

Mapuche

I have not heard
the name "Mapuche"
until today.

"Come," my friend says.
"This evening
there is an indigenous woman
from Chile speaking."

And I learn of one more tribe that lives
on ten percent of its ancestral lands.

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When she was in opposition
that nation's current president
opposed Chile's anti-terrorism laws,
uses them today, however,
to round up Mapuche
who try to stop the Ralco
hydroelectric dam, evict
timber-hungry multinationals,
dumps where garbage, transported
from cities, rots away, infecting
children who play nearby.

The word "mapuche,"
in the native language of the Mapuche,
means "people of the land."
Sometimes we discover a name
that actually means what it says.

The Mapuche people were never conquered
by the Inca empire, nor subsequently
by the Conquistadors. (Perhaps *this*
is what engenders so much terror
in the heart of Chile's current president?)

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How about you?

And what of the Kolla . . . the Pehuenche . . .
the Kaiapo . . . the Aymara . . . the Paez . . .
the Guambiano . . . the Achuar. . . . What
of all the indigenous nations living
today under the domination of others—
who go by aliases such as Mexico,
Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru.

Some year, I believe, their stories
will be taught to children
in the public schools of New York City
(as the tale of the Pilgrims is now)
and it will be necessary, perhaps,
to set time aside for those
who cannot keep themselves from weeping.

At this moment, however,
let us simply set time aside
to consider how, and why,
there are so many peoples in the world,
living under the domination of others,
who can never be conquered.

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How about you?

Steve Bloom
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