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MEETING WITH MAPUCHE POET

LEONEL LIENLAF (CHILE)

SEMINARY
DECOLONIZING APPROACHES TO STUDYING
HISTORY AND LINGUISTIC-CULTURAL
HERITAGE. METHODS, TOOLS, RESULTS AND
CHALLENGES.

FACULTY OF ARTES LIBERALES - UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW - POLAND



Che mamüll - figures that represent ancestral spirits

MAPUCHE POETRY

If we approach the contemporary literary production of Latin America, we will observe an aesthetic scene where a strong cultural identity coexists with an exuberant narrative imagination. More specifically, we can say that this scene presents "zones of indeterminacy or generic and textual uncertainty that put in crisis the stability of the literary canon [...] that is characterized by two fundamental characteristics: interdisciplinary mutation and cultural hybridization" (Carrasco, 2002) [1]. In this context, it is not difficult to find border crossings, the mixture of formats, the fragmentation of discursive hegemonies, orality, visual turns, performances. Since the 1980s, this mode of literary production has brought to light displaced and invisible sensitivities: the periphery, cultural heritage, ethnic identities, sexual and gender minorities. As a result, today we see the development of these literary practices on conditions of equality with, for example, national literatures, mass production and/or official languages.

[1] "zonas de indeterminación o indefinición genérica y textual que ponen en crisis la estabilidad del canon literario [...] que se caracteriza por dos rasgos fundamentales: la mutación interdisciplinaria y el hibridismo cultural" (original text).



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In the case of Chile and Argentina, today we find that mutation and literary hybridity are strongly present in ethnocultural poetry, particularly in Mapuche poetry (Carrasco, 2015). Written works that are in close connection to the Latin American literature, the cultural traditions and Mapuche speakers. Although it is a literary production that joins the general production, it is also a significant moment of production for language revitalization and cross-cultural transfers.

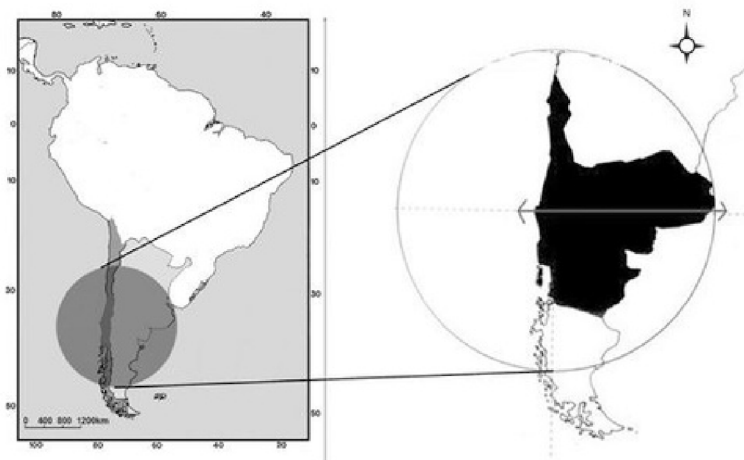
Beyond any ethnographic, historical or decolonial gaze, which can be consulted later, we are interested —with the meeting of the musician and poet Leonel Lienlaf— in making visible a mode of expression that works with memory, understanding of the territory and revitalizing its language in dialogue with the Spanish language. In other words, to make visible a past and a cultural present that is expressed in poetic language by virtue of a community in resistance and language-game with the grammatical hegemonies imposed on its language, but also in constant intercultural dialogue. In their poetry the Mapuche people share their narrative and political imagery, their myths, their relationship with the urban and rural, their rich cosmology, their struggles against the multinationals that occupy their territory and their defense of the native forests.

From a political-aesthetic understanding, Mapuche poetry is a distribution of the sensible in emancipatory action both for its innovation in the poetic field and the search for its ordering of the real and imaginary world. An example of the above is the consideration that the Mapuche people give to the oral transmission through song (*ül*).

The Mapuche people since pre-colonial times have inhabited what is known as *Wallmapu* —an extensive territory that connects the Pacific Ocean with the Atlantic Ocean. A popular legend says that the Mapuches did not form empires because their interest has always been to care for and defend the forests, lakes and volcanoes. The word Mapuche means "people of the land". For more than 300 years they were fighting against the Spanish Empire and have never been conquered. Since the origins of the modern states of Chile and Argentina, the Mapuche people have been systematically discriminated and punished by the state police apparatus.

Autors:

Maximiliano Bober - Rolando A. Mancilla



Wallmapu map

LEONEL LIENLAF



*“Silver and colors of earth
protect my heart, my soul
is standing so
to see the face of the deep night
where the old warriors watched
one another”*

Ngillañmawün[2]

Mapuche writer from the Alepue community of the Valdivia Province in the Los Ríos Region, Chile. Lienlaf is a key figure in contemporary Mapuche poetry, working not only in the medium of writing but also in traditional Mapuche songs or *Ül*. He is also recognized as an environmental activist and consultant to various ecological and human rights organizations

Publications:

- Se ha despertado el ave de mi corazón (Ed. Universitaria, 1989)
- Palabras Soñadas (LOM Ediciones, 2003)
- Kogen (Del Aire Editores, 2014)
- Epu zuam (Ediciones Cagtén, 2016)
- La luz cae vertical, antología bilingüe (Lumen/Penguin Random House, 2018).

[2] Translated via the Spanish by Arthur Dixon. Latin American Literature Today.

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