THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
LATIN AMERICAN POETRY

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Quechua/Kichwa Poetry

“Dícese que en estos tiempos se dan mucho los mestizos a componer en indio estos versos, y otros de muchas maneras, así a lo divino como a lo humano. Dios les dé su gracia para que le sirvan en todo.” (I am told that at this time the mestizos are working hard at composing verses in the Indian tongue, and writing others in many ways, both in the Divine and the Human manner. May God give them grace to serve Him in everything they do);

El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Comentarios Reales, 1609 (Royal Commentaries of the Incas)

Writing from the Andalusian city of Córdoba in the latter half of the sixteenth century, the mestizo chronicler and Cusco-native Inca Garcilaso de la Vega explains in his Comentarios Reales (Royal Commentaries of the Incas) that even just a few decades after the arrival of Pizarro on the shores of present-day Peru, already “many mestizos” had taken to composing verses in the language of Quechua (“indio”). Interestingly, Garcilaso’s brief description of the various forms and functions of poetry in the Incan empire of Tahuantinsuyu, as well as his fleeting reference to poems written “in Indian” in the years following the conquest, closes with a petition to the Divine to support these Quechua language poetic efforts. Some four centuries later, the continued composition and publication of poetry written in Quechua (as the indigenous Andean language is known in Peru and Bolivia) and Kichwa (alternately spelled as Quichua, as it is known in in Ecuador) attests to the fact that thankfully, if indeed improbably, Garcilaso’s supplication has been answered.

When considering the nearly five-hundred-year history of poetry written in Quechua, it is important to keep in mind that beginning in the colonial period, discursive and poetic practices in the Andean countries emerged in the midst of a space of violence, conflict, and exclusion. Indeed, during the centuries following the initial conquest of Tahuantinsuyu, diverse actors and efforts have sought to silence the voices of Quechua speakers and to stamp out their artistic, cultural, and religious practices. Whether by decree of the Church, agents of the colonial government, or through a combination of ecclesiastical and political forces, on numerous occasions throughout the colonial period, the use of the Quechua language (called runasimiri or “the language of the people,” by its speakers) was prohibited. On repeated occasions in the colonial Andes, various archbishops, agents of the Inquisition, colonial administrators, and officials (visitadores) called for a halt in the use of “vernacular” indigenous languages and for prohibitions against indigenous instruments, clothing, and visual art, as well as Quechua-language song, dance, and theatre.

Throughout the colonial period, attempts at linguistic interdictions were interspersed with attempts to “domesticate” the obstinate orality of the Quechua language in order to represent its diverse phonemes with letters of the roman alphabet and through monumental colonizing projects marked by the creation of scores of grammars, dictionaries, catechisms, and confessional manuals. As a result, the efforts of a diverse cast of evangelists, agents of the Inquisition, emissaries of colonial government and Spanish, mestizo, and indigenous scribes and chroniclers has left contemporary readers with an assorted corpus of colonial-era Quechua language poetry that hints at a rich, preconquest trove of religious, epic, and amorous verses which would likely have been declaimed by either an individual or a chorus at various mourning, harvest, celebratory, or commemorative events throughout Tahuantinsuyu.

Given that Quechua verbal art is deeply oral in character and often anonymously composed, prior to the sixteenth-century arrival of Spanish aesthetic hierarchies and influences, which tended to favor individually authored poetic works, the corpus of Quechua language poetry and drama would likely have been collectively authored and performed orally in songs or recitations. Similarly, many of the “modern” poems that appear in Quechua poetry anthologies are the unattributed verses of oral song-poems or riddles which have been collected, transcribed, and edited by anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, priests, and other “Quechuists”

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2 In this chapter I use the word “Quechua” to refer to the indigenous Andean language spoken and written by some ten million individuals principally throughout the Andean countries of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. In order to respect present-day northern Andean spelling preferences, I will use the word “Kichwa” when referring specifically to the dialect of the language that is spoken and written in Ecuador.
6 Lara, La poesía quechua (Mexico City: FCE, 1947); Edmondo Bentestá Aybar, Literatura Quechua (Caracas, Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1986).
Even single-authored works of contemporary Quechua language poetry reveal in their verses the profound influence of Quechua oral culture (songs, myths, and oral histories). Yet as Jean Franco and other scholars have pointed out, the study of indigenous literatures, and indigenous language poetry in particular, is complicated by the fact that tonality and sound structures are crucial elements of both oral and written, traditional and contemporary indigenous language poetries, and these features cannot be recreated easily in translations, or even meaningfully described when using non-indigenous critical terminologies. Further complicating the study of indigenous language literary histories is the fact that colonial linguistic and cultural hegemonic structures and policies, together with the intense chaos, violence, and demographic collapses that characterized the colonial period throughout the Americas, has meant that many manuscripts and voices have been lost, while work attributed to the (written) corpus of one author may in fact, have been the (oral) work of an entire community.

Precocial and Colonial Quechua Poetry

Although colonial sources of Quechua language lyrical and dramatic verse undoubtedly offer us only a very incomplete picture of precolonial poetic forms, Garcilaso’s Comentarios reales (1609), Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala’s Primera nueva corónica (1615), the anonymous Quechua drama Ollantay (circa eighteenth century), as well as the chronicles of Juan de Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salkamaywa (1613?) and Cristóbal de Molina (1575?) all offer fascinating glimpses of some of the forms which poetry in Tahuantinsuyu likely assumed. Two of the most well-represented of these poetic forms include the haylli (or jallil, song-poems which took the form of epic, celebratory, or agricultural songs, or sacred hymns dedicated to Andean gods such as Viracocha or Inti), and the harawi (a term frequently used to describe the passionate verses of “love poems,” but which sometimes also refers to poetry, or versification in general). Like the Incan arawikus, or poet-bards before them, the composers of Quechua language verse in the postconquest Andes tended to remain anonymous within the historical record:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quechua/Kichwa Poetry</th>
<th>Spanish Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>¿U]kkata kusiñiy kajta</td>
<td>She who had filled the hollow, and was my only happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayqen jallipa mullpuykapun?</td>
<td>Which mound of bitter earth has swallowed her up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saqraqani qhallallañata,</td>
<td>I left her healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Sajra wayracchu, apakapun?</td>
<td>Could an evil wind have carried her away?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puriqan pandani,</td>
<td>I follow [the hints] of her trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Llanthua maskkani.</td>
<td>I trace [the whispers] of her shadow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kikin pay llantuykuwanchu,</td>
<td>Is it she who provides me shade [as I continue on], or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waqayniyppay ayphullanchu?</td>
<td>Is it only the haze left behind by my tears?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the most well-known colonial-era Quechua poems, the powerful elegy known as “Manchay Puytu” (Ominous Storm Cloud) is anonymous, while the dozen or so late colonial poems generally attributed to the Bolivian “poet-soldier” Juan Wallparimachi Maita, are possibly not the work of a single author, but of a collective and primarily oral creative
process.\textsuperscript{12} Both “Manchay Puytu” and the so-called “Wallparimachi poems” exhibit powerful imagery, elegant parallel structuring and a tone of intense lamentation, which eloquently depicts the pain and yearning associated with losing one’s true love.

**Republican-era Quechua Poetry**

Given the forced castilianization policies, and the widespread disparagement and destruction of indigenous religions, cultural practices, and art forms during the period of Spanish colonial rule in the Andes, it is not surprising that very few examples of written Quechua poetry survive from the tumultuous years following the independence of Ecuador (1822), Peru (1824), and Bolivia (1825). Notable exceptions to this general dearth of indigenous language poetry published in the Republican-era Andes include the Kichwa language verses of the Ecuadorian poet, and former president, Luis Cordero (1833–1912) who published bilingual versions of his poems denouncing the abuses faced by indigenous Ecuadorians. Notable poems penned by Cordero in the late nineteenth century include “¡Rinimi Llacta!” (El adiós del indio), “Cushiquilca” (Coplas de contento), and “Runapag llagu” (Desventura del indio).\textsuperscript{13} In Republican Bolivia, Quechua language promoters, educators, linguists, anthropologists, and occasional poets and dramaturges include Carlos Felipe Beltrán (1816–1898) and José David Berrios (1849–1972). Key Quechuisists in Republican Peru include José Fernández Nodal (early nineteenth century–late nineteenth/early twentieth century) and José Dionisio Anchorena (1834–1906). Although much more well known for her novels (Aves sin nido, 1889; Herencia, 1895) and journalistic texts (as director of El Perú Ilustrado), the Quechuan writer and indigenista intelleclual Clorinda Matto de Turner also published Quechua language poetry (see, for instance, her Tradiciones cuzqueñas, v. 1, 1884, v.2 1886).

**Quechua Poetry in the Twentieth Century**

The postindigenista corpus of twentieth-century poetry written in Quechua is often described in terms of two distinct currents initiated in Peru in the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{14} The first of these movements is characterized by the aristocratic, Cusco-centric, “purist-Quechua” (or “modern-misti [mestizo]”) variant that arose in 1952 with the publication of Taki Parwa by the Cusqueñan Kiklu Warak’ a (né Andrés Gutiérrez, 1909–1984), while the second is generally associated with the work of more socially engaged poet-migrants following the 1962 publication of the haylli-taki (hymn-song) “Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisman” by the renowned Peruvian writer José María Arguedas (1911–1969).\textsuperscript{14} Taki Parwa, together with Warak’a’s two subsequent monolingual Quechua poetry collections (Taki ruru, 1964 and Yawar Para, 1972), is generally considered to mark the inception of modern written Quechua poetry. Not only did Warak’a create an individually authored corpus of poetic texts, but he also managed to create verbal imagery and expressions that feel both intimate and deeply personal, while still referencing important aspects of Quechua/Andean landscapes, mythologies, and cosmovisions.\textsuperscript{15}

Warak’a’s Taki Parwa is written in a highbrow register of Cusqueñan Quechua and includes thirty carefully metered poems (mostly quatrains, cinquains, and sestets) composed of five, eight, or ten-syllable lines. For instance, the poem “Puncayniykipi” (On Your Day) consists of four sestets, each integrally composed of eight-syllable lines. The gracefulness of the poem’s even meter is matched by several elegantly composed (and sometimes cleverly split) semantic couplets, as evidenced in the poem’s final strophe (lines 20, 22 and 21, 23). Warak’a’s verses also frequently achieve a calming effect through the use of anaphoric repetition and rhythmic assonances that particularly emphasize the rounded vowel [u]. In the poem “Puncayniykipi,” examples of such [u]-centric assonances occur in the phrases “tukuy urkun,” “yuraq ñukuñ,” and “unu ruruncu,” (lines 4, 16, and 21). These sonoral techniques are woven into “Puncayniykipi” in order to proffer a a tribute to the poem’s lyrical subject, in celebration of her name day:

\textsuperscript{12} Noriega, Poesía quechua escrita en el Perú: Antología (Lima: CEP, 1995), 29–30; Lienhard, La voz y su huella (Lima, Editorial Horizonte, 1992), 281.

\textsuperscript{13} See Noriega’s pivotal book Buscando una tradición poética quechua en el Perú for a study of contemporary poetry written in Quechua. For detailed readings of Arguedas’ most celebrated, lengthy, and oft-cited poem, “Tupac Amaru kamaq tatyanchisman” (To Our Creator Father, Tupac Amaru), see for example Antonio Cornejo Polar, “Tradición migrante e interculturalidad multicultural: El caso de Arguedas,” in Zorros al fin del milenio: Actas y ensayos del Seminario sobre la última novela de José María Arguedas, ed. Wilfredo Kapsoli (Lima: Centro de Investigación Universidad Ricardo Palma 2004), 511 and Massotti, Poéticas del flujo: migración y violencia verbales en el Perú de los 80 (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso de la República, 2001), 101-04.

Alison Krögel

Kawsay sipas c'ika mukmu 19 Vivacious lass; budding flower
amapuni hawiykipi may your eyes fend off any
wiq'i unu rurucunci 21 stream of tears that might blossom within you
amapuni suntuqykipi may your heart fend off any
llak'i phuyu tiyacuncu 23 cloud of sorrow that might live within you
kawsay kusi wíliay way live happily, as each year grows older

Although José María Arguedas greatly admired the work of Kilku Warak'a – calling him "the greatest Quechua poet of the twentieth century" – in Arguedas' brief prologue to "Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchism," he takes care to present his own haylli as a poem proudly written in a sociol iter based largely on Cusqueñan Quechua, but which has been slightly manipulated by the poet in order for it to be linguistically comprehensible to as large a number of Quechua speakers as possible throughout the Andean countries. Given his use of some Spanish language terms which "have been adopted by both Indian and mestizo [Quechua speakers]," Arguedas acknowledges that his poetry will likely be met with disdain by "purist Quechuists" – intellectual elites who promoted the use of "High Quechua" or "Capac Simi," unpolluted by Spanish words. Of great importance in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s for the dispersed communities of young Andean intellectuals studying in highland universities, or as Andean migrants (or as the children of migrants) in Lima, Arguedas closes his prologue to "Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchism" with an inspiring call to Quechua speakers and writers:

Those of you who have a better command than I of this language, I plead to you to write. We must increase [the body] of our Quechua literature, especially in the Language that the people speak; even though the other variety, the stately and erudite, should also be cultivated with the same dedication. Let us demonstrate that contemporary Quechua is a language in which one can write poetry in a manner which is as beautiful and moving as any of the other languages perfected by centuries of literary tradition! Quechua too, is a millenary language.

Arguedas famously affirmed on several occasions his belief that the semantic and sonoric richness and complexity of the Quechua language was more suited to lyrical expression than Spanish. Yet in this prologue he also

18 Arguedas, Tupac Amaru, 9.
19 Arguedas, Temblar/Katatay, ed. Sybila Arredondo (Lima L.N.C., 1972), 59; and
Arguedas, El canto Kechua: con un ensayo sobre la capacidad de creación artística del pueblo indio y mestizo (Lima: Ediciones Club del libro peruano, 1938), 16; see also Mazzotti, Poesías del flujo: Migración y violencia verbales en el Perú de los 80 (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso de la República, 2002), 100-01.
21 Espino Reluc, Etnopoética quechua, 26-28; Harrison, "José María Arguedas: El substrato quechua," Revista Iberoamericana 49 (1983): 122. Most readers are familiar only with the six Arguedas Quechua poems compiled by Sybila Arredondo in the bilingual, posthumous collection entitled Katatay/Tembjar (1972). According to the Peruvian literary critic Gonzalo Espino Reluc, however, a total of eighteen Quechua language poems written by Arguedas have been located to date, though not all of them were published prior to the author's death; see Espino Reluc, Etnopoética quechua, 27; and Mazzotti, Poesías del flujo, 104.
22 For interesting and much rarer examples of trilingual poetry collections, see Gonzáles, Tumupa: Libro de las stenoves, trans. Alison Krögel and José Ramón Ruisánchez (Lima: Ediciones El Santo Ocio, 2002), and Roncalla, Escritos Mitimana: Hacia una poética andina postmoderna (New York, NY: Editorial Barro, 1998) for poetry in Quechua, Spanish and English; and Elvira Espejo Ayca, Kipyajhayaypi: Por aquí, por allá (La Paz: Pipotecnia, 2013) who publishes trilingual Quechua-, Aymara- and Spanish-language poetry collections.
in the final decades of the twentieth century, poets writing in Quechua in the Andean countries generally lived, wrote, and worked in urban spaces, having moved away from the frigid pampas and distant ravines of the rural Andes: “karu qeswakunamanta, kita weraqochakuna, pampa, chiri, qoñaq allpaykuna qechuwaqskunamanta, ayqespa, mastarinakuniku lliu tawantinsuyu... "Kachkhaniraqkun, chaypas kachkaniraqkun, kancharisparaq" (from the distant ravines, from the now frigid, now burning pampas that the false wiraqochas took away from us, we have fled and we have spread out across all four regions of the world... And yet we still exist, we still exist and we are shining!).

While it would be impossible in these pages to explore in depth the vast corpus of twentieth- and twenty-first century Quechua poetry written and published in the Andean countries and beyond, a reading of this body of work reveals recurring examples of: lyrical poems addressed to the Beloved, Nature, Andean gods and cultural heroes, (sacred) ancestors, one’s Andean community (ayllu), dramatic Andean landscapes, the memory of resplendent and sophisticated Incan forebears and their empire of Tahuantinsuyu; celebratory poems extolling the virtues of Andean (agriculture, administration, and sociocultural and economic practices; migrants’ longings for a distant Andean homeland; and denunciatory poems that call for an end to racism and oppression, and for Andean peoples to rise up against such injustices in a modern-day, turning-the-world-upside-down pachacuti. Rather more uncommon, but nevertheless present (particularly amongst women poets) are poems focused on intimate, domestic subjects – a child nursed at her mother’s breast, the tattered red poncho of a beloved grandfather, or the image of a group of Quechua grandmothers happily walking into town together, arm in arm. Thematic diversity notwithstanding, some of the most striking poems of this body of work share in common their capacity to create complex and original imagery through a supple wielding of the Quechua language’s adjectival richness and agglutinating plasticity in order to weave multivalent meanings into compact (and often parallel structured) verses.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the post-Arguedan generation of bilingual Quechua poets writing primarily from Peru (Eduardo Ninamango Mallqui, Dida Aguirre, Lily Flores Palomino, Washington Córdova Huamán, Isaac Huamán Manrique, and William Hurtado de Mendoza), but also from Bolivia (Emma Paz Noya, Jaime Gutierrez Achocalla), and Ecuador (Arriurima Kowii, Auki Tituña Males), tended to distance themselves from the creation of nostalgic, mythic imagery of heroic Andean pasts. Instead, these poets more frequently focused on the development of poetic themes that denounced racism, poverty, (neo)colonialism, and the destruction of Andean nature and culture.24 The literary critic José Antonio Mazzotti has characterized Peruvian poetic production in the 1980s as a “dystopic,” “poetics of flow” (poéticas de flujo) that resulted from the “marked increase in internal and external migrations, a phenomenon accompanied by an unprecedented exacerbation of political violence [during the Shining Path era].”

The poetry of Lily Flores Palomino is representative of this current of denunciatory, post-Arguedan Quechua poetry in that it offers up direct, vivid imagery and unadorned verses that condemn the suffering of countless indigenous Andeans. For instance, “Yuyalayay” (Hope), the penultimate poem in Flores Palomino’s 1989 collection entitled Waqalliq Takin, begins with five lines that express with an almost oppressive force, the cruel realities faced by Andean campesinos who have been unable to free themselves from the misery meted out by hunger (1989, 100-01). The first four of these lines end with the genitive suffix -/pal, creating a rhythmic repetition that drives the poem towards a staccato crescendo and intensifies the reader’s sense of a painful and suffocating burden: “Maqakuyapa/ yaqayapa/ chiripa/ nanayapa” (lines 3-4). Yet an abrupt and temporarily disorienting shift occurs in line six when a soothing assonance introduces the possibility of “hope” (yuyalayay). The abrupt and disconcerting ending to the poem is then presented with the rough, penetrating sounds of the occlusive postvocal /q/ in the word “waquisqa” (dead) and in the ejective occlusion of the /q/ phoneme in the poem’s final word, “marqu’arikuspa” (within her arms).


Maqakuwpa 1 Behind the pummelings
yarqaypa of the hunger
chiripa of the cold
nanaypa of the pain
yanqa llullaq qepanpim, of the lingering deceptions
yuyalaayqya kashan hope lies waiting
munay samita with [optimism's] warm energy
wañusqata marq'arikuspa. dead in her arms.

Quechua/Kichwa Poetry

| manañan yachanichu 9 | Because I know nothing... |
| machu tañallap 11 | of the grandfather |
| ripunña whom they say, has already left us |
| sara mana poqochkaqa saqerispa 13 | leaving behind the unripened cornstalks |
| rititas chikchipas qapinkama. until the ice and the hail seize hold.48 |

With its at first disorienting and then depressing title, the poem “Yuyalayay” serves as a biting reminder of the painful and very physical privations that too many Quechua families must face on a daily basis.

Amongst students of post-Arguedian Quechua poetry, Eduardo Ninamango Mallqui stands out. His slim, impactful bilingual collection entitled Pukutay/Torrente (1982) is one of the most beautifully wrought descriptions of the sorrowful, nostalgic existence of Andean migrant-exiles struggling to understand their place within highland landscapes and communities that have been violently scarred as a result of the bloody civil war waged between Shining Path insurgents and Peruvian government forces, and which claimed the lives of tens of thousands of indigenous Quechua civilians in the 1980s and 1990s. The book’s title refers to an ominous “pukutay” Andean cloudscape that portends a storm of profound transformation and the upending of order within campesino communities in highland Peru during the latter half of the twentieth century. Indeed, the poems contained in this book chronicle a collection of departures, losses, and painful, catalyzing changes.47

In “Poem 4” of Pukutay, Ninamango Mallqui subtly expresses the intense sadness that characterized this time of deep uncertainty and drastic transitions by depicting the disruption of fragile, vital connections between vegetable and human worlds. As the first-person lyrical voice of “Poem 4” bears his childhood home and interprets the signs of nature that point to the death of his grandfather, Ninamango Mallqui employs the sterile, lonesome image of a solitary cornstalk in order to express feelings of a deep and existential sadness:

47 Noriega, Escritura Quechua en el Perú, 124; Lienhard, La voz y su huella (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1992), 292–95; Mazzotti, Poéticas del flujo, 53.
creativity evident within urban, rural, and peri-urban Andean communities. Thus far, Quechua poetry being written and published in Andean countries (and beyond) in the twenty-first century has begun to explore new registers, rhythms, themes, and styles, while continuing to refer and engage with the rich reserves of symbols, imagery, myths, landscapes, deities, and cultural heroes of Quechua and Kichwa oral traditions, as well as with modern Quechua literary pioneers such as Arguedas.50

In the collection Poesía en Quechua: Chkaschaschay, Ch’aska Eugenia Anka Ninawaman utilizes a more accessible register of Cusqueñan Quechua to celebrate and explore the symbolic and ritual diversity of the flora, fauna, and sacred spaces and beings of Peru’s southern highland. Anka Ninawaman’s poignant verses often celebrate (and indeed, promote) the underappreciated food resources that grow wild in the Andean countryside.51 For instance, in her poem “Ch’awiyuyu mama” (Mother Ch’awiyuyu) the poet reveals how a Quechua women’s knowledge of her community’s food-landscape can guide her to nutritional treasures such as the Ch’awiyuyu plant that grows wild all year long, and can help poor women to supplement their children’s nutritional needs at no cost:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mayu patapi</th>
<th>Along the river’s edge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q’illu sumbrina t’ikaqcha;</td>
<td>a yellow flower hat;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q’unir pulera ch’awicha.</td>
<td>a wrinkled green skirt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inti taytay kanchakuyusuqan
killa mamay llanchuyusuqan. 5

Munay munay wíñaqcha
phuyuy hump’ inwan
ch’aqchuyusuqas,
halp’aq suqumamanta
phuturimuquha. ... 10

hunt’aykachipwankas. 20

You fill us completely.35

50 See Juan Ulises Zevallos-Aguilar for a discussion of how, since the 1990s, Quechua poetry has moved away from lyrical representations of Andean (neoliberal) utopias in order to focus instead on themes of “ethnic recognition, identity politics, and the denunciation of problems that concern them”; see “Recent Peruvian Quechua poetry beyond Andean and neoliberal utopias,” in The Utopian Impulse in Latin America, ed. Kim Beauchesne and Alessandra Santos (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 275; see also Zevallos-Aguilar, Las provocaciones contraatáicas: regionalismo y anticontralismo en la literatura peruana del siglo XX (Lima: UNMSM, Ediciones del Vicerrectorado Académico, 2009).


52 “Ch’awiyuyu mama,” in Anka Ninawaman, Ch’aska Eugenia, Poesía en Quechua: Chkaschaschay (Quito: Abya Yala, 2004), 96–97.

Like Anka Ninawaman, the two monolingual collections of Quechua verse published since 2009 by the Peruvian poet and musician, Ugo Facundo Carrillo Caverio also traverse a fine line between sentiments of lament and resolution. Carrillo Caverio’s poems almost always allude to the possibility of finding solutions to complex social problems and a path to a brighter future. For instance, in his first collection of Quechua poetry, Yaku-unupa yuyayin (Memory of the Water, 2009), Carrillo Caverio pays respectful and grateful homage to the diversity and generous productivity of Andean cultivars. One particularly striking section of this book called “Papachanchikpa waytan uqllu waqtachanpi qillakuna” (Written on the Resilient Petals of Our Dear Potato’s Flowers), includes thirty-eight poems, each dedicated to the beauty, resiliency, abundance, flavor, or nutritional richness of a different variety of Andean potato.33

Although not published in solo-authored or monolingual Quechua language volumes, since 2011 three collections of poetry published in Ecuador have focused on the work of poets writing in Kichwa and other indigenous languages. Notably, one of these anthologies, Amanece en nuestras vidas is dedicated exclusively to the creative work of Ecuadorian indigenous women authors. Much of this poetry is imbued with a philosophy of women-centric, community-based solidarity and problem solving that seeks, as the Ayamara feminist Julieta Paredes has urged, to create and promote both the “new knowledges” of Andean women, while also celebrating the memories and achievements they have inherited from their grandmothers.34 This recent Kichwa poetry celebrates the wisdom, resilience, and honesty of Andean women who are quite capable of overcoming obstacles in order to become the architects of their own futures.35 The poetry of the Latacungan Kichwa poet and community


55 See, in particular, Líasq Fendhuz’s poëms “Allimanta purina chaki” in Collar de historias y lunas: antología de poesía de mujeres indígenas de América Latina, ed. Jennie
organizer, Esperanza de Lourdes Llasag Fernández merges elements of both the celebratory and denunciatory poetic currents apparent in Kichwa poetry published in Ecuador in recent years, in order to create the image of dynamic, forceful, and knowledgeable Andean women who capably organize their sisters so that their voices may be heard and their knowledge valued.35

Llasag Fernández’s poem “Amawta” (Wise Woman) celebrates the energy, strength, unity, and confidence of both indigenous and non-indigenous Andean women.37 The poem also cleverly deploys enjambment and the strategic use of the Kichwa first-person plural marker -chik (we) to express gratitude to both Andean “mamakunas” (female elders and community leaders or “grandmothers”) and to the Pachamama/Earth mother, from whom these positive traits were originally inherited.

Urkukunamanta, sachakunamanta, From the mountains, from the forests
panpakunamanta, ilaktari alipa from the valleys, from the towns where kawsaykunamanta they live
urpikushinalla utkalla purisha 3 like winsome birds, swiftly they shamunkuna… come walking.
Tukuykuna sinchi, kushukylla, 7 All strong, resilient, happy to be warmi kashikamanta women
fühlanchik mamakunapak panpakana like the farm plots of our shina venerable grandmothers
kawsayta kawsachik full, full of our vitality
tantalla achikila so united, so radiant
Pachamama shina sumakila beautiful like the Pachamama,
wakinpika mana amaturakha. but at times, misunderstood.38

38 Llasag Fernández, Esperanza de Lourdes, “Amawta,” in Hatun Taki, 78. More so than many other contemporary Kichwa poets, the work of Llasag Fernández deftly deploys several classic Quechua/Kichwa poetic elements such as semantic coupling, parallelism, internal rhyme schemes, and the repetition of particular suffixes for both semantic and sonoric effect. For instance, in line 10 of the poem “Amawta,” the poet uses parallel structure to create a rhythmically balanced and semantically significant verse by adding the affective (and sometimes, augmentative) suffix “-lla” to the Kichwa words “tanta” (all) and “achik” (light). In this way, the word “tanta” takes on the meaning of “all together” (or “so united” in my translation), while “achik” comes to suggest a luminous, resplendent light (“so radiant”). Thus, the use of the suffix “-lla” not only adds a subtly positive nuance to the predeterminer “all” to the noun “light,” but adds a rhythmical parallelism to the verse.

Like the poems of Ch’aska Eugenia Anka Ninawamana and Carrillo Caverio, Llasag Fernández’s work often dances on the border between the celebratory and the denunciatory, while generally leaning most of its weight towards an optimistic and celebratory space. The poem “Amawta” calls for women to realize their capacity to define themselves and their own futures and to appreciate and harness the strength and knowledge that they have inherited from their grandmothers, their kinswomen, and the Pachamama. Even if their beauty, vitality, and wisdom are not always understood or respected, the poem subtly and elegantly suggests that Andean women are more than capable of using their own agency and resilience to rectify instances of misunderstanding or ignorance.

In these few pages I have sought to offer a brief overview of some of the highlights of Quechua and Kichwa language poetry written in the Andes during the past five centuries and have suggested some ways of understanding the various movements, motivations, themes, and stylistic currents explored by the many (and at times, collective) authors of these texts. While the production, publication, dissemination, consumption, and study of poetic texts written in historically oppressed and principally oral indigenous languages has and always will be an exercise in overcoming a host of challenges, these are, nevertheless, exciting times for readers and writers of Quechua and Kichwa literature. The group of Quechua language writers, promoters, and poets involved with Pablo Landeo Muñoz in the all-Quechua language, Lima-based literary journal Atraspa Chumpa Riurista disseminates literary criticism written in Quechua and has done much to promote the reading of texts written in runasimpi with a mind towards Quechua aesthetic preferences and categories, while Kalipa, a newly launched (2016) interdisciplinary Journal of Andean Art and Culture directed by the Quechua poet and academic Yuly Tács, focuses on the dissemination of Quechua-language texts for a younger generation of readers and cultural activists.39 Founded in Lima in 2011, the literary press Pakarina Ediciones has managed to usher towards publication an impressive number of Quechua poetry and short narrative collections and literary essays under the guidance of Dante González, a Quechua speaker, writer, academic, and editor.

Quechua literary blogs such as Hawaiansura (curated by the Quechua language poet, essayist, and literary critic Freedy Roncallo), Alforja del Quechua (maintained by the Quechua literary critic and scholar Gonzalo Espino Relucé), Diccionario Cultural Boliviano (edited by Elías Blanco

Mamani), as well as the all-Quecha language cultural podcast Rimasun (hosted and produced by New York University’s Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies), also play an important role in disseminating and promoting Quecha literature and cultural events in the Andes and beyond. The Ecuadorian government (under the auspices of its various ministries of interculturality), has, in recent years, supported the publication of bilingual poetry collections written in Kichwa and other indigenous languages, while the well-regarded and long-established press Abya-Yala continues to publish books of Kichwa poetry and Kichwa literary and cultural studies. Bolivia remains alone amongst the Andean countries in actively promoting the publication of novels written in Quechua (as well as Aymara and Guarani) through the country’s creation in 2010 of a national award honoring the year’s best Bolivian novel written in an indigenous language (“El Premio Nacional de Narrativa en Idioma Originario Guamán Poma de Ayala”).

Moreover, in recent years, Bolivian publishing houses such as Pirotecnia in La Paz have supported the publication of works of poetry written in both Aymara and Quechua by authors, such as Elvira Espejo Ayca, who are fluent in more than one indigenous Andean language and who choose to write in both of their mother tongues. Clearly then, as Fredy Roncalla asserts in his recent book Havansayuy: Ukun Words “we find ourselves before the appearance of post-Arguedian Andean and trans-Andean literary spaces. In both Spanish and in Quechua, spaces and practices have begun to emerge from the thematic entrapment imposed by diglossia and [these new openings] should soon begin to bear fruit in poetry, narrative, digital technotexts, in painting, and in other areas of creation as well.”

Afro-Hispanic poetry has had a long trajectory in Latin America. Literary critics continue to “unearth” long-forgotten works that date back to the nineteenth century. A brief survey of literary anthologies in the U.S., as well as monographs published in the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century, reveals that the corpus of Afro-Hispanic literature continues to gain recognition. However, many of these writers have yet to be incorporated into the broader literary cannon. In other words, Afro-Hispanic literature remains at the margins of mainstream Latin American Literature, both in the U.S. and in Latin America. A thorough study of Afro-Hispanic Literatures and Cultures unveils a significant number of African-descended writers during the twentieth century, such as the following poets: Nicolás Guillén and Nancy Morejón (Cuba); Nicomedes Santa Cruz (Peru); Nelson Estupiñán Bass, Luz Argentina Chiriboga, and Adalberto Ortiz (Ecuador); Candelario Obeso (Colombia); Gerardo Maloney (Panama); Shirley Campbell and Eulalia Bernard (Costa Rica); and June Beer (Nicaragua).

The Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights Movement had a profound and lasting impact on the works of Black writers such as Nicolás Guillén, Manuel Zapata Olivella and Quince Duncan, among others. During the 1930s and 1940s, the negrista and Negritude movements were also influential among Spanish- and French-speaking Caribbean Writers. Cuban writers and artists such as Nicolás Guillén and Wilfredo Lam were discovering the multiethnic nature of their nation and promoted the study and incorporation of Afro-Cuban culture in their art. This movement reached South America in

40 For instance, the Cochabamban Quechua writer and linguist Gladys Camacho Ríos has published the novel Pinyup Yawar Wagaén (2013) that was subsequently translated into English as The Bloody Tear of a Cloud. In 2016 the Peruvian Quechua writer and academic Pablo Landeo published a much celebrated monolingual Quechua language novel, Aqupampa (Lima: Pakarina Ediciones, 2016).

41 Fredy Amílcar Roncalla, Havansayuy: Ukun Words (Lima: Pakarina Ediciones, 2014), 104. While this chapter has focused on written Quechua language poetry, rich literary traditions also exist in numerous other indigenous languages throughout Latin America. See, for example, the selection of authors and poetry collections described in this volume’s Guide to Further Reading.