



## Article

# Loss and Life in the Andean Pluriverse: Slow Unravelings and *suma qamaña* in Óscar Catacora's *Wiñaypacha*

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**Abstract:** The impulse for development and modernization creates rifts between humans and non-humans, dragging us deeper into the rhythms of capitalism and urban life. In the Peruvian Andes, this impulse has manifested in an intergenerational trend of rural out-migration that exacerbates the life-making struggles faced by those left behind. Óscar Catacora's film, *Wiñaypacha*, reflects on these struggles and their impact on the lives of an elderly Aymara couple living isolated in the Peruvian highlands as they await, to no avail, the return of their son. The first section of this article examines how the aesthetics of *Wiñaypacha* emphasize the social–ecological unravelings that occur between the human and nonhuman beings that together construct the filmed Andean world. Catacora's film represents migration as a gradual process of abandonment experienced by the Aymara elders that degrades their ability to sustain their lives and the lives of their animals. In the second section, I analyze the way *Wiñaypacha* makes visible the existence of the Andean pluriverse and worlds that have not disappeared in the wake of development. The film's representation of time and *suma qamaña* (harmonious living) represents a departure from the universalizing tendencies of extractive capitalism and exemplifies the existence of alternative life-worlds.

**Keywords:** Aymara cinema; Andean life-worlds; migration; pluriverse; *suma qamaña*; Earth beings



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## 1. Introduction

Oscar Catacora's film, *Wiñaypacha*, is a landmark within the context of Peruvian cinema. Premiering in 2017, the film is directed by an Aymara filmmaker, features an exclusively Aymara cast, and is the first film to be shot entirely in the Aymara language. Filmed in the Andean highlands of Peru's Puno region, *Wiñaypacha* deals with the experience of isolation and abandonment felt by Phaxsi and Willka, an elderly Aymara couple living in the highlands who have watched subsequent generations leave for the city. Funded in part by Peru's Ministry of Culture as part of an initiative to support film projects outside of Lima, the film relates a seldom-discussed narrative that emerges from the Andes and makes visible the day-to-day labors and mounting struggles faced by elders such as Phaxsi and Willka who continue to live in rural Andean communities. In creating the film, Catacora has discussed his aim to represent the Andean world as realistically as possible, further stating his reliance on the Andean highlands to provide his actors, visual backdrops, soundtrack, and lighting.

*Wiñaypacha* links an intergenerational trend of rural out-migration to a process of social–ecological deterioration experienced by the protagonists. As he engages with this migration trend that underlies the partial unraveling of the Andean world depicted on screen, Catacora emphasizes the slow, quotidian rhythms of life inherent to the world Phaxsi and Willka inhabit. The Aymara couple move slowly through the filmed landscapes and a vibrant network of nonhuman beings appear alongside them as dynamic actors who play a part in shaping their shared world. As the web of social–ecological relationships with which Phaxsi and Willka engage begins to deteriorate due in large part to the advanced age of the elders, Catacora introduces the central conflict of the film: a crisis of care brought

about by the absence of younger generations who have been drawn away from the rural Andean highlands over centuries of contact with settler-colonial cultures. In dialogue with this issue, Catacora fosters awareness for the struggles faced by aging Aymara people in the Andean highlands and raises questions about the future of Aymara language and culture.

Catacora's film further reflects on the place-making practices of Phaxsi and Willka which exemplify the ideals of *suma qamaña* (the Aymara word for an ideal that roughly translates as "harmonious living").<sup>1</sup> The practices of *suma qamaña* value the reproduction of life processes and are heavily influenced by the Aymara conception of time *wiñay pacha* (eternal time and space), in which the present is understood to be indelibly intertwined with the past and future.<sup>2</sup> Through his visibilization of *suma qamaña* and *wiñay pacha*, Catacora opens the door to the Andean pluriverse and points to the co-existence of parallel worlds and times that make up our planet. *Wiñaypacha*'s highly localized world is one composed of intensely interlocked social-ecological relationships that exist outside the cultural hegemony of extractive capitalism which seeks to reduce the planet to a singular logic (Acosta et al. 2021). In moving from a discussion of slow social-ecological unravelings caused by migratory pressures into an analysis of *Wiñaypacha* as representative of *suma qamaña* and the Andean pluriverse, my aim is to highlight a crucial function of the film. Catacora provides the migrant-spectator a type of return to the highlands that overcomes physical distance and contributes to the maintenance and revitalization of Aymara-Andean cultural memory.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, *Wiñaypacha* allows the spectator to (re)imagine beyond the Western cult of extractive development and envision worlds that exist outside the capitalist paradigm.

## 2. Social-Ecological Unravelings and the Crisis of Care in the Puna

The first act of *Wiñaypacha*, which encompasses roughly the first hour of the film, depicts the lives of Phaxsi and Willka (the only human actors to appear in the film) and their day-to-day struggles as they engage with subsistence practices. In several shots, the couple is also depicted as waiting for the return of their son, Antuku, who left his parents long ago to find work in the city. The majority of *Wiñaypacha*'s run-time consists of shots that engage with these moments in which Phaxsi and Willka are either performing quotidian tasks or waiting for their son as they silently contemplate the landscapes around them. Throughout much of the film, the director cultivates an aesthetic of slowness which is emphasized through the waning, deliberate movements of the actors and the duration of individual shots, which can last several minutes. These aesthetics of slowness in *Wiñaypacha* have been explored extensively by Maria Chiara D'Argenio (2020) in her analysis of the film.<sup>4</sup> She notes: Catacora's "use of a still camera . . . landscape imagery, reduced dialogue and action, repetitions and waiting" fit well with the characteristics of slow cinema (D'Argenio 2020, p. 155). While the genre has elicited a broad spectrum of discussion and definitions, common characteristics found in slow cinema include the incorporation of long takes, static camera work, representations of quotidian activities, and shots absent of human presence (De Luca and Barradas Jorge 2015). Certain aspects of slow cinema, such as the long take, can be scrutinized for the highly subjective ways in which slowness, as an aesthetic quality, can be produced. However, Tiago De Luca and Nuno Barradas Jorge's overview of the genre contends that slowness manifests "in those instances in which one is confronted with the impossibility of shaping temporal rhythms according to one's will" (p. 4). This subjective interpretation of slowness is also present in Catacora's film. While Phaxsi and Willka engage with their day-to-day labors, it is made apparent that they are aware of the slowness with which they engage in their tasks. This awareness is represented through the periodic rests taken by the couple, their allusions to exhaustion, and their view that many of the laborious tasks they perform should be completed by younger people—namely, their son, who would have taken over the labors performed by his parents had he not left for the city. While at no point does the positioning of the camera reflect a perspective that is subjective to one of the Aymara elders, the lengthy duration of objective shots

seems to correspond to the subjectivity of the two actors whose movements and discourses internalize the aesthetics of slowness present in the film.

Catacora's focus on quotidian slowness, particularly throughout the first hour of the film, emphasizes the symbioses and collective labors inherent to the construction and maintenance of the Andean social ecology. Moreover, this aesthetic emphasizes that the Andean world emerging through the lens of *Wiñaypacha* is one that has been cultivated throughout (at least) a lifetime of careful and compassionate labor by the film's protagonists and one that sustains the collective health of their small community. Phaxsi and Willka's relationships to the plants, animals, landscapes, and other Earth beings are foregrounded in the film and illustrate the prominent role that nonhuman beings play in the social realities of the Aymara couple. Anthropologist Marisol De la Cadena (2020), in dialogue with Andean thought, views these beings as political actors that take active roles in shaping social ecologies. She reflects that these webs of relations are recognized as made up of human and nonhuman "persons" consisting of animals, plants, and landscapes which participate in shared political systems (De la Cadena 2020, p. 284). These Earth beings that might often be considered inanimate or static "things" in Western cultures are understood as persons in that they play roles in the political landscapes of local and even national contexts. De la Cadena provides the example of Ausangate, a mountain and powerful Earth being visible from Cusco, and the way it influences local politics in the town Pacchanta that resides at its feet. Public opinion is rallied against the opening of a nearby mine in large part due to the fear that the mine would anger Ausangate, emphasizing its personhood and political weight in the Andean world (De la Cadena 2020, p. 280).

A similar system of shared politics is represented in *Wiñaypacha*. This appears explicitly during a take in which Phaxsi and Willka make an offering to *Pachamama*, the mountains (or *apus*), and their ancestors at the beginning of the new year to ensure the health of their crops and animals. Phaxsi also asks for her son's health and Willka asks that he is brought home (Catacora 2017, 31:34–34:47). *Pachamama* and the *apus*, two Earth beings, or "seres del mundo-otro", constitute an important duality in Andean worlds (Ricard Lanata [2007] 2013; Location 1486). *Pachamama*, a feminine agricultural divinity important to many Andean cultures, plays a role in the fertility of flock animals; the masculine *apus* organize the world, segmenting communities, agriculture, and plant and animal life (Ricard Lanata [2007] 2013). The *apus* are often benevolent towards those who depend on them and provide humans with domestic animals for their subsistence. Related to the process of filming, Catacora has also stated that when the crew needed rain or snow for a scene, they asked the *apus*, who fortunately assented (Esquivés 2018). However, these powerful Andean beings also punish those who do not take care of their animals and look unfavorably upon those whose offerings do not satisfy them. Coca leaves play an integral role in facilitating communication with the *apus* and *Pachamama* and are used in Phaxsi and Willka's offering. They are not only consumed by the Aymara elders, but also facilitate the line of communication between Phaxsi, Willka, and these powerful Earth beings. This duality of the plant, ingrained as it is in both the ceremonial and day-to-day practices of the Aymara elders, exacerbates the pain felt by Phaxsi and Willka toward the end of the film when they run out, leaving them unable to perform these offerings or chew the leaves to stave off their hunger.

Through his use of long and extreme long shots (typically outdoors) that can last several minutes, Catacora highlights a way of life in Phaxsi and Willka's micro-community that is predicated on a shared system of politics and the collective labors shared between the Aymara couple and their nonhuman kin. This particular aesthetic places more emphasis on the movement of the actors' bodies (as opposed to their facial expressions) and, importantly, the companion species and landscapes with whom Phaxsi and Willka frequently cohabitate during shots. These companion species, understood here to denote "beings-in-encounter" that together construct human–animal–plant worlds, consist of a dog, several sheep, and a brown spotted llama with a knack for finding open space in front of the camera (Haraway 2016, p. 13). While Phaxsi, Willka, and their animals often foreground shots, the backgrounds are dominated by the preeminent mountains looming behind. The *apus* are

omnipresent and observing, as they appear in shots which emphasize the entanglements, both physical and political, that exist between them and their subjects. This co-presence is a key element during a nearly four-minute take during which Willka stamps potatoes into the ground (making *chuño*, a staple of many traditional Andean diets) before resting to eat with Phaxsi (Catacora 2017, 12:50–16:30). Willka's labors constitute only one step of this process. The potatoes will likely spend the next several nights outdoors, cradled by the mountains as they become freeze-dried through the quick transitions between the cold Andean nights and warmer days. As Willka stamps on the potatoes, the brown spotted llama energetically interacts with the space on its own terms: it grazes, sniffs around the large rock looming in the background, and urinates. As the bodies of Phaxsi and Willka remain mostly static, relegated to the bottom left corner of the shot once Willka breaks from his task to share a meal with Phaxsi, the llama's energetic movements provide a dynamic contrast. Further into the background, the shot is framed by a mountain ridge that is partially veiled by clouds that spill over its tall peaks, ensuring that the camera does not accidentally stray into another world. This take demonstrates the multiple rhythms of multispecies and otherwise nonhuman beings that weave together and become entangled within the represented Andean ecology. Through the framing decisions made by Catacora, *Wiñaypacha* frequently subverts the individualism inherent to anthropocentric worldviews and repositions human life as inextricably embedded within and in contact with a wider network of nonhuman relationships and symbioses necessary for mutual co-existence. While this scene provides an example of the constant co-presence within a network of multispecies and thing relationships, these relationships are shown as dynamic and perpetually shifting throughout the film: the animals oscillate between leisure and grazing activities and co-laboring in the day-to-day tasks of Phaxsi and Willka.<sup>5</sup>

Social ecologies are built and maintained slowly across webs of symbiotic relationships between humans and nonhuman beings-in-relation; these nonhuman beings emerge as persons and political actors in the world of *Wiñaypacha*. Life in the Anthropocene has overseen the unsettling and deterioration in many of the relationships that exist between humans and nature on the frontiers of extractive capitalism. At times, these deteriorations are quick; at others, they unravel slowly over generations, as evidenced in *Wiñaypacha*. In the film, Phaxsi and Willka's diminishing ability to keep up with an accumulation of quotidian struggles—lifting a pot of water, carrying brush over mountain ridges, weaving a poncho, maintaining a fire, thatching a roof, and traveling to town to purchase matches—emphasizes a process of gradual social-ecological decay. By the end of the film, these struggles become insurmountable for the couple, resulting in the destruction of their homestead, the death of Willka and the flock animals, and Phaxsi's forced abandonment of her home. The second act is marked by these scenes of loss, inter-cut with takes of Phaxsi and Willka as they attempt to return to some semblance of normalcy. Despite the acceleration of loss depicted on screen as a result of old age, these losses are symptomatic of an underlying issue that is addressed explicitly in the film's dialogue: the intergenerational trend of rural out-migration to the cities that has left the Aymara couple alone.

The first reference to this trend of out-migration appears in Phaxsi's dreams about Antuku, where he falls into a muddy river. The mother takes this for a bad omen, which leads her to believe that Antuku has forgotten his parents (Catacora 2017, 7:36). While very little is done to contextualize Antuku's departure during this initial take of the film, the following reference to his absence reveals more. During the scene in which Willka pauses from stamping potatoes to eat with Phaxsi, Willka reveals that Antuku has migrated to the "city" (Catacora 2017, 15:51). This situates the son within an increasingly common trend of rural out-migration to urban areas, which is seen by some as a method to socially advance and escape what might be considered rural poverty from an outsider perspective (Crivello 2011). Moreover, as Phaxsi reveals to Willka, Antuku once said to her: "speaking Aymara is embarrassing" (Catacora 2017, 16:04). With this comment, the film addresses one of the more tangible effects of centuries of settler-colonial occupation: structures of exclusion often push non-settler languages and cultures to the periphery of the public space



and create rifts between younger and older generations through the implementation of education systems that promote assimilation into the settler-colonial culture (Arocutipa et al. 2019, p. 234). This results in a loss of cultural diversity for the sake of a hegemonic monoculture. Catacora's film suggests that, as the connections between younger Aymara generations with their linguistic and cultural roots are gradually lost with each subsequent generation, the pull of the city and integration into the settler-colonial economy becomes more appealing (Cine sin cancha 2018). As younger generations migrate towards the cities, their perspectives towards the highlands and the hard lives of their elders turn sour. Eyner Alata, Beatriz Fuentealba, and Jorge Recharte's study into the depopulation of the highlands in the Cordillera Blanca of Peru further discuss this change in perspective:

The life of a shepherd in the highlands is seen, in general, as a difficult one due to the trying climate conditions that one must tolerate; the nights are frigid, there are strong winds and frosts during the dry season, and dangerous thunderstorms come in the rainy season. Furthermore, the animals graze daily which requires their shepherds to walk with them, at times they travel several kilometers to encounter good pastures [my translation]. (Alata et al. 2018, p. 64)

This process of out-migration manifests in the lives of those who remain in the Andean highlands as a form of abandonment, which, coupled with the struggle experienced by Phaxsi and Willka's bodies against the passage of time, results in a crisis of care. As these experiences of abandonment and aging feed into one another, the network of entangled human and nonhuman beings begins to fall apart. This process accelerates in the second act of the film.

In what initiates the film's aesthetic shift from slow degradation to rapid collapse, Catacora largely unravels in a few shots much of the fragile yet vibrant social ecology that had been developed over the past hour. Needing to replenish a fast-dwindling supply of matches, Willka journeys to town with the llama in tow, although at times it appears that it is Willka who is in the llama's tow. He is unable to complete the journey and, at the culmination of a nearly five-minute sequence split between three still shots, Willka collapses while still clutching tight the llama's rope (Catacora 2017, 45:07–49:50). Worried over his absence, Phaxsi leaves home in the middle of the night, finds Willka, and the two huddle together to wait for morning with the llama nearby (Catacora 2017, 54:32). Upon the couple's return the following day, they find that their dog has disappeared, while a blood-splattered stone (hidden from their view but visible to spectators) foreshadows the scene of massacre that follows (Catacora 2017, 56:23). The following shots reveal that the entire herd of sheep has been killed during the night by predators. The couple navigate the visceral scene and Phaxsi bends over the exposed corpse of a pregnant sheep. She picks up its exposed placenta and pulls out the unborn lamb from inside. Phaxsi identifies the lamb as her own child, magnifying the emotional trauma experienced by the loss of multispecies kin which compounds her already-deep feelings of loss over the absence of her biological child. The sheep are buried together and the final one to be placed in the grave, "Romerito", stares back into the camera as dirt is cast over the bodies (Catacora 2017, 58:23). Phaxsi's mention of the ram's name is a subtle reminder of his personhood. Over the several shots that follow, Phaxsi and Willka attempt to adjust to the new normal while overcoming the pain of this unexpected loss. The llama, now the couple's final son, still makes an appearance in this sequence of shots, but it does so only in the context of an extreme long shot that emphasizes the emptiness of the surrounding space that had once been occupied by the now-deceased sheep. Promptly, the film's second act commences, playing out over a sequence of shots that depict a series of accumulating traumas. First, Phaxsi and Willka's house sets on fire, burning everything within it. While the couple escapes the fire, Willka subsequently falls ill and circumstances force Phaxsi to kill the llama in an act of desperation for food with which to fortify her ailing husband. Willka eventually passes away, and in the final shot of the film Phaxsi leaves her home and heads further into the mountains.

Intergenerational trends of out-migration underlie the film's tragic crescendo of successive social–ecological unravelings. The promise of education and upward mobility has driven a rural exodus from the Peruvian highlands while masking the crisis of elder care in rural spaces. These spaces and the people who inhabit them often become seen by younger generations as backwards or stuck in the past, reinforcing migratory trends. The relationship between migration and social–ecological crisis that is represented in *Wiñaypacha* is reminiscent of Rob Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence. Even though Phaxsi and Willka's lives seem mostly untouched by the machinations of extractive capitalism and the industrialized exploitation of natural resources (forces which feature heavily in Nixon's development of the concept), the gradual and sustained migratory pull exerted on Aymara youth by settler-colonial cultures shares some commonalities with the concept. Understood as "a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all", slow violence provides a framework to consider the destructive undertones of migration present in the social–ecological realities faced by Phaxsi, Willka, and others who live isolated in the Andean highlands as a result of migratory pressures (Nixon 2011, p. 2). These isolated spaces, high in the *puna*, become what Nixon terms unimagined communities.<sup>6</sup> They exist internal to the nation-state but do not coincide with Westernized ideals of development and modernization. Thus, they are rhetorically and visually pushed to the periphery of national consciousness and made invisible (Nixon 2011, p. 151). Westernized notions of progress drive "violent habits of imaginative disconnection" that promote forgetfulness (Nixon 2011, p. 159). *Wiñaypacha* represents the consequences of this process, which fall on the elders left behind who are abandoned both by family and the state (D'Argenio 2020, p. 156). Pushing back on this trend, Catacora (re)imagines the rural Peruvian highlands and interrupts the processes of imaginative disconnection which push the lives of those such as Phaxsi and Willka to the periphery of the national consciousness. The concept of slow violence provides a useful reminder that entanglements with settler-colonial cultures over centuries have contributed to the conditions that lead up to this point and disrupt the life-making practices of Phaxsi and Willka.

While the sequence of traumatic shots leading up to Phaxsi's journey into the mountains suggests a deep uneasiness over the current struggles and futures of rural Aymara communities, the final shot of the film is not entirely pessimistic. This is reflected in Phaxsi's decision to travel further into the mountains as opposed to heading for town to perhaps seek a reunion with her son. Slowly, with her back turned to the fixed camera which captures both Phaxsi and the looming peaks hanging high above, she moves off camera as she passes over a ridge. As her body disappears, the sound of her footsteps also fades into the background, eventually becoming subsumed by the diegetic sound of wind crashing against the mountains (Catacora 2017, 1:24:34). With regard to this final shot, I argue that Phaxsi's corporeal and auditive presence is not erased, but rather enveloped by the mountains and the howling highland winds. This interpretation is influenced by Andean intellectual Javier Lajo's reflections on how time is understood in Incan-descendant Andean cultures through the concepts of *hanan pacha*, *kay pacha*, and *uku pacha*.<sup>7</sup> *Hanan pacha* denotes the world that has been and continues to be; *kay pacha* is the present time, but it is seen also as a point of meeting between the past and *uku pacha*, the world yet to come/in the process of becoming (Lajo [2005] 2006, pp. 150–53). The relationship between these three concepts can be envisioned as three concentric circles, akin to a ripple effect in water pierced by a stone. *Uku pacha* exists at the center, rippling out into *kay pacha*, which retains a strong memory of *hanan pacha*, the outermost circle. Lajo further explains that "time . . . is not symbolically represented as an 'arrow', as it is in the West, but rather, as a zig-zag, like a 'thunderbolt' or the 'trace of the serpent'; [ . . . ] time flows from the inside to the outside and returns from the outside to the inside, in permanent cycles" (qtd. in D'Argenio 2020, p. 154). Understood within the context of *Wiñaypacha*, whose title translates as *tiempo y espacio eterno* (eternal time and space), Phaxsi's disappearance into the Andean landscape can be framed as a type of fulfillment of a stage in a temporal cycle

that reproduces itself in perpetuity. Phaxsi, who appears to have been displaced by the gradual decay and subsequent collapse of the entangled web of relations, resists becoming consumed and erased by a centuries-long process of slow social–ecological unravelings that have impacted the identity of Aymara communities. Instead, Phaxsi undergoes a type of return as she moves back, as Lajo suggests, “from the outside to the inside”. She moves closer to the *apus*, becoming-with *wiñay pacha*.

### 3. Deconstructing the Universe through *wiñay pacha* and *suma qamaña*

Óscar Catacora’s representation of *wiñay pacha* and life in the *puna* enunciates a rhythm of life distinct from that of Western settler-colonial cultures and demonstrates the presence of an Andean pluriverse. As defined by Arturo Escobar (2012), the pluriverse (*pluriverso*) encompasses our shared planet and understands it as a world within which many worlds in constant motion fit. As a lens through which to understand the ways these worlds collide and entangle, pluriversal thought articulates the entanglements and power dynamics that exist between worlds and the knowledges that are constructed through distinct epistemological frameworks and world-making practices (Escobar 2012, p. 49). Aymara-Andean notions of time proliferate throughout the practices of Phaxsi and Willka, which reflect an understanding of nature and culture as intensely intertwined and in eternal relation to one another. The world inhabited by the Aymara elders is biocentric as opposed to anthropocentric, and they labor together for a collective benefit that extends throughout the network of beings with which they are entangled.<sup>8</sup> *Wiñaypacha* visibilizes a world that emerges through the ideals of *suma qamaña* (“harmonious living”). It uses an Aymara understanding of time as an aesthetic tool through which to engage with the epistemologies and practices ingrained in the rural Aymara-Andean world(s). Implicit to this aesthetic is a rejection of the extractive capitalist rhythms of life which establish development as the guiding principle for human relationships with nature. It eludes the paradigm of extractive capitalism and its tendency to swallow worlds and reduce nature to an inert object for humans to exploit (Escobar 2012, p. 49). In this sense, *Wiñaypacha* deconstructs the illusion of extractive development’s universality and emphasizes the pluriversal heterogeneity of the planet.

Extractive development retracts the personhood of the nonhuman, thereby justifying the human right to exploit nature. It expands across worlds and reduces the planet to a universe governed by a singular logic that divides humans from nature. Development, an often ambiguous and illusory ideal (a utopia unfulfilled), is the justification for the violent practices of extraction inherent to capitalism. Peru has experienced many waves of extractive projects tied to the impulse for development, including the saltpeter, guano, rubber, fishing, and mineral booms of the 19th and 20th centuries (Azpur et al. 2011) and the extraction of oil from the country’s Amazonian region (Brandenburg and Orzel 2016). These extractive waves have slowly integrated (at times by force) indigenous communities into extractive economies, promoting migration towards cities and the coast, where labor becomes designed to generate capital rather than ensure the sustainable reproduction of life. The developmental impulse displaces non-capitalist life and labor, marginalizing and portraying non-conformist life practices as inferior, unsophisticated, and incongruent to modernizing the nation. A linear notion of time emerges in conjunction with this impulse. The past is left behind as human relationships to nature are severed. In her critique of this notion of time, Ursula Le Guin (1986) metaphorizes time as a spear leaving the hunter’s hand, emphasizing the linear trajectory of this temporal rhythm and the destruction that results as a byproduct. However, as Catacora’s film demonstrates, alternative worlds and understandings of time persist despite the dominating hegemonic impulse of extractive capitalism. Phaxsi’s choice to journey further into the mountains rather than search for her son indicates a refusal of the “developed” city and her unbroken ties with the *puna* despite the absence of Willka and the animals. Her internalized connections with this world emerge through practices of harmonious living and dying.

*Suma qamaña* promotes the collective health and coexistence between humans and nonhumans. The word *Qamaña* signifies “to live, reside or dwell, rest, protect, and care for others” (Albó 2018, p. 335). Understood in conjunction with the word *suma*, meaning good or well in Aymara, *suma qamaña* denotes one’s place of dwelling as a site of collaboration and respect, where humans live and grow together with other beings. Whereas extractive development supports human life at the cost of our nonhuman kin, *suma qamaña* emphasizes our entanglements and dependencies on one another (Wankar 1989, p. 313). The idea of living well and in harmony with one’s human and nonhuman kin has gained traction among some progressive governments in South America. Both Bolivia (*el vivir bien*) and Ecuador (*el buen vivir*) have incorporated some of these ideals into their constitutions.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the practices and understandings of living well/harmonious living have been recognized by many Andean and other Latin American intellectuals to provide opportunities to imagine and construct futures that exist outside of extractive capitalist cultures (Eduardo Gudynas 2011; David Choquehuanca 2012; Escobar 2012; Ariruma Kowii 2018; Acosta 2021).<sup>10</sup> *Suma qamaña* necessitates first an awareness that all beings exist in constant relation to one another; nonhumans are not inert objects and humans are not independent individuals (Escobar 2012, p. 49; Acosta 2021, p. 415). *Wiñaypacha* represents this awareness through Phaxsi and Willka’s interactions with non-verbal, nonhuman interlocutors. Phaxsi calls for the wind to return so that she can winnow quinoa (Catacora 2017, 27:21); Willka appeals to the rain to depart while he rethatches the roof of the couple’s home (Catacora 2017, 41:18); an *alqamari* (bird of prey), who Phaxsi sees as a bad omen, becomes the subject of her ire as it observes the aftermath of the fire that destroys Phaxsi and Willka’s home (Catacora 2017, 1:12:04). These dialogues are not one-sided; in each instance, the non-verbal interlocutors respond: the wind picks back up; the rain holds off; the *alqamari* flies away but proves prescient, as Willka dies shortly after.

Immediately after Willka’s death, Catacora follows with a shot of two cairns adorned with colorful ribbons and overlooking the mountains as they sit side by side, symbolic of the lives of the two Aymara elders.<sup>11</sup> This is not the first time these stone piles appear; in a rare medium close-up shot from the beginning of the film, we observe Phaxsi and Willka chewing coca leaves before Catacora cuts to a shot of the two cairns, establishing the second pair as a mirror of the first. In the second appearance of the cairns, the colorful ribbons blow in the howling wind. The wind softens as Phaxsi begins to speak: she asks (off-screen) the departed Willka to watch over Antuku (Catacora 2017, 1:22:03–1:22:14). Then, as if in response to her words, the wind returns in greater force and one of the cairns collapses. Clearly tied to the passing of Willka, the collapse of the cairn is a metaphor for the entanglements that exist between the Aymara couple and the Andean world. The essence of Willka’s being is tied to the stones and vice versa; the awareness of interrelationality runs both ways and the mountain marks his passing. Currents of *wiñay pacha* ripple through the scene as the “*va y viene*” (push and pull) of time as experienced by Willka’s body is mirrored in the stones which prove to be much more than just inert material as they might otherwise be understood (Lajo [2005] 2006, p. 52).

*Wiñay pacha* extends beyond epistemology and has a significant influence on the life-making practices and labors of Phaxsi and Willka. The idea of *allin ruway*, or laboring well, constitutes the link that runs between *wiñay pacha* and *suma qamaña* and is foundational to the temporal ontology of the filmed world that Catacora captures. Javier Lajo describes the importance of laboring well and its connection to the Andean conception of eternity in *¡Allin Kawsay! El retorno de los Qhapaq Inka*, a pilgrimage narrative that relates the histories and knowledges of Incan-descendants:

And everything comes together if you think and feel in equilibrium, to do things well, and you go *Illanando* and connecting to the rhythm of *Wiñay Pacha*, that is to say with eternal time; and it will reveal to you the sacred knowledge of the *hamuyiri* ancestors so that you may engage with *allin ruway*, or labor well in a collective manner with a vocation for eternity . . . you should learn . . . to speak



with the spirits of Earth, the *apus* who also speak to us in dreams, and with all of your ancestors [my translation]. (Lajo 2015, p. 161)

*Allin ruway* is here understood as a set of sustainable and collective practices carried out by human and nonhuman beings that sustain the foundations of life from which their descendants will benefit. Laboring well in the present sustains the parity between Earth beings that allows for the reproduction of these relations of life and labor in the future. These labors in *kay pacha* are meant to sustain the link between the world past and the world to come, illustrating an understanding of eternity as the co-presence of both the past and future-in-becoming in the present. Catacora represents numerous day-to-day labors throughout *Wiñaypacha* that exemplify the ideals of laboring well: collective labors between persons, both human and nonhuman, are commonplace, and the *apus* and *Pachamama* factor heavily into the social consciousness of Phaxsi and Willka. Aesthetically, the movements of the Ayamra couple, particularly as they labor in the first act of the film, embody the influence of the past and emergent future on the present. As they work together to weave a poncho; winnow quinoa; and make offerings to *Pachamama*, the mountains, and their ancestors, their movements acquire a ritualistic character. These actions have been performed many times before and are relied upon to live and labor well and harmoniously in their world as time flows through them and their part of the *puna*.

Further insight into the experience of time in *Wiñaypacha* is developed through the film's representation of Phaxsi's dreams about Antuku. The first of Phaxsi's dreams warns her that Antuku may have forgotten his home; the second, in which she hears the crying of a baby, gives her hope that her son may return the next day. The first dream connects Phaxsi to the past and shows that even Antuku, who has long since left the *puna*, persists in the memory of the Andean highlands and the beings with whom he had once forged a symbiotic collective. The second dream is interpreted by Phaxsi as premonitory, a hopeful sign that her son will soon be home. In Peru's Andean cultures, dreams can be understood at times to facilitate communication between the dreamer and the *apus*, ancestors, and other entangled Earth beings (Lajo 2015; Ricard Lanata [2007] 2013). They often relate ancestral knowledge and may warn dreamers of events to come. When understood within the context of *Wiñaypacha* and the flow of time as it exists in the *puna* for the Aymara elders, the impact of these dreams on the film's narrative further articulates the coalescence of the past and future with the present time. Phaxsi's dreams pull the past and future into contact with her present reality. Of course, Antuku does not return the following day, indicating that he might now be beyond the reach of even the beings who speak to Phaxsi in dreams.

After Phaxsi's premonition of the return of her son, she appears with Willka the following day, both with their backs to the camera, overlooking a wide expanse of the Andes. Willka stands and appears restless, while Phaxsi sits almost as still as the mountains that surround her (Catacora 2017, 24:16). From the perspective of the camera, it appears as if the Aymara couple are perched at the summit of a mountain as they survey the Andean worlds below, waiting for Antuku to emerge from one of them. Phaxsi eventually breaks her silent repose and asks what the two have done wrong for their son to abandon them; Willka responds that perhaps Antuku believes them dead. While the context of Antuku's new reality is never explained, what is certain is that he has been pulled out of the Andean world he shared with his parents and absorbed into the "universe" of development and linear time whose tracks propel the son further and further away from his parents, both literally and figuratively. Phaxsi counters Willka's comment: "We still live, and we are waiting for him" (Catacora 2017, 25:04). This scene expresses pain over the culture of development's tendency to leave behind (and unimagine) worlds that do not fit into its rhetoric of progress and modernization. Catacora shows that alternative worlds still exist outside of the hegemony of extractive development and organize in accordance with distinct temporal rhythms and life practices, here emphasizing an Andean world that emerges through *suma qamaña*. Even when Phaxsi and Willka have gone, this does not necessarily imply that the world of *Wiñaypacha* disappears (although by the end of the film it does appear that this world has experienced a loss of vitality). Humans were never the

center of this world but rather exist in ontological relation to a collective of beings who, as Catacora routinely demonstrates, constitute much more than static objects and participate in the construction of worlds.

#### 4. “Va y Viene”

Antuku’s roots no longer appear to reach into the Andean highlands. While Phaxsi’s journey higher into the mountains can be framed as a type of return or natural flow in the passage of time, the preoccupations introduced into the film through the mention of Antuku persist unresolved. Who will care for the elders living in the rural Andes in situations similar to those of Phaxsi and Willka? Furthermore, what will become of Aymara culture among younger generations who have become increasingly detached from the *apus* and the Andean highlands? These questions hang in the air long after *Wiñaypacha*’s credits roll. Intergenerational processes of acculturation continue to pull young Aymara people away from the Andean highlands. While the film relates a highly personal and localized experience, it also provides a type of return for those who have migrated away, an opportunity to remember and visualize other worlds.

Catacora’s drive to represent the rural Andean world as it truly exists is evident and the filmmaker has cited the pleasure he receives when spectators confuse *Wiñaypacha* for a documentary (Redacción Perú21 2017). He never used artificial lights; even when filming at night, he borrowed only the glow of a fire. Furthermore, the film lacks any extra-diegetic musical accompaniment. When the spectator hears music, it is because Willka has picked up his flute or begun to sing, the wind dying down enough so that it may be heard. With regard to the Aymara actors, neither of the film’s protagonists, Rosa Nina and Vicente Catacora (both Aymara monolinguals), had prior experience and Willka was played by Catacora’s own grandfather. Beyond *Wiñaypacha*’s narrative, the process of filming also internalized the epistemology and practices of *suma qamaña* and *allin ruway*. The film emerges through a compassionate collective of human and nonhuman beings: the film crew, animal actors, landscapes, weather, and the *apus* themselves. The extended silences and long takes characteristic of the film provide opportunities for a conglomeration of beings beyond humans to make their presences, both visual and auditory, noticed. Perhaps the best example of the compassionate labor that went into the making of the film relates to the decisions made by Catacora and the film crew with regard to lighting. Aside from his desire for realism in the film, Catacora has also stated that the decision to avoid artificial lighting was made to benefit his elderly actors, both of whom had cataracts and were blinded by the lights shining in their eyes.

Óscar Catacora’s film represents a significant success in breaking through hegemonies of representation that have long depicted indigenous cultures from non-indigenous perspectives (see Schiwy 2009; De Carvalho 2018). Although Catacora lamentably passed away in November of 2021 at the age of 34, his journey as a young Aymara filmmaker runs opposite to the narrative of Antuku and is evidence that the experience of Phaxsi and Willka’s absent son is not definitive. With *Wiñaypacha*, Catacora travels to the *puna* to tell a story about abandonment and represent social ecologies of Andean life entangled in time’s eternal ebbs and flows. He further makes visible the plurality of worlds, offering a vision of life that extends beyond a nature–culture divide which, at times, can appear universal through the lens of extractive capitalism. Catacora was the son who returned home.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This idea has translations in other languages, such as *sumak kawsay* (Quechua) and *el buen vivir / el vivir bien* (Spanish).

<sup>2</sup> The title of Catacora’s film is written as one word, *Wiñaypacha*. Javier Lajo, whose work in Incan-Andean thought provides the foundation for my consideration of the concept, writes *wiñay pacha* as two words. For the sake of clarity, I use *Wiñaypacha* (one word) only in reference to the film.

- 3 Somewhat unique for a film made outside of Peru's capital region, five cinemas in Lima screened *Wiñaypacha* for multiple weeks (D'Argenio 2020, pp. 143–44). This indicates the enhanced visibility of Catacora's film to Andean migrants in Lima.
- 4 For further discussion of *Wiñaypacha*'s production, funding, critical reception, and contextualization within the landscape of Peruvian cinema, see D'Argenio's article: "*Wiñaypacha* by Oscar Catacora: Overcoming *Indigenismo* Through Intimacy and Slowness".
- 5 "Multispecies and thing relationships" denotes the mutual interactions between species and things that form collectives (Beilin and de Moya-Cotter forthcoming). "Things" are understood to encompass a wide breadth of dynamic actors which might otherwise be mistaken for static objects.
- 6 *Puna* can be used to describe the tundra-like plateaus high in the Andes (Paerregaard 1997, p. 29).
- 7 Lajo uses the Quechua translations of these terms to dialogue with these concepts.
- 8 Biocentric notions of life recognize that human and nonhuman lives are interconnected with each other and with the planet. This epistemological framework recognizes the inseparability of nature and culture.
- 9 However, it has been argued that the constitutional recognition of these concepts functions more as propaganda for progressive governments and has produced mixed results (Acosta 2021).
- 10 For further discussion on the plurality of perspectives on the idea of living well and in harmony, see Eduardo Gudynas' (2011) article: "Buen vivir: Germinando alternativas al desarrollo".
- 11 Various cairns appear at different points in the film and appear to be fluid in their functions/meanings: we see four crested with mountain flora during the offering to *Pachamama* and the *apus*; another is along the path during Willka's unfulfilled journey to town. By far the largest, the towering spire of stones could have once been a waypoint by which travelers now seldomly pass.

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