Two Stories of Migration from China to Peru

This Zine was created by Cristina Zavala Portugal and includes a reflection written by María Elena Bedoya Hidalgo

1. Zine Transcript

COVER

Yellow and red pattern in the background. The two main characters of the stories look at each other face to face.

PAGE BREAK

Black and white cover

Story number one: Open Sea

PAGE BREAK

Open Sea

Year 1900 / Stories of a boat trip from China to Peru.

Vignette 1

3 people on a rug smoking long pipes. Two people lie on their sides

- We have been sailing on the open sea for 2 to 3 months.

Vignette 2

Close-up of the narrator

- News about the other ships only speaks of plagues and mutinies.

Vignette 3

Mist. Mah jong pieces all over the floor, one hand reaches out to play one of the pieces

- They say that all ships arrive with only half their crew.

Vignette 4

Haze.3 characters. The first is in a foetal position to one side. The second is curled up with his face between his legs. The third is lying face down, his ribs are visible. In the foreground a tea tray.

- Every day the death toll increases, very soon we will be part of those statistics.

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Three hands lighting two pipes.

- We are not allowed to go down.

Vignette 2

Migrants portrayed from behind.

- For the captain we are only a cargo to be delivered.

Vignette 3

Night. A group of neighbours outside on the street watch their houses burn down

- At home we lost everything...

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Two people setting fire to a storage room.

- Those were tough times; we did not have many options.

Vignette 2

Close-up of the narrator exhaling smoke.

- Here nobody wants to talk about the days in Canton, everyone is resigned.

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Back of a Child curled up, wearing a monkey mask. He has no pants and is urinating on the floor.

- This is my friend Wang's son, the toilets do not work,

Vignette 2

Lower part of the child's body standing, near someone else's feet.

- So, it does not matter.

Vignette 3

Character lying with his eyes wide

- No one can sleep anymore

Vignette 4

Four characters wrapped in sheets; their illuminated faces can be mistaken for skulls

- On some stormy nights everything gets dark, and we see our faces by the flashes of lightning

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Two characters lying in a corner, one of them has his head down. Several people lying around

- Wang lost his brother last week, they fell asleep and when Wang woke up, his brother was already dead.

Vignette 3

Body wrapped in sheets

- He left his brother wrapped inside a warehouse; the captain gave the order to throw the corpses into the sea... No one has found him yet.

Vignette 4

Wang leaning against the wall

- He also seems sick.

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Two people rummaging through empty barrels.

- Two weeks ago, the rice ran out, now we only eat carrots and sometimes fish.

Vignette 2

3 characters lying in distinct positions on the floor

- No one is ready to start from scratch in Peru.

Vignette 3

Object

- This is all I could bring from home, I made it myself

People ask: - Is it a duck? - It is a vase?... - Is both.

Vignette 4

Character sitting on the side of the ship, his face down.

No one is ready to leave their homeland, but in the crisis, we must seek opportunities.

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Narrator writing by candlelight

- Before embarking I was able to exchange a bag of tangerines for some paper.

I thought it necessary to document everything, although after reading and rereading my notes, I fear it will be very pessimistic.

Vignette 2

- Day 91, I see corpses thrown overboard daily.

Vignette 3

Narrator's mother drinking a glass of water

- Day 73, I started to feel scared at night remembering my mother who died sick too.

Vignette 4

Characters looking overboard.

- Day 128, We woke up to the screams of the sailors. Apparently, we were close.

END

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**Story Number 2: Pasta for wantan**

Stories about migration experiences between China and Peru.

Vignette 1

- My name is Lili, I am 19 years old, and I study at the University of Hong Kong.

Vignette 2

Lili sitting on a bench reading

- I have not decided yet if I want to make friends in college. But I am not in a hurry

Vignette 3

Close-up of Lili's eyes looking to the side

- The truth is that I prefer to observe people.... At a distance.

Vignette 4

Lili on the subway standing. She is watching two other people sitting while looking at their cell phones.

- Sometimes I feel like I do not belong anywhere.

Vignette 5

Photograph of Lili's family in front of a Chifa restaurant

- When my father decided to start a new business in Peru, I thought that would be that.

Vignette 6

Airfare ticket

- I never thought I would return to Hong Kong.

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1, 2, 3,

- Now I only have a couple of memories of that first big trip to Peru

The minipaos after school, the spring rolls, and the potato with egg, all at the same corner place.

Neon signs: Chifa Pollería, Chifa Mostrito

Fish swimming between their feces.

Vignette 5, 6 ,7

- But my favourite memories are those of the airport:

the smell of coffee from the machine,

the New Year on Capón Street.

Vending machines with the smell of reheated bread

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Sunset on the beach. Lili and her 2 sisters ride bikes and rollerblades along the boardwalk. While a man walks his dog.

- After that trip we stayed to live on the second floor of the Chifa.

Vignette 2

Lili takes a selfie with her friends from school and four alpacas in the background.

- I have spent so much time in Peru that I do not feel part of another place.

Vignette 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7

Lili and her mother watch TV. Lili's brother plays a Gameboy under the table.

- every afternoon after school, I accompanied my mother in the Chifa, watching

doramas, while my brother did his homework...

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Vignette 1

Lili's mother works at the Chifa restaurant while taking care of her son

- On the last trip my mother said that I should do university study here in China.

After a year she returned with my cousins and my younger brother, back to the Chifa.

Vignette 2

Lili's cousins appear posing

- My cousins say that Chifas are a mafia, but it’s just a theory. We were never able to prove it.

Vignette 3

Lili walking through the university library

Vignette 4

Lili in her room looking at a photo

- Sometimes I feel homesick.

Vignette 5

Lili receives a call from her mother on her cell phone

- But for those things I always count on the internet.

Vignette 6 and 7

Lili looking at the cell phone. On the screen is Lili's mother and a cat peeking out from behind the sofa.

- "Greetings to all over there" "Awww kitty"

-"Don't forget to visit your grandmother”

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Vignette 1

On the swings. Two children point at Lili.

- When I was a child in Peru, people always let me know that I was not from there.

Vignette 2

Latin Restaurant

- But then when I returned to China, I did not feel very much from here either.

Vignette 3

Lili In a supermarket in China asking a question to the manager

Vignette 4

Lili climbing stairs with a box. At the end of the staircase, you can see the reception of the university residence

- Apparently, I do not belong anywhere now.

Vignette 6

Students waiting for the bus in front of a library

- A few days ago, I met a student from Brazil, she does not speak Spanish. I do not speak Portuguese, but we understand each other better than the rest of the students on campus.

Vignette 6

Lili lying next to the fan

- I wonder if she feels like me. I really do not know why I ask myself so many questions.

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Many motorcycles traverse the crosswalk while Lili tries to cross to the other side.

- I still do not understand many things here...

Vignette 2

Lili in front of the Hong Kong subway map

Vignette 3

Box with CDs and cassettes. You can see the covers of Grace Chang and Faye Wong

- At grandma's house I found my mother's collection of records and cassettes

Vignette 4

Lili searching in a box. In the background there is a poster on the wall, 'The Chinese connection'

- And many of those gangster movies that my father likes.

Vignette 5

Lili listening to Leslie Cheung: let us be unhappy together

PAGE BREAK

Vignette 1

Lili walking around China, taking photos and uploading them to networks

- I take photos of what I see to share with my friends

Vignette 4

Photo on Instagram of Chifa rice and Inca cola

- Sometimes I also think that in a parallel universe there is a Lili who never left Peru.

Vignette 5

Some people sunbathing on the beach

- I would probably be traveling too.

Vignette 6

Lili attending the chifa in the new year of 2020

- Or in the Chifa of my parents working on holiday.

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Vignette 1

Wantan dish, instant soup. Lili cuts vegetables

-Or I imagine the universe 2043 where almost everything is the same.

Vignette 3

Close-up of Lili

- Well, not everything...

Vignette 4

Cell phone with headphones, music playing.

- Maybe in that universe Leslie Chung never commits suicide.

END

Vignette 6

Glossary

Doramas: Asian drama/novel

Chifa: Chinese-Peruvian food restaurant

Calle Capón: Main Street of Chinatown in Peru.

Link to Playlist to listen to the zine playlist

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZwmQga-mBFKUQhHhozxDvG1Cka4xteaL&feature=sha

nothing

1. Reflection by María Elena Bedoya Hidalgo

***Tampoco me sentí muy de acá…***

About seas and migrations in Cristina Zavala Portugal's fanzine

We live in a time of seas. Polluted seas, seas crying out for help, seas full of corpses, seas where thousands of tears are shed. Seas that seem to swallow stories. Cristina Zavala Portugal's work, *2 historias de migración: de China a Perú*, is situated in that maritime density, a latency of these stories that the sea seems to have taken or where no destiny is possible. In the initial part of her narrative, vapour predominates, whether it's a breath in the cold air, the steam from a closed kitchen, or the scent of opium and confinement. The act of speaking has become an exhalation that seems to dissipate in each panel of the comic. There are bodies in the darkness without form, faces of certain impending death: mere bundles travelling on ships without language or emotions.

Zavala portrays these bodies as narratives of constant dehumanisation and discrimination. Chinese migration, also known as "culí" migration to Peru, began in the mid-19th century and extended over decades. Large numbers of people arrived in Lima on ships, and in many cases, upon arrival, they were "assigned" to landowners, while others were "auctioned off" to those interested in exploiting their labour. Between 1840 and 1870 alone, over 100,000 Chinese arrived, many of whom worked in guano extraction or railroad construction. Cristina told me how these stories live within her grandparents, neighbours, and friends. Her surname, Zavala, a product of naming the newly arrived migrant, is imbued with the stories of haciendas. It is the trace of life, of names and surnames lost within the dynamics of capitalist labour accumulation and exploitation.

In its second phase, the drawing takes a different direction, turning towards the contradictions perceived in the present and the experience of inhabiting a body in an urban space. The lines become more defined, smoke is replaced by contour, and the detail becomes more photographic, resembling a sort of memory album. "Pasta para wantán" is the story of the impossibility of situating oneself in a specific place. For Zavala, the current situation of the younger generations of Chinese migrant children or those of Nikkei origin in Lima is unique. Like her first narrative, this is a shared memory within her closest affective communities. It is the story of moving between two worlds where you belong to neither and where it seems you don't belong anywhere. For her, it is the constant exclusion she experiences based on how she looks, how people perceive her, or how she is positioned in the world: "When I was a child in Peru, people always made me aware that I didn't belong there," a phrase that concludes in the next panel, "but when I returned to China, I also didn't feel like I belonged here." While the line in the drawing is suggestive and explicit, in the written word, the meaning becomes vapour-like and uncertain; it is where the migrant life is always on alert against the threat of being dehumanised and cast into the depths of the sea.

Malena Bedoya

Manchester, March 13, 2023