

La Casa Azul: A Narrative in Five Parts

A composition by Daniela Chaparro

The question of diversity is itself a tokenizing act. It seems silly to rely on Black and brown people to re-introduce musical histories, technological accomplishments and cultural knowledge that the industry itself has systematically erased. This piece notes that dominant systems of power rely on clean, neat categories that force folks of color to xylo themselves (“us” and “them”), act as representatives of their communities, and (re)tell stories of strife and struggle for a white audience. This leaves very little room for pluralism and diversity of experience and thought.

In *La Casa Azul* I explore my identities with regard to gender, heritage, race, and family in a way that relishes in the “choque,” the dissonance between my culture, gender, and geographical location. A clashing of worlds cracks open our awareness of the interrelation of different systems of oppression. It is precisely this new conscious space that is fertile for creation and reflection of myself, my craft as a sound artist, my personal stake in Chilean culture, and my search for liberation from binaries. Through computer sound, I can more accurately represent this experience through a mosaic of text, voice, music, digital synthesis, and found sound.

Composition: <http://mediathek.slub-dresden.de/ton90002547.html>

Text: Rodríguez Juana María. “Divas, Atrevidas, y Entendidas.” *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces*, New York University Press, 2003, p. 23.

I. Mestiza Mess

Who are we? Where do we come from? Where do we go? Anzaldúa’s *Mestiza Consciousness* breaks down the fictions of duality. Anzaldúa does not impose a unity of interpretation, although she suggests a cosmic unity that joins all things, just as Clark’s *Maraza Consciousness* depends largely on our capacities to read the sign as a cyclical, spiral relationship. Both authors attempt to transcend duality by not only embracing contradictions and ambivalence, but also using them to challenge and transform systems of categorization.

Anzaldúa describes the Mestiza Consciousness as a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definition of light and dark, and gives them new meanings. A constant process of translation and transformation, of movement through and against sites of knowledge, the Mestiza Consciousness she describes is born of hybridity and cross-pollination. She writes, "the work of Mestiza Consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner, and to show her in the flesh." Anzaldúa invites us to not only sustain contradictions, but to turn ambivalence into something else.

II. La Casa Azul

La casa azul. El sol amarillo. El cielo negro con ollitos. (The blue house. The yellow sun. The black sky, with little holes.) I remember being in Tunquén, or maybe it was Algarrobo, I don't remember. But we had just gotten home from the market, and it was really late. The house was still bright turquoise under the fluorescent lights. But that was the first time I saw the sky so big and so fucking grand and massive. I stood there craning my neck for at least thirty minutes. I was in awe, I had never felt so connected, so centered, and small. Delightfully small.

Esta canción es de ahora. Esta canción es de ahora. Esta canción cuenta lo que existe dentro del alma. Te amo mucho y me encanta tu sonrisa. Siento que tu ternura, o sea lo que tu reflejas siento que, no se porque es muy parecido lo que yo reflejo como de ternura. No se! Linda, te amo y saludos a la familia.

(This song is for today. This song is for today. This song speaks to what exists within our souls. I love you so much and I adore your smile. I feel like your tenderness, or what you reflect is similar to what I reflect in my tenderness. I don't know! Beautiful, I love you and send regards to the family.)

III. Dissonancia

Dissonancia, dissonance. Esta canción cuenta que a veces no se da cuenta de ahora.

Ahora. (This song speaks about how one may at times not notice the present moment.) I didn't know what my cousins were going through at the time. Many of them were depressed, dealing with divorce and loss. We didn't quite have the language to express that to each other. Even now, after years of practice, still. We still get hung up on vocabulary. It's really hard to connect.

Saludos para allá, te amo mucho.

(Sending greetings, I love you so much.)

There's a lot of reading between the lines, reading body language, and understanding intention. Letting that speak more than the words themselves. I get really fucking frustrated because of that. I feel like I'm constantly reaching, constantly filling in the gap that I know is always present, will always be present. If I had a wish I would wish

that we could understand each other.

Saludos para allá, te amo mucho.
(Sending greetings, I love you so much.)

I don't know if speaking Spanish together would help us understand each other fully, if we can ever do that with another person, if in every interaction we are always hearing what we want to hear, hearing what we think they're trying to say...never fully getting it. I just want to have a normal grandparent-grandchild relationship, cousin relationship, aunt and uncle relationship. I want to be able to describe my feelings accurately, and express my humor! I lack that so much when I speak in Spanish. I can never be funny. I can never be as funny as I want to be, as I know I can be, and it sucks! Disonancia, dissonance. Can be shrill, can be awkward, can be worth it.

Quien preguntó?

Yo.

Dani, que te acaba de preguntar.

Claro, porque después no voy a estar yo, ¿quién les va a contar?

Si, po. Tú no mas, po.

Claro. Ya po. Por donde empiezo...No pero, uh, cuando quieren otro día si quieren.

No sé.

Okay.

(Who asked?

Me.

Dani, they just asked you.

Right, because when I'm no longer here, who else is going to tell you?

Right. Only you can.

Right. Okay. Where do I start... No but, uh, maybe another day if you want.

I don't know.

Okay.)

IV. Parra y Jara

Parra y Jara. Broken fingers can still play. I'll never understand the depth of pain and trauma of Pinochet's time. Of how it bled through all the interactions my parents had in university: being teargassed, watching their friends be hurt, knowing people that have disappeared, watching strong politicians be assassinated one by one, watching political icons, musicians disappear only to reappear with broken fingers and charred bodies. Their music still plays out, though. Broken fingers can still play.

We went to Museo de la Memoria last time we went to Chile. I remember my mom not being able to move past the first floor, and there were three. I was so intrigued, and my dad was telling us all the things that he remembered, all

the political campaigns that were happening at the time, “Nó,” and finding connection to the materials that we were seeing. There were wired beds that showed what a typical torture scenario would look like in the stadium. And my mom cried. At a certain point my mom couldn't take in any more. She sort of glazed over and left. I'll never understand the effect that had on them. I'll never understand the ways that people process that.

Atacameños

And then,

Aimaras

What feels the most ironic to me is

Diaguitas

fleeing to a country that was

Changos

so deeply

Picunches

involved in

Yaganes

the reason why

Mapuches

those harms happened in the first place.

Pehuenches

Fleeing to a place with sheen,

Huilliches

with a promise

Tehuelches

that delivers

Cuncos

so selectively

Chonos

to a chosen few,

Alacalufes

the pale few,

Onas

that we were on the right side of,

o Selknam

and we directly benefited from.

¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido! ¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!
(The village, united, will never be defeated! The village, united, will never be defeated!)

V. Who Are We

Who are we? Where do we come from? Where do we go? We are people, humans. We come from our mothers. When asked who we are, we tend to answer in a narrative structure.

!!!! We follow a form !!!!

...to overcome the anxieties of self-narration and the burdens of self-representation. To authenticate and perform our identities, artists of color are condemned to write only autobiographical works, only struggles. We don't remember for ourselves as we remember in order to tell. Who I am is not where I or my parents come from. I, we, go from there. All our struggles are our baseline. We want to represent other stories for ourselves. By telling our stories, we cultivate creative energy and move on, to tell different and affirming stories.

Media Sources

Salvador Allende's Last Words to the Nation, www.marxists.org/archive/allende/1973/september/11.htm [Accessed 6th Nov. 2021].

Jara, V. "Te Recuerdo Amanda"; www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRmre8ggkY [Accessed 6th Nov. 2021].