Education in Social Movements: A Cultural-Cognitive Approach
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In the arena of Social Movements, the global and the local converge in ways that they do not anywhere else. If we look at the anti-war movement gathering force at this very moment, we can attest that global concerns for peace, and for survival, are infusing local organizations of every stripe with new life. Similarly, local struggles take center stage at most world forums. Such is the case of the MST, for example. Nevertheless, in spite of the attention social movements, old and new, receive today as sites for struggle, very little attention is given, as Eyerman and Jamison (1991, 1995) have pointed out, to the cognitive processes they are involved in.

The social movements of the sixties produced a wealth of knowledge and cultural manifestations that have not merely survived in time, but continue to have relevance for today’s movements. The anti-war movement of today resurrects the songs of the Vietnam anti-war movement; Joan Baez can be heard in every progressive radio station, while the songs of the Civil Rights Movement have never disappeared or lost their place or appeal in newer movements.

In Latin America, La Nueva Canción has played a role in every major social and revolutionary movement the area has undergone in the last thirty odd years. And at its very roots, there was a cognitive process that involved the local in its most humble clothes. Violeta Parra walking patiently from home to home, tape recorder and guitar in hand brought on folklore of unsuspected revolutionary power which would feed the revolutionary fires of several generations of musicians and those in the movements that they played for and from. Paradoxically, it was the fierce struggles against imperialism that motivated local cultural manifestations to fight for a space being disputed by a homogenizing pop culture, and that would, in turn, become a universal and enduring voice for struggles all over the world. It is also because of their universality that Violeta Parra’s compositions, though extremely regional and tightly connected to the folkloric forms of specific regions, can be played today by new generations of Chileans, who consider her “sacred but not untouchable” (Peña, 2001), in the form of rock, as evidenced by a record homage paid to her legacy by thirteen Chilean rock bands and soloists who edited in 2001 an album called Después de vivir un siglo.

Violeta Parra, who is considered the indestructible link between the old cantors and the new, found in the folklore of Chile a dialectical way of approximating reality, and made use of the contradiction to expose the realities of feudal and capitalist exploitation. This personal cognitive process reflected cognitive processes the society was undergoing at the same time, and initiated a mode of expressing them that would become the common denominator for all the composers of the New Chilean Song.

As educators turn towards “new” social movements for alternative sites for struggle, a look at the role popular culture played in the past in “old” social movements might hold clues to the varied ways in which movement intellectuals and organic intellectuals created knowledge and an enduring life for their works and message. It is with this focus that this paper centers on the work of Violeta Parra. It is also with the understanding that political education and its cognitive processes is education, more specifically, adult education, that the New Social Movement Theory in the field of adult education is presented here.
Contextualizing the Interest in Social Movements in Adult Education

The world of education, in particular that of adult educators, has become increasingly interested in the role of social movements in the bringing about of social, political, and economic change. That is, those educators that consider social change to be the main objective of education.

Concerned about what they consider the mistakes of the past; but, most importantly, concerned with a “new” world that some have called “post modern”, these educators are looking to social movements for the answers that were previously provided by the political parties and the labor organizations.

Partly, or in great part because of the fall of the Soviet Union, leftists all over the world have considered it necessary to revise their assumptions of the world and “re-group”, so to speak, to confront the new world. At the same time, many theorists talk about the “crisis of modernity”, the end of the meta-narratives. Post-modernists believe that we live in a fragmented world where all encompassing narratives of a humanity marching together towards a common goal (which is good for everybody) have been proven defunct. In spite of the fact that today, more than ever, we can talk about a global society, these theorists emphasize diversity, difference, fragmentation, and individual identity over the encompassing terms of the past, and of the total views of the meta-narratives.

There are those that believe that modernity is hardly in crisis and far from dead. Capitalism and liberal democracy (in the form of neo-liberal democracies) reign over the world. As long as capitalism lasts, we are caught in its meta-narrative. From this perspective, the meta-narrative of Marxism might still be the answer to defeat capitalism.

Those educators concerned with bringing about social change have turned away from the traditional struggles against capitalism through the political parties and many do not consider the working class to be the agent to bring about social change. From this perspective, then, the labor movement is not considered to be a viable place for struggle.

In the 1980s and 1990s, adult educators started writing on new social movements as the place to conduct struggle and the means to bring about change. Finger (1989) held a post modernist position, Welton (1993) defended rationality and stayed inside the modernity paradigm, and Spencer (1995) believed that the labor movement (particularly in Canada) was still the place to struggle. While Paulston and Altenbaugh (1988) looked sometimes to old social movements for answers (such as the Black Panther Party).

What these adult educators called the new social movements were the Women’s Movement, the Peace Movement, the Identities Movements (Gay Rights Movement, for example) and National Identity Movements (such as First Nations). Fuentes and Frank (1989, 1990) argued that some of these so-called “new” social movements were the same movements of the past; the Women’s Movement, for example, dating back to the 19th Century (at least in Europe and in the United States); the Peace Movement with a
long history of anti-war activism against both World Wars, and of course, Vietnam. More pointedly, the Ecological Movement (also considered a “new” movement) had its roots in the anti-nuclear activism of the 1950s (Isserman, 1993) and, as Martin (1988) argued, ecological education had always been the means of survival for the species, be it through “hands-on” training or through story telling and other cultural manifestations.

So, what was “new” about these social movements? Maybe a new way of looking at them. They have been increasingly seen as the sites for education to take place and as the means to build what many educators who have read Gramsci (1971) call civil society. “Civil society” is used sometimes to mean grassroots and other times, as Gramsci intended it, as the non-coercive part of the state that acts through persuasion. While the army, the police, the prisons are the coercive state that uses force to impose the hegemony of a class, civil society is made of the schools, church (when it is not acting in the coercive state), the media, etc. to impose hegemonic ideology through persuasion. When persuasion is not sufficient to control the hearts and minds, and actions of a people, the army and the police take over and impose it by force (as in fascism). Educators that believe Gramsci has answers for our path of action have argued, then, that our work should concentrate in the persuasion area. In other words, hegemonic education should be countered with new ideology or ideologies. Social movements, then, would play an important part in counter-acting hegemony. Many theorists also believe in Habermasian spaces for dialogue that occur in the public sphere. Furthermore, there are adult educators that believe that social movements are sufficient to “surround” the state and render it ineffective. Mezirow (1991), who takes from Habermas, believes that given perspective transformation we will all do what is good.

Arguments against New Social Movement Theory range from arguing that we do not live in a post-modern world, to accusations that most new movements are middle-class movements, and therefore hold no answers for the working class and the unemployed, and the South in general. More importantly, social movements (as evidenced in the past) are short-lived, conjunctural, in other words they bring people together to resolve or struggle for or against immediate, limited forms of oppression, and then disband. Finally, attempts to “surround” the state have been viciously defeated in countries where the working class has attempted to change the structures in a gradual manner without confronting or attempting to overturn the coercive area of the state, as is the case of Chile (Smirnov, 1979).

Paulston and Altenbaugh (1988) came up with a typology of adult education in which they could fit the different social movements. Under radical humanist adult education they placed movements such as ETA, ANC (pre-transition), The Black Panther Party. Under radical structuralist adult education, they placed those nations that have gone through revolution (China, Cuba, Sandinista Nicaragua). Under reformist adult education, they identified what we would call the new social movements. Their analysis of the Black Panther Party as a legitimate, and successful site for the education of revolutionary Blacks (they argue that in a five-year period the Black Panther Party educated thousands of militants and contributed to the militancy of
millions of African Americans) offers a view of the need for and the possibilities of radical adult education- in 1970 “two million black Americans, counted themselves as ‘revolutionaries’, while 75 percent of blacks admired the NAACP ‘a great deal’, 25 percent had this view of the Black Panthers (Paulston & Altenbaugh, p. 133) – while, at the same time, we should be reminded of the fate of revolutionaries when the objective conditions are not present.

I have called the process the Chilean working class was involved in a social movement, in the sense that it was a revolutionary movement that conducted a society to a revolutionary situation. The education that took place in different periods, and in different areas of the national life, was radical adult education, in the sense that it was class education- the education of the working class, and, to a lesser extent of the peasantry, towards the taking of power.

The movement of the “Nueva Canción Chilena” can be, and has been viewed as part of the world movement of the sixties. As such, it shares characteristics and influences with other cultural expressions of the period around the world.

The New Song in Latin America movement formed an International Permanent Committee in 1982. Besides defining the role of the artist as “a chance to project himself toward the future and... support, through art and life, the continuous clamor for social change demanded by the people of all nations”, it stated that The Nueva Canción movement “is art without class or country, and its message is that of hope and humanity’s highest ideals” (see Reyes Matta, p. 459).

Music in Social Movements

The role of music in social movements has been paid particular attention to by Eyerman and Jamison (1998), who have closely studied the music of the sixties in this context. They claim that music and social movements have a unique connection, as in the music produced during the Civil Rights movement, and that there are cognitive processes that take place in social movements which create new knowledge, as well as they renew tradition in novel ways.

Fernando Reyes Matta (1988) has identified, among others, a function of denunciation, and one of confrontation in the New Song in Latin America (Nueva Canción Latinoamericana). These two functions, I would argue, belong to a tradition established by Violeta Parra.

De lo Contrario no Canto

From Violeta Parra’s “Yo canto la diferencia” (1957) to Víctor Jara’s “Manifiesto” (1973) there are sixteen years of a social movement that took Salvador Allende to the presidency of Chile and that placed the Chilean working class at the doors of power. The role played by popular culture in that movement, as well as the influence of the movement on popular culture, are in part represented by those manifestos of Violeta and Víctor, who, in their songs, attempted to establish, not only their profound
commitment to social struggle, but also the uselessness of a culture that does not become part of them.

yo canto la diferencia
que hay de lo cierto a lo falso
de lo contrario no canto (V. Parra)

yo no canto por cantar
ni por tener buena voz
canto porque la guitarra
tiene sentido y razón (V. Jara)

That capacity to distinguish truth, as well as the choice made to sing it that Violeta would defend up to “Gracias a la vida” (1966) is the legacy repeated in Víctor Jara’s “Manifiesto” (1973), his last song. In the time space between these two songs, and between those two deaths, we witnessed the last stages of a social movement that would reach its highest stage between 1970 and 1973, but that, if we conceive social movements as cumulative processes, was being forged since the end of the nineteenth century.

From a Gramscian (1971) point of view, Violeta was an organic intellectual that arose from the peasant class into which she was born. As an artist, her option for folklore takes her to investigate and compile the traditional Chilean folklore of the agrarian regions of central and southern Chile. It is there that she discovers the clues for her own creative works. It is after careful and extensive research and compilation that she starts to produce her best-known songs and where political cognition appears in what have been called her “songs of struggle” (Cánepa-Hurtado, 1983). Her option for Chilean folklore involves the adoption of a philosophical conceptualization of medieval origin, inherited from the conquerors and colonizers of the XV and XVI centuries, the preference for a dialect of andalusian origin, that is not only regional, but also popular, often combined with indigenous words from Mapundungo, as well as poetic compositions, such as decima espinela, also inherited from the Spanish literature of the XVI century. The use of dialect to break with class conciliation, and the ingenious use of the contradiction to denounce a system of exploitation would actively cooperate with the progressive polarization of Chilean society.

Historical Context

The history of Chile, as the history of all peoples, involves a recounting of its class struggles. In the case of Chile, it is also the history of its dependence, first on Spain, then on English capital, to finally end in the hands of North American capital. From the establishment of the Republic, there has been a small land-owning oligarchy, eventually related by family ties to mining and financier capital. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the oligarchy must put its fate in the hands of foreign capital and
Chile becomes a “satellite” of England, in this way paving the road for underdevelopment (Frank, 1969). Class struggles begin, in this way, in the mines against foreign capital. The first general strike of saltpeter workers takes place in July of 1890 (Angell, 1974, p. 23). Repression nonetheless is left to Chilean institutions. While workers are massacred in the north, latifundia in the central and southern regions prosper under feudal oppression, which is, nevertheless, at the service of capital. The working class organizes itself at the beginning of the twentieth century and soon forms its own parties, besides the traditional workers organizations. From early on, the parties of the working class push for electoral politics and form coalitions, the FRAP and later Unidad Popular. It is evident that inside the Chilean working class there is created a conviction that it is through class conciliation that its power grows.

The Popular Front has Allende as a candidate in 1952, 1958, and 1964, to finally triumph in 1970 with Unidad Popular. Allende loses the elections of 1964 by a small margin. In fact the defeat is due largely to imperialist intervention. Socialism had become a tangible option since 1952. There is a slow but progressive sharpening of class struggle that is manifested, as in other areas, in the cultural arena. With the advent of radio, the oligarchy appropriates it to create a homogenous national image that serves an up and coming nationalist bourgeoisie. With that objective, it uses a folklore extracted from the agrarian regions that idealizes the feudal relations found in the latifundia (Manns, 1987). As part of this effort, universities create research groups to investigate folklore, and the radio produces programs to which Violeta Parra will be connected as an independent compiler. She carries on these activities between 1953 and 1957. What she compiles is in direct contradiction with the idealization of official groups and she is from the very beginning rejected by the bourgeois media. But peasants themselves react warmly to her efforts and lend her enthusiastic cooperation. In 1957 she starts producing her own creations, “songs of struggle”, though there are earlier precedents. There is no doubt that her songs reflect, and probably stimulate the class struggle between 1958 and 1964. The fear in the US of a socialist government being elected in Chile is greater in 1964 than in 1970 (Select Committee... 1975). Millions are invested in impeding the election of Allende in 1964. The loss of the elections radicalizes sectors of the left and class struggle deepens. Frei’s government mobilizes university students but in spite of significant advances such as the agrarian reform, he betrays their expectations. Between 1964 and 1970, political groups such as el Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) emerge from the universities, as well as leftist cultural workers. Among these, stand the folklorists that will find in “La Peña” an organic place for creation and diffusion. “La Peña” was the creation of Ángel Parra, Violeta’s son, and there she will return, after a stay in Europe, to work with her children and with the creators of the “Nueva Canción Chilena”: Víctor Jara, Patricio Manns, Roberto Alarcón; and after her death, the best known groups, Quilapayún and Inti-Illimani, will be formed under the influence of the former.

“La Peña” played a fundamental role in the struggle against the media for a public that in contact with North American music was acculturated by it. There were sectors in Chile that embraced foreign culture as a sign of class, and those that rejected...
it and chose their own, represented in folklore, as an anti-imperialist struggle. This is a battle that Violeta Parra believed she had lost. After her death, the other members of “La Peña” would vie for first place on the charts along with the British and North American groups, and between 1970 and 1973 they would become the conscience in song of a victorious movement.

Violeta Parra is recognized by the folklorists of the New Chilean Song as the antecedent of that movement. Patricio Manns (1987) calls her the “iron link” that connects popular tradition with the “New Song” and who “guarantees our continuity” (p. 57). I propose that the role the folklorists played between 1964 and 1973 was one of agitation and politicization using knowledge and approaches provided by the popular tradition that Violeta had rescued first in her research and then taken to a new level in her creative work.

From Chilean Dialect to Indocile Song

Chilean dialect exhibits two characteristics that I consider important for this discussion. First, Chilean peasant dialect has kept the same characteristics of the language of conquerors and colonizers, the majority from Andalusia (Oroz, 1966. pp. 14-36). With a significant number of archaisms, religious concepts, customs, and a philosophy of medieval origin were maintained. We could extrapolate that dichotomist medieval thinking translated into opposites such as good versus evil; devil against God; Moors and Christians; heaven versus hell; etcetera, not only has its origin in a particular conceptualization that is connected to the inherited language and culture, but that it also originates in the conditions of life themselves. Though arguable, one line of political analysis insists that Chilean peasantry has lived for most of its history in feudal conditions. Those conditions are clearly dichotomist and can be represented by opposites such as serfs and lords, top and bottom, rich and poor. And the anti-feudal struggle involves a way of conceptualizing that emerges from the ideology that was used in the course of feudal oppression, in other words from Christianity.

To reach for popular philosophy with ideological purposes in mind, the intellectual will find that it provides language with a never-ending source of expressions that reflect the objective reality of peasantry and that these carry in them the seed of rebellion. Dichotomist language can easily become antagonistic when objective conditions provide for the arena that will allow class contradictions to resolve themselves in favor of one of them. Furthermore, language can help to polarize the conditions even further.

The second characteristic that I consider pertinent for this discussion is that of attenuation. It has been argued that Chilean dialect, contrary to dialects spoken in Spain, for example, shows a marked tendency to attenuate. Two types of attenuation have been identified: one with a class character, and another, quite generalized in Chile, that is manifested out of courtesy, but that it could also be interpreted as a survival instinct sharpened by a verbal communication that usually takes place in extreme proximity (Puga Larraín, 1997). In either case, it is my opinion that in Chilean society, and particularly in the middle classes, there is a great degree of attenuation in
speaking that is fundamentally directed to avoid conflict; and that in a society, intensely stratified in classes as Chilean society is, the major conflict is the class conflict. It can be said that it has been essential for Chilean “democracy” to maintain at all cost a national life based on non-antagonist class relations. In this context, when language becomes antagonistic, particularly when referring to class conditions, or when it brakes with class collaboration, it becomes exceedingly dangerous, or it is perceived as such by those concerned with keeping the status quo.

If we keep in mind these two characteristics, it is possible to see how Violeta Parra, and then the composers of the “New Chilean Song”, carried out revolutionary activity that surpassed the linguistic and the art arenas. When the revolutionary moment is crushed by force, the reaction against the folklorists appears irrational in its brutality. Nevertheless, for a class that had held power for 160 years, the words of Víctor Jara signaled that power was under serious threat.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{usté, ñor, no es na} \\
\text{ni chicha ni limona} \\
\text{se la pasa manoseando} \\
\text{caramba su dignida…} \\
\text{Y si sigue hociconeando le vamos a expropiar} \\
\text{las pistolas y la lengua y todito lo demás (1971)}
\end{align*}
\]

Reality is dichotomist; the classes have arrived or are arriving to impasse. Popular humor inspires Víctor to express the moment in such a manner. Language and tone are “crude” for the “delicate” sensitivity of the middle classes. It is popular dialect thrown to the face of the eternally lukewarm Chilean middle classes. It had been Violeta Parra the first to use language in this manner:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Me han preguntádico varias persónicas si peligróscicas para las másicas son las} \\
\text{canciónicas agitadóricas” (1966)}
\end{align*}
\]

Evidently, agitation songs where dangerous for the classes in power, therefore they were also such for the masses.

\textit{From Christianity to Aristotelian Contradiction}

Towards the end of the Middle Ages there is in Europe a resurgence of the study of Aristotle’s contradiction (Price, 1992, p. 145). The concepts of continuity, contrariety, and contradiction are re-examined to explain how change is produced (Kretzmann, 1982, pp. 270-296). It is not surprising, then, that together with medieval religiosity, we find in the Chilean folklore that springs from the production both of cultured and popular Spain a preoccupation with contrariety and contradiction. It is when in Spain, conditions were present for an incipient capitalism that called for the elimination of feudalism and, therefore, for a class struggle to marshal the advent of the bourgeoisie.


Songs of Struggle

Written between 1957 and 1967, the “Songs of struggle” have been identified as Violeta Parra’s original creations, clearly distinguishable from her previous compositions in subject matter, style, and intent. Though it has been argued that they are not original musically speaking (Manns as cited in Pancani & Canales, 1999), they are so in content. Their content is highly political and, though it borrows from tradition, it also exhibits characteristics not previously found in the folklore of Chile. I would argue that these songs appear to be the work of somebody quite familiar with dialectical materialism, and since there has been a concerted effort to portray Violeta Parra as a “naïve” composer, one would have to accept, then, that her genius springs from her close contact with folklore, *el saber popular*.

What Violeta Parra combines in her songs is dichotomist conceptualization and the absence of attenuation in songs “en tono mayor a lo humano y a lo divino”: decimas, quartets, quintets, sextons in verses of eight syllables in which there is an abundance of antithetic figures. In her compositions there is a scientific approach to the analysis of society in a language and manner of philosophizing that are familiar to her audiences. Furthermore, the “songs of struggle” are, as a whole, a veritable treatise on Chilean society, where the composer travels geographically, as it were, through Chile identifying the particular injustices present in each region, pointing fingers at the culprits, and calling for a reverting of the oppressive situation.

In these works, the composer systematically unveils the contradictions inherent in Chilean society, to then make a call for the resolution. At the heart of her analysis there is a break with the institutions of “civil society”, a denunciation of bourgeois democracy as a sham.

Dialectical Songs

“Al centro de la injusticia” opens the cycle. The composer walks us through the long and suffering geography of Chile unmasking the contradictions of its economic, socio-political realities:

| Chile limita al norte con el Perú        | Claro que algunos viven acomodados, pero eso con la sangre del degollado. |
| con el Cabo de Hornos limita al sur.    | Delante del escudo más arrogante la agricultura tiene su interrogante. |
| Se eleva en el oriente la cordillera    | La papa nos la venden naciones varias cuando del sur de Chile es originaria; |
| y en el oeste luce la costanera.        | Delante del emblema de tres colores la minería tiene muchos bemoles. |

| Al centro están los valles con sus     | |
| verdores, donde se multiplican los     | |
| pobladores. Cada familia tiene muchos | |
| chiquillos, con su miseria viven en    | |
| conventillos. | |
El minero produce buenos dineros pero para el bolsillo del extranjero, exhuberante industria donde laboran por unos cuantos reales muchas señoras, y así tienen que hacerlo, porque al marido la paga no le alcanza p’al mes corrido. Pa’ no sentir la aguja de este dolor en la noche estrellada dejo mi voz.

Linda se ve la patria señor turista pero no le han mostrado las callampitas. Mientras gastan millones en un momento de hambre se muere gente que es un portento. Mucho dinero en parques municipales y la miseria es grande en los hospitales. Al medio de Alameda de las Delicias Chile limita al centro de la injusticia.

Then in “La esperanza”, there is a call to revert the contradiction. Language here is humorously confrontational. “Que la tortilla se vuelva”, the resolution of the master-slave contradiction, was present in the songs of the Spanish civil war.

No pierdo las esperanzas de que esto tenga su arreglo un día este pobre pueblo tenga una feliz mudanza el toro solo se amansa matándolo bien en pelo no tengo ningún recelo de verle la pajarilla cuando se dé la tortilla la vuelta que tanto anhelo.

“Yo canto a la diferencia” (1957) is the manifesto that will survive in future composers:

Yo canto a la chillaneja si tengo que decir algo y no tomo la guitarra por conseguir un aplauso. Yo canto la diferencia que hay de lo cierto a lo falso, de lo contrario, no canto.

There is here evidence of her total awareness in reference to the irresoluble contradiction: truth and lie. Truth is not a synthesis, but must be found through a dialectic process of elimination. In “Gracias a la vida (1966) she will state “perfecto distingo lo negro del blanco, “cuando miro al bueno tan lejos del malo, “así yo distingo dicha de quebranto. In “Maldigo del alto cielo” (1966) she will create, for the first time, a false synthesis that she herself blames on the intensity of her pain; because in her
cosmology, good must triumph against evil, beauty over ugliness, the oppressed over the oppressors.

Maldigo la cordillera
de Los Andes y de la Costa
maldigo toda la angosta
y larga faja de tierra,
también la paz y la guerra,
lo franco y lo veleidoso,
maldigo lo perfumoso,
porque mi anhelo está muerto,
maldigo todo lo cierto
y lo falso y lo dudoso:
cuánto será mi dolor!

“Religious” Songs

“La carta” (1962) is a reaction against the violence of Alessandri’s government. Here there is not only a call for rebellion, but this rebellion must be communist. Referring to her brothers she says: “todos comunistas con el favor de mi Dios”. Religion is re-formulated as a doctrine of equality and, therefore, it is God who advocates for communism.

dijo el Señor a María
son para todos las flores
los montes, los arreboles (“La carta”)

Religion will be an inexhaustible source of inspiration: ideology at the service of rebellion. This is not new in anti-feudal struggles. But, at the same time, there is a progressive unmasking of the institutions both civil and religious that exponentially breaks with the attenuation of civil society. In “Qué dirá el Santo Padre” (1962), the antithesis is used to contrast the values of liberty, a civil concept; paradise, a religious one; justice, a legal construct, with the realities of loss of freedom, authoritarianism, genocide, and injustice. The pope is called to witness the atrocities as the highest human authority and representative of the divine:

Qué dirá el Santo Padre
que vive en Roma,
que le están degollando
a sus palomas.
A similar process is present in “Miren” (1962), where it is “democracy” that is unmasked: presidents, candidates, elections, Church and coercive state:

Miren como sonríen
los presidentes
cuando le hacen promesas
al inocente.

Miren como le ofrecen
al sindicato
este mundo y el otro
los candidatos.

Miren como redoblan
los juramentos,
pero después del voto
doble tormento

Miren el hervidero
de vigilantes
para rociar de flores
al estudiante

Miren como relumbran carabineros
para hacerles el premio
a los obreros.

Miren como se viste
cabo y sargento
para teñir de rojo
los pavimentos.

Miren como profanan
las sacristías
con pieles y sombreros
de hipocresía.

Miren como blanquean
mes de María
y al pobre le negrean
la luz del día.

“Ayúdame Valentina “ (1963) is a frontal attack to the Church and its institutions. In spite of the fact that Violeta had often pointed to the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church in Chile, she had always rescued the doctrine for the purpose of conscientization. In this composition, though, she breaks with the legacy of Christian ideology. It is a significant step in the anti-feudal struggle.

Ayúdame, Valentina,
tú que volaste tan lejos,
díles de una vez por todas
que arriba no hay tal mansión,
mañana la ha de fundar
el hombre con su razón.
This repudiation of religion had also been present in “Porque los pobres no tienen” (1962), where she had clearly denounced both the role of the Church and of religion in class oppression.

Porque los pobres no tienen
adonde volver la vista,
lavuelven hacia los cielos
con la esperanza infinita
de encontrar lo que su hermano
en este mundo le quita, palomitay:
¡qué cosas tiene la vida, zambitay!

Porque los pobres no tienen
adonde volver la voz,
lavuelven hacia los cielos
buscando una confesión,
ya que su hermano no escucha
la voz de su corazón, palomitay:

De tiempos inmemoriables
que se ha inventado el infierno
para asustar a los pobres
con sus castigos eternos,
y el pobre, que es inocente,
con su inocencia creyendo, palomitay:

El cielo tiene las riendas,
la tierra y el capital,
y a los soldados del Papa
les llena bien el morral,
y al que trabaja le meten
la gloria como un bozal, palomita.

Para seguir la mentira
lo llama su confesor;
le dice que Dios no quiere
ninguna revolución,
ni pliegos ni sindicatos
que ofendan su corazón, palomitay:
¡qué cosas tiene la vida, zambitay!

Historical Songs

In “Un río de sangre” (1962) there are allusions to the Spanish civil war, not an unusual association in Violeta Parra’s compositions. In this composition, injustice is universalized, and Violeta puts Federico García Lorca, Lumumba, Zapata, Manuel Rodríguez and Recabarren in the same brotherhood, the one of those who are both heroes of the people and the victims of injustice.

Banderas de popelina
pa’ recoger tanta sangre,
que ningún viento desgarre
porque han de seguir flameando.
Pues Chile sigue llorando
a Rodríguez y Recabarren.

Manuel Rodríguez had appeared earlier in what some consider the first song of struggle: “Hace falta un guerrillero”, a song of epic characteristics.
De niño le enseñaría lo que se tiene que hacer
    cuando nos venden la patria
        como si fuera alfiler;
    quiero un hijo guerrillero
        que la sepa defender.

*Songs with a “National Question “ Theme*

Violeta Parra’s particular emphasis on the indigenous question is remarkable. Her treatment of the subject is unheard of for the times. She does not present indigenous people as exotic figures, nor as folkloric ones. There is, as in “Arauco tiene una pena” (1962), for example, recognition of the Mapuche question as a *national question* that calls for a Mapuche uprising.

*Arauco tiene una pena*
que no la puede callar
son injusticias de siglos
que todos ven aplicar
nadie le ha puesto remedio
pudiéndolo remediar.
Levántate Huenchullán.

*Un día llega de lejos*
huecufe conquistador
buscando montañas de oro
que el indio nunca buscó
al indio le basta el oro
que le relumbra del sol.
Levántate Curimón.

*Entonces corre la sangre*
no sabe el indio qué hacer
le van a quitar su tierra
la tiene que defender
el indio se cae muerto
y el afuerino de pie.
Levántate Manquilef.

*Arauco tiene una pena*
por eso pasan llorando
los cueros de su Kultrún.
Levántate, pues Callfull.

*Del año mil cuatrocientos*
que el indio afligido está
a la sombra de la ruca
lo pueden ver lloriquear
totora de cinco siglos
nunca se habrá de secar.
Levántate Quilapán.

*Arauco tiene una pena*
más negra que su chamal
ya no son los españoles
los que les hacen llorar
hoy son los propios chilenos
los que les quitan su pan
Levántate Pallahuán.

*Ya rugen las votaciones*
se escuchan por no dejar
pero el quejido del indio.
Por qué no se escuchará
Aunque resuene en la tumba
la voz de Caupolicán
Levántate Huenchullán.
In “El Nguillatún” (1966) there is an effort to incorporate Mapundungo in the song with rights to space equal to Spanish, a strategy that connects her to another Latin American intellectual—Arguedas.

Millelche está triste con el temporal
los trigos se acuestan en ese barrial
los indios resuelven después de llorar
hablar con Isidro, con Dios y San Juan
con Dios y San Juan.

Camina la machi para el nguillatún
Chamal y rebozo, trailonco y cultrún
y hasta los enfermos de su machitún
aumentan las filas de aquel nguillatún

Se siente el perfume de carne y muday
canelo, naranjo, corteza e’ quillay;
termina la fiesta con el aclarar,
guardaron el canto, el baile y el pan.

In “Según el favor del viento” (1962) the hard life of the people of Chiloé is contrasted with a world of “silk and velvet”. The singer calls for the country to “wake up”; with apocalyptic threats that, as in other songs, attack the civil institutions.

Despierte el hombre, despierte,
despierte por un momento,
despierte toda la patria
antes de que se abran los cielos
y venga el trueno furioso
con el clarín de San Pedro, llorando estoy,
y barra los ministerios, me voy, me voy.

Songs of Miners

In “Y arriba quemando el sol” (1962) her poetic voice loses its edge and combative tone. It is a song of defeat that clearly portraits her acute concern for the fate of miners in the North:

Cuando fui para la pampa
llevaba mi corazón
contento como un chirigue
pero alla se me murió

Primero perdí las plumas
y luego perdí la voz.
Y arriba quemando el sol.
**Songs About the Role of the Composer**

“Mazúrquica Modérnica” (1966) is written as an answer to being challenged for writing agitation songs. It is a highly sophisticated analysis of society, of the causes that mobilize the masses, the class location of soldiers and police, the role of the judicial system; it is a denunciation of politicians and parties, and manifests awareness of the role played by the composer herself, as a denunciator.

Furthermore, in “Mazúrquica Modérnica” (1966) there is transgression at several levels. In an effort to put in evidence the hypocrisy in social relations, an invented language is used, which highlights the ideological content rather than hides it. It is a denunciation of bourgeois democracy and of its institutions. It also serves to ridicule the useless verbal interchanges that take place in civil society.

Me han preguntádico varias persónicas
si peligrósicas para las másicas
son las canciónicas agitadóricas
ay que pregúntica más infantílica
sólo un piñúflico la formulárica
pa’ mis adéntricos yo comentáría.

Le he contestádico yo al preguntónico
cuando la guática pide comídica
pone al cristiánico firme y guerrérico
por sus poróticas y sus cebóllicas
no hay regimiento que los deténguica
si tienen hámbrica los populáricos.

Preguntadónicas partidirísticas
disimuládicos y muy malúlicos
son peligrósicos más que los vérsicos
más que las huelguicas y los desfílicos:
bajito cuérdica firman papélicos
lavan sus mánicos como piláticos.

Caballeríticos almidonáticos
almibarádicos mini ni ni ni...
le echan carbónico al inocéntico
y arrellenádicos en los sillónicos
cuentan los muérticos de los
encuétrnicos como frivólicos y bataclánicos.

Le han preguntádico varias persónicas
si peligrósicas para las másicas
son las canciónicas agitadóricas
ay que pregúntica más infantílica
sólo un piñúflico la formulárica
pa’ mis adéntricos yo comentáría.

Y su conciencia dijo al fin:
cántale al hombre en su dolor
en su historia y su sudor
y en su moti vo de existir…

Hoy es su canto un azadón
que le abre surcos al vivir
a la justicia en su raíz
y a los raudales de su voz
en su divina comprensión
luces brotan del cantor.

All through the “songs of struggle”, the composer manifests an acute sense of her own value as an artist, and of the urgency of her message. She is perfectly aware of her “mission”, and of her creative force and does not hesitate to use a prophetic tone, as she knows good, right, and truth to be on her side.

In other words, Violeta did not ignore that she was an organic intellectual. In fact she articulated quite clearly what she thought her role, and others’ like her should be. She firmly argued for the need of organic spaces, such as “La Peña” and her own “carpa”. She believed that these places were counter-hegemonic, and her last years were spent in this effort.

What we must do is to create, create a lot and profoundly, and deliver these creations to those they have been made for. The creator must never beg to be heard. And when doors are closed in our faces, when there is so much bureaucracy and so much imbecility trotting the streets and painting its nails in offices, we must find a way to invent a space where we can be heard and understood. In that sense “La Peña” is an example. With all its limitations, it is a tool...Here will the new ones come, the ones that are beginning....In that sense “La Peña” is not enough. That is why I have planted my tent. And we need a lot more peñas, a lot more tents the length of Chile if we want this to mature, to multiply, to give fruit. (Parra as cited in Manns, 1987, pp. 69-70)

Around 1965, according to Leonidas Morales, the “energetic nucleus” of Violeta Parra’s work is closed. This would coincide with a disillusion in sectors of the left towards the political strategies they had employed till then, thus inaugurating a new movement forward in the struggle of the Chilean people that Violeta Parra would not witness. Nevertheless, there are three songs that she composes towards the last days of her life, that form a kind of testament: “Gracias a la vida” (1966); Volver a los dieciséis” (1966) and “Run Run se fue pa’l Norte” (1966). These are, according to Violeta herself, her best compositions. Though not openly political, “Gracias a la vida” is, in spite of its apparent simplicity, her composition with the deepest philosophical content. In it, Violeta strives to reflect not only her gratefulness for the life she had, but also her adherence to those philosophical positions that took her to embrace a political commitment of unusual consistency and clarity.
Violeta Parra’s Legacy

It is in Violeta Parra’s work where we find the clues for the role played by the folklorists of “New Chilean Song” during the government of Unidad Popular. She created the space for the agitation song and for herself as a cantor whose duty is to formulate ideology through the channels provided by the people themselves. Inside the enormous advancement of the Chilean people in their struggles, there appeared this sort of minstrel that emerged from its lines to witness and to create new knowledge that would push the processes forward. Besides her innumerable talents, Violeta happens at the precise moment. The “New Chilean song” would continue her legacy by reflecting the conditions of struggle the Chilean people found themselves in, and agitating till the wave would turn.

The option for folklore, and, therefore, for a popular dialect and a popular philosophical heritage, constituted a true revolution at the cultural level and provided the people with a weapon for agitation that would serve, perhaps more than any other factor, to sharpen class contradictions. This was, undoubtedly, what the historical moment called for. The conditions of capitalism in Chile and in the world, and the particular class formation in Chilean society, could only bring that country to a violent class confrontation. Thus, dichotomist positions were the ones that interpreted that moment best. The irony resided in that it was in the womb itself that gave birth to capitalism that these modern minstrels got the power of the word to expose it and the call for action to overturn it.

Eyerman and Jamison (1998) argue that:

by combining culture and politics, social movements serve to reconstitute both, providing a broader political and historical context for cultural expression, and offering, in turn, the resources of culture—traditions, music, artistic expression—to the action repertoires of political struggle. Cultural traditions are mobilized and reformulated in social movements, and this mobilization and reconstruction of tradition is central…to what social movements are, and to what they signify for social and cultural change. (p. 7)

When social movements die out, or class struggles are smashed, as it was in the case of Chile, the new knowledge created in the cultural arena tends to endure. It is the case of “La Nueva Canción Chilena”. The songs of Unidad Popular traveled the world over and continue to live in the collective conscience of peoples, and in new social movements as what Marcuse called traditions of criticism and resistance.

Conclusion

The different and contrasting ways in which the period of Unidad Popular is discussed today by cultural workers such as the surviving members of the Chilean New Song (Pancani & Canales, 1999) would seem to indicate that, generally, they consider themselves today part of the world movements of the sixties (together with University
Reform and the Beatles), and of a continental cultural phenomenon (La Nueva Canción Latino Americana), rather than Chilean workers who fought in a revolutionary class struggle. It might point to the limitations of cultural movements, even when they connect with class struggles. As cultural movements, they tend to be temporary and contingent, characteristics that they share with “new” social movements. The messages elaborated in the fire of the climatic moments of the struggle endure because of their universal appeal, on the one hand, and because of what they meant at a given point in time, on the other. The movements themselves disappear, while the classes they connected to do not. In other words, they do not replace class struggle.

La Nueva Canción Chilena found its continuity in Chile in Canto Nuevo, which appeared as a response to the Dictatorship. The music changed, and so did the messages; the only common thread that united the different manifestations was the anti-dictatorial struggle, a contingent struggle that lasted while the dictatorship did.

Today, the composers of La Nueva Canción Chilena do not generally compose political songs (in the sense of agitation songs), since there is no space for them in the Chile of today, they say; and they do not necessarily extract their compositions from Chilean, or even Latin American folklore, as they once did. Boleros, and other popular music forms are a common denominator; “cultured” poetry often provides the form, and an individual search for meaning and happiness the themes.

Though sung around the world, wherever they are needed in new struggles, the songs of Unidad Popular are judged as “triumphalist” and “voluntaristic” (see Vitale, 2000, p. 106) today by Chilean critics on the left, and by a couple of the composers themselves. This is perhaps due to a general lack of analysis of the period, and to the understanding of 1973 as a defeat, rather than as an inevitable class confrontation. The working class had a right to its slogans and its songs, and it was in the nature of the struggle itself to call for class confrontation.

The revolutionary situation between 1970 and 1973 provided the arena for an accelerated toma de conciencia of the working class as a revolutionary class. Education took place in the workplace, in the unions, in the party cells, in the neighborhood and factory organizations, in the communes, in the country, in the mines, in the schools, in the theaters and Peñas, on and off the stage, and on the streets. We have the songs to remind us of what happened, and, many times, of how it was done.

References


