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Publication Date

2021

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Resonance and Resistance: Feminist Worldmaking and Musical Practice in Chile

by

Christina Marie Azahar Folgar

A dissertation in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

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Spring 2021

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Christina Marie Azahar Folgar

Abstract

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This dissertation engages the concept of resonance in order to explore how Chilean feminist activists, musicians, industry leaders, and audiences have used popular musical practices to create space for themselves and their communities. Centrally, this study asks, how are feminist organizers in Chile engaging music to mobilize artists, audiences, and industries to end patterns of patriarchal oppression? To what extent do feminist musical practices allow participants to navigate, re-sound, and re-envision the physical, social, industrial, and virtual spaces of which they are a part? By examining a diversity of feminist musical practices from the mid-twentieth century to the present, I explain how musical and interpersonal resonances shape feminist coalition-building while also reconfiguring the gender politics of social and geophysical space.

Each chapter in this dissertation makes audible distinct feminist understandings of Chilean music history, spatial politics, and the patriarchal systems that shape these. In Chapters Two and Three, I examine the role of cantautoras (women singer-songwriters) across generations of political movements, specifically addressing the feminist legacies, activism, and travels of folklorist Violeta Parra (b. 1917) and singer Pascuala Ilabaca (b. 1985). The latter two chapters examine two highly distinct community music practices. Chapter Four draws on my participant observation in women's community cueca classes in Santiago to analyze the process of "sacando la voz" (raising, drawing out, or finding one's voice) within the urban folk music tradition, cueca brava. Chapter Five examines the history of countercultural arts collective Coordinadora Femfest and their collaboration with trans performer Hija de Perra. I explain how members have used peripheral venues and DIY performance practices to develop a transfeminist coalition building based on "sounding from under"—outside mainstream institutions and in solidarity with marginalized communities.

Each case, I argue, represents a different enactment of feminist worldmaking in which sound is made into a reclamation of space, an amplification of voices, or a mobilization of power. I define feminist worldmaking as the performative means through which musicians and musical collectives practice modes of existence and envision human futurity outside the strictures of sexism, classism, and xenophobia. Based on this perspective, I locate feminist worldmaking possibilities in these practices not only in the way their artistic imaginings envision new futures, but also in the very real ways that their organizing, production, and performance actively transform gender and sexual politics within their social context.

Dedication

*To my grandparents,
who ignited my curiosity,
who cared for me endlessly,
and who dreamed and worked
and sacrificed for my education
long before I was born.*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the past several years completing this project, I have had the great fortune of being supported by innumerable friends, family, mentors, colleagues, artists, administrators, and advocates who have believed in me endlessly.

Primero, a las mujeres músicas chilenas con quienes compartí un año de compañerismo, trabajo y arte—especialmente Carolina Ozaus, Maria Paz Reese, Antonia Piña, Barbara Finsterbusch, Camila Camacho, Gaba Revenco, Sol Saldivia, Camila Camacho, Carolina Nicoletti, Constanza Araya, Pascuala Ilabaca, Josi Villanueva y todas mis compañeras del taller de canto femenino cuequero—gracias por abrir sus hogares, por compartir sus historias y por confiar en mi voz. Me han cambiado por siempre. Ofrezco este trabajo humildemente como un documento de su labor política y artística y un testamento al poder de crear en colaboración.

A Panchita, mi gran amiga, me hubiera perdido en Chile sin ti. Gracias por cuidarme y por hacerme parte de tu familia.

In addition to my Fulbright Faculty Host and dissertation committee member Daniel Party, whose regular meetings and hospitality grounded me during my time in Santiago, I was fortunate to be welcomed into a community of musicologists in Chile whose enthusiasm and collegiality I am eternally grateful for. Lorena Valdebenito, Daniela Fugellie, Laura Jordan, Jacob Rekedal, Juan Pablo González y Nayive Ananías, gracias por cuestionar y dialogar conmigo. ¡Y gracias por asegurar que nunca me faltaba un buen café! A mis estudiantes de Música, Género y Sexualidad—Rodrigo, Darío, Gerardo, Claudia, Pablo y Paulo—gracias por permitirme compartir algunas de mis primeras ideas sobre esta investigación en nuestro curso. I also owe huge thanks to Juan Eduardo Wolf and Luis Achondo, who likewise provided invaluable feedback on early versions of these chapters, especially my study of canto femenino cuequero.

To my Fulbright cohort—Amie, Danielle, Jennifer, Emma, Talia, Amanda, Kate, Maaike, Mickey, Sam, Carly—thank you for inspiring me, exploring with me, and for continuing to show me what big dreams and big hearts are made of.

Jocelyne, though I've shared hundreds of pages of prose with you over the years, words seem to fail when I try to describe how your guidance has shaped me along this journey. Thank you for fighting for me, for giving me the space to find my voice, and for reminding me to always question, reflect, and revise. Even as you've mentored me, you've taught me how to be a forever-student, and I hope to continue learning from you for years to come.

T, you have shown me the meaning of creative, socially engaged scholarship and teaching. Thank you for brainstorming with me, for your patient guidance through some of my earliest graduate level projects, and for mentoring me as I delved into a beautiful world of WOC literature and art. Through it all, you have always reminded me to breathe. I wouldn't have finished this without you.

Charles, what an honor to have been in conversation with you throughout the research and writing of this dissertation. Your kind and discerning commentary has never failed to humble

and inspire. Thank you for helping me see these stories—and indeed the world—in new and impactful ways.

To the friends, colleagues, and comrades who went through grad school with me—Daniel, Nour, Melissa, Kendra, Danni, Edward, Matt, Saraswathi, Rachel, Beezer, Jiselle, Hong-June, Inderjit, Rebecca, John, Jacob, Jon, Annie, and so many more—I love you, and y’all know I wouldn’t have survived this without you.

Arathi—my work wife, cat auntie, and one of my best friends—where do I even start? I never knew I needed an older sister until I met you. From teaching me how to cook to getting me through grad school to helping give me the tools to land an amazing job, thank you for loving and supporting me through all the hurdles as I’ve figured out how to adult. You are the best.

To my family—Mom, Steph, Ita, Gladys, and all my aunts, uncles, and cousins—thank you for everything, but especially for your love and understanding as I moved across the country and then to another hemisphere while completing this degree. No matter how far I go, you will always be my home.

Finally, to Carlos—my heart—we met when I was just beginning graduate school, and you’ve loved me patiently and unconditionally as I’ve spent months and years buried in books or lost in writing or traveling for research. Thank you for always waiting for me and thank you for the absolute joy you exude every day. I can’t wait to begin our life together post-PhD.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Bodies, Territories, and Voices

I. Calling In: Feminist Musical Practices in Chile

A desire for change had long been burning when, on March 5, 2016, celebrity singer-songwriter Francisca Valenzuela and her team of producers held the first version of their feminist music festival, Ruidosa Fest.¹ “Ruidosa” (a woman making noise) reclaims the masculine adjective “ruidoso” (noisy) as a feminine noun. A ruidosa, according to Valenzuela and her team, “is someone who recognizes that society is indignantly unequal, and who wants to shout, speak up, or make noise so that this changes. It is someone who wants to address these problems creatively, from a focus that promotes solidarity, cooperation, and alliance.”² In addition to Valenzuela, the event included a major line-up of well-known women artists from Chile’s vibrant indie/alternative music scene, including Camila Moreno, Denise Rosenthal, and Javiera Mena (Figure 1.1). Yet, more so than the lineup, the loudest noise at Ruidosa Fest, one that has continued to resound to this day, was a series of conversations held by artists, journalists, and producers on women’s lived experiences in the music industry in Chile and beyond.



Figure 1.1 "Desde la música" - Panel of women artists. Ruidosa Fest, March 5, 2016. From left to right, Camila Moreno, Denise Rosenthal, Javiera Mena, Francisca Valenzuela. [Photo by Rosario Oddó.](#)

¹ Video: “Ruidosa Fest SCL 2016,” March 31, 2016. <https://youtu.be/UWQwc557vTQ> (Accessed March 19, 2021)

² Ruidosa Fest. “Glosario – Ruidosa/o.” <https://somosruidosa.com/glosario/> (Accessed March 18, 2021).

It was a hot dusty day in Santiago as I waited outside the venue for Ruidosa Fest 2016 to begin. Moved by the significance of the event, I had made the journey from Berkeley, California, to Santiago de Chile specifically to be present for this day. Ruidosa Fest 2016 was by no means the beginning of feminist music in Chile, but it certainly marked a turning point in public conversations around gender equality, sexual harassment, and women’s representation in mainstream music festivals and record labels. It took place before the #NiUnaMenos movement began sweeping Latin America in late 2016,³ before the #MeToo movement took hold in the U.S. and other Western countries in 2017,⁴ before Chile’s “mayo feminista” in 2018, and before the Chilean feminist collective Las Tesis swept the world in 2019 with their viral performance, “Un violador en tu camino” (“A Rapist in Your Path”). Reflecting on all that has come to pass in the five years since I attended the first Ruidosa Fest, it is difficult to remember the world as it was then. But without a doubt, I remember the energy in the room when five women raised their voices at Ruidosa to speak “Desde la industria” / “From the Industry” (Figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2 - "Desde la industria" - Panel of women journalists and producers. Ruidosa Fest, March 5, 2016. From left to right, Carolina Ozaus, Javiera Tapia, Carmen Barahona, Carla Arias, Marisol Garcia. [Photo by Rosario Oddó.](#)

³ The #NiUnaMenos or #NotOneLess movement was founded by Argentine activists in 2015 in response to rising rates of femicide. #NiUnaMenos began sweeping other Latin American countries in October 2016 after organizers launched a call for a general women’s strike. For more information, see Lopez 2020.

⁴ The original “Me Too” movement was founded on MySpace in 2006 by a Black woman, survivor and activist Tarana Burke. In 2017, actress Alyssa Milano made #MeToo go viral after suggesting on Twitter women use the hashtag to describe their experiences of sexual assault following public allegations made against Harvey Weinstein. For more information see the NY Times article by Aisha Harris, 2018.

The cool room was a welcome respite after several long hours in the sun listening to the afternoon's lineup. This audience was slightly older and smaller than the group that had attended the earlier panel of women artists (Fig 1.1), but there was nevertheless a decided sense of anticipation in the room. Once everyone was settled, moderator Marisol Garcia opened the "Desde la industria" panel by lauding the fact that Ruidosa Fest was facilitating a public dialogue among women of diverse backgrounds and roles in the music industry—a forum that, according to her, was unprecedented in Chilean history.⁵ Garcia, a well-known journalist and author of several books on popular music and politics, was joined by Carolina Ozaus, guitarist and co-founder of the underground music festival Coordinadora Femfest; Javiera Tapia, journalist and director of *POTQ* music magazine and founder of the feminist magazine *Es Mi Fiesta (It's My Party)*; Carmen Barahona, a producer at the agency Doll Music; and Carla Arias, director of the record label Quemascabeza. Throughout the session, Garcia and audience members raised questions ranging from learning business management skills and entrepreneurship to navigating the world of music industry professionals as a mother.

Two questions in particular, however, generated significant divergence and debate among the panelists: How do you balance being a woman and being involved in music, and do you consider yourself a feminist? Arias pointedly responded that it was never important for her to dwell on her womanhood when making decisions for her company, and firmly declared that she was not a feminist because she felt it was too deeply associated with man-hating and counterculture. Ozaus, on the other hand, expressed that the work of Coordinadora Femfest was based explicitly in combating gender discrimination by creating spaces for women to perform and circulate their music through grassroots and community organizations. She framed countercultural spaces as powerful outlets where participants could work to escape the sexism and commercialism of mainstream labels and media outlets, and she emphasized that she saw feminism as a practice based in collaboration and a search for equality, not animosity between men and women. Tapia, somewhat more ambivalent, reflected that "teoría feminista es bacán y una mierda a la vez" (feminist theory is amazing and a piece of shit at the same time)—amazing, she mused, because it makes you understand the world differently, but shitty when learned in isolation from lived experience. The real work, or the "double work," Tapia argued, was for women to try and do their job while also working to make space for themselves.

Despite the differences of opinion that caused moments of tension, in this exchange, there was also compassion, vulnerability, and curiosity. It captured a shared struggle to work towards women's wellbeing and demonstrated the healing potential of diverse women engaging one another in conversation across strong differences of opinion. Rather than creating divisions, their dialogue created room for accountability and growth. Black feminist activist and public scholar Professor Loretta J. Ross calls this type of dialogue "calling in." Different from "calling out," a form of public shaming where one party performs moral authority over another party's wrongdoing, "Calling in involves conversation, compassion and context. It doesn't mean a person should ignore harm, slight or damage, but nor should she, he or they exaggerate it" (Bennet 2020).

⁵ As will be explained in Chapter 5, Coordinadora Femfest had already been hosting feminist music festivals, panels, and other similar forums since 2004, twelve years before the establishment of Ruidosa Fest. However, as countercultural organization, Coordinadora Femfest made a conscious decision for many years not to seek mainstream media coverage of their events, and therefore they were less widely known.

In this public act of “calling in” during the industry panel at Ruidosa Fest 2016, I not only witnessed a stirring moment of solidarity and trust-building, I also was introduced to a world of feminist musicians, activists, artists, journalists, producers, and scholars, all engaged, however differently, in making space for themselves and for others to fight for gender and sexual equality. Over the course of the next two years, I became deeply immersed in online conversations, and then, in 2018, spent a year directly collaborating with and interviewing several of the artists, journalists, and producers who had participated in Ruidosa. The more I came to know these people and the spaces they were creating, the more I wanted to understand how their musical practices shaped the feminist world they sought to live in.

Throughout this dissertation, I ask, how are feminist organizers in Chile engaging music to mobilize artists, audiences, and industries to end patterns of patriarchal oppression? To what extent do feminist musical practices allow participants to navigate, re-sound, and re-envision the physical, social, industrial, and virtual spaces of which they are a part? This is not a study of “women’s music” in the same way that women’s music has been understood in the United States to revolve around second wave feminism, primarily cis- white lesbian women, and the music festivals they have put on since the 1970s (Reagon 1998; Morris 1999; Hayes 2010; Koskoff 2014). Rather, I frame this study around a broad array of gender and sexual subjectivities, racial and class positionalities, and political, ideological, and artistic movements I describe as feminist musical practices. Following bell hooks (1981), I use “feminism” to refer broadly to struggles to liberate people of all gender and sexual identities and all socio-economic, cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds from historical patterns of sexist domination and oppression. I use the term “musical practice” in order to expand my examination of musical traditions beyond staged performance (Bayton 1993). Festivals and other staged musics still feature centrally in this study, but, as I explain, feminist musical practices can also be heard in spaces such as community music classes, voice lessons, individual modes of listening and composition, management, production, and musical research. I contend that these sounded phenomena deeply shape the ways in which we understand the emplaced, material realities of gender and sexuality. Finally, the term “practice” allows me to approach both feminism and music as evolving sets of actions—not just ideologies but dynamic ways of embodying one’s place in local, regional, and global events.

The stories gathered in this study are meant to represent a diversity of women musicians’ experiences from the mid-twentieth century to the present. In the first two chapters, I examine the role of cantautoras (women singer-songwriters) across generations of political movements, specifically addressing the feminist legacies and activism of folklorist Violeta Parra (b. 1917) and singer Pascuala Ilabaca (b. 1985). The latter two chapters examine two highly distinct community music practices: a series of women’s cueca classes and the underground feminist music collective Coordinadora Femfest. Each case, I argue, represents a different enactment of feminist worldmaking in which sound is made into a reclamation of space, an amplification of voices, or a mobilization of power. I locate feminist worldmaking possibilities in these practices not only in the way their artistic imaginings envision new futures, but also in the very real ways that their organizing, production, and performance actively transform gender and sexual politics within their social contexts

Though these narratives are diverse, this dissertation does not recount an entire history of feminist musical practices in Chile. To date, Guadalupe Becker’s 2011 article “Mujeres en la

música chilena: Diálogos entrecruzados con el poder” (“Women in Chilean Music: Dialogues Intertwined with Power”) is the most comprehensive account of women's role in Chilean music throughout the twentieth century. Javiera Tapia's 2020 book *Amigas de lo Ajeno* (*Friends of the Other*) also provides a comprehensive compilation of stories and interviews from many of Chile's most famous contemporary women artists. Still, Becker and Tapia along with Chilean musicologists Laura Jordán (2012) and Lorena Valdebenito (2017) point toward the need for a feminist musicology not only to write a compensatory history of women in music, but also to use critical perspectives on gender and sexuality to transform the very foundational questions and methodologies of music historiography. The case studies I present in this dissertation represent a contribution to Becker, Jordán, Valdebenito, Tapia, and other Chilean feminist music scholars' foundational work. Across each chapter, I work to construct deeply personal analyses that demonstrate the role of diverse feminist musical practices in resisting sexist as well as racist, classist, queer/transphobic, and ableist oppression and in creating new places from which to imagine alternate forms of futurity and coexistence. This collection of stories is, as all coalitions are, imperfect and incomplete, but it represents a labor of love and a testament to the trust I was able to develop with feminist musicians of highly distinct backgrounds, political leanings, and artistic formations.

As a study on placemaking, a noticeable gap in this work will be the fact that all of the artists and institutions I speak about are based in the region in and around the capital, Santiago, and the nearby port city, Valparaíso. For reasons that will soon become apparent, my ability to travel beyond this region was relatively limited. However, I make significant effort throughout to be specific about scale when I speak about space, place, and placemaking. At times I speak in relation to a city, a neighborhood, or a plaza, at other times in relation to a home, an institution, or a body. When I speak about geographic regions beyond the area where my ethnography took place, I draw on sounds, images, oral histories, and historical records, turning to my own experience only when it helps illuminate my positionality. What follows in the introduction will direct the reader to the various scales at which I will address feminist worldmaking and feminist musical practices throughout the dissertation.

II. Context: Scales of Orientation

¿Qué sabes de cordilleras si tú naciste tan lejos?
Hay que conocer la piedra que corona el ventisquero,
hay que recorrer callando los atajos del silencio
y cortar por las orillas de los lagos cumbreños.

What do you know of mountains, if you were born so far away?
You must know the rock that crowns the icy peaks,
You must pass through, quieting the short paths of silence
and cut along the banks of the lakes in the pinnacles.

“Arriba en la cordillera”/ “Up in the Mountain Range,” Patricio Manns

Understanding the Landscape

“Entre mar y cordillera,” between sea and mountains. Chile is bordered completely by the vastness of the Pacific Ocean to the West, and the looming, protective peaks of the Andes to the

East. Stretching long and narrow across 2,635 miles, it reaches from the parched earth of the Atacama and Altiplano in the North, to the cold realm of lakes, fjords, and glaciers approaching Torres del Paine and the Strait of Magellan in the south. Easter Island, or Rapa Nui, in the land's native language, is also a Chilean territory, but resides over 2,000 miles away from the mainland (Figure 1.3). Seismic and volcanic activity are common—so much so that they are the subject of almost daily conversation. Even after living in earthquake-prone California for over five years, I was shocked to hear a Chilean friend's mother once say, “Si es menos que un siete, no es un terremoto, es un temblor” (“If it's less than a 7.0, it's not an earthquake, it's a tremor”).

Across this beautiful, volatile, dramatically diverse topography, regional identity is inevitably a source of fierce pride, and a constant foil to the idea of an imagined national community. The central region of the country is home to the metropolitan capital, Santiago. But that is not the only reason the region is culturally and politically hegemonic. It is also quite simply the remoteness and inaccessibility of the North and South. By bus or car, six hours is considered a short trip in Chile. A typical journey is ten hours or more. Only those with enough money can fly.



Figure 1.3 Physical map and political map of Chile. Source: mapamundi.online

What does all of this mean for the feminist musical practices I discuss in this study? The landscape, which offers protection but also creates isolation between mountains and sea, is a recurring theme in Chilean literature, art, as well as daily conversation. Being geographically cut off from the rest of the world and having restrained mobility within the country due to its natural landscape has helped sustain recurrent notions of Chilean people as being cold and inhospitable, tending to keep to themselves. Sometimes during my time there these ideas of distance, coldness,

and isolation would come up jokingly during “la once,” Chile’s version of elevenses held, to the bemusement of Anglophone visitors, around 7:00pm. Busy preparing for this daily social ritual, someone would pour tea, slice palta (avocado), serve loaves of marraqueta (a popular bread), and begin laughing with me about how “anti-social” Chileans were. In the winter, this jovial and ironic conversation was repeated once or twice over a warming vino navegado (mulled wine). But too often, a feeling of coldness and solitude would creep in. Someone would recall themselves or a relative being locked under curfew, or prohibited from walking down a certain street, or being the target of government surveillance, or being tortured, disappeared, or killed.

Geopolitical Histories

Llegando al feliz momento del final
Los cielos al fin, en el mar acabarán.
Bajando de la montaña recibimos tanto viento
Que se nos borró la cara y llegó el desprendimiento
Con los instintos perdidos y la memoria borrada.
Intentamos prender fuego con pura leña mojada.

Arriving at that joyous, final moment
The heavens, in the end, will finish in the sea.
So much wind comes down to us from the mountain
That our face was erased, our release arrived
With instincts lost and memory wiped away
We try to light fire with only wet kindling.

“Herencia de hielo”/ “Inheritance of Ice,” Pascuala Ilabaca

In 1973, the United States backed a military coup against the socialist government of President Salvador Allende, who had been democratically elected as leader of the coalition party Unidad Popular (Popular Unity) in 1970. The commander of the armed forces, General Augusto Pinochet was installed as Commander-in-Chief. Under Pinochet’s military regime, which lasted until 1990, a group of Chilean economists known as “The Chicago Boys” were brought into the administration to oversee the imposition of a radical experiment in free-market capitalism. Trained at the Chicago School of Economics under neoliberal theorist Milton Friedman, the Chicago Boys were responsible for developing an economic plan based on extreme austerity measures, privatization of public services such as health, education, and social security, and the deregulation of private industries. All of this resulted in massive corporate profits as well as a sharp rise in socioeconomic inequality (Davis 2019). Authoritarianism came hand in hand with these capitalist freedoms (Letelier 2016). Tens of thousands were tortured and over three thousand were killed or disappeared. At least 200,000 are estimated to have gone into exile.⁶ The regime transformed public space by inhibiting the right to assembly. It imposed harsh curfews impeding transit after certain hours, forcing social life into private spaces. It transformed stadiums, schools, and public buildings into spaces of torture, making these spaces inseparable from the memories of physical, psychological, and often-times sexual violence that occurred

⁶ According to the historian Steve J. Stern, these are baseline numbers accounting only for cases that were legally proved. According to his investigations, other credible estimates reach 4,500 deaths and disappearances, 150,000-200,000 detentions, over 100,000 cases of torture, and exile estimates of up to 400,000. Stern notes that in 1973 Chile’s population only estimated around 10 million (Stern 2006: xxi)

there (Valle 2017). The regime also strengthened Chile's long history of settler colonialism in the North and South, vilifying and forcing Mapuche and other Indigenous communities off their land (Stern 2006).

This reign of terror, according to some, is the primary culprit for a lingering sense of frigidity and isolation in Chile to this day. The dictatorship thrived on fragmentation, erasure, silence, and the disposal of bodies. It exacerbated an already pervasive tendency towards solitude, and further inhibited the possibility of building meaningful coalitions of workers, Indigenous, women's, and other minority movements across geopolitical boundaries. After the transition to democracy in 1990, which constituted a change in leadership and electoral systems but largely left in place the economic systems and constitution imposed under the dictatorship, these processes of fragmentation in Chile have remained largely the same.⁷ Collective memories of repression, torture, disappearances, and mass executions continue to influence cultural expression and the use of public and private space, particularly for women and other minorities. In her song "Herencia de hielo" ("Inheritance of Ice"), quoted above, singer Pascuala Ilabaca laments the trauma inherited by generations born or raised after the end of the dictatorship, comparing living in the aftermath of the regime to "lighting fire with only wet kindling."⁸ For Ilabaca and the other feminist music practitioners whose lives and work I present in this study, countering this inherited silence and solitude with voices raised in solidarity has been at the root of their activism. Since 2006, Chile has seen several waves of anti-capitalist student movements resisting the residual social and economic effects of the dictatorship, and between 2018-2019, these movements saw an explosion of feminist coalition-building across different sectors of society and regions of the country.

Sensing the Surroundings: Mayo Feminista and Chile Despertó

Proprioception, the sense of where one's body is in space. Feminist writers have used various means to describe the politics of being aware of one's body in relation to its surroundings. Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa describes this ability, developed through centuries of cultural memories of oppression, as "la facultad," or the capacity to perceive a deeper understanding of reality through corporeal senses as well as intuition. La facultad is the ability to stretch the limits of one's perception beyond one's physical being. It can be an act of protection or survival, but also of love and sensitivity (Anzaldúa 1987). Sarah Ahmed describes bodily sensation as a starting point for feminism. "Feminism can begin with a body, a body in touch with a world, a body that is not at ease in a world; a body that fidgets and moves around. Things don't seem right" (Ahmed 2017:22).

This project initially began with a keen interest in how women's bodies move through space, through performance, through media, and through song. However, what began as a study on gender, mobility, and sound eventually transformed into an investigation of feminist senses of

⁷ The 1980 Constitution, drafted under the Pinochet regime without popular input and approved in a fraudulent plebiscite, has been revised to eliminate major authoritarian provisions, but according to law professor Fernando Atria, "Chile's Constitution is neoliberal in nature, and its basic role is to guarantee conditions for the free market even in traditional social areas such as education, health, and social security" (Bonney 2020).

⁸ Pascuala Ilabaca, interview with the author. October 15, 2018.

place, sounds of feminist spaces, and feminist placemaking through musical practice. This was influenced first by the fact of my own relocation to Chile for the duration of 2018, and the shift this caused in my own feminist sensibilities. However, this transformation was also informed by the velocity at which feminist movements emerged and transformed throughout the duration of 2018 and into 2019 and 2020.

Mayo feminista 2018 (Feminist May 2018), as it came to be called, saw the largest mobilization of feminist students in Chilean history (Zerán 2018). Sick of the surroundings of their educational systems, filled with sexist micro-aggressions, unchecked sexual harassment, and rampant cases of assault, students decided it was time to take these institutions over. On April 17 of that year, students at the Universidad Austral in Valdivia, a town in southern Chile, occupied their department building after the university failed to press sexual assault charges on a professor known to make regular advances on female students (Aguilera 2018). After this initial “toma” (take-over), students across the country experiencing similar circumstances followed suit. At the movement’s peak in late May, over twenty universities and secondary schools were being occupied or on strike, fighting for “una educación no-sexista” (a non-sexist education) and in some cases demanding parallel feminist curriculum (Figure 1.4). The tomas carried on throughout the winter months of June and July. Even the most prestigious law program in the country at Universidad de Chile was held under toma for over three months.



Figure 1.4 Folklorist Violeta Parra appears on a large canvas at Universidad Alberto Hurtado during the 2018 feminist student movements. Banners underneath read “For a non-sexist education, parallel feminist curriculum” and “They take our spaces, but they provide resources to abusers.” Photo by the author.⁹

⁹ Here, Violeta Parra (1917-1967) is portrayed as a canonical, saint-like figure. However, her memorialization is far from uniform across Chilean society and politics. See Chapter Two for more detail on Parra’s complex legacy.

Claiming the sanctified halls of universities as their own not only spelled out a direct challenge to Chile's largely for-profit higher education system and the way its neoliberal agenda was entwined with patriarchal systems of power. It also provided these students the space and time to re-attune themselves to what dialogue and collaboration might mean outside of spaces entrenched in structural sexism.

The movement brought spectacular actions to the street as well, with massive demonstrations held in cities across the nation in May and June. These marches featured dramatic actions where women used their bodies to perform a collective struggle against core patriarchal power systems such as the Catholic Church (Figure 1.5). However, in their effort to quickly articulate new feminist sensibilities through collective action, many of these public displays included imagery such as giant vagina banners and women soaked in fake menstrual blood that were read by queer activist groups as highly exclusive to transwomen and non-binary people. Some other banners even included language suggesting calls for violence against men, re-producing the same type of gendered violence they were supposedly trying to counter-act (Colectivo Granada 2018). Unsurprisingly, these marches are what received the most media attention as the movement was taking place. But regardless of how they were represented—bold revolutionary interventions or violent displays of anarchism—they were undeniably a catalyst in bringing feminism and issues of sexual harassment into public conversations. Yet, for those more closely involved with the movements, it was the more private, re-claimed university spaces of the tomas where the true sparks of new feminist sensibilities were ignited.



Figure 1.5 Bare-breasted and masked, students take over the statue of Pope John Paul II in la casa central, the main campus building of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Source: Instagram Screenshot, May 16, 2018.

Most of the musicians and industry members I interacted with throughout my ethnography were in their late twenties and thirties, some much older than that, and as such were not directly involved with the student movements, aside from an occasional visit to a campus to bring supplies, perform music, or otherwise show solidarity. However, many had participated in the student movements in 2006 and 2011 and felt vindicated seeing this younger generation force issues of sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual violence into the realm of university and national politics. Because of the way they were able to stoke public and private conversations on feminism and gender/sexual equality throughout the country, the significance of the feminist student movements across extremely diverse groups of women and gender minorities cannot be overstated. In making themselves heard, they made room for other voices to join them, and the following year would see Chile lead a feminist social uprising like no other.

On October 18, 2019, the Chilean government, under President Sebastian Piñera, began using police and military force to violently repress a social uprising that had begun a few days earlier as high school students began mass evasions of metro fares in protest of rising costs of living and inequality. For the first time since the Pinochet dictatorship ended in 1990, a state of emergency was imposed by the President, allowing the armed forces to restrict civilian movement and enforce nightly curfews. As demonstrations continued, low estimates confirmed at least 31 protesters dead at the hands of the military and police between October 2019 and March 2020 (Ulloa 2020). Nearly 4,000 protesters were injured, and nearly 1,000 reported being tortured while in detention. Of those injured, over 400 suffered ocular lesions or lost eyes from pellet bullets shot at point blank range. Among those tortured, nearly 200 reported being sexually abused.¹⁰ This social movement, which came to be known as “Chile Despertó” or “Chile Awakened” created dramatic changes in the social and geopolitical spaces I reference throughout the dissertation. Streets have become spaces of popular protest met with armed force as if they were militarized war zones. Public places, such as the former Plaza Italia in Santiago, have been re-appropriated and re-named. Now, this central thoroughfare is known as Plaza de la Dignidad (Dignity Plaza). Chile Despertó has reminded the national and international community that while the military dictatorship may have ended during the transition to democracy in 1990, the neoliberal socioeconomic systems that the dictatorship installed, as well as the militarized police and armed forces that enabled these systems to maintain power, were never truly gone.

Amidst the beginning of the Chile Despertó movement, a feminist collective called Las Tesis from the port city of Valparaíso created a viral performance called “Un violador en tu camino” (“A Rapist in Your Path”) that was shared and re-enacted by thousands of women in dozens of countries around the world.¹¹ The piece was a flash mob-style spoken word and dance conceived and written by Las Tesis members Daffne Valdés, Sibila Sotomayor, Paula Corneta, and Lea Cáceres (Minutaglio 2020). Launched on November 25, 2019, the International Day Against Violence Towards Women, this piece was inspired by the writings of Argentine anthropologist Rita Segato (Minutaglio 2020). According to their own testimony at a live streamed event on December 12, 2019, Las Tesis wanted to use this performance to communicate that sexual violence cannot be understood as simply violence between individuals

¹⁰ These numbers are taken from reports published by Chile’s Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos (National Institute of Human Rights). Accessed March 6, 2020. <https://www.indh.cl/archivo-de-reportes-de-estadisticas/>

¹¹ Video: “A Rapist in Your Path’: Chilean protest song becomes feminist anthem.” *Guardian News*. December 6, 2019. <https://youtu.be/s5AAscy7qbl>

or isolated acts of aggression. Rather, their performance contends that it is public in nature—that sexual violence is conditioned, condoned, and even perpetrated by the State. It is police and military raping women and girls. It is justice systems failing to press charges on perpetrators. It is supervisors and family members and domestic partners telling victims to remain silent if they want to maintain their dignity, or their career, or their lives.¹²

“Un violador en tu camino”

El patriarcado es un juez
que nos juzga por nacer,
y nuestro castigo
es la violencia que no ves.
El patriarcado es un juez
que nos juzga por nacer,
y nuestro castigo
es la violencia que ya ves.

Es femicidio.
Impunidad para mi asesino.
Es la desaparición.
Es la violación.

4x
Y la culpa no era mía,
ni dónde estaba ni cómo vestía.

El violador eras tú.
El violador eres tú.

Son los pacos, los jueces
el Estado, the President

El Estado opresor es un macho violador.
El Estado opresor es un macho violador.

El violador eras tú.
El violador eres tú.

Duerme tranquila, niña inocente,
sin preocuparte del bandolero,
que por tu sueño dulce y sonriente
vela tu amante carabinero.

4x
El violador eres tú.

“A Rapist in Your Path”

Patriarchy is our judge
that imprisons us at birth
and our punishment
Is the violence you DON'T see
Patriarchy is our judge
that imprisons us at birth
and our punishment
Is the violence you CAN see

It's femicide
Impunity for my killer
It's our disappearances
It's rape

4x
And it's not my fault
Not where I was or how I dressed

The rapist WAS you
The rapist IS you

It's the cops, the judges
the State, the President

The oppressive state is a macho rapist
The oppressive state is a macho rapist

The rapist WAS you
The rapist IS you

Sleep tight, innocent girl
don't worry about the bandits
over your sweet and happy dreams
watches your gentle, loving cop¹³

The rapist is you¹⁴

While shouting/speaking the lyrics above, performers move their bodies in synch with a drum beat and at intervals throughout the piece squat to the ground, replicating the dehumanizing position women are forced to take during pelvic cavity searches by the police. Generally, participants dress in club attire and wear black coverings over their eyes to represent the ways

¹² Facebook Livestream: “Conversaciones Alameda Abierta, ‘Arte movilizado.’” *Centro Cultural Gabriela Mistral*. December 12, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=449798909014394>

¹³ This stanza is drawn from the official hymn of the Carabineros de Chile, the country's national police force.

¹⁴ Unless otherwise noted all translations are by the author.

women are invisibilized, as well as to reference the dozens of eye injuries that had been inflicted by police on protesters during the Chile Despertó uprisings.

I had returned to the United States by the time this viral performance was sweeping the world. Between December 2019 and January 2020, I performed “Un violador en tu camino” twice in San Francisco with a community of Chileans and mostly-Latinx allies from around the Bay Area.¹⁵ Like most women who participated in these interventions, I am a survivor, and therefore words cannot fully capture the pain, the euphoria, and the catharsis of joining victims around the world to shout, “La culpa no era mía!” “It wasn’t my fault!” What I can articulate is that this movement, which occurred while I had already begun drafting my dissertation and analyzing my time in Chile in 2018, forced me to start writing from a place of deep embodied knowledge and interpersonal investment in the feminist movements that had been unfolding in Chile over the previous three years. As the open letter published by music scholar Danielle Brown makes painfully evident, ethnomusicology, the field in which I have been trained, has historically been a colonialist project grounded in the ethnographic formation of foreign or racialized “others” who inherently are understood to hold positions of lesser power than the Western scholars who study them.¹⁶ Rejecting this framework, in my dissertation, though I acknowledge the relative privileges and resources that come with my U.S. citizenship, I work to frame my research collaborators as the friends and mentors that they were. Rather than feign academic objectivity, I write myself into the feminist movements that have emerged in Chile because these movements are intimately intertwined with larger transnational movements of resistance against State violence and sexist, racist, capitalist oppression.

In other words, Mayo Feminista, Chile Despertó, and the collective Las Tesis helped me recognize that despite differences of language and nationality, the preservation of my human rights is inextricably related to the preservation of the rights of all women. In what follows, I describe these experiences of juncture, coalition-building, and collective organizing through music and performance as *experiences of resonance*. This idea allows me to speak more deeply about the spatiality of musical sound, as well as to articulate the ways in which the musical practices I discuss “resonated” socially or politically among practitioners and their communities.

III. Theory: Sonic Coalitions and the Undoing of the Nation

On Women, Noise, and Resonance

[Woman] is a code word and it traps, and the people that use the word
are not prepared to deal with the fact that if you put it out, everybody
that thinks they’re a woman may one day want to seek refuge.
And it ain’t no refuge place! And it’s not safe! It should be a coalition.

From “Coalition Politics: Turning the Century,” Bernice Johnson Reagon, 1983

¹⁵ Video: “‘Un violador en tu camino’ – San Francisco, California.” *Yapo Films*. December 10, 2019.
<https://youtu.be/uWe8ZAt1OmM>

¹⁶ Danielle Brown. “An Open Letter on Racism in Music Studies” (blog) *My People Tell Stories*. June 12, 2020.
<https://www.mypeopletellstories.com/blog/open-letter>

Chicanx and Latinx feminist scholars Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano (1997) Frances Aparicio (1998), Michelle Habell-Pallán (2005), Deborah Vargas (2012), and Licia Fiol-Matta (2017) have each argued that nationalist constructions of Latin American musical genres reproduce heavily masculine, heteronormative ideas of regional and national identities, and that addressing feminist and queer listening practices might illuminate how misogyny and homophobia have structured our understandings of the voices and bodies representing the nation. To paraphrase Deborah Vargas (2012: xviii), how can we listen to feminist musical practices and hear soundscapes not bounded by nationalist or regional genres, but rather shaped by desires, excursions, and coalitions? How does music come to move space and place, and how does the fact of women creating that sound shift the gendered politics of their representation? To answer these questions, I draw on a range of discourses from ethnomusicology and beyond to develop my own version of what Habell-Pallán terms “feminista music scholarship,” which she describes as “an examination of power-flows through music via epistemologies birthed through feminist of color and indigenista theorizing and practice” (2017). Across each chapter, I engage the voices of U.S. Women of Color writers and Latin American decolonial feminists (Richard 2008; Kirkwood 2010; Castillo 2016; Korol 2016; Segato 2016) to examine how feminist musical practices shape ideas of nation, territory, and public space with their music. Specifically, each chapter addresses the ideologies, sensibilities, and genealogies of listening that have informed the ways women artists represent place, make place, and form relationships to place.

I use “woman/women” to describe a flexible gender identity that is legible across various contexts and accounts for a diversity of racial, ethnic, sexual, class, bodily, and regional subjectivities. I do not use the gender non-conformative “womxn” since it has no direct correlate or easy translation into Spanish, although it functions similarly to the term “Latinx.” I do not use “womyn” for the same reason, and also because of its historical use within trans-exclusive feminist spaces such as the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, which has been organized explicitly by and for “womyn-born-womyn.”¹⁷ Using the word “women,” with all of its baggage, allows me to write through rather than erase the term’s associations with patriarchal subjugation, and with heteronormative constructions of womanhood and femininity. It allows me to speak about how “woman” has been wielded to exclude racial others, touting whiteness as an idealized form of womanhood, and about how these racist, heteronormative exclusions are a foil to the feminist project of ending sexist oppression (Davis 1981; hooks 1981; Moraga & Anzaldúa 1981; Lorde 1984).

Initially, in describing the feminist musical practices that appear in this study, I followed the discourse of Ruidosa Fest and used “noise” to theorize their politically disruptive potential. David Novak describes the phenomenon of noise as a process of negotiation, stating, “[...] noise is a context of sensory experience, but also a moving subject of circulation, of sound and listening, that emerges in the process of navigating the world and its differences” (Novak 2015: 125). Noise and noisiness became a way to talk about sounds—music, voices, soundscapes, silences—that demand attention, which question normative identities and seek to topple oppressive forms of power. However, the idea of noise didn’t quite capture the way these sounds

¹⁷ Anderson-Minshall, Diane. 2015. “Op-ed: Michfest’s Founder Chose to Shut Down Rather than Change with the Times.” *Advocate*. April 24, 2015. (Accessed March 6, 2020). <https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2015/04/24/op-ed-michfests-founder-chose-shut-down-rather-change-times>

resonate, intersecting and interacting with a multitude of spaces and listeners as they reverberate and open new places, real and imagined. “Resonance,” Veit Erlmann explains, bridges the distinctions between sound and listener, body and cognition, subject and object, by bringing our attention to the physiological process of hearing or experiencing sound through the body (Erlmann 2015: 177). In the context of feminist musical practices, the idea of resonance captures the necessity of learning when to quiet one’s own voice in order to listen deeply and empathetically, knowing when to let others be heard. Resonance also helps elucidate the ways these musical practices define and are defined by social and geophysical space. Said more clearly, resonance is inseparable from musical coalition-building. It constitutes a reordering of people, places, relationships, and embodied experience.¹⁸

In conceptualizing a study on feminist musical practices, I am greatly indebted to the voices of feminist musicologists and ethnomusicologists who have been developing conversations on music and feminism for the past several decades, particularly those who have gathered together dozens of diverse voices in edited volumes approaching the study of music, gender, and sexuality in global perspectives (Cook & Tsou 1994; Diamond & Moisala 2000; Bernstein 2003). Ellen Koskoff in particular has been foundational in elevating the significance of feminist studies within (ethno)musicological fields, long working to make the study of gender and sexuality equally important as the study of racial, ethnic, national, or religious identities (Koskoff 1989; 2001; 2014). Furthermore, the work of Deborah Wong (2001; 2004; 2008; 2019) and Tomie Hahn (2007), and their profoundly sensitive writing on embodied knowledge, intersubjectivity, and movement in Asian and Asian American music and dance has allowed me to think more expansively about musical arts and their capacity to shape the ways women navigate and experience space. Eileen Hayes (2010), on the other hand, with her incredibly important account of Black women and feminist music festivals in the U.S., has very much shaped the critical lens through which I analyze festivals and other feminist musical practices, helping me to discern participants’ intersecting racial, ethnic, and class positionalities and power dynamics. My study of resonance and resistance enters these ongoing conversations and asks how an attunement to space and place can also enhance our understanding of music as an anti-patriarchal practice.

On Feminist Worldmaking: Revisiting Space, Place, and Gender

I define feminist worldmaking as the performative means through which musicians and musical collectives practice modes of existence and envision human futurity outside the strictures of sexism, classism, and xenophobia. This concept intervenes in musical studies of gender, sexuality, and feminism by demonstrating how musical voices and musicking bodies not only mold subjectivities, relationships, and political coalitions, but how, in doing so, they give shape to the social and geopolitical spaces within which they operate.

As I have already indicated, this dissertation will examine musical practices as examples of feminist worldmaking within distinct scales of space and place. To do so, I will draw on an

¹⁸ Gaye Theresa Johnson (2013) and T. Carlis Roberts (2016) have written extensively about the spatialized aspects of sonic coalition-building in racial solidarity movements. These works deeply inform my approach to theorizing the use of sound in feminist musical practices.

array of previous scholarship in critical geography, women of color feminism, queer and queer of color theory, anthropology, and performance studies. I qualify my use of worldmaking first and foremost within the body of scholarship inspired by José Esteban Muñoz. His foundational writing (1999 & 2009) on the worldmaking potential of art and performance focuses on “disidentification” as an emancipatory practice engaged by queer, women of color, and other minoritarian subjects who recast oppressive systems, images, or tropes, as sources of their own empowerment. Muñoz contends that these types of performances “transport” performers and viewers to different symbolic spaces and temporal realms.

If disidentificatory performance transports us across symbolic space, it also inserts us in a coterminous time where we witness a new formation within the present and the future [...]. The coterminous temporality of disidentificatory performance exists within the future and the present, surpassing relegation to one temporality (the present) and insisting on the minoritarian subject's status as a world-historical entity (Muñoz 1999: 198).

Although I do not exclusively cast the feminist musical practices considered here as processes of disidentification, Muñoz's schema of performance “transporting” artists and audiences across symbolic time and space is useful in addressing how feminist musical practices envision alternative worlds of existence while also situating participants in different histories than those defined by canonical white men and their notions of progress and linear time. In that sense, I argue that these musical practices can be seen as enacting feminist historiographies for the purpose of shaping new futures and worlds of existence.

To think beyond the realms of performance and consider the physical and geopolitical spaces and places involved in this ethnography, I look to critical geography. The mobilities turn in this field over the last decade and a half has led scholars to envision new paradigms of thought attending to the interconnected scales, networks, and representations of mobility that organize social life and understandings of space and place. Studies have ranged from the movement of people in transit or migration, to physical movement of objects, to virtual travel via online networks and audiovisual media, and communicative travel through mobile technologies, but are broadly connected by a Lefebvrian concern for addressing space and mobility in relation to capitalist systems of production (Lefebvre 1974; Cresswell 2006; Urry 2007; Murray and Upstone 2014).

Anthropological considerations of space, place, and mobility have been more attuned to collective “senses of place” (Feld and Basso 1996) and the exploration of culture as phenomena born of travel and translation, not simply attachments to neatly defined regions (Clifford 1997). Later anthropological work has also addressed the movement of cultural phenomena and commodities across different spatial scales of production, and approaches a gendered reading of space, place, and mobility by attending to the sensory practices and embodied knowledges associated with these spatial scales (Tsing 2005, 2015). Marcia Ochoa (2014) in particular illuminates how femininity might be performed and negotiated through the interconnected spatial scales of the transnational, the national, the street, and the stage.

In one moment, I would consider the way an eyebrow was perfectly arched, and in another I charted the sweeping path of history, just to see how an acrylic stiletto wound up on a particular piece of asphalt. But it is this kind of vertiginous change in scale that makes it possible to hold contradictory and complex social relations in the same frame (Ochoa 2014, 16).

In anthropological sound studies, Steven Feld's seminal notion of acoustemology (1996; 2012; 2015) helps explain how sound is attached not only to experiential knowledge of the living material world, but also reverberates an emplaced sense of history, identity, sentiment, and intimate relationships. However, my inquiry into resonance, noise, sounding, and placemaking in feminist musical practices falls more in line with decolonial scholarship of the Américas that addresses the politics of gendered and racialized bodies in relation to their capacity to make noise, to listen, and to be heard (Briggs 1993; Bauman & Briggs 2003; Kun 2005; Ochoa Gautier 2013; Chávez 2017; Rouet 2019).

Studies of gendered mobility largely inspired by Doreen Massey's text *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994) have centrally used gender as a tool to re-imagine power structures of place as connected to territory or physical setting, space as connected to social settings and notions of belonging, and spatiality as it relates to the rules governing space. Gendered mobility studies also critique the discursive construction of movement or travel as masculine and stasis or home as feminine (Massey 1994; Blunt 1994; Kaplan 1998; Uteng and Cresswell 2008). I draw on these geographical and anthropological bodies of literature in order to address questions, such as how does the ability or inability to travel shape musicians' feminist politics and performance? How do the economic systems of their respective scenes influence women and gender minorities' use of particular venues, means of producing and circulating their music, their social mobility across diverse audiences? How do understandings of space and place change when they are re-presented by women through sound and music?

Angela Davis's influential work on black women in blues (1998) has been particularly relevant as an example of a study on music, gender, mobility, and emplacement.¹⁹ As part of her examination of black feminist legacies in blues music, Davis spends significant time discussing how experiences of travel not only reshaped ideas about black women's belonging (or entrapment) within the domestic sphere, but also, through their songwriting about travel, vindicated the sexual liberation that accompanies this newly found mobility. Davis's consideration of women's travel writing in music is powerful in that it marks how sexual and racial politics are transformed both through the movement of people and through the circulation of cultural practices such as music and literature. It shows us how mobility and travel shape notions of sexuality, desire, and belonging. But what can a feminist understanding of the body, of the role of emotion, open in our understandings of travel? Of space and place?

U.S. Women of Color feminism has illuminated much about how real or imagined "third spaces" can be seen as realms for negotiating new identities or relationships. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) notion of "the borderlands" juxtaposes the US-Mexico border with lesbian subjectivity in order to articulate both figuratively and physically marginalized spaces from which to negotiate multiple identities and forms of oppression/resistance. Audre Lorde (1984), Maria Lugones (1987), and bell hooks (1990), claim marginal spaces and outsiderhood as sites with potential for radical openness from which to inhabit and understand multiple world views.

¹⁹ "Blues representations of women engaged in self-initiated and independent travel constitute a significant moment of ideological opposition to the prevailing assumption about women's place in society. Notions of independent, traveling women enter into black cultural consciousness in ways that reflect women's evolving role in the quest for liberation. At the same time, dominant gender politics within black consciousness are troubled and destabilized." (Davis 1998: 67)

Juana María Rodríguez (2003) uses a queer, racialized understanding of sexuality to trouble the very meanings of identity, sites of knowledge production, and the power of discourse in the construction of space and place. As she elaborates,

“Identity is about situatedness in motion: embodiment and spatiality. It is about a self that is constituted through and against other selves in contexts that serve to establish the relationship between the self and the other. Places offer preexisting narratives of former encounters; they offer a means of symbolically decoding practices that occur within sociolinguistic frameworks” (Rodríguez 2003: 5).

Drawing on these foundational texts in queer and women of color feminism allows me to ask how emotion, affect, embodiment, desire, and intersectional identities inform the way in which feminist musical practitioners in Chile navigate, occupy, and represent space and place through their performance. It also helps me to ask how their practices of coalition building, of meeting and negotiating in spaces of difference, inform the sites they choose to carry out their labor.

IV. Methods: Experiencing Feminist Musical Ethnography

I am a Salvadoran American born and raised in a middle-income, mixed race family in a heavily white, conservative region of the southern United States. I am a cis- woman in my late twenties—a daughter, a grand-daughter, a sister, an auntie/tía, a cousin, a niece, and mother to two adorably peevish cats. I grew up listening to a wide variety of rock, pop, and folk music from the U.S. and beyond, as well as salsa, bachata, merengue, boleros, cumbias, and other classic Latin genres. Spanish lives in my roots, but it is my second language. I am a singer, a saxophonist, a timid pianist, and enjoy being a beginner at guitar, ukulele, jarana, fiddle, and other stringed things. I am a forever-student and a dedicated teacher. Feminism and intentional community-building are at the heart of all my work.

Aside from differences in language and my country/region of origin, most of my interests and life experiences—my age, my gender, my Latin American heritage, my creative endeavors, the music I listen to, my political leanings, my work as an educator, and yes, my love of cats—made it relatively easy for me to fit into the diverse groups of women and feminist organizations who formed part of my fieldwork in Chile. Most of my interlocutors are cis- women of middle-income backgrounds in their late twenties and thirties, though a few notable leaders and mentor figures are in their mid-late forties. All are musicians, work in the music industry, or are avid music fans, and they are, for the most part, university educated. Several hold advanced degrees. Many are teachers or therapists or doctors. Most, especially after mayo feminista in 2018, consider themselves feminists and actively participate in some form of community organizing.

Though I conducted preliminary fieldwork in 2015 and 2016, the majority of the ethnographic fieldwork for this study took place between January and December 2018. Funded by a Fulbright fellowship, I lived primarily in Santiago and travelled at least once or twice per month to the nearby port city of Valparaíso. During this time, I conducted individual and group interviews with dozens of musicians, journalists, and visual/performing artists. In these interviews, I focused on each subject’s biographical journey (Guilbault and Cape 2014), exploring their personal background, gender identity, and probing how these experiences have shaped their lived reality within various musical scenes. I also addressed how each subject has

come to know, experience, or shift gender and sexual norms of performance in their respective musical practice and sought to understand how this has influenced their compositional and aesthetic styles. With Pascuala Ilabaca, who is the subject of Chapter Three, I had several meetings and conducted two in-depth interviews during 2018, in addition to attending most of her concerts and other shows throughout the year.

During 2018, I also engaged in extensive participant observation. With the feminist collective Coordinadora Femfest, I attended weekly planning meetings for their annual music festival, helped coordinate and publicize a series of community classes they launched later in the year, created photo and video documentation of all their public events—including public talks, community art and book fairs, fundraising gigs, and demonstrations—and assisted with all aspects of production on the day of their annual festival. With the community music school Escuela a la Chilena, a program that teaches all aspects of cueca performance, including vocals, guitar, percussion, and dance, I attended months of classes learning the women’s form of this vocal practice. In addition to these activities, in order to gain a better understanding of women’s experiences across a wide range of musical practices, I also attended at least two-three shows per week by women artists in a variety of genres, making audio-visual recordings and taking notes on sound and repertoire choice, gesture and stage presence, the spatial arrangements of the venue, visual effects, and the artists’ interactions with the audience.

Though I had engaged in some social media ethnography during my year in Chile, between 2019-2020 when I had already returned to the United States, I spent significant time studying my interlocutors’ agency and self-fashioning through social media websites and other online forms—particularly Instagram, Facebook, SoundCloud, and Spotify. Through these analyses, I was able to understand how each subject shaped their online identity, what audiences they sought to reach through these outlets, and how—especially during the Chile Despertó movements and COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020—they engaged virtually with their social and political reality.

I use primary and secondary archival sources from the Music Archive of the National Library of Chile, from print and digital encyclopedias, and from newspapers and magazines to corroborate, support, provide greater context, or balance what I learned during ethnographic interviews and participant observation. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Spanish to English are my own, as are all musical transcriptions. I attained explicit written permission before taking any of the photographs that appear in this dissertation. Citation is provided when I source images that are not my own.

V. The Way Forward

I conceptualize each chapter in this dissertation as a set of cartographies. Each story and each voice make audible distinct feminist understandings of Chilean music history, spatial politics, and the patriarchal systems that shape these. They make audible journeys and arrivals, natural landscapes and city spaces, histories and futures that contest and envision alternative possibilities to neoliberal, patriarchal constructions of nation, community, and home.

Chapter Two is an exploration of memory and memorialization entitled “Holding Space for La Carpa de la Reina, An Offering to Violeta Parra.” Parra, a foundational figure in Chilean folk and political music, died in 1967 but continues to hold deep resonance with women’s groups, feminist musicology, and feminist musical practices to this day. In this chapter, I weave together an ethnographic examination of Violeta Parra as she appeared among the various sights, sounds, stories, and voices that formed part of my fieldwork in Chile in 2018. Using the twin concepts of “holding” and “having” space, I uncover how feminist artists and academics understand Violeta Parra as a historical figure and how they grapple with her lingering presence in musicological studies, university curriculum, and in contemporary folk and popular music scenes. Ultimately, I contend that the memory of La Carpa de la Reina, one of Parra’s final artistic projects, has posthumously become a holding space for contemporary artists, especially women, to develop their careers. Conversely, I argue that contemporary artists and intellectuals hold space for Parra by studying her oeuvre as well as her complicated life in effort to construct new, non-sexist musical canons and systems of musical knowledge production.

Chapter Three, “Pascuala Ilabaca: Singing Feminist Ethnographies of Place” explores the ways her physical travels, as well as her artistic representation of travel through live performance and music video, articulate a feminist ethnography of place while also re-imagining masculinist constructions of travel (Blunt 1994; Massey 1994; Kaplan 1996; Davis 1998; McGinley 2014). Drawing specifically on Ilabaca’s involvement with the 2013 television series *Territorios imaginados (Imagined Territories)*, this chapter addresses the ways her narration of Chilean cities through art and music presents alternative spatial imaginaries (Bachelard 1964[1958]; Anderson 2006[1983]; Foucault 1986; Basso 1996; Kun 2005) to national narratives which construct the northern and southern regions of Chile as rural Indigenous peripheries, opposed to the modern, urban regions in the center of the country (Anderson 2006; Lipsitz 1994; García Canclini 1995; Mularski 2015). The final section examines her interventions in environmental justice, migratory rights, and recent women’s movements through her 2018 album *El Mito de la Pérgola (The Myth of the Pergola)*.

Chapter Four, “Sacando la voz: Feminist Solidarity and the Spaciousness of Voice in Canto Femenino Cuequero,” draws on my participant observation in women’s community cueca classes in Santiago to analyze the process of “sacando la voz” (raising, drawing out, or finding one’s voice) within the urban folk music tradition, cueca brava. Through interviews, pedagogical examples, and performance observation, I describe how the process of sacando la voz affords participants with what I call a spaciousness of voice. I define “the spaciousness of voice” as the capacity of sung voices to take up material space through projection and timbre, as well as to the way this vocal spatiality emplaces singing bodies within social systems. This chapter focuses on how women have been historically silenced by their preclusion from singing in cueca brava and demonstrates how women’s vocal spaciousness achieved through community classes enables them to sonically dismantle the limitations imposed on their voice, while also transforming their collective political sensibility through a vocal performance of feminist solidarity.

In Chapter Five, “Sounding from Under: Coordinadora Femfest, Autogestión, and Transfeminist coalition,” I examine the history of Femfest and the group’s collaboration with trans performer Hija de Perra from the group’s first festival in 2004 to the present. I explain how

members have used peripheral venues and self-determined performance and production practices to develop a transfeminist coalition building based on “sounding from under”—outside mainstream institutions and in solidarity with marginalized communities. Drawing on queer of color and trans feminist theory (Lorde 1984; Muñoz 1996, 2009; Halberstam 2005, 2018; Rodriguez 2003), I argue that in Chile’s post-authoritarian society, the transfeminist coalitions Femfest has cultivated help foster a countercultural performance practice that empowers marginalized subjects whom the regime had deemed abject. This enacts a powerful worldmaking practice for queer, trans, migrant, Indigenous, impoverished, and other subjects excluded from full citizenship and social life.

Chapter 2

Holding Space for La Carpa de la Reina, An Offering to Violeta Parra

Volver a los diecisiete	To return to seventeen
Después de vivir un siglo	After living a century
Es como descifrar signos	is like deciphering signs
Sin ser sabio competente	without wisdom or skill
Volver a ser de repente	to become, suddenly,
Tan frágil como un segundo	as fragile as a second,
Volver a sentir profundo	to once again feel profound
Como un niño frente a Dios	like a child in God's presence
Eso es lo que siento yo	that is what I feel
En este instante fecundo.	in this fecund instant.

“Volver a los diecisiete” / “To Return to Seventeen,” Violeta Parra

A Greeting

Dear Violeta,

La Carpa de la Reina has long held a sacred place in my mind's eye. Once a living breathing space—a tent filled with music, nestled at the base of the Andes—it now resides in the realm of utopian imagination. La Carpa was your peña—your escape and your gathering place. “Folk club” is the best translation I have, but it does not do it justice. It was your sanctuary, the place from which you dreamed, and where you fought fiercely to build the world as you wished it to be. There, you offered whispers and glimpses of futurity. But too often, you were met with indifference. La Carpa, during your lifetime, remained empty.

I imagine you had a vision of a world where no story was too small, no song unworthy of being sung, and no person left wanting for love and protection. Passed down through generations, these visions found their way to an unsuspecting American teenager and set her upon a lifetime of inquiry searching for stories and meaning in music. I “return to seventeen” after twelve years of my own studies and my own travels, and I remember the feeling of being “as fragile as a second.” I remember the time before I learned the pain that comes with empathy, the turmoil that builds solidarity, the heartbreak that precipitates hope. How did you manage, all those years ago, to hold the hurt of a world in ruins, and still leave us with so much promise?

Only you could know the reason why you decided to cut your life short and leave this earth. Those of us who have come since can only wonder, and marvel at the space you left for us to fill. This chapter is my humble offering to you. In it, I ponder the paths you laid out, and—imperfectly—try to listen for the ways your voice still lingers. It is my effort to hold space for the emptiness you felt, and to let you know that La Carpa still lives. Piece by piece, it is being filled.

In solidarity,
Christina

I. Encountering Violeta



Figure 2.1 "Violeta Parra, ca. 1955." Source: Revista del Sábado de El Mercurio, 10 de marzo, 2001. p. 21.
[Memoria Chilena, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile](#)

According to most scholars and musicians, singer and folklorist Violeta Parra (1917-1967) is viewed as the “mother” of nueva canción chilena (Chilean new song), a Marxist-socialist folk song movement that emerged in Chile in the late 1960s-1970s (Vila 2014: 5; González 2018: 75). Parra was a prolific singer, composer, guitarist, poet, visual artist, ethnographer, and a member of the Chilean communist party (Herrero 2017). She is most known for her political songs and for her decades of work documenting folk music throughout Chile. The peñas, or folk music venues that she and her family established in the 1960s to teach and perform Chilean folk music were indeed early gathering places for younger artists such as Victor Jara, Patricio Manns, and members of the groups Quilapayún and Inti Illimani, all of whom would go on to become protagonists of the nascent nueva canción chilena, and all of whom, incidentally, were men. However, Violeta Parra died in February 1967, over two years before the first Festival de la Nueva Canción Chilena (Chilean New Song Festival) happened in 1969, after which nueva canción became a nationally recognized artistic and cultural coalition supported by the campaign and later administration of democratic socialist President Salvador Allende, elected in 1970

(Morris 2014). Given the timing of her death, why is Violeta Parra remembered as such a foundational figure to the nueva canción movement? Furthermore, considering that nueva canción chilena was a movement dominated by men—both in terms of the male singers that were its protagonists and the socialist ideals of “the new man” that they sang about (Vila 2014: 5)—what can memorializations of Violeta Parra tell us about shifting gender politics in Chilean music, musicology, and other cultural institutions?

In this chapter, I conduct an ethnography of Violeta Parra’s memorialization by listening for her continued cultural resonances (Redmond 2020) and weaving together the ways her image and influential ideologies appeared in the sights, sounds, stories, and voices that formed part of my fieldwork in Chile in 2018. The title, “Holding Space for La Carpa de La Reina,” draws inspiration from a major project that Parra undertook towards the end of her life in the community of La Reina just outside Santiago. Built in 1965, La Carpa de la Reina (The Tent in La Reina), was supposed to be her magnum opus—a peña conceived not just as a club for evening performances but also as an artistic and educational space where she could develop public programming on Chilean folk arts. Parra had described this place as her “University of Folklore” (Boyle 2017; Herrero 2017; Vilches 2018). However, due to its inaccessible location in the outskirts of Santiago, as well as the ideological fissures that were emerging between Parra and younger generations of folk singers and cultural producers, it was ultimately a failed project, and tragically was the site of her suicide in 1967 (Parra 1985). Though the physical space of La Carpa de la Reina is now gone, it now exists as a type of myth, particularly in origin stories of the nueva canción movement (Boyle 2018: 173). The memory of La Carpa has also become deeply entangled with (mis)representations of Parra as a troubled, unstable artist. In the popular 2011 film *Violeta se fue a los cielos* (*Violeta Went to Heaven*), for instance, nearly the entire second half of the screenplay includes time loops cycling between Violeta living her final years in the dilapidated space of La Carpa and flashbacks to professional losses, failed romances, and traumatic experiences from her childhood (Tapia 2018).

The idea of La Carpa as a failed space has, on the one hand, validated sexist, conservative claims that Parra was a hysterical, irrelevant figure. This was the case especially during the years of the Pinochet dictatorship from 1973-1990, during which the music of Parra and all other nueva canción artists was heavily censored (Vila 2014). On the other hand, however, with the increased memorialization of Violeta Parra leading up to the centennial of her birth in 2017, the failure of La Carpa has also been over-romanticized by those on the center-left who tend to glorify the rural, home-like, perhaps even maternal domesticity of the space without fully acknowledging the patriarchal, capitalist systems that contributed to La Carpa and Parra’s demise (Vilches 2018). In other words, Parra is a polarizing figure who has rarely been recognized in all her complex personhood.²⁰ As scholar Patricia Vilches has so aptly stated, even for those who would claim her as a mother figure, “Violeta’s status as a twenty-first-century earth mother nurturing all Chileans comes at a price” (2018: 108). By returning to the imagined space of La Carpa, this chapter attempts to represent the legacy of Violeta Parra in present day Chile with all her complexities and contradictions.

In what follows, I consider how the empty space of Violeta Parra’s unfinished work—represented by La Carpa de la Reina, the physical and imagined space of the university that

²⁰ A notable exception is Lorena Valdebenito’s doctoral dissertation (2018), which addresses this issue exhaustively.

never was—is shaping new feminist discourses and artistic projects among Chilean musicians and musicologists. In doing so, I also address my own encounter with Violeta Parra as I came to understand her through my artist and academic interlocutors, my observations of social movements in Chile in 2018, and my own study of her life. Certainly, as a U.S.-American ethnomusicologist, I have also at times been guilty of idealizing Violeta Parra, and therefore have been cautious not to place undue emphasis on the influence she has held over younger generations.²¹ However, rather than hide my subjective relationship to Parra, I offer this chapter as a way to make space for the at-times conflicting ways Violeta Parra has shaped my academic training and ethnographic experience, and how she has influenced my affective relationship to Chilean music. Furthermore, though several studies have already been published documenting recent institutionalized memorials for Violeta Parra, such as the Violeta Parra Museum inaugurated in downtown Santiago in 2015 (Valdebenito 2018; Vilches 2018), this chapter creates room to contemplate how Parra has been remembered and re-imagined in less formal settings. Through classroom conversations, university events, interviews, artwork, and reinterpretations of Parra’s music, I share how feminist musicians and academics are holding space for the vision of La Carpa by re-imagining or drawing inspiration from Violeta Parra’s countercultural intellectual and creative practices.

The term “holding space” is applied here both methodologically and analytically. “Holding space” has its origins in clinical psychology but in recent years has entered the mainstream in discussions on wellness, social activism, and feminist relationship building, particularly as these relate to experiences of grief, trauma, and healing from sexual assault (Plett 2016; Solomon 2018). According to the Gender & Sexuality Therapy Center,

“Holding space” means being physically, mentally, and emotionally present for someone. It means putting your focus on someone to support them as they feel their feelings... The person who is holding space helps set the tone for a kind, curious, and judgement-free interaction where the other person can be vulnerable, and like the term says, “have space.”²²

As the above definition implies, “holding space” involves a process of non-judgmental witnessing wherein someone who is experiencing pain can express those feelings without other people interjecting their opinions. Crucially, the person holding space for someone else—whether a partner, friend, or family member—must be able to listen to and validate a person’s feelings or actions even if they diverge from one’s own beliefs.²³ A holding space, in this sense, can also be conceived as an embodied place where both holder and held co-create a realm of safety that exists outside their other lived realities and belief systems—a place to explore and to practice other ways of knowing and being with one another.

In this chapter, I use these concepts of “holding” and “having” space to uncover how feminist artists and academics understand Violeta Parra as a historical figure and how they grapple with her lingering presence in musicological studies, university curriculum, and in contemporary folk and popular music scenes. Despite being a failed space during her lifetime, I

²¹ Daniel Party has critiqued the ways nueva canción artists have received disproportionate attention from foreign scholars, resulting in problematic generalizations about the music’s appeal and influence (Party 2010: 682-683).

²² Gender & Sexuality Therapy Center, “What ‘Holding Space’ Means + 5 Tips to Practice,” (blog). January 17, 2020. <https://gstherapycenter.com/blog/2020/1/16/what-holding-space-means-5-tips-to-practice>

²³ Gender & Sexuality Therapy Center, “What ‘Holding Space’ Means + 5 Tips to Practice,” (blog). January 17, 2020. <https://gstherapycenter.com/blog/2020/1/16/what-holding-space-means-5-tips-to-practice>

contend that La Carpa de la Reina has posthumously become Violeta Parra's way of holding space for future artists, especially women, to develop their careers outside of the traditional male-dominated realms of the Chilean music academy and popular music industry. Conversely, I argue that contemporary artists and intellectuals hold space for Parra by studying her oeuvre as well as her complicated life in effort to construct new, non-sexist musical canons and systems of musical knowledge production. Finally, I am holding space for Violeta Parra as an ethnographer by using this chapter to frame all the case studies that follow in this dissertation. As part of an analysis of feminist worldmaking, the idea of holding space allows us to approach scholarly, artistic, and activist work with a deep awareness of and appreciation for the imperfections, erasures, misrepresentations, and misunderstandings that emerge within these processes.

The next section, "Historicizing Violeta," draws on photos and fieldnotes as well as secondary biographical sources to explore how Violeta Parra is being remembered in academic settings. Throughout, I discuss how Parra's career and her legacy help reveal the interconnected ways Chilean musicology and the Chilean music industry have represented and treated women artists. The final section, "The Futurity of Violeta" is an ethnographic analysis of two cantautoras, Pascuala Ilabaca and Ana Tijoux. It explores how these politically committed songwriters are drawing on Violeta Parra's voice and image to create new visions for themselves as well as for Chile and its future.

II. Historicizing Violeta

Women in Sonority, Interrogating Musical Canons

It was March 15, 2018. Though I had arrived in Chile in January, the new academic year was recently beginning after summer recess in February. As a Fulbright student fellow, my faculty sponsor Dr. Daniel Party, professor of music at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (UC), had invited me to use the libraries and participate in departmental events during my time in residence. The event that evening was of particular interest. Entitled "Mujeres en Sonoridad" (Women in Sonority), a play on the word "sororidad" or "sorority," this lecture-concert had been organized by women students and alumni of the Institute of Music. The room was overflowing, and the air was buzzing when I arrived. The walls were adorned with banners strung with photos of women composers, and the stage area was set under a halo of colorful streamers. Thrilled to see such a large turnout, perhaps one hundred people over the course of the night, I quickly realized that this event was not just any lecture-concert. It was a highly conceptualized performative enactment of a re-imagined musical canon. Composition students, musicologists from the faculty, and alumni artists had all collaborated to create a program of pieces by all-women composers performed by all-women musicians. The performances were accompanied by framing remarks from musicologists Maluche Subiarbre, Carmen Peña, and Laura Jordán. As Jordán stated during her remarks before the second half of the concert, the event was designed to valorize women in music in terms of both "representation and incarnation"—representation referring to the symbolic significance of featuring only women composers and performers, and incarnation referring to their lived, embodied experience as musicians. Most importantly, Jordán emphasized, the event marked an ongoing process of "aperturas necesarias" (necessary openings) for "músicas sororas, mujeres sonoras" (sororal music, sonorous women).

Too often, ethnomusicological writing conducts analyses of “musical” or “performative” spaces without fully considering how the researcher’s understanding of these spaces are shaped by their other personal, social, or professional interactions during the course of ethnography (Appert 2017). Undoubtedly, the event “Mujeres en Sonoridad” was, for me, an introduction into the social network of women musicologists in Chile. However, it was also my introduction to the deeply interconnected social networks that exist between Chilean music departments and the Chilean music industry. Especially in the case of women artists, who have grown in number in recent years as universities have added popular music and music production tracks to their curriculum (Valdebenito 2017), many well-known contemporary women artists began their careers and are connected to one another as alumni of performance and composition programs in academic music departments.²⁴ In Chile, where academic and musical infrastructure is highly centralized in Santiago and the surrounding region, this makes the world of women musicians and musicologists incredibly small. Furthermore, this event made me more deeply aware of the complicated ways women have been categorized, historicized, or erased as composers in Chile. The performances were split programmatically between “classical” and “popular” repertoire, the latter of which featured primarily student composers from the university (see Figure 2.1). Notably, however, a piece by Violeta Parra was also included in the popular music section, and the selected work was not even one of her original compositions. Rather, it was a “recopilación”—a folk song that she had recorded during her fieldwork. In other words, the program organizers had made a conscious choice not to place Parra within the category of classical composers and instead to highlight her role as a collector and interpreter of folk music.

²⁴ José Manuel Izquierdo, personal communication with the author, February 12, 2018.

MUJERES EN SONORIDAD

A lo largo de la historia de la música occidental, la mujer ha tenido consistentemente un lugar complejo: tras una breve revisión de los textos más canónicos del devenir musical, es posible constatar que las mujeres teóricas, compositoras, instrumentistas e incluso cantantes son usualmente olvidadas, o sólo nombradas en casos aislados. Si bien esto podría inducir a creer que no existieron mujeres músicas, o bien, que la música es en sí misma un arte de hombres, lo cierto es que se cuentan muchas mujeres que en mayor o menor medida han ejercido la praxis musical y, en algunos momentos de la historia, incluso han gozado de un rol preponderante. El problema, por lo tanto, no es su ausencia, sino su invisibilidad. La mujer en la música es algo paradójico: está presente, pero no a la vista.

Este problema es evidenciable en variados repertorios. Si se toma como ejemplo la música del salón decimonónico, la mujer fue entonces un eje sustancial en la práctica musical de la época. Sin embargo, su práctica estuvo principalmente circunscrita al espacio semipúblico del salón y se entroncó en la afición, más que en la profesión. En un contexto más actual, para la música académica la mujer suele ser una presencia intermitente. Si el salón fue un espacio socialmente permitido para la mujer músico en el siglo XIX, la academia ha tenido, desde sus inicios, un cariz marcadamente masculino. Aunque es un hecho que la mujer se ha integrado a la institucionalidad, suele haber una diferencia entre el claustro estudiantil y docente: muy pocas mujeres ejercen cargos de docencia universitaria en el mundo de la música. Esta desigualdad aumenta en el campo más reducido de la composición y la música contemporánea, en el que son escasas las mujeres con presencia estable.

Si bien es cierto, en las músicas populares y de raíz la figura de la "cantora" es común, la participación de la mujer en estos ámbitos está lejos de la inclusión igualitar con sus congéneres hombres. En efecto, la mujer cantadora se ha enfrentado a la difícil tarea de imponer en espacios herméticos y masculinos, en los que lo escénico-visual es quizás excesivamente valorado. Muchas veces, las mujeres en la música popular mediatizada ven cómo su dimensión corporal se presta para una funcionalidad comercial, que en ocasiones se llega a valorar más que sus resultados sonoros, sobre todo si se compara a la recepción de las propuestas artísticas masculinas.

Todos estos desafíos anteriormente citados, constituyen sólo una breve pincelada de lo que implica ser mujer en la música. Así, el programa de esta tarde nos invita a disfrutar y visibilizar la música que nos han legado las mujeres a través de los años, pero quizás mucho más importante, nos exhorta a reflexionar y valorarla por lo que es en su contexto: producto sonoro de un camino que muchas veces se toma sinuoso.

PARTE CLÁSICA

QIN DING (1991) PENELOPE KNUTH - VIOLA
GAZE TRIO
KARINA FISCHER - FLAUTA
MARCELA RODRÍGUEZ - PIANO

PALABRAS INTRODUCTORIAS MALUCHA SUBIABRE - MUSICÓLOGA

ISIDORA ZEGERS (1803-1849) VANESSA ROJAS - SOPRANO
L'ABSENCE - LES REGRETS D'UNE JOSEFINA PÉREZ - PIANO
BERGÈRE - LA COQUETTE FIXÉE

GUADALUPE OLMEDO (1853-1889) FRANCISCA MONTEFUSCO - VIOLÍN
CAMILA ANDRADE - VIOLÍN
NATALIA CARRILLO - VIOLA
ANA LEIVA - VIOLONCELLO

CUARTETO DE CUERDAS EN LA MAYOR - I MOVIMIENTO

EMMA WACHTER (1891-1974) GABRIELA HEMMERDINGER - SOPRANO
HALLAZGO
MATILDE MÉNDEZ - PIANO
ROCIO

CARMELA MACKENNA (1879-1962) MATILDE MÉNDEZ - PIANO
PRELUDIO N° 1
PRELUDIO N° 4

PALABRAS INTRODUCTORIAS CARMEN PEÑA - MUSICÓLOGA

ANA CARTAGENA (1994 -) ROSARIO ARCUCH - PERCUSIÓN
ARBOLANDO
ANA CARTAGENA - CONTRABAJO
ROMINA MOLINA - CONTRABAJO
TRINIDAD MURRA - CONTRABAJO
ANDREA ROJAS - CONTRABAJO

VALENTINA CÁRCAMO (1991 -) JAVIERA POZO - VIOLÍN
PENSAMIENTOS DE COPILOTO
YASNA ULLOA - VIOLÍN
ABIGAIL SEGUEL - VIOLA
SOFÍA VAISMAN - VIOLONCELLO

BELÉN ROBLEDO (1995 -) FLORENCIA NOVOA - SOPRANO
LA MUERTE DE LA MUERTE
ROSARIO ARCUCH - VIBRAFONO
NATALIA VEGA - PERCUSIÓN

SOFÍA VAISMAN (1993 -) PÍA BARRIOS - VIOLÍN
BATTUS, PARA TRES VIOLINES AZAZEL CRUZ - VIOLÍN
FEMINISTAS
CONSTANZA TOLEDO - VIOLÍN

GEORGINA CANIFRÚ (1978 -) SOFÍA VAISMAN - VIOLONCELLO
DISTANCIA EN CUERDAS

PARTE POPULAR

PALABRAS INTRODUCTORIAS LAURA JORDÁN - MUSICÓLOGA

CARMEN RODRÍGUEZ (1997 -) CARMEN RODRÍGUEZ - VOZ Y GUITARRA
LLUVIA
GRANDE DE NIÑO

PILAR VARGAS (1997 -) PILAR VARGAS - VOZ, GUITARRA Y UKELELE
DÍAS VERDES
OJOS
CANCIÓN NUEVA

FLORENCIA NOVOA (1999) FLORENCIA NOVOA - VOZ Y GUITARRA
EVENTO Y PASO

VIOLETA PARRA (1917-1967) ALFONSINA TORREALBA - VOZ Y PERCUSIÓN
BLANCA FLOR Y FILOMENA COLOMBA NÓMEZ - VOZ Y GUITARRA
(RECOPILOCACIÓN)
FRANCISCA MORAGA - CONTRABAJO

MARÍA RITA CAMARGO (1977 -) ALFONSINA TORREALBA - VOZ Y PERCUSIÓN
PAGU
COLOMBA NÓMEZ - PIANO
FRANCISCA MORAGA - CONTRABAJO

MARTA GÓMEZ (1978 -) ALFONSINA TORREALBA - VOZ Y PERCUSIÓN
LA CHICHARRA
COLOMBA NÓMEZ - VOZ Y PERCUSIÓN
FRANCISCA MORAGA - PERCUSIÓN

VERÓNICA QUEZADA (1996) VERÓNICA QUEZADA - VOZ
REY PLANTA
PASTILLAS PARTIDAS
AL SUR

VERÓNICA BELLINI (1971) ROCIO ACOSTA - VIOLÍN
NI UNA MENOS
JAVIERA POZO - VIOLÍN
PAULINA CAMPAÑA - VIOLÍN
PILAR VARGAS - ACORDEÓN
VANIA MATELUNA - GUITARRA
ANA CARTAGENA - CONTRABAJO
MARISOLA CIFUENTES - PIANO
KATHY CAMPOS - VOZ

****CRISTINA VERGARA GESTER CONCHA** SONDISTAS

Figure 2.2 Program for "Mujeres en Sonoridad," Instituto de Música, UC. March 15, 2018.

At the time of the event, this categorization of Violeta Parra outside of the classical canon did not strike me as odd. However, the more closely I became involved with the Chilean musicology programs, the more I realized how little consensus there was on the subject of Violeta Parra's legacy and how she should be historicized within folk/popular or classical music canons. During the second half of the year, I was invited to teach a class on Music, Gender, and Sexuality for the Latin American Musicology master's degree program at Universidad Alberto Hurtado (UAH). After having discovered the significant number of publications on Violeta Parra that were produced in 2017 for her centennial celebrations, I decided to devote one class session entirely to Violeta Parra's historiography.²⁵ For this day, I invited Dra. Lorena Valdebenito, a Parra expert and faculty member at UAH, to join our discussion.

For the majority of the class, Valdebenito, myself, and six students unpacked the various archetypes through which Violeta Parra has been understood in Chilean music history. Victor Herrero (2017), for example, author of the one of the most comprehensive Violeta Parra biographies to date, organizes his chapters around images such as Violeta "The Revolutionary" and Violeta "The Universal." Another Parra scholar, Sonia Montecino (2017), on the other hand,

²⁵ Selected works include *Después de vivir un siglo: Una bibliografía de Violeta Parra* by Victor Herrero (2017), *Música y mujer en Iberoamérica: hacienda música desde la condición de género* edited by Juan Pablo González (2017), *Violeta Parra: Life and Work* edited by Lorna Dillon (2017), and *Mapping Violeta Parra's Cultural Landscapes* edited by Patricia Vilches (2018).

organized one of her recent publications around images of Violeta as “the mother,” “the abandoned,” and “the disobedient.” At the time of our class, Valdebenito (2018) had recently completed her doctoral dissertation, “Vio-le-ta Pa-rra *fragmentada*: Análisis de discursos articulados en su construcción como figura de la música en Chile a partir de su muerte” (Discourse analysis of Violeta Parra’s construction as a musical figure in Chile after her death). In this work, Valdebenito categorizes posthumous discourse on Parra into five areas: Violeta “the myth,” “the saint,” “the author,” “the woman,” and “the suicide.”²⁶

In our discussion, Valdebenito was particularly interested in exploring Violeta “the author,” and analyzing the gendered dimensions of her exclusion from academic and/or art music canons.²⁷ She stressed that though much of Parra’s original music was, in fact, directly inspired by the folk music and rhythms that she collected during her travels throughout Chile, other pieces, particularly her works for guitar, are sonically quite similar to those of other Latin American guitar masters from the time period (Valdebenito 2017: 116). However, Valdebenito was quick to point out that despite being willing to compare pieces such as Parra’s experimental ballet, “El Gavilán” (“The Hawk”) to the guitar works of Antonio Lauro or Heitor Villa-Lobos, male musicologists have consistently excluded Parra from “the Parnassus” [sic] of Latin American guitar simply because she lacked formal musical training and therefore did not produce scores of her repertoire (Valdebenito 2017: 116-117). Students were quick to join the discussion, noting that Parra herself disrupted the very distinction between folk and classical canons and between interpreters and composers since she constantly performed a “campesina” (rural) identity—dressing in simple clothing, living frugally, and telling stories about growing up in abject poverty—but she also fought to be respected and remembered as an intellectual. Other students remarked on the fact that despite being remembered as a champion of Chilean folklore who ardently resisted cultural imperialism, Parra was also romantically involved for many years with a much younger Swiss man, Gilbert Favre, who was directly connected to the westernizing of Andean music for cosmopolitan audiences in Europe and the United States.²⁸

Ultimately, as our session continued, a general consensus emerged that Valdebenito and other women musicologists were demonstrating that Violeta Parra is not only worthy of inclusion in a canon of Chilean composers, but also—more importantly—her inclusion disrupts the patriarchal, classist systems of value that have reified these canons in the first place. This led to a very candid conversation about the issue of male gatekeeping in musicological spaces. For example, Valdebenito and the students reflected on a conference that had been held at the university in 2017 as part of Violeta Parra’s centennial celebrations. For this occasion, women musicologists from throughout Latin America had been invited to present analyses of the history and lived experiences of women musicians in the region. However, it escaped none of the invited speakers that the conference organizers were all men who had chosen the rather inapt event title, “Música y mujer en Iberoamérica: hacienda música desde la condición de género” (Music and Woman in Iberoamerica: Doing Music from a Gendered Condition). These conference proceedings were later published under the same title—one that normalizes the masculine

²⁶ Original Spanish: Violeta mitificada, Violeta canonizada, Violeta autora, Violeta mujer, Violeta suicida (Valdebenito 2018).

²⁷ Many of the themes that grounded this discussion can be found in Valdebenito’s published piece, “Creación musical femenina en Chile: canon, estereotipos y autorías” (2017).

²⁸ See Rios 2008 and Herrero 2017 for more detailed discussions of Violeta Parra’s relationship to Gilbert Favre and its implications for Chilean and Latin American folk music.

condition while also homogenizing the experience of all women into the singular title, “Woman.” Events such as these, the class agreed, make it painfully evident that until women have more proportional representation in positions of academic authority—for example, as department chairs, presidents of academic societies, and journal editors—the historiography of women in music will continue to be inhibited by sexist systems of knowledge production.

Violeta Parra’s memorialization in this event, as well as her appearance in “Mujeres en Sonoridad,” makes clear that simply invoking a woman’s name or including her in a program does not constitute feminist historiography. What, then, would a feminist account of Violeta Parra as a researcher, teacher, and performer look like? And how might this shape our understanding of her influence among contemporary feminist musicians?

The Feminist Legacies of Violeta Parra



Figure 2.3 "Violeta Parra, ca. 1955." Source: *La Estrella*, Valparaíso: [A. Edwards], 1921-v., (9 mayo 1992), p. 8-9. [Memoria Chilena, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile](#)

During her lifetime, Violeta Parra did not explicitly connect herself to organized feminist movements in Chile or Latin America (Castillo 2007& 2016; Boyle 2009; Kirkwood 2010; Marino 2019). Yet, cast through the lens of the present, it is clear in her life’s journey and in her musical, poetic, and intellectual work that Parra was grappling with issues such as the politics of motherhood, the role of women in public and political life, and women’s rights in the workplace. In this section, I survey existing literature to understand how Parra drew on her own experiences and her interactions with women in her fieldwork to develop a creative and scholarly archive where the role of women as culture-keepers is central, and where women’s affective

relationships to intimate interpersonal events such as birth and death are valorized not as private phenomena but as collective, political experiences.

According to biographer Victor Herrero, Violeta del Carmen Parra Sandoval was born in 1917 in San Carlos, a small town in the foothills of the Andes mountains near the city of Chillán in south central Chile. She was a prolific singer, poet, folklorist, and visual artist, and was the third of seven siblings—several of whom also became major figures in Chilean art and culture. With a keen eye towards illuminating Violeta Parra’s early childhood experiences, Herrero unpacks the fact that Violeta did come from relatively humble origins, but not the extreme poverty many misguidedly believe she came from (Herrero 2017: 53). Her father, Nicanor Parra, Herrero clarifies, was a schoolmaster in the town of San Fabián de Alico, and her mother, Clarisa Sandoval, was a seamstress. Both were amateur musicians, and Parra began teaching herself guitar in secret at just seven years old (Herrero 2017: 34).

By Herrero’s account, Parra’s father Nicanor struggled with periods of alcoholism and gambling that put significant strain on the family. To escape this difficult home life, Parra and her siblings, especially her sister Hilda, would spend much time during their youth performing in plazas, ever captivated by playing the guitar and learning songs they heard in town markets or taverns (Herrero 2017: 43-44). Herrero notes that periodic visits to acquaintances in the small, isolated town of Malloa also deeply informed Violeta’s later career and her fascination with rural life. As an adult, Violeta Parra frequently described her girlhood visits to Malloa to see the Aguilera family whose daughters were well versed in songs, rituals, and folk practices that were being lost in other areas of the country. Reflecting on these visits in a poem, Parra recounted,

Con esas niñas aprendo
lo que’es mansera y arado,
arrope, zanco y gloriado,
y bolillo que está tejiendo;
la piedra que está moliendo;
siembra, apuerca, poda y trilla,
emparva, corta y vendimia;
ya sé lo que es la cizaña,
y cuántas clases de araña
carcomen la manzanilla.

With those girls I learned
the nature of vat and plow,
must, porridge, and toddy,
and bobbin that is sewing;
the stone that is grinding;
sowing, reaping, pruning, and threshing,
laying grain, cut and harvest;
now I know the darnel
and how many types of spiders
eat away at the chamomile (Parra 1998: 108).

It is in Malloa with the Aguilera sisters that, Herrero contends, Violeta Parra was first exposed to the musical-poetic tradition “canto a lo poeta” (song in the style of a poet). This centuries-old oral tradition would eventually form the core repertoire of Parra’s research and creative energies (Herrero 2017: 47). However, Parra would spend much of her adolescent and early adult years performing more commercialized folk genres.

Parra’s father Nicanor died in 1930. Shortly afterwards, she decided to move to Santiago. As Herrero tells it, she arrived in 1933 at Santiago’s central train station with no suitcases, just her guitar, hoping to make a living as a musician (2017: 56). Over the next two decades Parra continued performing, and eventually, after her sister Hilda also moved to Santiago, they formed the musical duo Las Hermanas Parra (The Parra Sisters), performing rancheras, boleros, and other popular commercial music from the time period (Torres Alvarado 2002; Herrero 2017). But all of this changed in 1952 when Parra had a meeting with her older brother, also named Nicanor, that would dramatically change the course of her life.

Nicanor Parra Sandoval (1914-2018) would eventually become one of the most renowned poets in the Spanish language. In 1952 he had recently returned to Santiago after completing his doctorate in cosmology at Oxford University and was in the process of writing what would become his most famous book, *Poemas y antipoemas (Poems and Antipoems)*, published in 1954. At the time of their meeting, he was consumed by his study of a popular style of poetry known as “payas” or “counterpoint” in Latin America in which two poets “duel” one another by improvising verses, occasionally with the accompaniment of a guitar (Herrero 2017: 109). Drawing on an interview with Nicanor Parra, Herrero²⁹ describes the meeting between these two famous Parra siblings in great detail, stating,

Self-absorbed, Nicanor did not pay much attention to his sister. Years later in an extensive interview the poet would recall his conversations on that day:

–What are you doing? –asked Violeta.
–I’m working on something... very difficult.
–And what does this work consist of? –insisted his sister.

Nicanor explained to her that he was studying counterpoint, and read her some of the quatrains from the most famous paya duel in Chilean history, the encounter between Mulato Taguada and Don Javier de la Rosa [...]

–And these are the things you study? –Violeta commented with certain disdain.

Right away, she asked her brother to wait on her and said she would leave and return shortly. A few hours later, Violeta returned to the apartment with a stack of papers. They were her own poems, written over the past several years. “She left and came back with so many verses. So many! All stupendous, excellent, and told me ‘Study this!’, [said Nicanor].

Impressed by his sister, Nicanor began to teach her that same day about the meters of popular poetry. He told her that payas and coplas consisted of quatrains, or one stanza of four lines which, generally, rhymed in the sequence of ABAB or ABBA. However, he [also] told her that the true poetry of the people was written in décimas and explained that these consisted in ten-line stanzas, each line being octosyllabic [...]

After listening to a few décimas, Violeta gave her verdict:
–But those are the songs drunkards sing!”
–What? What drunkards?” asked Nicanor, perplexed.
–The drunkards in Chillán!”

(Herrero 2017: 110-111).

Chile, like many other countries during the 1930s-1950s, had been experiencing a boom in industrialization and urbanization as citizens from rural areas flocked to Santiago in search of work (Torres Alvarado 2002). Having lived this process herself, it is likely that in the moment of her meeting with Nicanor, Violeta Parra realized that her memory of these décimas and her nostalgia for the cultural life of her youth was an affective tie shared by many other migrants in the capital. Herrero’s analysis connects Parra’s nostalgia to her experiences with the Aguilera sisters in Malloa, the songs of her mother and father, and the sounds of the markets, festivals, and cantinas where she spent so much of her early years (Herrero 2017: 111). One could infer that although it was Nicanor who clarified the history of these oral traditions for Parra, it was her

²⁹ Herrero cites Morales, Leonidas. *Conversaciones con Nicanor Parra, op. cit.*, pp. 145.

renewed emotional attachment to these places and ways of life that inspired her to begin collecting stories, music, and poetry from rural communities. This affective attachment undoubtedly influenced her fieldwork methodologies and her relationships to her interlocutors.

Several primary and secondary sources point towards the influential role of two matriarchs—her mother, Clarisa Sandoval, and a family friend, Rosa Lorca—on Violeta Parra’s intense focus on the experiences of women in her field recordings, interviews, and later her poetry and musical compositions. According to scholar Catherine Boyle, Parra’s mother was one of the first people she would interview as she embarked upon her quest to understand Chilean history through its folk music, and throughout her life she would always speak of her mother by celebrating her creativity, and her “craft of fierce and intelligent domesticity in the life experience of day-to-day survival” (Boyle 2009: 81). According to Herrero, shortly after Parra’s interview with her mother, she then interviewed Rosa Lorca, a well-respected midwife and arranger of “*velorios de angelitos*” (children’s wakes) in the community of Barrancas, a working-class neighborhood on the outskirts of Santiago. Born in 1891, Lorca had moved to Santiago in her twenties from the small town of Cunaco in the Colchagua Valley. Along with her role as a keeper of rituals for birth and death, she knew a vast repertoire of songs from her girlhood in the countryside (Herrero 2017: 112). Years later, Parra would publish fieldnotes from her meeting with Doña Rosa that capture the latter’s wit and humor,

I was a sack of verses and sayings, but “with the wind and the weather, everything wrinkles”; my memory is wrinkled and now I remember very little, said Doña Rosa Lorca when I went in search of her songs. But jog my memory and I’ll recall verses “with bite like a mosquito,” she added (Parra 2013: 45).³⁰

However, it was Lorca’s knowledge of the *velorios de angelitos* that remained a particularly poignant subject for Parra. These wakes involved dressing the deceased child as an angel and arranging their body on an altar for mourners to celebrate their passage into heaven with songs, prayers, food, and drink. Women, and especially the child’s mother, were not allowed to cry, or else they risked wetting the angel’s wings and preventing their ascent. *Velorios de Angelitos* were common throughout Latin America, but with the rise of modern medicine they were increasingly prohibited out of concerns for hygiene, and with culture bearers such as Rosa Lorca aging and dying, the tradition was gradually being lost (Herrero 2017: 31).

Parra had first been exposed to these rites after the death of her younger brother, Caupolicán, in 1924 (Herrero 2017: 30-31). Tragically, in 1955, Parra’s own infant daughter, Rosita Clara Arce Parra, died of pneumonia while she was away traveling in Europe (Herrero 2017: 198). Rosita Clara had been named for Rosa Lorca, who was Parra’s midwife for her birth, and for Parra’s mother, Clarisa (Herrero 2017: 179). After Rosita Clara’s death, Parra was consumed by grief and guilt, leading her to prolong her stay in Europe for two years rather than the three weeks she had initially planned, leaving her three older children, Ángel, Isabel, and Carmen Luisa, in the care of relatives (Herrero 2017: 198). Years after these devastating events, Parra’s son Ángel would describe her unwavering admiration for Rosa Lorca, a woman that had seen her family through countless periods of transition, and who, according to Ángel, remained

³⁰ Original text: Yo era costal de versos y decires, pero “con el viento y la garuga to’o se arruga”: se me arrugó la memoria y ahora es bien poquito lo que me acuerdo – dijo Doña Rosa Lorca cuando fui en busca de sus cantos --. Pero recorriendo la memoria van a salir versos “pica’ores como sancú’os” – agregó” (Parra 2013: 45).

an example of whole, vibrant womanhood to his mother. In his book, *Violeta se fue a los cielos*, Ángel reminisces,

Doña Rosa, in her way, was the Violeta Parra [sic] that my mother was searching for. The humble Chilean Violeta, proud, hard-working, dignified, and master of her own destiny. Individual and whole. Birth midwife, singer, queen in the kitchen and in the bedroom, she would say, caretaker of little angels” (Parra 2006: 70).

This fascination with women’s agency and with their roles as culture keepers and breakers of norms would influence much of Violeta Parra’s research and creative work over the next decade and a half after her initial interviews with her mother and Rosa Lorca.

According to scholar Paula Miranda, 1953-1959 were especially generative years in Parra’s documentation and analysis of Chile’s vast and culturally diverse regions. With a notebook, guitar, and tape recorder, Parra set out, “[...] to form and reconstruct a cultural and acoustic map, bringing together all that we are and have been as a nation, including the diverse poetic-musical records that make up Chile: from north to south, from the sea to the mountains, including Rapa Nui” (Miranda 2017: 83). After initial study in the Ñuble Region where she was born and raised, Parra began studying cueca in the central regions surrounding Santiago, including el Norte Chico in the region of Coquimbo and the south-central region of Maule. Between 1957-1958 she paid particular attention to the southern regions of Bío Bío and Araucanía, home to the majority of Chile’s Indigenous Mapuche communities. In her later years, she focused on the music of the island of Chiloe, which included waltzes, sirillas, and periconas rooted in both Indigenous Huilliche culture as well as practices from Andean regions in the far north (Miranda 2017: 86).

Throughout these years Parra’s home region of Ñuble remained a place of constant return, and according to Miranda and other scholars (Pring-Mill 2002; Boyle 2009), this was the region where she deepened her knowledge of the poetic-musical form “canto a lo poeta.” This tradition has three forms: canto a lo divino (songs to the divine), canto a lo humano (songs to the human), and paya (Miranda 2017: 86). Her brother Nicanor had introduced her to paya, the combative form Parra had heard in cantinas during her youth in which singers improvise and challenge one another with décimas. The other two forms were also performed in décimas but were usually less improvisatory. Robert Pring-Mill explains that canto a lo divino drew on topics from the Old Testament as well as popular and even pagan religious ideologies, whereas canto a lo humano explored a variety of life secular experiences, and included verses of praise, of the world upside down, greetings, toasts, and chronicles of current events (Pring-Mill 2002: 43). During her own investigations of canto a lo poeta, Parra learned the melodic patterns or “entonaciones” on which the verses were sung, as well as the “toquios” or accompaniment traditionally performed on the guitar or Chilean guitarrón (Miranda 2017: 86).

Pring-Mill and Boyle note that practitioners of canto a lo poeta were generally men and were usually itinerant artists traversing working-class communities, meaning that the oral repertory of this tradition was grounded heavily in masculine voices and perspectives (Pring-Mill 2002: 43; Boyle 2009). However, according to Miranda, during Parra’s early travels and studies, she spent particular time coming to know women singers of these traditions (Miranda 2017: 86). Though both male and female singers were often highly protective of their verses, based on her son Ángel’s accounts, Parra developed an intrepid communication style that facilitated deeply interpersonal connections with her interlocutors, especially with other women. He recounts, “To

convince them [to share their verses], only a few words from my mother were necessary. I remember they were always the same: Chile, culture, the people, dignity, pride, land, love, and justice. These were magic words that held a great power of conviction and were the same words which the authorities refused to listen to” (Parra 2006: 109). Miranda contends that although these singers still often only shared fragments of their own verses with Parra, the more important aspect of these interactions was that these singers provided Parra with the tools to develop her own voice and contribute to this tradition through her own verses. As Miranda elaborates,

Violeta discovered in these male and female singers not only text, but above all ways of speaking, being, thinking, establishing oneself as an autonomous subject and, more than anything, singing. The twists, humour, lack of inhibition, accumulated wisdom, improvisational skill, the carnal passion [...] all of this would forever mark all of her activities and creative endeavors” (Miranda 2017: 87).

Taking a cue from the singers themselves, Miranda explains that Parra was known to painstakingly reconstruct fragments of songs recorded from different areas and draw on her own accumulated knowledge and intuition to imagine and reinvent parts of a traditional repertoire through her own voice (Miranda 2017: 88). It was precisely this type of careful re-envisioning of Chilean cultural expression through her own voice and the voices of other women that garnered Violeta’s recognition by some as “the mother of Chilean folklore.” However, Parra’s concentration on the voices and experiences of women in her documentation of *canto a lo poeta* not only transformed her own intellectual and creative voice. It also shifted the ways this tradition was historicized through the recorded archive. According to Miranda, while male Chilean musicologists in the 1950s considered samples to be incorrectly recorded if they were “contaminated” with non-musical interference, Parra’s tapes tended to include conversations with performers, information on their names and places of origin, and even exchanges of jokes and laughter between herself and her interlocutors (Miranda 2017: 93). By Miranda’s reading, this incorporated a feminine celebration of the quotidian into the records of these oral histories.³¹ Yet, while her approach to cultural research was deeply informed by local histories and knowledge, her framework for understanding these processes was not isolated from international, cosmopolitan cultural phenomena.

Ethnomusicologist Fernando Rios explains that after launching her career as a folklorist, in 1955 Violeta Parra was invited to Europe to attend the Warsaw International Youth Festival (Rios 2008; Herrero 2017). Shortly afterwards, she earned a regular solo act for one year in Paris at L’Escale, a renowned venue in the Latin Quarter, where she encountered a highly cosmopolitan milieu and was introduced to musical practices from around the world (Rios 2008; Sáez 1999: 77-87). France had long been a center of migration for artists from across Latin America, and in a process well-documented by ethnomusicologist Fernando Rios (2008), many musicians there were combining folk music instruments from throughout the Americas in an attempt to develop a pan-Latin American sound.³² However, while most Latin American musicians in Paris at the time

³¹ As Gonzalo Montero (2018) elaborates in an alternative reading of her investigative practices, Parra often was only able to record these intimate moments by taping without informing the women she was interviewing. As a contemporary researcher, the value of the voices and stories Parra was able to record in her archive must be understood alongside the somewhat questionable ethics of her methodology.

³² Fernando Rios’s 2008 article “La Flûte Indienne: The Early History of Andean Folkloric-Popular Music in France and Its Impact on Nueva Canción” examines the cosmopolitan cultural formation involving urban centers in Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, and France that gave rise to what he terms “Andean folkloric popular music” or mass-mediated

were not producing politicized repertoire, Violeta was quick to insert her anti-capitalist sensibilities into her music (Rios 2008: 153). She returned to Chile in 1956 but came back to Paris in 1962 with her son Ángel and her daughter Isabel, performing such openly political works as “Hace Falta un Guerrilleo” (We Need a Guerrilla) and “La Carta” (The Letter), a song denouncing the death of her activist brother at the hands of police (Rios 2008: 153).

The family stayed in Paris until 1965, continuing to perform at venues in the Latin Quarter and learning new musical styles from other international artists. In fact, it was in Paris, not in Latin America, that the Parras were introduced to Andean musical practices from the altiplano (highland plains) region of Bolivia, Peru, and Northern Chile. Though by the time this music arrived in Paris, it had become highly stylized and adapted to fit the aesthetic preferences of western audiences. Rios actually credits the Swiss musician Gilbert Favre, Violeta Parra’s romantic partner during these years, with popularizing a westernized sound on the Andean quena (end-blown flute), trading the flat, pinched delivery preferred by Andean communities for a smooth, rounded vibrato sound more amenable to sensitive European ears (Rios 2008: 153).

Still, the Parra family was frustrated by the hedonism and apolitical ambiance of venues such as L’Escale in Paris. Eventually growing tired of this atmosphere, they returned to Chile and founded their own folk music venue, La Peña de los Parra. This new venue offered a whole new generation of artists the opportunity to explore Chilean and Latin American folklore and proved critical in fomenting the political ideologies and aesthetic practices which gave rise to the Chilean *nueva canción* movement in the late 1960s-70s. As Rios explains,

The Parra family, like generations of Latin American writers, painters, poets, and musicians, had been deeply affected by their experiences in the French capital. “We returned from Paris playing music from Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, music from other countries” recalled Ángel Parra (p.c.). His family’s belief in the ideal of Latin American unity directly led to the standard *nueva canción* practice of combining “the [Andean] charango with the [Venezuelan] cuatro, the cuatro with the [Argentine] bombo... the [Andean] panpipe, the [Mexican] guitarrón, all mixed together,” which was intended to resignify these locally specific instruments to mean “Latin America” (Ibid.) (Rios 2008: 154).

However, according to Victor Herrero, tension would soon emerge over the musical and political direction of La Peña. While Violeta wanted more focus on Chilean folk repertoire, Ángel and Isabel were insistent on developing the pan-Latin American sounds described above and continuing to learn more repertoire from around the continent. This, they felt, was more in line with what the youth wanted, and for the most part, they were correct. Especially after events like the Cuban revolution in 1959 and the growing international popularity of stylized Andean tunes such as “El condor pasa,” the left-wing students and young adults who formed the majority of La Peña’s line-up and audiences were enthralled by the music of Latin American countries, and, to quote Isabel Parra, felt that “Chilean folklore became a bit passé, and we moved on to other things” (Herrero 2017: 443). Devastated by the feeling that she was becoming irrelevant, Violeta began isolating herself from others—even her children. And though publicly she still claimed to be the owner and manager of La Peña, behind closed doors, she was making plans to separate from Ángel and Isabel and create her own venue (Herrero 2017: 442).

adaptations of rural/Indigenous expressive practices geared towards modernist cosmopolitan aesthetic standards.

In 1965, Violeta Parra established her Carpa in La Reina, a community on the eastern outskirts of Santiago, almost in the foothills of the Cordillera de los Andes (Boyle 2017; Herrero 2017). According to Isabel Parra's account, La Carpa de la Reina was also Parra's attempt to remove herself from capitalist society and from a younger generation of folk singers whom she deemed overly bourgeois (Parra 1985: 142). Scholar Catherine Boyle describes the structure of La Carpa as large and unwieldy—a large dome shelled only with canvas—almost like a circus tent, hence its name, “La Carpa” (Boyle 2017: 173). Furthering La Carpa's instability, though Parra had received some support for the endeavor from the mayor of La Reina, the upper-class residents of this community generally resented the noise and extra traffic that the venue drew (Boyle 2017: 176). Parra was able to host a few somewhat successful events, but La Carpa de la Reina proved to be far from the place of lively intellectual exchange that she had desired. She quickly realized that only those privileged enough to own a car or afford a taxi were able to make the trip to her peña. It was not the popular masses whom she had hoped to reach, and neither was it the journalists or producers or historians whom she hoped would help validate her endeavor. As Boyle contends,

The failure of La Carpa is located in this very place, in this ambition to forge an actively engaged audience for whom the spectacle is specifically prepared. This is also why La Carpa was an empty space that would remain empty, for it remained a living performative space in potential only. 'I can take an empty stage and call it a bare stage,' says [Peter] Brook, and that is what Violeta sought to do, to conjure a bare stage from inhospitable land and imbue it with the possibilities of performance, of life. It is what she had done all her life [...]. It is this misjudgment that makes La Carpa the radical dislocation of a woman who wanted her art to be the conduit for the popular art and folklore of Chile that she had spent her life sharing with different audiences the length of the country and abroad, making visible music and musical forms that had been invisible between communities (Boyle 2017: 181-182).

In other words, the emptiness of La Carpa represented not only a failure to form community with her desired audiences, but also, it signified deep isolation from the cultural institutions of the country whose history she had worked to preserve. Bound up with the space of La Carpa, Violeta Parra herself became emptied. As her youngest daughter, Carmen Luisa described, recalling a night of torrential rain, “‘mi mama estaba igual que la carpa: hecha hirones, tenía una pena horrible’ (my mother was just like La Carpa: in pieces. She felt terrible pain)” (Boyle 2017: 187).

Based on critical accounts from today, in La Carpa de la Reina, Violeta Parra was imagining a utopian future—one in which cultural authenticity was measured not on the commercial value of a musical or artistic commodity but on the role a practice played in maintaining community, especially Indigenous, impoverished, and otherwise marginalized communities (Boyle 2017; Vilches 2018). Her research, Paula Miranda contends, questioned official representations of national identity—specifically stylized and homogenous representations in state-sanctioned folk music. But she also maintained the hope that authenticity might be found elsewhere, transferred across generations through different means (Miranda 2017: 93-94). Perhaps, had she been able to manifest her University of Folklore during her lifetime, Parra would have been more successful in directly inserting a vision of Indigenous, cosmopolitan, and feminine plurality into the singularity of the nation. However, this vision was ultimately bound by unyielding ideological and economic forces that consistently rejected Parra's agency as a creative intellectual (Miranda 2017). Tragically, according to Parra's daughter, Isabel, on February 7, 1967, “She shot herself with a revolver she had brought from Bolivia to defend herself from criminals around La Carpa” (Parra 1985: 144).

After Violeta Parra’s death, generations since have discovered that the music she created in La Carpa de la Reina proved to be some of the most enduring masterpieces of Latin American art in the twentieth century. Her final album, *Las últimas composiciones de Violeta Parra*, recorded in 1966, was composed entirely at La Carpa, and contains such classics as “Gracias a la vida” (Thanks Be to Life), “Volver a los diecisiete” (To Return to Seventeen), and “Run Run se fue p’al norte” (Run Run Left for the North)—songs that Parra herself deemed to be the most beautiful, the most mature, and most complete songs she had ever composed (Parra 1985: 144). Victor Herrero, speaking about this album, states,

In *Las últimas composiciones*, Violeta distilled everything she had learned in the nearly two decades of her career, and simultaneously was able to generate something completely new for the time. No one, for example, had thought to use the [Andean] charango to accompany a sirilla [from Chiloe], much less to play that instrument in a slow accompaniment as is the case in “Gracias a la vida” (Herrero 2017: 477).

“Gracias a la vida” in particular has been revered as a universal anthem and has been performed and re-interpreted by artists around the world, including Mercedes Sosa in Argentina and Joan Baez in the United States who covered the song on her 1974 album by the same name.³³ These final songs and their circulation have been analyzed exhaustively in Chilean music studies, especially by foreign scholars (Pring-Mill 1990 & 2002; Torres Alvarado 2002; Boyle 2009). Yet, without denying the significance that these aural traces of La Carpa have had on later generations of Chilean artists and thinkers, I turn to Parra’s autobiography, written in *décimas*, to understand how she attempted to transmit the wisdom gained through her decades-long dialogue with marginalized communities, and particularly with women.

Violeta Parra’s *Décimas, Autobiografía en verso (Décimas, Autobiography in Verse)* was written in 1959 and published posthumously with introductions by Pablo Neruda, Nicanor Parra, and Pablo de Rokha (Parra 1998). Following Catherine Boyle, I see Parra’s decision to write her autobiography in *décimas*—one of her earliest areas of investigation—as a conscious effort to channel the knowledge she had gathered in her travels through Chile and Europe and use them to carve a space for a woman’s perspective within the intensely masculine tradition of *canto a lo poeta* (Boyle 2009: 79). In essence, Boyle contends, Parra’s aim with her autobiography was to develop a new shared poetics that ritualized quotidian experiences and, in doing so, express the deeply political meanings of women’s private and public lives (Boyle 2009: 79).

One *décima*, “Verso por despedida” (Farewell Verse), honors the passing of Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral (b. 1889), the first Latin American author to win a Nobel Prize in Literature.

Presidenta y bienhechora
de la lengua castellana
la mujer Americana
inclina la vista y llora
por la celestial señora
que ha 38artido de este suelo,
yo le ofrezco sin recelo
en mi canto a lo divino,
que un ave de dulce trino,
la acompañe al alto cielo.

President and benefactor
of the Castilian language
the American Woman
turns her gaze and weeps
for this heavenly woman
who has left this earth,
my offering to her, without doubt
in my song to the divine,
is that a sweet avian tune
may accompany her to heaven (Parra 1998: 207)

³³ Baez, Joan. 1974. *Gracias a la vida*. A&M Records. Los Angeles.

Both Parra and Mistral were champions of the poor and the marginalized, and both were tireless advocates for sanctity and political significance of motherhood. Parra's offering to Mistral in this verse makes clear her affective connections to her work, and simultaneously places both women within a shared poetics of Latin American womanhood.

Another *décima* conveys Violeta's outrage at the rape and murder of a young woman—painting a portrait of the violent reality of femicide that is still endemic to this day.³⁴ After reflecting on the brutality of the event, she laments the indifference shown by society, stating,

Al otro día los diarios
anuncian con letras gruesas
que hallaron una Teresa
muerta por unos barbarios.
¿Qué sacan del comentario
si no ha de poner remedio
al bar, qu'es un Cementerio
legal, como bien se sabe,
el código, enfermo grave,
sordo y mudo a estos misterios?
(Parra 1998: 153-154)

The next day the newspapers
announce in bold print
that a woman named Teresa was found
Dead at the hands of barbarians.
What do they get from this commentary,
if it provides no remedy
to the bar, which is a cemetery
legal, as everyone knows,
the code, gravely ill,
deaf and mute to these mysteries?

The full piece makes poignantly clear that the entire community is struggling with devastating poverty (Boyle 2009: 82), but her discussion of this particular case of violence makes evident that women suffering in these conditions bear an additional weight of harassment, abuse, and annihilation at the hands of men in addition to the strain of their socioeconomic status.

In one of the final pieces of her autobiography, “Aquí tiene mi pañuelo” (“Here, Take my Handkerchief”), Violeta Parra leaves a promise of hope for her women readers, reminding them that for all the corruption and pain and hypocrisy in the world, there is power in connection, in women looking each other eye to eye and recognizing their shared struggles.

Aquí tiene mi pañuelo,
señora, seque su llanto,
no hay en el mundo quebranto
que no tenga su consuelo,
saque la vista del suelo
y mírame frente a frente,
que sufre toda la gente,
l'olvidaba por egoísmo,
eso conduce al abismo
le digo primeramente.

Here, take my handkerchief,
woman, dry your tears
there is no heartbreak in the world
which does not have solace
lift your gaze from the ground
and look at me me face to face,
know that all people suffer
wrapped up in yourself, you forgot this
and that leads to the abyss
I tell you first of all (Parra 1998: 191).

Parra would not live to see the ways women would “take their handkerchiefs” during the dark years of the dictatorship in the 1970s-80s as they waved them boldly in performances of *la cueca sola*, crying for justice as loved ones were kidnapped, tortured, and killed.³⁵ Though Violeta

³⁴ According to the human rights group Red Chilena Contra la Violencia Hacia las Mujeres (Chilean Network Against Violence towards Women), between 2010-2020, on average 59 women per year have been killed as a result of femicide. This group defines femicide as “a misogynist crime that reflects, in an extreme manner, a sense of ownership, domination, and control that men exercise over women in patriarchal societies.”

<http://www.nomasviolenciacontramujeres.cl/registro-de-femicidios/> (Accessed March 4, 2021).

³⁵ See Chapter 4.

Parra's own losses proved too much to bear, her studies and her words have continued to provide hope and hold space for the struggles of generations of women.

III. The Futurity of Violeta



Figure 2.4 Mural of Violeta Parra from her 2017 centennial celebrations. Photo by the author.

Violeta Parra has long been remembered as teacher and muse to younger generations of singer-songwriters, so much so that the term for singer-songwriter “cantautor” and the feminine “cantautora” have, for some, become synonymous with progressive politics in Chile.³⁶ Indeed, as Figure 2.4 demonstrates, cantautor Victor Jara, a mentee of Violeta Parra, has famously been quoted as saying, “Violeta Parra is like a star that will never go out. Violeta, who unfortunately no longer lives to see the fruit of her labors, marked the path for us. We do nothing more than continue it and give it a touch of the present.”³⁷ Since the 2000s, a new generation of cantautoras has been revitalizing the image of Violeta Parra through their music and political work. Lorena Valdebenito has analyzed this phenomenon extensively, arguing that Parra’s poetic lyrics denouncing social and political wrongdoing and her austere performance style generally featuring only singer and guitar as a model has come to define the social role of cantautores/as since the 1970s (Valdebenito 2018: 118). However, not all who look to Parra as a referent have such an easy relationship to her legacy.

While in Chile, I did constantly see references to Violeta Parra across music and art from a variety of genres. However, when I asked cantautora Pascuala Ilabaca (b. 1985) about this phenomenon in one of our interviews, she responded somewhat cynically. Though the image of Violeta Parra was experiencing a revival after the centennial in 2017, she contended, as little as ten to fifteen years ago, Parra’s image and her music were relatively obscure compared to male figures such as Victor Jara. Ilabaca attributed this to the deeply militarized nature of Chilean society, explaining,

³⁶ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, October 15, 2018.

³⁷ This quote originally appeared in Isabel Parra’s memoir, *El libro mayor de Violeta Parra* (1985: 146).

Since Chile was formed as a military government and not as a viceroyalty, the aristocracy has always been connected to the military—not just since the dictatorship but since the founding of Chile. Leaders generate “virtuous people” who represent “the virtues” of the military leaders. The case of Victor Jara is the same. As someone who was martyred [during the coup in 1973], it’s easy to transform him into an example for society. On the other hand, Violeta Parra has absorbed everything that is feared about the feminine figure—the unpredictability, the suicide, that dance with darkness, with cursing things, with contradicting herself. These are the things that society fears.³⁸

Ilabaca continued by stating that even though the controversial image of Violeta Parra and the countercultural nature of her art held a liberatory possibility for Chile’s militarized society, her legacy is still constantly subjected to regulation and co-optation by private institutions and government agencies. Laughing darkly, she mused, “Liberation also comes with many rules.”³⁹

Despite the controversy that Violeta Parra brings up in contemporary Chile, Pascuala Ilabaca, a folk artist whose repertoire centers heavily on women and environmental issues, has always found great inspiration in Parra’s life and music.⁴⁰ In her late teens and twenties, Ilabaca was studying at the conservatory of music at the Catholic University of Valparaíso where, in 2007, she earned a bachelor’s degree in music composition. During this time, she was also becoming deeply connected with Valparaíso’s renowned bohemian music and night life. She performed regularly as an accordionist for a cabaret with Swiss band leader Bert Under Erikson, and began developing her own solo act, eventually forming the group Pascuala Ilabaca y Fauna with other bandmates from Valparaíso. In her night life as a musician, Pascuala was surrounded by women composers, singers, dancers, and artists, but in her conservatory life, she was in a world of men. Her classmates, her professors, and the composers whom they studied were—unsurprisingly—mostly men. Indignant at the fact that she was never able to analyze women’s music in her composition and analysis classes, she decided to begin independently analyzing the music of Violeta Parra, particularly her compositions for guitar.⁴¹ Her studies inspired her to interpret pieces from Parra’s lesser-known repertoire through her own arrangements, and in 2008, shortly after completing her degree, she released her first album, *Pascuala canta a Violeta* (*Pascuala Sings to Violeta*) featuring herself as lead singer, accordionist, and pianist, and two colleagues, Cristián Retamal on guitar and Jaime Frez on percussion (Ponce 2020). This debut album would make Ilabaca’s musical career inseparable from the legacy of Violeta Parra. It garnered critical acclaim and even earned the recognition of then-President Michelle Bachelet, Chile’s first woman president, who invited Ilabaca to share this music on a tour through India.

But in this first album, it is also clear that in her efforts to present new ideas of Latin American womanhood to the world, Pascuala was still grappling with the complicated legacy of Violeta Parra. The record features fourteen pieces by Violeta Parra, arranged by Ilabaca, Retamal, and Frez. Most of these arrangements remain incredibly faithful to their original melodic and lyrical form. Violeta recorded most of her work with only a guitar, charango, or bombo as accompaniment, so the nuances of her voice were central to their interpretation. Ilabaca likewise took great care with her vocal delivery, but enlivens each of Parra’s pieces with rich textures, countermelodies, and harmonies. “El Gavilán” (“The Hawk”) and “El Nguillatún” are reinterpreted with the distinctive timbres of Mapuche instruments, including kultrun (a hand

³⁸ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, October 15, 2018.

³⁹ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, October 15, 2018.

⁴⁰ These themes are taken up in greater detail in Chapter 3.

⁴¹ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, October 15, 2018.

drum considered a sacred part of Mapuche culture), trompe (mouth harp), and trutruca (a curled, single-pipe trumpet). The ardor of “Arriba quemando el sol” (“The Sun Burning Above”) is made more palpable with the loud distortion of an electric guitar. Several of Parra’s cuecas are also featured prominently throughout, as are two of her “Anticuecas,” guitar compositions written in a sonic vocabulary of satire in that they distort and darken the traditional form of a cueca by featuring more complex rhythms and modal melodies, and by breaking the norms of repeated verses and ornamentation.⁴² Mulling over the complexities of these works during one of our interviews, Ilabaca reflected, “[Violeta Parra] loved folklore but she broke its format too. She loved poetry, but she made anti-poetry.”⁴³ In other words, although Ilabaca undoubtedly views Violeta Parra as a keeper and symbol of Chilean traditional culture, she understands her to be a rule-breaker—someone whose difficult experiences in life led her to constantly question, critique, and view society through a lens of darkness.

This pain was perhaps the most difficult aspect for Pascuala Ilabaca to take on as she prepared to interpret Parra’s music in her first album. Ilabaca was only 23 years old in 2008 when she was preparing this first album, and she was anxious about the potential lack of maturity and gravity in her voice. Not only would she be performing works originally recorded by a much older woman, but she also knew that Parra had dealt with heartache, loss, and emptiness in a way she had not experienced. Once, in an interview about her piece, “El Gavilán,” Violeta Parra herself had claimed that she alone could interpret her works, explaining,

This song has to be sung by me. Pain cannot be sung by a trained voice, a voice developed in a conservatory. It must be a voice that has experienced suffering, like mine, having experienced forty years of suffering. It must be as real as possible, you understand?⁴⁴

In a tragic coincidence, the night before Ilabaca was to begin recording the vocal tracks for *Pascuala canta a Violeta*, the brother of her now-husband died by suicide. Reflecting on this harrowing experience in a documentary released four years later in 2012, Ilabaca recalled in that moment coming to understand the deep cost of being able to channel suffering into one’s voice. Newly grieving, she began recording the album knowing she would have no difficulty conveying the pain that these songs demanded.

And yet, Ilabaca continues to emphasize that she does not wish to be confined to stereotypical representations of Parra’s suffering and emotional instability. Pointedly, she reminded me, “In that sense [Violeta’s] legacy can be something negative. Often times, people tend to think that we [women artists] will be like her. Chilean women singers nowadays are usually people who are so driven and self-managed. But we have to fight every day with that archetype of the emotional artist who breaks with all norms.”⁴⁵ Still, Ilabaca continues to proudly perform Violeta Parra’s work, honoring its darkness, its irreverence, and its capacity to question. Though, as she acknowledges, “[...] associating oneself with that irreverence [as a contemporary artist] will never guarantee you a space.”⁴⁶ In fact, by Ilabaca’s estimation, associating herself

⁴² For a more detailed explanation of cueca and its traditional performance practice, see Chapter 4.

⁴³ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, October 15, 2018.

⁴⁴ (Garcia 2016). This interview with Violeta Parra, recorded by Mario Céspedes, originally aired on January 5, 1960 on Radio Universidad de Concepción. In 2016 it was published in a collection of Violeta Parra’s interviews edited by journalist Marisol Garcia.

⁴⁵ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, October 15, 2018.

⁴⁶ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, October 15, 2018.

with Violeta Parra has frequently caused her to experience scrutiny on social media platforms and in live performances, and, she feels, has often made it more difficult for her to receive reviews or access promotional networks in mainstream media outlets and production agencies.

In the face of decades of cultural erasure and misogynist tellings of musical history, Ilabaca continues to hold space for Violeta Parra by remaining steadfast to a listening and compositional practice based on attentiveness to the voices of women and other marginalized groups and by forging her own spaces through which to produce and disseminate her music.⁴⁷ Also, Violeta Parra is surely a primary figure in Ilabaca's feminist listening genealogy, but the lineage is vast. In her 2014 album *Me saco el sombrero (I Take Off My Hat)*, Pascuala Ilabaca traces a history of Chilean voices that have influenced her own. The fourth track, for example, "Versos por despedida" ("Verses of Farewell") reinterprets Violeta Parra's *décima* honoring the death of Gabriela Mistral. The third track, "Canción Quechua" ("Quechua Song") sets Mistral's own poem by the same name to music. Pascuala's Spotify playlists, "Los bellos Fantasmas de América Latina" ("The Beautiful Ghosts of Latin America") and "Mujeres y revolución" ("Women and Revolution") also trace alternative lineages of Chilean and Latin American voices, each demonstrating a feminist genealogy of listening by imagining new canons of cantautoras.

Another Chilean artist, acclaimed MC Ana Tijoux (b. 1977), also recently turned to Violeta Parra as she began re-imagining her artistic voice after twenty years as a star of Latin American hip hop and alternative music. Begun in her early 40s, Tijoux's 2018 musical project *Roja y Negro, canciones de amor y desamor (Red and Black, Songs of Love and Heartbreak)* was an exploration of folk music and other classic genres from across Latin America such as bolero and tango.⁴⁸ However, this new direction should not be entirely surprising. As Felix Contreras, host of the NPR podcast alt.Latino reminds his listeners,

This exploration of a new direction isn't really out of the blue for Tijoux. She was born in France to Chilean parents who were in exile from the brutal dictatorship back home and has said singer-songwriters with messages were on her parents' playlist when she was a kid. She said in a statement: "From my earliest years I took inspiration for my lyrics from singer-songwriters such as Chico Buarque, Violeta Parra, Victor Jara, Mercedes Sosa—revolutionaries with an acoustic guitar, who to me are not so different from my hip-hop heroes" (Contreras 2018).

Tijoux's return to these folk traditions—in covers of classic pieces by Violeta Parra and Victor Jara as well as in several stirring original songs—once again re-signifies the legacy of Violeta Parra, disrupting her canonization within a strictly folk music tradition and bringing her voice into the sonic and social world of hip hop, an oral tradition that has influenced political music around the world in the twenty-first century.

Even as *Roja y Negro* has allowed Ana Tijoux to create space for Violeta Parra in new contemporary music scenes, covering Parra's music has also allowed Tijoux a space to experiment and re-invent herself as she transitions to a new stage in her career. The following

⁴⁷ See Chapter 3

⁴⁸ This project was supposed to be released as an album later in 2018 but instead the recordings have been released as a series of singles. Also, though Tijoux's live performances of her *Roja y Negro* project included covers of music by Violeta Parra and Victor Jara, the recordings released on streaming platforms are only her originals. <https://open.spotify.com/artist/0mgS9B99TmAuoB4Gp55MW>

excerpt from my fieldnotes describes Tijoux's first live performance of her *Roja y Negro* project in Santiago on March 23, 2018.

Event: Ana Tijoux: *Roja y Negro*, canciones de amor y desamor

Date: 23 March 2018

Location: Centro Cultural Matucana 100

There was something magical about the anticipation humming gently in the line out the door of the venue, Matucana 100. Perhaps five hundred filed into the theater—young, old, children. It was as if everyone there was going to catch up with an old friend or loved one, but someone who always surprises, or maintains an air of mystery. The space must have been an old warehouse at one point—the long brick walls of the compound filled nearly half a block. We were only able to see a small entryway before entering the auditorium. As we finally hurried into the auditorium with hushed excitement, the lights were already dim. A fog machine had blown haziness into the room, and a heart was illuminated in flame-like splendor at the back of the stage, surrounded by several red cloth panels (Figure 2.5). Ushers quickly helped attendees find their seats. The sound/video team rushed to finish setting up. Then the stage went dark. A recognizable rhythm began to sound on the bombo andino, and in half-light, Ana Tijoux began to sing “Arriba quemando el sol” by Violeta Parra. I never imagined that this would be the role Ana was working herself into when I started my research. How naive I was to imagine I could write artists into separate scenes. I'm struck by the vulnerability, the depth of character, and the vibrancy that's emerging in this new project for Tijoux. These songs were raw, unfinished, still becoming her own. She herself was powerful, confident, sure of herself—completely grounded while also in completely new territory. What a joy to see this aging which is also a return to her youth. What a joy to remember we are always constantly becoming, free to define our own person and to represent our own dynamism or stillness. What an inspiration to see such an acclaimed and respected artist re-invent herself, try on different voices, experiment, fail, persist.

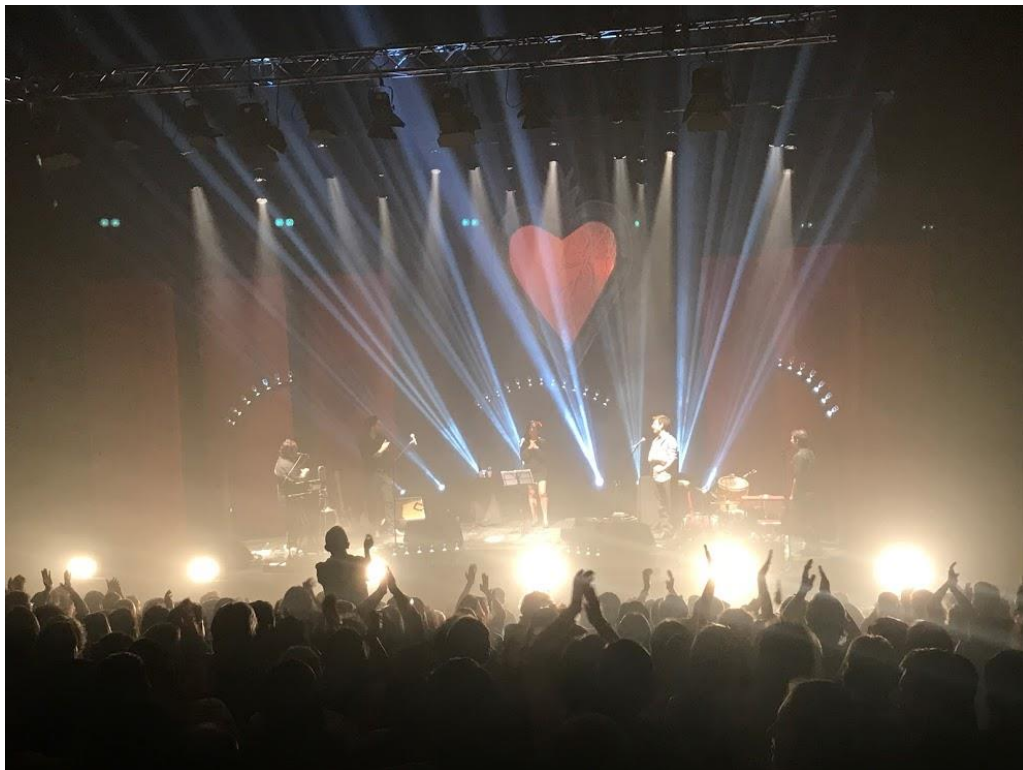


Figure 2.5 Ana Tijoux (center) performs at "Roja y Negro: Canciones de Amor y Desamor," March 23, 2018. Photo by the author.

Since 2018, Ana Tijoux has continued to place herself within a genealogy of women who, throughout history, have re-imagined Chilean identity with their words and with their music. In August of 2019, Tijoux shared the following Instagram post featuring a new mural of herself alongside Violeta Parra and Gabriela Mistral, affirming, “When the walls sing, history becomes verse. Infinite thanks to my colleague @seco_sanchez, a young artist, for making me part of that Chile that fills my lungs with pride and strength. Set between my role models Gabriela Mistral and Violeta Parra, my path is certain” (Figure 2.6).



Figure 2.6 Ana Tijoux shares a photo of new mural by Seco Sanchez featuring herself (center) alongside Gabriela Mistral (left) and Violeta Parra (right). Screenshot of public Instagram post. Accessed August 14, 2019.

A Departure

In [Violeta Parra’s] voice, one section of humanity’s centuries of accumulated aesthetic experience resonate and are recreated. For that reason, other voices are always singing in her songs, other worlds and other times (Miranda 2017: 84).

Perhaps these new directions are not the spaces Violeta Parra had imagined for herself or her work. But I like to think she would have been delighted at having her image and her voice animate the worlds contemporary women artists and musicologists are creating for themselves and for their communities. In the stories that follow in this dissertation, Parra enlivens a range of feminist musical practices, from cantautora Pascuala Ilabaca’s exploration of Chile’s vast and striking geography to women’s community cueca classes. She even appears in the underground noise rock of Coordinadora Femfest. In all of these spaces, Violeta Parra is remembered differently—her voice and image conjured for different purposes. For some, she is an academic, for others, she’s “la más rockera que hay” (the biggest rocker there is). Some cling to her image of humility and simplicity, while others admire her international accolades. What remains constant is that for many feminist artists, she is a point of departure, and her utopian dreams linger in their affective, artistic, and political labor.

Chapter 3

Pascuala Ilabaca:

Singing Feminist Ethnographies of Place

Hay un contenido que está en el inconsciente de toda esa primera infancia... del hecho como, de la música, no como algo que se ve estático o que se escucha desde un audífono, sino como algo que se descubre en un territorio y que va cambiando según ese territorio.

There's a theme in the unconscious of my earliest childhood years... the fact that music is not something static or something you listen to from a headphone, but rather is something that you discover in a territory and which continues changing according to that territory.

Pascuala Ilabaca, Interview with the author, April 19, 2018

A rush of wind, then the long drone of an accordion. Snow-capped mountains loom large over a desolate landscape as the sun sets in Valle de la Luna—an otherworldly area of gorges, crevices, and rock formations set high in the Atacama Desert in Chile's northern region of Antofagasta. Purple shadows creep steadily across the glowing earth. The camera cuts to a woman seated high on the face of a boulder, bent intently over a notebook. In the next scene, she picks up her accordion, and begins to sing.⁴⁹

Cada vez que tengo pena
Me voy a mirar al cielo
Pa' preguntarle a las nubes
Si han visto a mi amor pasar.

Each time I feel pain
I will look to the sky
to ask the clouds
If they've seen my love pass by

Gritaron todas las aves
Nosotras fuimos testigo,
Que entre San Pedro y San Pablo
Han borrado el gran camino

All the birds shouted
the women, we witnessed
that between San Pedro and San Pablo
they've erased the main road

Échale, che una copita
Pai' que vamos despertando
Como es posible vivir
Con las mineras borrando

Pour yourself a drink
that we may begin awakening
How is it possible to live
with the mines erasing

Como es posible dormir
Si el río seca... secando...

How is it possible to sleep
If the river dries up... drying...

This music video is part of an episode from the 2013 documentary series *Territorios imaginados* (*Imagined Territories*). Narrated by singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Pascuala Ilabaca (b. 1985) who performed the piece above, this series explores the extreme landscapes and regions of Chile through the lens of art and music. In each episode Ilabaca interviews artists, musicians, dancers, scholars, and activists from the region she is visiting, and shares her own musical performances and interpretations of each territory.

In the conclusion of the above episode on Antofagasta, Ilabaca performs a *copla atacameña*, an improvisational song form consisting of four-line stanzas sung to traditional melodies from the area in and around the Atacama Desert. These improvised verses were

⁴⁹ "Territorios imaginados" – Pascuala Ilabaca en Antofagasta." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgNyPCup1u8>

typically performed by shepherds tending livestock and are generally sung in a high, strained timbre—their delivery evoking the solitude and silence of the desolate highland landscape from which they emerged.⁵⁰ Ilabaca’s reinterpretation of a copla atacameña in *Territorios imaginados* likewise centers a deep presence in the landscape. However, her narrative specifically laments the drying of rivers (“how is it possible to sleep / if the river dries up”) and the erasure of community infrastructures (“between San Pedro and San Pablo / they’ve erased the main road”) at the hands of national and international mining industries (“How is it possible to live / with the mines erasing”).



Figure 3.1 Región de Antofagasta. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

The Region of Antofagasta is rich in copper, saltpeter, and lithium. It was once a part of Bolivia but was occupied by Chile during the War of the Pacific (1879-1884) and ceded to Chilean rule in 1904. Since then, the region and its people, a great majority of whom are of Indigenous or African descent, have continued to be exploited by domestic and international mining industries (Arellano G. 2012; McEvoy 2016). Ilabaca’s improvised performance in this episode offers a sonic re-imagining of the fraught cultural relationships and environmental abuse contained in the history of this stark landscape. Her choice to forego the traditional accompaniment of a cajita challera (frame drum) and to instead use her accordion to evoke a Hindustani alap also introduces a sonic reference to water struggles in Northern India where Ilabaca spent several years of her childhood and early adulthood living and studying Hindustani classical music.⁵¹ Narrating from a woman’s perspective, the feminine gaze becomes entangled

⁵⁰ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, April 19, 2018.

⁵¹ Pascuala Ilabaca has spoken often of the similarities in landscape and culture between the Chilean altiplano and the mountainous regions of Northern India and Nepal, particularly in her 2012 documentary *Crear en viaje, la música de Pascuala Ilabaca*.

with the natural environment, illuminating the earth as an active participant in social relationships (“All the birds shouted / the women, we witnessed”). This sensibility exists in striking contrast to the socially and environmentally extractive nature of the mining industry. Ilabaca’s copla atacameña is not composed based on an assumed symbiosis of women and nature. Rather, it draws upon her many years of traveling and listening to women’s stories and gestures towards the unique ways women’s lives are upended in the midst of environmental destruction. The opening verse “Each time I feel pain / I will look to the sky / to ask the clouds / if they’ve seen my love pass by,” for example, hints at long periods of absence as male workers are forced to travel great distances find employment.

Pascuala Ilabaca’s performance of the copla atacameña in el Valle de la Luna exemplifies one of the many ways she uses her artistic work to convey a feminist politics of place grounded in deep conversation with local territorial histories. Like much of her repertoire, this video is aimed at artistically reconfiguring the gender politics of public space and environmental landscapes. She accomplishes these interventions through lyrical imagery, rich scenography, and a sonic vocabulary developed through years of traveling, touring, and studying music throughout Latin America, Europe, and India. In light of the extensive travels and studies that inform her work, I contend that the music video also demonstrates Ilabaca’s capacities as a feminist ethnographer—a researcher, traveler, and communicator whose epistemological framework for studying human life is grounded in self-reflexivity and in an awareness of gender, sexual, racial, ethnic, and class positionalities.

Although Ilabaca’s investigative practice and her modes of dissemination may not be entirely conventional in institutionalized academic settings, her ethnographic process has precedent in the work of earlier Chilean folklorists and singers such as Violeta Parra (1917-1967) and Margot Loyola (1918-2015). Parra and Loyola were the first women in Chile to gain recognition for their collection, investigation, and dissemination of folk songs and dances. Since Loyola lived much longer than Parra, she was directly involved in teaching folk music to generations of young singer-songwriters, including Pascuala Ilabaca, who was actually first introduced to the copla atacameña from Loyola’s classes.⁵² And although Violeta Parra passed away in 1967, her legacy and her written and recorded archives have also been extremely influential. In fact, Ilabaca’s first studio-length album, *Pascuala canta a Violeta (Pascuala Sings to Violeta)*, released in 2008, was a result of her intensive study of Violeta’s repertoire while completing her composition degree at the Catholic University of Valparaíso. Ilabaca is certainly not alone among her contemporaries in positioning herself as an inheritor of Parra’s legacy. Other younger cantautoras such as Evelyn Cornejo (b. 1981), Elizabeth Morris (b. 1972), and Javiera Bobadilla (b. 1985) have also positioned themselves within a genealogy of cantautoras beginning with Parra (González 2013; Valdebenito 2018). However, her travels, her global sonic sensibilities, and her political stances on women’s rights and Indigenous and environmental justice make Pascuala Ilabaca and her music a particularly rich case study through which to examine the feminist politics of contemporary Chilean cantautoría (singer-songwriting) based on the models of earlier folklorists such as Parra and Loyola.⁵³

⁵² Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, April 19, 2018.

⁵³ See Chapter 2 for more details on Violeta Parra and her influence on Pascuala Ilabaca.

This chapter is a feminist historiography and ethnography of Ilabaca's listening practices. I argue that Pascuala Ilabaca's contemporary musical practices enact feminist genealogies that highlight the voices of women intellectuals and creatives throughout Chilean history. Following Judith Butler (1990: 5), I define a feminist genealogy as a process of tracing the political operations and systems of representation that produce normative understandings of "woman" and "womanhood," thus critiquing the "heterosexual matrix" that reifies patriarchal gender relations. Drawing on Frances Aparicio (2002), I specifically argue that Ilabaca's listening practices articulate feminist genealogies that inform her ethnographic work and allows her to narrate place through a process of feminist dialogue.

I first met Pascuala Ilabaca at a show in Berkeley, California, in 2017. As part of her first U.S. tour, she had booked a gig at Ashkenaz, a small community center and concert venue known for programming folk and traditional musics from around the world. After her set, we had the chance to speak, and I shared with her my plans for studying feminist musical practices in Chile during my Fulbright year in 2018. Delighted at my interest and very amiable about by my background as a musician and feminist scholar, we remained in touch, and once I arrived in Chile, we developed a collegial relationship. In addition to attending all of her shows that I could throughout the year, we also ran into each other frequently at other musical events such as Ruidosa Fest 2018.⁵⁴ Twice during the year, we met at cafes in Santiago and Valparaíso and had long, in-depth interviews. In these conversations, Ilabaca showed great warmth and candor in discussing themes ranging from women's, Indigenous, and environmental rights to travel, touring, and navigating the music industry as a female bandleader. In each discussion, Ilabaca irrevocably expanded my understanding of music, place-making, and creative ethnography.

Part one of this chapter draws on interview material and posts from Pascuala Ilabaca's social media accounts to explore her biographical journey (Guilbault & Cape 2014) and demonstrate how her musical practices have been cultivated from a feminist ethnography of place. In this section I address her approach to creating feminist genealogies through processes of traveling, listening, and gathering, and critically examine how her mobility has shaped her capacity for empathy and her ability to bridge social, economic, and cultural divides in her music. Part two draws on case studies of Ilabaca's audiovisual repertoire to demonstrate how her musical practices represent a feminist poetics of place and reimagine spaces and landscapes scared by natural and man-made disasters (Gargallo 2017; Stewart 1996; Tsing 2015). Part three focuses on the release of Ilabaca's 2018 album, *El Mito de la Pérgola (The Myth of the Pergola)*, and traces the ways this project centers the experiences of women and Indigenous communities navigating processes of migration and land rights struggles.

I. Traveling, Listening, Gathering

From the earliest years of her life, Pascuala Ilabaca's worldviews have been defined by itinerancy. She was born in Girona, Spain in 1985. Her parents, Pilar Argandoña and Gonzalo Ilabaca, both Chilean, were visual artists who had fled the country to escape the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. During their time in Spain, Ilabaca's father worked as a street vendor selling his paintings, and she grew accustomed to life on the move in the city, immersed

⁵⁴ For more on Ruidosa Fest, see Chapter One.

in a world of immigrants of various nationalities—all artists, musicians, and performers trying to make ends meet in whatever way they could. As she recounted, “These early years were intense and itinerant and unstable, and were filled with an encounter with art, with collective labor and also with a realization of the difference between the First and Third World. Even as a child, you pick up on these things.”⁵⁵ Later, she would begin to discern that though some conceive of travel as a luxury, for others—refugees, pilgrims, even climate migrants—movement was a necessity on which their lives depended, no matter the precarious circumstances of the journey. Coming into this understanding, Ilabaca grew to embrace her travels as a means towards radical empathy and a practice of adaptation.

In an Instagram post from 2019 (Figure 1.2), she reflected on the ways in which the constant travel of her childhood shaped her understanding of home, stating,

When we traveled, our home was distributed in 8 suitcases, cylinders, and trunks; we had postcards for the walls, bedspreads and even a swing which we hung up when we slept in a tent and there was a tree nearby. When we arrived somewhere, my mother smoked a cigarette and then directed the assembly of our new abode. She had an enormous capacity to make us excited. Not having children myself, I can’t imagine how she did it. My father went to the street to draw. Sometimes we would stay there a while, sometimes not long at all. Sometimes the place was very pleasant, other times it was inhospitable. Sometimes we didn’t even unpack. Those were exceptions. In general, the good and the bad, the receptive and the hostile, love and heartache live together in strange ways everywhere, no matter where we’re staying or where we’re going, here or there. It’s good to apply that minute my mother gave to observe, position yourself, and based on that see how you will adapt, overcome, or present yourself in your environment.⁵⁶



Figure 3.2 Pascuala Ilabaca (left) with her mother (right) prepare to set up their belongings in their new home. Year 1996. Image source: Instagram Screenshot - Accessed April 4, 2019.

⁵⁵ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, April 19, 2018.

⁵⁶ Pascuala Ilabaca, Public Instagram post, April 4, 2019

This reflection on her mother's tenacity and keen spatial awareness reveals that even in childhood, Ilabaca's emerging understanding of how to move through and within new places and cultures was tempered by a feminine gaze. She was coming to understand the emotional labor it takes to learn from a place—to respect its boundaries—while also making yourself known and present within it.

In 1989, the family moved back to Chile, and lived in a car for a year while her parents participated in a caravan of artists investigating popular religious festivals throughout Chile from Arica to Chiloé. These experiences—witnessing festivals and learning about the rhythms, movements, and characters of each performance practice, particularly those from Northern Andean regions of Chile, would be deeply impactful on Ilabaca's later work. In an interview, she explained delightedly that it was these festivals which had made her understand that music could not be separated from an attachment to territory, and that music moves through and with people. *Comparsas*, theatrical street ensembles accompanied by music and dance, are a core element of Andean festivals, and they would become a foundational experience in Ilabaca's introduction to the study of popular culture. As she reiterated in our interview,

Ultimately, I feel that this was the most important element in my introduction to folklore and my introduction to music. It has to do with music that is connected. It connects with the territory, and at the same time you can embody these ancient popular roles—really become them—whether through doing folklore or modernizing folklore. This was very important to me from the beginning.⁵⁷

Through witnessing these *comparsas*, Ilabaca developed a profound appreciation for the importance of public celebration in the formation of mythologies and community identities. No doubt, these spectacles imprinted upon her the rich visual and sonic textures that shape public spaces and public life. As I discuss in more detail below, many of Ilabaca's compositions and collaborations experiment with the *comparsa* format in order to explore the emotional and affective implications of popular and Indigenous spaces being threatened by colonialist, capitalist enterprises. However, Ilabaca's musical and social formation would continue to be influenced by several other periods of travel throughout her youth, adolescence, and early adulthood.

In 1991 when she was 6 years old, Pascuala Ilabaca and her family settled in the port city of Valparaíso. Built in and among the dramatic hills of Chile's central Pacific coastline, Valparaíso would become Ilabaca's home. Its striking geography and bustling cosmopolitan cultural scene would have a lasting influence on her musical practice. But beginning in 1996, the family was traveling again, this time spending two years living in Varanasi—a city on the banks of the Ganges River in Uttar Pradesh, India. In an Instagram post on March 25, 2019, (Figure 1.3) Pascuala explored the impact of this period in India on her and her younger sister, Danila.

Before, I didn't talk about [these memories], because undoubtedly our childhood in India made us different. And this was difficult for us to deal with when we returned; once again in an isolated, capitalist country where traveling for some is synonymous only with money (as if Roma, circus performers, artists, pilgrims, folklorists, and backpackers didn't exist!!!) and India is seen through the prism of Western documentaries full of stereotypes which reduce the East to a place distortedly more mystic, weak, or vulnerable than the West. How tiresome these prejudices when they're consumed like daily bread. They cause harm everywhere. They inhibit us. They reduce us. Let the prejudice off the car, that train won't take us anywhere.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, April 19, 2018.

⁵⁸ Pascuala Ilabaca, public Instagram post, March 25, 2019.



Figure 3.3 Pascuala Ilabaca (right) and younger sister Danila Ilabaca (left) travel by train during their time living in India. Year 1996. Image source: Instagram Screenshot - Accessed March 25, 2019.

Again, Ilabaca was confronted with the fact that many in Chile saw travel only as a bourgeois luxury, but her lived reality demonstrated that although traveling artists and folklorists need some degree of resources and privilege in order to live, work, and study in other places, this sort of travel was by no means luxurious. Furthermore, her reflection above reveals that beginning in her youth, it became apparent that travel in the pursuit of knowledge and intercultural communication necessitated empathy. In other words, it was an early lesson in what Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) describes as feminist ethnography—an ethnography that does not homogenize the category of Women but rather draws deeply on the understanding of one’s own gender and racial subjectivity in order to comprehend the political and social complexities of communities with whom one works. Self and Other, body and mind, East and West, home and abroad were revealed to be completely entangled, as were the prejudices of classism, racism, and exoticism. In an earlier Instagram post (Figure 1.4), Ilabaca had delved more deeply into the complicated phenomenology of belonging. Musing on her experiences of kinship in India, she reflected,

Once I found a grandmother far away from home. I needed one so I imagined that she was mine. Her ears were full of piercings. She told me she had one for every ten years of her life. I wanted to have piercings like hers too but I was only eleven years old. We were with her daughter and her granddaughter who was a little older than me. My mother, sister and I were new women in that village. The local women taught us to do things that they did and the girls taught us games. We spent many afternoons talking and playing in a language that we made up but which all of us understood; Is that the mother language? The master language? I enter into the state where I can still feel our circle—friend sister daughter grandmother mother granddaughter.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Pascuala Ilabaca, public Instagram post, March 4, 2019.

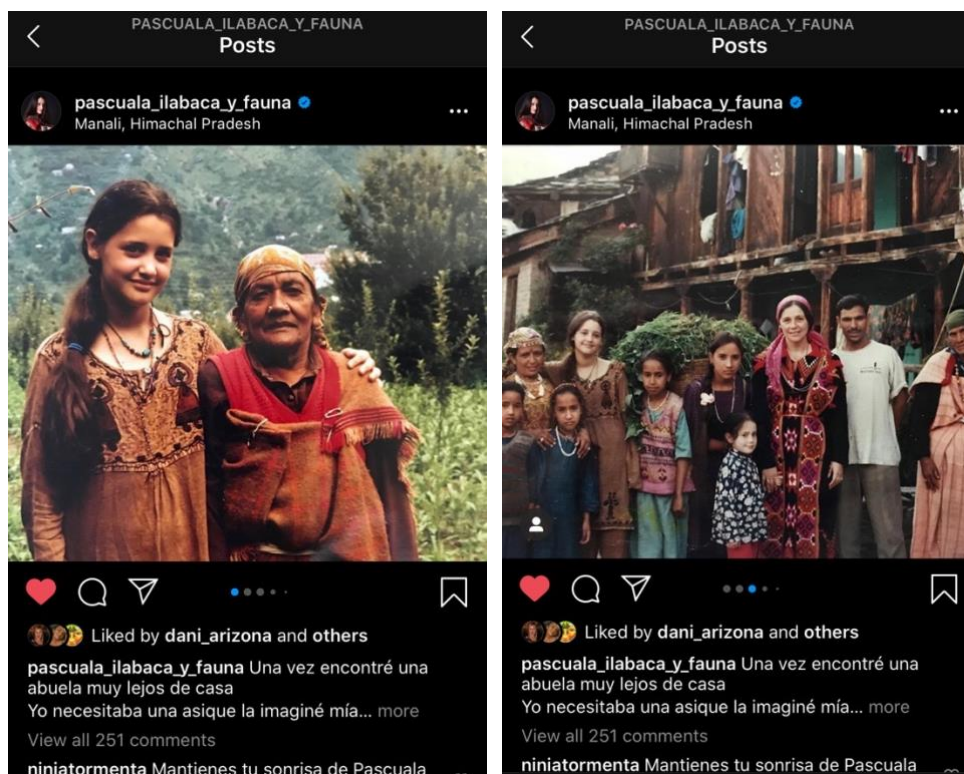


Figure 3.4 Left, young Pascuala Ilabaca stands with an older woman in Manali, Himachal Pradesh. Right, Pascuala (second from left) and her mother and sister (third from right) with the older woman’s family. Image source: Instagram Screenshot – Accessed March 4, 2019.

It would be easy to frame this representation of belonging as an exoticist fantasy which glosses over differences in power, privilege, and mobility among these women. Yet, in the context of their shared community environment, this imagined kinship between “travelers” and “locals” seems to have been experienced as very real. This post hints at the fact that differences in nationality and ethnicity might dissolve in significance when social circumstances facilitate the development of visceral feelings of close familial ties among friends, mothers, grandmothers, daughters, and granddaughters developing close familial ties despite having no hereditary relationship or shared geopolitical origins.

Though still an early childhood experience, Ilabaca’s recognition of these connections, developed through close observation and participation in a new community, points towards the possibilities of feminist ethnography. As Abu-Lughod elucidates,

[...] imagine the woman fieldworker who does not deny that she is a woman and is attentive to gender in her own treatment, her own actions, and in the interactions of people in the community she is writing about. In coming to understand their situation, she is also coming to understand her own through a process of specifying the similarities and the differences. Most important, she has a political interest in grasping the other’s situation since she, and often they, recognize a limited kinship and responsibility (1990: 26)

Imagining ties of kinship through the process of feminist ethnography does not mean claiming an identity which one does not hold. Rather, as Abu-Lughod suggests, it helps illuminate the limitations of kinship while also revealing the responsibilities we have to one another. Pascuala Ilabaca's years in India were an early initiation into the promises and pitfalls of ethnography. Tracing her musical career throughout her adolescence and adulthood demonstrate a highly refined understanding of the possibilities and limitations of kinship that can be developed through travel.

When Ilabaca was 15 years old, the family spent a year living in Mexico. She had begun studying piano years before when the family resided briefly in Valparaíso, but unfortunately, having had a traumatic experience with a piano teacher, she did not practice that instrument seriously until she was a young adult. Mexico, however, was where Ilabaca first began playing her now trademark instrument, the accordion. She did not attend school that year. Instead, she earned money modeling for visual artists and eventually saved enough to purchase her first accordion. Her evenings were spent learning rancheras and singing in bars, where she got to know many other musicians. Through these connections, she was introduced to one of her first women's advocacy projects. A local non-profit organization helping women and children whose partners and fathers had left to work in the United States began sending impromptu groups of artists and musicians to provide cultural enrichment to these communities. As Ilabaca shared in our first interview,

“They [the NGO] put together artistic committees and we'd go with them in a little truck—everything disorderly and really informal, right? I was a girl, and I did this work and they paid me! I would go with the accordion and paint with other girls and people from everywhere—Chile, Argentina—who knows where else. And we'd get to these towns and we did activities for the children and the women, and this was enriching—realizing that it really mattered to me the impact that music generates for people, and how it can foster emotional wellbeing. And it was work with women!”⁶⁰

This deep interest in uplifting marginalized experiences of womanhood would follow her the rest of her life and had a deep impact on her future listening and musical composition. Reflecting back on these experiences in our interview, Ilabaca explained how they had shaped her current understandings of feminism. According to her, most mainstream conversations on feminism promote a “battle of the sexes” which maintain binary archetypes between men and women. With a perspective based in the rich diversity of women she has met during her travels, she indicated that she has become more interested in using her position as an artistic figure to serve as an “ambassador” on behalf of Latin American women who are marginalized or who do not conform to the sexist, exoticist stereotypes of Latin American women as they are represented in international art and media. Now, whether in large-scale international tours in Europe and the U.S. or in informal festivals put together autonomously by rural, Indigenous, or working-class women throughout Latin America, she aims to use her music and platform as a bridge for sharing the knowledge and practices of women around the world.⁶¹

Through her experiences and later representations of travel, Pascuala Ilabaca demonstrates that she deeply understands the patriarchal, colonial forces in which she and other women live. She takes great care in her travel, her study of folk traditions, and her new compositions to

⁶⁰ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, April 19, 2018.

⁶¹ Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, April 19, 2018.

represent women as diverse subjects, and to represent Indigenous cultures not as antiquated mythologies but as living, complex narratives and practices. Recognizing the lasting influence of her early formation as an artist and ethnographer, I see Ilabaca's "travel writing" through her musical creations closely allied with what Caren Kaplan calls "a feminist politics of localization" in that she uses the notion of traveling to distinct locations in order to destabilize colonial discourse and to recognize and validate complex relationships between women in different parts of the world (Kaplan 1996: 187). Through her reflections on her early life experiences, Ilabaca reveals that ethnography stems from processes of travel that are not exempt from gender, racial, and class privilege, but that nevertheless hold the possibility of illuminating commonalities, differences, and interconnections among individuals and communities around the world.

How might these feminist ethnographic experiences translate to an understanding of land and space? Can they rearrange the voices associated with certain territories? In the following section, I explore how Ilabaca has drawn on these histories to develop practices of listening and gathering stories to enact a feminist re-imagining of place in Chile and beyond.

II. Imagined Territories

Home

Hidden staircases, winding alleys, panoramic hilltops, a bustling port—the city of Valparaíso has captivated inhabitants, visitors, and migrants since the earliest days of Chile's history. Located along the Pacific coast, about two hours west of the capital, Santiago, Valparaíso's positioning as a seaport has had a lasting impact on the region's economic, cultural, and demographic development. However, the physical environment has also shaped the look and feel of this urban space. According to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the city's steep hills and ravines, set against a narrow coastal plain and expansive bay, led to a type of architecture and infrastructure that starkly departs from Spanish cities organized centrally around a main plaza. *Ascensores* (funicular lifts) and jagged stairways often replace flat trains and sidewalks. Also, its multinational inhabitants, frequently hailing from England, Germany, or Italy, contributed to the adaptive and eclectic architectural styles (UNESCO World Heritage Center). In the past two decades, cities like Valparaíso and Santiago have also seen a rise in migrants from Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and even Haiti, and officials acknowledge that these shifts are sparking racial tensions (Águila V. 2016).

This is the place that Pascuala Ilabaca calls home. After years of travel across Latin America, Europe, and India, her native city remains a source of constancy. As she noted in a 2012 interview, "Valparaíso is like my life raft. Here, I have a feeling of belonging. For all the other places I have fallen in love with, in the balance, Valparaíso has weighed more. I like being local to a place, I need it" (Garcia 2012). Valparaíso, known for its bohemian nightlife as well as its multiple universities, is also where Ilabaca formally began her musical career after receiving her bachelor's degree in composition at the Catholic University of Valparaíso and launching her career as a soloist accompanied by the band "Fauna," formed with musicians whom she had met performing in bars and clubs as a young adult.⁶²

⁶² Pascuala Ilabaca. Interview with the author, April 19, 2018. For more details on Ilabaca's studies in composition, see Chapter Two.

I begin my examination of Pascuala Ilabaca’s “imagined territories” with Valparaíso in order to understand how her notion of home shapes her relationship to citizenship and social life. Her song “Lamenta la canela” (“La Canela Laments”) from her 2010 album *Diablo Rojo Diablo Verde* (*Red Devil Green Devil*) is situated within a quotidian Valparaíso that unveils the domestic and private lives of women and places their livelihoods in relationship to the public space of the city. “Lamenta la canela” represents an intersubjective mode of knowing place and puts notions of home and stability in tension with ideas of movement and agency within the city.



Figure 3.5 Pascuala Ilabaca y Fauna on the set of music video "Lamenta la canela." Source: [ReverbNation](https://www.reverbnation.com/)

Lyrically, “Lamenta la canela” evokes the pain of routine and daily life, hinting particularly at how women experience the quotidian through acute sensory anchors, waves of emotion, and isolation. Moving between first, second, and third person, the lyrics evoke Ilabaca’s personal experience as well as the imagined experiences of others unnamed:

“Lamenta la canela”

No puedo evitar
tanta pena
ventanita,
de cortina abierta.

Te veo en la cocina
tan solita
lamenta, menta
la canela
lamenta, menta
la canela

Aguó la constancia
quemó la pasión

I cannot escape
so much sorrow
little window
with open curtains

I see you in the kitchen
so alone
She laments, -ments
la canela
She laments, -ments
la canela

Constance was watered down
passion was burned

frió la paciencia
cortó el amor!
Cortó el amor!

patience was assailed
Love was cut off!
Love was cut off!

Hay un espejo
En la quebrada
Picó la vida
Colgó el corazón
Esto ya lo canto Parra
La fractalidad me da valor
La fractalidad me da terror
Me da calor
Esto ya lo cantó Parra y Peña!

There is a mirror
in the stream
Life stung
Heart hung
Parra has already sung this
Fractility gives me courage
Fractility brings me terror
it gives me passion
Parra and Peña have already sung this

La felicidad, tiki tiki ti
Si no la querís, no te la llevís
No te la llevís, si no la querís
La felicidad!

Happiness, tiki tiki ti
If you don't want it, you won't have it
You won't have it, if you don't want it
Happiness!⁶³

The first two stanzas move swiftly between first and second person and introduce the figure of “la canela.” This term can be translated literally as “the cinnamon-colored woman,” a descriptor that alludes to a woman of mixed racial heritage. As is the case with many racialized terms used in Latin America such as “negra” or “morena,” “canela” is used here as a term of endearment and respect, but its exact racial connotations are ambiguous. Ilabaca’s use of the term here illuminates rather than occludes the implications of race women’s livelihoods in this working-class neighborhood. Mainstream representations would have the public believe that Chile is an Aryan nation, but in this song, Ilabaca disputes this characterization by narrating an intersubjective experience of precarity and bringing light to the daily struggles that many darker, lower-class women face. And yet, it is unclear whether the term “canela” creates room for the experiences of Black or Indigenous women in Valparaíso. Without naming these identities specifically, Ilabaca, who is very fair skinned, does not make fully apparent who she is including in this racial and gender narrative.

Paralleling the dual perspective in the first two stanzas, the video begins with Ilabaca inside her house, peering out through the window over a bleak foggy day. A mournful accordion begins to play a softly punctuated minor drone in the background. At the beginning of the first stanza, the frame changes, and Ilabaca is on a rooftop, staring out over the bay with accordion in hand, singing with the chaotic looking hills in the background (Figure 3.6). However, by the beginning of the second phrase when the narrative changes to second person, the frame pans between Ilabaca on the roof, now with her band, and women around the neighborhood hanging laundry or simply staring out over their balconies (Figure 3.7). As this transition begins, the drummer, clarinet, and saxophone add undulating riffs that move gradually along with the walking bass line, creating a feeling of slow motion, or of drudgery, almost a dirge.

⁶³ Pascuala Ilabaca – “Lamenta la canela” 2010 – Video Oficial (Accessed 28 January 2021).
<https://youtu.be/dUUnZtTv2DE>



Figure 3.6 Still from music video "Lamenta la canela"



Figure 3.7 Still from music video "Lamenta la canela"

Moving to the third stanza, the horn riffs are transposed to higher registers and the tempo accelerates. After a climactic pause, a new accompaniment riff, circular and driving, is introduced before Ilabaca begins to sing. Impassioned and discontent, her vocals elide one line into another as she repeats, “Constance was watered down / passion was burned / patience was assailed / love was cut off!” In the next stanza, however, “fractility” becomes her source of refuge, terror, and passion—a complicated, partial resolution. This abstract yet compelling image of a fractal conveys a sentiment of unfinished jaggedness and endless possibility which is portrayed in striking contrast with the everyday. As these two stanzas are being sung, more brief images of women cutting vegetables, folding clothes, or simply smoking in their bathrobe appear in counterpoint to the band—now playing loudly in an abandoned space full of rubble tucked between buildings (Figure 3.8). Towards the end of the fourth stanza, the group members are also shown playing on porches, steps, alleyways, abandoned lots, and other quotidian places immersed in the labyrinthine urban neighborhood. The world of performance and the world of the neighborhood are bridged as curious onlookers—men, women, and children—react to the music. Some smirk with annoyance. Some grin with enthusiasm. Some begin clapping along. Regardless, all are engaging with the disruption.



Figure 3.8 Still from music video "Lamenta la canela"

Entering the final stanza, the horns and drumset drop out as Ilabaca sings, "Happiness... / if you don't want it, you won't have it / you won't have it, if you don't want it..." As this phrase is repeated, band members and neighborhood onlookers exchange smiles and looks of joy as they tap spoons together in lively, syncopated rhythms. Enfolded within this percussive accompaniment, Ilabaca's lyrics come as a release. Rambling through alleyways and overlapping houses, happiness appears as a meandering journey, often fleeting and punctuated by monotony and heartbreak. This emotional engagement with the city both disrupts and celebrates the feminine quotidian.

It is impossible for me to watch this video without thinking of Michel de Certeau's "Walking in the City." Written from the vantage point of the World Trade Center in New York, De Certeau speaks of having a "voyeuristic" vantage point on the "walkers" navigating the streets far below (De Certeau 1984: 91). He frames the many streets and pathways as a hegemonic structure of power enacting discipline on the inhabitants' spatial navigation of the city. The walkers, however, are not necessarily bound by these structures, and in fact enact spatial "tactics" which work within while also subverting the disciplining power (De Certeau 1984: 96). In this video, Ilabaca goes through multiple transitions between lofty vantage points and embeddedness in less-occupied spaces, placing herself within the intimate ordeals of the neighborhood. Rather than moving through the famously winding streets or ascensores (lifts), she departs from her own home and moves through a network of rooftops and windows, alleyways and porches, none of which correspond with city infrastructure, but all of which form daily paths in women's lives. This fantasized mapping of multiple and overlapping quotidian spaces disrupts the distinction of home and city space. The conjuncture of images, perspectives, places, and sounds that Ilabaca brings together in this music video reveals how private, often feminized spaces are inevitably lived and experienced in connection with other spaces, both real and imagined.

Ilabaca's relational attunement to space and place expands what Steven Feld describes as "acoustemology" by centering a gendered understanding of space and place. According to Feld, "Acoustemology figures in stories of sounding as heterogeneous contingent relating; stories of

sounding as cohabiting; stories where sound figures the ground of difference—radical or otherwise—and what it means to attend and attune; to live with listening to *that*” (Feld 2015: 15). In Ilabaca’s singing and playing through each space, we hear how the whisper of the accordion becomes the solitude of the kitchen or the lone vista over deteriorating hilltop houses; the lilting walk of the bass and drum set become the slow movements of women’s daily routines; and the horn section’s loud and vibrant improvisations become an adventure through rubble, crooked staircases, and doorways—perhaps an imagined escape. In each scene, we hear how these places are known through connection. Yet, this video expresses more than a cerebral knowledge of lived environment. Ilabaca’s experience of place—of home—as represented in this performance is tactile, affective, and embodied in racialized, gendered experiences (Rouet 2019). In the final frame, Ilabaca is shown from behind, gently sweeping a balcony while gazing out over the ocean—the most mundane of tasks bound up with the endless possibility of the horizon. This unsettled conclusion reminds viewers that home cannot be contained within one sphere, and neither is it always a place of comfort or rest. Indeed, other pieces from Ilabaca’s audiovisual work demonstrate that her re-imagining of “home” has also been achieved through a re-examination of her homeland, the many territories of Chile.

Homeland

In the 2012 series *Territorios Imaginados (Imagined Territories)*, directed by Rodrigo Cepeda and Sergio Navarro, Pascuala Ilabaca shares re-imaginings of Chilean landscapes scarred by colonial and environmental destruction. Although the promotional materials name “six landscapes” that distinguish the cities and regions presented in each episode, within and throughout each part of this series, there are a multitude of spatial scales which are unearthed and reframed—from architectural details to large terrestrial formations. This six-part documentary is based on interviews with local visual artists, historians, and even dancers. They illuminate the sentimental attachments inhabitants have for these territories as well as the interconnected geopolitical forces that have manipulated them and the natural disasters that have transformed them. Each episode presents a decolonial rendering of its respective landscape by presenting narratives that counter the erasures of settler colonialism. Episodes one and four on Iquique and El Maule present particularly rich commentaries on the ways women and Indigenous communities understand and engage with their surroundings in the midst of hostile political and geological forces.

Episode one on Iquique, a port city in the extreme North of Chile, explores an area that has remained a hub of industry since mining began in the region in the late 1800s.⁶⁴ Here, Pascuala interviews María José Muñoz, an artist who creates video installations that question the colonial history of Iquique. Her 2010 installation “Irredento” (“Unrepentant”) features a woman alone on a boat performing a version of the cachimbo, a musical and dance style prohibited after the occupation of Tarapaca that followed the War of the Pacific. According to Muñoz, the setting on the boat, with the dancer being rocked by the waves, demonstrates the instability of the official history of this region, and the dance retells experiences of displacement, loss, and intergenerational grief that remains unresolved. After the War of the Pacific (1879-1884), by Muñoz’s account, Peruvian citizens in this area were forced to abandon their homes and their

⁶⁴ “Territorios Imaginados: Iquique” (accessed January 29, 2021). <https://youtu.be/Bzbi3rE2Fyc>

livelihoods. If they chose to stay, many changed their names and hid any cultural practices which could connect them to Peru or Indigenous culture. To continue exploring the erasure of Indigenous culture in this region, Pascuala then interviews Rosa Quispe, an Aymara woman and self-described “cultora” or “keeper” of Aymara music, language, and other traditions. Together with Ilabaca, Quispe and her musical partner Mauricio Novoa perform a huayno passed down in her family called “Achachi condor” or “The Old Condor,” meant to teach children the names of various animals in Aymara. The huayno, according to Quispe, is considered by many to be the “national music” of this region, and she sees her work as part of a larger ethos of “ayni,” an Aymara term describing a sense of responsibility and reciprocity towards one’s culture.

To close the episode, Ilabaca performs a piece off her first album entitled “Ay mamita, mamita.” “Mamita” is a term of endearment meant to show respect to the matriarchal status of Indigenous women, especially those from the Andean regions of Northern Chile, Peru, and Bolivia. In this song, Pascuala has an imagined encounter with an elder Indigenous woman whom she both reveres and fears, for she is understood to hold powers over darkness and other mysteries of the natural world.

Ay mamita, mamita Déjame tocar tu trenza Sombrero de terciopelo Morenada fortaleza	Ay mamita, mamita Let me touch your braid Hat of velvet Darkened ⁶⁵ fortitude
Te rolaré tabaquito Pa que me cuente un secreto Enrolame en tu mantita Destrozame el esqueleto	I’ll roll you a bit of tobacco so that you might tell me a secret wrap me in your shawl destroy my structure
Ay mamita, mamita Reina de la oscuridad Me entrego con inocencia O usted me ve la maldad?	Ay mamita, mamita Queen of darkness I come to you with innocence But do you see my wickedness?
Me llené toda de maqui Me rompí hueso por hueso La flor del cactus me sana Con su desértico beso	I filled myself with maqui ⁶⁶ I broke myself bone by bone The cactus blossom heals me with its kiss of the desert

In these lyrics, Ilabaca implicates herself as an outsider—someone who has benefited from colonial systems which exploit Indigenous communities. Yet she also offers herself to be destroyed and rebuilt with Indigenous epistemologies. Ilabaca’s piece is an imperfect musical offering, but one which conveys clearly that she has witnessed not only the ways Indigenous women, their culture, and livelihoods are threatened and erased in this region, but also the ways they have shown resilience and fortitude in the face of generations of violence and cultural trauma. Far from a diminutive address, I see Ilabaca’s veneration of “la mamita” as an attempt at building intimacy and solidarity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women.

⁶⁵ “Morenada,” translated above as “darkened” comes from the term “moreno,” a racial descriptor meaning “dark” or “brown.” The “morenada” is also the name of a Bolivian folk dance thought to have emerged from Aymara and mestizo carnival practices critiquing Spanish colonizers and their exploitation of Black slaves (Rosoff 2016).

⁶⁶ A dark purple medicinal berry native to Chile and Argentina.

Conversely, in the fourth episode focused on the Maule River basin near the south-central city of Talca, Ilabaca attempts to humanize a region that has often been at the center of anti-Indigenous sentiment in Chile.⁶⁷ At the beginning of the episode, Ilabaca arrives at the O'Higgins Museum of Talca, and the director, Alejandro Morales explains that the city was originally formed in the eighteenth century as a strategic military site between Santiago, the capital, and unceded Mapuche territory in the south. According to Morales, because of this, throughout the history of Chile the region has been romanticized as a frontier of modernization. The devastating effects of settler colonialism are often erased or downplayed. In addition to this fraught history, the area has also suffered from some of the largest earthquakes in the world. With every quake, Director Morales believes, the process of destruction and reconstruction forces inhabitants in the region to confront their idiosyncrasies and re-acquaint themselves with their homeland.

The epicenter of the most recent earthquake in 2010 was located just off the coast near the city of Constitución which lies along the delta where the Maule River spills into the ocean. Narrating her journey to the site of this catastrophic event, Pascuala solemnly recounts, "I go to finish this journey in the farthest reaches of the Maule, which has become a ghostly crossing... I arrive in Constitución, which is no longer a port, no longer come and go. I'll go to Orrego Island (in the Maule River delta) to listen to the voices of the dozens of Chileans who lost their lives during the fateful earthquake—here, February 27, 2010." Alone on the banks of the delta ravaged by a devastating tsunami which followed the 8.8 magnitude earthquake that day, Ilabaca sings her a cappella piece, "La luna llena" ("The Full Moon") expressing both profound love and immense loss, as well as a yearning for the impossible.

"La luna llena"

Yo te di un beso en la frente
Y después te di otro en los pies
Pa' que arreglés la sonrisa
Así no te quiero ver

La luna llena, la luna llena
Me desperté de cabeza
Me tropecé con la miel,
La abrí con una cuchilla

Como si fueras sandía
Como si fuerai panal
Hay que partirte a pedazos
Pa' que te dejés amar

La luna llena, la luna llena
Me desperté de cabeza
Me tropecé con la miel,
La abrí con una cuchilla

Ando penando por un milagro
Ando buscando un amor extraño
Ando llorando por un panal
Donde dejé mi cuchillo

"The Full Moon"

I kissed your forehead
Then kissed you again on your feet
So that you might fix your smile
I don't want to see you like this

The full moon, the full moon
I awakened upside down
I tripped in the honey
I opened it with a blade

As if you were watermelon
As if you were honeycomb
You must be split into pieces
To allow yourself to be loved

The full moon, the full moon
I awakened upside down
I tripped in the honey
I opened it with a blade

I go pining for a miracle
I go searching for a strange love
I go crying for a honeycomb
Where I left my knife

⁶⁷ "Territorios Imaginados: Talca" (Accessed February 2, 2021) <https://youtu.be/64h1kB2q9p0>

The camera sweeps over tattered boats, some of which are beached on the dark sand along the river. Two pelicans glide low and ominous over the grey water, perhaps prophesying safe passage to the afterlife.⁶⁸ A change of frame, then a close-up reveals the façade of a crumbling brick building. The roof is caved in and wooden beams protrude hazardously towards the sky.

In this setting, Pascuala's song rings out as an effort to understand the desolation, the destruction, the precarity of the landscape she is encountering. "La luna llena" is like a fever dream in which the singer finds her beloved has been transmogrified, just as this beloved landscape has been undone and irrevocably transformed—by centuries of environmental exploitation, genocide of Indigenous peoples, and natural disaster. Ana Lowenhaupt Tsing describes this sort of searching and imagining amidst destruction, stating, "To live with precarity requires more than railing at those who put us here (although that seems useful too, and I'm not against it). We might look around to notice this strange new world, and we might stretch our imaginations to grasp its contours" (Tsing 2015: 3). Stretching her imagination, Pascuala Ilabaca seems to transpose the voices of those who lost their lives due to the earthquake or to colonial violence into a register which we can almost understand, but not quite. Their voices are still just beyond the horizon of our senses, and of this territory. Yet, in the act of listening to the cacophonous destruction of the earthquake's aftermath, Ilabaca's song distills this feeling of loss into the very essence of life's succulence and bounty—watermelon, honeycomb, miraculous love.

III. Street Music and Migration

While much of Pascuala Ilabaca's earlier work centered re-imaginings of home or homeland, her most recent album explores the experiences of women and Indigenous communities in transit or migration and explores the potential street music practices to create spaces of democratic socialization. At the album launch for *El Mito de la Pérgola (The Myth of the Pergola)*, on October 12, 2018, in Teatro Oriente in Santiago, Pascuala Ilabaca and her band Fauna took audience members on a spellbinding visual and musical journey. As attendees filed expectantly into the auditorium, we were greeted with a mesmerizing backdrop—a fantastical oasis emerging within a pergola set in a charred, desolate landscape. Cut outs of hand painted creatures hung from the rafters, adorning the front of the stage as they stared intently out into the crowd (Figure 3.11). This album was inspired by the rhythms of street music and the sounds of plazas, markets, and other public spaces around the world. The ten tracks feature musical genres that have been central to the organization of marginalized communities and people's movements throughout Latin America. These include the Mexican son jarocho, fanfarria (brass band music), Andean carnival practices, milonga, barrel organ, and even the sounds of the chichin, a drum set designed to be worn on one's back and played by dancing to pull the levers which strike the drumheads. Chinchineros (chichin players) are notorious for their performances in parks, plazas, and subway stations in Santiago and Valparaiso.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Historians of ancient Egypt believe pelicans were revered as guardians of the transition between life and death (Hart 2005).

⁶⁹ Pascuala Ilabaca y Fauna. 2018. *El Mito de la Pérgola*, Petit Indie.



Figure 3.9 *El Mito de la Pégola* album launch, Santiago. October 12, 2018. Photo by the author.

According to Pascuala, this album reclaims public space for the people by proposing a myth in which popular art, marginalized parts of humanity, and endangered species are rescued and placed in the center of a plaza, imagined as the center of social power. In this mythology, the art and people and species guarded within this pergola heal a society and a planet desecrated by political violence and pollution.⁷⁰ Drawing on rich visual, auditory, and historical narratives, this album not only re-imagines the political power of public spaces, but also, by centering experiences of movement and migration, names and proposes ways to heal intergenerational trauma caused by war, natural disasters, and capitalist oppression. In other words, it asks listeners to consider how to find home in a foreign place, or a place that is being made unlivable.

To bring the visual mythology to life, Pascuala turned to her younger sister, Danila Ilabaca, an artist whose primary medium is collage. She designed the album artwork (Figure 3.12) which the concert scenography was based on. The black and white area is a collage of dying places such the Atacama Desert lost to erosion, or the city of Berlin broken and bombarded after the Second World War. The center, a collage in full color, is a mythical space where characters and creatures worth preserving exist unharmed. There is an extinct animal staring at an animal in danger of extinction, a female soldier from the Zapatista army, Peruvian singer Yma Sumac, a chinchinero, a Hindu god, tropical flora and fauna, an Indigenous man playing a flute. All of these beings represent forms of life which should be valued, which are worth being in the center of society.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Pascuala Ilabaca, interview with the author. October 15, 2018. Also see YouTube video description – “Pascuala Ilabaca y Fauna - El Mito de la Pégola (Álbum Completo)” (Accessed February 9, 2021). <https://youtu.be/XPck1Y1Hpww>

⁷¹ Pascuala Ilabaca, interview with the author. October 15, 2018.



Figure 3.10 *El Mito de la Pérgola*, album artwork by Danila Ilabaca

The rich visual narrative as well as the music shared in this album reframe the value of public spaces by centering musical and artistic practices born out of social gatherings across lines of socioeconomic background. These practices are shown to be the sustenance of life and a creative expression of democracy. In the album launch, for example, Pascuala and the band worked hard to create an event which would dignify the work of street artists who have been so influential on their personal, political, and musical development. “While I was doing all the press to promote the event,” she said, “the journalists kept asking me, ‘who are your guest artists?’ expecting that I would give them the name of some famous person, as if other musicians didn’t have the same value. In our performance, I think that we made people really feel the value of street art in Chile, and [demonstrated] that this is part of our identity.”⁷² Undoubtedly, appearances at the live event and in the album by street performers such as a chichinero and barrel organist, both of whom play instruments which are deeply associated with parks and plazas in Chile, reoriented the public’s understanding of the spaces these sounds can occupy. Heard onstage or through headphones, they resonate in the center of an imagined national community (Anderson 2006).

Other tracks broaden the audible entanglements (Guilbault 2005) of the album’s mythology by incorporating public, participatory sounds from other parts of Latin America. For example, the lively track, “Son de la vida” (“Song of Life”), is written in the style of a Mexican son jarocho, a music and dance practice which emerged amongst communities of former African slaves in the coastal state of Veracruz (Díaz-Sánchez & Hernández 2013). As a call and response

⁷² Pascuala Ilabaca, interview with the author. October 15, 2018.

genre, the son jarocho lends itself well to audience participation in the lyrical narrative, and “Son de la vida” invites audiences to ironically disrupt the finality of death by claiming that life and the toils of work suck us so dry that in the end, nothing is left for death to consume.

“Son de la vida”

Mira cómo viene un perro
Mira cómo viene un perro
Alguien lo dejó en el camino
Tan fiel que le había sido a un niño, el perro

Mira cómo se va un viejo
Mira cómo se va un viejo
Un día ya avanzó su turno
Tan fiel que le había sido al mundo, el viejo

La vida te toma la mano
Mañana te agarra del pie
Pasado te ha chupado entero
La vida no le dejó nada a la muerte

¿Cuántos clavos he clavado?
¿Cuántos árboles regué?
¿Cuántas papas he pelado?
¿Cuántas cuentas ya pagué?

Todos mis zapatos gastados
Los guardé para que veas
Que me porté bien

“Song of Life”

Look, here comes a dog
Look, here comes a dog
Someone left along the road
So loyal it had been to a child, this dog

Look, there goes an old man
Look, there goes an old man
One day his turn came
So loyal he was to the world, the old man

Life takes you by the hand
tomorrow it grabs you by the foot
the past has sucked you dry
Life left nothing for death

How many nails have I hammered?
How many trees did I water?
How many potatoes have I peeled?
How many debts have I paid?

All my shoes worn out
I saved them so you could see
that I behaved well⁷³

It was impossible for the audience at the album launch to keep from clapping along and singing the chorus “The past has sucked you dry / life left nothing for death,” everyone cathartically and collectively re-envisioning the pain of life as a source of pride and victory. Just as son jarocho had once sustained communities of former Black slaves in Mexico (Díaz-Sánchez & Hernández 2013), here, it once again became a way to value the energy that goes into living. In this light, even the most mundane and quotidian forms of work become small acts of resistance, providing dignity and helping to relieve the fear of death.

The track “El Baile del Kkoyaruna” (“The Dance of the Miner”), however, is the piece which has resonated most with listeners throughout Chile, Latin America, and even the United States. The song was released as a music video single on June 15, 2018, and to date, it has received over 1.7 million views on YouTube.⁷⁴ The visuals depict an Indigenous man who is leaving his home and walking a long road through the mountains to go work in a mine. However, he is followed by a troupe of singers and dancers who represent the culture he will always carry with him. As Pascuala explains in the YouTube video description,

This song is dedicated to so many people who leave their hometown, their family to look for a job. This poetry wants to remind you that you can leave a geographical territory, but your origin, your myth, will be with you wherever you are. In the video, the “Kkoyaruna” (“miner” in Quechua language), is accompanied by a carnival on the way to the mine, the masked dancers

⁷³ Pascuala Ilabaca y Fauna. 2018. *El Mito de la Pérgola*, Petit Indie.

⁷⁴ Pascuala Ilabaca y Fauna – “El Baile del Kkoyaruna (Video Oficial)” (Accessed February 1, 2021) <https://youtu.be/eCjXOKL6FKo>

and musicians, we remind you that through the Carnival rite you can clean up the degradation of work and connect with your root.⁷⁵

The costumed performers that accompany Pascuala Ilabaca y Fauna in this video represent *Comparsa La Gritona*,⁷⁶ a troupe based in Valparaíso which Pascuala herself used to perform in and which has been highly active in political movements in the city for the past fifteen years since the student uprisings of 2006.

According to Pascuala, “comparsas” or troupes of street performers, are now a deeply entrenched part of Valparaíso’s musical culture. They were originally influenced by Andean carnival comparsas which would travel to Valparaiso during the *Fiesta de San Pedro y San Pablo*, also referred to as the “Festival of Fisherman” that occurs every year in June and draws comparsas from the far north. However, she contends that the comparsas such as “La Gritona” which have emerged in Valparaiso are now much more secular and politicized.

[The comparsa in Valparaiso] mixed so much with Andean culture because here in Valparaiso there exists what is called The Festival of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, which is the festival of fisherman. Every year they decorate their boats and comparsas come from all over Chile. They dance in the streets and then they get on the boats and perform out in the water. It is a beautiful festival in June. And so, this led Valparaíso to absorb much of the carnival culture of the North... but here it has a more bohemian side, and explores more of the diabolical, sexual aspects. I think in that regard it is more a practice of liberation. There’s a song for example which was created by the comparsas of Valparaíso which goes, “Hey porteño! Don’t be scared when you see / The student in the street / [fighting] for a free education.”⁷⁷

Pascuala described these liberatory practices as acts in which “the people” themselves create a collective composition which speaks back to the people and explains their political necessities.⁷⁸

“El Baile del Kkoyaruna” speaks back to the people, especially those of Indigenous ancestry, by figuratively returning to the street and celebrating “rites, myths, dances, flutes, and masks” which are part of Andean rituals which have historically been repressed, appropriated, or used to misrepresent these Indigenous cultures as uncivilized. The lyrics also blend Quecha words with Spanish, celebrating the vitality and depth of this language.

“El Baile del Kkoyaruna”

Mi mino-minoría
Se resiste, resiste
Tengo un mito que me hace calmo
Tengo un rito que me hace rico
Tengo un baile que me hace santo
Tengo un siku (flauta) que está bendito
La mine-minería
Se llevó mi warmimasi* (amor/pareja)
Llora mi warmisunku *(corazón)
Sin mi compañera
Mi dignidad en moneda
Se gasta como una rueda
Se rueda como la tierra

“The Dance of the Kkoyaruna (Miner)”

My minority
Does resist, does resistance
I have a myth that makes me calm
I have a rite that makes me rich
I have a dance that makes me holy
I have a siku (flute) that is blessed
The mine-mining
Took my warmimasi (love/couple)
My warmisunku (heart) cries
Without my partner
My dignity for money
It is wasted like a wheel
It rolls like the earth

⁷⁵ English translation by Pascuala Ilabaca

⁷⁶ “Gritona” translates most directly as “loudmouthed.”

⁷⁷ Pascuala Ilabaca, interview with the author. October 15, 2018.

⁷⁸ Pascuala Ilabaca, interview with the author. October 15, 2018.

Girando malherida
Pero cuando hay carnaval
Mi saynata* (máscara)
Me sanará
Takina Kkoyaruna (Canta minero)
Tusuna Kkoyaruna (baila minero)

Turning badly hurt
But when there is Carnival
My saynata (mask)
It will heal me
Takina Kkoyaruna (sing miner)
Tusuna Kkoyaruna (dance miner)⁷⁹

The video, filmed all in one shot, opens with a grandiose horn line and quena as the protagonist begins his journey, rising at dawn to depart for a mining job. As he continues walking, the guitar and percussion quietly begin to play a carnivalito rhythm common in Andean comparsas. Their steady “ta-taka ta-taka” is accompanied by the walking bass, which propels the miner’s journey. Gradually, more horns, accordion, and singers enter, building to a final, riotous celebration. All the while, the miner stares ahead and walks un-flinching towards his destination (Figure 3.13). When the song ends, the entire group stops, and the camera zooms out. The miner, surrounded by the comparsa, shrinks into the looming hills of of Cerro La Campana, the site of an old mine outside Valparaíso, a visual representation of the cultural roots he carries with him from this landscape (Figure 3.14).



Figure 3.11 Still from music video "El Baile del Kkoyaruna"

⁷⁹ English translation by Pascuala Ilabaca with minor edits by the author



Figure 3.12 Still from music video "El Baile del Kkoyaruna"

Many commenters on YouTube have given high praise to this video, sharing the ways in which they feel it values parts of their heritage which were erased by the Spanish conquest and the largely white colonialist governments it left in place. User Demins I B Mamani, for example, shared, “This is beautiful because no matter where I go, I feel discriminated against because of my features, the words I use, and my even-tempered demeanor. But I know that behind me there is a whole beautiful treasure of culture, mathematics, architecture, music, platonic harmony, religion and philosophy with Mother Earth” (Figure 3.15). His comment was liked 755 times and received thirty-three replies.

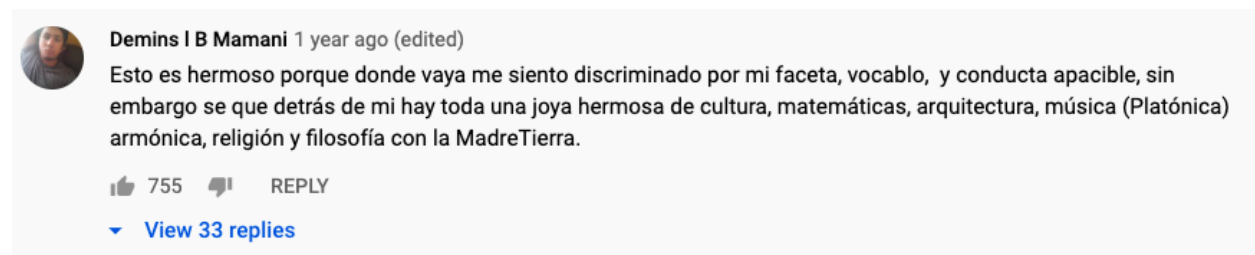


Figure 3.13 Screenshot of public comment on YouTube video "El Baile del Kkoyaruna" (Taken February 5, 2021)

However, the video’s use of Indigenous words, imagery, sounds, and dance also generated significant controversy on this forum. Some comments were harsh in their criticism of the racial and class differences portrayed between Pascuala and the male Indigenous protagonist, and even those viewers who were more sympathetic noted that her appearance took away from the focus on the protagonist (Figure 3.16).



Figure 3.14 Still from music video "El Baile del Kkoyaruna"

Comments on Pascuala's appearance in the video generated significant discussion about representation and appropriation. User Almudena Ortega, for example, shared, "Beautiful. But doesn't it bother you all that it's a white woman receiving the applause? I doubt that in the USA Black people would watch a white woman "validating" their folklore without protesting. This is a serious question." To which user Angelo Arcos responded, "My friend, this is an absolute piece of art. The interpretations you can make out of the message are multiple, and your evaluation is just one more. The vast majority of the comments find value in the cultural preservation Pascuala is doing. I'll leave it at that, from afar" (Figure 3.17).

Almudena Ortega 7 months ago (edited)
Hermoso. Pero no les chirría q sea una mujer blanca la q se lleve los aplausos? Dudo q en USA los negros vieran a una rubia "valorizando" el folklore africano sin protestar. Y es pregunta seria

👍 🗨️ REPLY

▲ [Hide 2 replies](#)

Sasha Mmperez 7 months ago
Pff que les gusta wrbear ah

👍 🗨️ REPLY

Angelo Arcos 6 months ago
Amiga, esto es una pieza de arte absoluta. Las interpretaciones que se pueden hacer del mensaje son múltiples y tu apreciación es sólo una más. Gran mayoría de los comentarios tienden a dar valor al rescate cultural que hace Pascuala. Yo me quedo con eso, por lejos!

👍 🗨️ REPLY

Figure 3.15 Screenshot of public comments on YouTube video "El Baile del Kkoyaruna" (Taken February 9, 2021)

Indeed, out of the 1,408 comments which have been made on the YouTube video to date, most express deep enthusiasm or gratitude at the fact that the video validates elements of Indigenous culture which have been systematically and violently erased in the majority of the Americas. This is not to say Pascuala's positionality as a white woman representing Indigenous culture

should not give viewers pause. Rather, it demonstrates that through these very imperfections and imbalances in representation, the video has struck a chord helping viewers grapple with their mixed ethnic identities and their loss of direct connection to a shared Indigenous past.

During her tours, Pascuala found that this song resonated with people around the world who have lost connections to their past due to migration, violence, or forced assimilation. Reflecting on her tour through the United States in 2018, she remarked,

The single from [*El Mito de la Pérgola*] is “El Baile del Kkoyaruna” and it speaks precisely about people who have to leave behind their roots to go and work somewhere else. And that is the history of the United States! So, with that song, there was a deeper connection with the people [than I’d had on previous tours there]. For example, when we were at the International Folk Art Market in Santa Fe, we played inside a pergola in the plaza, and I saw in the eyes of each person, that everyone—their grandparents or themselves—came from somewhere else, and they have rites... They have fears activated and don’t know where they came from, and they have to try and discover [these fears] to liberate themselves from them. It made me realize how universal the themes from the album are.⁸⁰

By celebrating these rites, born in the street and sustained by popular memory, Pascuala Ilabaca orients listeners towards an understanding of home grounded in travel and in transience. By showing the public how to find home in a space of movement, this project provides an avenue to heal intergenerational traumas endured through forced migration and cultural erasure. Though Pascuala’s intervention in this piece is deeply informed by local territorial histories, it speaks to a world that has been divided by borders and asks listeners to remember that we all came from somewhere else, and we all are accountable to one another.

IV. Postlude: “Compañeras, to the Beat”

During our final interview in October 2018, after nearly six months of feminist uprisings around the country, I asked Pascuala, “What role do you feel music should or could play in these ongoing feminist struggles?” to which she responded,

I love Latin American folklore, but there are so many genres that are bound by machismo. I don’t think those genres or those rhythms should be lost, and so I think women have a tremendous responsibility to create new lyrics which don’t perpetuate machismo. I feel responsible for making sure that women don’t learn to suffer with my songs, and I feel that that should form part of the modus operandi for current singer-songwriters. For example, now I’ve been composing new songs which are all “anti.” There’s an anti-violent cumbia, an anti-possessive ranchera... I see this as similar to anti-folklore, so that’s what I’m working on—studying rhythms full of machismo that need new lyrics to renew them so they’re not lost.⁸¹

By re-imagining these musical practices without their misogynist undertones, she proposes a way to maintain ties to cultural identities that are not patriarchal. In other words, similar to the “anti-cuecas” and “anti-poems” of the Parras, ultimately, Ilabaca’s goal in creating this “anti-folklore” is to reject the heteropatriarchal and classist tendencies that run deep in so much traditional music from Latin America, but to do so in a way that still honors the unique historical and social value of these cultural traditions.

⁸⁰ Pascuala Ilabaca, interview with the author. October 15, 2018.

⁸¹ Pascuala Ilabaca, interview with the author. October 15, 2018.

This interview happened almost a year to the day before the beginning of the massive 2019 uprisings that sparked the Chile Despertó movement demanding radical political and economic redistribution and the abolition of Chile's militarized police force. It was a year before President Sebastian Piñera declared war on his own citizens and imposed martial law for the first time since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship, and a year before feminist collective Las Tesis from Valparaiso shook the world with their performative rejection of structural patriarchy and sexual violence. During this volatile time, feminist activists especially were targeted by police and counter protestors. Dozens were threatened, physically assaulted, or even killed.

In response to a brutal attack on Pamela Contreras, a former spokesperson of the prominent feminist collective Coordinadora 8M (March 8th Coordinator), Pascuala Ilabaca composed the powerful milonga "Compañeras al compás" ("Compañeras, to the Beat") for voice and string quartet, which laments the constant danger women face as they confront ongoing political violence.

"Compañeras al compás"

Mi vecinita sale a la calle
vestida en carnaval
quiere bailar la vida
porque en su casa la pasa mal
pega en su cara una lentejuela
con forma de Luna
borda en su falda el nombre que
llevó una hermana muerta

Así como las aves vuelan
haciendo formas
vi formarse en la calle
un círculo de palomas.

Mi vecinita sale a la calle
vestida de negro
quiere luchar la vida
porque su abuela la pasa mal
tapa su cara porque en la calle
una bomba la espera
su mamá se retuerce
al no saber si volverá

Así como las aves vuelan
haciendo formas
vi formarse en la calle
un círculo de palomas
el metal es tan frío
que nunca siente piedad
unas palomas caen y las otras vuelan,
unas palomas caen y las otras vuelan.

Al compás compañeras, al compás
esta es nuestra pena y nuestra lucha
al compás compañeras, al compás
este es nuestro canto y nuestra lucha
al compás compañeras, al compás

"Compañeras, to the Beat"

My neighbor goes out to the street
dressed for Carnival
she wants to dance life
because she has a bad time at home
she sticks on her face a sequin
in the shape of a moon
embroiders on her skirt
the name of a dead sister

Just as the birds fly
making shapes
I saw take shape in the street
A circle of doves

My neighbor goes out in the street
dressed in black
she wants to fight life
because her grandmother has a hard time
she covers her face because in the street
a bomb waits for her
her mother writhes
not knowing if she will return

Just as the birds fly
making shapes
I saw take shape in the street
a circle of doves
the metal is so cold
that it never feels mercy
some doves fall and the others fly,
some doves fall and the others fly.

To the beat, compañeras, to the beat
this is our grief and our struggle
to the beat, compañeras, to the beat
this is our song and our fight
to the beat, compañeras, to the beat

Este es nuestro fuego y nuestra lucha
Al compás compañeras, al compás
Este es nuestro fuego.

this is our fire and our fight
to the beat, compañeras, to the beat
This is our fire.⁸²

The music video, released March 1, 2020, was filmed in an alleyway in Valparaíso. Pascuala sings, surrounded by the string quartet, and is slowly joined by women from various sectors of the feminist movements. Pamela Contreras herself appears bearing the emblematic green handkerchief of the pro-abortion activists. Another woman adorns herself in the carnivalistic attire of a comparsa. A Black woman and a woman masked in the style of participants in the 2018 university tomas also appear with the ensemble (Figure 3.18).

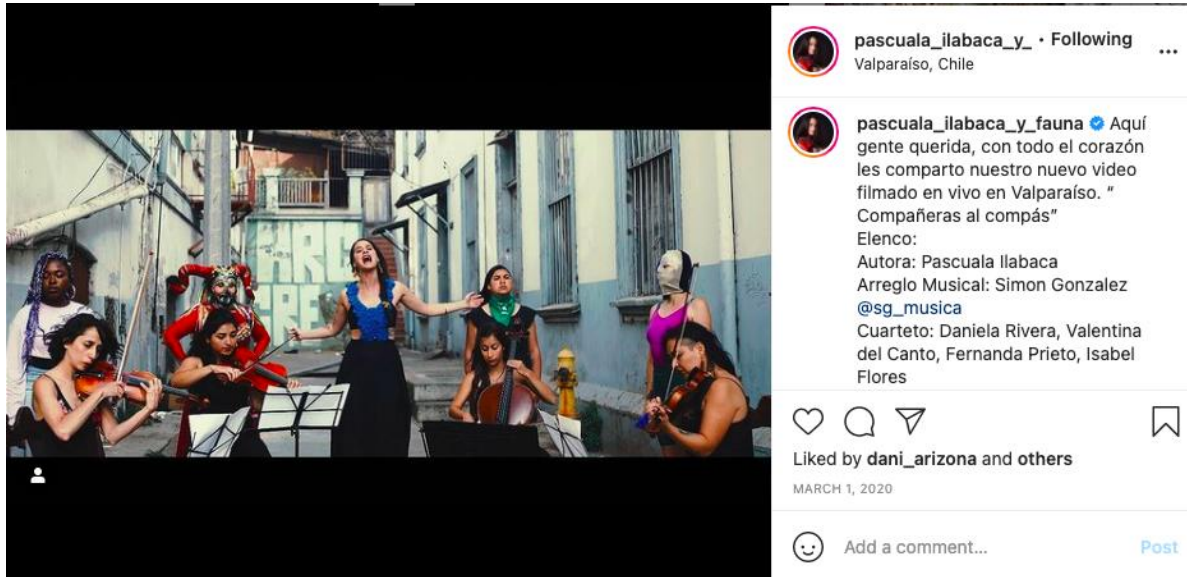


Figure 3.16 Screenshot of public Instagram post. Taken March 1, 2020.

After telling the story of two women moved to join the struggle in the streets, in the final stanza, Pascuala repeats, each time with building intensity, “Compañeras al compás... este es nuestra lucha” (“Compañeras, to the beat... this is our fight”). Finally, she calls out, “Este es nuestro fuego” (“This is our fire”). The strings rise in a sharp glissando, then cut into silence, their bows pointed fearlessly in the air. This piece of feminist “anti-folklore” evocatively captures the social re-ordering which transpired in Chile between 2019-2020. But, in hindsight, its release on the precipice of a global pandemic—one which in many ways forced the world into deeper isolation—stands as a testament to the power of witnessing and of presence.

⁸² Pascuala Ilabaca – “Compañeras al Compás (Video Oficial)” (Accessed February 1, 2021) <https://youtu.be/-OMrWearaRs>. English Translations by Pascuala Ilabaca with minor editing by the author.

Chapter 4

Sacando la Voz:

Feminist Solidarity and the Spaciousness of Voice in canto femenino cuequero

Su voz no acepta el canto coral...

Its voice does not accept choral singing...

Margot Loyola in *La Cueca: Danza de la vida y de la muerte*

The evening of March 8, 2018, International Women's Day, I was running through crowds and police barricades towards the Chilean presidential palace, La Moneda. On the southern side of La Moneda, where I had just been marching with a group of artists and activists along Santiago's main thoroughfare, the Alameda, thousands of demonstrators were gathered protesting for women's labor rights, free and secure access to abortion, and an end to sexual harassment and violence. However, knowing that the carabineros, Chile's militarized police force, could begin violent interventions to disperse the crowd at any moment, my friends and I determined it was time to leave, and I decided to attempt entering the concert happening on the northern side of La Moneda, in the Plaza de la Constitución. The concert had been framed as a celebration of cantautoras (women singer-songwriters), but implicitly it was designed by the outgoing government to commemorate the end of Chile's first woman president, Michelle Bachelet's, second term of office. This event was supposedly free and open to the public, but in actuality it was heavily guarded by carabineros in full riot gear and armored vehicles. Many people who had been at the march were being turned away as they attempted to pass through the barricades to enter the other side of La Moneda where the event was taking place. Even knowing the privilege I had as a United States citizen with temporary residency status in Chile, I was laden with anxiety as I felt the carabineros' scrutinizing stare for several agonizing moments before finally being let in.

Once inside, attendees were welcomed with paper programs and promotional videos professing the great strides President Bachelet's administration had made in advancing the rights of women. Special celebration was being made of the legalization of abortion during her administration, despite the fact that it had only been legalized in three extreme cases and that even in these instances many health care providers were refusing the service. None of the singers throughout the evening took quite the same celebratory tone, but neither did they perform or say anything explicitly critical of her administration. Politically speaking, it could not have felt more different from the demonstration I had just left.

The final act in the concert, Flor de Juanas, was introduced as a women's cueca ensemble.⁸³ Cueca is a musical, poetic, and dance form with roots dating back to at least the nineteenth century, and it has several regional variations throughout Chile. However, given the setting at the presidential palace, I expected to see some form of the cueca declared Chile's

⁸³ For a full video of this performance see, "Flor de Juanas – Día Internacional de la Mujer." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DpIbHXME0aA>

national dance under the Pinochet dictatorship in 1979. This state-endorsed version includes stylized costumes of peasant women and dashing huasos (cowboys), and a couple's dance where partners use handkerchiefs coquettishly in a performance of courtship. This dance is generally accompanied by banal lyrics idealizing the lifestyles of rural, landowning classes in the Central Valley region. But as Flor de Juanas came on to perform, nothing was what I expected, and the audience around me seemed equally surprised.

Over a dozen women formed a single line across front center stage. Their dresses were an explosion of color with floral embroidery and long ribbons adorning their skirts. Their makeup was bold and carnivalesque, and some had ribbons and flowers braided into their hair. The accompaniment went silent, and when they began to sing, a wall of raised voices erupted from the stage declaiming the story of two women who both infamously fell victim to atrocious acts of domestic violence. Each singer gradually raised a red handkerchief to cover her eyes, and as a soloist began the next verse, one woman dressed fully in black moved to the front of the ensemble to perform a *cueca sola*.⁸⁴

Along with the directly critical content of their performance, which was especially powerful given the departing president and other government officials gathered in the audience, I was most impacted by the sheer volume and the shouted, nasal timbre of their voices. Women's *cueca* that I was familiar with up until that point was usually softer, more lyrical, and sung in more of a head voice than a nasal voice. Further, while *cueca* is typically sung in pairs, the second voice harmonizing a third below the melody, the polyphonic choral arrangement of this ensemble was unlike anything I had heard before. Interest piqued, I did a quick social media search and learned that their director, Josi Villanueva, was offering a taller (a community class) on *canto femenino cuequero* (women's *cueca* singing). Specifically, she was teaching women to sing *cueca brava*, an urban form of *cueca* historically performed only by men and which is characterized by these shouted, nasal vocal timbres. Without hesitating, I signed up.

I recount this story at length because it introduces how I came to be a participant-observer in these community *cueca* classes from April-December 2018. As I came to realize, my story is similar to the stories of many women who came to be involved in the classes. After hearing Villanueva or her group Flor de Juanas sing, prospective students report being captivated by their vocal power. However, once in the classes, Villanueva's pedagogical practice of "sacando la voz" often proves a mentally, emotionally, and corporeally draining process. The phrase "sacando la voz" translates most easily into English as lifting or raising one's voice, but more specifically, the Spanish verb "sacar" is frequently used to mean "to draw out" or "to extract." *Sacando la voz*, in this context, then literally means to reach in, find one's voice, and draw it out.

Drawing on my ethnographic experience in Villanueva's classes and the broader urban *cueca* community in Santiago, in this chapter, I analyze the process of "sacando la voz" within the *cueca* tradition as a vocal practice which affords participants with what I call a "spaciousness of voice." By spaciousness of voice, I mean the capacity of sung voices to take up material space

⁸⁴ The *cueca sola* is a solitary version of the *cueca* couple's dance created during Chile's military dictatorship and performed ever since as a way to protest the murder and disappearance of loved ones. The *cueca sola* and its legacy will be described more in depth later in this chapter.

through projection and timbre, and the way this vocal spatiality emplaces singing bodies within social systems. I argue that the vocal spaciousness women achieve through these classes enables them to sonically dismantle the limits imposed on their voice and their bodies in performance spaces—when, for example, they are prevented from singing—while also transforming their collective political sensibility through a vocal performance of feminist solidarity.

On the one hand, this argument addresses an underexplored area in studies of sounded space (Feld 2012; Ochoa 2014) by underscoring that the gendering of sound—particularly voiced sound—directly influences the ways in which built environments and social spaces are acoustically mapped. On the other, it expands the concept of public intimacies, described by Jocelyne Guilbault (2010) as performative practices which reinforce identities and shape interpersonal relationships in spaces of musical performance. In examining the pedagogical practice of “*sacando la voz*” and the spaciousness of voice it affords, I address not only individual vocal practices, but also the interpersonal relationships that are forged or transformed as class and performance spaces are filled with women’s collective song.

Throughout this chapter, I consider why is it that cueca still holds so much relevance for these communities. Why are these women drawn to learning to sing cueca brava, and not to other popular genres? As several Chilean music scholars (Carreño 2010; Spencer 2011; Solís 2013) have indicated, because of its official status as “national music” and its prominence in Chilean fiestas patrias (independence celebrations), cueca constitutes a performance of national identity where hierarchical relationships of sex, class, and ethnicity are played out in highly public spaces. In traditional cueca couples dance forms and in its lyrics, women understood to be of lower class or Indigenous background are framed as objects of desire and of conquest. And though rural cueca commonly featured women singers, within urban cueca spaces in Santiago and the surrounding region, a specific style of vocal projection called “*canto gritado*” (shouted song) became yet one more way in which male dominance was performed. Yet, women have always performed in urban cueca as dancers, instrumentalists and now, increasingly as singers. In fact, as Christian Spencer (2011) has thoroughly documented, women have been actively participating in cueca brava as professional singers and adopting the *canto gritado* timbre since around the early 2000s. In this chapter, I document how Josi Villanueva—formerly one of these professional singers—is now creating opportunities for more women to engage in this practice as amateur community members.

As women intervene in the patriarchal, classist, and heteronormative underpinnings of this national performance practice, they transform understandings of cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 2005) by staging new forms of femininity and *chilenidad* (Chilean-ness). After historicizing women’s voices in Chilean cueca from the nineteenth century to the present, I will use class recordings, individual and group interviews, and performance observations to explore how women’s voices are changing the social spaces of cueca amidst the political upheavals which began with the Chilean feminist student movements of 2018.

I. Canto femenino cuequero Across Time and Place

Most of the women participating in cueca classes during the time of my fieldwork were born approximately between 1980 and 1995, meaning they came of age after the end of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1990. This timing is significant because the seventeen-year military regime was responsible for a generation of cultural erasure and censorship, where *toques de queda* (curfews) eliminated the possibility of public night life and led music-making to become a clandestine practice (Jordán 2009). Inevitably, this history of erasure and silencing shaped how my classmates, instructors, and other informants in Santiago's urban cueca community narrated the history and gender politics of cueca. They frequently draw sharp lines between *cuecas de la dictadura* (of the dictatorship), and cueca urbana and the references they tended to have for female cueca singers were primarily those who have been active since the early 2000s. As I will explain later in the chapter, this changed throughout the course of the year as groups of women from these classes began taking it upon themselves to investigate the longer history of women's role in cueca since the nineteenth century. However, before discussing the shifting memory practices of these urban cueca communities, I will briefly introduce the history and gender politics of cueca as a broader national tradition. I will also explore how vocal practices in these cueca traditions have been intimately connected to race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and understandings of the erotic. My account of cueca here as a cultural practice or set of practices is not meant to be exhaustive.⁸⁵ I am concerned more specifically with addressing how musical, poetic, and choreographic forms of cueca have shaped and been shaped by women's voices and bodies for nearly two centuries.

From Chinganas to Casas de Canto: Mid-Nineteenth to Early-Twentieth Century

Women have had a principal role as singers in cueca since at least the mid-nineteenth century, when cantoras were the main protagonists of rural, outdoor festivities such as rodeos and chinganas (rustic, often open-air taverns). Chinganas were primarily spaces where cueca and other folkloric genres developed in the Central Valley region following Chile's independence. These venues were typically run by single women who took over rural dwellings near areas of transit and subsisted by selling food, drink, lodging, and offering dancing and music to workers or soldiers coming to or from the port of Valparaíso (Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, nd). In these spaces there was also a confluence of criollo (Spanish, often of Arab/Andalusian descent), Indigenous, and Afro-descendent participants (Carreño 2010). In the early twentieth century, with the movement of much of Chile's rural population into urban centers such as Santiago and Valparaíso, these rural festivities gradually became more associated with *casas de canto* (houses of song, also called "casas de remolienda" and "casas de tambo"), which generally were understood to be brothels (Jordán y Rojas 2009; Carreño 2010; Spencer 2011).

Though recordings do not exist from chinganas and *casas de canto* of this era, according to my cueca instructors, classmates, and conversations with other Chilean music scholars, oral histories passed down from these early days indicate that women's singing in these spaces was loud enough and their timbre piercing enough to be heard over the din of partiers and music.

⁸⁵ For more complete and taxonomical descriptions of *cueca's* various regional, musical, poetic, and choreographic forms, see Vega 1947; Garrido 1979; Claro 1989; González y Rolle 2005; Loyola y Cadiz 2010.

However, with the rise of the recording industry in the 1920s-30s, the vocal timbre of women's cueca was smoothed, and arrangements became more orchestrated in order to fit into what Fernando Rios (2008) calls a "modernist-cosmopolitan" acoustic aesthetic (Spencer 2011; González y Rolle 2005). The more clandestine nature of *casas de canto* means that knowledge of the timbre and volume of women's voices in these spaces was somewhat lost from popular memory, but as Christian Spencer (2011) and Rubí Carreño Bolívar (2010) have indicated, women entering urban cueca spaces after 1990 have increasingly drawn on oral histories of that time period to reclaim the vocal practices of performers from the early twentieth century.

From Cueca Campesina and Cueca Huasa to Cueca Militar: Early to Mid-Twentieth Century

During the same period of industrialization and urbanization in the early twentieth century, elite sectors of Chilean society began looking to consolidate their national identity in a respectable salon dance form similar to the way tango had been adopted as such in Argentina. What had been a form of popular sensual revelry became sanitized into a couple's dance defined by restraint and respectability (González y Rolle 2005). Couples no longer touched as they were dancing, and though cueca remained a performance of romantic pursuit, women were increasingly expected to perform with delicate passivity, often using a handkerchief to shield their face, while men performed with loud bravado and airs of conquest. For both men and women, stylized rural costumes became standard, and men increasingly donned the traditional hat and poncho of *huasos* (cowboys understood to be landowning men). In the salon and other urban festivities, performances of "the rural" through cueca campesina or cueca huasa (deriving its name from its association with huaso lifestyles) came to be associated with a patriotic, productive middle/upper class.

The notion of cueca campesina or cueca huasa as authentic representations of Chilean national identity was bolstered by the rise in the mid-twentieth century of academic *Grupos de proyección folklórica* (Groups of Folkloric Projection) which aimed to collect, revitalize, and disseminate traditional music and dance from throughout Chile. This movement was shaped by a confluence of folklorists, academic researchers, government programs, and music industry leaders, all concerned in varying manners with re-defining civic life and cultural identity during a period of intense urbanization and with solidifying a Chilean musical and national identity in the face of a growing international music industry dominated by the global north (González y Rolle 2005). Many of these efforts became consolidated in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Chile when the Instituto de Investigaciones del Folklore Musical was created in April 1944 (Ibid). In this setting, research and public programming on Chilean traditional musics developed simultaneously with chamber musics of Western Classical traditions. Because of this, once again, vocal timbres were often smoothed, and melodic and harmonic arrangements refined to make performances more appealing to the tastes of middle- and upper-class concert goers. The duo Las Hermanas Loyola, formed by renowned folklorist and educator Margot Loyola and her sister Estela Loyola became some of the most recognized interpreters of this emerging repertoire of Chilean traditional musics (González y Rolle 2005; Carreño 2010; Spencer 2011).

By the 1950s-60s, *música huasa* (also called *música típica*), which consisted primarily of cuecas, tonadas, and other traditional musics from central Chile, had reached its peak popularity,

and women had become its primary protagonists. According to scholarship on this time period,

The incorporation of women into public life and the music industry's own necessity for renovating performances produced in the 1950s the triumph of the female singer as the folkloric artist. The brashness with which rural women singers had animated Independence Day celebrations and rodeos was left behind; now, the charm, cunning and wit of the Chilean woman was fully expressed on the national stage, on discs, on radio, and in cinema. Furthermore, incorporating a feminine voice to the huaso trio of baritones and tenor enriched the vocal harmony of this folklore for the masses, making it clearer and more varied. The feminine first voice was set much higher from the secondary masculine voices, making it more clearly recognized. (González et al 2009: 324).

Along with this increasing prominence of women's voices as interpreters of cueca huasa or campesina, the increased use of microphones both on stage and in the recording studio meant that women artists such as Ester Soré, an icon from this period, could sing in a manner that was described as softer, warmer, and more in a spoken tone than the high pitched, lyrical performances by women in Grupos de Proyección Folklórica. With the sensitivity of the microphone, every sigh and interjection could be heard, making women's voices associated with soft expressivity (González et al 2009: 324-325).

After the military coup in 1973, which was largely endorsed by elite sectors of society, the regime followed measures taken in the early twentieth century and adopted a highly stylized, form of cueca huasa/campesina as the national dance under Decree N° 23 of November 6, 1979, (Jordán y Rojas 2009). As Jordán and Rojas expand in their article on cueca during the dictatorship,

During the period of the military government, Chilean identity is partially corporealized in the figure of the huaso. This subject was revived from the imaginary created in the 1920s, in which [the huaso] was supposed to be the depository of national identity as a totality. Its peasant origins and its vulgar elements are eliminated, are cleaned, to create a new rural subject—landholding, galant, and invincible. For the years after 1973 it would once again come to incarnate values of a so-called [national] way of being. The huaso of the dictatorship is the filtered subject, repository of nationalist and patriotic desires of the first years of the regime, precedent to the inundation of the neoliberal model, and would be used as corporealized correlate of the government (Jordán & Rojas 2009: 74).

During the dictatorship cueca became inseparable from fiestas patrias, when national cueca competitions began to be organized and it became mandated that cueca be taught in schools. If, as Jordán and Rojas contend, the figure of huaso became a corporealized performance of idealized neoliberal masculinity in these official spaces, ideal femininity was personified in the figure of “la huasa” or “la china,”⁸⁶ the rural woman that women's costumes were supposed to represent. As Scarlet Stuardo (2019) explains, the nationalization of the cueca also led to an increase in its commercialization as “traditional” costumes were sold widely to meet the demands of these official celebrations, thereby massifying the heteronormative gendered figures of the huaso and huasa. Scholar Rubí Carreño (2010) contends that these official cueca practices

⁸⁶ The terms “huasa” and “china” are often used interchangeably to describe the feminine accoutrements (“trajes”) and persona adopted in cueca performances in the mid-late twentieth century. However, there is still ongoing debate about the appropriate use of both terms, as well as the ethnic and class distinctions that they identify. During my fieldwork many women maintained that “trajes de huasa” represented the traditional dress of middle/upper class women of European descent “whereas trajes de china” represented the dress of maids or servants, usually of Indigenous descent. See Stuardo 2019 for greater context on how cueca costuming has transformed based on political and commercial changes throughout the twentieth century.

defined civic life in terms of celebration even as their performance erased the realities of the women and rural/working class groups who historically performed these types of cueca.

Cueca sola

One of the most important precedents to today's feminist movements within the urban cueca community is the emergence of the cueca sola as a form of resistance during the dictatorship. Written by Gala Torres and initially performed on March 8, 1978, by members of the Conjunto Folklorico de la Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (Folkloric Ensemble of the Group for Families of the Detained and Disappeared), cueca sola as a collective practice of mourning and hope has continued to be a powerful expression of political dissent to the present day (Museo de la Memoria; Jordán y Rojas 2009).

La cueca sola

Mi vida, en un tiempo fui dichosa
apacibles eran mis días
mas llegó la desventura
perdí lo que más quería
Me pregunto constante
¿dónde te tienen?
y nadie me responde
y tú no vienes
Y tú no vienes, mi alma
larga es la ausencia
y por toda la tierra
pido conciencia
Sin ti prenda querida
triste es la vida.

(Cancionero AFDD, cited in Carreño 2010)

My love, I once was happy
my days were pleasant
but ill-fortune arrived
I lost what I loved most
I ask myself constantly,
Where do they have you?
and nobody answers
and you never come
You never come, my love
long is the absence
and throughout the whole earth
I ask for awareness
Without you, treasured one
life is miserable.

While singing these lyrics, women dance the cueca alone, leaving space in their movements for a loved one who is no longer physically present. The absent body is made real and undeniable (Jordán y Rojas 2009). In performing this absent presence, the cueca sola subverts this nationalist performance practice and converts it into a rejection of State silence and denial of torture and disappearances carried out during the regime and even in the years of democracy since 1990.⁸⁷

Although in recent years it has become increasingly common for men to also perform cueca sola in acts of remembrance, it remains a performance distinctly gendered as feminine, and continues to be one of the most widely circulated performances of resistance to the Pinochet dictatorship and its legacy.⁸⁸ As Rubí Carreño (2010) elaborates, the cueca sola, in performing a love lost at the hands of the state, endows private love with public political power. This understanding of the public power of a romantic partnership evokes rhetoric from nueva canción and the Popular Unity government's Marxist socialist understanding of the *compañero/a*—a

⁸⁷ In the wake of the social uprisings that began in Chile in October 2019, cueca sola has again become one among many artistic forms of resistance to disappearances, torture, and murder at the hands of the State.

⁸⁸ Along with its circulation in international communities of Chilean exiles, the British artist Sting's music video, "They Dance Alone," released in 1987, also references cueca sola and brought international attention to this performance of resistance.

partner who may be a romantic connection but who also is understood to have shared political commitments and dedication to communal labor. Carreño goes on,

This concept of love and politics as quotidian labors was strongly censured by the dictatorship: *compañero* became colleague, became husband [...] the “*compañero*” was transformed into a “Marxist cancer” [...] The *cueca sola* recuperates this content: denouncing at the same time the absence of the erotic partner, the dance partner, and forms of life associated with celebration [...] *Cueca sola* reclaims the necessity of enjoying oneself at the same time that it signals a space of violence and destruction: an emptiness which captured the body of the beloved. Nevertheless, they go on dancing (Carreño 2010: 159).

Cueca brava Since the Mid-Twentieth Century

In Santiago’s working-class neighborhoods of the early twentieth century, *cueca* and other forms of urban popular song performed by male vendors and laborers were resounding in streets, plazas, and markets. Though several variations of urban *cueca* emerged throughout Chile during this time, *cueca brava*, named for the *barrios bravos* (rougher neighborhoods) where it emerged, is the style most associated with the Chilean capital (Spencer 2011). Different from *cueca campesina* where the figure of the *huaso* holds primacy, in *cueca brava*, the figure of *el roto* (loosely, a man of the people and of humble origins) dominates the social imaginary and came to define a performance of national identity tied more to popular celebrations in working class spaces rather than those of landed elites. Even as *cueca brava* groups began to be recorded in the 1940s-50s, their lyrics and imagery remained tied to themes of urban night life, working class livelihoods, and social critique (Spencer 2011; Jordán y Rojas 2009).

Another crucial difference from *cueca campesina* is that in *cueca brava*, the primary purpose of the social gathering was to sing, not to dance. Groups of men would gather in a circle and each sing one stanza of the song, using melodic and textual ornamentation to “compete” with one another (Spencer 2011: 12). This participatory spatial arrangement is called “*canto a la rueda*” (song in a circle). These *ruedas* were defined by *canto gritado* (shouted singing), a loud, penetrating vocal technique achieved by projecting through the nasal voice and upper facial resonators to produce a thin, twangy timbre in the upper limits of the singer’s tessitura. According to Samuel Claro, referencing Fernando González Marabolí, this masculine form of singing also holds racial and ethnic undertones. In their reading, for the male Chilean mestizo, considered to be of Spanish-Andalusian descent from the paternal side and of Indigenous descent from the maternal side, *canto a la rueda* and *canto gritado* represent an oral transmission of their Arab heritage defined by masculine pride, and as such is a performance of superiority over a more effeminate, Indigenous culture (Claro et al 1994; Spencer 2011). Masculinity thus became so entrenched in *canto gritado* that many, even some women, have believed it only achievable by the male voice.⁸⁹

The cultural blackout of the dictatorship made these already somewhat underground practices even more clandestine. However, after the transition from military government in 1990 and the gradual re-opening of public spaces and social night life, there was a resurgence of

⁸⁹ It should be noted that the coding of *canto gritado* timbre in *cueca brava* as a masculine vocal practice is quite distinct from the gendering of vocal and instrumental practices in many other realms of folk, rock, pop, and classical music in Chile, where women are often celebrated as singers while their potential as instrumentalists is questioned. For more on the history and representation of women singers in Chile, see González 2013.

interest in folkloric practices which departed from those that had been established as official culture during the dictatorship. This coincided with a period of societal opening for women, as they were increasingly (though by no means unilaterally) given more access to participation in the workforce and other forms of public life. By the late 1990s-early 2000s, groups of all women such as Las Niñas, Las Capitalinas, and Las Torcazas began establishing themselves as professional singers within the cueca brava scene, adopting the same timbre and volume as that considered men's canto gritado.⁹⁰ Furthermore, rather than adopting the demure persona of women singers and dancers who were the stars of cueca campesina, women post-1990 instead utilized canto gritado along with elegant modern stage attire as a way to revive the image of madams and performers in chinganas and casas de canto from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through this process, they cultivated performative personas based on sexual independence. For example, the cover for the first album released by Las Niñas (Figure 4.1) portrays a woman in sultry attire awaiting a partner with a glass of wine and cigarette in hand.

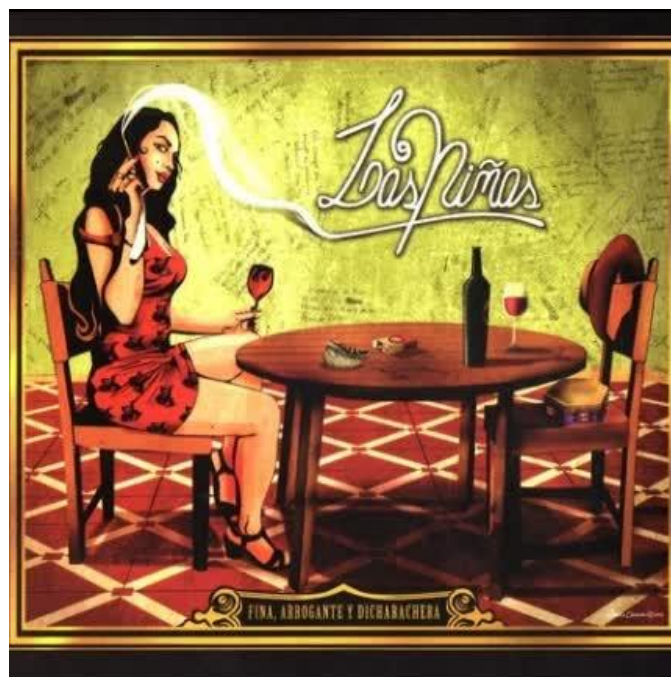


Figure 4.1 Cover art for the 2010 album *Fina, arrogante y dicharachera* by Las Niñas. Source: PortalDisc.

This is not to say that women participating in cueca brava since 1990 have uncritically identified themselves as or in relation to sex workers of previous decades. Rather, according to discussions in our women's cueca class, they saw the revival of women's practices from the early twentieth century as a way to validate these figures as *mujeres bravas* or *choras* (bold or tenacious women). Adopting the empowered vocal practice of canto gritado and using elegant modern costuming and colorful scenography were all ways in which women began to re-imagine the vocal and visual aesthetics of cueca brava to fit their contemporary gender and sexual identities. This process of transformation has continued in recent years as women not only make adaptations in cueca's vocal and scenographic practices, but also have begun to experiment in mixing cueca with other musical genres from throughout the southern cone.

⁹⁰ For a deeper history of women's entrance into the cueca brava scene between 2000-2010, see Spencer 2011.

II. Transforming the Gender Politics of cueca brava: Josi Villanueva and Flor de Juanas

Josi Villanueva is a singer, songwriter, guitarist, and music educator currently living in Barrio Yungay, Santiago, one of the historical centers of cueca brava's emergence. She was a member of Las Niñas as a singer and guitarist from 2011-2015 and was active in transforming the gender politics of cueca brava in Santiago by helping open *ruedas* for women to participate as singers rather than just spectators or dancers. Yet, as she described in our interview in August 2018, despite this opening, and despite the desire of women to participate, she began to realize the necessity of teaching more women how to develop the vocal capacity to make themselves heard. After the group Las Niñas disbanded in 2015, she decided to launch her own *talleres* (community classes). In her words,

Teaching cueca was born out of a necessity. People really lacked the ability to project their voice. And because of shame or insecurity, whatever it is, it was very difficult for them. People wanted to be able to hit those shouted notes. Because that's what you do in cueca, somebody teaches you, *pah!* To find your voice!⁹¹

After launching her classes in 2015, Villanueva had great success enrolling women of diverse ages and backgrounds. However, as these groups developed, she realized that many students found it difficult to leave the classes and the community that they had developed throughout the course of rehearsals and performances. For many, it was their first time participating in something created by and for women, and the group provided a sense of comfort and safety to discuss issues that weren't brought up in other spaces.

Trying to imagine a way to create continuity for this community which went beyond the series of classes, Villanueva was inspired by her background performing with an Uruguayan-style *murga* during her university years. "Why not combine elements of *murga uruguaya* with Chilean cueca?" she thought. *Murga uruguaya* is a genre of satirical musical theater with roots in festival practices from Cadiz, Spain, but which is now most commonly associated with Uruguay. It has spread throughout the Southern Cone in recent decades, and unlike cueca, *murga* is meant to be sung in chorus rather than in solos or duets. In the following excerpt from our interview, Villanueva explains how she began to utilize the choral and theatrical practices of *murga uruguaya* to create the new ensemble, Flor de Juanas. This group was born out of the first class of cueca students whom she taught. As she elaborates, *murga* became a way for this group to amplify the vocal capacities of *canto gritado* through collective singing, and to transform cueca brava into a performance practice centered on women's social commentary.

JV: Suddenly I realized that the girls in my class wanted a class 2, a class 3, as if they couldn't separate themselves (*laughter*). And I'd had an itch, for a long time I would say, to combine *murga* and cueca, to combine the choral with cueca singing. So, it's from there that Flor de Juanas was born. Because I had been invited to participate in new cueca groups, but I wasn't interested anymore.

CA: And those were mixed groups, with women and men?

JV: No, all women... but I was looking for something more... In that moment I didn't know what. I just wanted to do something different, something that sounded powerful, something strong, something

⁹¹ Josi Villanueva. Interview with the author. August 20, 2018.

participatory, something... I don't know, choral. And from there this is born, Flor de Juanas. And the very fact of having gathered only women gave shape to our cause. We spoke from the perspective of women. We began to speak about things we hadn't wanted to speak about as women within the cueca community. Because the cueca never, with the exception of Las Pecadoras, I believe, never had been used as a form of struggle. Because the cueca, despite being rota, has always been about the underworld, describing the *casas de tambo*, describing what happens to the *roto chileno*, describing domestic life, *empanadas*, Chilean traditions. That's what it's about. And to always keep the celebration alive.

CA: Can you tell me a bit about that concept of the *roto chileno*?

JV: The "*roto chileno*" is the person, man or woman, who carries deeply rooted in themselves much of our Chilean traditions. In general, the *roto* is not a person of [elite] lineage. Generally, they are of the people. So, they, the person of the people, are always going to give you more than those on top. They are more opportunistic, more ready for a good meal, good at keeping traditions, for spending, for music, for dancing, for partying, ready for a welcoming table. The *roto chileno* will always ask for a good table, a good drink, a good wine, even if it's the cheapest wine in the whole place, it has to be a good wine. And it's enjoying this, Chilean traditions, Chilean folklore, that's "a *roto*." Now, among people with more power or more money, what's been happening is that that they'll call you "*roto*" because they want to call you vulgar, or poor, but that's not right. The *roto* is someone who maintains traditions. It doesn't necessarily have to be poor.

CA: How was the process of combining *murga* with *cueca*? *Murga* comes from Uruguay, right?

JV: It actually comes from Cadiz and the Uruguayans trapped it and that's beautiful! Or rather, the *murga* they perform now is recognized around the world. Someone says *murga*? Uruguay. You see? Not Spain, Uruguay. This genre of [Uruguayan] *murga* is very different, at least from what Flor de Juanas does. But in their essential essence, there are many similarities. By definition *murga* is a gathering of people who sing popular music in chorus and who hopefully speak about social precarity in a satirical form. So that's more or less what *murga* is about. And to that you add color, flare, makeup, the allegoric costumes, and that's the performance, the theatrics. So, that's when I said, "If I get together a lot of people to sing popular music... *cueca* is popular!" And *cueca* for me is what represents me as a genre of my country. But the *cueca brava*, or *cueca rota*, that *cueca*. The *cueca* that you sing more forcefully, that you sing with more tenacity, more bravado, that you dance differently... And the *cueca* has a structure, and having a structure makes it more complicated. Because you have to write in a certain form, and respect that form because if not, it's not *cueca*, and I wanted it to be *cueca*! That was a huge amount of work!⁹²

Since Flor de Juanas was officially formed in 2016, it has become an artistic and social cornerstone of the community that has evolved out of Josi Villanueva's ongoing classes. On the one hand, they have come to serve as an example of the type of vocal projection, timbre, and capacity to harmonize in a group that Villanueva seeks for students to achieve in her classes. For many classmates and audience members whom I spoke to, Flor de Juanas' plurality of voices represents a call, an invitation for listeners to find their own voice, revel in their own power to sonically rupture the norms of feminine docility. Commenting on the power of this type of group singing, one Flor de Juanas member stated,

There's a social, political, and historical context in which things are changing rapidly in recent years. What's changing is that norms are being questioned. This has included patriarchal abuse and all the systems of power in the world. But that is not only in Chile. [...] And the most affected are the weakest, the most vulnerable — poor people, women, children, the elderly. In that sense, the labor of a women's *murga* is potent, because there are 14 women singing in the form of the *cueca*, which is a *canto gritado*, and because of this it has much more impact.⁹³

⁹² Josi Villanueva. Interview with the author. August 20, 2018.

⁹³ Loreto. Group interview of Flor de Juanas with the author. November 27, 2018.

Their block of raised voices gives them control over a space during their performances, and their shouted song fractures the idea of a passive, quiet, feminine body meant only to be gazed upon (James 2015). The group takes this collective vocal practice based on murga aesthetics and blends it with the instrumentation, syncopated rhythms, and strict poetic form more typical of Chilean cueca.⁹⁴ But combining murga with cueca was not only a matter of blending compositional styles, it also entailed a new mode of cultural imagination which placed the social archetype of “the roto chileno” in synchrony with the more abstract, allegoric character representations in murga uruguaya. In this new artistic world, with new scenography and dance forms, the cueca brava archetype of la mujer rota, the woman of the people—hostess, entertainer, and keeper of the domestic sphere—has been re-framed as a subject with a public political voice. In Flor de Juana’s performances, women’s bodies are understood not only (yet still) as sites of pleasure but also as a place from which memory is enacted, untold traumas are shared, and unspoken hopes are expressed.

The song “Veleidoso,” which Flor de Juanas performed at the opening of their set at the presidential palace in 2018, illustrates many of these new compositional and performatic⁹⁵ elements. This piece was initially written for Carola Barría, a resident of Punta Arenas, one of Chile’s southern most cities. In 2013 at 33 years old, Barría was brutally attacked by her romantic partner in front of their five-month-old child. Her aggressor, acting in a jealous rage, beat her and gouged out her eyes before shooting two other men he suspected to be her lovers and abandoning her and their baby on the side of the road where they were not found until the next day. Her ex-partner was killed soon afterwards in a stand-off with police (Garcia 2016). At the time of this event, Josi Villanueva’s sister-in-law Ani, a social worker, was living in Punta Arenas. Villanueva and her partner Raúl went to Punta Arenas for a performance shortly after the incident but were shocked to realize that Carola Barría’s attack was not making headlines or even truly being discussed in the city.

I asked Ani if she knew more about this news, and of course she knew about it in depth. She told me everything in great detail [...]. We cried together that night, and I told Raúl that the story had impacted me deeply and that I had to write a song. Raúl had had a melody tucked away from a while back and so I said, “Lets do it! I’ll write the lyrics to that melody and we’ll try it out.” That’s how we composed “Veleidoso” for Carola Barría.”⁹⁶

When Flor de Juanas initially began performing the song, they would recite somewhat improvised verses at the beginning making clear that the piece was about Carola Barría. However, in 2016, shortly after Flor de Juanas had begun performing, another woman in the southern town of Coyhaique suffered a similar attack. Nabila Rifo, 28 years old at the time, was beaten unconscious and her eyes were also gouged out by her romantic partner. This attack occurred in the midst of #NiUnaMenos (#NotOneLess) anti-femicide movements that had begun in Argentina and swept South America, and immediately garnered national and international outrage. Villanueva, wanting to respond to the current situation, composed an extended

⁹⁴ An in-depth discussion of the traditional poetic format, instrumental arrangements, and rhythmic structure in Chilean cueca is beyond the scope of this chapter. For more detailed analysis see (Garrido 1979; Claro et al 1994; Figueroa Torres 2006; Loyola y Cádiz 2010).

⁹⁵ Following Diana Taylor (2003) and Alejandro Madrid (2009) I borrow the contemporary Spanish word “performático” or “performatic” in English to describe the staged, sounded, and embodied elements of musical performance, and to distinguish these elements from the “performativity” of musical discourse.

⁹⁶ Josi Villanueva. Group interview of Flor de Juanas with the author. November 27, 2018.

introduction that honored both Carola Barria and Nabila Rifo, weaving together the symbolism of their sight being taken away.

Below, the song's lyrics are transcribed in full. The first two stanzas form the introduction which extends the typical poetic structure of a cueca. The cueca itself begins with the copla made of four octosyllabic lines (8a-8b-8a-8b), followed by two seguidillas consisting of four lines each, and alternating between seven and five syllables (7a-5b-7a-5b), and a remate, a two-line verse of seven and five syllables, respectively (7a-5a). The lines in parentheses are *muletillas*, ornamental phrases added only when performed.

“Veleidoso”

Intro

Para ir buscándole culpas
Suman bestias en la fila
No hay culpa que justifique
Lo que le han hecho a Nabila
Con retazos de coraje
Viste Carola Barria
Los hiló como una rueca
A la sombra de sus días

Copla

(Ay ay ay) Te llevaste la luz clara
(Tiki tiki ti, tiki tiki ti, veleidoso)
que iluminaba mis ojos
(ay ay ay) ahora lucho con la pena
(Tiki tiki ti, tiki tiki ti, veleidoso)
y de rabia me desojo.

Seguidilla

Por tu cruel decision
(Ay ay ay) yo te maldigo
(Tiki tiki ti, tiki tiki ti) veleidoso
(Ay ay ay) es tu castigo

Seguidilla

Es tu castigo, sí
(Ay ay ay) que esté despierta
(Tiki tiki ti, tiki tiki ti) veleidoso
(Ay ay ay) No acabé muerta

Remate

Por tu vida arrancaste
(Ay ay ay) nunca pagaste

“Fickle One”

To go searching for blame
beasts are summoned to the ranks
But no blame justifies
What was done to Nabila
With fragments of courage
Carola Barria adorns herself
She spun them like a spindle
to the shadow of her days

You took the clear light

which illumined my eyes
now I struggle with the shame

and in rage I lose my sight.

For your cruel choice
I curse you
Fickle one
It is your punishment

It is your punishment, yes
That I remain awake
Fickle one
I did not die

You ran for your life
you never paid

The *muletilla* “tiki tiki ti, tiki tiki ti veleidoso” also gives the piece its title. This phrase is a lyrical and melodic quotation from the monumental song “El Gavilán” (1960) by Violeta Parra (1917-1967). In both songs, “tiki tiki ti,” normally a lighthearted interjection in more traditional cuecas, is used in dark irony to curse the “veleidoso,” the fickle or untrue lover. “El Gavilán” (“The Hawk”) used the allegory of an abusive lover who is like a hawk preparing to strike its prey to describe the experience of violent oppression at the hands of larger systems of patriarchal and capitalist oppression (Valdebenito 2018). Similarly, “Veleidoso” by Flor de Juanas uses two

individual cases of domestic violence to critique the unequal justice systems and religious institutions which continue to grant impunity to abusers, torturers, and rapists across contemporary Chilean society and beyond. Wielding the intertextual trope of the “veleidoso” shifts the blame from victims to perpetrators in cases of sexual violence.

“Veleidoso” opens a cappella. Rather than an extended introduction of rasgueos, a lightly scratched strumming pattern on the guitar, all three voice parts enter with loud and forcefully articulated parallel thirds in D minor. The introduction (Figure 4.2) is performed with notable rubato, and the first three measures especially have a direct 3/4 feel with accents falling on the downbeats rather than a more typical sesquialtera three against two structure. Though the even rhythms and bold parallel harmonies are typical for murga, which evolved out of parade performances during carnival, these elements make the piece immediately more sonically striking in a context where audiences are expecting a cueca.

The musical score for the introduction of "Veleidoso" is written for three voices (Soprano Prima, Prima, and Segunda) and guitar accompaniment (SP, Pr., Sg.). The piece is in D minor and 3/4 time, with a tempo marking of ♩ = 80. The lyrics are in Spanish and describe a scene of domestic violence and the role of the church.

Lyrics:

Pa-ra ir bus-can-do-le cul-pas su-man bes-tias en la fi-la
 Pa-ra ir bus-can-do-le cul-pas su-man bes-tias en la fi-la Nohay cul-pa que jus-ti fi-que
 Pa-ra ir bus-can-do-le cul-pas su-man bes-tias en la fi-la lo que lehan hecho
 Con re-tra-zos de co-ra-je vis-te Ca-ro-la Ba-ri-a
 Na-bi-la
 a Na-bi-la
 los hi-lo como u-na rue-ca a la som-bra de sus di-as
 los hi-lo como u-na rue-ca
 los hi-lo como u-na rue-ca

Performance markings: *rit.* (measures 13-14), *Solo* (measure 14).

Figure 4.2 “Veleidoso” Introduction. Transcription by the author.

During the bridge leading from introduction to the copla (Figure 4.3), the texture dramatically changes. Now there is only cajón, the muted, unpitched strumming of guitar, and the rasping of the accordion being scratched like a washboard. This extended syncopated introduction is part of the structure of every cueca when performed, but the fact that it is only a soft, percussive accompaniment rather than the typical harmonic patterns played by guitar and accordion adds a heightened sense of solemnity to the performance. It brings listeners to focus directly on the singer when the soloist finally enters at the beginning of the copla.

The musical score for Figure 4.3 is written in 6/8 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 92. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a Voice staff with lyrics: "Ay ay ay te lle - va - - - te lle - vas - te la luz cla - - ra ti - ki ti - ki", an Acoustic Guitar staff with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes, and a Cajón staff with a similar rhythmic accompaniment. The second system, starting at measure 5, includes a Voice staff with lyrics: "ti ti - ki ti - ki ti ve - lei - do - so quei - lu - mi - na - ba mis o - - jos", a Guitar staff, and a Cajón staff. The guitar and cajón parts continue with their respective rhythmic patterns.

Figure 4.3 “Veleidoso” copla part 1. Transcription by the author.

In the second part of the copla (Figure 4.4), the rest of the ensemble begins to sing vocal accompaniments to the melody of the cueca, initially harmonizing on “ah” in parallel thirds then gradually adding a moving bass line in the lowest voice and finally all three voices joining in harmony to sing the final phrase “te llevaste la luz clara.”

♩ = 92

Solo
Ay ay ay aho - ra lu - u aho - ra lu - cho con la pe - na ti - ki ti - ki ti ti - ki - ti - ki ti ve - lei - do - so y

Sobreprima
Ah - - - - - Ah - - - - -

Primera

Segunda.

7

Solo
de ra - bia me des - o - jo ti - ki ti - ki ti ti - ki ti - ki ti ve - lei - do - so te lle - vas - te la luz cla - ra

SP
- - - - - te lle - vas - te la luz cla - ra

Pr.
- - - - - te lle - vas - te la luz cla - ra

Seg.
- - - - - te lle - vas - te la luz cla - ra

Figure 4.4 “Veleidoso” copla part 2. Transcription by the author.

This vocal arrangement sonically re-emphasizes the violence of a woman having her sight taken away, but the openness of “te llevaste la luz clara” (“you took the clear light”) allows the listener to imagine other forms of loss.

During the performance of this piece, one member steps in front of the group and performs an interpretation of the cueca sola (Figure 4.5). Only now, rather than performing to the traditional “Cueca sola” song, with lyrics that mourn a lost lover, this version of the cueca sola dance performed with “Veleidoso” mourns women whose lives have been lost or who have lived with physical and emotional abuse. It stages the experience of women’s suffering, but in its movements—in continuing to dance—it gestures towards the possibility of life.



Figure 4.5 Cueca sola during performance of “Veleidoso,” October 20, 2018. Photos by the author.

In this liminal moment of performance, past losses meet future creations as the dancer conjures another presence with the twirl of her red handkerchief. This garment itself is now not an ornament of modesty but a *bandera de lucha*, a call to joint struggle. Flor de Juanas has continued this struggle through their ongoing creation of new feminist repertoire—performing and composing cuecas addressing femicide, gendered labor inequalities, sexual violence, and abuse at the hands of the government. This repertoire has formed the basis for Josi Villanueva’s community women’s cueca classes.

III. Talleres de canto femenino cuequero / Women’s Cueca Classes

Sacando la voz

I was traveling outside of Santiago during the first week of class for the taller de canto femenino cuequero which began in April 2018. When I arrived the second week, I realized I was already behind. “¿Donde están sus tareas?” (“Where are your homework assignments?”) Josi

asked us. “Gulp!” Ever the avid student, my face flushed as I had to explain I wasn’t aware there was homework, then, with a nervous smile, introduced myself as la estudiante norteamericana who had signed up for the course. “Eres musicóloga, no?” (“You’re a musicologist, right?”) Josi asked. “Yes.” My face flushed deeper. Never mind my credentials, I was already a week behind the rest of the class, who had not only learned the basic poetic format and performed the structure of a cueca, but who also had written their own cuecas to demonstrate their grasp of these concepts. Homework turned in, they were ready to sing, and as I quickly realized, it wouldn’t be in a group, but one by one we would be taking turns singing in front of our new classmates. As I scrambled to copy down the cueca we were supposed to be ready to sing that day, the rest of the group began warming up. “Wait, what’s a *muletilla*? Where does it go? Which lines repeat?” I whispered to a few classmates nearby who were kind enough to help me. Then, soon enough, it was my turn to sing. And yes, my anxiety was audible. Graciously, Josi reminded me as she had done with many others that I wasn’t fully relaxed, that I hadn’t fully prepared my body for singing. “Stretch, vocalize, shake your head, breathe deeply, and try again,” she said. Re-centered, and now remembering my body, I sang once more.

As I came to understand over the next few weeks, Villanueva’s pedagogical practice of *sacando la voz* valorizes the corporeal as a realm of power. Because cueca brava has historically been a space where women’s voices are silenced and their bodies objectified, this has been a major draw for students regardless of their musical background. A common reminder to breathe from the abdomen was, “Desde el utero las mujeres sacamos la fuerza” (“Women get our strength from the uterus”)! This playful metaphor for technique also implicitly rejects the phallus as symbol of power. When working on interpretation and timbre, she would remind us, “Es una voz aguerrida” (“It’s a battle-driven voice”)! “Voz” as a feminine noun here elicits in the adjective “aguerrida” the imagery of a feminine warrior. To get us to project, she’d exclaim, pointing at a wall across the room, “Canten para que tus voces lleguen para allá” (“Sing so your voices make it over there”)! According to multiple students, this type of rhetoric helped them reacquaint themselves with their bodies, and to develop what Cate Poyton (1996, 1999) calls a new internal choreography for projecting their voice. But at the beginning of the year—April to July if I’m being honest—I simply couldn’t sing this way.

In one of the earliest classes, Villanueva demonstrated how to achieve *canto gritado* through a combined chest and head voice, supported deeply by the diaphragm. After demonstrating in loud piercing voice what it sounded like to open your mouth, chest, and body fully and support your breath from the core, she went on to compare this to a head voice, or what she described as *falsetto*. She began to sing sarcastically in a thin, quiet manner and made us all laugh when she reminded us we’d never get invited out to sing with a voice like that. However, before making us sing from the chest as a group and then individually, she cautioned that singing in this manner with improper technique could easily put too much strain on your vocal cords. So, after singing together she asked, “Did anybody find this painful?” And about half of us, including myself, raised our hands.

This feeling of pain—voice cracking, pride hurt—is something other students and I dealt with constantly in the first few months of the class. Even practicing on my own in my apartment, I struggled to get my voice to sound the way I wanted. For my part, I blamed this at first on the fact that as a classically trained singer, *canto gritado* was the opposite of almost every vocal

technique I'd ever been taught. But eventually being honest with myself, I realized that the real issue was fear: fear of pushing my body, fear of being heard, or of not being heard, fear of taking up too much space. This, I realized, was the pain of "sacando la voz." It was a bodily practice, a development of technique, but it was also a psychological letting go of years being conditioned into silence, into deference, into making space for others, not myself.

Feminist Solidarity and the Spaciousness of Voice

As I went through the eight months of classes, questions would arise with my fellow students, why are we doing this? What is the value of what we're accomplishing in our singing? There was of course the practical reason of being able to enter mixed performance contexts and occupy sonic space once dominated by men. As someone put it in one class, "I like that a bit, that challenge, as if [men] feel a bit invaded in their own territory." A more significant reason, however, was being able to use one's voice as an act of solidarity (Bohlman 2016), a way of forging public intimacy when others attempted to enter the space. As my classmate Dani mentioned

"I don't really sing well, but sometimes I've tried because I have female friends that want to, so we support each other a lot...In *ruedas* with male friends, often a guy will come in and lose the rhythm or something, and they're like "oh well," and everyone deals with it. But when a woman messes up? No, everyone stops playing. I think it also has to do with the social context we're living in. Men so suddenly start to feel like they're being violated."⁹⁷

The social context Dani mentioned was a massive feminist student movement which swept Chile between May and August 2018. University and high school students held *tomas* (takeovers) occupying campus buildings across the country and staged massive demonstrations in the streets of major cities, all protesting systemic sexism in education as well as what they deemed a culture of sexual violence. To my knowledge, most of the women in the *cueca* classes were not participating directly in these marches or *tomas*, but all seemed to feel the shifts they created in daily social life.

Outside of classes, within *ruedas de cueca*, some men did in fact become more attentive to listening and making space for women, but many became more defensive. Several classmates reported that even their male friends began silencing them in *ruedas de cueca* in addition to silencing their opinions and concerns regarding the feminist movement and women's rights in Chile. In these instances, the spaciousness of voice developed in classes facilitated not only individual empowerment, but also constituted an act of public intimacy in which women collaboratively resisted being silenced. I in no way equate the exclusion of women by male peers in musical spaces to the masculine violence being fought in the broader feminist movements, but I do believe that the vocal spaciousness developed in classes and later in these *ruedas de cueca* helped women to materially experience the agency of their voices, and to strengthen the sense of intimacy forged when they used their voices collectively.

During one class in mid-September, just before *fiestas patrias*, Josi invited a former member of *Las Niñas* to speak to us. The session became a turning point for how the group

⁹⁷ Dani. Transcription of class recording. September 13, 2018.

thought about the patriarchal legacies of cueca and how they understood their own cueca practice in relation to the ongoing feminist movements. In the excerpt of our conversation transcribed below, Josi alludes to some of the complicated ways in which cueca has been politicized by both conservative and more progressive sectors of society.

JV: A flyer came out with someone wearing a green handkerchief (a symbol of the feminist movements) saying “cueca is patriarchal.” But the whole “no more cueca” movement [at that time] didn’t really exist. It [this “no more cueca” flyer] wasn’t connected with the feminist movements, but it still came out in the news [that way]. It was to discredit the movement. The theme I wanted to touch on here was, this happens. There are women, above all in the south of Chile [Mapuche women], and above all women who lived the dictatorship, who feel or who felt extremely violated by the cueca Pinochet installed in this country.

Student: The fascist cueca...

JV: The cueca [that we practice] comes from ages past. It carries thousands of years... many years. Of course, it is from rougher neighborhoods... This other stylized cueca, huasa and everything, the dictator of this country made it the national song and dance... And based on that cueca... if you see “that guy” with the big poncho... that guy with so many crazy things on dancing with a woman dressed as a peasant, the peasant is the servant of the house and the guy with the poncho is the master who runs after the peasant. This is what happened throughout history especially to Indigenous women. When festivities come, especially Independence Day celebrations, those guys would get drunk and afterwards would grab the peasant girl and rape her. You understand?

Deep inhalation from the group

JV: One starts to investigate with sociologists, anthropologists...this is where the cueca comes from. That could bother the feminist movement, that side of it. It bothers me too, in fact. It’s not as though I’m taking up a banner of the feminist cause. It’s bothered me since I was five years old.⁹⁸

Josi used this moment to make clear the difficult fact that contemporary cueca brava practitioners must grapple with the uneasiness of how other forms of cueca were manipulated during the dictatorship for purposes of maintaining authoritarian rule. Though at times exaggerating the longevity of cueca brava for dramatic effect, she emphasized that cueca huasa as it has been practiced since the dictatorship was a more recent phenomenon and therefore less representative of “authentic” Chilean culture.⁹⁹ It was inescapable, most of us seemed to agree, that the cueca imposed during the dictatorship represented a form of sexual and ethnic violation. And though a few older women in the class who currently practice cueca huasa expressed unease at the idea that contemporary dance competitions might maintain these connotations, everyone acknowledged that it was understandable for Indigenous women and lower-class women to feel threatened by the history of this form of cueca. To wrap up the conversation, Josi contended that as women practicing cueca brava, it was our job to create an alternative to cueca’s patriarchal, authoritarian legacy by using our performances to demonstrate the power of women collaborating to control sonic and social space.

⁹⁸ Transcription of class recording, September 13, 2018.

⁹⁹ During my fieldwork it was not uncommon for Villanueva and other professional performers/instructors to describe cueca brava as a “canción milenaria” (thousand-year-old song) due to its supposed roots in Moorish/Arab song forms dating back to the Iberian region of al-Andalus in the 700-800s. Music scholars generally support the theory that cueca brava was influenced by Arab music of this region, but have not substantiated any direct connection to song forms pre-dating the turn of the last millennium (Claro et al 1994; Spencer 2011).

It is clear in her example of the fake “no more cueca” flyer that anti-feminist groups feared the feminist movements were destabilizing the imagined community of the nation (Anderson 2006). Frankly, they could not have been more correct in their estimation. But a closer look into the ways that the feminist movements manifested across Chile outside of university tomas and marches reveals that, rather than seeking to eviscerate national traditions, feminist artists and musicians were beginning to utilize national traditions to perform new modes of gendered sociality. In the case of these cueca classes, the sonic space of women’s raised voices afforded space for this national music to be reconceived as a mode of creating solidarity.

Feeling Vocal Spaciousness

Throughout the course of the year, I came to realize that the vocal practice of cueca brava was not something that could be achieved easily, if at all, in isolation. In November, two weeks before the end of our class and our final concert, I went to Quinta Normal, a nearby park, with the three classmates I would soon be performing with. It was springtime, and we’d chosen this spot to practice because of its openness and inviting green spaces. All of us felt less shy rehearsing outdoors than inside where our voices echoed, and we would constantly worry about neighbors hearing us. It was our first time practicing together as a group, and though each of us admitted to still feeling a bit nervous and insecure about our voices, we all felt that we had made significant progress mastering canto gritado throughout the past several months. Still somewhat timid, we stood in a circle to begin practicing one of our songs, “Mañana va a ser muy tarde,” transcribed below as performed.

Mañana va a ser muy tarde

Mañana, mañana va a ser muy tarde
 Cuando te, cuando te acordis de mi
 Cuando te, cuando te acordis de mi
 Que a mi no, que a mi no se me da nada
 Lo poco, lo poco y na’ que perdí
 Mañana, mañana va a ser muy tarde

La maldición que te echo
 (Mi vida) y en adelante
 Es que el dinero sobre
 (Mi vida) y el amor falte
 La maldición que te echo
 (Mi vida) y en adelante

Y el amor falte, sí
 (Mi vida) se hicieron humo
 Las ilusiones mías
 (Mi vida) las de mi orgullo

No vengai a buscarme
 (Mi vida) que ya es muy tarde

Tomorrow Will Be Too Late

Tomorrow, tomorrow will be too late
 When you, when you remember me
 When you, when you remember me
 Now it doesn’t, now it doesn’t matter
 The little, the little and nothing I lost
 Tomorrow, tomorrow will be too late

The curse I cast on you
 My love, now and forevermore
 Is that the money be too much
 And love be lacking
 The curse I case on you
 My love, now and forevermore

May love be lacking, yes
 My love, for they turned to smoke
 My illusions
 My love, the ones I prided

Do not come looking for me
 My love, for now is too late

During the first four-month long class from April-July, when the feminist movements were at their height, this piece had come to signify a collective sense of frustration and urgency as women continued to occupy university campuses, to march in the streets, and to circulate their

demands. “Tomorrow will be too late to give us control over our own bodies! Tomorrow will be too late to stop women from being attacked and killed” one group of students proclaimed before singing this cueca at the end-of-class performance in July.

Remembering that performance, we stood in the park in November still daunted by the challenging melodic range of this song, which began at the upper limits of most of our vocal ranges. Taking turns singing each of the stanzas, the first few rounds were difficult. We all felt uncomfortable knowing that we were being watched and heard. Then, as we began again, we all finally made eye contact, and started walking backwards, making the circle larger. “Lanza tú voz para acá!” (“Launch your voice over here!”) one of us would say as the other was singing. It came my turn, and for the first time I truly felt what it was like to sing canto gritado without inhibition. For the first time, all I cared about was how happy it made me to sing this music with these women in this place. For the first time, I let go of my fears for long enough to actually listen to the voices around me. My memory of that day is not of vocal perfection, but of sunlight and poetry and trust. Finally, in community, I had found my voice. When the day of our show finally arrived, there were mistakes, missed notes, and late entrances, but we knew this time that our voices had in fact made it across the room, had filled the space, and been heard.

IV. Endings and New Beginnings

In her famous text, “Uses of the Erotic,” Audre Lorde states, “That self-connection shared is a measure of the joy which I know myself to be capable of feeling, a reminder of my capacity for feeling” (Lorde 1984: 57). She emphasizes that sharing joy and sharing deeply any pursuit with another person can become the basis for forging ties across unknowable differences (Lorde 1984). While these women’s cueca classes have indeed established a level of self-knowledge and understanding among students and practitioners which fosters the growth of feminist solidarities, these affective and political ties should not be construed as homogenous collectives. Through an ongoing practice of mapping one’s voice into social and physical spaces, women cueca singers constantly negotiate their own subjectivities in relation to their environment.

In her book *Aurality*, Ana Maria Ochoa provides a helpful framework for understanding the voice and sound through creative mishearing, and how this mishearing is itself an intersubjective form of place-making. Ochoa argues that acoustically-shaped place-making, “[...] requires more an orientation toward the other, a disposition to listen, rather than a resolution of the ambivalence in such a situation, leading us away from a politics of representation and essentialism to one of echolocation that highlights ambiguity as central to the reconstitution of the world in colonial situations” (Ochoa Gautier 2014: 51). In the present, as women cueca singers navigate an increasingly authoritarian public sphere, the space of their voices continues to reconstitute the world they seek to live in.

Chapter 5

Sounding from Under: Coordinadora Femfest, Autogestión, and Transfeminist Coalition

Hoy hay tantos espacios distintos de lucha feminista...
A mí me parece que a nosotras nos convoca lo creativo.
Y lo creativo de por sí, aunque venga de las tristezas, y la precariedad absoluta,
está ligada al amor.

Today, there are so many different spaces of feminist struggle...
To me it seems like what calls us together is creativity.
And this creativity, although it may come from sorrow and absolute precarity,
is grounded in love.

Antonia Piña, Coordinadora Femfest, Interview with the author, July 31, 2018

Gathering Together, A Listening Guide

Carolina Ozaus's house is a gathering place, a beautiful mixture of punk memorabilia, music and motorcycle equipment, magnets with anarchist quotes, two demure cats, creaky floors, plants, and a patio for smoking and talking long into the night. It's tucked away on a side street near Metro Toesca in Santiago Centro in a hundred-year-old apartment building. There is a shared central courtyard where flowers cover up signs of aging on the walls, reminding us to keep lifting our heads towards the sun despite pain and passing of time. This is a place I returned to again and again throughout the time of my fieldwork. It's a place where members of Coordinadora Femfest have been gathering for years to hold meetings, plan events, celebrate achievements, and mourn losses. But most of all, because of Ozaus's loving labor, Femfest members have gathered in her home to find community. If the building could talk, it would have endless stories to tell about the organizing, the rehearsals, and the new personal and political connections formed within its rooms. I do not begin here to frame this place and these gatherings as perfect or to paint them as some sort of feminist utopia. I start here to describe one among many places that have housed a process of imperfect struggle, learning, tension, and continued feminist practice as the group has evolved from its inception in 2004 to the present. It is a place that has nurtured and sustained the difficult work of coalition building.

Coordinadora Femfest—a countercultural arts collective—is the organizer of Chile's longest running feminist music festival, Festival Femfest. It was created by women who were then in their late teens to early thirties and were active in Santiago's underground/punk rock scene. They wanted to host a music event by women for women that provided a safe space amidst the constant misogyny they faced playing gigs in most other settings. Carolina Ozaus was one of the founding members, along with Paz Reese, Antonia Piña, Barbara Finsterbusch, and Manuela Valle. Over the course of their sixteen years of activities, they have expanded from the festivals to host smaller single shows, participate in community events, join feminist discussion forums, and in 2018 finally achieved a long-time goal of opening Escuela Femfest, a series of community classes on subjects ranging from sound production and songwriting to sex education and sign language.

The group's name, "coordinadora," or "coordinator," expresses one of the core causes of the organization: to foster a circuit among women-centered bands (including trans, queer, and lesbian groups) in rock and underground music throughout the southern cone. As a coordinadora, they distinguish themselves adamantly from being a productora, or a production group. They do not function as promoters. They do not accept corporate sponsors, and they do not connect bands with other contacts in Chile's independent and mainstream music industries.¹⁰⁰ Rather, at all levels, from the programming of their shows to their internal decision-making to what food participants are going to eat, they strive to promote an ethos of "autogestión" or self-determination. "Autogestión" is generally used to describe a process of self-management or self-production, but as it is practiced among Coordinadora Femfest members, it is best understood as a process of collective determination based on an ethos of collaboration and horizontality. This collective determination extends beyond the organization itself and defines how they see themselves and their labor in relation to the needs and goals of other social justice groups and marginalized communities in Santiago and beyond. It is not an explicitly feminine or feminist politic in and of itself, yet Femfest's ethos of autogestión—grounded in creating space and seeking abundance for cis-straight, queer, and trans women/non-binary people alike—runs counter to the cronyism, competitiveness, and structural sexism that spread misogyny, sexual violence, and scarcity politics in Chile's more neoliberal mainstream and independent music scenes.

Femfest's collaboration with Hija de Perra (Daughter of a Bitch), a renowned "travesti" artist and intellectual, was foundational in helping them develop their anti-patriarchal and anti-neoliberal politics. Similar to the term "drag," in the South American context, "travesti" describes a political identity associated with dress and performance practices that consciously reject the social violence of imposed gender binaries, and it is often closely associated with transgender and/or non-binary identities.¹⁰¹ Perra's performances, known for their often-times shocking perversity, enacted a sexual dissidence that called out the violence of heteronormative gender roles. In the post-dictatorship society of the early 2000s, her celebration of gender ambiguity, queer sexuality, and non-normative erotic acts directly rejected the sexual repression which permeated society during the regime of dictator Augusto Pinochet. It was this directness, this fearless desire to create safe spaces for the outcast, that enamored her to Femfest members in the early years. While initially, the organizers in their early twenties may have been concerned primarily with getting women on stages, Hija de Perra took their vision and helped them contextualize their labor within larger anti-neoliberal struggles. She made them realize how it was not just sexism, but also capitalist systems of power that relegated women to passive, domestic roles, and demonized non-heteronormative lifestyles. In this chapter I explain how, despite Hija de Perra's untimely death in 2014, her transfeminist politics—which invoke the "trans" of transgender as well as transformation—continue to influence the organization.

¹⁰⁰ For the purposes of this chapter, I make distinctions between underground, independent/alternative, and mainstream music industries in Chile. However, the borders between the political economies of these scenes are in reality highly fluid—especially between the underground networks of Femfest and similar groups and the journalists, producers, labels, and musicians who form part of Santiago's independent music scene. Shannon Garland (2014; 2019) and Javiera Tapia (2017; 2020) have both written extensively on neoliberalism, affective labor, sociality, and gender politics in Chilean indie music since the 1980s.

¹⁰¹ For more information on the term "travesti," see Juliana Martínez. "Travesti: una breve definición." Sentiido. January 29, 2020 (Accessed March 10, 2020). <https://sentiido.com/travesti-una-breve-definicion/>

Organizers have stated that they do not confine their shows or festivals to one particular genre, but their ethos of autogestión and their transfeminist politics inevitably influence the types of bands that they choose to collaborate with. In other words, it is their methods of event production—their networking, their funding sources, the spaces where they choose to perform, and the political message which they want to communicate—that determine the sound and aesthetics of their musical events. Overwhelmingly, they feature bands grounded in punk, grunge, experimental, and noise rock as these genres have historically been linked to DIY economies and countercultural politics around the world.¹⁰²

Using a term that Femfest members frequently deploy to describe their artistic and political work, in this chapter, I argue that their practice of autogestión through transfeminist coalitions facilitates a feminist musical practice of sounding from under. By “under,” (used as such, in English, by Femfest members), I refer to peripheral spaces, marginalized groups of people, and non-institutional settings within which Femfest has developed their feminist musical practices. “Sounding from under” therefore describes a countercultural performance practice that expresses deeply situated coalitions of marginalized subjectivities, and that, as a spatial practice, makes audible the lived reality of poor places, colonized places, forgotten places, and other realms which constitute the various “under” parts of society. This conceptualization expands understandings of non-capitalist musical political economies (Ochoa and Botero 2009) and underground infrastructures of noise and feedback (Novak 2013) by attending to the intersectional subjectivities and labor that turn these processes into liberatory practices. Through sounding from under, Coordinadora Femfest imagines, revises, and practices the anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalist world they want to live in (Dolan 2005; Halberstam 2005; Muñoz 2009).

Drawing inspiration from notions of queer time and space (Halberstam 2005; Freeman 2010), which locates queer subjectivities and queer forms of community outside of chronological bourgeois reproductive time, this chapter moves fluidly between past and present, and between underground and institutional spaces. It ties together narratives that construct alternative temporalities from those happy, forward-looking models of social and economic development propagated by the Concertación after the end of the Pinochet dictatorship.¹⁰³ Drawing on Halberstam’s (2005) notion of queer space as a type of place-making activity that fosters the creation of queer counter-publics, this chapter also revisits places that have been forgotten, erased, or abandoned by human rights commissions that dealt only with violence that took place during the regime, not with ongoing violence and lingering trauma.¹⁰⁴ Yet, the chapter also chronicles profound acts of solidarity, of trust, and efforts in creating new modes of existence.

¹⁰² Most founding Femfest members, especially those who were teenagers in the late 1980s/90s, acknowledge that they were influenced by international feminist punk movements such as Riot GRRRL, but tend to see those group’s DIY practices as more individualistic and distinct from their collective practice of autogestión.

¹⁰³ The Concertación de partidos por la democracia, or the Coalition of Parties for Democracy, was a coalition of center-left parties formed in 1988 that held power from the end of the dictatorship in 1990 until Sebastian Piñera was first elected in 2010. Though these parties presided over a transition to democracy that rolled back the many of the authoritarian powers of the State, many economic, educational, and other social systems formed during the dictatorship were left largely in place (Bonney 2020).

¹⁰⁴ For example, the Museo de Memoria y Derechos Humanos (The Museum of Memory and Human Rights), inaugurated in 2010 by then-president Michelle Bachelet, explicitly examines violence carried out by the Chilean State between 1973-1990. It excludes abuses by the State which have occurred since that time. Furthermore, it virtually excludes the ongoing human rights abuses being suffered by Chile’s Mapuche and other Indigenous communities.

To tell these stories, I draw on interviews, albums, documentaries, and conversations from a year of personal participation in Coordinadora Femfest. I first met Carolina Ozaus and a few other members in 2016 during a shorter research trip, and when I returned to Chile again in 2018 to conduct my year-long fieldwork project, I was quickly invited to join in on their planning meetings, social gatherings, and musical events. The lines between co-organizer, friend, and ethnographer became blurred significantly throughout the course of the year, as they certainly will appear in this chapter. But rather than tease out these distinctions I aim to write productively through their complicated overlaps, amplifying my discussion of “sounding from under” by including my own interpretations of how these sounded spaces felt.

In the first section, I introduce “las antiguas,” the “older women” (a term used somewhat jokingly by members, because in this punk/underground scene these “older women” are in their thirties and forties) who have been part of Femfest since its beginning. Drawing on multiple interviews, I discuss their early lives, their bands, their meetings and friendship, and their stories of how Femfest began. These interviews reveal how Femfest’s original networks of solidarity, and their artistic and political coalitions were formed at a time when social media was in its nascent stages. They also construct a feminist genealogy (Aparico 2002) that forms the foundation for how Femfest communicates its ideals and its mission.

The second section examines the legacy of Hija de Perra within the history and current work of Femfest. In this section, I examine Hija de Perra’s role as a performer and the performative effects her discourse has had in the organization. I am specifically interested in the lingering effects and affects of her body after her material being left this world. Drawing on an archive of countercultural performance and my own participant observation in numerous shows, I consider how—in life and in death—Hija de Perra has provided Femfest with the tools for transfeminist coalition building. I maintain that the transfeminist coalitions Femfest has cultivated in dialogue with Hija de Perra help them foster a countercultural performance practice which—sounding from under—empowers marginalized subjects the regime had deemed abject.

In section three, I examine the daily practices of living, producing, and otherwise participating in Coordinadora Femfest. Based on my year of observation, participation, recordings, and field notes on Femfest meetings, this section considers how Femfest members are continuing to navigate their networking and coalition-building in the present and addresses the new financial resources and spaces they have turned to in order to carry out their events. I ask, for example, how does autogestión change when members are now less able to commit unpaid time due to work and/or family commitments? How have members grappled with adapting their feminist politics in the midst of national social upheavals and changing demographics in Santiago? How have these developments in turn influenced their musical, artistic, and educational programming? This section demonstrates the inseparability of feminist life and feminist political praxis (Ahmed 2017).

Finally, section four examines the lived experience of Festival Femfest 2018. It is an exploration of the sound worlds and coalitions created on the various stages as bands performed and those created behind the scenes as women students from Femfest’s first sound production class ran the sound tech themselves. This section is also a deep reflection on the achievements and productive failures (Halberstam 2011) of hosting the event at a cultural center in Lo Prado, a

low-income neighborhood on the outskirts of Santiago. By addressing the difficult emotional labor of organizing a self-produced festival; coordinating underground musicians, artists, and grassroots organizers in a horizontal manner; and fostering new forms of feminist musical practice, this conclusion offers an intimate glimpse into the imperfect process of feminist worldmaking.

I. Las Antiguas: Beginnings and First Encounters

As Carolina Ozaus stated in the opening to her documentary on Femfest, “The main motivation that made us all get together some years ago to form Coordinadora Femfest was to be able to have collective determination in our music making.” Ozaus is now the oldest member of the organization and carries out a great majority of their financial and legal responsibilities and networking efforts. She, along with Antonia Piña, Barbara Finsterbusch, and Maria Paz Reese are the four members that remain from the group of women who founded Femfest in 2004. They, along with Mila, Sol, Nico, Gaba, Kony, Cami, and myself, formed the core members of Coordinadora Femfest in 2018. The rest of this group had only begun participating in Femfest within the past three years, and as we went through the several months leading up to the festival, this gap in organizational knowledge was made evident as we struggled with how to maintain horizontality in our planning despite the constant need to ask questions and seek guidance from the longer-standing members. The following histories are pieced together from interviews, the documentary, and many meetings over the course of the year. Collectively, they tell the story of how these individuals came together to create Femfest through a process of autogestión. As I will explain shortly, the re-telling of these stories has also served as a way to transfer historical knowledge to newer members and to transmit many of the values they see as foundational to autogestión and feminism.



Figure 5.1 Femfest logo with collage of images from past festivals. Source: Coordinadora Femfest.

Carolina Ozaus is a guitarist, composer, poet, teacher, and documentary film maker. She was born in Santiago in the early 1970s, and despite her parents' best wishes, she knew at an early age that music was her calling. After finishing high school, she matriculated at the conservatory of Universidad de Chile, where she studied voice for a few years before leaving, knowing that despite the technical skills she had gained, she could not dedicate herself to classical music. By that time, she was already playing in rock bands. She later tried studying music pedagogy, but again fell into a creative crisis, left the university, and even stopped playing music with her bands. It took time for her to realize that she could, in fact, be both a performer and an educator on her own terms. After years of playing in other musical projects throughout her twenties, in 2003, Ozaus met Tania Corvalán, and they formed the duo, Vaso de Leche (Glass of Milk), named after Chilean anarchist writer Manuel Rojas's short story by the same name. After being in such a male-dominated world throughout her musical career in the 1990s, Ozaus recalled her new project with Corvalán feeling totally different,

For me it was a new experience and a new possibility of creating from a place of empathy. There were so many things that we empathized with as we were composing. That isn't to say that my earlier projects with men weren't enriching, but this was different. We spoke the same language. The same things had happened to us. Because of this it was a really fast process as soon as we got together and started creating, and we became a song-writing machine.¹⁰⁵

In other words, Ozaus came to realize in this initial project with Corvalán that composing with men vs women did not necessarily pre-determine a particular sound, but rather, composing with someone of a similar gender identity and background (both being cis-gender, lesbian women), allowed for greater understanding between one another in the creative process.

Besides the occasional cantautora (singer-songwriter), and Denise, front woman of the band Aguaturbia, Ozaus and Corvalán didn't know many other women in Chilean rock bands, and they certainly were not hopeful about being able to form connections with other women. However, the now-antiquated social media platform Fotolog soon began to shift the way they connected with other groups. One day, Manuela Valle, member of the band Rompehogares (Homewreckers), reached out to Vaso de Leche and invited them to participate in a women's music festival. Carolina recounted,

Fotolog came along, and one day I was going to rehearsal and Tania said to me, "Hey, some girls reached out to me that have a band called Rompehogares (Homewreckers). Manuela reached out and wants us to go to a meeting because they want to do a festival." And I said, "Cool, a festival, but for what?" "A festival of all women's bands!" Tania told me. I was ecstatic. In 2003 I was 33 years old. So, I said, well, I already knew I was going. In other words, I think it was a turning point. Before I was like, "Well, I know there aren't so many women out there, but I can make music with Tania and that's fine..." I had been...I never expected it would happen. I didn't have any faith that women would empower themselves through music. And then I turned around and found all these colleagues that came from a younger generation."¹⁰⁶

Through this nascent social media platform, Vaso de Leche was able to connect with much younger women musicians who they likely would not have come into contact with otherwise. But these younger women had likewise never experienced being part of such a large network of female bands.

¹⁰⁵ Carolina Ozaus. Interview with the author. June 21, 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Carolina Ozaus. Interview with the author. November 19, 2018.

Barbara Finsterbusch, who was only 16 when she met Carolina, Tania, and Manuela, described feeling like these older women were much more rooted in their feminist ideals. As she described, “I think my peers, in terms of age, didn’t yet have that ‘chip’ of feminism planted, but we did have a chip telling us we were capable, and we could do anything.” Finsterbusch remembers meeting Valle for the first time not through Fotolog, but after a tense experience at a show. Finsterbusch was lead singer of the girl’s garage rock band Lilits, inspired by bands such as Sonic Youth, Nirvana, Alice in Chains, and Rage Against the Machine. There were few places to gig, she said, and one night they ended up playing in a dive bar with an older male crowd.

Barbara: We played this venue owned by some Nazi assholes, and they shut down our show because our guitarist was a lesbian. And these guys... I guess they caught her kissing her partner, and they shut the whole thing down and cut off our electricity and everything was... Everything went to shit. It all went wrong. It became a huge problem.

CA: And how old were you all at the time?

Barbara: About 16... And I’m telling you all this because at that same gig, there were some girls that had come to see us. It was the girls from [the band] *Rompehogares*. At that time, Manola (Manuela), Pazita, Anto, and a few other chicks were playing in *Rompehogares*. They told us that they were also an all-female group and suggested we all get together to chat and share how our experiences had been. When we got to Manola’s house, we thought we were going to be the only band, but no! They had told several other people in other girls bands! [...] So that was it. We got together in that house, and there were so many of us, and we decided to create a place for ourselves to play, and that’s how Femfest was born. Everyone was like, “Yeah! A women’s festival! Let’s go for it! Let’s turn the tables so we sound more in-your-face! Femfest!” And that’s how it was born. We held the festival on December 5, 2004. That was the story.¹⁰⁷

Antonia Piña (Anto), keys player for *Rompehogares*, who was also in her late teens at the time, reflected back on the experience at the Lilits show and described it as a pivotal moment for herself and for the network of bands Valle was creating—a moment when they began to visualize and manifest roles for themselves outside of the heteronormative ideals of the perfect wife and domestic partner that were propagated commercially and in film, television, and media.

I feel like every time I think about that night, it’s clearer just how strange we were in basically any environment, because we were beyond average women, outside of the stereotypes, outside of the ideal Chilean woman, which is basically a housewife or those stereotypical women who want to be like the blonde woman on television. [...] It was then that Manola [Manuela Valle], especially, but really all of us began discussing the idea of having a meeting to put together a festival.¹⁰⁸

Maria Paz Reese (Pazita), who was then 17 years old and the guitarist of *Rompehogares*, similarly described the spontaneous and transformative manner in which Manuela brought together the network of bands that eventually became Femfest.

We [*Rompehogares*] were the ones that went and looked for these bands, the ones that convened them and everything, especially Manola. As I told you before, she was really sociable, so she would just become close to all these women. In fact, I have this memory that’s now really funny of being in a taxi with Manola, and her saying “We should do a festival of all-women bands,” and I said, “Yeah, we should do it...” I have that moment stuck in my memory, the two of us just looking out the window absentmindedly and thinking, “Hmm... We should do it...”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Barbara Finsterbusch. Interview with the author. November 20, 2018.

¹⁰⁸ Antonia Piña. Interview with the author. July 31, 2018.

¹⁰⁹ Maria Paz Reese. Interview with the author. June 29, 2018.

Sitting with me at a cafe, Pazita paused and reflected briefly on the fifteen years that had passed since that casual taxi ride. Her face lit up remembering the youthful rush of energy that everyone felt as Manuela networked and eventually hosted the first meeting of Femfest bands at her house. Gathered under one roof were Vaso de Leche, Rompehogares, Las Jonathan, Lilits, Golden Baba, Flores Marchitas, and She Devils, a group from Argentina.

At these initial meetings, Manuela recounted in the Femfest documentary that learning to relate to one another in a way that was based on collaboration and solidarity was extremely powerful, especially in a country where, as she reminded the interviewer, these types of connections were punished throughout many years of dictatorship and are still at times questioned (Documental Femfest). Another past member, Diana, expanded, “This is where you realize some of the greatest things about autogestión, something that’s maintained on the margins of commercial politics, which to me has to do with love—the love of developing an idea, a message, and a love of creativity” (Documental Femfest). Both members described forfeiting financial gain and aspirations to fame as necessary sacrifices in developing a practice of autogestión, but each maintained that it was these relationships of care and solidarity, based on egalitarianism rather than competition, which form the most radical rejection of Chile’s neoliberal society.

The documentary also makes clear the ways they see Chile’s neoliberalism as directly constricting normative gender roles. As Diana explained,

I believe that all the media and advertising which forms a type of coalition in our current system [...] puts forward a model of the ideal woman as super structured... This construction of reality in a country like this with a past like ours, with a dictatorship, where everything was reaffirmed in these forms of mass communication, has us [women] really confined in terms of stereotypes. On the television you can see “the mother” who’s in all the cleaning commercials. They show her as a perfect woman, the ideal mother, a fragile, aseptic woman, best friends with Mr. Muscle, cleaning everything and wearing pastel colors. They’re putting together an imaginary [...]. When it’s all said and done, the freedom that they’re offering you in all of these stereotypes [...] has to do with covering up all the frustrations of life in this shit system and replacing them with the necessity of consumption. This is a construction which is necessary to delimit social classes in a country like this.¹¹⁰

As other members indicated in the documentary as well as in interviews and other conversations, they understand the mainstream music industry to be an integral part of the advertising and mass media coalition which is jointly responsible, for perpetuating these gender and class divides through a culture of competition and consumption. It is for these reasons that they understand their refusal to conform to heteronormative feminine docility as part of an anti-capitalist as well as an anti-patriarchal agenda.

However, members are quick to clarify that in their initial meetings during the early years of the organization, they weren’t so self-reflective and didn’t have such a carefully articulated vision of what autogestión or feminism actually meant. When giving a presentation to prospective bands in June 2018, they stated that in those first years, they just wanted to do a festival their way, with no outside sponsors or producers, and to create a space where everyone felt safe and empowered. They also emphasized that their method of collaborative, horizontal organizing came very naturally since the group was formed out of existing friendships and new

¹¹⁰ Quote from *Documental Femfest*

friendships quickly developed among the bands. Although, as I explain in later sections, these same friendships have also occasionally led to challenging situations and conflicts of interest among members. Older members showed this slide (Figure 5.2) to prospective bands when explaining the history of who this group was formed by and formed for, and how they came to work through a process of autogestión.

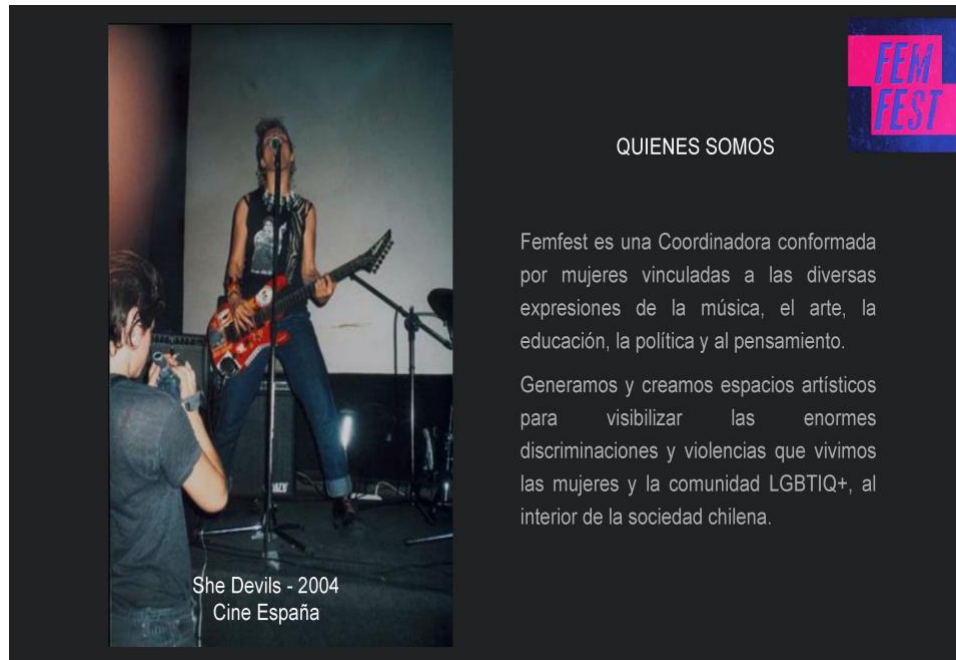


Figure 5.2 “Who are we?” Source: Presentación Convocatoria Femfest, June 9, 2018.

On the left, one slightly blurred image of the band She Devils performing on the dark stage at Cine España, an underground venue. To the right reads “Who we are: Femfest is a Coordinadora formed by women connected to diverse expressions of music, art, education, politics, and thought. We generate and create artistic spaces to make visible the enormous discrimination and violence which we experience as women and as members of the LGBTQ+ community within Chilean society.” With this slide, older members immediately made clear that from the start, they have positioned themselves in solidarity with queer and trans communities, and that they work out of peripheral or underground spaces which often lack the higher quality facilities and sound/light systems of other venues. However, they reiterated that working and performing out of these spaces allowed them the flexibility to make the festival accessible to anyone regardless of financial means.

Older members also explain their feminist politics in relatively simple terms, describing the influence of Hija de Perra as an obvious choice.

We laugh a bit at the stereotypes that are attached to us, which we don’t accept... images drawn from the discourses they try to wield about us. And because of this I believe it was also key to include Hija de Pera as animadora (MC)... [She shows that] one can play with and manipulate the images they attach to you and be critical about them.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Manuela Valle in *Documental Femfest*

As las antiguas described to prospective band members at the same meeting in 2018, Hija de Perra deeply informed what they describe as a pillar of sexual dissidence within their organization (Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3 “Pillars of our Coordinadora” Source: Presentación Convocatoria Femfest, June 9, 2018.

As Femfest members reiterated in the above slide, “Hija de Perra has been the expression of the coordinadora’s political discourse for ten years, always animating the festival from a perspective of sexual dissidence.” As they communicated clearly here, they still see Perra’s politics as a continuing ideological and aesthetic influence on their organization, despite her death some four years prior. In the following section, I explain some of the lasting effects of Hija de Perra on Femfest, and the transformations they have undergone in order to arrive at their current feminist artistic and political practices.

II. Hija de Perra: Transfeminism and Queer Countercultural Memory

“Una mujer puede transformarse en un monstruo tratando de ser bella. O sea es cómo se exagera la belleza hasta un punto que se junta con su opuesto y termina siendo horrible... a la vez es muy interesante que nos impongan esas bellezas, esas bellezas que si realmente uno lo piensa, en verdad no lo son tanto.”

“A woman can become a monster in the process of trying to be beautiful. Or rather, it’s like beauty is exacerbated to the point that it meets its opposite and ends up being horrible. At the same time, it’s very interesting that those forms of beauty are imposed on us, those beauties which, if you really think about it, really aren’t so beautiful.”

Feosia, member of the band Horregias, describing Hija de Perra

Hija de Perra was the artistic persona created by drag artist Victor Hugo “Wally” Pérez Peñaloza, a cisgender gay man, who used this character to embody a radically perverse transfeminine subjectivity. She was involved with Femfest since its inception as its Master of

Ceremonies.¹¹² When asked how Hija de Perra came to be a part of the organization, each person I interviewed seemed to pause, think a moment, then say something to the effect of, “It’s like she was always there.” No one could remember exactly who made the first contact in those early years, but as Barbara said,

When Hija de Perra arrived as part of Femfest, she arrived immediately as the animator of Femfest. And we, without thinking about it, desiring it, meditating on it, or proposing it, Hija de Perra became the voice of Femfest for ten years. So, imagine, these four years that Hija de Perra hasn’t accompanied us have been a major blow.¹¹³

Just as much as Perra’s presence seemed natural and pervasive in the early years of Femfest, her untimely death in 2014 likewise has made her absence a constant point of discussion in the years that have followed. How did Hija de Perra’s history with Femfest shape their understanding of transfeminism? As Manuela Valle describes of Perra’s performances,

Hija de Perra took to the extreme the gender norms of the female body as defined by a male gaze and the narrative of sexual freedom placed by neoliberalism, while at the same time, contaminating the transparent surfaces of the post-dictatorship with dirt and bodily fluids. Unlike other drag queens’ performances, Hija de Perra did not aim to embody a beautiful, perfect woman but rather a grotesque reflection of what the male gaze desires and constructs as femininity (Valle 2017: 232).

According to Valle, in a neoliberal society, the idea of sexual freedom is a heteronormative concept designed to promote the illusion of free choice while in actuality holding both men and women to harmful standards of masculinity and femininity and erasing the possibility of non-normative sexual desire (Valle 2017). Valle’s text ultimately points towards how, even after the transition in 1990, the neoliberal economy imposed by the dictatorship continues to foster a society that valorizes political subjects for their respectability, their hetero-(or homo)-normativity, and their conformity to these ideals in both their private and public lives.

Hija de Perra’s untimely death in 2014 shook Femfest to its core and forced the organization to re-imagine its feminist political praxis.¹¹⁴ However, her lingering absence, or constant presence, animated all of the spaces I participated in with Femfest during my fieldwork. For example, (Figures 5.4 and 5.5) in Femfest’s concert spaces, Hija de Perra’s image circulates as both call to action and signifier of collective memory.

¹¹² "She," "he," "they"... none of these translated pronouns do justice do the manner in which Perra defied gender norms. Each Femfest member used different pronouns and referenced him/her by Wally or Hija de Perra or both. I use "she" when describing Hija de Perra, the drag character and "he" when describing Wally.

¹¹³ Barbara Finsterbusch. Interview with the author. November 20, 2018.

¹¹⁴ Victor Hugo/Hija de Perra died on August 25, 2014, after a months-long battle with an aggressive pulmonary infection resulting from HIV/AIDS. His mother, Rosa Peñaloza, believes he received improper care from medical providers at the hospital where he was being treated due to discrimination against his illness and his way of life. For more information, see Jerez Pinto 2019.



Figure 5.4 Concert poster for a show commemorating the anniversary of Hija de Perra's death.
Source: Coordinadora Femfest.



Figure 5.5 Altar for Hija de Perra created by Femfest members and audience. August 26, 2018. Photo by the author.

The images shown here are specifically from a show commemorating the fourth anniversary of Hija de Perra's death. Her memorialized appearance at this event is significant since the show was also held to raise funds for the 2018 Festival. By using these traces of past performances to activate the community of her friends, family, and fans, Hija de Perra's prior affective labor continues to sustain Femfest's alternative political economy. José Esteban Muñoz calls these types of traces ephemera. He expands,

Ephemera [...] is all of those things that remain after a performance, a kind of evidence of what has transpired but certainly not the thing itself. It does not rest on epistemological foundations but is instead interested in following traces, glimmers, residues, and specks of things [...]. Ephemera includes traces of lived experience and performances of lived experience, maintaining experiential politics and urgencies long after these structures of feeling have been lived (Muñoz 1996: 10).

The ephemera left in the wake of Hija de Perra's corporeal departure instilled in Femfest members a feminist practice grounded in the profound awareness of how our bodies—entangled in regimes of political power—come to sense, move through, and shape our worlds. In this way, the memory of Hija de Perra provides an opening for the possibility of transfeminist worldmaking—trans here representing not only a transgender, transsexual or “travesti” subjectivity, but also, according to Femfest members, the trans of transit, movement, adaptation.¹¹⁵

These concepts aren't necessarily new in feminist or trans activism and ideology. However, following recent writings on trans and feminist solidarities (Garriga-Lopez 2018; Halberstam 2018), rather than repeat and reinforce narratives of their tensions, I find it important to gesture towards the ways in which cis- and trans- feminisms in Chile have been in dialogue with and nourished one another. Namely, in the case of Coordinadora Femfest—a group of cis-gender women who primarily identify as heterosexual, though many identify as queer, lesbian, or bisexual—their close collaboration with Hija de Perra deepened their empathy for the experience of trans and non-binary people, and in their dialogues with other feminist groups, has helped them to critically resist the aggressive separatism of trans exclusive radical feminists or “TERFs.”¹¹⁶ Furthermore, many cis-straight Femfest members have expressed that far from feeling excluded from Hija de Perra's transfeminist politics, through her, they came to feel more comfortable expressing their own femininity and sexual desire. In other words, this dialogue between cis- and trans- feminisms reveals that both came to be more secure in the central belief that no gender identity or form of sexual pleasure is more or less valid than any other, and both can be equally committed to resisting misogyny and sexual oppression.

The following examples demonstrate some of the ways in which Hija de Perra's political praxis continues to influence Femfest. In a 2014 piece published just before her death, Hija de Perra describes how her non-normative sexuality was pathologized during the years of the Pinochet regime.

¹¹⁵ Barbara Finsterbusch. Interview with the author. November 20, 2018.

¹¹⁶ Though the term “TERF” itself is not used widely in Chile, the commonality of excluding trans women from feminist spaces is still prevalent. In fact, many of the student groups who took part in the Mayo Feminista occupations and demonstrations in 2018 received significant criticism from queer/LGBT and trans groups for this very reason (Baird Campbell, personal communication). For more on the history of trans exclusive radical feminism, see Burns 2019.

It's well known that homosexuality as a pathology was just eliminated from psychiatric manuals in 1973, but since in my country that same year the dictatorship began... between bombs and bloody cannibalistic killings surely that information didn't make it to Chile, and they treated my case as an illness, a mental disorder that was possible to cure through therapy, so that I would be able to adapt myself to the patriarchal, sexist, heteronormative environment successfully (de Perra 2014: 12).

Having experienced this oppressive pathologization, the character Hija de Perra became Wally, her creator's way of embodying a transfeminine subjectivity which disidentified with the cruel effects of violent masculinity sustained during the dictatorship through pervasive homophobia as well as through the specter of torture and detention centers. Hija de Perra continued,

I bravely resolved to confront everyone, and I nourished myself with insolent, filthy acts responding to the social constructions in our South American context, verifying in my own flesh the oppression and hostility together with the discriminatory pleasure of the other when they feel superior and correct, destroying personal integrity and trashing human dignity (de Perra 2014: 11).

It was this brash form of embodied disidentification with gendered forms of state violence that drew Femfest members to Hija de Perra. As Barbara Finsterbusch told me in an interview,

Hija de Perra had such a powerful discourse. [She] took what was going on socially and threw it up in your face in the most horrendous and atrocious way [...]. Either you liked it, or you didn't, and we liked it. We liked it because it was a grotesque way of seeing reality, and that's how things were, and it was good to say it. There's no reason to have precise, beautiful words to say things. They simply have to be said. We found that Hija de Perra achieved that goal. She just said it.¹¹⁷

Reflecting on these initial encounters with Hija de Perra's discourse and performance, Femfest members described the way in which it informed their own countercultural musical practice and helped them mature from their broad and youthful "anti-establishment" countercultural ideology, to developing countercultural practices that seek not only to deconstruct oppressive regimes of power, but also aspire to perform new modes of conviviality and community sustenance.

Throughout the later years when many Femfest members were beginning to feel disenchanted with their work, she would strike lightning into their hearts. Barbara described,

We were burnt out once and we went to see her [Hija de Perra] in her house to let her know that we were ending Femfest, and she was outraged. In that moment, the guy [Wally] really showed the Hija de Perra character he carried inside of him. He was like, "NOOOO!!! HOW COULD YOU EVEN THINK ABOUT IT? Femfest has to make it to at least ten years!!! And we'll get a big cake and some girl has to pop out of it showing her tits!! NO YOU IDIOTS!!!" And then he talked us up... he talked us up so much that we said sheepishly, "Yeah, of course, fine...ok thanks, of course we'll keep the movement going."¹¹⁸

Sadly, Hija de Perra wasn't able to see the tenth Femfest Festival in 2014, she passed shortly before the event. Although Perra's untimely departure left a lingering absence amidst the organization, they eventually channeled their grief into transformative action. The same year of her death, they were invited to collaborate with a different Femfest in Temuco, a smaller, mostly Indigenous city in Southern Chile. This expansion into a southern region marked a major turning point for the organization in their mission to center their work in under-served areas, and it helped them begin to collect themselves and re-imagine their identity without Hija de Perra.

¹¹⁷ Barbara Finsterbusch. Interview with the author. November 20, 2018.

¹¹⁸ Barbara Finsterbusch. Interview with the author. November 20, 2018.



Figure 5.6 Carolina Ozaus performs at the Festival Femfest’s outdoor stage next to a poster of Hija de Perra. October 27, 2018. Photo by the author.

At the 2018 Festival Femfest, the memorialized image previously used in Hija de Perra’s altar was placed adjacent to the outdoor stage, taking on new valences as a reminder of the ways Hija de Perra animated this stage in the past and continues—albeit in spectral form—to enliven each bands’ performance. During her set at the festival Carolina Ozaus interpreted Violeta Parra’s famous song “Maldigo del alto cielo” (Figure 5.6) Parra is arguably Chile’s most iconic female artist, but the story of her death by suicide in 1967 is often told as a cautionary tale about the perils of emotional instability and deviant womanhood (Valdebenito 2018). At the festival, however, Ozaus’s performance of Parra’s piece alongside the image of Hija de Perra created an intertextual reference reclaiming both artists’ countercultural discourses. When performing the section of the song copied below, Ozaus abandoned the original melody and loudly declaimed the text over the drone of distorted eighth notes on her guitar. When she got to the final line “cuanto será mi dolor” she began looping a minor, descending eighth note pattern, which she gradually faded out while repeating “cuanto será mi dolor” then “under, under, under,” locating the performance as coming from a position of alterity.

“Maldigo del alto cielo”

Maldigo luna y paisaje
 Los valles y los desiertos
 Maldigo muerto por muerto
 Y al vivo de rey a paje
 Al ave con su plumaje
 Yo la maldigo a porfia
 Las aulas, las sacristias
 Porque me aflige un dolor
 Maldigo el vocablo amor
 Con toda su porquería
 Cuánto será mi dolor.

“I Curse the Heavens Above”

I curse the moon and landscape
 the valleys and the deserts,
 I curse all the dead
 and the living, king or page
 the birds with their plumage
 I curse, unwavering
 the classrooms, the sacristies
 because such pain afflicts me
 I curse the word love
 with all of its filth
 how great will be my pain.

Never even having witnessed one of Hija de Perra's live performances, I sensed her ephemeral presence alongside Ozaus's set re-animating Violeta Parra's text. In that moment, I recalled the ways Ozaus and other Femfest members described Hija de Perra's performances, and how they called out that which is filthy about normative constructions of sexuality. For the first time, I heard the last passage sung, "maldigo el vocablo amor / con toda su porquería," as a survival strategy rather than a cry of suffering. Ozaus's delivery of the text similarly took the ideas of abjection and pain present with both Parra's and Hija de Perra's work and recast them as ways of naming and overcoming oppression. Subtly inserting this transfeminine subjectivity inspired by Hija de Perra into Violeta Parra's piece, allowed for a performance based not on disempowering narratives of deadness, but on liveness, on queer temporalities, and the possibility of regrowth (Halberstam 2005; Muñoz 2009). Ozaus's sounding from under rekindled transgressive feminine voices that had been silenced, inviting listeners instead into an alternate unfolding of time and place where power is built from the margins and from the marginalized.

The narrative I've presented here of Hija de Perra's legacy in Coordinadora Femfest is, like collective memory itself, fragmented. Yet I maintain that the lingering presence of Hija de Perra's radical transfemininity instills these acts of collective memory with an urgent need to reclaim the future for trans, queer, migrant, Indigenous, impoverished, and other citizens that Chile's post-dictatorial society has cast out. With this sense of transfeminist futurity, Femfest's countercultural performances become dynamic, embodied tools for intersectional coalition building. Their worldmaking potential lies in their capacity to transform histories while they themselves re-invent the meanings of conviviality, intimacy, and community sustenance.

III. Living and Producing Femfest

Becoming a Femfesta

I learned about Femfest in March 2016 when I was in Santiago attending the first edition of Ruidosa Fest, the feminist music festival launched by pop musician Francisca Valenzuela.¹¹⁹ On a panel called "Desde la industria" ("From the Industry"), Carolina Ozaus had prepared a compelling manifesto on the need to radically change the competitive, for-profit nature of mainstream music industries in order to truly achieve equality for women and gender minorities. Moved by her passionate and articulate perspective, I found Ozaus after the panel and arranged another meeting to talk more about her organization, Femfest. A few days later, sitting in the hot afternoon sun at Cafe Literario in Parque Bustamante, she graciously shared with me some of the early history of the group, their principles of autogestión and their use of countercultural art, music, and sexually dissident performances to resist gender stereotypes forced on women musicians in the mainstream music industry and in Chilean society more broadly.

Fast-forward two years. Although I'd kept in touch with Carolina through Facebook during the time that elapsed between my visit in 2016 and my return for fieldwork at the beginning of 2018, I was still unsure how I would be received by the rest of the group. Coming from a North American university, and being funded by a Fulbright scholarship, would I be seen

¹¹⁹ For more information on Ruidosa Fest, see Chapter One.

as part of “the establishment?” On another hot day in February 2018, Carolina invited me to Cafe Literario once again with another member, Antonia Piña, who was then completing a master’s degree in sociology in France. We complained about the heat, shared our respective experiences being cat-called while in route to the meeting, then without skipping a beat, Antonia asked me to describe what my dissertation was about. “What is your argument?” she said.

Somewhat caught off guard, and fully aware that I was being tested, I tried my best to talk through my theoretical interests in sound, gender, and mobility in post-dictatorship Chile, and to describe the participatory research I hoped to carry out. Done with their assessment, Antonia and Carolina laughed a bit at having put me on the spot and clarified that since they had worked with foreign scholars in the past, they were generally used to the process. Nevertheless, they stated emphatically that they expected transparency on my part and, most importantly, that I share with them any publication or future work which came out of my investigation.

Formalities done, Antonia and Carolina happily invited me to the first general meeting of the year to be held in March. The whole interaction made me realize from the very beginning that the feminist discourse I would be studying was also discourse I would be actively participating in. My new peers came from dramatically different backgrounds and schools of thought. Aside from our different nationalities, most of Femfest’s membership was in their late thirties to late forties, 10 to 20 years older than me. They had lived through the end of the dictatorship and most had been introduced to political organizing through anarchist or revolutionary leftist groups. I knew that my involvement with Femfest would force me to re-evaluate many of my own feminist and political beliefs. However, from the very first *asamblea*, (general assembly) held a few weeks later, I quickly understood that Femfest had welcomed me into their organization because they also wanted me to share my perspectives. What took more time to understand was *how* to go about voicing my opinions among these new peers, especially when I was still learning so much about the history and functioning of Femfest. The first few months between March and June was a rush of information at every meeting. I was constantly learning new names, trying to understand references to places and events, or just asking them to explain another Chilean slang word I didn’t know. It was hard to feel like I could actually form any sort of critical opinion, much less share that opinion clearly and sensitively with the group.

My own learning curve aside, these meetings nevertheless became an integral part of my social life in Chile. At least once or twice a week, everyone would gather around 7:00 in the evening at someone’s house, and we’d casually enjoy “once” (Chile’s version of elevenses). While slicing avocados and pouring tea, we’d ask about children and partners, or share updates about our cats and our menstrual cycles. It was my first time experiencing this sort of feminist collectivity as a social rather than strictly political practice, and I loved it. Eventually socializing would give way to a meeting. The agenda would often take twists and turns since it was rare that anyone officially moderated, but everyone was allowed the time and space to share their thoughts and feelings. This made for slow but cohesive decision making when it came to planning events or working on other projects. Around 11:00pm or later, depending on the week, the meeting would devolve into smoke breaks, a run to get pisco and Coca-Cola for “piscolas,” and when it was still warm enough, we’d end up out on a patio. Throughout those first few months I listened, enjoyed, and came to deeply appreciate the slow pace and free-wielding structure of Femfest meetings. Yet as my own sense of feminist practice evolved, I began to see

that it was exactly these alternative modes of organizing—such as socializing and conducting proceedings at a more moderate rhythm—that lay the foundation for Femfest enacting their anti-neoliberal feminist agenda. It was, as they said, their way of constructing *lazos afectivos* (affective ties).

Slowly but surely, I began to feel like a *Femfesta*, someone who was truly a part of *Coordinadora Femfest* and contributed to its functioning. This was a position I had been resisting somewhat until Paz finally opened up to me during a group self-care and self-reflection workshop in June. By then I had been participating in the group for over five months, and she and other members began to gently prod me to take more ownership over my role in the organization, not only as a photographer but as an active participant in discussions, decision-making, and event-planning. This excerpt from my field notes describes the interaction.

June 30, 2018.

Essentially, [Paz] told me that she knows I've been trying to be conscientious and respectful of the group as I've become involved and begun conducting interviews. However, she said at times this led me to participate less, and that my energy in the space was lacking. It was good to hear that she didn't think this was because of lack of care, and re-assuring that I have an invitation to delve more deeply into Femfest's activities and use my voice/presence here more often.

In other words, I realized that trying to maintain a careful distance as a foreigner and as a researcher was actually having the opposite effect that I had intended. This changed my thinking about feminist praxis as both an ethnographer and an organizer. I was forced to confront the fact that forging new connections involved not just recognizing my positionality but articulating it clearly and transparently, using it as a way to generate conversation and ideas. This became crucial as I participated in Femfest's coalition-building processes over the course of the year.

Studies in autogestión

At a meeting on April 20, Femfest members decided it was urgent to begin figuring out what communities they wanted to collaborate with for the 2018 festival in October. But more than what communities, they were concerned with how they would coordinate with various groups, and for what purpose. How would they go about making connections if connections did not exist already? When would these meetings need to happen? How would Femfest communicate their core values and mission with these new groups? Immediately, the group agreed that they had to collaborate with performers in the trans community, since after Hija de Perra's death in 2014 they had not fully recovered their connections with these groups. But, as some members suggested, it was also pressing to begin working with growing communities of immigrants coming from places like Haiti, Venezuela, and Colombia.

In discussing these potential opportunities for collaboration, the group realized that more pressingly, they needed to stop and consider what types of feminisms they were occupying as they went about building these coalitions. Was it black feminism? Mapuche feminism? Lesbian or transfeminism? Carolina had recently been to a talk on black feminism hosted by members of the black migrant community and shared that during this event the speakers made clear that they had no interest in being tokens of diversity in unequal collaborations. Taking this sentiment to

heart, the group decided it would be best to host this year's festival in collaboration with groups they had already been fostering relationships with. They would focus on reinvigorating their connections to the trans community and continuing to develop ties with pro-choice abortion rights groups and deaf advocacy groups. Coalitions with migrant communities would have to be built more slowly. The relatively new connection they wanted to begin growing this year was with a group called Festival de Arte Erótico (FAE).

One of the members of FAE had come to the first Femfest meeting on March 24 and explained that they wanted to collaborate with Femfest because they believed the two organizations held closely aligned visions regarding the use of art to validate dissident forms of sexuality. They wanted Femfest to participate in their annual festival to be held in late May, which they explained as a night of performances celebrating the role of erotic play in social life. In turn, they would help with Festival Femfest later in the year. An extra point of interest in working with FAE was the fact that it would be hosted that year by Daniela Vega, the trans actress who had recently starred in the Chilean film *Una Mujer Fantástica* (*A Fantastic Woman*), which had just won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. They hoped that developing their connection with FAE would help them re-gain some of the connection with the queer and trans communities that they had lost after the passing of Hija de Perra. So Carolina agreed to support them by performing at the event with her group, Marea Terrestre (Terrestrial Tide).

The night that FAE was finally going to take place, a group of other Femfest members and I walked expectantly through Barrio Yungay to the venue.¹²⁰ From the outside it looked like any of the decaying early twentieth-century row houses lined up along the block, but once inside, we were surprised by the grand entryway, ornate molding, and two large courtyards already filled with dancing, drinking and live music. The space was dimly illuminated with fuchsia, green, and blue lighting. Through the haze of cigarette smoke my friends kept pointing out well-known figures in Santiago's underground arts scene. Short pieces by erotic film-maker Erika Lust—known for her works celebrating women's sexual fantasies—were being screened outside on the wall in the back courtyard. Organizers kept tempting attendees to visit the *carpa de experiencias* (Experiences Tent), but none of us felt comfortable enough to venture inside. We remained mostly on the dance floor or in the courtyard listening to bands. In a group of eight or so women, we felt safe, and as far as I could tell, everyone had a great time.

At our next meeting, however, it became clear that all had not been well at the Festival de Arte Erótico. A known sexual abuser and several other individuals known to be highly queer- and trans-phobic had perpetrated the space. People had been manipulated into taking hard drugs, and many erotic performances crossed the line when they brought spectators into sexual acts without their consent. As we had feared, these disturbances transpired in the *carpa de experiencias*. The events forced us to ask ourselves what they revealed about the values of FAE as an organization. The allegations emerging from the *carpa de experiencias* were particularly concerning, since the non-consensual contact had seemed to be premeditated and pervasive.

¹²⁰ Barrio Yungay, now known to be a lower-middle class, bohemian neighborhood, was a center of wealth in the early 1900s. It is filled with glamorous neo-gothic and neo-romantic houses that have fallen into disrepair since the elite society there began leaving for the eastern outskirts of Santiago in the later twentieth century. However, amidst this architecture, the neighborhood is now full of murals and street art, music and cultural centers, and museums.

Femfest had believed so much in FAE's mission and the possibility of creating a safe space for celebrating sexual desire, but the reality was that this event had not been a safe space. Most Femfest members at the follow-up meeting agreed that though some performances at Femfest festivals are designed to provoke—as was always the case with Hija de Perra—they had never heard of audience members feeling violated or unsafe. But still, they asked, how can you actually guarantee a safe space? How can a politics of sexual dissidence be performed consensually? How can you possibly accommodate everyone's needs and backgrounds when planning these sorts of events? What protocols can be put in place for dealing with conflict, harassment, and abuse? How could they go about dis-entangling themselves from an organization that held similar values, but that ultimately did not adhere to the same ethical standards?

FAE ended up not being invited to participate in Festival Femfest that year. I share the story of this failed collaboration because it created a learning moment where we were forced to evaluate the costs of coalition-building from “under” through autogestión. Despite Femfest's desire to create a reciprocal relationship with an organization more deeply connected to the queer and trans community, Femfest members recognized that it was worth sacrificing FAE's involvement through time, labor, and donations in order to continue producing Festival Femfest in a setting where all involved felt safe and trusted. This example demonstrates how the labor of “sounding from under” is not only defined by countercultural musical practices or by performing in marginalized spaces, but also through the reciprocal socioeconomic ties and relationships of trust which make these performances possible. As Carolina commented at a meeting later in the year, “What is Femfest? Femfest, of course, could be considered a product, but the festival is nothing without the previous work that goes before, of coordination. And it's difficult for us.”¹²¹

Mayo feminista 2018

Around the same time that Coordinadora Femfest was negotiating their collaboration with the Festival de Arte Erótico, another movement was growing which would transform Femfest's coalition-building process in 2018. What had begun in April with a group of female students at Universidad Austral shutting down and barricading their department in protest of ongoing sexual harassment and misogyny within their institution by May had turned into a nation-wide movement with secondary and university students across the country shutting down their campuses in feminist tomas (takeovers). The movement para una educación no-sexista (for a non-sexist education) began dramatically re-shaping the way feminism was understood in Chile. Until this movement began, feminism in the social spaces I encountered generally had the connotation of militant, separatist politics which was unappealing to most women. A common sentiment was “I'm pro-women, but I'm not sure if I'm a feminist.” However, what this movement ultimately catalyzed—not in spite of but because of students' dramatic marches and disruptive tomas—was deeper conversation about feminist politics across society. The fact of students bringing women's rights into the national political spotlight allowed space for women of diverse backgrounds and situations to begin evaluating the ways in which patriarchal systems of power influenced their own lives.

¹²¹ Carolina Ozaus. Transcribed from fieldnotes by the author. July 25, 2018.

However, for an organization such as Femfest, which as a collective had already been developing their feminist sensibilities for over a decade, the movement that came to be called Mayo Feminista also created a sense of urgency to forge connections with groups of students and other women who were just beginning to evaluate their ideas of feminism. Femfest members, many of whom are educators themselves, were inspired by the bravery of these students in catalyzing such a powerful movement, but also recognized that they were young, alone, in some cases uninformed, and generally wanted help from allies and older generations with more experience in political organizing. Quick to respond to this need, Femfest members began reaching out to their contacts at the universities and collaborating with students to plan performances, discussions, and workshops within the various tomas happening around Santiago.

On June 11, the coldest day of the year, thunder rolled, and snow fell outside as a group of about ten students gathered in the auditorium of the School of Communication and Journalism at Universidad de Chile in Santiago. There was no heat, and students had already been surviving around a month sleeping and eating and organizing within the frigid halls of the locked down university. Nevertheless, the small group of students that attended was desperately eager to learn about Coordinadora Femfest. Carolina Ozaus had been invited to host a screening of her documentary on Femfest and then lead a discussion with students. Mila, another Femfest member, also joined since she was an alumna of this department. I was invited to document the event and share my perspectives as a feminist scholar/artist/activist from the United States.

After the documentary screening, which was received with great enthusiasm, Carolina, Mila, and I shared with students what had brought us to Coordinadora Femfest and, more broadly, to feminism as a practice of liberation. As Carolina stated, reflecting on what she had learned about feminism through her years of involvement with Femfest, “It’s a daily construction, a huge exercise. Patriarchal structures manifest themselves in our personal lives...from the most private to the most public realms. We’re all learning...but we’re all changing history.” Mila, agreeing, emphasized that the most important part of their feminist praxis was organizing according to other, non-capitalist logics. Rather than a business team, she explained that Femfest members see each other as family, and are first and foremost committed to each other’s well-being. Explaining the importance of beginning meetings with *la once*, she said, “We sit down and nourish ourselves—literally and figuratively. You enter into work as a process of healing. You have to set the example of being able to share your feelings and needs.”

The students gathered that day acknowledged that Femfest provided a model of a collaborative and intersectional feminist coalition-building which they were still struggling to achieve in their own organizing. However, they were still left with many unanswered questions. How, they wondered, could they make their movement more inclusive to university staff who received far lesser pay than faculty and administrators? How and when should they allow male students to join in their discussions? How should they delineate womanhood in order to be more trans-inclusive? What tools could they use to connect their feminist agenda with the class tensions and systemic inequalities which plague Chile's mostly private educational system? What could they do to make their struggle relevant for Indigenous, migrant, poor, working class, and other groups of women who are disconnected from university settings?

Acknowledging that these were questions similar to many of the challenges Femfest and other feminist groups also face, Carolina and Mila offered not answers, but reflections on their own experiences in tomas and navigating the combined necessity of establishing safe, closed spaces and doing the difficult, externally facing work of coalition-building (Reagon 1983). “Sometimes tomas are like that,” they said. “Everything remains internal, and people start just returning to their homes, and in the end, they just do Facebook resistance.” Going on, they explained that while it’s crucial to question the centers of power within your own tomas, it is equally crucial to develop empathy and networks of communication among the various tomas, and to always acknowledge that none of us are fully emancipated from patriarchal and capitalist powers, we’re just in distinct processes of liberation.

As the tomas progressed through Chile’s winter months between April-July, creative organizations such as Femfest began serving not only as models of coalition-building, but also became crucial points of connection across various sectors of the feminist movements. In an event at the School of Law at Universidad de Chile, which was home to one of the most publicly engaged groups of students during the feminist movements, feminist poetry recited by students and community allies became a way through which those gathered collectively shared and made sense of their anger at ongoing sexual violence, their frustration with the static responses from the university and government, and their hope that this movement would ultimately expand beyond the tomas and lead to structural social change. Yet perhaps more importantly, through these recitations, performers voiced and embodied their personal relationships to a collective feminist cause. Through sound and gesture, they evidenced multiple modes of holding space for themselves and for one another. The following prose and image are drawn from my notes and photographs of the evening.

June 27, 2018.

This evening marked two months since students had taken over the building, and though there seemed to be a tiredness weighing on all the students we met, there also seemed to be a celebratory mood. This was not a moment of closure, but rather of reconnection with the momentum they would need to carry their demands beyond the tomas, beyond the walls of the institution. On this night, I was struck by the incredibly different ways each poet positioned themselves physically as they were reading. Some would lean on the table in a relaxed manner, some would almost burry themselves in their books and look only at the page before them, some stood with their feet on a chair for added effect, some sat and stared solemnly at the audience as they read. These various poses are what I focused my photography on. Not because I wasn’t captivated by the poetry. But I couldn’t help but be intrigued by the way each poet’s emotion poured through not only in their words and voice, but through the way they held themselves, the way they let their bodies be on display in this space. It was the small gestures that struck me most—raised eyebrows, one leg kicking nervously under the table, feet crossed humbly, tossing back one’s hair, a silent stare after finishing a reading... That’s what was powerful about what I was left with, not the words, but the presences—individual, collective, ephemeral, phantasmic. Femicide statistics made into poetry, made into memory, made into pain, made into life. Generational trauma made into sarcasm, made vulnerable, made to heal. I had dinner with Coni and Carolina nearby afterwards. Never have I so much needed a few beers and fries with friends.



Figure 5.7 Poets and from the community visit the School of Law at Universidad de Chile. Photo by the author.

As the tomas reached their end, Coordinadora Femfest continued to evaluate how these feminist student movements had shifted the group's perspectives. Most members seemed to agree that while much of their coalition-building and sounding from "under" did the important work of creating opportunities for musical circulation outside of mainstream music industries and validating marginalized spaces such as lower-class neighborhoods and prisons, working from under also necessitated new modes of historicizing their political and cultural labor. In other words, they recognized the significance of creating intergenerational channels to share knowledge and establish continuity in working to achieve their longer-term goals. This manifested in two important decisions taken in the second half of the year. First, they needed to finally create the community school they had always dreamed of, and second, they needed to invite participants in tomas from throughout Santiago and Valparaíso to participate in a panel at the 2018 Festival.

Funding and Organizing Escuela Femfest

When Coordinadora Femfest was first formed, members were younger, less limited in time by work and children, and were able to contribute their labor more flexibly out of love for the people, for the music, and for the spaces they were creating. During this time, they did not accept any outside funding for their events. But as the years went on and people became busier, the group eventually began to shift towards feeling that applying to certain types of funding, as long as they were careful about its source, would allow them to put on better events and alleviate some of the financial, energy, and time burdens which they had been taking on themselves for so long. This gradual shift forced them to begin thinking critically about how they were presenting themselves to audiences as an artistic organization. Likewise, it also implicitly changed their organizational structure. In order to apply for grants, the organization had to be registered as a *personalidad jurídica* (a legal entity) and authorship of application materials had to come from

only one or two people. This meant that where once the Coordinadora was conceived as and, for lack of a better term, “marketed” as a collective of bands, after receiving their *personalidad jurídica*, in practice it became a core group of individuals in charge of administration who then delegated tasks to others involved in planning their events.

While this was a major challenge to their organizational principal of horizontality, the benefit was being able to start planning larger scale and longer-term series of events. This shift at first caused significant controversy among many members who felt that disrupting their horizontal organizational structure ran counter to their ethos of *autogestión*. Since the transition, each time the group has applied for a different form of funding—usually from non-profits and local municipalities but occasionally from larger government agencies—there often continues to be significant hesitation and deliberation before a decision is made. Yet, they continue to access the same communities, perform in similar spaces, and generally still program events featuring bands and artists who perform rock music, though in recent years they have also increasingly worked with folk musicians and other acoustic acts. Sonically and spatially speaking, I see these organizational shifts not as a sign of co-optation or “selling out” but rather as a rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari 1988) expansion of their sounding from under as they access a greater number of marginalized spaces and groups with more regularity.

An illuminating example of this expansion is Femfest’s creation of their first formal series of community classes. In August 2018, Coordinadora Femfest received word that they had won a grant from Fondo Alquimia, an organization dedicated to supporting diverse communities of LGBTQ+ women and girls. The grant would enable them to carry out their plans for organizing a women’s community education program before the Festival in October. Aiming to create a diversity of course offerings in music making and gender/sexual awareness, the first workshops they decided to create were Sound Production, Sign Language, Sexuality & Self Care, Screen Printing, and Songwriting (Figure 5.8).



Figure 5.8 Graphic advertising Coordinadora Femfest’s community classes.

Having received this grant less than three months ahead of their 2018 festival, Femfest members knew they had to act quickly to organize their classes and to structure their community school in such a way that it would also support their work producing the festival event. Among their considerations in moving forward with the project were:

- How could Femfest work with the Festival venue, Centro Cultural Lo Prado, to ensure that the surrounding community of Lo Prado was included. In the future, how could they better communicate with this low-income community to learn what types of classes might be most relevant and/or desirable?
- How could Femfest set pedagogical standards with class instructors which would not reproduce hegemonic epistemologies and patriarchal power relations?
- How should Femfest go about framing the classes so that both students and instructors understood that they saw these classes as spaces of political development, not just courses to attain technical skills?
- How should they record and archive their experience putting together these community classes? Should classes be filmed in order to create promotional material for future programs?

- What days and how often should classes meet? Whose schedules should they prioritize in planning class meetings?
- Should instructors be paid? If so, how much? How much money would that leave from the grant to be used for the festival? Would Fondo Alquimia money go to covering the cost of supplies?

Many of these questions had quick, practical answers. Instructors were paid \$15000 Chilean pesos (roughly the equivalent of \$30 USD) per one-hour class to compensate their travel and time. Meetings for each class were once a week in the evenings in order to accommodate people arriving from work and school. Those who had families were welcome to bring their children with them to classes if necessary. The first and last meetings of each class were photographed and filmed by me and another Femfest member. Other members of the communications team would be in charge of posting these materials to social media and on their website.

The more political questions, however, would take time and practice to figure out. Great care was taken to select instructors whom the Femfest team believed could translate their technical skills into modes of political empowerment. Also, Femfest members decided to make it a point to be physically present at the start of each series of classes to introduce themselves and their organization to students, and to make sure students understood that the classes were part of Femfest's larger anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchal agenda. After those initial classes, instructors would be given significant freedom in deciding what pedagogical approaches to use, and how to continue framing their technical skills in relation to broader political agendas. It became clear that the Centro Cultural Lo Prado was not able to help Femfest communicate with the surrounding community in order to attract students. Nevertheless, the Femfest members in charge of organizing the classes decided to prioritize admitting students of more precarious socioeconomic backgrounds who showed a true commitment not only to the course materials but also a commitment to learning more about Femfest's political projects. This was not a perfect process, but it allowed for Femfest members, instructors, and students to experiment with learning spaces that best suited their needs and, in this way, to create spaces of feminist praxis.

The three classes initially launched were Sign Language, Sound Tech, and Screen-printing. These were chosen strategically as each area would perform an essential role in planning and carrying out the Festival. On the first day, August 29, 2018, about 40 people showed up for the sign language and sound tech classes at Centro Cultural Lo Prado. Students were visibly excited and Femfest members were thrilled at the excellent turnout. As the sign language class began, one of the first themes addressed was why organizers were making a point to teach sign language for a music event. What are other ways in which music could be understood outside of its sonic perception? Can musical meaning be transmitted when sound is felt or seen through signing but not heard? During this first class, participants dwelled deeply on silence, on the experience of living and communicating in silence, and on using gesture and a reading of the body to do some of the most ordinary tasks such as introducing oneself to new people or telling a story (Figure 5.9).



Figure 5.9 First day of Femfest’s Sign Language Class on August 29, 2018. Students silently perform a scene from the movie Finding Nemo in which a group of fish join together to escape a fishing boat’s net.

These classes made participants more eager to accommodate the needs of deaf, hard of hearing, and other people of differing abilities during the festival. Further, they helped participants become more attentive to the lived experience of being in the world in silence, and how, even when unheard, music might still be understood as a deeply meaningful political and expressive practice. By the end of the six-week Sign Language course, students were prepared to translate several bands’ songs on the day of the festival. Having learned to sign the literal text of the lyrics as well as to create interpretive signing for instrumental sections, this sounding from under was a communication of sound through silent bodies made communicative through gesture.

The Sound Production class, however, enacted a sounding from under in a much different manner. By exploring the intricacies of sound technology, these students were coming to understand sound’s spaciousness, spatiality, and its physical impact through learning to control volume, balance, and feedback. As women entering the highly masculine field of sound production, their learning to manipulate technology and space to express particular acoustic aesthetics was groundbreaking in that they knew it would allow them to give women musicians greater control over the quality of their performances. By the time the festival arrived, this team of about twenty students was ready—under their instructor’s guidance—to run all of the sound production for the two festival stages. Whereas in the past Femfest had to rely on male allies to run their sound systems during their events, these students’ collaborative work allowed Festival Femfest 2018 to function completely through autogestion, through their own labor, allowing the event to take place more completely outside of patriarchal and capitalist models of event production.



Figure 5.10 Official Poster for the 14th Annual Festival Femfest.

Though it is a visual art practice, the Screen-printing classes also came to serve Festival Femfest's sounding from under. As an artistic practice, screen-printing has been considered a masculine art form due to the intense physical labor which goes into constructing the frame, screen, and manipulating heavy squeegees to apply paint to the surface being printed on. This class became an essential part of preparing for the Festival, since participants were tasked with creating all of the festival posters which would be used to promote the event. Screen printing was perhaps one of the most arduous processes in the weeks of early October leading up to the festival. After the initial poster design was created and an artist collective agreed to let us use their basement, countless hours were spent moving equipment, preparing our supplies, then painting and working long hours in a poorly ventilated space. The house was at one time a small textile mill, and this basement had little light, little airflow, and even less space to hang posters to dry. Wire and string were hung back and forth across the room, and for days on end we worked into the night hanging wet posters and hoping they would be dry by morning (Figure 5.11).



Figure 5.11 Screen-printing festival posters in the basement of an art collective's home. Photo by the author.

It was a draining process, but also invigorating because of the tactile feeling of making a movement come together through the work of our hands. All of us were driven by the excitement of the excursions to follow when we would hang posters around the city. The sounding from under on these screen-printing nights was the thump of wood and rubber spreading paint across paper. It was mildly dizzy laughter as we inhaled paint fumes for hours on end. It was blasting Nirvana and Soundgarden from somebody's cellphone because we needed energy to keep working. It was gentle reminders to take shifts and share food and drink. In the two weeks before the festival, Femfest members were exhausted and spread thin. Managing the community classes and organizing the festival simultaneously demanded enormous amounts of time and labor that were completely unpaid, and that had not been distributed well across the full membership of the organization. But spreading color over these canvases provided a jolt of renewed energy to finish what was already set in motion.

IV. Experiencing Festival Femfest

Femfest es un festival autogestionado. Trabaja de colaboración, y es sin fines de lucro. Aquí, decir "sin fines de lucro" es decir que es una plataforma, desde la contracultura, donde podemos visibilizar el trabajo de las bandas que no aparecen en la televisión, que no aparecen en los medios tradicionales... formar otro circuito... porque no es un festival de competencia... Aquí, nadie está subiendo fotos para ganar un premio determinado, ni quien esta vendiendo mas discos o tiene mas fans. No... queremos realmente que haya un circuito.

Femfest is a festival that is collectively determined. It functions through collaboration, and it is not for profit. Here, saying "not for profit" is to say that it is a platform, operating from a countercultural space, where we can make visible the work of bands that don't appear in traditional media... [we can] make another circuit, because it is not a competitive festival. Here, nobody is uploading photos to win a fixed prize, neither is anyone trying to sell the most CDs or see who has the most fans. No... we really want a circuit.

Carolina Ozaus on the ethos of Festival Femfest

As part of their ethos of horizontality, Femfest divides responsibilities for planning the festival into non-hierarchical committees. In 2018, there were initially six committees, respectively responsible for managing bands, panels, festival marketplace, finances, communications, and catering. During the planning process, when I asked whether Femfest had a designated committee for photography and videography, I was nominated to lead the effort. This meant forming a group to photograph and video the festival stages, the three panel discussions, art installations, marketplace, and other performances and activities taking place throughout the day (Figure 5.12). With the help of other Femfest members, I formed a team of three photographers and videographers (including myself) and agreed to coordinate our roles throughout the day and to manage file sharing, editing, and dissemination after the event.



Figure 5.12 The 2018 Festival Femfest Program

Though a daunting task since at the time I had no experience doing event photography beyond that which I had been doing during my fieldwork, I realized that being an event photographer for Festival Femfest would allow me the unique opportunity to focus my ethnographic engagement on the placemaking practices of the festival. Furthermore, photography would allow me to work through the multiple worlds of experience I was immersed in during the event as a co-organizer, first-time attendee, and as a foreign ethnographer. In what follows, I present a selection of my images from Festival Femfest in the form of a photographic essay.¹²² This medium of representation follows the work of other ethnomusicologists (Keil 2002; Meintjes 2017) who

¹²² For the full album of all the published images of Festival Femfest 2018, see the organization's Facebook page. These published images include those shot by the author as well as those shot by other photographers. However, in this portion of the dissertation, I have only reproduced images which I personally photographed. https://www.facebook.com/FEMFESTCHILE/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1129296203904503

have turned to photography as a means of capturing music, culture, and social life as dynamic, living phenomena. As articulated by Angeliki Keil regarding the work of photographer Dick Blau in the book *Bright Balkan Morning*, “His photographs locate us in a world that words alone cannot capture. Bringing together his images of conviviality with his study of the figures, details, and textures of everyday life, Dick explores a deep connection between ethics and aesthetics” (Keil 2002: 15).

In representing Festival Femfest through photographic essay, I similarly seek to contextualize moments of connection and encounter within broader acts of place-making and reclamations of place, and to provide glimpses of the details and textures that set the scene for Femfest’s feminist musical practices. Furthermore, these images attempt to evoke a sense of the temporal rubato that always accompanies festivals. With their fast-paced behind-the-scenes labor, simultaneous events, intermittent waiting periods, delays, and pauses, temporality in the festival feels both rushed and frozen, comprised of moments outside the regular passing of time.



Femfest organizers make final touches on an installation outside of the festival venue that reads “Sem frém bienveni pami nou” (“Sister brother welcome in our midst”) in Haitian Creole. The lettering is made of wrappers from super ocho candy bars, a popular item sold by Haitian vendors in Chile.



As most Femfest organizers rush to set up tents for the marketplace (behind), Anto (left) and Barbara (right) decide where to place the Femfest banner. Barbara wants it to be hung so it will be visible not only to attendees but also to community members passing by the venue.



Femfest organizers gather on the roof to adjust and re-adjust the banner, making sure it's perfectly centered over the entryway to the venue, Centro Cultural Lo Prado.



A publishing collective lays out their inventory at the festival marketplace. A theme in their selection this year was guides on how to access safe free or low-cost abortions.



Jacksa Suazo (above left), instructor of Escuela Femfest’s sound production class, works with a student to prepare for sound check. According to many attendees, having a collective of women run sound made the event seem less hierarchical and less competitive, elements that they saw as crucial parts of Femfest’s antipatriarchal agenda.



Artist Tania Corvalán, singer and puppeteer for the group Lactosa Postmortem, listens to her bandmate test sound. Even before the festival officially begins, she has begun to take on the mystique of her stage persona.



Amidst the bustle of setting up, Mila (left) pauses to breathe for a moment with Paz (right). At the time this photo was taken, Paz was about 5 months pregnant. Mila, an educator on women's sexual and reproductive health, wanted to make sure she was properly nourished and not over-exerting herself.



Araceli, a singer-songwriter who had also been a student in Femfest's sound production class, smiles as she works with her classmates to do sound check before her set.



Gerardo Figueroa (second from the right) is a musicologist and well-known producer and journalist in Santiago's underground and indie/alternative rock scenes. A long-time ally of Coordinadora Femfest, this year he made the festival a required event for students in his undergraduate class, all of whom happened to be men.



For the first time in Femfest's history, the 2018 festival included stand-up comedians as part of the line-up. In order to further explore the role of comedy as a potential medium for feminist rebellion, a panel discussion immediately following the three comedy sets allowed the artists to discuss what led them to this form of social critique.



In another first for the organization, the 2018 festival featured an exhibition on Decolonial Art curated by Femfest members Camila Arma, a professional photographer, and Gaba Revoco, a professional art preservationist. Above, Camila reads a manifesto on the installation and invites attendees to visit between sets.



This piece by Colectivo 33° Sur is a map of leathers arranged in the form of a crime scene. It is meant to represent an “aesthetic necrology,” with each piece of fabric standing in for the body of a woman murdered due to femicide.



Group *Lactosa Postmortem* uses elaborate puppetry to perform a musical drama narrating the story of a singer who wakes up to realize that she is dead. Alternating between the gleeful and the somber, the performance asked audiences to consider their own mortality and take hold of their fleeting opportunities for human connection.



Mapuche poet and activist Marjorie Huaiqui (left), prepares for her panel and performance workshop on Mapuche music, dance, and storytelling.



Artist Vilú Esa, originally from the island of Chiloé in Southern Chile, performs the classic song “Marinerito Pulio” by folk artist Rosario Hueicha, also from Chiloé. The lilting waltz is translated into signs by a student from Femfest’s sign language class.



As a decidedly non-separatist feminist festival, Femfest relies on the support of men to help with childcare during their events. Above, a man explores the festival marketplace and merch tables with his young daughter.



Seeing the festival as a unique opportunity to connect various factions of the feminist university tomas that had begun earlier in the year, Femfest invited representatives from throughout Santiago and Valparaíso to participate in a panel discussion on autogestión. The panel was planned for only one hour but ended up lasting nearly three hours.



The open-mouth Femfest logo illuminates the backdrop of the indoor stage as poet Fernanda Meza (right) somberly reads her work, indifferent to the frantic activity behind her. When agreeing to perform at Festival Femfest, it is made clear to bands that they will be responsible for their own setup and teardown, and that they should also be willing to help other groups if necessary.



Rosa Peñaloza (right) mother of Hija de Perro, continues to attend Femfest events as a way of honoring her son's memory. In this photograph, Peñaloza works with two collaborators to sell books and clothing that use Hija de Perro's image to celebrate transgender rights.



Femfest organizer Carolina Ozaus performing her poetry over looping guitar effects. In the glow of the late afternoon sun, her loud declamations transfixed the audience.



At the Femfest merch table, copies of the 2018 compilado (mixed tape) are quickly running out. These mixed tapes have been created for every edition of the festival, and they always feature songs from each band on a particular year's lineup. Historically, the mixed tapes have served as the primary archival record of the annual festival—serving as an auditory register of which bands were present and documenting shifting political agendas.



Over halfway through the day's events, Barbara (left) and Cami (right) enjoy a quick moment to happily acknowledge the success of the festival so far.



Artists from the collective Ser y Gráfica (a play on “serigrafía,” the word for screen printing in Spanish) take a break from custom screen printing to enjoy the final few sets at the outdoor stage. Their original works have been featured at countless feminist political events, conferences, and demonstrations throughout Santiago.



Audience members wait expectantly for the performance of Claudia Rodriguez, *travesti* feminist artist and activist. Her performance pieces, similar to those of *Hija de Perra*, are designed to shock and force self-reflection, ultimately aiming to frame anti-heteronormative politics within a distinctly Chilean post-dictatorship class consciousness. (Photo and video were not permitted during the performance that followed).



Punk rock band Ana Frank performs at the indoor stage. By this time all sets at the outdoor stage had concluded, and energy was growing as audience members trickled in to see this head-banging set.



(Left) Emo/ska rock band Ke Ruede closes out the festival with their final song of the night. (Right) As Ke Ruede took their final bows the entire audience was on their feet and dancing, yelling for an encore. Bandmembers remained joyfully onstage, forestalling the inevitable end of the festival.



After tear-down is finally completed, Femfest organizers take an exhausted but celebratory group photo before loading out. From left to right: Camila Camacho, Camila Arma, Gaba Revenco, Antonia Piña, Maria Paz Reese, Barbara Finsterbusch, Carolina Ozaus, Sol Saldivia, Christina Azahar, Vale Soto.

The Aftermath

Quisiéramos que esto fuera todo el año, pero también pasa que Femfest es nuestra vida paralela. Nosotras también trabajamos. Tenemos que, como toda persona... pagar cuentas, pagar ir al médico, comer, descansar, comprarse ropa... Entonces, aun así, creo que el Femfest es un Festival que ya está en la historia del feminismo, sin querer estarlo. Esa nunca fue nuestra finalidad, estar en la historia. Pero sí, yo sé que está en la historia del feminismo. Está en la historia de la música. Es un referente.

We wish that this could last the whole year, but it's also true that Femfest is our parallel life. We also work. Like everyone, we have to pay bills, pay to go to the doctor, to eat, to rest, to buy clothing. Even still, I believe that Femfest is a festival which is now part of the history of feminism, even without intending to be there. That was never our goal, being part of history. But yes, I know it is now part of the history of feminism. It's part of the history of music. It's a referent.

Carolina Ozaus, 2018 Post-Festival Interview

The day after the festival, Femfest organizers dispersed. Many went to spend a few days relaxing with family and friends in the Lakes Region in the South. Others took shorter trips to hike in the foothills of the cordillera surrounding Santiago. I went north to Iquique, taking in the dramatic extremes of the emerald ocean and the dizzying heights of the altiplano (highland plains) just an hour or so inland. For all the joy that had come out of putting together Festival Femfest, the demanding labor of organizing such a large event entirely through autogestión—where personal and political and economic relationships overlap and become embroiled—had taken its toll. We were exhausted, and it was mutually understood that we needed some time apart. The week leading up to the festival was especially difficult. The Bands committee, led by Carolina and Barbara, was working until the last minute to finalize the festival program. For the rest of the membership, this meant there were unanswered questions until the day of the event. When do we arrive? Who will be setting up? Who will be bringing certain items? Who will be taking care of food? Who are our points of contact with the venue? Is there a plan in place for greeting and directing bands and other participants? Who is MC-ing each event? How will we take care of clean up?

The miraculous thing to me was that all of these tasks were, for the most part, taken care of. Because of everyone's trust in one another, on the day of the festival there was simply an understanding that things would get done, and people would fill in as needed without a director telling them what to do. However, in my estimation this model of collaboration only worked because of an over extension of four people's energies, and not through a truly horizontal distribution of responsibilities. Las antiguas had taken on the bulk of the work.

During the festival evaluation meeting about ten days after the event, this imbalanced distribution of labor formed a large part of our discussion. The older members, particularly Carolina and Barbara who had been in charge of bands, reported feeling abandoned, admitting feeling as though others had not stepped in enough to help during the planning process. However, many younger members countered that there was not enough transparency from the older members, and that without effective communication they had no way to know how they could have helped. A tension clearly emerged between members who felt that any type of direction would lead to a hierarchy of power, and members who felt that achieving a truly horizontal organization meant not just relying on new members to step in and be self-motivated,

but also depended on older members effectively delegating tasks and teaching principles of autogestión when necessary.

It was agreed that for the next year, an extended program would be created ahead of time so all Femfest organizers were clear on the flow of events for the festival. Also, a formal post-production plan would be created in order to share news and maintain a more thorough archive of the festivals. Both of these steps, they hoped, would allow them to spend more time networking within the community of Lo Prado, which surrounded the venue, in order to be more inclusive of the lower-income and migrant residents there. Though around 200 people attended the 2018 festival, turnout was not what they hoped, and they knew their networking with the surrounding community had been a serious shortcoming.

Nevertheless, in the series of interviews I conducted with Femfest organizers in November after the festival, everyone recognized that the true accomplishment at this year's Festival Femfest was the success of their community classes which gave other women the tools to make the sound, sign language, and signage for the festival possible. As Barbara reflected,

This year was important because we achieved something that we had never done, which was the Escuela de formación. [...] Two years ago the most important thing had been going to play in women's prisons, for example. But this year the most important thing was creating the Escuela de Formación that allowed us to give tools to other women, for free, to attain skills in areas that matter to us, and in which we want more women to participate [such as] sound production, screen printing, and sign language.¹²³

Carolina, also reflecting on the success of the classes, stated that, "There is a before and after [for Femfest] with the school."¹²⁴ Not only did it create an empowering new form of feminist musical education, it also established another avenue for maintaining the longevity of the organization, since many students had and likely would continue to participate in Femfest festivals and other events.

This ability to provide a gathering place, a safe place, a place to challenge oneself, to grow, to build a circuit among women in countercultural arts—both broadly defined—this continues to be Femfest's practice of feminist worldmaking, even as they have had to adapt amidst political upheaval and shifting social realities in the midst of a global pandemic. Their noisy performances, their introspective performances, their sounding from under, and their disruption of the status quo only serve to maintain the affective bonds developed through autogestión and transfeminist coalition-building.

¹²³ Barbara Finsterbusch. Interview with the author. November 20, 2018.

¹²⁴ Carolina Ozaus. Interview with the author. November 19, 2018.

Conclusion: Musical Celebration as Mournful Resilience

Marielle Franco, Black lesbian feminist activist and City Counselor in Rio de Janeiro.
Assassinated on March 4, 2018 (Phillips 2018)

Joane Florvil, Haitian migrant living in Chile since 2016
Detained in August 2017 on false charges of abandoning her infant daughter
Found dead on September 30, 2017, after a month in police custody (Ruiz Pereira 2017)

Macarena Valdés, Mapuche environmental activist
Found dead on August 22, 2016, days after having been threatened by members of the Austrian-Chilean engineering company RP Global (El Desconcierto 2016)

The list of names went on seemingly endlessly, each one coming as a jolt, recalling infamous cases of sexual and racialized violence that had taken place in Chile and Latin America over the previous two years. As the names of these deceased women were read aloud, a melancholic silence came over what had just been a bustling club at the opening of La Matria Fest on May 10, 2018, in Barrio Bellavista, a center of nightlife in Santiago. This show was organized by Mariel Mariel, an indelible singer who—together with her main collaborator Andrés “Sonido” Landón—is known for her highly danceable “Flow Latino,” a sound she describes as urbano infused with folk/roots melodies, Afro-diasporic rhythms, and ethereal electro-pop (Hassan 2015). Later on in an interview, I learned Mariel’s vision for La Matria Fest was to create a feminist musical celebration that denounced gender and sexual violence in a disidentificatory re-interpretation of Chilean “Fiestas Patrias,” a national holiday accompanied by musical and dance traditions she feels validate toxic masculinity.¹²⁵

Although the promotional material for La Matria Fest had made clear the gravity of the sexual violence, racism, misogyny, and queer phobia that had motivated this gathering, the shock of being confronted at the beginning of the show with a list of now-silenced voices seemed to take everyone’s breath away. Many of these women’s names and faces lingered throughout the evening—appearing in the media graphics that illuminated the backdrop of the stage as well as in artists’ discussion with the audience between sets. Mariel herself even performed an impassioned cover of the song “Hipocresía” (“Hypocrisy”) by Panamanian singer Rubén Blades while wearing a t-shirt with the image of Marielle Franco.¹²⁶

Despite the club setting and the lineup of catchy folk-infused hip hop, urbano, and tropical sounds brought by artists Ana Tijoux, Evelyn Cornejo, Mariel Mariel, and Mákina Kandela, throughout the evening, I was constantly pulled between celebrating, mourning, screaming, crying, drinking, laughing, and dancing as if my life depended on it. Reflecting back on this evening, I am forever returned to the night I was finally able to articulate the physical and emotional experience of feminist musical celebration. In the spaces where the party pauses, grief punctuates laughter. Fear punctuates revelry. Despair punctuates release. At La Matria Fest, I felt clearly how the musical event binds all these energies into the present moment, and in that moment, you are asked to imagine different realities besides the unequal and oppressive world

¹²⁵ Mariel Villagra Arias (Mariel Mariel). Interview with the author, July 18, 2018.

¹²⁶ “Mariel Mariel canta ‘Hipocresia’ por Rubén Blades en La Matria Fest – 10 mayo 2018.” Video by the author.
<https://youtu.be/SMIjLqL-4YI>

we live in. You are asked to inhabit the space sensitively, and to listen critically, or at least as critically as possible when you're dancing with drink in hand. Above all, it is a ritual of healing.

In this dissertation, I have laid out four different narratives about the generative potential of feminist worldmaking through musical practices. Through the stories of folklorist Violeta Parra and cantautora Pascuala Ilacaca, the vocal practices of canto femenino cuequero, and the countercultural, transfeminist soundings of Coordinadora Femfest, I have attempted to demonstrate the empowering resonance of music as a form of feminist resistance. First and foremost, my dissertation has aimed to uplift and honor the multifaceted lives and work of these artists and communities, and to explain the profound political significance of their musical practices. However, this conclusion is a solemn reminder that gender, sexual, racial, and class violence are unrelenting, and while music may be a powerful source of resilience, these practices are often prompted by deep despair and processes of mourning. In feminist musical practices, moving, sounding, voicing, celebratory bodies are also expressions of survival borne out of immense pain. My fieldwork was irrevocably shaped by the fact that I also experienced these musical journeys as forms of survival, and in my writing runs a deep and poignant reality—that these feminist musical practices are also constant reminders that we are not alone. Yet, the stories I have recounted here represent but a small number of musical practices among what has been a verdant growth in feminist performance amongst a wide range of ongoing social movements in Chile. From the dembow beat of Mon Laferte's charged anti-capitalist dance-anthem "Plata Ta Tá" ("Money -Ey -Ey"),¹²⁷ to the viral circulation of Ana Tijoux's sardonic cumbia "Pa qué" ("Why"),¹²⁸ a meme-inspired critique of Chile's poor response to the COVID-19 pandemic, other popular feminist artists are continuing to create music that is being shared around the world, reinterpreted, and performed in the streets in celebratory acts of resistance.¹²⁹

This text inevitably feels unfinished, as the social movements and musical practices I have analyzed are ongoing and constantly changing. However, in these snapshots of moments from 2016-2020, I have aimed to re-stage the gendered narratives of Chilean political song, and to present a new approach to theorizing women's participation in popular music scenes and social movements. This approach is based on addressing the physical, geopolitical, and imagined spaces that feminist musicians navigate, negotiate, and occupy in order to understand their worldmaking potential. In a moment of intense transformation in international social justice movements and ongoing dialogue among different generations of radical feminists around the world, this study sheds new light on how gender and sexuality are intertwined with physical, social, and virtual place-making, and how these processes can be lived and understood in musical practices. Silence and resonance, mourning and resilience, music proves to contain worlds of affective, interpersonal, and spatial entanglements, all of which bind feminist movements in coalition as we listen intently for the future.

¹²⁷ "Mon LaFerte, Guaynaa – Plata Ta Tá" – Mon Laferte. Premiered December 5, 2019.

¹²⁸ "Pa Qué – Ana Tijoux feat. PJ Sin Suela (Official Lyric Video)" – Ana Tijoux. Premiered July 16, 2020.
<https://youtu.be/BuN6QYk7aBs>

¹²⁹ For example, on December 11, 2019, a group of dancers performed a flash-mob style version of Laferte's "Plata Ta Tá" in Chile's Bellas Artes neighborhood during the height of Chile Despertó demonstrations. "Pla Ta Tá Mon Laferte, Guaynaa/Intervención Femenina, Bellas Artes, Chile" – Alvaro Salinas. Posted December 11, 2019.
<https://youtu.be/BURTDyrX46c>

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