, Loncon has voiced this message: that Mapuche culture offers unique terms for thinking about the balance and cycles of the Earth and that non-indigenous people should also learn, delve into, and apply that thinking in their own lives. This is the focus of her most recent book *Azmapu: Aportes de la filosofía mapuche para el cuidado del lof y la madre tierra* (2023). As the title states, it details “Azmapu”, also known as the “law of the land”, or as the norms that regulate the relationship between all beings on Earth. These norms are divided into four different concepts, one of which, is *itrofil mongen*¹ which Loncon understands as “reconocimiento de todas las formas de vidas humanas y no humanas interdependientes y vinculadas que existen en la naturaleza” (2023: 62).² According to Loncon, *itrofil mongen* accounts for interaction between many forms of life; material bodies such as human bodies, rocks, trees, and water and immaterial ones such as dreams, spirits, energies and more.

While *Azmapu* and *itrofil mongen* are concepts that have existed for centuries, their current pervasiveness in Chile is likely linked to Loncon’s presidency and public advocacy of the term as well as to the growing urgency surrounding our social and environmental global crises. Scholars, activists, and poets throughout Abya Yala have similarly brought to the fore long-held beliefs about the interdependence between human and non-human life by creating new concepts. “Critical relationality” is one of those terms. Scholars Kim Tallbear and Angela Willey state that “critical relationality” is needed to overcome the settler-colonial tradition that has taught us to understand “kin” through hierarchical, anthropocentric, and heteronormative logics. They believe, in line with others, that reimagining nature and our relationship to it is urgent and possible:³ “Learning to see and understand reciprocity among humans and the land, between humans and their more than human kin, and among non-human actors is key here not only to biodiversity, but to reimagining what it means to relate, to be related, to be in relationship” (Tallbear and Willey, 2019: 13).

Both *itrofil mongen* and “critical relationality” ask us to reimagine our relationships to the natural world, or, in their words, to humans and “more than human kin”. In this paper, my primary purpose is to consider how Seba Calfuqueo and Daniela Catrileo, two Mapuche poet-artists, help us reimagine our relationships with other, non-human bodies by analyzing “Kowkülen” (2020), a performance by Seba Calfuqueo and the book of poems, *Río herido* (2011, 2013, 2016) by Daniela Catrileo. In line with Loncon’s invitation, and the scholarly work on critical relationality, this paper asks, what do we discover when we focus our attention on relationships between bodies in these works? I seek to demonstrate that despite the different art mediums (visual performance and poetry), the artist-poets engage with sensuality, “visceral kinship” (Nelson, 2017), and interchangeability with bodies of water.⁴ As we will see, their works

¹ Here and throughout the article I will use the unified alphabet in Mapuzugun when I refer to *itrofil mongen*. However, Elisa Loncon, who I quote, uses the *azümcheje* alphabet which spells *itxofill mogen*.

² “The recognition that human and non-human life are interdependent and linked together”. All translations are mine. The other elements are 1) *az mogen*: knowledge of the world, nature, and its diversity; 2) *Nor mogen*: the behavior of people and nature; 3) *kume mogen*: “good living” which emphasizes living in harmony and reciprocity (62).

³ For more on erotic and kin relationships between human and non-human beings see the fascinating anthology *Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature* (2011) by Qwo-Li Driskill, Daniel Heath Justice, Deborah Miranda, and Lisa Tattonetti.

⁴ I acknowledge the work of Astrida Neimanis in *Bodies of Water* and her insistence that the existence of human bodies depends on the existence of other bodies. This paper only indirectly engages with her work as it focuses more on the articulation of indigenous epistemologies (Loncon, 2023; Nelson, 2017; Tallbear and Willey, 2019) than on posthumanism. I thank Rodrigo Bobadilla for introducing this text to me.

reflect on existing and ongoing tension as a result of prolonged colonial messages and practices, and their insistence on relationality makes them powerful proposals for the present and future.

Moving Beyond Narratives of Normative Love

In 2020, Chilean satirical newspaper *The Clinic* announced a video series “Kimün domo ñi dungun mew” (“Women’s Knowledge and Speech”), dedicated to Mapuche women poets whose work attempts to improve the protracted tension between the Chilean State and Mapuche groups. The series came out just one month before the plebiscite slated to determine whether the Chilean Constitution would be rewritten (initially set for April 26, 2020; and postponed until October 25, 2020, because of COVID-19). The first chapter focuses on María Lara Millapan, who has a PhD in “Didáctica de la Lengua y Literatura” and is a professor of Mapuzugun at the Pontificia Universidad Católica in Villarrica, Chile. She is also a published poet, and the director of a Mapuzugun teacher-training program. In the article “María Isabel Lara Millapán, poetisa y académica: ‘Nuestro rol es ser weichafe de la justicia’”, the link to her video “Preguntas de fondo” appears at the top and a brief description of her trajectory is found below, consisting of three short sentences, one of which states: “Creció en el sector rural de Quepe (IX región), donde compartió y aprendió de sus seres queridos el amor por la naturaleza” (The Clinic, 2020: s/p). The intention of the series and the description are clearly aimed at bringing more attention to the unquestionable contribution that Lara and other women are making in favor of interculturality. The literal message of this sentence is that she learned, from her family, to feel love toward nature. The word “love” in the narrative is somewhat problematic because it reflects long-held misconceptions and misrepresentations of Mapuche communities. The notion that indigenous people “love nature” relates to desires for authenticity⁵ and it communicates a one-sided experience rather than a relationship where exchanges occur. The sentence also misrepresents her specific words: Lara never uses the words “love” or “nature” in her specific video⁶, rather, she states that improved intercultural relations would require people to learn about Mapuche history, language and culture and focus on being better people rather than on controlling others (Lara Millapán, 2020: 2:10-2:52). Ultimately, *The Clinic*’s narrative reinforces a colonial tendency regarding love and indigeneity; love becomes limiting rather than expansive. It becomes fetichized and understood as instrumental rather than relational.

Interdependence as something other than normative love is precisely what authors, poets, and researchers in Abya Yala have been interested in making known from a variety of disciplines.⁷ Robin Wall Kimmerer, professor, botanist, poet, and author of the prized *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013), teaches an environmental biology course at SUNY college. As her friend and colleague, author Elizabeth Gilbert describes in *Big Magic*, Kimmerer begins the semester by asking her students if they love nature. Their answer is usually a resounding “yes”, Gilbert reports. However, to Kimmerer’s second question: “Do you believe nature loves you in return?” the response is quite the opposite: silence. Gilbert finds that students’ lack of optimism and imagination in Kimmerer’s classroom experience is daunting: “These earnest young world-savers [...] believe that humans are nothing but passive consumers and that our presence here on Earth is a destructive force. (We take, take, take, and offer nothing in return). They believe that humans are here on this planet by random accident, and that therefore the Earth doesn’t give a damn about us” (cited in Gilbert, 2015: 202). What Gilbert

⁵ On desires of authenticity of indigenous women and nature, see Gabriella Nouzeilles’ *La naturaleza en disputa: retorica del cuerpo y el paisaje en América Latina* (2002: 13).

⁶ The link to her video “Preguntas de fondo: María Isabel Lara Millapán” is found at the top of the article from *The Clinic*. <<https://youtu.be/r7Q2H-kF1cs>> Accessed 30 March 2023.

⁷ See the special issue organized by Kim Tallbear and Angela Willey, “Critical Relationality: Queer, Indigenous, and Multispecies Belonging Beyond Settler Sex & Nature” July 25, 2019, in *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies / Revue d’études Interculturelles de L’Image*. In poetry, see *Nature Poem* by Tommy Pico.

and Kimmerer seem to be saying, in line with Loncon, is that despite the continuity and dominance of colonial-settler paradigms, all people have the potential to enter into some kind of kinship⁸ with nature if we allow ourselves to experience our environments differently. In Robin Kimmerer’s words: “Without that sense of relationship, [...] they [her students] are missing out on something incredibly important: They are missing out on becoming cocreators of life” (cited in Gilbert, 2015: 203).⁹ This message underscores the notion that in spite of our different relationships to colonial and indigenous histories, we all have the potential to practice awareness of interdependency with natural life. In Chile, indigenous poet Elikura Chihuailaf has often stated something similar: that people should understand themselves as descendants of indigenous people: “Ese es el principio, no hay ningún ser humano sobre la tierra que no provenga de culturas, de pueblos indígenas” (Chihuailaf, 2023: s/p).¹⁰ This idea does not diminish accountability for ongoing settler-colonial violence and paradigms, but it asks all people to think of their position in relationship to nature differently.

Awareness can occur through sensual experiences that are available to us in everyday occurrences, as scholar Melissa K. Nelson, Anishinaabe/Métis/Norwegian and enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, writes. In her fascinating chapter “Getting Dirty: The Eco-Eroticism of Women in Indigenous Oral Literatures” she states: “Other beings are always inside of us—bacteria, viruses. That is basic biology. But to truly feel the sensuous gravity of the life that surrounds us and is within us is an act of profound intimacy, vulnerability, and courage” (2017: 232). The words “sensuous gravity” and her gesture to unite this sensation with experiences of “intimacy, vulnerability, and courage” are unquantifiable and require bravery because they are not situations in which we typically position ourselves. Furthermore, she argues that by paying attention to the supposedly “mundane”, we would likely change our behavior toward non-human life.

Walking barefoot on the Earth; drinking a cold glass of water; eating a fresh summer peach; breathing in warm air— these basic, often unconscious daily acts are not in fact mundane but are sublime and sensuous eco-erotic connections to the more-than-human world. If we truly felt this, in our guts, in our cells, would we continue to poison our soils and water? Mine our mountains? I think not. The metaphysics of ecoerotics teaches us that we are related to everything through a *visceral kinship* and that our cosmo-genealogical connections to all life demand that we treat our relatives with great reverence and appreciation. (235; emphasis mine)

Nelson’s reference to “visceral kinship” speaks of sensorial experiences that occur in the body, that are felt as emotion, and in relationship to other beings. This term accounts for all bodies, and it links the physical, emotional, and even spiritual experience of inhabiting a human body. For Nelson, kinship implies re-signifying “kin” as in Tallbear and Willey’s work. Here, the concept does not restrict family bonds to biology or blood; it prioritizes connection. If we look at the etymology of the word “kin”, we find words that are used to divide, oppress, and annihilate people as well as ones that imply togetherness and belonging such as the word “kind”¹¹ which implies familiarity and closeness. In this paper, I use “visceral kinship” with a general understanding that non-normative kinship can be expressed via emotional and physical sensations of closeness, connection, and a practice of reciprocity (Tallbear and Willey, 2019).¹² In what follows, I will show how Seba Calfuqueo and Daniela Catrileo’s art-poetry offer

⁸ Indigenous scholars re-signify this word by assuming that kinship is not based on biological relations or blood quantity, as racialized laws have done to legally exclude indigenous peoples from indigeneity.

⁹ In Elizabeth Gilbert’s *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear*, she cites conversations with friends and colleagues and therefore does not include references in the bibliography. This is the case for her references to Robin Kimmerer. See also Nelson (2020) and Kimmerer (2013).

¹⁰ “This is the principal. All human beings on Earth from cultures, from indigenous groups”. See also *Recado confidencial* (1999).

¹¹ From Old English *cynn* “family; race; kind, sort, rank; nature” from “Online Etymology Dictionary”.

¹² See Tallbear and Willey (2019: 13).

examples of interdependence with nature and bodies of water in ways that resonate with Nelson's ideas of sensuality and "visceral kinship".¹³

Body-Land Logics in Seba Calfuqueo's "Kowkülen"

Seba Calfuqueo (Santiago, Chile, 1991) and Daniela Catrileo (Santiago, Chile, 1987) are Mapuche artist-poets who have ruptured long-held assumptions about the Mapuche people as connected strictly to nature and rural spaces. They both grew up in the capital city of Santiago, where hundreds of thousands of Mapuche families were forced to migrate in the early 20th century following the annexation of Mapuche lands in the *Ocupación de la Araucanía* which officially ended in 1883. As María José Barros' states, Calfuqueo and Catrileo are "parte de una nueva generación de creadores mapuche que, anteceditos por el poeta David Aníñir, han vuelto a relevar la experiencia de los mapuche urbanos como un eje fundamental de sus proyectos creativos y activismos" (Barros, 2022: s/p).¹⁴ They also engage with and contribute to indigenous feminisms, intersectionality and the sexual dissident movement (Barros, 2022).

"Kowkülen" or "Ser líquido/ Liquid Being" by Seba Calfuqueo is a 3-minute video-performance in which the interconnection between a human body and a body of water is visually available to us. In the first part, half of their body lays in a creek that feeds into the Cautín River. Their body is exposed and strung up with a blue rope in the fashion of *shibari* (Amaro, Catrileo, Quevedo, 2022: 74). *Itrofil mongen*, the interdependence of all life, is enacted in a literal way before our eyes. The narrative, expressed in running sub-titles, reflects this as well: "Próximos al agua. He estado ahí. En estado líquido. Corriendo por diversas cuencas. Ngen ko, Arüm ko, Ngürü ko, Kay kay" (Calfuqueo, 2020: 00:21-00:37).¹⁵ The subject implied in the narrative of this first scene is ambiguous; while our eyes likely focus on Seba's body (implying that the human body is the primary subject) the narrative mentions only the names of the water spirits after stating the first person "I have been", implying that the spirits could be the speaking subjects.

In the next scene, their head rests gently on their folded arms, which lay on the muddy bank. Seba's body is almost completely immersed, and we can see it through the shallow waters. In this scene the speaking subject is human and states, "Mi cuerpo es agua. Me revuelvo con ella. Así es mi política [...] Agua es territorio. Extractivismo neoliberal".¹⁶ Unlike the previous scene where the subject is ambiguous, here the human as subject becomes clearer: the human assumes a political position: "water is territory" which implies co-existence with bodies of water as opposed to ownership (a reference to the privatization of water in Chile). The body remains ambiguous in terms of its sexual identification though, implying throughout a logic that defies phallogocentrism and binary oppositions.

In the third and final scene, their body is strung up with the same blue rope but is now tied to the trunk of an enormous fallen tree, which holds the same seemingly lifeless body. Both "trunks" are parallel. Seba's arms, hair, and legs hang limp and dangle in the water. The rope seems to strangle and

¹³ An important term for this discussion is the hyphenated body-land concept because it stems from the history of feminism and intersectionality in Latin America, both of which have influenced the work of Calfuqueo and Catrileo. One woman leading the use of the hyphen *territorio-cuerpo-tierra* is Lorena Cabnal, a xinka woman from Guatemala who considers herself a "feminista comunitaria" and belongs to the Asociación de Mujeres Indígenas (xincas) de Santa María Xalapán. For more on her work see *Feminismos desde Abya Yala. Ideas y proposiciones de las mujeres de 607 pueblos en Nuestra América* (2013) by Francesca Gargallo.

¹⁴ "[...] part of a new generation of Mapuche creators, preceded by the poet David Aníñir, they have come to highlight the experience of urban Mapuche as a crucial point of their creative projects and activism".

¹⁵ "Next to the water. That is where I have been. In a liquid state. Running through different streams. *Ngen ko, Arüm ko, Ngürü ko, Kay kay*." The Mapuzugun translation to English: "The power of water, hot water, changing (or lying) water, Kay kay". "Kay kay" is a reference to "Kaykay filu", the mythological water serpent with the power to dominate the ocean.

¹⁶ "My body is water. I am immersed in it. These are my politics. [...] Water is territory. Neoliberal extractivism".

uncomfortably suspend the body, inhibiting their movement, but the body does not express discomfort or resistance. Like the first part, the body is intimately “in nature”; Seba’s body is not attempting to do something with the water or the tree; both bodies are quiet, suspended and tied together, co-existing. The narrative now uses the pronoun “us”, distinguishing the human body (or bodies that are not the river): “Nuestros cuerpos en el agua. Partes mínimas de un todo y, sin embargo, aún presentes. Ecosistemas, especies. Itrofil mongen” (Calfuqueo, 2020: 1:40-2:00).¹⁷

Here we find the paradox that is crucial to the video-performance. The narrative asserts the proliferation of life: “we are still here. [...] Itrofil mongen” (Calfuqueo, 2020: 2:57-3:04). Seba’s physical body, the sub-titles, and the existence of the video-performance itself are evidence of the veracity of this statement. And yet, the limp body tied to the fallen tree reminds us of death and extractivist and neoliberal culture and policies in Chile that threaten the longevity of the life of trees and queer bodies. The demonization of queer sexualities and love practices are explored in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (2010) by editors Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson who demonstrate that the logics of domination and normalcy that shame queer people also inflict violence on indigenous people. This intertwining of violence is reflected in “Kowkülen”. In response, Calfuqueo constructs a body-land poetics¹⁸ that acknowledges intersectional violence and that is focused on embodying Mapuche epistemology through a visual and literal manifestation of *itrofil mongen*.

¹⁷ “Our bodies in the water. Tiny parts of a whole and yet, still present. Eco-systems, species. *Itrofil mongen*”.

¹⁸ See footnote 13.

Kowkülen (Ser líquido, 2020)

Seba Calfuqueo / 13 abril, 2020 / ARTWORKS



Video, 1920×1080, 3 minutos.

Video compuesto por un pieza audiovisual y un texto autoral.

La obra realiza un recorrido corporal, personal y poético con respecto a las aguas, los humedales, los lagos, los mares, los ríos y las vertientes. El trabajo aborda el cuerpo, los binarismos, el género, la sexualidad, las relaciones históricas del agua y la vida, como también su potencial como un espacio vivo, necesario para las relaciones de todos los territorios.

Image 1. “Kowkülen” (2020), Calfuqueo. Video, 1920×1080, 3 min. Website Screenshot

The videoperformance exudes a sense of calm. The sound and image of the flowing river is important; it seems to caress Seba’s body in the first scene, it allows them to float in the second, and it acts as a cushion in the third, holding the weight of their hanging body. The same sound of the river flow is constant throughout the three scenes, reflecting that it was recorded separately from the videoperformance. It has its own voice. As Amaro, Catrileo and Quevedo state: “nunca dejamos de oír la fuerza del caudal, se manifiesta su cadencia como un diálogo con todo lo existente, tanto lo visible (árboles, insectos, animales, hierbas) como lo invisible (seres pertenecientes a la cosmovisión mapuche)”(2022: 74).¹⁹ The constancy of the voice of the river implies the continuity of a dialogue and it parallels the role of the sub-titles: both voices are independent of the visual images, implying two languages: human written language and river.

“Kowkülen” reflects a choice to interact with and represent literal and metaphorical closeness between human and non-human bodies. Physically, Calfuqueo places themself inside, tied up to and

¹⁹ “We never stop hearing the force of the water, its cadence manifests itself like a dialogue with all existing life, the visible (trees, insects, animals, herbs) and the invisible (beings from the Mapuche cosmovision)”.

juxtaposed with the body of water. In the words of Amaro, Catrileo, and Quevedo, the work “nos revela otro modo de acercarnos a las obras, situado desde el pensamiento mapuche: no escindido del itrofill mongen”(2022: 77).²⁰ This other mode of relating to *and* representing a relationship with nature reflects a practice of closeness and sensuality, reminiscent of “visceral kinship”. Seba’s body and the body of river are alike in kind (both are bodies) and material (both made of water). The position of Seba’s body in each scene communicates a sense of ease and trust; they seem to be “at home” in relationship to the river. The video-performance sends the message that unknown relationships to nature exist, and they also need to be imagined and created.²¹

Daniela Catrileo: Poetizing the Body and the Waters in *Río herido*

Daniela Catrileo and Seba Calfuqueo are co-creators of the Rangitulewfu collective, a creative laboratory for young Mapuche artists, and translates to “Between Rivers”. They have published several texts and carried out multiple performances. Catrileo, like Calfuqueo and other members of their collective (for example, Paula Baeza and Cristian Vargas Paillahueque), understands the body as a powerful medium for expressing her messages. In 2018, Catrileo and Baeza carried out a multi-location performance titled “Las últimas hebras de nuestro cuerpo” and Catrileo reported feeling that it was important to be using her body in response to the hunger strike of Celestino Córdova and incarceration of other Mapuche leaders (Espindola). The human body’s relationship with the land is also central in Catrileo’s *Río herido*, which I will explore in this section.

The multiple manifestations of rivers in Catrileo’s *Río herido* makes it especially complex to interpret. *Río herido* consists of four sections: “Cesura: Testimonio del accidente”; “Todo río contiene un corazón de engaños”; “Ser incendio en tu cauce”; “Acción fluvial: inmersión”.²² The book holds a space for a persistent paradox: the logic of the city, based on human understandings of structure and control, co-exists with the logic of rivers, which usually determine their own course as they make their way to the ocean. This paradox is seen in the first poem. It reads: “Nohayestructuraniorigen” (2018: 12).²³ The words run together without spaces and appear in a vertical line. In opposition to the meaning of the words (“There is no structure or origin”), the spatial organization of the poem communicates that there is a structure and an origin. The “origin” or beginning of the poem is “No” and this seems to recall colonial negation of indigenous languages and ways of being. The verticality is reminiscent of colonial power, expanding over indigenous land, territory, and epistemologies. The poetic voice attempts to state otherwise, wrestling against the poem’s disavowal by asserting that there is “no structure or origin”. In this way, the poetic voice seeks to tell another story; the story of cycles, motion, and movement. This is the story of rivers which is the story of the poetic voice herself, as we will see.

²⁰ “[...] it reveals a different form of approaching their works, situated in Mapuche thinking, and not separated from *itrofill mongen*.”

²¹ In the article “‘Ojo de agua atenta’: aparatos de resonancia y resistencia en los videoperformances de Paula Coñuepan y Sebastián Calfuqueo”, authors Lorena Amaro, Daniela Catrileo and Javiera Quevedo state: “El artista no está mostrando la devastación, muestra otra relación posible. Una forma diferente de vincularse con las aguas, no como un bien mueble, sino como parte de ellas” (2022: 76).

²² “Interruption: Witness to the Accident”, “Every River has a Cheating Heart”, “To Be the Fire in your Riverbed”, “Fluvial Action: Immersion”.

²³ “Thereisnostructureororigin”.

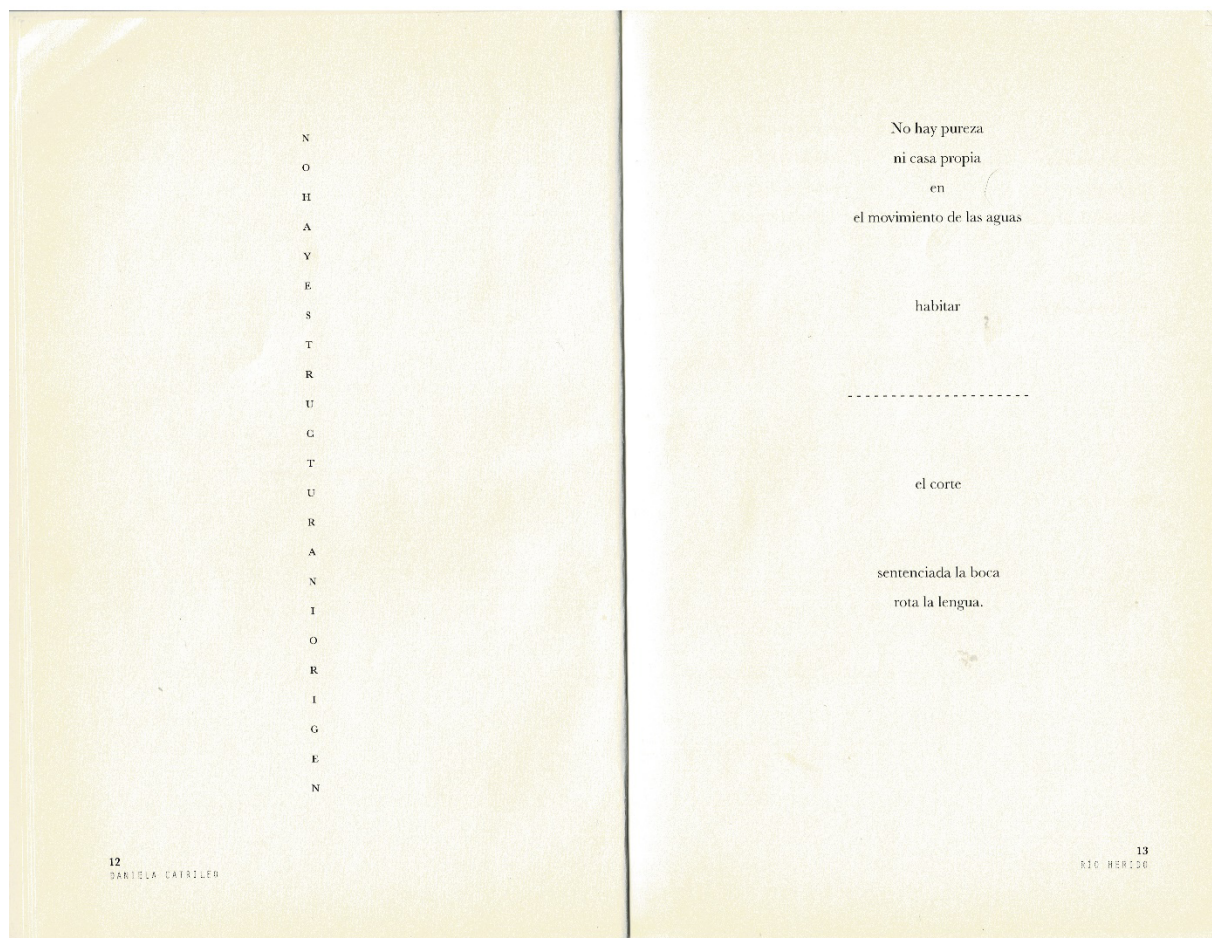


Image 2. Excerpt from *Río herido* (2019: 12-13), Catrileo. Scanned from original book.

The second poem reflects a change. It reads: “No hay pureza / ni casa propia / en / el movimiento de las aguas” (2019: 13).²⁴ In the middle of the page, we see the word “habitar” separated by a dotted line, below which we find the word “el corte” (13). The last lines at the bottom of the page state “sentenciada la boca / rota la lengua” (13).²⁵ In my reading, this is a crucial moment for the book and for all that is to come. Here, there are two implied subjects: river body and human body. Rivers can be cut by humans to control their flow, to create dams and to divert water. A river’s natural course can also be understood as cutting the land. Humans too can cut or be cut; cut off from language and cut out of history. When the poetic voice declares: “habitar...el corte”, the subject is ambiguous, leaving room for both the river and the body. Both inhabit the cut. Whether this is the result of an internal need or external obligation, the river and the poetic voice are destined to inhabit the cut, the wound. In this second poem, then, the words intertwine human and river experience, evoking their shared materiality as water bodies.

Catrileo also communicates the interchangeability of these two bodies by refraining from naming them specifically. We know from interviews that various rivers flowing through Santiago played an important role in her life. In her interview with María José Barros, recently published in *Aguas Libres* (2022), she explains that the Maipo River, which runs through the suburbs of Santiago, was the closest river to her house. She and her father would visit it often. When her family moved to Santiago, she would seek out the Mapocho River and, later in life, the Zanjón de la Aguada. All these rivers played a part in the creation of *Río herido*, however, in the book, they are not mentioned by name. By maintaining a general signifier (*río*/river) without proper names, the reader can more

²⁴ “There is no purity / or a room of one’s own / in / the movement of the waters”.

²⁵ “to inhabit / the cut/ the mouth sentenced / the tongue broken”.

easily see the connection between river bodies. *Catrileo* also refrains from using many possessive pronouns to refer to the human body. This allows readers to play with the signifieds they imagine, allowing them to grasp their similarity and interchangeability.

Similarities between the human body and rivers run throughout *Río herido*. For example, “Tengo un río herido / en forma de zanjón / que grita india y me tira a la calle” (2019: 37).²⁶ The river may be wounded because it has been confined and forced to fit into a human-made ditch which contorts the water’s movement, just like the word *india* contorts her true being into something she/they are not: it restricts and determines their range of movement and motion. Its encapsulation is comparable to that of the speaker who faces discrimination and who similarly desires physical freedom. The order of the lines of poetry is important: the poetic voice refers to the experience of the river first (“wounded river in the shape of a ditch”) and “then” to the poetic voice’s experience with discrimination (“india” being the last word). Therefore, the poetic voice considers the river’s needs as an autonomous being first.

In *Río herido* the river is also separate and unique from the poetic voice. It can be a vessel for the dead and it takes on many guises in the city: *cauces*, *zanjón*, *acequia*, *pozo*, *humedal*. It also has a voice that can, at times, express itself more forcefully than the poetic voice can. For example, “El río es voz que no calla. / ¿Qué se abre en el lenguaje de las aguas?” (2019: 19).²⁷ The river’s voice counters her human words: “Las palabras ya no son huesos / sino fantasmas / enterrados en su boca” (2019: 23).²⁸ This stanza recalls the absence of Mapuzugun; words or speech that could have been like another material body, but are now ghosts. When thinking about her name, which “is” in Mapuzugun, one of her poems asks, “¿[c]ómo escribir un nombre que nació herido, antes de ser escrito antes del origen de la letra?” (45).²⁹ Her last name *Catrileo* translates to “río cortado”-“wounded river” in Mapuzugun which also manifests duality: she is a body and a river, and both are wounded. Here too, both she and the river are implied in the naming. She herself has commented on the closeness she feels to water, because of her name, “[...] como mi apellido conlleva el río, siento que estoy llena de agua y que las aguas me escriben también” (Espindola, 2018: s/p). In these examples, the river is metaphor (independent and comparable) and metonymy (interchangeable).

By understanding the “metonymic relationship” (Contreras, s/f: s/p)³⁰ between her body and the river, we can more easily grasp how *Catrileo* mixes material and immaterial living beings in *Río herido*. For example, “¿[d]e qué sirve / escribirte, si desapareces / en la hoja / en el cauce?” (*Catrileo*, 2019: 22). Multiple subjects are implied in the verb “disappearing”: a person, a story, a human body. The medium that leads to the disappearance is the “page” (*hoja*) and the riverbed (*cauce*). A body is most likely to disappear down a channel, and that body could be human or non-human. That body could also disappear from the page and thus, from history. This and many other poems offer multiple and simultaneous metonymic renderings where multiple beings are simultaneously implied.

While the poetic voice shares many similarities to the river, unlike the river, she has a human body and thus must find life on the shore, in the cracks, between the wet and dry land. “La vida se ha desarrollado de manera más fecunda constantemente en los márgenes de los ríos” (45).³¹ Human life inside the river is literally not possible; she mentions not being able to cry under water, in the poem “Vida acuática”. Likewise, human beings cannot breath, walk, run or laugh under water. Going to the shore,

²⁶ “I have a wounded river / in the shape of a ditch / that yells india and throws me to the street”.

²⁷ “The river is a voice that won’t be silenced. / What will be opened by the water’s speech?”.

²⁸ “Words are no longer bones / rather they are ghosts / buried in their mouth”.

²⁹ “How to write a name that was born wounded, before being written before the beginning of letters?”.

³⁰ Constanza Contreras discusses this in her chapter “Relating Otherwise: Erotics of the Non-Human in the Poetry of Natalie Diaz, Roxana Miranda Rupailaf, and Elizabeth Acevedo” in her dissertation in progress from the University of Michigan. Constanza is a PhD Candidate in Department of English.

³¹ “Life has always grown in the most fertile parts of the river: the margins”.

then, means respecting the material reality of the body. It also reflects the notion that Catrileo and her poetic voice live in the interstitial spaces: in between Mapuzugun and Spanish; in between nations, cultures, and epistemologies.³² Positioning her body next to and in between other bodies can be found explicitly in some of her video performances. For example, in “Las últimas hebras de nuestro cuerpo” her body lays in between the cement and the Mapocho River in Santiago (Espindola, 2018: s/p).



Image 2. “Las últimas hebras de nuestro cuerpo” (2018). Daniela Catrileo. Espindola’s article cover image.

As we have seen thus far, Catrileo uses language that allows the body and the river to be independent as well as interchangeable and interdependent. For this creation to exist, Catrileo practices what seems like visceral kinship with the various rivers that she has had contact with during her formative years and this, as I will show, occurs through the act of listening. In her text “El Nacimiento del río o poética del río: Ñche Daniela Catrileo Pingen” (2019), she states “El cauce sabe cuándo debe llegar al mar y de qué forma multiplicar sus arroyos, el cauce sigue a pesar de nosotros. Pero para que ese río naciera, había que nadarlo. Creer en su posibilidad y aprender a oír las voces bajo el agua” (4).³³ Catrileo’s statement here about learning to “hear the voices under the water” speaks to a critical and loving engagement with Mapuche epistemologies that exist in the present and are accessible by way of practicing a gentle and meditated form of listening. She practices *nütram* or dialogue by assuming that dialogues of the past reverberate and ripple into materials, including water and living bodies. Her poetry is a manifestation of that listening differently. In the same article she states: “Un consejo podría emerger desde las profundidades de nuestras aguas hasta encontrar en su raíz la réplica. Y todo ese recuerdo, toda esa voluntad, todos esos cuerpos tienen *dungun*, como posibilidad de relación, de comunidad” (3).³⁴

Catrileo’s curiosity about the “speech” or *dungun* of the water inside and outside of her body is an essential source of creation and connection. The river is a place where past names, relationships, and injustices are remembered; to connect with the waters, the rivers, means to connect with herself and the waters where she was born and raised. To recall Melissa K. Nelson’s words, this is an act of intimacy and

³² See also María José Barros’s references to the connections between Gloria Anzaldúa’s work and Catrileo’s poetry in the article “Recados descolonizadores desde la Mapurbe: Daniela Catrileo, Camila Huenchumil y Daniela Millaleo” (2021: 51) and “La poesía de Daniela Catrileo: Escribir la diáspora mapuche y la (im)posibilidad del retorno” (2022: 80). Regarding Catrileo’s understanding and use of the term “*champurria*”, see Fernanda Moraga García’s “Nosotras *champurrias*/nosotras mapuche? Guerra florida de Daniela Catrileo” (2021).

³³ “The river flow knows when it must arrive to the ocean and it knows the way its creeks must multiple, the riverbed continues despite humans, despite us. But for the river to be born, I had to swim in it. Believe in its possibilities and learn to hear the voices under the water”.

³⁴ “From the depths of our waters may emerge needed advice until it finds its roots. All of this memory, and generosity, all of these bodies have language, which create the possibility of a relationship, of a community”.

courage. In Catrileo's *Río herido* the interdependence between the bodies represented on the page comes after a practice of listening to the land, transposing her body and story onto and into the waters.

Conclusions

As I have shown, Seba Calfuqueo and Daniela Catrileo's video-performance and poetry are not representations of something else; they are the manifestations of long held and new relationships between their bodies and other bodies in the natural world. While they are continually working on articulating their Mapuche identities in a fast-changing, technological and Anthropocentric world, they also have special access to what Tallbear and Willey describe as "longer-standing intimate relational frameworks to guide relations with lands and waters" (2019: 6). As we saw, they express these relational frameworks in heterogeneous ways. Seba Calfuqueo makes the trek to the Cautín River from Santiago and Catrileo engages, years prior to Calfuqueo, with the urban landscape of her neighborhood in Santiago. The natural setting of each experience is different, but their purpose is similar; to connect with bodies of water by tapping into their own bodily, visceral, and sensual experiences. Not as a longing for the past, but as practices of creation and connection for the present and future. In the process they also show us the multiple elements that impede connection: the intersection of racism, sexism, neoliberalism, and the exclusion of Mapuzugun. If digested slowly, these works allow readers to experience the complexity, difficulty and bravery involved in relationality and *itrofil mongen*.

As we saw at the beginning, love narratives about indigenous people can lead to a fetishization of indigenous knowledge, discouraging curiosity and exploration of one's relationship to land, whatever that relationship may be, as indigenous to the land, as migrants, as settlers, etc. This matters because, terms like *itrofil mongen* and critical relationality are important for indigenous autonomy as well as interculturality, which asks all people to explore and value their own stories as an important path for listening to and valuing the stories of others.³⁵ Calfuqueo and Catrileo show us that our bodies are a crucial part of who we are as humans, as a species, and where we come from. From their performances and writing, we learn that listening to our bodies as bodies of water may be a path to forming sensual and visceral experiences with other bodies of water.

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³⁵ See the work of Michael Byram, for example, "Conceptualizing Intercultural (Communicative) Competence and Intercultural Citizenship" (2012).

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