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Feminist Performance as Challenging Voice-Body Regimentation

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Abstract: This article proposes a close listening to women's voices in Chile today. Subverting the assumption that the study of voices leads preferably to the description of individual subjectivities, this article aims to interrogate the collective dimension of vocal sound through the study of the performance *A Rapist in Your Path*. Its impact on the feminist movement is examined by paying attention to two versions in which vocal sounds articulate specific notions of identity, both of which challenge the conventional ordering of gender. It is the vocal timbre that disrupts this order, allowing us to hear the voices of Mapuche women shouting in their language and extreme metal singers sonically embodying violence. Thus, diverting the attention from the lyrics and movement to the sound itself, the articulation between this denunciation of rape culture and forms of inequality experienced by women in Chile becomes evident.

Keywords: feminism, Chile, Mapuche, activism

The first decades of the twenty-first century have brought to light with great intensity a diversity of female voices that, from different niches and cultural arenas, demand not only visibility, but also audibility. The metaphor of "hearing the voice" of women, tremendously powerful in the different waves of feminism to dispute the right to appear publicly and to install their own issues in the political debate, should not completely obliterate the need to listen to vocalized sounds. More than mere carriers of meaning, the sounds themselves, articulated in speech (and song), mobilize cultural negotiations that are worth exploring.

Voice theory has greatly contributed to expanding our understanding about music styles and, more specifically, the deep meanings popular voices entail, because listeners relate to voices through the perception of their own bodies and subjectivities. In particular, the concept of vocalicity has shed light on the performative aspects of vocal emission, shifting attention from the semantic content of verbalization to the sonorous aspects of performance. The latter have been understood as traces of corporeality over sound (specifically through the Barthesian concept of the grain), although recent studies

highlight the necessity of moving away from deterministic narratives that tend to show the voice as a simple result of a specific situation. Thus, Katherine Meizel (2021) develops the concept of multivocality to emphasize the non-existence of a single and stable voice, showing how singers are confronted with diverse circumstances that make possible or push them to develop diversified vocal strategies.

While vocalicity has a variety of performative elements, including prosody and dynamics handling (through the modification of sound levels), vocal timbre is probably one of its main features and the one that offers the best possibilities of scrutiny. Timbre is often thought of as a complex object combining technologies, acoustical properties, performance techniques, in addition to perceptual elements. Although musical timbre in popular culture holds “expressive primacy,” music studies still miss “a deep analytical reading of sound production,” as Fink, Wallmark, and Latour contend (2018). In her contribution on vocal timbre, Nina Sun Eidsheim (2019) has highlighted the constructive nature of timbre. This means that vocal timbre is not an automatic result stemming from the vital conditions and materiality of a given body, but is rather socially constructed. It is, on the one hand, the product of performative choices that operate at the bodily level through specific techniques. Thus, the singer’s agency is crucial for the manipulation of her vocal apparatus and for the production of a timbre. On the other hand, listeners participate through the perception of sonic qualities conferring meanings that can be conventionalized or disputed.

In this essay, I propose exploring how vocal timbre participates in the production of feminist discourses, specifically through the performance *A Rapist in Your Path*. My aim is to show how the study of voice sheds light on issues that intersect with the demand to stop sexual violence.

A Rapist in Your Path

Although for years Chile had been considered a politically stable country by Latin American standards, in October 2019 a popular uprising put in check the legitimacy of the neoliberal system established by the military dictatorship and the country’s political institutions. October 18 of that year marked the beginning of a series of massive protests that signaled the discontent of the population regarding the policies of privatization of services, the lack of social rights and the precariousness of life. The spark that triggered everything was an increase in the cost of public transportation, which provoked a so-called social explosion. The movement quickly moved on to demands for ecological, social, and, most especially, political justice. Thus, part of the discontent was directed toward the demand for a new political constitution, a demand that was sanctioned the following year by means of a plebiscite, in which the newly drafted constitution was rejected.

In the context of these protests, several social dynamics were interpreted as an evident change in Chilean society; hence, the slogan “Chile woke up” (Jiménez-Yáñez 2020) became well established in the public discourse. Among these dynamics, the occupation of the public space in cities and towns was remarkable, thus developing cultural and political activities in streets, squares, and esplanades. Several authors have analyzed the relevance of artistic manifestations in this context and, more specifically, the presence of sound and choreographic practices carried out by citizens. What has been most highlighted is the multiplicity of cultural-cum-artistic expressions. These range from the performance of symphonic and choral music to dances associated with religious festivals. By the same token, the rich tradition of Chilean politically committed songs was updated and re-enacted during this time (Bioletto and Spencer 2020), including themes such as “El pueblo unido jamás será vencido” (Sergio Ortega), “El derecho de vivir en paz” (Víctor Jara) and “El baile de los que sobran” (Los Prisioneros), to mention a few.

The historian Mario Garcés (2020) points out that the protagonists of the demonstrations were the young generations, who showed how a huge cultural change had occurred during the last years. These changes especially concerned new subjectivities, including new ways of relating to their bodies, their sexuality, aesthetics, but also of relating to work and the media. Thus, together with historical demands for social rights, contemporary identity demands were put on the table. In particular, feminist and indigenous struggles played a key role.

On the other hand, the official institutional response to the social outburst was marked by police and military violence. Notorious was the mutilation of people, as hundreds were directly shot in their eyes. In addition, demonstrators were imprisoned and the death of several citizens were associated with the action of State agents. International organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, issued in November 2019 an urgent call for reforms in Chilean police institutions and later published a complete report in 2021, listing the number of human rights violations, including numerous sexual assaults, especially against women.

At the end of November 2019, in the midst of the protests, the interdisciplinary art collective LASTESIS decided to take to the streets their performance *Un violador en tu camino*, which was part of a theatrical work that was to be premiered later in theaters. The artists decided to bring forward part of their work in view of the social mobilization contingency and the subsequent police repression.

When LASTESIS released the performance *Un violador en tu camino*, translated as *A Rapist in Your Path*, its members—Sibila Sotomayor, Daffne Valdés, Paula Cometa, and Lea Cáceres—could not imagine the global impact that this feminist artistic action would achieve. Just a few years after they premiered it on the streets of Valparaíso, in Chile, a number of academic

articles (Alcázar 2021; Bieletto Bueno 2020; Bronfman 2021; Imawa 2022; Martin and Shaw 2021; Ortiz 2021; Serafini 2020), reflect on their contribution to transnational connections between women's organizations and on the multiple ways through which this performance became a sort of "anthem of contemporary feminism," as some authors recall (Carranza Weihmüller, Nunes de Sousa, and de Cássia Caetano 2021).

Conceived of as a spontaneous gathering of people who perform a political/cultural action that quickly dissolves, this performance can be labeled as a flash mob: a kind of performance that creates anarchic situations (Walker 2013, 121). Sibila Sotomayor (2022) recognizes the connection between this performance and the tradition of agit-prop, a form of amateur theater developed by organized workers. It presented a number of women shouting and following an apparently simple choreography in front of official buildings. Based on the study about sexual violence and rape by the well-established feminist theorist Rita Segato, as well as on Virginie Despentes's book around the same issues,¹ the performance stressed, with its lyrics and dance, that rape culture involves the complicity of virtually all power institutions: the police, the judges, the president.

Much has been written about the centrality of the body in this performance, since *A Rapist in Your Path* is able to bring to light the systematic violence inflicted specifically on women. It does so through the performance of the right that these female bodies have to occupy the public space, while playing with corporeal movements that recall and defy daily sexual assault. As such, its performers enact the critical aims of a flash mob, as they "act with disregard for their audiences, as if the cities and the corporate spaces they often occupy within them were already theirs by right" (Walker 2013, 121).

Most of the analyses of this performance carried out by researchers point to visual and kinesthetic elements. From a visual perspective, Deborah Martin and Deborah Shaw (2021, 718) observe that "the public assembly of women in large groups, calling attention to themselves both through visual spectacle as well as loud chanting, constitutes a violation, and a rewriting of the rules of gendered public space." In particular, they notice how wearing glamorous clothing reinforces the women's right to publicly show up without becoming vulnerable. Regardless of their appearance, they subvert the idea that their outfit implies sexual availability. On a kinesthetic level of analysis, the inclusion of repetitive squats, not only functions as an icon of physical abuse and humiliation, but also allows the performers to embody this set of movements in a completely new context: occupying the streets, side by side with other women. In Paula Serafini's (2020, 294) words, "despite its simplicity and fluidity, the combination of words and movement performed simultaneously by rows of participants—sometimes in the hundreds—is aesthetically stunning, and affectively moving." In addition, many authors notice how the simplicity of movements and the easily-adaptable lyrics helped to enhance the participatory quality of *A Rapist in Your Path*.

The lyrics were adapted to local needs according to the various interests of organized women and their particular agendas, as well as to several languages, including Mapudungun, Quechua, Japanese, Portuguese, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Basque, Catalan, Galician, Asturian, German, Hindi, French, English, Turkish, Arabic and even sign language, among others (Ortiz 2021).

Many authors find in this performance exactly what the artists were looking for when they created it: a transformation of logical discourse into corporeal discourse. If, as Paulina Bronfman (2021, 221) points out, the dance in flash mobs does not necessarily have to be attractive to the eye, one might ask whether the voice must be attractive or pleasing to the ear, so that it may achieve an impact. Although a crucial portion of LASTESIS's performance consists of a collective chant, very little attention has been paid to its vocal sonorities. However, one can find brief descriptions of voices being loud (Martin and Shaw 2021, 718) and firm or strong (Alcázar 2021, 22).

A remarkable exception comes from the ethnomusicologist Natalia Bieletto, whose work addresses her experience as a participant of LASTESIS seniors, a singular enactment of *A Rapist in Your Path*, performed by women older than forty. She provides insightful thoughts about the embodiment of the shouting voices, expressing that “the physical sensation of screaming out loud and feeling the screams of the others resonating within oneself is already liberating” (Bieletto 2020, 83). She also reflects on the fact that this chant continued in her head and body—as an echo—for a longer period of time than flash mob itself, thus providing a personal interpretation of the lasting effect of the political performance as a whole. Her main contribution to the case consists of framing *A Rapist in Your Path* from the perspective of embodied listening practices vis-à-vis specific aural regimes, where female voices still need to dispute the public soundscape.

When chanting together, these women are able to add their single vocalities into a major collective voice, in such a way that the timbre differences become meaningless. Bieletto (2020, 72) refers to her experience by alluding to “our unmistakably feminine timbres.” Although she does not characterize the sonic result of the performance in all its details, one can wonder if her perception of affective kindness (*ternura*) among women might correspond to the hearing of the somehow “natural” high-pitched and fully timbered voices shouting in unison.

In metaphorical terms, voicing women's demands is often understood as a claim for gender justice, which gives to the voice a role of bearer of logical meaning. However, one may wonder to what extent it would be relevant to pay attention to the *quality* of voice to make women's bodies truly *audible*. In this essay, I build on Amanda Weidman's concept of voice-body regimentation. According to her, it is possible to recognize aural and vocal regimes in terms of “the forms of regimentation effected by modes of discipline in vocal production, recurring practices and contexts of audition, shared ideologies

about the sonic qualities of voices, ideas about the relationship between body and voice, and the technological media through which voices come to be heard” (Weidman 2021, 5). As such, voices become a fruitful field of inquiry allowing us to hear, not only what they claim, but also how they embody particular intersections.

A Rapist in Your Path does not affirm unitarian female voice. It rather proves a useful starting point for specific renditions that exceed conventional female vocalization in Chile. If one of the aims of LASTESIS is to “to disobey, to create ruptures and to make the condition of this normality of exception uncomfortable” (Imawa 2022, 365), my intention is to explore how vocalities can challenge voice-body regimentation as well as available sonic existences.

Mapudungun Version

Some weeks after the performance of the flash mob in Valparaíso, when many versions were being set up around the world, an urban Mapuche organization based in Santiago, Wechekeche ñi Trawün, produced a version with the lyrics translated into Mapudungun by linguist and activist Elisa Loncon along with social scientist Ana Millaleo (table 1). This was not the only Mapudungun version available, since around the same time a teaching group called Mapuzuguletuaiñ published another translation of the song.

Mapudungun is a living language. It is the native language with the largest number of speakers in Chile. However, only 10 percent of the Mapuche are competent speakers as a result of consecutive colonial homogenizing policies. The number of children learning Mapudungun as their mother tongue is descending rapidly and learning it in schools is becoming a difficult task: the law requires that a classroom have 20 percent of indigenous students in order to teach a native language in public schools. Although the decrease in the number of speakers is evident, the political demands of indigenous organizations aim at its revitalization, as part of a contemporary movement for political recognition. However, as Elisa Loncon observes, the promotion of the language should not be directed only to the Mapuche population; to favor intercultural understanding, it should be promoted for the entire population: “Contrary to what governments have done, the demand of indigenous peoples is centered on cultural dialogue, that is, that non-indigenous Chileans learn about indigenous knowledge, values and languages in schools, in order to be able to dialogue without epistemic or linguistic subordination in an intercultural dialogue without ghettos” (Loncon 2019, 252).²

Arguably, the dissemination of this language in the form of artistic expressions across Chilean society has only recently increased, through work done by hip hop artists (Rekedal 2014) and metal bands (Rekedal 2019; Koplow 2022), among others. However, Mapuche sounds are present in

Table 1: *A Rapist in Your Path*: original lyrics in Spanish (left), translation into Mapudungun (center), author's translation into English (right)

El patriarcado es un juez que nos juzga por nacer, y nuestro castigo es la violencia que no ves.	Wentrun mawe zallum machefengey Zallum tukeyñmu tain llegün Ka taiñ kutrantun Tami lelikenon ti lefmautun	The patriarchy is a judge that judges us for being born, and our punishment is the violence you do not see.
El patriarcado es un juez que nos juzga por nacer, y nuestro castigo es la violencia que ya ves.	Wentrun mawe zallum machefengey Zallum tukeyñmu tain llegün Ka taiñ kutrantun Tami lelikel ti lefmautun	The patriarchy is a judge that judges us for being born, and our punishment is the violence you already see.
Es feminicidio. Impunidad para mi asesino. Es la desaparición. Es la violación.	Lagümtu domon N geno zallungey langümche fe mu Ñamchengey Nüntutungey	It is femicide. Impunity for my murderer. It is disappearance. It is rape.
Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba ni cómo vestía. Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba ni cómo vestía. Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba ni cómo vestía. Y la culpa no era mía, ni dónde estaba ni cómo vestía.	Inche ngelay ti werilkan Ñi chew mülen ñi tukutulen Inche ngelay ti werilkan Ñi chew mülen ñi tukutulen Inche ngelay ti werilkan Ñi chew mülen ñi tukutulen Inche ngelay ti werilkan Ñi chew mülen ñi tukutulen	And the fault was not mine, nor where I was, nor how I was dressed. And the guilt was not mine, nor where I was, nor how I was dressed. And the fault was not mine, nor where I was, nor how I was dressed And the fault was not mine, nor where I was, nor how I dressed.
El violador eras tú. El violador eres tú.	Nüntukafe ngeymi Nüntukafe ngeymi	The rapist was you. The rapist is you.

<p>Son los pacos, los jueces, el Estado, el presidente.</p>	<p>Pu paco Pu zallunmachefe Ti presidente</p>	<p>It's the cops, the judges, the State, the president.</p>
<p>El Estado opresor es un macho violador. El Estado opresor es un macho violador.</p>	<p>Ti trañma niéteu estao Kiñe nüntukafe ngey Ti trañma niéteu estao Kiñe nüntukafe ngey</p>	<p>The oppressive State is a macho rapist. The oppressive State is a macho rapist.</p>
<p>El violador eras tú. El violador eres tú.</p>	<p>Nüntukafe ngeymi Nüntukafe ngeymi</p>	<p>The rapist was you. The rapist is you.</p>
<p>Duerme tranquila, niña inocente, sin preocuparte del bandolero, que por tu sueño dulce y sonriente vela tu amante carabinero.</p>	<p>Eymi ngeymi lamgümchefe Estao ngey mapu weñefe Malaltukuniel pu mapuche Kutrantu niel mapu ñuke Langüm eymi Macarena Valdés Langüm eymi Camilo Katrillanka Weñefe Gobierno</p>	<p>“Sleep peacefully, innocent child, without worrying about the bandit, that for your sweet and smiling sleep is watched over by your loving guard.”</p>
<p>El violador eres tú. El violador eres tú. El violador eres tú. El violador eres tú.</p>	<p>Marichiwev!!! Marichiwev!!! Marichiwev!!! Marichiwev!!!</p>	<p>The rapist is you. The rapist is you. The rapist is you. The rapist is you.</p>

Chilean Spanish in the form of local vocabulary and pronunciation. The issue of the influence of Mapudungun in Chilean Spanish goes back to the famous indigenist arguments by philologist Rudolph Lenz, developed and published during the first half of the twentieth century. At that time, it became accepted that part of the lexicon and intonation features present in Chilean Spanish had indigenous origin. However, his main argument was refuted by Hispanist scholar Amado Alonso, whose anti-indigenist views, denying any native influence in the Spanish spoken in Chile, has prevailed. Nevertheless, some of Lenz's ideas have again been discussed by linguists such as Scott Sadowsky (2020), who has proposed that three out of the ten linguistic phenomena observed by Lenz probably do come from contact with Mapudungun. In addition, Sadowsky demonstrates with a new study that Chilean vowels were rephonetized under the influence of Mapudungun.

In addition to confirming the importance of Mapuche sounds in Chilean Spanish, what is interesting to note about the discussion in the linguistic field is the contemptuous disregard that, for decades, has been expressed toward the indigenist thesis originally developed by Lenz. This has often taken the form of an attack on apparently “improper” ways of pronouncing Spanish.

The translation of *A Rapist in Your Path* into Mapudungun and its sonorous rendition unveil two potential political readings. On the one hand, the translation contributes to legitimize the language, not so much through vocal soundings (whose verbal meaning can be barely understood), but through theoretical strategies taken for providing a proper translation of previously nonexistent words. According to Melisa Stocco (2020, 469), “the practice of collaborative translation holds a special place in that it can be understood as one of the current efforts of intellectuals, writers and translators of the Mapuche nation to revitalize their vernacular language, Mapuzungun.” In fact, as linguists and educators Elisa Loncon and Silvia Castillo have argued, the creation of neologisms proves a crucial strategy for assuring the currency of Mapudungun (Loncon and Castillo 2018). Specific feminist terms such as *patriarcado*—translated in one of the versions as *wentxukawün*—join the Mapuche vocabulary as a proof of its contemporaneity.

On the other hand, both the live performance and the video register (Wechekeche Ñi Trawün 2019) introduce into the Chilean (and international) soundscape a plethora of vocal “noises” often perceived as “intruders” in “proper” Spanish. More specifically, this is the case of the pronunciation of consonants historically associated with a “poor” vocal articulation. In this way, these women's voices affirm their right to be heard, not only as carriers of logical discourse but also as bearers of different sonic expressions. Such sonic expressions have arguably survived cultural assimilation as one of the multiple strategies for homogenizing the population in the country.

As Jennifer Lynn Stoeber has shown in her work on black music, in spite of the centrality of sight and the visual, race categories have been informed by

ways of listening and sounding. Stoeber (2016, 4) proposes considering “the sonic color line” as the audible contours of race, and she identifies listening as an organ of racial “discernment, categorization, and resistance.” Here, the very presence of those sounds legitimizes their existence, since they do not need to be literally “understood” to play a political role. In fact, the LASTESIS performance functions with the presupposition that the meaning of the lyrics is known, thanks to its previous circulation in Spanish. The Mapuche translation of the performance is not vocalizing a new message but offering a different materialization of a well-known speech. Thus, one of the contributions of this performance is to mobilize Mapuche sounds among nonnative speakers, at least partly functioning according to what Erez and Karkabi (2019) call a “post-vernacular” use of language. This refers to a language that does not necessarily seek a full understanding of its semantic message by nonnative audiences, but rather points to a symbolic presence embodied by the *sounding* of language.

As is also the case in international versions of *A Rapist in Your Path* (in Argentina and Mexico, for example), these Mapuche women take up the possibility to transform the content of the performance, introducing a whole new stanza in Elisa Loncon’s version. Here, they refer to the political assassination of Mapuche *weichafe* Camilo Catrillanca by the police, as well as to the persecution of environmental activists such as Macarena Valdés—who was found dead under strange conditions. Along with the political persecution of Machi Francisca Linconao and the brutal torturing of Lorenza Cayucan, the figure of Macarena Valdés connects feminist discourse with environmental struggles and the fight for political-cultural recognition. Moreover, as Javiera Manzi and María Yaksic point out (2018, 9), these women “remind us that the struggle against patriarchy implies a recognition of strong structures of class, race and gender domination where the deepest forms of peoples division, exploitation and subjugation are exposed” (my translation). Additionally, they vigorously shout at the end of the performance the vernacular expression “Marichiwew,” which means “ten times we will win.” During the performance, some of the participants hold up posters denouncing human rights violations by the government (fig. 1).

Finally, it is worth noting that this version in Mapudungun shows an plasticity of the performance, not only through new words, but also through the addition of an intense and prolonged *afafan* (fig. 2). *Afafan* is a form of vocalization, characteristic of Mapuche rituality. It has been described as “shouts of demonstration of force” (García Mingo 2016, 142) or as a Mapuche holler of affirmation (Rekedal 2019). The sound of *afafan* has recently been integrated into the public and political life of the streets of Chile along with the sound of *trutrukas*. A *trutruka* is a horn instrument used in ceremonial activities and it is also present in this performance. Its presence functions in a double way: as a sign of tradition and symbol of resistance. This resistance dimension holds a very powerful meaning that has



Figure 1: Mapuche women performing squats (Wechekeche Ñi Trawün 2019).



Figure 2: Mapuche women making an afañ with their voices and raising their fists (Wechekeche Ñi Trawün 2019).

been analyzed as a relevant aspect of Mapuche culture in contemporary popular music (Soto et al. 2022).

As for the accompanying rhythm, these women perform without the recorded music shared by LASTESIS. Instead, they shout over a base of traditional percussion: *kultrun*, *wadas*, and *kaskavillas* marking every beat. In addition, the staging involved the use of both traditional costumes and

flags, as well as a stage featuring rocks, trees, and grass. This underlines the connection with a wild environment, despite being in the capital city of Santiago. It also highlights the display of *kultrun* drums in front of the performers. These instruments thus become signs demarcating a space visually adapted to Mapuche symbols.

This version in Mapudungun puts at its core the voice in relation to the specific struggle of Mapuche women. As Daniela Catrileo says, the critical relationship “is precisely a taking up of the voice, the use of language as a mediator between the voices that have been forgotten in the *mapu* (land)” (in Rangiñtulewfü 2018, 207, my translation). Coming from the mobilization of Mapuche women in the *warria* (city), it shows one of the multiple ways in which the Mapuche position themselves vis-à-vis Western feminism. More specifically, they claim an “identity clash intersection” (Rangiñtulewfü 2018, 206) that makes a version like this possible.

Metal Version

Let me turn now to a metal version of *A Rapist in Your Path*, produced by VOFEMEX, an all-women metal band. The acronym stands for “Vocalistas Femeninas Extremas,” or female extreme vocalists. While the word *extreme* denotes a specific singing style referring to extreme metal, it also suggests the production of a vocal sound out of order, beyond conventional sounding. Extreme styles, like death metal, include a variety of specific techniques, such as “the sound of highly distorted down-tuned guitars, single-note riffs, frequent uses of blast beats in drum parts and vocal styles that tend to focus on screaming rather than conventional singing” (Heesh 2018, 5).

VOFEMEX’s version of *A Rapist in Your Path* starts with solo drums marking the beat. Suddenly a long growling vocalization without lyrics appears as a scream in the foreground. Then guitar and bass riffs introduce a totally new rhythmic accompaniment. This situates this version in the realms of progressive metal, metalcore, and djent. Djent is an onomatopoeia that denotes “low tuned and heavily palm muted guitar sounds” (Whithead 2019, 7); but nowadays the term refers to a set of style decisions such as the use of guitars with 7 or 8 strings, multiscale instruments, and polyrhythmic riffs. We can observe in this version the alternation between growl and singing voice, or between noisy and melodic excerpts, all of which pertain to the larger frame of progressive metal.

Lyrics are performed by single vocalists who alternate their roles, each of them singing only a brief portion of the text (fig. 3). Instead of a mass of female voices shouting together making their specific timbres dissolve (as in the original version of the LASTESIS performance), here we can observe a collaborative approach where everyone embodies the protagonist in consecutive turns.



Figure 3: Three frames from VOFEMEX's video clip of their metal version of A Rapist in Your Path (Vofemex.cl 2020).

Tempo is similar to the original rendition of the flash mob and many of its adapted versions. However, taking advantage of the growling technique, some of the musical phrases extend their duration, lengthening the last vowel and dropping it like a fading scream. The excerpt of the lyrics that could be considered the refrain—when they claim “And the fault wasn’t mine, not where I was, not how I dressed”—presents a growing tension, built through both a dynamic crescendo and a change of vocal color. First, many voices join in a “unison” of growls, whose timbre is rough and deep. Then, repetition is provided by altering the timbre, seeking higher frequencies and thus producing a shinier sound. The effect is compelling.

The use of growling is undoubtedly one of the most distinctive aspects of this version. As can be seen in the commentaries made by users under the YouTube video (Vofemex.cl 2020), this vocal technique triggers anxieties about the “proper” vocal sound a woman must exhibit. Contesting such comments, a user called Javier Andrés posted: “There is always a guy with fragile masculinity who believes that only men can sing gutturally and who thinks they are ‘imitating’ a male voice xddd [*sic*—chat slang] great girls, very powerful voice.” This opinion coincides with what has been developed in the literature, since female metal celebrities declare they are constantly “complimented” because “they sound like men” (Chaker and Heesh 2016).

Although metal music is generally considered male dominated, it is important to emphasize that the intersection between voice, gender, and aggression has been specifically discussed with respect to the growl technique. In his study on the emblematic case of the singer Angela Gossov (Arch Enemy’s vocalist), musicologist Florian Heesh (2018) shows that the association between growl and masculinity breaks down into three components. First, the usually low pitch (albeit tonally inaccurate) is associated with men’s voices. This association is done despite the fact that there are no physiological differences between women and men for the production of this sound, since it is emitted with the “false vocal cords,” the same ones that are activated when people cough. Second, the rough timbre is associated with the masculine as opposed to the widespread idea that women “sing beautifully” or have neat and clear voices. Finally, although violence is a characteristic aspect of metal, it is particularly relevant in the aggressive connotation associated with growl, due to its similarity with the sounds of ferocious animals. In fact, one of the most interesting gendered aspects to highlight and question is the idea that aggressiveness is essentially masculine.

By featuring extreme voices—and, more specifically, growls and guttural sounds—these women activate two sets of meanings. On the one hand, they provide proof of their capacity to perform a style conventionally considered “masculine.” Although it is not new that females sing extreme metal, these musicians take up the opportunity to show themselves as an organization, producing a high-quality video, and conquering a niche. They transform a flash mob into a song, re-inscribing a street chant in a music form; they create

a set of chords to provide a harmonic background, presenting it through the characteristic arrangement of progressive metal.

It is worth highlighting, of all the musical modifications, the addition of a choral section. The singers, after alternating the performance of the vocal solo, join together in a homophonic texture, sung in modal voice (in regular full singing voices), where they display a solemn vocalization. The appearance of this section produces a contrast between the guttural voice and the quasi-angelic singing voice. This contrast may relate to the “Beauty and the Beast” technique, theorized by Lori Burns (2020) as marking a contrast between opposite gender subjectivities. Conventionally, this implies the alternation between a growling voice performed by a man and a singing voice performed by a woman in her upper register. In this case, however, the alternation is not split into two divergent gender identities. Rather, both kinds of vocalizations appear as available timbres for each of the singing women. This chorus also stands out because it is one of the few moments where voices gather. This is a different feature when compared with the original LASTESIS version, precisely performed by masses of screaming women who sing unison during the whole time.

On the other hand, the metal singers also vocalize an affect conventionally considered inadequate for women in the public scene: *rage*. To follow Natalia Bieletto’s reading of the liberating effect of shouting together, the perception of anger via these specific sounds allows a deeper understanding of voice-body regimentation. More specifically, their “aggressive” singing shocks, as it makes audible noises that are conventionally “improper” for so-called civilized people, but especially for women.

This is why comments on YouTube that say “brutal!” to compliment these musics seem impeccably accurate. The association between guttural singing and violence has indeed been conventionalized through musical styles such as the different strands of extreme metal. But recent research on guttural vocals in Colombia suggests that this association is not just metaphorical, but materially implicates the body. Juan Diego Parra, Monica Herrera, and Juan Francisco Sans (2021) have characterized growl as “aesthetics of violence,” due to the physiological implication of specific muscles involved in the production of such a voice, thus proposing a concrete link between growl singing and rage.

A member of the YouTube audience provides a commentary on the VOFEMEX version that shows the relevance of this approach to the interpretation of the meaning of guttural singing. The online comments describe how the listener’s body is challenged in its muscle memory when perceiving these vocal sounds:

You brought out our rages, our pains and our screams that for years we had hidden in our throats, in our stomachs, in our memories. It is impressive how this performance has been transformed into a collective

and healing mantra. Thank you rocker women for this tremendous and fierce work. I remember years ago when Cinthia used to tell me to sing: “take it out of your stomach, take out what is there, stagnant,” how [So] right she was! and she really feels strong in this version of the mantra. They are great girls! . . . Thousands, but thousands, thousands of thanks!

These metal singers thus reinforce the original meaning of the performance and trigger a visceral response in the audience. Therefore, despite distancing itself from the original *A Rapist in Your Path* version (at least in artistic terms, as the performance moves from flash mob to song and video clip), this metal version restores the centrality of the body through a neat embodiment of rage, clearly perceived by audiences. As another listener says: “Great way of expressing a message that has been taken to so many languages, when it seemed it couldn’t get any louder, they took it to the next level! Aguante!” (Aiol).

In addition, by making audible a noisy voice emitted by women’s bodies, the singers enable the recognition of sound diversity. At the same time, they vindicate virtuosity in a highly demanding field. The reactions of the listeners emphasize a perception of risk, as if by producing these vocal sounds the body was being pushed to its limit. “Excellent version! Great handling of the guttural technique and clean voice too, not everyone can [do it]!!!! If I do the guttural I run out of throat!!!! Powerful, I loved it” (Consciencia Espiritual). Concurring with the notion of extreme vocality, this impression resonates metaphorically with the great achievement of shouting and bringing out rage.

Finally, the presentation of this feminist performance in extreme metal style produces a perception of “audacity” on the part of the audience. This reveals the difficulty of occupying spaces still dominated by men. Someone comments thus: “I just found you by chance and I’m surprised I didn’t [get to know you] before. For a year I went to several metal shows and I never saw any women. Clearly the female gender is not very appreciated in an environment surrounded by two-faced macho men. I hope you achieve parity on stage and people give you the space you deserve. Don’t stop” (pampam_vinovino).

As can be seen in the comments, the audience’s reception connects the achievement of this version with the current demands for a greater female presence in the music scene. The demand for gender quotas and, more specifically, for parity in programming, covers the whole music industry (Pinochet, Novoa, and Basáez 2021), but is more neatly observed in independent scenes. In the case of metal, whose paraphernalia associated with violence is still widely perceived as masculine, these demands seem more difficult to achieve. In the more general field of rock, there are numerous actions aimed at building inclusive spaces for women and dissidence. If we

connect these demands for participation, visibility, and audibility with the production of specific sound styles, the need for these bodies to appear on stage is made apparent. These women occupy part of the sound spectrum that has usually been discouraged for women, thus subverting conventional voice-body regimentation.

Concluding Remarks

The two cases I have analyzed allow us to explore the scope of *A Rapist in Your Path* beyond the celebration of a feminist performance that has attained global success via social media and women's organizations. While it is very important to affirm the great contribution that LASTESIS have made through their work toward the massification of contemporary feminist thought, I was interested in exploring some aspects of vocal performance that go beyond what was imagined by the original performers and creators and that connects this flash mob with the specific needs of women in Chile. I believe that, to some extent, the study of these versions of the LASTESIS performance is in tune with one of the premises taken up by this collective, namely that their research "does not only seek to generate content, but also create the ways in which these contents are approached" (Sotomayor 2022, 54). Both the hearing of the Mapuche voice—in its vernacular and post-vernacular dimensions—and the exploration of the guttural style remind us that, beyond the joining of voices in a screaming crowd, sonorous disobedience continues to be a terrain of contestation for these women's bodies.

Vocal timbre proves a useful object to observe the broad spectrum of sites where inequalities become materialized across the different experiences of women in Chile. The cases observed refer, on the one hand, to the racialization of the voice, to the demands for epistemic justice through the right to sound in one's own language, and to the power of listening as a political tool for intercultural understanding. On the other, denaturalizing vocal sound vis-à-vis the body that emits it generates a crucial opening for the recognition of the diversity of gender identities and representations. In particular, the confrontation with the aggressive noise of rage, a sound that conveys anger and awakens it, makes it possible to avoid the risk of neutralizing the seriousness of the demand that gives rise to the performance in question: the need for a life free of sexual and gender violence.

Notes

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1. LASTESIS worked with Rita Segato's *Las estructuras elementales de la violencia: Ensayos sobre género entre la antropología, el psicoanálisis y los derechos humanos* (2003) and Virginie Despentes's *King Kong Théorie* (2006).

2. "Contrario a lo que han hecho los gobiernos, la demanda de los pueblos indígenas se centra en el diálogo cultural, es decir, que los chilenos no indígenas aprendan sobre los conocimientos, valores y lenguas indígenas en las escuelas, a fin de poder dialogar sin subordinación epistémica ni lingüística en un diálogo intercultural sin guetos."

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