

The Earth's Remembrance

A Conversation between Moira Ivana Millán
and Jean-Daniel Lafontant

COMPILED BY CECILIA LISA ELICECHE

ABSTRACT This conversation brings together Mapuche *Weichafe* and writer Moira Ivana Millán and Haitian art collector *Houngan* Jean-Daniel Lafontant. They reflect on the histories of colonialism and anticolonial resistance and discuss the workings of memory, embodiment, and territory, churches, museums, western science and forms of cultural, epistemic, and spiritual extractivism. Millán and Lafontant offer critiques of colonial violence and ongoing environmental destruction, which work together, they argue, to constitute a campaign of terracide that is still being waged on a planetary scale. They conclude by affirming collective struggles against this campaign and calling for a language beyond anthropocentrism.

KEYWORDS memory, extractivism, spirituality, territory, terracide, anticolonialism, restitution

Haitians were the first to resist colonial invasion, and the Mapuche were the last to defend themselves against the advancement of the colonial frontier. Today the Mapuche are being violently attacked on multiple fronts, and Haiti is on the verge of yet another invasion. I sewed this quilt in the form of a dialogue, bringing together personal conversations with Mapuche *Weichafe* Moira Ivana Millán and Haitian *Houngan* Jean-Daniel Lafontant. For various reasons, the conversation could not happen directly between these two important authorities. With their permission, I put them next to each other here, combining words that I felt spoke to each other.

Rume Mañun! Mesi anpil! Thank you from the depth of my heart, Moira y Papa Da. — Cecilia Lisa Eliceche

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and Moira Ivana Millán

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Telluric Memory

Weichafe Moira Ivana Millán (WMIM): *Initially I read the finding of a funerary canoe¹ as an affirmation of our ancestors' existence in this territory. The second thing I was thinking about was how the desecration of our sacred spaces, of our burial sites, continues. And, third, the issue of the good death. Because there were multiple ways of taking the initiatory path to the stars. It was not only by being buried. Recently, I learned, or I was taught, why we bury, why the Mapuche people do not burn, why there is no cremation. Because if there was a good death, if the person we are saying goodbye to embodied a good way of living, in solidarity when we bury them we are sowing them in the earth so that they can multiply. And I thought a lot about this COVID situation, about the fact that many people died without being able to say goodbye to their loved ones, without being sown, because many people were also cremated. You burn those people who have done evil because you don't want them to reproduce, so that their strength, their newen, isn't reproduced. You burn them to purify the pain that person embodied, lived with, or generated. That is burned. It will not find its way back.*

The finding of a canoe coffin, which in Mapuzungun is called a wampo, shows first of all the binding, almost symbiotic relationship between the Lafkenche, the people of the great waters, and the element water, which could be the sea, or the lake, where these wampo were used, to live, to transport, to do so many things, even to leave this world on the way to the path of the stars. There is the idea that the path of the stars is nothing more than the continuation of the rivers. The rivers continue. What we call the Milky Way is a great river. The wente mapu, the world above, and the world below, the underworld: these three dimensions are intertwined; they cross paths and trace paths that have to do with our own life. It is not just burying a being. We are also weaving together those three dimensions. We inhabit, we are, and we develop in these three dimensions.

Unearthing that sister, a kwifiülchazomo, a young ancestor who has died: this unearthed kwifiülchazomoyem causes disharmony. It interrupts the cycle. And that also has consequences. This impossibility of living with the wingka (the invader, the colonizer) that touches and tampers with everything, that profanes everything, that "thingifies" or objectifies everything, and that disharmonizes and messes up every time. No matter how continuously we live performing ceremonies and investing all our energy in it. Phew! It is a titanic task that never manages to see its fruits. Because the wingka insists on groping, on being foolish, arrogant, not listening. . . . It costs us a lot. It is a spirituality that seems impossible to sustain in the face of the systemic violence of the wingka: the assaults on our spirituality and on the cosmic order.

You ask about the Lullaillaco children.² I cannot give you my opinion on where they are and how they ended up there. Whatever archaeology and anthropology say, I put in quotation marks because it is their logic. From their logic they derive hypotheses, and then they can prove them or not. But their proofs will always be filtered through the Eurocentric, Western gaze. We are not going to know for sure, and the reason we don't know for

sure is precisely because the people who claim to have made the discovery are the same ones who swept away all that culture, who destroyed the vestiges that could bear witness to other forms of existence and other ways of inhabiting the world. What they say now really matters little or not at all to me. What seems important to me is to stop and think: What right do this state and the dominant culture have to desecrate, to continue the desecration? Spiritual and cultural extractivism is a form of theft because it is desecrating and stealing and taking something somewhere else, relocating it to a place where it is going to be profited from, where it is going to be exhibited for the profit of the state or whoever administers it. That seems to me completely violent. It is a mechanism of violence, of aggression toward the culture and the spiritual structure of the people. We belong to the territory; the territory constitutes us. The bones belong to the soil. If the remains were taken from a particular geographic site, they should be returned. Because property and family are winkga concepts. The remains belong to the territory, to the mountain, to the river; they are part of a telluric and cosmic ecosystem.

So for me the Lullaillaco children should stay where they were found. Now, how can they return to the place where they were found if they have already been desecrated? That's when the community has to decide — to create a protocol for the reception of those remains that should be returned to the territory.

Regarding the children of the Lof Lafken Winkul Mapu, what I see as connecting them involves the violence of the state. That occupying force is in charge of violating them even before our children are born. It shows its contempt for a mother who is pregnant. In other words, the children who are on their way are very much aware that they are not welcome, not being received as they should, and that they are being repressed. The children who are on the way, who are growing up, are being shot at, persecuted, the Indigenous children who die of hunger, or the Indigenous children who suffer forms of sexual violence such as the chineo. Indigenous children are on the receiving end of all attacks. Even after they are dead, children are still being groped and defiled. There is the racism and the arrogant, anthropocentric, and foolish violence of the dominant culture. Always, in all cases.

When it comes to this question of childhood, the right to a good birth, a good life, and a good death come together. These are three rights that are violated and which in turn constitute the three-dimensional vision of the existence of the Mapuche people.

Houngan Jean-Daniel Lafontant (HJDL): I am flabbergasted at the violence that you are describing, because not only can I feel it, but it reminds me of the violence that occurs all over the so-called *nouveau monde* and somehow in the old European kingdoms and empires. That same violence has been perpetrated all over the world to establish new systems, such as slavery, colonialism, imperialism, hypercapitalism, oligarchies, and so on. I am affected by the violence committed against the Mapuche because it is the same violence that was committed against the Taino, the Arawak, the Lokono, and all Native people who inhabited the island. As Haitian

and Vodouvi, we carry the memory and living experience of these ancestors; we remember the violence against them, as they are us and a branch of our ancestry. Vodouvi should make it a point to promote the heritage of those who lived on the land and who early on fused with those who were brought from Africa to be enslaved. I refuse the label “those who came from Africa as slaves” because Africans were captured, kidnapped, and forcefully brought to the colonies to be enslaved. Barely twenty years after the landing of Mister Cristoforo Colombo, with his “Christian” sword, on the vast territories influenced by the Toltec, the Aztec, the Maya and other advanced civilizations, “Africans” and “natives of the land” became one.

These early ancestors, Natives of the land and the people of Alkebulan,³ suffered the same violence as the Mapuche. The people of Ayiti and Alkebulan became one and transmitted to their descendants the codes of the violence that they endured during three hundred years of resistance against domination and colonialism. It’s important to document, preserve, and divulge these cruelties and historical facts because, more and more, “they” want to erase these memories. To extinguish that memory, the earth and those who retained the memory of that ancestry shall perish. Because the memory and the experience of our ancestors are engraved in us and in the diverse places of our cosmos, some can collect memories of these violent criminal acts. These memories are forever recorded because the greater the violence, the more vivid the memory. These memories are there for eternity.

When colonialists occupy a territory, they often commit genocide. In their view, people only exist as individuals. They commit these atrocities, often to erase the memory of the people of the land. But by enriching the land with the flesh of its Native inhabitants, they fortify the *egregor*⁴ of its people and block their own integration. Simultaneously, they commit a terricide not only because of their system of domination but because they are ignorant of the divine power of the land. Any parcel of earth is sacred; a territory is a divine living entity. The land will listen to the lamentation of its people and reject the new occupant. The land will identify the predators, and they will be rejected by the spirits who inhabit it. The memory of the land will always remain: the land itself remembers.

We stand in solidarity with the Mapuche people and applaud their continued resistance. *Mariciwew! Awochen-Nago!*

WMIM: *Without territory, we cannot exist. Without territory, there is no identity, no culture, no spirituality. And we are an indivisible unit. Everything that happens to the territory has repercussions not only for our corporeality but also for our spirituality.*

This is why the struggle for the protection of territories is a struggle against terricide, a category that we use to define in a synthetic way the different means the system employs

to kill life. Tangible territories and perceptible territories are at risk. The latter are a dimension where the cosmic, spiritual forces that sustain life on the tangible plane live.

It's important to recover telluric memory. How is this constructed? It's good to recover the ancestral sound of our language and to think this concept from there. We are speaking with the language of the invader, and languages create worlds. In our languages, we have profound concepts that are practically impossible to translate into the conceptions of the dominant culture. In Mapuzungun, a word that could be used to refer to memory is longkogen. Longko would be "head" and gen, "essence." From the word gen or ngen, the ngenmapu, that is, the cosmos also arises. This way of understanding memory involves perceiving how that cosmic essence inhabits us. Memory, then, does not refer to human memory, the ephemeral, the accumulation of facts, or the situations we have experienced. We also carry the memory of the kwfikecheyen (our ancients) who live in us. When we bring a life to the world, that life will not simply build its own memory; it brings the memory of its ancestors. But we also bring the memory of the territories. Telluric memory does not belong to us, and it is not anthropocentric: it is an integral memory. Telluric memory is the weaving of the people's memory with that of the territory. Without territory we have no memory.

HJDL: Nature has a memory. In Vodou generally and for many of us, the umbilical cord is buried under a tree. This tree will grow on the umbilical cord and will carry the memory of that being and their ancestors before them. The tree carries the memory of the body and acquires new information throughout the life of the subject. If an umbilical cord is buried under a tree in Haiti and the subject is in Germany, in the event of a mystical or a physical imbalance, a healer can manipulate energies on the tree to heal the subject, wherever they may be. In that process, the healer will simply go to the tree, speak to its spirit, and perform the energetic manipulations necessary for the subject to heal as the tree and the subject become one and indivisible. This sacred tree retains the memory of the body, the living experience of the subject and its DNA. The tree is the person. The person is the land. That connection makes us one with nature. One with nature and one with the divine universe. You cannot separate the two.

When we die, we are also buried for trees to grow on us. These trees carry our memory. I am not talking only about our mystical memory. They hold all our memories, including our experiences and genetic memories. All of that becomes one with the land. This is why the land has a very particular energy. It's the energy of its people, those who inhabit and respect it. In a territory, all is energy and vibration: everything including its fauna, flora, and natural and mystical elements. The people of a territory, its creatures, Lwa,⁵ and energies, are indissociable from that parcel of earth. On a territory, the land and nature are an integral part of its inhabitants. In Vodou, the word "individual" is nonexistent. It is replaced by the word

“Moun,” which is composed of five elements intricately linked with nature and indivisible.

I am talking not only about telluric memory but also about genetic memory. If one has a drop of blood from a divine ancestor, one holds that “ancestral” memory. That drop of blood, the blood that has been spilled, if spread, the earth will remember. In a parallel way, nature has the memory of everything, and this is an important part of telluric memory. The symbolism of the Poto-Mitan is that of the great Baobab. The Baobab or Mapou tree (silk tree) in Haiti knows everything, all that happens during the tree’s life and beyond. If a Baobab is five hundred years old, it then collects the living memory of five hundred years of telluric events. It also stores the memory of all Baobabs within a given territory. They are connected by the roots as in a web, and their collective information organically spreads.

Nature, the earth, has its own memory of living things and events. The Poto-Mitan is the symbol of that memory. This is why the memory from above and the memory from below connect on earth. The Lwa of Vodou themselves use that channel to commute from one dimension to the next. This is the symbolism of the cross in Vodou. It is also very important to know that in our culture we are elements of the divine, potential spirits. We, children of the ancient ancestors, are the product of creatures from the world above and those from the earth. We are the children of multiple sources and dimensions; we are the source of the multiverse. We are a starburst. We are engendered by divine creatures from above and by earthly beings. We are born from multiple dimensions, and these dimensions are within many of us. The memory of our divine ancestors is!

WMIM: *Memory is not only human experience; it is the language of the earth’s own remembrance. And territories speak. They speak, for example, through rivers. When these territories are devastated, polluted, or disappeared, fragments of memory are also lost, parts of this spiritual ecosystem that lives within the ecosystems of the earth. Recently I was remembering an elder Wichí I visited in a community of the Algarrobal in El Impenetrable, in Chaco. I asked him if they had Pewma. Pewma are dreams, but they are not just any dreams; they are dreams that teach us things; they bring us the voices of these other dimensions that we inhabit. And he said, “No, because now we drink bottled water.” And one wonders: What does that have to do with it? It has everything to do with it, because, he explained to me, “Before, we used to drink water from the streams, the rivers, and the streams bring memory, they bring their memories. Now we don’t have a stream, we don’t have a river, we drink bottled water, and we have stopped dreaming.”*

So this memory will not be recovered, and harmony will not be reestablished if we do not heal together with the territories that have been plundered, polluted, and destroyed.

HJDL: Pollution is the outermost projection of imperialism and capitalism in its extreme stage. It is created because there is a total disregard for nature. Pollution

is not only from plastic, oil, petroleum gas, agri-toxins; it is in every facet of our life. For communities like us, it is almost impossible to get rid of that pollution because we have become part of the pollution itself. This is a systemic movement that is created by the current powers. It's forcing us to leave the land, to leave our agricultural system, the Lakou system. It is forcing us out of the village, out of nature, and into the urban ghettos. I am not talking about urban life as in a cosmopolitan city that is organized around nature. In the past, there were cities organized around nature. Today, things are different, because there is a systematic destruction of the rural world, of the peasantry. There is a war against nature and its waters and natural resources. It is a perfect expression of hypercapitalism. And in it we have become the product. We are just like the plastic around us. We are disposable entities. We are no longer human.

Plastic pollution is currently impossible to remove from the urban system as we know it in Haiti. As we speak, drains and the sewer system in much of Port-au-Prince are clogged. In the temple, water from the sewer system got into our bathrooms and kitchen. This is a situation of absolute violence. Plastic has invaded our life. Haiti does not produce plastic. Haiti does not produce anything, except minimal amounts of food. So then, why so much pollution? We are preparing for the worst because we are living in the worst of conditions.

For many of us, Haiti is the beginning and the end. It is an extraordinary nation, a *phare*, a beacon. Now we are seen as an example of the worst that can happen within the world. We are a lighthouse turned upside down, but change will come. *Ayibobo!*

The Lwa of Vodou are talking about an era of reversal; that may imply drastic and possibly violent changes, with the consent of the universe. This abusive system is destroying the earth. "Greed" has become its lifeblood. Individualism and obsessive power are now the core of that new order. Greed has long replaced the divine as in the saying "In God We Trust"! The money god is the ruler of this wicked system. We have gone mad praising diversity when convenient while forcing a destructive world order to establish the supremacy of the few over the majority. Earth and the universe of Ati-Sole are in agony. Nature itself is tired of what's happening. As nature engages in a reversal, the world will gradually find a new equilibrium, a serene balance. These systems imposed upon us will be reversed and replaced by the old ways of peace among all and harmony with nature.

WMIM: *The system, and of course the colonial nation-states, cannot admit that there is a civilizational alternative being woven in the South of the world, where, under our feet, there are billions of dollars of interest to transnational corporations. As Mapuche people, what we propose is a completely different civilizational model. And we are not fighting for this civilizational paradigm alone; the Mapu is fighting too, the Pu Ngen, the forces of nature are also fighting. There was a great Longko, Weichafe, called Calfuküra, who said,*

“Take care Wingka! When you have finished with the last of the Mapuches, beware of the Manke! Beware of the Panguí! Beware of every animal, because they are all of us.” And an elder from the north, in Jujuy, was telling me that in this precise moment animals are in the struggle too, and the spirit of these animals is fighting. Speaking in the context of so many fires, and the animals that were killed in the fires, she said, their püllu, their spirit, is also rising up, and in another dimension they are fighting against this terracidal system.

The soil has memory, rivers return to their course, mountains shake off invasions, the earth remembers, and the forest rises again. Animals return to where they were expelled from by the dominant civilization. The earth is looking to reestablish harmony, reordering itself, that is, healing and seeking justice.

Modern Science, Epistemic Extractivism

HJDJL: “The system that is” has been tampering too much with nature. The system tampers with nature by misusing science. There is apparently a Russian weapon that can create tsunamis, others that can create earthquakes. We’ve been tampering with nature and with elements of nature, thinking that we can control the universe. We have the power as humans to do things for ourselves, but we cannot control nature. We are provoking Mother Earth. Those Djovi-Mazanza,⁶ who have obtained this easy knowledge, coming as it does from worlds totally unknown to most, have misused it. The Mazanza have forgotten that nature is an integral part of the divine universe. These newcomers who brag about knowledge and science: you don’t possess what you simply have access to! This knowledge has been within our reach for the longest time and has been used wisely.

Many of these forms of knowledge and scientific principles are as ancient as humanity itself. The knowledge and science have been among the Alkebulan people (People of Kemet⁷ and Africa) and protected by their descendants of all creeds.

“The knowledge always was.” Knowledge is. But today the tools created with ancient information are now used primarily to empower some and dominate others. It is not the knowledge that is the problem; it is the use of the toys they are creating that is damaging.

WMIM: *The ancestral knowledges of peoples have sustained harmonious bonds with the earth for thousands of years. By contrast, capitalist and anthropocentric technology has generated the environmental state we are in, threatening to lead us to a point of no return. Of course, it can be stopped, here and now. We can halt the accelerating process of planetary death. Everything we do contributes to environmental collapse; even when I write a novel and want to print it, it will be printed on paper that comes from deforestation. But then how do we resolve these contradictions without falling into false redemptive proposals, such as those carried out by internet companies with false environmentalist discourses, which expose the political oxymoron, assuring us that the storage “clouds” pollute less than paper milling?*

These companies do not tell us, for example, that in order for these clouds to store our ten-year-old emails or audio messages, millions of liters of clean water are needed daily to cool servers, or that the carbon dioxide produced by server farms (before the COVID pandemic) was equal to that generated by air traffic in the United States. Also as inhabitants of the internet, that space now called “virtual reality,” we generate environmental, social, and economic impacts. The narrative of economic power is always misleading, and it invisibilizes. The technologies of capital are terracidal, from the beginning to the end of the production and consumption chains. Throughout the life cycle of these technologies, they are intrinsically related to the deterioration and death of territories: first, their materials are extracted for the production of the devices, and finally these devices end up in a landfill, which most likely is located somewhere on the planet where pauperization allows for killing with impunity. Racialization and the geopolitics of capital determine the territories where lives are not valued. These are turned into sacrificeable territories. These companies are allowed to take away the elemental forces, also called vital elements (minerals, water, energy). Extractivism is reflected in the irrational use of these precious elements, as well as in the irreversible contamination of the territories.

There are ancestral knowledges, and there is technology. For me, technology in itself is the consciousness of the limit. I can't make use of this knowledge that transports me in a nonmaterial way, so I have to create a material tool to transport myself. To a certain extent technology speaks of finitude, limitation, and the dominant culture. More technology means more limitation. Of course, today we are told that such and such a country is advanced and that it has tremendous technology; such and such a people use telepathy — this is superstition.

I don't think all of this is or should be freely available to everyone. I think it is available to those who can decode that knowledge for a purpose. A bunch of scientists can want to find answers, but it's not their place. It may not even be appropriate for the two of us to talk about certain topics that are so vast and deep. This information suddenly reaches a Lawentuchefe, a medicine woman, a Machi, a Lonkgo, a Pewmatufe, people who harbor a certain force or energy, for whom these questions, this curiosity, is not mere curiosity but fulfills a purpose. And it is not gratuitous. The circle of reciprocity is complete when that purpose is met. But there is always a cost. Always. So gratuity, like pricing, is a wingka idea. Reciprocity is something that belongs to the cosmic order. This depth and vastness of knowledge and cosmic information has nothing to do with the organization of information in the dominant culture.

What I am seeing is a growing extractivism, and this is no longer just for the academics, with their misleading artifices and the euphemisms we heard decades ago. Others are lashing out with impudent violence to stop the evolution of this ancestral knowledge. Because we have a Machi in prison. There is no other explanation. They can say a lot of barbarous things, but what is certain is that they see in the figure of the Machi, of the Machis, the incommensurable embodiment of an ancestral knowledge linked to territory

and the earth—not to mention that telluric force that they of course do not have. And they think this needs to be stopped in some way.

What is happening is that science as such is slowly being discredited because it has been pimped and reduced to tawdry commercialization. Science is no longer seen as it used to be, as a civilizing expression and as not only accurate, but also, as you said, benevolent. It is now evident that science has made laboratories of poor countries, that millions of people are killed in the name of science, that pandemics are being inoculated.

Science is also in crisis and being questioned. And feminism, for instance, does not account for different logics that must have a place on its emancipatory agenda. So, yes, let's go with abortion! But what about the right to motherhood? What about the right to motherhood in our identities? This not only involves how we give birth, educate, heal, or prevent violence. You yourself in your maternity are going to have a lot of challenges if you suddenly decide that your child should not have certain vaccinations. Because this health system is in reality a system of commodification of our bodies-territories. Our bodies-territories become spaces of exploration with economic potentials. The same thing that is happening to the Mapu with mining exploration is happening to our bodies-territories, which are being genetically mapped and tested. What they are doing to this earth they are doing to us. This health system is also preparing for the mutilation of certain senses of humanity. We are in an era of the technologization of our territorial bodies. The concept of territory for this era and this system is simultaneously expanding and denaturalizing. We talk about virtual territory with the same consistency as if we were talking about tangible territory. Who are the people who inhabit this virtual territory? We are facing the power of virtual corporatocracy. And this virtual corporatocracy is devising a system, a “model of life” where the body can be transmuted, adapted to its technologization.

The more progress that is made toward the technologization of the body, the more we, Indigenous nations, compel ourselves to recover ancestral memory and search for the millennial secrets of the relationship between humans and the rest of nature. We seek to return to an indivisible unity with the earth, to return to being and acting as earthlings.

The healthcare system is not a system of healing. We live in a system where the modality is analgesic, where the idea is to not feel. Does it hurt here? Little pill. Do you feel sadness? Little pill. It's all about pills. The idea is not to feel. To not let yourself go through the pain. Listening to your body doesn't always mean the pleasant symptoms of that body; it also means listening to the pain because that's what we are. From finding the depth of that pain, from finding the origin of that pain, we go toward healing.

Today we were discussing the concept of yerpun, which is about going through the night. The Mapuche people say that one is not born as a person on earth. To be che, to be a person, one builds oneself. We are earthlings, and to get from earthling to person we walk through a process where we have to go through the night; we have to have our yerpun. How do you go through that night? We go through the pain, but we don't stay in the suffering. We don't stay in the dark night of suffering and pain. When we have

experienced pain, loss, loneliness—when we have gone through it—we don't stay there. We understand the value of companionship, we understand gratitude for having all that we need, and we become more human. To be human, to be a person—as the Mapuche people say, to be che—implies having elevated your spirit, having opened your heart. So there is such an enormous difference between the conception of the individual as a citizen in the universe and the conception of being a person within the cosmogonic order. These are directly opposing views. So the wingka health system and the Indigenous peoples' idea of good living, the perception of what healing would be, respond to opposite logics. For us, healing is the reestablishment of harmony. What the health system does is remove the ailment without reestablishing harmony. It silences the pain for as long as it lasts, but it does not reestablish harmony.

HJDL: Science and technology have known unprecedented developments. The world's massive technical advancement has produced exceptional discoveries. In a parallel way, the world is experiencing the worst disparities and inequalities. The total disregard for spirituality and for the earth as a divine entity have led to egoistical development serving the interest of individuals disguised as large corporations instead of collectivities. Poverty is rampant, yet no one sees it. Misery is paroxysmal today. But the so-called advanced world has gone blind.

Technology is seen as a key element for combating climate crisis, disparities, and major disturbances. However, many catastrophic developments, some irreversible, were a consequence of these “advancements.” We are in a point of crucial alarm. Recovering from this will be a serious challenge. We are seeing the *dernier sursaut de la bête* (last burst of the beast).

Consequently, I call upon my sisters and brothers in the divine, those who retain knowledge, who understand the science of the spirits and the keys to the mystical world; I call on them to act. May all the mystic forces of peace combine their knowledge, their science, and their energies to reduce the negative influence of those who now wield power and are using it to promote division and inequality. Please, regroup and reason with the greedy newcomers. Power is love, not greed!

I am always embarrassed to say “love,” because love takes on meanings that almost reduce it to nothing. But when I say that power is love, I mean that power is the understanding of us, the understanding of the divine, and that of the divine within us. Not greed. Not what they use for modern science. Not the tools they play with or the toys they create. Power is love, and love is being one with humankind. In love we should trust!

Churches and Religions That Capture Spiritualities

WMIM: *There is ample evidence of links between certain mining businessmen and evangelical churches. This, for example, is happening a lot in the province of Chubut, in the areas affected by the Navidad project. Mining companies have financed the propagation*

of cults, building churches, investing funds, and calling on evangelical pastors to ask their congregations to stay away from antimining demonstrations. They have suggested that mining could be a godsent alternative to generate employment, so that people, especially young people, could leave alcohol and drugs behind and dedicate themselves to work. I have heard that on countless occasions. The congregation is hijacked by the opinion of the pastor. That is why evangelical churches do not openly participate in the antimining struggle. On the contrary, they are in favor of mining, while the Catholic church, colonial though it is, at least in the province of Chubut, is taking a stand against mega mining.

The impact of the Evangelical church is decisive. It tries to divide us in our own territory, not only in recovered territory but also in the city. It divides us, and it does this through spiritual extractivism. It takes away our identity. It promises us a paradise so that we will stop defending the paradise that does exist, which is in the territory that we defend day after day in the struggle for life.

Evangelical churches are instrumentalized to carry out a form of neocolonization in neighborhoods in which Indigenous people are the majority. You go to Formosa, Chaco, Jujuy, Salta . . . the vast majority of people in these impoverished shanty towns, living in abject misery, are Indigenous. They are brothers, sisters, and siblings who come out of Indigenous communities. Because in addition to all the land seizures, there is also the fact that the climate crisis is having a terribly profound effect on the bodies and territories of these communities. So there are environmental refugees, which of course the state is not going to recognize as such because, in the first place, it has to recognize that there is an environmental crisis caused by an extractivist model, a toxic industrial model.

In fact a large percentage of the urban population consists of environmental refugees. And that is where the evangelical churches go, to contain, disperse, undermine, and alienate, thus preventing the rearticulation not only of Indigenous struggles but of all the struggles against this predatory and lethal capitalism. And they succeed because they replace our spirituality with religiosity, and they reach women above all. And why do they reach women? Because we Indigenous women suffer a lot of racism. We are condemned to be the little servants of white women; we confront terrible institutional and patriarchal violence over our bodies-territories that reflects back to us a despicable image of ourselves that is also enslaving. We cannot liberate ourselves. What then is our perspective on the future? "We are nothing." That phrase, "We are nothing": I have heard it so many times, so many times in the mouths of women from different Indigenous nations. We are ugly and poor; we are nothing. So the low self-esteem, the lack of recognition of our plenitude, makes us believe that our poverty is divine will, that our submission is divine will. So we get married or we get together with men who beat us, who mistreat us. And what we face outside is more mistreatment and more contempt. It is as if we are destined to nonlove, as if we have no alternative but nonlove because we are not desired or admired; we are not loved. We are in most cases neglected women, invisible; we are not seen, and when we are seen it is through a repressive and exploitative gaze.

So then comes the fantasy that there is only one being who can love us, who is God, who accepts us as we are. In the midst of so much violence, so much racist hatred and cruelty, so much lack of love, there is a need to cling to the idea that there may be someone, a supernatural being, who loves us, accepts us for who we are, finds us beautiful, and wants the best for us. There is a massive attraction there, in the face of pain and lack of possibility, perspective, and self-esteem—no future. The refuge of an invented religion offers us paradise and love, all that we do not find in everyday life.

HJDL: The Catholic church is the primary tool of slavery, colonialism, and hypercapitalism and its most prominent beneficiary. Today in the West, Catholicism is an imperial system; in the rest of the world, it is a religion. The attacks are the same, as greed and Catholicism are interconnected and indissociable. Religion is a man-made tool of domination. Only spirituality defines the human soul. The practice of our ancestral traditions and beliefs does not make of them a religion. I am always confused when people refer to Vodou as a religion. *It is not.* Vodou is a way of life. Its magic and spirituality are centered in nature, the ancestors, the land, our history, and the divine in us.

Let's consider some actions taken by the Catholic church of Haiti. They have invaded the most sacred spaces, those of the Taíno and those generated by Africans brought into slavery in Saint-Domingue, now Haiti. Most of these portals, including six of the nine major universal ones (there are hundreds of these spaces in Haiti) have been despoiled by a Catholic, Christian, or Western institution. They systematically identify mystical sacred places and build their churches, temples, lodges, and all sorts of malevolent institutions. They then ruin the authentic mystical egregor and develop their own.

Most Vodou pilgrimage sites have a Catholic church that is placed on the original sacred site. Consequently, the power of the Lwa, the spiritual egregor, the intensity of the mystical forces that inhabit the place are despoiled and their emanation diminished. The sacred portals often close as they are repeatedly obstructed by a church's edifice. The church becomes the façade. Those who know can still open the gates to these portals. Often, they operate on the hidden side of the facility. When these portals remain inactive for too long, only virulent forces will reopen them.

These acts have been perpetrated methodically and systematically by the oppressors, using their religion, tradition, and mystical system to shut down the spiritual egregor that preceded them. Bwa Kayiman is an example. Its main site in Morne Rouge has been invaded by the Protestants, primarily the Evangelicals. They built churches, confronted and attacked vodouvi, burned and cut sacred trees, and organized mass possessions and public prayers quite often led by white American pastors. All of this is done to destroy the mystical egregor of the place or shut down the cosmic portals.

They limit access to the space of worship and reduce direct interaction among the vodouvi, the Lwa, and the sacred energies of the lieu. Evidently, an energy cannot be imprisoned; but if it is not fed by the belief of the people, it loses its purpose and potency. This is why Christian and Catholic religions' purpose is to prevent access to the sacred portals that contain energies and the secrets of the land. One objective is for people not to feed on these sacred energies but on the belief of the oppressor. Their mission is to obstruct all ancestral portals and reduce the Haitian spirit to that of a submissive slave. These actions are done systematically and purposefully to establish a hegemonic mystical egregor and erase the ancestral knowledge of Haiti and its people. It is the same throughout the Americas. They place Catholic and Christian churches, all kinds of churches, in sacred Indigenous places. It's worse in the United States, where they even build governmental institutions on the very sacred spaces of the Natives of the land. By doing so, they ensure that people will turn their back on the earth and nature, on the sacred, mystical spaces, and turn to a belief system imposed by the oppressors. No longer looking at paradise here, they will seek a heaven that will be found only in death.

These traditions, the Christian traditions, seek to completely eliminate the relationship between the earth and us. They create a relationship with a god in heaven. This distant god, sitting on a throne in a lost universe, will never hear our lamentation. We become foreign to our own universe and lose contact with our universal, telluric dimension. These imposed traditions make us nontellurian. We are no longer grounded; we become standby passengers on earth, waiting for the vessel of death to take us to heaven or hell. We lose all our spiritual and mystical force by not believing that everything in the universe is one with us, indissociable in the love of nature and each other. These destructive teachings and forms of brainwashing eliminate all possibilities for reterritorializing and reclaiming our Lwa, spirits, and telluric energies.

Museums, the Memory of "Things," Cosmic Portals

WMIM: *Museums are thieves' houses. The exhibition of "objects" is gauche, vulgar, tasteless, and on top of it people are paid salaries to think about how they will display the "objects," and then they do it wrong. I visited the British Museum and went to the Mapuche gallery. They even have a Rewe! How can there be a Rewe there? Re is purity, and we is place; it is a place of purity. It is the representation of the ceremonial space of our people. These, to us, are elements of power that we use to communicate with earth. I remember a conversation I had with Irish brothers and sisters, who said the way the church was able to install itself there was by moving their stones. They are stone portals. They moved them. I can't understand. Those stones were signaling special energetic places. And why did they do it? Because they were ignorant? No. They did it because they understood how those sites strengthened people. And they moved them to weaken people spiritually.*

This is why we are the way we are on earth. All these places have been sacked and debilitated: these great portals that communicated with and connected us with the forces that sustained life. We will not be able to heal from the devastation of our ecosystem if we do not recover the portals and the sources of energy that in the Mapuche world we call the Pu Ngen, or the forces that reconstitute life. Those stones in museums—I would rather see them moved in pieces back to their original territories than intact in there, giving force to evilness. If they are not where they belong, it's better for them not to be anywhere at all. Because those who took them know why they took them. And they know why they put them where they put them. There are people who have a profound understanding of our knowledges and accumulate power in order to continue dominating and practicing terracide. Invasion and territorial pillage cannot be understood only from the perspective of the economic development of the state. They also need to be read as the pillage of spiritual territories.

HJDL: We should make no mistake about those who govern the world. I am not talking about governments; I mean those who give orders and control the systems in place. They know the power of the land, the sites, and the territories. Each land has its unique soul. They know that every land has its energies, each territory radiates an esoteric dimension, each land has its signature. Not “mountainous land,” as is often thought, the Taíno word *ayiti* means “high land” or “sacred land.” *Ayiti* is an ancient word; its original meaning is “high spiritual land.” After the Haitian Revolution and the victory over the French empire of Napoleon Bonaparte, the name of Saint-Domingue, given first by the Spaniards and later by the French colonizers, was abolished. The land was given to them mystically by the Taino. As a tribute to these Native ancestors, Hayitians restored the original Arawak name and added “Toma” for “our land.” The land has kept its original vibration, and its Natives are a vibrant part of this egregor. Its old ancestral beings are as alive today as they were thousands of years ago.

Haiti is the object of the world's covetousness. They really want it. Not as a piece of land, as they could exterminate all Haitians and get it. They seek not only its material resources or geostrategic position but also want its soul and spiritual legacy. Haiti is an ancient land, and its various portals lead to immense knowledge and resources. They want the ancestral knowledge of the land. They want all of it. And if they can't have it all, they may destroy it all.

I had a nightmarish vision of the Citadelle crumbling down. Built in the early 1800s, it is the most important fortification of its kind in the world. The Citadelle is also the most important symbol of African resistance and freedom in the new world. In 2010, a catastrophic magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck the western part of Haiti, killing three hundred thousand people and causing over 8.5 billion US dollars in damages. I would add that the number of postearthquake deaths in the years that followed are not mentioned but are estimated to be in the thousands.

Many of my friends passed. Most of trauma. Others got sick because of the pollution. About ten years after the 2010 quake, a second one took place in the southern part of Haiti. In 2021, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck the Tiburon Peninsula. Because it primarily affected rural areas, 3,000 people died, 13,000 people were injured, and 130,000 homes were destroyed. The damages are estimated around two billion US dollars.

Meanwhile the Dominican Republic, which occupies two thirds of the same island, has not been affected by those quakes. These important Haitian places, south and west, have been seriously affected. The north, not yet. But in that vision, the next quake is happening in the historical north side of Haiti. In that vision, the Citadelle has crumbled. The destruction of that symbol is important for those who want to maintain world hegemony.

WMIM: *“Objects” contain a deep philosophical, spiritual meaning in cosmogonic synthesis, and are often a fundamental part of the narrative structure of our memory. They have been reduced to archaeological pieces, decontextualized and emptied of meaning. “Things” do not only contain symbolism. I use inverted commas because there is no word for “thing” in the Mapuche world. Thingification, objectification—this belongs to the dominant culture. Every element, every “object” had a name. Not only that: it was charged with philosophical sense, but also energy.*

All objects have a use and a philosophical and spiritual transcendence. They are not only ornamental. The construction of pots, silverwork, the loom, daily life, the logistics for survival. Spirituality and philosophy were intrinsically linked. We could say that there was an iconographic construction in the objects of daily use. You had a challi, a pot, that was for medicine and another one for cooking. How did you identify them? Because the use of each element was captured in the drawings, and in that way knowledge, kimün, was also perpetuated, and in how the world was ordered, in everything we did. Today, seeing how these objects are reinterpreted, sometimes in absurd ways, I have seen all kinds of nonsense in museums. They are interpreted from a wingka, Western point of view; the museums have no idea what they are saying. They lay claim to legitimate knowledge in the most arrogant way. They claim the privilege of defining the world according to what they believe it to be. They will continue to be wrong and to talk nonsense.

HJDL: At Na-Ri-VéH objects are sometimes discarded. In some instances, the object is preserved because it belonged to the Lwa, is sacred and can't be used, or is broken, or unusable. Anything used by the Lwa is sacred. Depending on the elemental ascendance of a Lwa, an object will be buried (earth), hung (air), burned (fire), or drowned (water). Sometimes objects are buried because we want the earth to keep the energy, as we may not want it to be too potent on the outside. At other times, objects are hung because we want their energy and their memory to remain. Their use is infinite. But most use is linked to the potency of each of the four elements.

Some objects are burned, as fire has the potency of Ogoú or Èzili Laflanbo. Elements are linked to specific Lwa or energy. Objects, natural objects, and materials retain the energy that is given to them by the earth. Nature, minerals, and all elements vibrate with us, *are* us, and one with the sacred divine.

As in the handling of human-made objects, when one enters the temple, there is always a ritual. Some rituals are elaborate, others quite simple. For instance, some objects must spend several days in the rain, in the sun, and so forth. Some are presented to the moon. They benefit from the magical effects of nature. Objects have their own identity, but other forces, magical powers, are added to them. Minerals have their own energy, their own force, their own power. Sometimes we add to it.

During the fire at Na-Ri-VéH, the sacred cherry tree burned. To preserve its powerful energy, we inserted the burnt trunk of that magical tree into a new object. The “hosting” object came with its energy, but we had a full ritual to bless the new, combined object, to rename it, so it became part of the temple, part of the community. We inserted into this new object a very old one. The cherry tree was the first tree planted on the land, when the family acquired the property over one hundred years ago, so it has its own energy. The cherry tree is there, not as a tree, but as part of a new sacred object. Everything in nature, each natural piece (not chemically transformed materials like plastic) has its own energy and its own power. It is very easy for us to bring another energy, another force, into an object, by chanting around the object, by touching it, by asking it for things, by feeding it, or simply by asking the Lwa or other energies to bless it. These manipulations allow us to provide additional energies to the object, transforming it. On the other hand, we can also remove certain energies from an object and turn it into a “still” item. In a parallel way, we can capture the “soul” of an object or its energy and place it into a new one.

This mystical process or magical transformation allow us to desacralize an object, when allowed by the Lwa. The magic added to an object to reinforce its magical powers can be removed or displaced into another object. There were cases when pieces from the temple were acquired by collectors. This requires rituals and ceremonies that allow the removal of the “soul” of the piece. Often, these energies are captured and placed in another object. Nonetheless, an object always keeps part of its original energy, mostly that inherent to its natural disposition, the energy source of the object. Furthermore, every artistic creation retains its own magic and is the energy source of a transformed piece. The piece is then alive and can be potent or active.

Every object has a soul; every object has an energy. But all energies can be manipulated and possibly transformed, displaced, and replaced.

For instance, the energy of a Bizango Statue can be enhanced or diminished through tying or enchainment. The binding is a constant reminder of the suffering

of those enslaved to preserve colonialism. A reminder to never return to slavery. These morbid but spectacular statues are a positive reminder to forever ban that most inhuman system.

Bizango is a tradition in Vodou with specific links to the maroons (Taíno and Africans) and the Sosite (secret societies). Phenomenal statues from that tradition became quite popular on the art market, not only for their remarkable aesthetic value but also for their powerful energy sources. As in the Musée du Quai Branly's acquisition of a Na-Ri-VéH Bizango statue, it is important to be precise. Over ten years ago, the Bizango statue was sold to a collector, who later passed it on to the museum. Since then, that piece and others have been researched and extensively documented. As per the tradition at Na-Ri-VéH, selling the piece required very specific rituals. Given its provenance, sacred history, and power, extensive ceremonies of desacralization and replacement were completed. Later, with the blessing of the Lwa, its energy was restored at the temple. Furthermore, the Lwa suggested that the transaction was beneficial to all and would also benefit Na-Ri-VéH.

On the other hand, there was a piece by Sebastien Jean, who was not famous at the time. The small statue called *Le garde des Gédé* was recently acquired and vibrated well with the Bawon, Grann, and Gede families of Lwa. It was *andoye* and sacred as a protector of the *badji* (temple or sacred room) of the Gede. In retrospect, it should not have been sold. We performed all the proper ceremonies, but many people have asked for it to return. On many occasions, I have seen it in my dreams and visions. We are hoping that this piece will return to Na-Ri-VéH.

Reflecting now, I think these things may be happening for two reasons. First, it is possible that the object should not have been sold. Second, the rituals and ceremonial processes may not have been properly organized. This second explanation seems more plausible. One important reason may be that the initiation and integration processes were not properly completed. The piece was not completely transformed to become sacred. Part of the process had started, and then we sold it. It was never replaced because the process to render it sacred was never completed. Its displacement and sales may have created a mystical void at the temple. I've been thinking about it for a long time, and it keeps coming back to me. I am hesitant about what to do. Maybe I ought to perform another ceremony. Or maybe the piece must be returned; hopefully it will be. Currently our *règleman* (ritualistic processes) are lacking.

I would love to ask whoever retained the piece for a possible restitution, arguing that the entity insists on returning. Yet the world we are living in has its own rules, and if we abide by these rules—according to which selling the piece and collecting the fees for its desacralization seals the transaction—how can we ask for restitution? Furthermore, a sale at Na-Ri-VéH is conducted by the *Houngan* under the kind benevolence of the Lwa and with the approval of the community. All are

part of the process. In the end, we have accepted our potential error and deem the transaction to be concluded. As the Sèvitè of the Lakou, I take full responsibility for the consequences. Nonetheless, this is where two worlds collide. This collision opens a debate about the right to possession and private versus collective property. It's also a debate between greed and spirituality—and between love and the ego.

On the general subject of restitution, of course there are cases where pieces are stolen, sacred places violated, and art illicitly or malevolently taken. In these cases restitution should be mandatory. In the case of the Campagne Rejetée, also known as the Campagne Anti-Superstition, headed by the Catholic church and the Haitian government of Elie Lescot after the US occupation, they burned, stole, and otherwise destroyed many pieces. The most valuable ones—gold artifacts, old drums, Taino artifacts—are in the Vatican Museums. These pieces and many others stolen from the land should all be returned, and reparations should follow. We know most Western institutions are predatory; they come to steal and destroy in the name of modernity. It is the core of the system they have created. But now is the time to reestablish some kind of equilibrium.

Modern and “Contemporary” Art Museums, Spiritual Extractivism

WMIM: *Modern and contemporary art museums bear full responsibility for spiritual extractivism. Because they reinscribe and justify the genocide, the terracide, in order to establish and to enthrone modernity. They enthrone modernity as a “civilizing” response to human needs. And if there is something that has enthroned anthropocentrism, as the foundation of terracide, it is modernity. And in this way, it has justified absolutely everything. So, yes, we have here a form of butchery, one of the most noxious expressions of the cultural process of the dominant culture.*

HJDL: I don't think places are the enemies. Places and institutions reflect their founders' souls and intents, motivations and objectives. The enemy is the ego prejudice in the lower soul of many people. Stereotypical humans, men—more precisely, egocentric conservative men—think within the frame of mind of the colonial master, that of a supremacist. Others have the same mentality, and gender and background don't exempt anyone. The frame of mind is the enemy, and the enemy is powerful.

Once this mental framework is overcome, the configuration and energy of the space will be transformed. Museums will be transformed, and the Western cathedrals of art and culture will be metamorphosed. The Western colonial egregor must and will disappear and make room to a diverse universe, the multiverse. As we turn to the spiritual world and the spirit of nature, we will understand that the creative process and, by extension, art, whether sacred or not, is divine. As we become aware that we are the other, and the other is us, our paradise will be here.

We must take advantage of our oneness in a sensitive way. That's all we need to do. I don't find it that complicated.

WMIM: *I haven't seen much modern and contemporary art. I'm telling you this honestly. First of all because I have no interest because it depresses me. As a Mapuche woman, I go into a museum, and I feel like I'm struck by their violence and their arrogance, and it depresses me. It makes me extremely sad. So I don't go because I go where my spirit is strengthened, not where it is weakened and feels beaten. I think museums have to be dismantled, and the memory of the people has to be demuseologized. I wouldn't go to museums at all, and certainly not if I have to pay. I mean, they stole everything from us, and I still have to pay them? No! The same thing happens to me with the national parks. I don't pay for the national parks. I fight with everyone, and I walk in. When they say, "No, you have to pay," I tell them, "I am Mapuche, and I am visiting the park of my Guaraní brothers and sisters, a territorial space that you dispossessed. You are not going to charge me, come and remove me if you want." But they never force me to leave. I refuse to pay in the national parks. The same with the museums. I know only the museum in London, because we went there to see if we could organize a protest, that was the only reason. I went to one in Berlin with the same intention. But after that I haven't visited museums.*

I already know how the wingka organize the world. I'm not interested. And something that happens to me a lot lately is that I feel that this wingka world talks, talks, talks, rationalizes. It gives me a headache to see how the wingka tries to construct thought. Sometimes I feel that the wingka are curious, and this is also part of their ego. They learn, they listen, they ask, ask, and ask some more, and nothing changes in their lives. They are in the cities. They continue to inhabit the megacities. They continue to live with everything that is wrong and that makes us wrong. They ask and ask, but their lives are not transformed. Now I understand the papai, the elder women, that there comes a time when they no longer answer; they keep quiet. I am getting there. I don't know if it's because I'm getting older. But I'm getting fed up with words. I almost don't feel like talking. I live in silence, and I don't answer. I don't feel like talking. I don't answer the phone. I don't do any of that because I feel that all that is just vanity. I had to go to the United States on a tour of four universities, and that's when they arrested the Machi, and I asked myself: Why am I going? For my ego? Because I am going to get paid? The money they pay me justifies me leaving my house, the territory? For what? For vanity? No, I'm not going. If they don't have space in their schedule later, if they don't have another time for me, then I won't go. What do I care? In other words, let the wingka continue studying, let them write, let them do whatever they want; but if they don't question themselves, if that search doesn't lead them to transform the world, we are wasting our time. So that time that I would use to talk to the universities about this and that, I can use to talk to the sea. I will feel much more listened to, and I will learn more. I'm going to use it to walk the mountain, to listen to the wind, what am I going to talk for?

Language Beyond Arrogance

HJDL: Today, the Lwa and Mother Earth are appalled by our behavior. We worship our divine individuality; we think we are God. Some of us are part of the divine, we certainly are not the divine. Our blind arrogance is the epitome of ignorance. Nature will survive it; but, as a species, we may not. And I am using the word “species,” because we think we are different from those other creatures that live in the world; we think that because they don’t speak our language that they don’t speak their own language. We think that they are stupid animals, because “animal” and “stupid” became synonyms, while being human is a synonym for being godly. We are deaf to the language and pleas of others, yet we scream in arrogance on all fronts.

WMIM: *We need to take out the earplugs that are blocking the entrance of territorial or telluric voices, the earplugs that the colonizer put in us. There is that phrase that I really don’t like: “Giving voice to the voiceless.” It’s an arrogant phrase. It’s not only arrogant but tutelary toward peoples. It underestimates communities. I don’t think it is about giving voice to the voiceless but about taking out our colonial earplugs. I am not speaking about humans only; I am speaking about all that is in the spiritual dimension, about animals, all of nature, rivers: all have a voice.*

Words weren’t the only way we used to communicate. We learned the language of the earth. The language of birds, the language of rivers. Not all rivers speak the same way. Not all winds speak and sound the same. To think that language is only anthropocentric is to have a completely biased and blind view of the depth and marvel that is the cosmos, where everything has its own form of communication, and languages are established with their own codices. Ignorance and the lack of cosmogonic vision make it so that, probably out of shame, we consider inferior the rest of the natural forces with whom we share the earth. We enthrone human culture, and we refuse to see the depth of the cosmic language other forces speak.

CECILIA LISA ELICECHE is a mother, dancer, choreographer, and campesina based between Salvador de Bahía, Brussels, and Necochea. Among her choreographic works are *Unison*, *the non-massage dance*, *The Ghost of Lumumba*, and *Caribbean Thinkers for a New Europe*. They have collaborated with Heather Kravas, DD Dorvillier, Janet Panetta, Etienne Guilloteau, Claire Croize, and Tereza Díaz Nerio. Since 2016, she has been sharing life with Leandro Nerefuh, diving in the deep waters of Ayiti (<https://haitioayiti.com/>). In 2020, with the guidance of Ruro Caituiro, Cecilia gave birth to divine Toya. She’s a cofounding member of the dance editorial writing grupa *Dancing at the Crossroads (as we walk)*. Cecilia is a spiritual daughter of Sosyete Na-Ri-Véh and is proud to serve on the board of KOSANBA (the Scholarly Association for the Study of Haitian Vodou). They are currently completing a PhD in anthropology at the Universidade Federal da Bahía. She is

thankful to *Houngan* Jean-Daniel Lafontant, Dr. Egbomi Nancy de Souza, *Weichafe* Moira Millán, and Dr. Kyrah Malika Daniels for their friendship and guidance.

Born with the gift of clairvoyance, **JEAN-DANIEL LAFONTANT** was formally initiated in 1997 as a *sèvitè* (servant) of the spirits. A year later, he founded the Vodou temple Na-Ri-VéH 777 in Port-au-Prince. For twenty-five years, he was a professional marketing executive. After Haiti's devastating earthquake in 2010, Lafontant joined the humanitarian NGO Catholic Relief Services, a welcome shift after a long career in the financial sector. For years he has promoted Haitian art influenced by Vodou and has intermittently worked as a consultant for various media, museums, universities, and diverse art institutions. Among the most successful of these productions are the award-winning documentaries *In the Eye of the Spiral* and *Believers* with Reza Aslan on CNN. Lafontant has produced and helped shape dozens of documentary films, art exhibits, articles, research projects, conferences, and other productions and events related to the culture and religion of Haiti. He now dedicates all his energy to healing, Vodou, and the promotion of Haitian art and culture.

MOIRA IVANA MILLÁN is a *weichafe* of the Mapuche Nation and a member of the Pillán Mahuiza community, located on territory recovered by her and the women of her family more than twenty years ago. Moira is an activist and a defender of human rights, of her people, and of the earth. She is also a writer. Moira lives in an ancestral territory called Puelwillimapu, in a whitewashed country today called Argentina. She cofounded the Movimiento de Mujeres y Disidencias Indígenas por el Buen Vivir and the Movimiento de Pueblos contra el Terricidio. She organized the first Marcha de Mujeres Originarias por el Buen Vivir in 2015 and the Caminata: #BastaDeTerricide in 2021. Among her writings are the film script for *Pupila de mujer, mirada de la tierra* (2012), the book *El tren del olvido* (2019), and the soon-to-be-published novel *Los caminos del cilantro*.

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Notes

1. Perez et al., "A Pre-Hispanic Canoe."
2. The Children of Llullaillaco, also known as the Mummies of Llullaillaco, are three child mummies abducted from their sacred burial site on March 16, 1999, by Johan Reinhard and his archaeological team near the summit of Llullaillaco, a 6,739 m (22,110 ft) stratovolcano in the ancestral territory of Tawantinsuyu (on the colonial border between Argentina and Chile). On June 20, 2001, Argentina's National Commission of Museums, Monuments, and Historic Places declared the Children of Llullaillaco to be National Historic Property of Argentina. Since 2007, the children have been exhibited in the Museum of High Altitude Archaeology in the Argentine city of Salta.
3. *Alkebulan* is a word of African origin derived from the Arabic words *al*, meaning "the," and *qibla*, meaning "orientation." Sometimes it is used as an alternative name for the

continent of Africa. The term *al-qibla* was also used to refer to the region to the south of the Sahara Desert, which is generally the direction that Muslims in Africa face during prayer. The word *Alkebulan* is often used to honor and acknowledge the African origins of humanity.

4. The term “egregor” comes from the French word *égrégor*, which is derived from the Greek word *egrégoros*. In the esoteric or occult context, an egressor is a collective energy created by our ancestors who had a common purpose or belief. The Vodou egressor is an esoteric entity with a collective consciousness and its own intelligence.
5. The word “Lwa” refers to the various spirits, forces, energies, and ancestral vibrations that are central to the Vodou tradition, culture, and religion. The Lwa are worshipped and invoked for guidance, protection, and assistance in various aspects of life. Each has its own personality, preferences, and areas of expertise. They are often associated with nature, universal phenomena, the cosmos. Each Lwa or family of Lwa has its own rituals, colors, food, preferred animal, and *veve* or symbol.
6. In Vodou, Djovi are children, and Mazanza are those who act irresponsibly and/or against the interest of the community. When these words are put together, Djovi means “immature” and Mazanza “arrogant” and “disruptive.”
7. Kemet is the ancient Egyptian name for Egypt, which means “black land” and refers to the fertile soil of the Nile Valley. The people of Kemet were the ancient Egyptians, who lived in this region and developed one of the world’s earliest civilizations. The term “Kemet” is often used in the context of ancient Egyptian history and culture, as well as in modern Afrocentric discourse. The people of Kemet were known for their advances in architecture, art, literature, religion, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and other fields, and their legacy has had a profound impact on human history and culture.

Work Cited

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