



Oralities and musicalities in dialogue: Kalfu and the musicalization of the Mapuche poetry of Elicura Chihuailaf¹

Oralidades y musicalidades en diálogo: Kalfu y la musicalización de la poesía mapuche de Elicura Chihuailaf

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Abstract: In this article, I present an analysis of the musicalization of the Mapuche poetry of Elicura Chihuailaf carried out by the Chilean band Kalfu. The research proposal I put forward is that this musicalization can be understood as the culmination of a broad process of transmission and dialogue between oralities and musicalities, which develops in three stages: the first, in which we find the orality and musicality of the Mapuche oral tradition that serves as inspiration for Elicura Chihuailaf's poetry; the second, which consists of the textual representation of these oralities and musicalities in the "oralitura" work carried out by the poet, where the orality and musicality of the poem are also incorporated; and the third, in which the sonic reconfiguration of these oralities and musicalities takes place through Kalfu's musicalization work, where the orality of the musicians' vocal interpretation and the musicality of the instrumental composition are also integrated.

Keywords: Musicalization of poetry, Mapuche Poetry, Kalfu, Elicura Chihuailaf, Oraliture, Intermediality.

Resumen: En este artículo presento un análisis de la musicalización de la poesía mapuche de Elicura Chihuailaf realizada por la banda chilena Kalfu. La propuesta de investigación que planteo es que esta musicalización puede entenderse como la culminación de un proceso amplio de transmisión y diálogo entre oralidades y musicalidades, que se desarrolla en tres etapas: la primera, en la que encontramos la oralidad y la musicalidad de la tradición oral mapuche que sirven de inspiración para la poesía de Elicura Chihuailaf; la segunda, que consiste en la representación textual de dicha oralidad y musicalidad en el trabajo de "oralitura" realizado por el poeta, donde se suman la oralidad y musicalidad propias del poema; y la tercera, en la que ocurre la reconfiguración sonora de estas oralidades y musicalidades a través del trabajo de musicalización realizado por Kalfu, en el que se integran, además, la oralidad de la interpretación vocal de los músicos y la musicalidad de la composición instrumental.

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Palabras claves: musicalización de poesía, poesía mapuche, Kalfu, Elicura Chihuailaf, oralitura, intermedialidad.

The relationship between orality, poetry, and music acquires a particularly significant dimension in the encounter between the work of Elicura Chihuailaf and the Chilean musical group Kalfu. This article analyzes how the musicalization carried out by the band on the poetry of the Mapuche author represents the culmination of a broad process of transmission and dialogue between oralities and musicalities. The proposed hypothesis is that this process unfolds in three stages: the first, constituted by the orality and musicality of the Mapuche oral tradition that inspires Chihuailaf's poetry; the second, which consists of the textual representation of that orality and musicality in the "oralitura" work carried out by the poet, where the orality and musicality inherent to the poem itself are added; and the third, corresponding to the musicalization performed by Kalfu, in which these oralities and musicalities are sonically reconfigured, also incorporating the musicality of the instrumental composition and the orality of the sung word.

The analysis will be carried out from a stylistic and structural perspective characteristic of literary studies focused on poetry, in order to propose some hermeneutic approaches that make it possible to demonstrate the stated hypothesis. In addition, the analysis of the musicalization of the poems will pay special attention to the structural aspects of the musical composition and to the particularities of the performers' interpretations.

Regarding the object of study, Kalfu is a Chilean fusion band² that combines music with poetry in *mapudungun* and is notable for focusing its musical productions on the work of Elicura Chihuailaf. Their body of work includes *Cantata mapudungun* (2012), which adapts Chihuailaf's translations of 20th-century Chilean poets into *mapudungun*, and the albums *Trawun = reunión* (2017), *La sangre grita Vol. 1* (2019), and *La sangre grita Vol. 2* (2021), which are musicalizations of the poet's works³. Notably, Kalfu's creative project was developed in close collaboration with Chihuailaf, who not only performed with the group in live presentations and discussions but also contributed to the musical compositions by reciting his poems for inclusion in several of the musicalized versions.

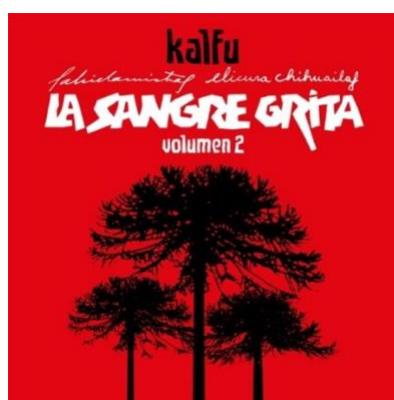


Figure 1: Cover of *La sangre grita* [The blood cries out] Volume 2, 2021. Last EP of the band.

² Within the context of Chilean Latin American fusion music, Juan Pablo González provides a valuable overview in his book *Música popular chilena de autor: Industria y ciudadanía a fines del siglo XX* [Author's Chilean Popular Music: Industry and Citizenship at the End of the 20th Century], Ediciones UC, 2022.

³ Elicura Chihuailaf's poetry has also been musicalized in genres beyond popular music, such as the works of composer Eduardo Cáceres (1955) in the field of contemporary music. However, this study focuses on Kalfu's work, as it is a work of musicalization of poetry developed with the poet's participation.

Elicura Chihuailaf (1952) is one of the most renowned voices in Mapuche poetry in Chile. His work has been acclaimed for its intercultural significance, as it builds bridges between the Mapuche and non-Mapuche worlds by introducing the Mapuche worldview and traditions to Westernized society, while also fusing his cultural heritage with elements of Chilean poetry, as seen in his translations of Chilean poets into the Mapuche language. His work has been translated into multiple languages and has received major accolades, including the Chilean National Prize for Literature in 2020.

In line with his commitment to fostering intercultural dialogue, Chihuailaf's body of work is diverse and includes poetry collections such as *En el país de la memoria* (1988), *El invierno, su imagen y otros poemas azules* (1991), *De sueños azules y contrasueños* (1995), *Sueños de luna azul* (2008), *La vida es una nube azul* (2015), and *Sueños de luna azul y otros cantos* (2018). His poetry has also been disseminated in audio formats, as in the oral poetry cassette *Hablando en el espíritu azul de mi gente* (2003).

He has also published essays, with his most iconic work being *Recado confidencial a los chilenos* (1999). Furthermore, his poetry has inspired visual artists who have illustrated his books, including María de los Ángeles Vargas and Alberto Montt in *Kalfv Pewma Mew: Sueño azul* (2009), Tite Calvo in *Relato de mi sueño azul* (2013), and Tatiana Álamos in *Ruegos y nubes en el azul* (2014). Chihuailaf has also contributed to intercultural dialogue from the opposite direction, by translating Chilean poetry into *mapudungun*, most notably in *Todos los cantos* (1996), a volume of Pablo Neruda's poetry also translated.

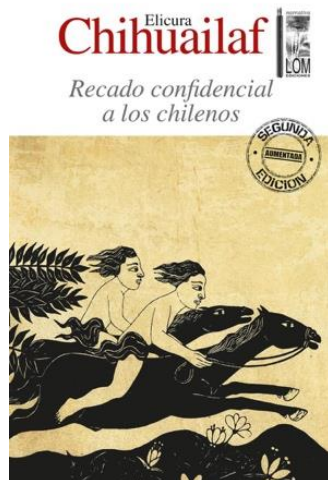


Figure 2: *Recado confidencial a los chilenos* [Confidential message to the Chileans], 1999. The author's first prose work and one of the most important in his career, due to the intercultural dialogue it proposes

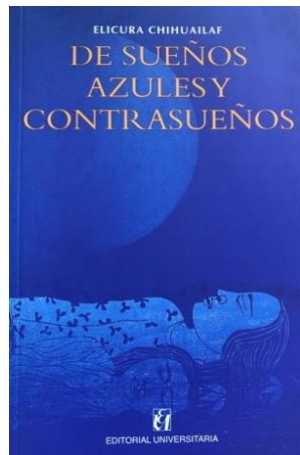


Figure 3: *De sueños azules y contrasueños* [Of Blue Dreams and Counterdreams], 1995 is one of Elicura Chihuailaf's most acclaimed poetic works and a key piece within contemporary Mapuche poetry.

Having laid out the context for this analysis and introduced both Kalfu and Elicura Chihuailaf, it is important to note that this article focuses on the album *Trawun = reunión*, released in 2017. This album includes several musical compositions based on Chihuailaf's poems, including: "Llueve en el poema", "Hablando con la gente de la Tierra de Arriba", "Al azul del morir", "El árbol de la ternura", "Ponte de pie", "La llave que nadie ha perdido", "Círculo", "Nada de mí quedará en esta Tierra", "Fvtranawel", "Algunos sueños", "Mi alma solitaria dice adiós", "Tami Pewma Mu Kalfv Chaw", and "Señales de la Tierra de Arriba". Many of these poems appear in his collections *De sueños azules y contrasueños* (1995) and *Sueños de luna azul* (2008). The album also includes an original piece titled "El brujo", created by Manuel García in collaboration with Kalfu. In keeping with the album's title – "reunión" [gathering]– the project features Elicura Chihuailaf's own recitations in some of the tracks and includes collaborations with a wide range of Chilean musicians such as Francisco "Pancho" Sazo, Manuel García, Francisca Valenzuela, Tata Barahona, Juan Ayala, Andrés Godoy, Kike Galdames, Nano Stern, Manuel Huerta, and Joe Vasconcellos. Also featured are Mapuche artists Miguel Ángel Pellao, a lyrical tenor, and traditional singer Beatriz Pichi Malen, whose contributions are of particular interest in this analysis.

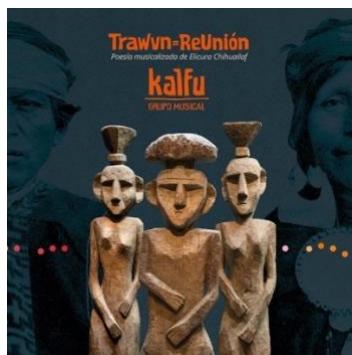


Figure 4: Album cover of *Trawun = reunion*, 2017.

Some Theoretical Considerations on the Musicalization of Poetry

The musicalization of poetic texts constitutes a return to the shared origins of music and poetry. Although the literary and musical traditions currently function as independent disciplines, within the academic sphere –at least in the past two decades– studies that link

both fields have proliferated. As a result, some research has specifically addressed the musicalization of poetic texts as an object of study. Various theoretical frameworks have been employed to approach this phenomenon.

On one hand, interartistic studies and intermediality have focused on the possible connections between different art forms. As Claus Clüver notes:

‘Interarts Studies’ has been a growing interdisciplinary area of the humanities, still dominated by investigations into the interrelations of literature and the other arts, but increasingly also involved with aspects of intermedial connections between the visual arts, music, dance, performance arts, theatre, film, and architecture (2007: 20).

In this context, the musicalization of poetry not only links both disciplines from a textual and sonic perspective but also generates a state of hybridity in the media through which these artistic productions are disseminated. A musicalized album may be simultaneously understood as a musical creation and as the sound medium of a poetic work—what Irina Rajewsky defines as intermediality: “all those phenomena that (as indicated by the prefix *inter*) in some way take place between media” (2005: 46). Therefore, the musicalization of poetry, understood as an intermedial product, would occupy a liminal space between the canonical practices of both disciplines, forming part of “those configurations which have to do with a crossing of borders between media” (2005: 46), as the author states.

On the other hand, intersemiotics and musical semiotics have proposed modes of study focused on the dialogue and integration of the semiotic systems of both disciplines. A recent study by Marta Covisa points out:

“Comparative studies between music and literature have enjoyed a privileged status within interartistic comparison. Among the countless theoretical approaches to the literary-musical comparative phenomenon, semiotics has repeatedly been highlighted in recent decades as a particularly productive framework for analysis”⁴ (2024: 198).

This theoretical perspective has offered valuable tools for the analysis of the musicalization of poetry—some centered on the phenomenon of “translation” from text to sound, following the proposals of classical semioticians such as Jakobson’s “intersemiotic translation” (1959); others go beyond this notion of “translation” to conceive musicalization as a new, autonomous reality born from the blend of the semiotic codes of poetry and music, as in the case of “heterosemiosis,” proposed within musical semiotics by authors such as Juan Miguel González Martínez (2007)—.

To these formulations, we can add structural approaches to the analysis of works that explore how certain structural aspects of the poem are displaced and amplified through musical composition—for instance, Juan Carlos Ureña’s “transmusicality” (2015), which refers to the transplantation of the poem’s inherent musicality into musical composition, and Rossana Dalmonte’s concept of “expansion” (2002), which emphasizes the selection and enhancement of specific structural aspects of the poem, particularly grammatical, syntactic, and semantic ones—. These are certainly not the only theoretical approaches, but the ones mentioned here are sufficient to illustrate how the connections between poetry and music continue to spark academic interest today.

⁴ Author’s translation.

Finally, in Chile, some studies on the musicalization of poetry have focused on highlighting how these works may be interpreted as a form of critical engagement with the poetic texts that inspire them (Cussen 2014), on how this dynamic is reflected in emblematic works of the Chilean poetic-musical tradition –such as *Alturas de Macchu Picchu* by Los Jaivas (Eisner 2017)– and on tracing certain continuities in the development of musicalizations of poetry, particularly in relation to the literary canon (Meza 2022).

Orality and Musicality in the Mapuche Oral Tradition

For the purposes of this analysis, the term *oralities* refers to all those cultural manifestations that, in their broadest sense, rely on the voice as the primary vehicle of expression. Within this framework, we consider the main elements that constitute the object of study in this work: the specific speech of a community –here, the Mapuche people; collective oral expressions, such as “the tales” of the ancestors; individual voices, like that of a poet– in this case, Elicura Chihuailaf; and song, both collective and individual, which includes the musical work carried out by Kalfu.

We do not disregard the “epistemic conflict” (Castillo 2019) that emerges around the academic taxonomy used to refer to orality, where concepts such as “The Oral”, “Oral Tradition”, “Oral Literature” or “Oraliture” seem to lack clear boundaries or well-defined uses (404). Therefore, in this analysis, we will use *oral tradition* to refer to the body of knowledge orally transmitted within Mapuche culture, and *oraliture* to describe the poetic work of Elicura Chihuailaf, which, within the context of Chilean poetry, encodes that knowledge in written form.

Musicality, meanwhile, refers to specific sonic modalities found both in speech and in music. In speech, it manifests through elements such as rhythm, pronunciation, and the intonation patterns characteristic of a given language, which contribute expressiveness and communicative nuance. In music, it is expressed through melody, harmony, and instrumental dynamics in composition, which vary according to cultural and aesthetic context. In both cases, musicality implies an intentional and characteristic sonic organization that shapes how it is perceived and interpreted.

In Mapuche culture, orality plays a central role; its traditions and worldview are transmitted orally to new generations. This transmission of knowledge took place through storytelling and song, without the use of writing⁵. “On this side of the world, what was known was song, the *ül* in Mapuche culture, since written tradition was neither possible nor perhaps necessary”⁶ (Carrasco 2014, 105). The very name of their language reflects this: *Mapudungun* can be translated as “the speech of the land.” The scholar Iván Carrasco, when

⁵ It is worth mentioning the existence of various grapheme alphabet proposals developed for the Mapuche language. According to Pilar Álvarez-Santullano, Amilcar Forno, and Eduardo Risco (2015): “In recent decades, various initiatives have emerged to provide a writing system for the Mapuche language. This process, which moves an oral society toward becoming a literate one (in relation to the vernacular language), unsettles the social conditions that preceded its emergence –among them, the social representations and conceptions of the ‘self’ as a people and their relations with the dominant social group, historically equipped with writing” (116). However, the authors also point out that these writing systems are contemporary linguistic constructions: “In this sense, the task of writing a language that has until now functioned in and for oral tradition not only aims to revitalize the language itself, but also to position its speakers (and now writers) in a new relationship or potential agreement between peoples who contest the same space in an effort to maintain and develop their cultural and institutional practices and policies” (116). (Author’s translation).

⁶ Author’s translation.

discussing the phonemes, morphemes, and syntagms of the Mapuche language, states that they “resonate with a particular sonority, cadence, [and] music”⁷ (2019: 18). Elicura Chihuailaf, for his part, describes his language by highlighting certain aspects of its spoken form: “Mapuzungun, the speech of the Earth, an agglutinative and inflected language, made up of its respective dialects and idiolects”⁸ (2015: 59). However, beyond the linguistic features of Mapuche speech, what concerns us in this article is the way in which, being a language anchored in orality, it also resonates with memory, insofar as it serves as an oral vehicle for Mapuche cosmogony and traditions. It is the collective memory of a people preserved in the immediacy of orality that underscores the importance of ancestors and elders as bearers of this knowledge.

This marks the first stage in the dialogic process between orality and musicality. The orality of Mapuche tradition and the musicality of its language enter into dialogue with the written poetry of Elicura Chihuailaf—a poetry situated within an intercultural space in relation to Chilean culture, as it also takes part in the Chilean poetic tradition—. Mapuche cosmogony and its traditions are always present in his poems; thus, we may propose that the orality and musicality of Mapuche tradition speak through Chihuailaf’s poetry, while also engaging and blending with the poet’s individual voice and personal experience. As the poet himself states: “It is not only I who speak: the author is but a small path within the teachings and the word of our ancestors. That voice, the voice of a people who have been suffering for 200 years, is what has carried me around the world”⁹ (Chihuailaf, in Gómez y González 2020).

Elicura Chihuailaf: Oraliture, Literary Tradition, and Interculturality

Elicura Chihuailaf’s poetry constantly seeks to reflect the oral tradition of his people. This is why his writing is done in both Mapudungun and Spanish, why his poems address the unique Mapuche way of perceiving the land and nature, and why the act of storytelling by elders and ancestors is textually represented in his poetry. The following quote is enlightening in this regard:

His poetry places particular emphasis on orality, as it brings together the voices of ‘the ancestors’, alluding to the collective memory of his people and to the oral teaching and transmission of Mapuche traditions received by the poet through the figures of his familial and collective ancestors and forebears. It is for this reason that the author himself defines his poetic practice as ‘oraliture’—that is, a literature that arises from the substratum of this latent orality, an element that in his poetry becomes a marker of identity and a sense of belonging to his community¹⁰ (Meza 2021: 106).

Regarding the link with nature, Magda Sepúlveda (2021) is especially relevant, as she connects Mapudungun and Elicura’s poetry with sound: “Since Chihuailaf conceives of Mapudungún as a way of being in nature, he creates a type of poetry in which the sounds of the surrounding environment are of paramount importance” (298). His poetry also offers Chilean tradition a deep reflection on intercultural connections and the historical memory of the inequalities suffered by the Mapuche people—first due to

⁷ Author’s translation.

⁸ Author’s translation.

⁹ Author’s translation.

¹⁰ Author’s translation.

colonization, and then to the Chilean state— since the aim is not to romanticize or present a softened version of the dispossession and segregation experienced by the Mapuche nation, but to raise awareness about them. As Iván Carrasco (1995) states:

Chihuailaf takes as his foundation the situation of asymmetric interculturality endured by the Mapuche and develops a lucid historical-cultural reflection on it as the basis of his poetry. His project is to establish his writing as the record of the historical and ethnic memory of the Mapuche community, “on the shores of an oral tradition still alive”¹¹ (62–63).

Elicura Chihuailaf’s poetry can be understood, from the perspective of specialist Iván Carrasco, as “intercultural Mapuche poetry” or “ethnocultural Chilean poetry,” because, according to the scholar: “What we call ‘poetry’ or ‘Mapuche literature’ is a complex, polysemous, and variable cultural object. In fact, there is no word in Mapudungun (the ancestral language of the Mapuche) equivalent to poetry, a term, concept, and type of experience that is very Western”¹² (2014: 105).

Because of this, Carrasco refers to the “construction” of Mapuche literature, understanding this as the creation of artistic textuality by Mapuche authors—in other words, the construction of a written Mapuche literature that enters into dialogue with literary criticism and theory within cultural institutions (2014: 105)–.

The intercultural aspect is essential in Chihuailaf’s poetry, as it builds bridges not only from the Mapuche world toward Chilean culture, but also in the opposite direction. This is evidenced by his translations into Mapudungun of poets from the Chilean tradition such as Pablo Neruda. Carrasco also emphasizes the intercultural nature of Mapuche poetry:

Mapuche poetry—that is, poetry written by authors of Mapuche culture, ethnicity, or native language—is composed of intercultural poems, that is, the product of a verbal, artistic, thematic, and cultural symbiosis between elements of Mapuche and Western Chilean origin¹³ (2014: 105).

However, the same author adds that this poetry, being rooted in the features that constitute Mapuche identity, can be understood “from its cultural construction as a type of literary discourse different from Chilean poetry”¹⁴ (2014: 106).

It is important to note that in Elicura Chihuailaf’s poetry we not only find the echo of Mapuche orality and musicality; his poetry also carries a personal mark, a unique gaze that emerges from his Mapuche identity but enters into dialogue with his Chileanness. That’s why, in the context of receiving the National Literature Prize, the poet said of his poetry: “It is not only I who speak”¹⁵ (Chihuailaf, in Gómez y González 2020) Here the poet acknowledges both the voice of his community and, from his cosmogony, the voice of the Earth as foundational to his poetry, alongside his own. This personal voice is what shows certain thematic preferences, such as Indigenous spirituality, the presence of nature, and of his people through the figure of the ancestors, and the practice of poetry as an individual who moves through interculturality.

¹¹ Author’s translation.

¹² Author’s translation.

¹³ Author’s translation.

¹⁴ Author’s translation.

¹⁵ Author’s translation.

One of the particular ways the poet's individuality manifests in his writing is the consistent use of the word *azul* (Blue) in the titles of all his poetry books. The meaning of this *azul* is explained by the poet himself in an interview for "*Trawvn = ReUnión Documental grupo Kalfu*" (2018), which narrates the story behind the Kalfu group's album and the relationship between the band and the poet. Chihuailaf states:

In our worldview [...] our elders say that the Spirit, the life energy of living beings, is an energy that in this case comes from the *Azul* [Blue]. And then that energy comes to inhabit a temporary house, which is the Body, and later leaves it to continue westward to cross the *Río de las Lágrimas* [River of Tears] and return, completing that circle back to the point of origin¹⁶ (28:05).

In this context, "Azul" becomes a space beyond the material world, from which come the spirits that give life to beings and earthly elements. The poet's voice then expresses his individuality through the choice of specific themes—in this case, a sacred element rooted in Mapuche cosmogony—. Other Mapuche poets may focus more on themes such as the resistance of the Mapuche people to injustices caused by colonization and the Chilean state. While Chihuailaf certainly addresses these themes as well, along with others such as memory and territory, he leans more heavily toward expressing the Mapuche view of nature, spirituality, and worldview.

But the poet's voice is not only evident in the thematic choices within his poetry. His work also conveys the subjectivity of the poetic speaker: thoughts, musings, and emotions that are intertwined with the Mapuche worldview that underpins it, and with his own poetic practice. In the poem "La llave que nadie ha perdido" (Chihuailaf, 2018), we find what might be considered his poetic credo—a reflection on the purpose and essence of poetry:

La poesía no sirve para nada
me dicen
Y en el bosque los árboles
se acarician
con sus raíces azules
y agitan sus ramas al aire
saludando con pájaros
la Cruz del Sur (66)¹⁷

These first verses tell us that the poem is written in the first person and introduce a central reflection: what poetry is for. There is a contrast between the external message—the pessimistic verdict that poetry is useless—and the poetic magic that the speaker perceives in nature: trees with blue roots, where blue serves as a metaphor for the sacred element of nature according to the Mapuche worldview.

The following verses reveal the speaker's own understanding of what poetry is:

La poesía es el hondo susurro
de los asesinados
el rumor de hojas en el otoño

¹⁶ Author's translation.

¹⁷ The poems will be quoted in their original language in order to preserve their meaning and significance.

la tristeza por el muchacho
que conserva la lengua
pero ha perdido el alma
La poesía, la poesía es un gesto
Un sueño, el paisaje
tus ojos y mis ojos, muchacha
oídos, corazón la misma música.
Y no digo más, porque nadie
encontrará
la llave que nadie ha perdido (66)

Here we see how the speaker's view of poetry is shaped by emotions and personal references –the boy, the girl, the poet himself– as well as by key elements in Chihuailaf's poetry such as nature, dreams, and music.

The final verses of the poem introduce a crucial element for understanding Chihuailaf's poetry: the fusion of his voice with that of his ancestors and culture:

Y poesía es el canto de mis
Antepasados
el día de invierno que arde
y apaga
esta melancolía tan personal (66).

The song of the ancestors blended with the speaker's personal melancholy shows the dialogic and polyphonic nature of Elicura Chihuailaf's poetry.

In summary, the orality and musicality of Mapuche tradition are fully present in Chihuailaf's poetry, but they do not erase the poet's voice or his personal experiences. His work represents a dialogue between oralities in which different voices come together. The written poems of Chihuailaf, like all poetic texts, contain their own musicality –resulting from the inner rhythm created by pauses, emphases, cadence, and intonation shaped by language. Therefore, if the first stage in this dialogic process of musicalities and oralities –proposed in this analysis– corresponds to the orality and musicality of the Mapuche language and oral tradition, then the orality of Chihuailaf's poetry (expressed in his own voice) and the musicality of his texts, as poetic compositions, make up the second stage of this process, where voices encounter, dialogue, and merge.

Kalfu and Musicalization as a Dialogue Between Oralities and Musicalities

While Elicura Chihuailaf's work already engages in a dialogue between his poetry and Mapuche oral tradition, in the musicalizations created by Kalfu we encounter the highest expression of polyphonic voices and a dialogue between oralities and musicalities. The very name of the band aligns perfectly with Chihuailaf's poetry and Mapuche tradition, as "Kallfü", from which the band's name derives, means "Blue" in Mapudungun, alluding to the rhetoric of Mapuche Indigenous spirituality that is characteristic of Chihuailaf's poetic work.

The musical work that Kalfu carries out with Elicura Chihuailaf's poetry involves transforming poetic texts into melodies embedded within broader musical compositions that include rhythmic and harmonic elements. The poems are set to music with the intention of

being sung; however, the vocal performances of Kalfu's musicians sometimes intertwine with the recitations of the poet or invited Mapuche artists, as in the case of Mapuche singer Beatriz Pichi Malen in the musicalization of the poem "Ponte de pie" (Kalfu 2017).

The intercultural nature of Kalfu's work is particularly significant, as it reveals the convergence of Mapuche culture –expressed through the poetry of Elicura Chihuailaf– and Westernized Chilean culture. The Mapuche culture is reflected on the semantic level –that is, in the content of the poems, which refer to Mapuche traditions and worldview– while the Westernized Chilean element appears in the musical influence of globally impactful Western genres and styles, such as rock and pop. Yet, the dialogic nature of Kalfu's musical work not only creates bridges between Mapuche and Chilean-Western cultures, it also generates a linguistic dialogue between Mapudungun and Spanish. In the musicalized versions of the poems, both languages alternate and sometimes coexist simultaneously.

This linguistic dialogue is also musically rendered in a distinctive way: from what might be called Kalfu's "musicality" as a stylistic trait, there is a characteristic choral approach tending toward polyphony, which, through a kind of "musical ekphrasis" (Bruhn 2000), expresses through multiple singing voices the dialogue between oralities proposed in this analysis. However, in Kalfu's musicalization, it is not only cultures and languages that engage in dialogue; artistic disciplines also interact, producing intermedial relationships in which the "nonspecificity" typical of contemporary art stands out (Garramuño 2015). While Kalfu's work can be situated within the tradition of Chilean music, its use of Elicura Chihuailaf's poetry as raw material allows these musicalizations to be understood as a way of circulating the poet's work through a musical format. Furthermore, the album *Trawun = reunión* (2017), true to its name, fosters dialogue and interaction among a variety of guest artists, including renowned Chilean fusion musicians such as Nano Stern, Joe Vasconcellos, and Francisco "Pancho" Sazo, as well as Mapuche musicians like the aforementioned Beatriz Pichi Malen and tenor Miguel Ángel Pellao.

The album also features a dialogue between spoken and sung word, as several musicalizations combine singing with poetic recitation. Examples include "El árbol de la ternura", "Llueve en el poema", and "Ponte de pie". These recitations are always performed by artists of Mapuche heritage –either the poet himself or invited artists– suggesting that Kalfu seeks to represent Mapuche orality sonically through voices of Mapuche origin.

In addition, some tracks present internal dialogues between lyrical voices. The most representative example is "El árbol de la ternura," a musicalization of the poem co-composed by Kalfu and special guest Tata Barahona. This poem enacts a dialogue between body and spirit, which the musical composition seeks to reflect: "The musicalization of the poem exalts its dialogical character, proposing an interaction between the two lyrical speakers, where the Body expresses a concern that is answered by the Spirit"¹⁸ (Meza 2021: 112–113).

In sum, Kalfu's musicalization work stands out for establishing a dialogue among various agents: cultures, languages, artistic disciplines, artists, modes of enunciation through the word, and lyrical speakers. Thus, one may propose that this musicalization, with its own orality and musicality, represents a third stage that completes the dialogic process between oralities and musicalities proposed in this analysis. In the first stage, we encounter the orality and musicality of the Mapuche language and tradition; in the second stage, these elements merge with the orality of the poet and the musicality of his poetry; and in this third stage, we

¹⁸ Author's translation.

witness the *Trawun* –the gathering– of all these components, interwoven with the orality and musicality unique to the musicians’ work.

To illustrate this, the poem “Ponte de pie”, published in the 2010 collection *El azul de los sueños*, is presented below, followed by an analysis of its musicalized version by Kalfu. The first stanza reads:

Qué estás haciendo, sentado en tu Tierra
entristecido, sin parlamentar
Conversa pues, parlamenta
Qué tristeza verte así (57).

Here, we find a voice that urges the subject to act and communicate. The word “parlamentar” is used, which, according to Silvia Mellado (2020), is closely linked to conversation or *nütram*. She notes: “In the poems, the *nütram*, as spoken conversation or storytelling, appears intrinsically linked to the *parlamento* [parley] –whose political meanings of negotiation, in the history of the Mapuche people, date back to the 16th century”¹⁹ (89)–.

In its musicalization, Kalfu places these opening verses in the voice of the lead singer within a rock-fusion composition. The poem continues:

Estás sentado en la pampa solamente
donde parlamentaban tus Mayores
Sin movimiento yace tu Tierra
Nada dices (57).

In this stanza, the dialogue between Elicura’s poetry and Mapuche tradition is evident in the reference to the “Mayores” (the Elders). These elders held parliaments on their land, and the speaker is compelled to do the same, following the patterns of tradition. In these verses, silence is equated with sadness and inaction. In its musicalization, Kalfu reinforces these ideas by shifting to male voices (symbolically representing the Elders) and especially by including the powerful voice of Pehuenche tenor Miguel Ángel Pellao, who later performs a solo section singing the beginning of the poem in Mapudungun. This is followed by Beatriz Pichi Malen’s recitation of a fragment of the poem, also in Mapudungun. Finally, the third and final stanza reads:

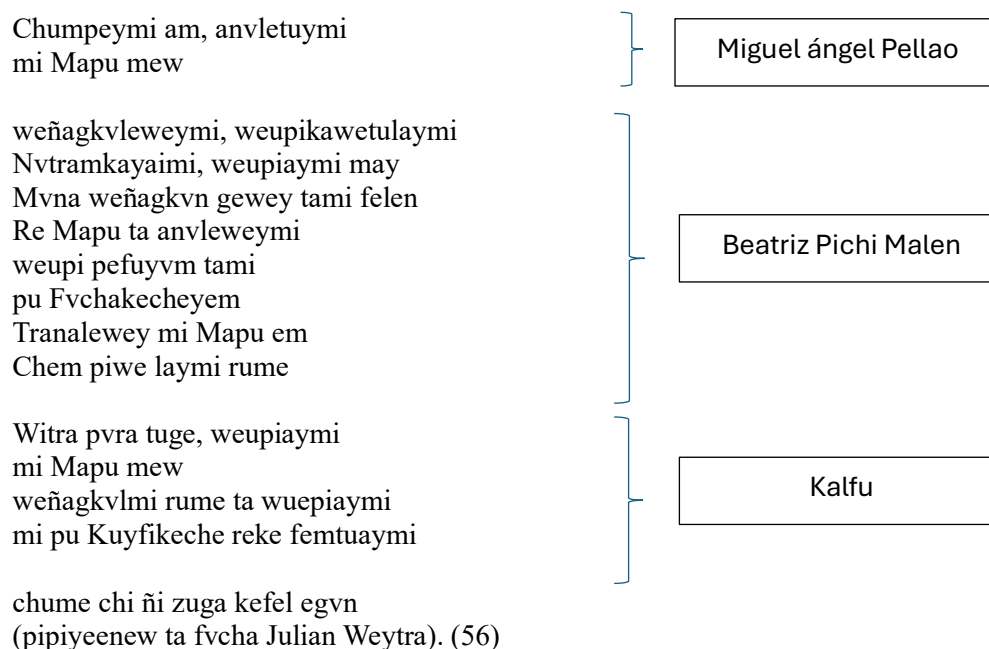
Ponte de pie, parlamenta en tu Tierra
aunque sientas tristeza, parlamenta
como lo hacían tus Antepasados
como hablaban ellos.
(me está diciendo el Anciano Julian Weitra) (57).

These verses emphasize the speaker’s need to act, as the voice of the ancestors seeks to instill courage and movement in one overwhelmed by sorrow. Most notably, the parenthetical reference to a community elder directly links the poem to Mapuche oral tradition. In the musicalization of this fragment, we reach a climactic moment where the choral arrangement precisely conveys the dialogic nature of Kalfu’s music. All voices return

¹⁹ Author’s translation.

in this section –male voices singing verses in Spanish that are answered in Mapudungun by female voices, and particularly by the lead vocalist–. This culminates in a polyphony where each voice maintains a distinct melodic line while simultaneously singing the final verse: “me está diciendo el Anciano Julian Weitra” (57).

It is also noteworthy that in Kalfu’s musical composition, the Mapudungun version of the poem is reconstituted through vocal alternation, that is, through a dialogue between oralities. The Mapudungun version begins with the singing of Miguel Ángel Pellao, followed by the recitation of Beatriz Pichi Malen, and then the singing of Kalfu’s musicians. Only the final two verses are not sung in Mapudungun, probably to amplify the emotional impact of the Spanish lines during the climax, as illustrated below:



Another poem that illustrates how oralities and musicalities intertwine is “Llueve en el poema” (*Sueños de Luna azul y otros cantos*, 2018), whose musicalized version was created by Kalfu in collaboration with musician Francisco “Pancho” Sazo of the renowned Chilean fusion group Congreso. The first stanza reads:

Cuando el joven Mañkian fue vencido por el deseo
de besar a la rubia sirena que se peinaba en la noche:
se convirtió en piedra. Cuando el lonco de Retrvkura
Quiso desposar a una hermosa niña blanca, ella
-huyendo- dio siete vueltas; también él. Ambos
se convirtieron en piedra
(Así nos están diciendo nuestros Mayores) (26).

In this stanza, we once again encounter a reference to the *Mayores* (the Elders). The poem opens by recounting traditional stories from Mapuche culture. This written encoding by Elicura Chihuailaf of oral narratives can be understood as an act of oraliture, in that it represents the recovery and textual dissemination of traditional stories orally transmitted within Mapuche culture. It is worth highlighting that in Kalfu’s musicalized version, the

composition begins with a recitation in Mapudungun performed by the poet Chihuailaf himself, thereby embodying Mapuche orality. In the musicalization, the verses of this first stanza are sung by the band's director, Jaime Herrera, omitting only the final parenthetical verse that refers to the *Mayores*. The composition, arranged in a pop-rock style, sometimes features a rhythm in the percussion that evokes the sound of walking. Thus, we may say that there is a certain ekphrastic reflection of the poem's content in its musical form. The poem continues:

Porque ardiente piedra
sobre piedra nunca fuimos
arrodillado estoy y mirándote
bajo la triste Luna
Y en esta historia siendo
tu Primera Piedra
pero olvidando peinar
tus cabellos
no obstante tu dulce canto
en el aire predecible del mar (26).

If the first stanza contains the orality of Mapuche culture, in the second we encounter the orality of the poet himself. Speaking in the first person and addressing a second person, the poet infuses the poem with personal affectivity. In the musicalized version of this section, the voice multiplies; through choral work, the composition reflects the collective voices of the community, as suggested by Chihuailaf's written text. The poem continues with the final stanza:

Y llueve en Retrvkura, llueve
Llueve Mañkian, llueve
Porque ardiente piedra
sobre piedra nunca fuimos
Llueve en el poema: Llueve (26).

In this final stanza, the poem, through an intertextual turn, returns to the Mapuche legends mentioned at the beginning. Yet the author now enacts a semantic shift, moving from these stories toward his own poetry. Just as it rains in the locality of Retrvkura, the setting of one of the traditional tales, it also rains within the poem itself. Just as the poet addresses a second, undefined person, the poem as an artistic construct addresses one of the traditional Mapuche figures from the first stanza: Mañkian. In the musical composition, this marks the climactic moment, where wordless vocalizations by guest artist Francisco "Pancho" Sazo erupt into the soundscape, before giving way to his sung articulation of the poem's final verses. What stands out in the orality of this musicalization is the alternation and dialogue among the voices produced in singing, especially through the repeated use of the word "*llueve*", which seeks to sonically render the textual repetition of this word.

These two poems, analyzed in both their written and musicalized forms, recount what the *Mayores* say from within Mapuche tradition. We can observe, then, a semantic displacement: from what the *Mayores* say in oral tradition to what the poet writes as an act of intercultural dissemination and integration into Chilean literary tradition. We can also identify a second shift –from the poet's written word to the musicalization carried out by

Kalfu— resulting in a form of popular, intermedial, and interartistic circulation. Thus, the musicalization of Elicura Chihuailaf's poetry by Kalfu can be understood as the third stage in a broad dialogical process between oralities and musicalities. In this process, we witness the convergence and intersection of the spoken word of Mapuche oral tradition, the written word of Chihuailaf's poetry, and the sung word of musicalization.

Conclusions

Mapuche culture is distinguished by the oral transmission of its cosmogony and traditions. Its language, Mapudungun, is likewise notable for its musicality —constructed through characteristic intonations, stresses, and pronunciations—. Within this oral tradition, ancestors and *Mayores* hold a central role as the primary transmitters of knowledge through spoken word.

This oral tradition of Mapuche culture is taken up by the poet Chihuailaf and encoded in his written poetry. This allows us to interpret his work as an act of *oralitura*. However, the orality and musicality observed in Mapuche tradition and in Elicura's poetry also blend with the poet's own voice and with the inherent musicality of poetic composition.

The analysis of the poems and their musicalized versions allows us to understand how orality and musicality interact in a transition from Mapuche orality to the poetic writing of Chihuailaf, and then to Kalfu's musicalizations. In all these instances, the value of the word is crucial: in the first, the collective word as a primary source of knowledge transmission and memory preservation; in the second, the written poetic word that encodes this oral tradition in an act that can be understood as a process of oraliture; and in the third, the sung word, which serves as an intercultural bridge between the Mapuche and the Chilean worlds.

The novelty of Kalfu's work on Elicura Chihuailaf's poems lies in its ability to reconfigure an oral and sonic dimension that writing alone cannot convey, and which is essential to Chihuailaf's poetry. Kalfu's compositional approach tends to support the dialogical character and symbolic representation of the voices of ancestors and Elders, while also making room for the poet's own intervention, declaiming in both Spanish and Mapudungun—thus reinforcing linguistic dialogue as well.

To conclude, we can say that just as the poet Chihuailaf takes his people's culture and traditions as his raw material, the musical work of Kalfu takes Chihuailaf's poetry as its source. Thus, the echo of Mapuche oral tradition merges with the voice of the poet, and both oralities are transposed into the sonic space of musicalization, where they encounter not only the orality of the sung word but also the musicality of the composition. This allows us to conceive of Kalfu's musicalization as the third stage in an expansive process of dialogue between oralities and musicalities, where cultures, languages, artistic disciplines, and —above all— sensibilities converge.

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