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ELEVEN

Ecological Crisis and the Re-Enchantment of Nature in Jaime Huenún's *Reducciones*

Ida Day

Chilean poet Jaime Huenún's *Reducciones* (Reductions; 2012) explores the social and environmental consequences of European colonization since the second half of the nineteenth century, when southern Chile received thousands of German immigrants as part of a state-sponsored colonization plan. Confronted with large stretches of impenetrable native forests, the colonists began a deforestation process in order to prepare the land for agriculture and livestock farming, which left a profound impact on the society, economy, and geography of the region. In less than a century, the region spanning La Araucanía to Chiloé lost at least three million hectares of native forests.¹ The massive destruction of indigenous forests and their recent replacement with pine plantations caused the ecological degradation of regional ecosystems, forcing local farmers to leave their land and join a population of migrant temporary workers. Indigenous territories shifted considerably due to private expropriations of land and forced labor migrations.²

An ecological perspective of this history of colonization is present throughout Huenún's work, addressing the interplay between the Mapuche-Huilliche people, the colonists, and the natural world. Huenún is deeply engaged with a central mission of Latin American indigenous writers and cultural activists: resisting the ecological crises provoked by the expansion of neoliberal capitalism. Their work criticizes the homogenizing effects of globalization on local communities and environments, which have resulted in the loss of biodiversity as well as the sacred con-

nection between indigenous people and the natural world. They also focus on protecting traditional knowledge from commercial exploitation in the service of bioprospecting and cultural tourism, which perpetuates the indigenist myths that idealize native peoples' attitudes toward nature. As Huenún frames it, "las expresiones de arte y los conocimientos originarios han sido rotulados como charlatanería, folklore o simple costumbrismo nativista apto . . . para ser transado en el mercado del turismo" (indigenous knowledge and artistic expressions have been labeled as charlatanism, folklore, or a simple nativist *costumbrismo* . . . in order to be traded on the tourist market; cited in Rojas 67).³ In response, these indigenous activists' view on the environmental consequences of colonialism and modern industrial society is often marked by an anticolonial approach to ecological crisis (Huenún, "Sobre *Reducciones*" 314).

This chapter focuses on the decolonial ecological aspects of Huenún's *Reducciones*, which explores the history of Mapuche-Huilliche communities in Chile that has traditionally been silenced in colonial historical discourse. The title refers to native territories; similar to North American "Indian reservations," the "reducciones" are fragmented territories used by the state to corral indigenous peoples since the sixteenth century. However, the term also implies various ways of "reducing" native peoples materially and symbolically, implying not only a reduction in the extent of their traditional territories, but also of their languages, histories, and cultural traditions. Ironically, given this colonial dynamic of reduction, indigenous peoples' cultural traditions emphasizing the unity of spirit and matter have often been used to enrich Western environmental thought.⁴ In particular, they have contributed to the reevaluation of the concept of ecology as a purely scientific field, redefining it as a "fundamentally holistic" knowledge that "cannot truly be reduced" (Carroll 11). In this sense, Jaime Huenún's *Reducciones* combats colonial territorial and cultural reductivism by offering a spiritually based ecological model that engages central aspects of indigenous ecologies, such as the relationship of mutual respect with local ecosystems and the understanding of knowledge as holistic and embodied, uniting material and spiritual experience. I examine how Huenún's work addresses the concept of ecological crisis in terms of the loss of indigenous culture and its sacred relationship to nature. Also, I highlight its contribution to "a global and cross-cultural phenomenon" of spiritual ecology, which calls for responses to ecological crisis that include spiritual awareness and reverence for the natural world (Spensel xi).

Jaime Huenún, born in 1967 in Valdivia, considers himself a mestizo poet: "mi padre es huilliche y mi madre chilena, por lo que mi vida y mi poesía están entre las dos realidades" (my father is Huilliche and my mother Chilean, and that is why my life and my poetry are between the two realities; "Poesía mapuche actual" n. pag.). Like the majority of contemporary Mapuche-Huilliche, Huenún grew up in the city (Osorno),

and did not learn his ancestral language, Tsezungun. His collection *Puerto Trakl* (2001) portrays this loss of cultural/indigenous identity in modern urban communities, which has resulted in “una orfandad que vive la población indígena del país” (an orphanhood suffered by the indigenous population of the country; Huenún, “Huenún” n. pag.). Huenún is also the author of *Ceremonias* (*Ceremonies*; 1999), *Fanon City meu* (2014), and two edited anthologies: *La memoria iluminada: Poesía mapuche contemporánea* (*Illuminated Memories: Contemporary Mapuche Poetry*; 2007) and *Antología de poesía indígena latinoamericana: Los cantos ocultos* (*Anthology of Latin American Indigenous Poetry: The Hidden Songs*; 2008). His work represents a collective voice of Mapuche-Huilliche communities and foregrounds their complex, pluricultural reality: “los artistas indígenas y mestizos de Chile consideramos que nuestros trabajos conjugan espiritualidad y materialidad, tradición e innovación, arraigo y diáspora, memoria mítica y memoria histórica” (the indigenous and mestizo artists of Chile believe that our work combines spirituality and materiality, tradition and innovation, rootedness and the diaspora, mythical memory and historical memory; Huenún, “Carta abierta” 274). In accordance with the postcolonial denunciation of Western essentialism, which rejects “the simplistic binary oppositions upon which much of colonialist and postcolonialist discourse is predicated,” Huenún maintains a critical distance from exotic stereotypes that trivialize indigenous communities and exclude them from global discourses (Liebmann 73). Even though the poet rejects the idea of returning to the origin, citing “la imposibilidad de volver a los lugares antiguos del ser” (the impossibility of returning to bygone places of being), he recurs to indigenous history in order to highlight the roots of the current ecological imbalance (Huenún, *Ceremonias* 11). His work foregrounds the evidences and effects of past practices that lie at the root of material conditions in the present. It offers a deeper understanding of the crisis, which has not only material but also spiritual dimensions.

Shawn William Miller observes in *Environmental History of Latin America* (2007) that, “only by putting nature in our official past can we potentially grasp its substantially altered place in our present and future” (5). Accordingly, Miller casts “both nature and culture in the roles of the protagonists,” giving nonhuman life (animal and plant species) and natural resources a place in his historiography (2). Huenún’s protagonists also come from human and nonhuman worlds; however, the nonhuman subjects of *Reducciones* include not only material but also nonmaterial elements. The work enriches the environmental outlook on history with the sacred dimension of spiritual ecology. Using a Mapuche dialogue, *nüttram*, the poet “entrelaza ratazos de mitos, recetas medicinales e historias de parientes y vecinos vivos y difuntos” (interlaces pieces of myths, medicinal knowledge, histories of living and dead relatives and neighbors), emphasizing the spiritual/sacred aspects of his indigenous tradi-

tion (*Reducciones* 118). Huenún integrates the voices of nature, ancestors, and spirits in his work in order to demonstrate the intimate material and spiritual bonds between indigenous people, their cultural traditions, and the natural world, the loss of which has resulted in ecological crisis.

In contrast to indigenous poetry focused on traditional, rural forms of existence, Huenún's work includes a reflection on the position of contemporary Mapuche-Huilliche in a globalized world: "el paisaje mapuche . . . no puede ser en mi poesía sino el escenario de una degradación permanente y no el lugar ameno que muchos snobs amantes de lo exótico buscan en la lírica escrita por autores indígenas" (In my poetry . . . the Mapuche landscape cannot be but a scene of permanent degradation, not the idealized pastoral setting that many aficionados of the exotic look for in lyric poetry written by indigenous authors; Huenún, "Jaime Huenún" 4). Since most contemporary Mapuche-Huilliche live in urban areas and do not speak their people's native language, the author problematizes the conventional, exotic view of indigenous cultures and their environments.⁵ As Rodrigo Rojas notes, *Reducciones* combines different poetic voices including European colonists, indigenous people, spirits, and the author himself, as well as mixing indigenous oral tradition with Western literary sources, as ways of opposing "la reducción del individuo mapuche a un ser unidimensional, cuya esencia está ligada a la oralidad y al ámbito rural" (the reduction of the Mapuche individual to a one-dimensional being, whose existence is linked to orality and the rural setting; 34).

Reducciones' opening section, "Entrada a Chauracahuin" ("Entrance to Chauracahuin"), which refers to the original name of the contemporary city of Osorno, recounts the history of colonization of this region and the emergence of new cultural identities. It also describes the transformations of the natural environment from native forests to the current farmland: "abrir a incendio y hacha la húmeda e impenetrable selva del pellín y del laurel, chamuscar el pelaje pardo del pudú, derretir los pequeños cuernos del huemul con las brasas del coigüe derribado, fueron algunos de los afanes que permitieron convertir los campos de los huilliche en haciendas y llanuras productivas. Ahora en las grandes praderas de los fundos osorninos pastan las vacas Holstein y los rojos toros Hereford (To open the humid and impenetrable jungle of pellín and laurel, to singe the pudú's dark fur, to melt small antlers of huemul with the embers of a felled coigüe, these were some of the desires that motivated the transformation of the Huilliche countryside into haciendas and productive plains. Today, Holstein cows and red Hereford bulls graze in the vast grasslands of Osorno's estates; 23). As is evident in this description, the Osorno region of Chile exemplifies the European imperialistic practice of terraforming its colonies to make them resemble European environments, a global phenomenon studied by Alfred Crosby in *Ecological Imperialism* (1986). Huenún demonstrates how slash-and-burn agriculture applied to the Valdivian temperate rainforest has produced "a German or

Swiss farm," as well as enormous biodiversity and cultural losses: "la explotación civilizada terminó con uno de los territorios más bellos de la tierra, con ríos, montañas y bosques interminables, inmensos, misteriosos" (civilized exploitation put an end to one of the world's most beautiful territories, with rivers, mountains, and unending, immense, mysterious forests).⁶

Contrary to the myth of a pristine pre-Columbian America, however, these forests had a long history of human intervention and management before the arrival of the Europeans. The indigenous people also used slash-and-burn agriculture that affected local forests, but their seasonal migrations from habitat to habitat minimized their ecological footprints. Thomas Miller Klubock points out that while European colonizers viewed the Mapuches "as a vagrant population of barbarian nomads with no fixed relationship to territory or land, their mobility was part of an extensive agricultural economy that reflected a dynamic engagement with southern Chile's ecological landscape" (13). This form of land use did not endanger the overall ecological health of the land even after centuries of habitation and use. In contrast, the European colonists expanded and distorted the indigenous agricultural techniques, while the importation of nonnative cattle and plant species and the application of Western notions of private property made impractical any process of rotation that might have allowed the land to regenerate. "Entrance to Chauracahuin" illustrates how the colonization of the Huilliche territory transformed the biodiverse endemic ecosystem into ecological impoverished "haciendas and productive plains," although even these estates were marked by hybrids of cultures and species.

Much more devastating consequences of colonization are revealed in the poem "Trumao," which describes land degraded by agriculture, logging, and ranching. If, as Mansilla Torres affirms, "Entrance to Chauracahuin" problematizes the implications of colonization in the emergence of "mestizajes múltiples, dinámicos, subversivos, dolorosos a veces" (multiple, dynamic, subversive, and sometimes painful mestizajes), "Trumao" focuses exclusively on its negative effects, particularly the ecological crisis that it provoked.⁷ In the Mapuche language, *trumao* refers to the fertile volcanic soil. It is also the name of a small town in Los Lagos region, which was an important center of economic development between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1960s, providing a port and a train station for transporting agricultural products, animals, and lumber. The opening verse of the poem, "venganza de la tierra, venganza de las aguas solas" (vengeance of the earth, vengeance of solitary waters), communicates the exploitation and abuse of the once fertile land, which is now eroded and cannot be used productively (134). The personalization of nature and the use of word "vengeance" imply an interdependent relationship between the natural and human worlds, symbolizing the negative consequences for people of exploitative attitudes and actions toward

nature. The images of the degraded environment in the poem are charged with feelings of loss and alienation: “botellas de plástico en la vía férrea, durmientes como corchos podridos donde zumban y anidan sin descanso las avispas asesinas” (plastic bottles on the railway, sleeping like rotten corks where assassin wasps tirelessly buzz and nest; 134). The ecological crisis described in “Trumao” is the result of economic imperialism, which, as observed by Miller, turned “ecologically diverse landscapes into monocultural regimes . . . spreading cancer, ravaging everything at its perimeter and leaving a black, dead core characterized by deforestation, erosion, and ghost towns” (131). Huenún’s poem makes allusions to this colonial dynamic, presenting economic violence against the natural world as acts of profanation. He uses negative imagery to capture deforestation, referring to “los invisibles bosques de la profanación” (the invisible profaned forests; 134). In the author’s perspective, the natural environment is sacred and should be treated with great respect and reverence.

Similar environmental and cultural desolation is the theme of the poem, “Campamento de Pampa Schilling” (“The Settlement of Pampa Schilling”), which addresses the material and spiritual consequences of economic development and colonization: “ya viudos de nuestros dioses, viudos del sol, del agua y de la luna llena. Adentro, frente al bracero, quemamos lengua y memoria” (already widowed of our gods, widowed of the sun, of the water, and the full moon. Inside, before the fire, we burn language and memory; 112). Campamento Pampa Schilling in Osorno (paradoxically named after the German landowner) refers to the resettlement of indigenous people displaced from their territories in the 1970s. During the forestry export boom that began following Pinochet’s 1973 coup d’état, Mapuche peasants were expelled from their lands throughout southern Chile. The rural zones dedicated to pine forestry production became “the poorest in the country, with unemployment rates that exceeded the national average of more than 20 percent (in some zones it approached 50 percent) and a ballooning population of landless peasants who lived in rural *poblaciones* (shantytowns) along the sides of roads and highways” (Klubock 240). Pampa Schilling is an example of this miserable settlement on a constricted allotment of land, colloquially referred to as a “población callampa” (mushroom town).

Huenún’s poem alludes to the relationship between the inhabitants of the camp, their environment, tradition, and cultural memory. It illustrates the social and ecological costs of the neoliberal economic system, which generates “avasalladoras economías extractivas, sin consideraciones mayores por el medio ambiente y las propiedades indígenas” (devastating extractive economies, without the slightest consideration for the environment or indigenous property rights).⁸ The export-oriented pine forestry production has resulted in ecological crisis, characterized by the destruction of native forests, the erosion of local ecosystems, and the

dislocation of indigenous communities. The poem describes the native trees (ulmo and laurel) outside of Pampa Schilling, posing the question: “¿Para quién brilla el laurel?” (for whom does the laurel shine?), thereby capturing the Mapuche communities’ exclusion from their customary uses of native forests (112). As Klubock notes, state policies defined indigenous people as a “threat to the forest and restricted their access to the basic forest resources necessary to subsistence” (5). Confronted with these restrictions, Mapuche communities made claims to the land they considered public or Mapuche ancestral lands, basing themselves on “long histories of possession since time immemorial” (Klubock 19). At the same time, the native trees in Huenún’s poem also allude to the biodiversity of southern Chile’s temperate forests destroyed by colonial exploitation and monoculture pine plantations.⁹ The loss of biodiversity is parallel here to the loss of indigenous culture, since both are threatened by the homogenizing impacts of the neoliberal system.

Apart from being deprived of their land, fauna, and flora, the inhabitants of Pampa Schilling are also losing their language and traditions, which is metaphorically expressed in the verse: “quemamos lengua y memoria” (we are burning language and memory; 112). The reference to “burning” evokes the destruction of both indigenous culture and territories and culture due to the overuse of slash-and-burn agriculture. In her reflection on Huenún’s work, Elvira Hernández links the disappearance of indigenous traditions to the loss of reverence for the natural world, stating that the environment of contemporary Mapuche-Huilliche “no permite conversar con la sabiduría de la tierra—con la que rompió su alianza” (does not allow one to converse with the wisdom of the earth—with which it has broken its alliance; 61). Like many other contemporary indigenous authors, who consider the disconnection from nature and tradition one of the major causes of ecological and spiritual crisis, Huenún illuminates the loss of local beliefs and practices in “Settlement of Pampa Schilling.” The spiritual loss is expressed in the poem through the symbolic representation of death, particularly through the use of the term “viudos” (widowed). The residents of the *población* are permeated by a sense of deprivation and desolation, and the natural world outside of the camp communicates these feelings: “afuera brilla el laurel a relámpagos y a sangre. El monte es una neblina y el agua del mar se arde (outside, the laurel shines with lightning and blood. The mountain is a mist and the sea’s water burns; 112). The images of blood, lightning, and burning water imply the violent events in Huilliche history, “witnessed” by the local environment. In “Settlement of Pampa Schilling,” natural phenomena revive the voices/spirits of the past as a denunciation of injustices committed against the Huilliche community. The poem presents the land as a spiritual being with a soul, “what the ancients called the *anima mundi* [which] was forgotten, banished even from our collective

memories" (Vaughan-Lee, "Spiritual Ecology" n. pag.). As in spiritual ecology, the nature here is a living being, which needs healing.

Huenún turns to spiritual ecology as a remedy to the crisis. The ecological crisis in his poetry is the result of economic exploitation of native communities and the environmental devastation of their ancestral lands. It is not only a physical crisis but also a spiritual one, manifested by "human alienation from nature combined with disenchantment, objectification, and commodification of nature" (Sponsel xv). Huenún responds to it by proposing a spiritual ecology, which re-enchants nature and expands the scope of scientific ecology with a spiritual dimension. Since scientific ecology refers to the study of physical interrelations in an ecosystem, it does not address the root of the ecological crisis, which is the disregard for the sacred nature of life.

According to the principles of spiritual ecology, ecological imbalance is caused by the idea that human beings are separate from the world, and "the deepest part of our separateness from creation lies in our forgetfulness of its sacred nature" (Vaughan-Lee, *Spiritual Ecology* 1). As observed by Tony Watling, this modern, Cartesian Western worldview has created a "disenchantment of the world, an eclipse of magical and spiritual forces, denying creativity and sacredness to nature" (16). Humanity has become alienated from the natural world and has lost a sense of nature as a place of belonging and worship. According to Marx, this alienation from nature occurred with the shift toward industrialized production. Since Marx was a materialist, however, his analysis downplayed any spiritual dimension as a mystification of the modes of economic production. Given the ecological crisis generated by modern modes of production, however, many advocates of spiritual ecology consider indigenous traditions to be a source of ideals, attitudes, and values for remedying the destructive effects of modern worldviews. Especially influential is animism (from Latin *animus* referring to "spirit, soul"), a belief system that attributes a spiritual essence to nonhuman entities. The principles of animism are manifest in spiritual ecology, emphasizing the reverence for the natural world, as well as the interdependences and interconnectedness within environmental systems. Thomas Berry, one of the leading figures in spiritual ecology, refers to the human disconnection from the natural world as "spiritual autism," stating that: "we are talking only to ourselves. We are not talking to the rivers, we are not listening to the wind and stars. We have broken that great conversation" (cited in Vaughan-Lee, *Spiritual Ecology* 59). The author calls for regaining the intimate connection between human beings and nature, present in indigenous worldviews.

Jaime Huenún's poetry reflects the sacred link between the Mapuche people and their environment: "todo el mundo espiritual mapuche está vinculado a la naturaleza. . . . No se entiende la cultura mapuche sin esta vinculación porque ya 'mapuche' significa 'gente de la tierra'" (the entire

Mapuche spiritual world is linked to nature. . . . The Mapuche culture cannot be understood without this link since “Mapuche” itself means “people of the earth”; Huenún, “Huenún” n. pag.). Resuming the “great conversation” described by Berry, the elements of nature are protagonists in *Reducciones*—they feel, speak, listen, and respond: “Cantan árboles canciones de un nublado y ciego amor” (Trees sing songs of a clouded and blind love; 94). Eduardo Viveiros de Castro describes this kind of universal communication between people, animals, and other elements of the cosmos as a kind of “multinaturalism” consisting in “a spiritual unity and a corporeal diversity,” where the spirit is universal and the body particular (“Cosmological Deixis” 470). It thus contrasts with Western cosmology, which postulates the metaphysical particularity (spirit or mind as what differentiates the human) and unity of physical matter. The Amerindian idea that the metaphysical is the integrator in the universe is the foundational concept in animism, which attributes to nonhumans the soul or spirit and therefore perspective, or subjectivity.

Animated forces and beings inhabit the enchanted nature represented in Huenún’s poems. The author emphasizes the spiritual link between human beings and the universe through the use of poetry, which, according to him, has always been related to the sacred: “la poesía es el canto que el hombre todavía no logra entender o descifrar completamente, el canto a través del cual el universo le habla y a través del cual los espíritus de la memoria están tratando de comunicarse” (poetry is the song that man has still not completely comprehended or deciphered, the song through which the universe speaks to him and through which the spirits of memory attempt to communicate with us; “Poesía Mapuche” 9). Transcending cultural boundaries, poetry communicates directly as an expression of the universal spiritual society. John Felstiner expresses a similar view in *Can Poetry Save the Earth?* (2009), which discusses the role of poetry in spiritual ecology and environmental activism, arguing that while science and policies focus on solutions, poetry can change our values by “stirring the spirit” and awaking the awareness of being an integral part of the universe. Huenún’s poems, in which nature and spirit are inseparable, aim to awaken this awareness (*Reducciones* xiii).

“Parlamento de Huenteano en la Isla Pucatrihue” (“Huenteano’s Parley on Pucatrihue Island”) is one example of a poem that articulates the communication with the spirits of the universe. In Huilliche mythology, Huenteano is a spirit living on the rocky island of Pucatrihue, in Osorno Province.¹⁰ According to the most popular version of the story of Abuelito Huenteano, the old man left for the sea because of accusations of incest with his daughter-in-law.¹¹ After wandering for several days, he married a mermaid and was turned into a rock. This marriage generated an alliance between the sea and the Huilliche people, which granted them access to marine natural resources. Huenún’s poem talks about the offerings left on the rocks for Abuelito Huenteano (bread, tobacco, flowers) in

order to ask permission to fish and to collect seaweed: “pronto partirán con sus cosechas de algas y pescado, la pobre ración de sus afanes. El pan y el tabaco que dejan en mis rocas serán para las olas; los ramos de trigo y de flores caerán en las oscuras almas de la profundidad” (soon they will depart with their harvest of seaweed and fish, the meager ration of their labor. The bread and tobacco left on my rocks will be for the waves; the bunches of wheat and flowers will fall into the dark souls of the depths; 115). Huenún emphasizes the communication between human beings and the elements of the universe, facilitated here through the poetic voice of Huenteano, a spirit in the form of a rock. This image finds its expression in indigenous traditions, in which natural elements play an important role in communications between living people and ancestral spirits (Petit-Breuilh 142). In oral Huilliche tradition, Abuelito Huenteano is an “encanto,” which refers to “a sacred place, ruled by an atemporality and geographically localized, [where] the ancestors live in symbiosis with nature” (Alvarez-Santullano and Barraza 9). By recurring to this tradition, Huenún “re-enchants” nature, offering a response to the environmental crisis, which is characterized by Watling as “a disenchantment of the world” (16). The relationship between Huenteano and the local people reflects the concept of indigenous kinship with the land, which is currently considered an important aspect in management of ecosystems. Since habitat fragmentation is a major factor endangering ecosystems, the indigenous notions of connectivity or kinship with nature “work against fragmentation in all its forms, environmental and social” (Rose et al. 76).

In “Parlamento de Huenteano en la Isla Pucatrihue,” there is an intimate spiritual and material interdependence and reciprocity between the human and nonhuman worlds. As observed by Viveiros de Castro, myths tell stories about physically diverse but spiritually equivalent beings that “inextricably mix in a common context of intercommunicability” (“Cosmological Deixis” 472). In this worldview, the original condition of all natural beings is not animality (as in modern biology), but humanity (subjectivity or perspective, as Viveiros calls it); animals and geographical features are often conceived of as existing within human genealogies. In this sense, there is no clear distinction between nature and culture: the natural world is also fundamentally human (472). Abuelito Huenteano, an ex-human representing nature, receives rituals, respect, and offerings from his former community in exchange for food. This relationship represents indigenous peoples’ moral responsibilities to the environments they inhabit. As Whitt and her collaborators state: just as the land sustains them, “[native peoples] are obligated to provide their lands with sustenance, to sustain them by means of practices and ceremonies” (10). Unlike the Western/modern attitude towards nature characterized by use and exploitation, the indigenous attitude implies not only use, but also care and respect. Therefore, the “sacred geography,” like

Huenteao, is a “source of spiritual as well as physical sustenance” (Spon-
sel 14).

The practices described in Huenún’s poem demonstrate an attitude of reverence toward nature and a sense of belonging to place. Such indigenous attitudes and ceremonies have served as influential sources in the field of spiritual ecology. Winona LaDuke underscores the difference between the Western sense of place as an object of empire, “historically one of conquest, of utilitarian relationship, of anthropocentric taking of wealth,” and the indigenous notion of places as spirits or sacred beings (86). She argues that, in the light of ecological crisis, it is important to reexamine the scientific attitude to the physical world as a mere object and to recognize our interconnectedness with the earth as a spiritual and living being. The worship of sacred places by indigenous people reaffirms this interconnectedness.

The sacred sites in Huenún’s work also play a crucial role in preserving indigenous communities’ cultural identity since their histories and human life experiences are woven into them. Such is the case of the cemetery of San Juan in Osorno Province, which Huenún commemorates in his poem, “En el cementerio de San Juan” (“In San Juan’s Cemetery”). The historical background of this work is the 1912 Forrahue massacre, in which fifteen Huilliches were murdered in a protest against a violent usurpation of their land. The cemetery of San Juan is a place of their burial, where their spirits are believed to continue living. The poem describes this sacred site, composed of little wooden houses, in the time of celebration: “el tiempo de las cruces, de las largas ofrendas” (the time of the crosses, of the long offerings) when relatives come to visit their ancestors, eating, drinking, and conversing with them (114). Their dialogue is facilitated through rituals and ceremonies. The cemetery thus preserves the memory of the past, reconnecting the contemporary Huilliche with their history. As Huenún frames it, “sin los ancestros nosotros no existimos, . . . y la poesía que nosotros hacemos como autores mapuche-huilliche es un ejercicio de restitución de la voz de nuestros muertos” (without ancestors we do not exist, . . . and the poetry that we create as Mapuche-Huilliche authors is an exercise in restituting the voices of our dead; “Sobre *Reducciones*” 309). This statement reflects how indigenous tradition relies on poetry and rituals transmitted through generations for millennia. Ritual is designed to bring the past to life in the present, to establish cyclical connections with the past; therefore, it plays a crucial role in preserving tradition. The author shares this view with other contemporary Mapuche poets such as Elicura Chihuailaf, according to whom the memory of the past helps indigenous people build a future in which their voice will have greater impact: “somos presentes porque somos pasado (tenemos memoria) y por eso somos futuro” (we are present because we are the past [we have memory], and that is why we are the future; “Elicura Chihuailaf” n. pag.). In both perspectives, poet-

ry's function is to revive traditions and values that not only affirm indigenous identity but also promote ecological awareness.¹² While both poets recognize the importance of reconnecting with Mapuche traditions in order to address the impact of globalization on indigenous communities, Huenún's *Reducciones* focuses on the role of colonialism in destroying these traditions. Huenún's poetry is heavily marked by the denunciation of colonial injustices; in this sense, his poetry becomes an anti-colonial tool (Huenún, "Poesía mapuche" 5). It addresses indigenous history in the context of colonization, dismantling colonial stereotypes of native people, as well as activating cultural awareness.

Since postcolonial criticism is committed primarily to the struggle for social justice, it has been criticized for being human-centered and "insufficiently attuned to life-centered (eco- or biocentric) issues and concerns" at a time of global environmental crisis (Huggan 702). However, there has been growing interest in exploring the intersections between postcolonial and ecological concerns in recent decades.¹³ Writers and scholars have analyzed the ecological problems as a result of imperialistic exploitation of communities and their environments. As observed by DeLoughrey and Handley in *Postcolonial Ecologies*, "historicization has been a primary tool of postcolonial studies and . . . it is central to our understanding of land and, by extension, the earth" (4). The natural world in these works functions as a "participant in the historical process rather than a bystander to a human experience" (DeLoughrey and Handley 4). This perspective finds its expression in indigenous traditions, where nature plays an important role in communications between people and the spirits of their ancestors.

Huenún's *Reducciones* expresses this tendency poetically, demonstrating how historical violence and traumas are communicated through the natural environment. Huenún's poem "Huenchantü" reflects how nature participates in the human experience of crisis: "escucha el silencio de los campos, Abraham, ningún animalito ya nos habla. Los bosques en silencio, como piedras, los pájaros sin voz. Huenchantü, huenchantü. Debajo de la tierra el sol se pierde, debajo del frío remolino de las almas en pena" (listen to the silence of the fields, Abraham, none of the animals speaks to us. The forests in silence, like stones, the birds without voice. Huenchantü, huenchantü. Under the earth the sun disappears, under the cold swirl of lost souls; *Reducciones* 125). The silence of nature in the poem is a literary trope of absence that implies the experience of loss and trauma, which is incommunicable. According to Dominick LaCapra, the unspeakable losses of the past are often impossible to express or articulate, since trauma is a "disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence" (41). The experience of trauma in Huenún's poem is linked to the notion of "huenchantü," which in mapudungun refers to a "time of crisis, war and hunger, period of conflict."¹⁴ In this case, the title refers to the effects in Chile of the 1929–1939 global political

and economic crisis, which was characterized by unemployment and despair, especially among the working class and peasants, and by violent usurpations of indigenous territories. In the poem, the impact of this crisis is not only felt by people, but also reflected in the natural world: “el agua respiraba bajo tierra. . . . La tierra nuevamente ardía y nuestros muertos, boca abajo, cubrían con sus sombras la extensa sombra de su corazón” (the water was breathing under the earth. . . . The earth was burning again, and our dead, face down, covered with their shadows the extensive shadow of their hearts; 124). Contrasted with the dead bodies, the water and the earth in the poem are breathing and feeling. This imagery suggests that the environment is a living organism, and consequently it can suffer the experience of trauma. In “Huenchantü,” the memory of historical events and human experiences is embedded in the land and sea.

Huenún also uses autobiographical memory, challenging the Eurocentric perspective that, in the words of Víctor de la Cruz, “relegated the indigenous peoples’ past to the distant and poetic zone of myth” (29). Huenún writes that “mi antigua parentela aborígen remontaba sus trabajos y sus días con ocasionales fiestas comunitarias. . . . Pero la rueda de los tiempos, los soles y las lunas girando sobre vivos y difuntos, ha echado sombra a esas viejas sabidurías. . . . Quedan en la tierra, corazón de boqui y la memoria resistente . . . y los ríos: el Rahue, el Pilmaiquén, el Bueno, buscándose por valles y declives, destellando con los peces que brincan los remansos del atardecer” (my ancient indigenous family transcended their work and their daily lives with occasional communal celebrations. . . . But the wheel of time, suns and moons spinning over the living and the dead, has cast a shadow over this old wisdom. . . . What is left on the earth, is the heart of boqui and resistant memory . . . and the rivers: Rahue, Pilmaiquén, Bueno, chasing one another through valleys and slopes, glinting with the fish that jump over the still waters of dusk; *Reducciones* 99). By disclosing personal memories and experiences, the author connects native history with contemporary conditions and increases the intimacy between the reader and Huilliche culture. Despite the note of nostalgia, the main function of the work is to preserve traditions that are disappearing.

Huenún’s approach forms a contrast with the Latin American tradition of indigenismo, which focused on the return to the origin and idealized the indigenous past. As Rebecca Earle observes in *The Return to the Native*, many nineteenth- and twentieth-century indigenist authors celebrated the precolonial past in their works without exploring any connections between the history and the present reality of the indigenous people: “constant throughout was the use of pre-Columbian history to construct national past that accorded little place to the contemporary indigenous population. In other words, preconquest Indians were good to build nations with, contemporary Indians were not” (183). A similar view is

expressed by Florencia Mallon in *Decolonizing Native Histories*, criticizing the European/colonial perspective that excluded indigenous histories from global discourses: “indigenous histories themselves have never really been local, except in the eyes of the colonizers. Rather, they have from the very beginning participated and been embedded in, transformed by, and resistant to globalization” (220). Huenún’s work reflects this view—his perspective on indigenous history is both local and global, since it emphasizes the place of native histories in the construction of the global present. By revitalizing memories and traditions, *Reducciones* activates awareness of and resistance to the reduction of Mapuche culture by colonial historical discourse.

Reducciones introduces an alternative vision of care for the environment into debates over environmental ethics, redefining nature within a spiritualized framework. It contributes to the emerging field of spiritual ecology by manifesting intimate and dynamic connections with the natural and spirit worlds. Since spiritual ecology questions modernism’s disenchantment of nature, it is antithetical to the environmental ethics of modern colonial societies, which tend to objectify nature “as if it were no more than a warehouse of material resources to exploit for consumption, commerce, and profit” (Sponsel 17). Huenún’s postcolonial perspective challenges this view by re-enchanting nature, reviving native traditions, and reexamining the environmental history of Mapuche-Huilliche and mestizo societies of Chile, thereby offering insight into the current ecological crisis. *Reducciones* revisits the indigenous past not solely to lament what has been lost, but also to propose a return to the traditional awareness of the sacredness of life and nature that may ameliorate the crisis provoked by the modern separation of culture and nature.

NOTES

1. This estimation was provided to the author by Jaime Huenún in e-mail correspondence from October 29, 2014.
2. For a detailed study of the colonization of Mapuche territory see José Bengoa, *Historia del pueblo mapuche, siglo XIX y XX*.
3. The commercial exploitation of indigenous traditions has become common worldwide, as Lisa Aldred demonstrates in “Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality.”
4. See John A. Grim’s *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology*, Roger S. Gottlieb’s *Religion and Ecology*, and Leslie E. Sponsel’s *Spiritual Ecology*.
5. Many contemporary Mapuches rebel against these stereotypes, redefining their indigenous identities as complex and diverse. In “Our Struggle Has Just Begun,” Claudia Briones demonstrates how young Mapuches live “in friction with the idea that Mapucheness is centrally linked to the countryside and rural life” and assert their indigenous identity as punk rock and heavy metal fans and musicians (105).
6. Quote from Huenún, e-mail correspondence with the author dated October 5, 2011.
7. See Mansilla Torres 20.

8. Quote from Huenún, e-mail correspondence with the author dated October 25, 2014.
9. For a historical study of the destruction of southern Chilean forests, see Luis Otero Durán, *La huella del fuego*.
10. Rolf Foerster examines numerous myths and legends relating to the transformations of humans (spirits of ancestors) into stones in *Vida religiosa de los huilliches de la costa*.
11. See Pilar Alvarez-Santullano and Eduardo Barraza, "Escrituras de 'encanto' y parlamento en la poesía huilliche."
12. See also Elicura Chihuailaf, *Recado confidencial a los chilenos*.
13. Among the works that link the interests of postcolonial and ecological discourses in literary studies, it is worth mentioning *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* (2005), edited by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, René K. Gosson, and George B. Handley, and *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010) by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin.
14. E-mail correspondence between Huenún and the author dated November 16, 2014.

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