

Our Endless Grief

Jaime Huenún Villa

2020

Catrillanca, Wounded Jewel,
your spirit rides through the ravaged
fields of Temucuicui.
Your head destroyed,
your spirit crushed
by the fickle language
of the powerful.
Tear gas whistles, flying
in your funeral procession.
Children, mothers, old people moan
no longer able to harvest
the Mapuzugun of their dreams.
The language of death has been unleashed,
brutality is the only recourse.
What will we give the children of the future,
the daughter of your blood,
those children fleeing alone
toward harsh underbrush?
Others cry and do not sleep
gravely injured by adults
safeguarding with guns
the Rule of Law.
Our endless grief
on the wet gray earth,
our endless pain
under the light of the sun.
But the song in our memory defends us,
but the tongue of the flowers,
but the rumbling of the rivers,
but flocks of Southern lapwings
announcing visitors
under the Southern rain.
¡Petu mongeleiñ, petu mongeleiñ! *
cry the mountains
that neither sleep nor plead.

We still exist, Catrillanca,
in the air of Wallmapu,
in the dance of Darwin's rhea,
in the eyes of your daughter
now growing up next to the fire
waiting along with us for
justice to reign on earth.

*"Petu mongeleiñ" is a phrase in Mapuzugun meaning "We are still alive."

—from the unpublished book *Kawiñtun üyelwün mew Ceremonia de los nombres*

Translated by Cynthia Steele.

About "Our Endless Grief"

On November 14, 2018, Camilo Catrillanca, a 24-year-old Mapuche farmer and activist, was shot in the back of the head and killed by special forces of the Chilean police when they entered his farm in Ercilla allegedly in pursuit of car thieves.

Catrillanca died at the scene and a teenager riding with him was arrested and tortured. Catrillanca was unarmed, and subsequent revelations about the torture and police obstruction of the investigation, led President Sebastian Piñera to force the resignation of the police chief and ten other police commanders.

Jaime Huenún Villa is an award-winning Mapuche-Huilliche poet from Valdivia in southern Chile. His books include *Ceremonias* (1999) *Reducciones* (2013), and the forthcoming bilingual *Cronicas de la Nueva Esperanza* (Santiago LOM, 2020) in which this poem will appear. Two of his other books are also available in English translation: *Port Trakl* (Action Books, 2007) and *Fanon City Meu* (Dialogos/Lavendar Ink, 2018).

Translator Cynthia Steele is Professor Emerita of Comparative Literature at the University of Washington, Seattle. Her translations of other poems by Jaime Huenún Villa are forthcoming in *Michigan Quarterly Review* and *Washington Square Review*.

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/406-spring-2020/our-endless-grief>
Fifth Estate #406, Spring, 2020

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