

La conciencia de la mestiza towards a new consciousness

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In this world of dualities—male-female, whites-other races, subject-object, self-society, among others—we are always confronted with identities. Essentially, these are struggles that co-exist, overlap, cascade and confront each other. Anzaldua's concept of divided loyalties seeks to find the allies in the other, the Whites. The recognition of the truth is at the forefront of the consciousness call. Instead of disengaging or spreading animosity, Anzaldua aspires to transcend the world of dualities by engaging the "other" and creating something new out of this experience. Ultimately, I agree with Anzaldua's concept of divided loyalties, specifically in the discussions on the duality of race.

This paper seeks to present Anzaldua's perspective of the new mestiza and her cognizance of the different struggles of dualities. This discussion will be followed by the discussion of divided loyalties and Anzaldua's call towards acts of recognition and revisiting of buried truths that are indispensable features towards a more dignified humanity.

Anzaldua's argument inductively starts from a description of the self. The fact that the individual of the 21st century has her crisis of self-identity because of the problematic definition of boundaries is enshrined in the statement: "Because I, a mestiza/ continually walk out of one culture/and into another/ because I am in all cultures at the same time." (Anzaldua 99) From this initial discussion the attempt to challenge the dualities of race and ultimately of identities is already surfacing. I also envision that this discussion is a vague description of the reality that every human being experiences today—that of globalization, not only on the macro-level plane such as the political-economic sphere, but also on the level of the self.

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While “ being in all cultures” seems like a very beautiful phenomenon, it is actually presented as a confrontation or struggle. The presence of different opposing cultural forces takes on the “ self” as its battlefield. There is a clash happening within: “ The ambivalence from the clash of voices results in mental and emotional states of perplexity... The mestiza’s dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness.” (100)

Imagine this phenomenon of psychic restlessness taking place not just in a single person but collectively happening in commonly held boundaries such as race and culture. We then would have, what Anzaldua calls, un choque or a cultural collision. It is safe to assume that her understanding of un choque is comprehensive considering that she recognized that the struggle for collective identity takes its root on the struggle within the self.

One might ask: why is an understanding of the iconic, self-identity-struggling mestiza essential in presenting an argument that would validate the concept of divided loyalties? Simply put the “ mestiza connection” is important because the struggle of the mestiza is a struggle of identity, a confrontation between mutually exclusive variables of cultures. Loyalties are given to defined boundaries of an identity; in this case, the boundary is culture. The dilemma of the mestiza lies in her multiple cultural boundaries. Most of the time, the mestiza identity is challenged by paradoxical cultural realities. Divided loyalties exist because of the constant redefinition of the self in the context of “ conflicting information and points of view” (101). Why is there a tolerance for ambiguity? Anzaldua captures this in the statement: “ Rigidity is death.” (101)

The concept of divided loyalties elucidates the readers in the intricacies of the dualities of race. Before the “ new consciousness”, people are consumed in the dualities of culture and race but Anzaldua recognized that without a transcendence of this bipolarization, a new consciousness will never be attained. The dual and mutually exclusivist nature of culture is fertile soil for hostility and animosity. The concept of divided loyalties is unique in such a way that the other (i. e. Whites) is perceived as allies instead of enemies.

This is what I would call the “ recognition of allies outside the boundaries of our identity.” Next to this recognition is the others’ revisiting of truths that were denied, forgotten or disregarded. Anzaldua affirms this by stating: “ We need you to accept the fact that Chicanos are different, to acknowledge your rejection and negation of us. We need you to own the fact that you looked upon us as less than human, that you stole our lands, our personhood, our self-respect... by taking back the collective shadow, the intra-cultural split will heal.” (107-108).

While there is an attempt to seek for allies in “ others” (i. e. enemies), there is also the need for revisiting past injustices. Without revisiting them, there would be reconciliation for the clashes, the un choque, within and without the self. Anzaldua’s call for an acknowledgement of mistakes and recognition of White allies might seem to be an anomalous response to the clash of cultures and yet ushering in a new consciousness calls for a new approach, a possible paradigmatic shift.

It is tempting to assume that Anzaldua’s thoughts focus on the differences among the different dualities. The concept of divided loyalties is evidence supporting this fact. It is interesting to understand that divided loyalties <https://assignbuster.com/la-conciencia-de-la-mestiza-towards-a-new-consciousness/>

show only one side of the multi-faceted and dynamic relation of identities and cultural boundaries. Crucial to the act of defining what makes different groups or individuals unique is also the act of finding the sameness co-existing among these differences.

While there is the duality of Anglo and the Mexican, there is also the opposing identities and social constructions based on sexes. Male dominance features strongly in Anzaldua's discussions. The configurations of identities are complex that an area of sameness (i. e. Mexican culture) can also have independent elements that show differences (i. e. Mexican men and Mexican women). More importantly than posing the question what makes us different, is asking what makes us the same?

The mestiza capability of "walking in and out of different cultures" can present a danger namely having a divided loyalty. Conversely, this same ability of the mestiza enables her to identify with others that are different by probing and looking into boundaries that are common denominators in different cultures. Of the Mexican-Indian difference, sameness can be found. Anzaldua writes, "It is imperative that mestizas support each other in changing the sexist elements in the Mexican-Indian culture. As long as woman is put down, the Indian and the Black in all of us is put down. The struggle of the mestiza is above all a feminist one." (106).

Despite the concept of divided loyalties and the conventional behavior of animosity towards the other, Anzaldua emphasizes on creating avenues of action that would highlight sameness in the midst of differences. This phenomenon actually transfigures the mestiza into someone transcendent of her boundaries. I allude to this as "reaching out to humanity."

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One undeniably appropriate example for divided loyalties is the struggle of indigenous people, specifically Native American Indians, for their identity which is juxtaposed with the desire to belong to the American way of life. Ideally, one might pursue a life exclusively rooted in indigenous cultural identity or to embrace the American dream which leaves indigenous lifestyles behind. Surprisingly, Native American Indians show a hybridization of ideas and cultures. Some might call it a post-modern worldview—taking in, reinterpreting, reimagining and redefining the world and the self as one pleases. Clearly, when an individual or the collective consciousness of a culture aspires for such hybridization, loyalties are automatically compromised or divided.

It is important to reiterate that this new consciousness and new identity should not be seen in a negative way. In spite of the challenges to the indigenous peoples of the world, their identities thrive. Remember, “Rigidity is death.”

Another example for divided loyalties is the diffused way of looking at things, as if we “have all melted in the pot, but haven’t.” (108). It is a conventional way of thinking for the rest of the world to abhor the US. Americanism, in a cultural sense, is largely detested. Politically, the US remains the world’s hegemonic power although many Americans would deny this as a fact. While Anzaldua does not point this out, the world has become an American mestiza. The countries of the world look at themselves and their clear-cut boundaries of identity are prominent.

However, under this presupposition is the subtle trend towards Americanism, as evident in the world’s knowledge of American culture, love of Brangelina, <https://assignbuster.com/la-conciencia-de-la-mestiza-towards-a-new-consciousness/>

desire for the American dream, skill of the English language, use of American technology, among other things. While the countries of the world quintessentially retain their identity, the majority have collectively fallen into the concept of divided loyalties. The countries still have their identities, but they take on new forms, they have the ability for mutually exclusive concepts such as nationalism diffuse with Americanism or internationalism.

One might consider that the new consciousness ushered is a necessary embrace of the minorities towards its melting into the greater majority. Ironically, the melting happens, and yet the inimitable identities of the selves remain. While Anzaldua believes in compromise such as finding White allies to further the cause of minorities, and the concept of divided loyalties might show how one exclusive boundary of identity can melt into the boundaries of another, her idea of a new consciousness still recognizes the legitimacy of the struggle of the less powerful. Talking in terms of race, this implies minority-majority confictions that would need to be addressed. Furthermore, Anzaldua does not conform to passivity in the midst of constant changing of forms. This is indicated in the statement: " This land was Mexican once/ was Indian always/ and is./ And will be again." (113).

Divided loyalties exist because the boundaries of identities (both of the self and the collective) are no longer defined structures. Conflicting realities will never co-exist, albeit the mestiza has the capacity to transcend its dualities. While divided loyalties can be a threat to the self, it is capable of bringing forth a new beauty of a newly defined identity.

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