

Volume 38
issue 1 / 2019

Contracampo e-ISSN 2238-2577
Niterói (RJ), 38 (1)
abr/2019-jul/2019

Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication is a quarterly publication of the Graduate Programme in Communication Studies (PPGCOM) at Fluminense Federal University (UFF). It aims to contribute to critical reflection within the field of Media Studies, being a space for dissemination of research and scientific thought.

Music and spiritual feminism: Religious concepts and aesthetics in recent musical proposals by women artists.

MERCEDES LISKA

PhD in Social Sciences at University of Buenos Aires. Researcher at CONICET (National Council of Scientific and Technical Research). Also works at Gino Germani's Institute (UBA) and teaches at the Communication Sciences Graduation Program at UBA, and at the Manuel de Falla Conservatory as well.

Email: mmmliska@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9692-6446>

PPG|COM Programa de Pós Graduação
COMUNICAÇÃO
MESTRADO E DOUTORADO UFF

TO REFERENCE THIS ARTICLE, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING CITATION:

Liska, M. (2019). Music and spiritual feminism. Religious concepts and aesthetics in recent musical proposals by women artists. *Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication*, 38 (1).

Submitted on: 03/11/2019 / Accepted on: 04/23/2019

DOI – <http://dx.doi.org/10.22409/contracampo.v38i1.28214>



Abstract

The spiritual feminism appears in the proposal of diverse women artists of Latin American popular music created recently. References linked to personal and social growth and well-being, to energy balance and the ancestral feminine powers, that are manifested in the poetic and thematic language of songs, in the visual, audiovisual and performative composition of the recitals. A set of multi religious representations present in different musical aesthetics contribute to visualize female powers silenced by the patriarchal system. This paper analyzes the aesthetic forms in which practices and narratives of spirituality are represented in four proposals of Argentine female artists, and it puts them in relation to some of the speeches of the contemporary political scene.

Keywords

spiritual feminism; Argentine female musicians; religious aesthetics; women's movement.

Introduction

...la caza de brujas estaba arraigada en las transformaciones sociales que acompañaron el surgimiento del capitalismo. Silvia Federici, *Calibán y la bruja*, 2015.

In the recent music made by women references of spirituality are reiterated, a term of increasing dissemination in contemporary social discourses. This notion refers to a diverse set of practices, beliefs or cosmogonic senses that are recovered both in their symbolic and aesthetic dimension. This repertoire of religious imprints brings, along with other artistic and musical proposals, imageries of a repositioned femininity at a hinge moment in the politics of gender and sexuality in Argentina, as well as in other countries of Latin America.

The notions of spirituality that appear in the creations of several artists are related to narratives of an ancient and popular history of women, and with it, the return to a religious perception of the musical experience in cultural contexts usually secular, such as the modern Argentine popular music genres.

Those recreations do shaft in the interpretation of the singing, associated with different activities that became common among middle class women of heterogeneous sociocultural environments; the theme of personal discovery and the work on oneself comprises spiritual groups and practices that challenge the enlightenment thought and the separation between religion (soul) and Psychology (mind). These activities are reflected, among others, in the gestation of the neo-Hinduism, the neo-shamanism, the magical Christianity that vindicates the Holy Spirit, or the New Age movement (Viotti and Felitti, 2016).

In the development of a research on current musical experiences of Argentine female artists, and of promptly analyze the aesthetic features of their works, the spiritual dimension was observed as a constant topic that is distinguished from musical styles and projects led by male musicians¹. The spiritual dimension to which we refer occurs in the corporal expressivity, in the atmosphere and ritualization of recitals, in symbols of religious connotation that appear on the audiovisual production, and even in the theme of the songs. The magical-religious aesthetics are shown, on the one hand, in proposals that combine many other references and cultural topics, and in a more limited way they are central and define the style of the artistic proposal.

Through lyrical, sound and visual resources the musical production involves the experiences of spiritual conversion of the artists themselves; transformation processes and lifestyle changes, alternatives and solutions to problems of emotional destabilization or personal neglect, professional searches connected with feelings, desires or personal yearnings, and autonomous economic management. In some cases, the spiritual musical aesthetics are related to other artists' activities, like the guide of women's meetings around dynamics of the circles, in which singing occupies fundamental functions of communication and healing.

Likewise, if spirituality is an aspect that is reiterated in the recent works of Argentine female artists, it also appears in the productions of artists from other Latin American countries, even in music that spreads in the mass culture through Latin and Afro-American pop.

These thematic features come up within a much broader range of content that shape gender and sexuality representations in artists of an intermediate generation in the process of professional consolidation. These creative bets set up a stage of musical development on the part of women encouraged by a greater recognition and artistic appreciation, a response that has to do with a shift in perception of the gender as professional activity organizer².

¹ This work is part of a research project entitled "Bien Warrior. Un análisis sobre la producción artística de mujeres en la música popular" initiated in 2016 at the Gino Germani Investigations Institute of the Buenos Aires University, solved by the Council of Scientific and Technical Investigations (CONICET).

² Between the years 2017 and 2018 a series of statistical works were broadcasted by the mass media in

This work makes a description of the spiritual references of different artists and the social senses that they mobilize in the context of overcrowding of the fight against violence and inequalities affecting women. What functions do current spiritual narratives fulfill in Argentina and Latin America? How do they relate to the cultural processes that involve women? How do they reveal themselves in the musical activity?

We are going to analyze four musical processes: Miss Bolivia, Paloma del Cerro, Perotá Chingó and La Yegros. These take in different musical styles: from Anglo-Caribbean genres like reggae or American Hip-hop, to the traditional repertoires of Latin American folklore combined with electronic textures. The musical proposals as a whole give account of an heterogeneous range of spiritual approaches, and of the centrality of the religious representations in a significant portion of the contemporary urban popular music of Argentina. We will analyze the biography and artistic career of each one of them at the crossroad with the characterization of some of their songs, visual arts in Networks, broadcasting and discography covers, videoclips, recital proposal and other situations established in the exchange with the public, as well as oral testimonies of the artists in journalistic interviews. Such materials are observed from the perspective of cultural studies, the theoretical-methodological considerations of Simon Frith of conceiving the musical in its multiple dimensions and of understanding it as a space of social senses and not as a reflection of its context and its time (Frith, 2014), the Marxist-Gramscian conception of the struggle in and for meaning the culture (Hall, 1984) and the feminist perspective of cultural studies (Hollows, 2005). After the descriptions of what was to observe in the music field, we analyze the spiritual traits altogether replacing some debates on spiritual feminism from the sociology of religions (Frigerio, 2007; Viotti and Funes, 2015; Viotti and Felitti, 2016).

1. Miss Bolivia

María Paz Ferreyra leads Miss Bolivia, one of the local artists of great impact in recent years that started from the independent realization until achieving resonance in the mass media communication. In the particular case of this artist it is interesting to see the trajectory that is defining her music around gender issues and a challenging feminine imaginary of patriarchal hegemony.

From this artistic profile, with strong political significance, Ferreyra introduced the themes of new spiritualities in her musical works of 2017. That year she presented a new album: Pantera. Two songs from this work refer to spiritual concepts, although this imprint crosses all the album, associated with a personal moment of the artist. Although it is framed in the tone and rhetoric of struggle of the women's movement that in Argentina massively occupied the streets in June of 2015, with which she is permanently identified, Ferreyra settles a correlate between the social sphere and her life story. Pantera, the fourth album of Miss Bolivia, is inscribed in the density of the slogan that says that the personal is political.

Before this album Miss Bolivia has been accompanying the demands of gender and sexual diversity, in fact she is one of the artistic and political/cultural references of her generation (intermediate) in Argentina. However, she was doing it from a counter-cultural style usually identified with rock. In the visual art that accompanied the broadcasting of Pantera, Ferreyra shows herself with a renewed, neater aesthetics, of light and blue tones of much enlightenment on her face and figure, and her dreadlocks more hidden. At the same year of the output of Pantera, Ferreyra contracted legal marriage and said to the media, that questioned her astonished, that she had given "room to love", founding the desired emotional stability³. Pantera collects that moment of fullness of the artist associated with a personal work carried out

the county which show the little participation of women in festival programming grids across the country. From those works arose the initiative of a female quota bill that aims to establish a level of 30% stake in these events: <https://indiehoy.com/noticias/presentan-proyecto-ley-cupo-femenino-festivales-argentina/>

³ TV show in which she talks about her marriage:

from meditation, nutrition and other techniques concerning the care of the body and the emotional self.

“El Paso” and “Calma y respira” are the titles of songs from the album that aim to the use of alternative therapeutic resources in order to find well-being or emotional balance. The first one, in paused beat and climate and bass boost downloads in strong times, she talks about moments of deep sorrow and anguish, that reiterates as a mantra the two words which entitle the song and refer to the meditation techniques and that she has tattooed on her arms [see image 1];

Calma y respira,

aunque te estés volviendo loca no dejes el camino y camina.

Calma y respira,

mira pa'lante y sigue, no cedas, traga saliva.

Calma y respira,

aunque te estés volviendo loca con eso de las cosas de la vida.

Digo calma y respira,

mira pa'lante y sigue, no te dejes caer.⁴

Several of her songs tell us of personal situations of distress, but in this song the own sadness remains in the background. Here she speaks to an anguished woman, she accompanies her with this song so that she can go through that pain so she will not let herself fall. She suggests her to modify something in her life to change energy, clean up karma and concentrate on breathing;

Aquí estoy yo, sí, incondicional, como siempre,

me dicen la Miss, la que te pide que te centres,

sigo cortando el dolor como con un sable,

tengo esta nueva canción porque pedían que hable.

This introspective climate song marks a distance from the rest of the songs on the album and from Miss Bolivia's style, nourished of music for dance, and for this reason it does not appear in the recitals repertoire. The second song mentioned, “El Paso”, contains the characteristics of the most representative music of the artist and it was the album's first single that produced a video clip. The “Calma y respira” tips in this song turn up in other key, making specific reference to a diverse spectrum of techniques and therapies of personal support such as tarot, yoga, psychoanalysis and astrology. With a sonority of Argentine cumbia, the lyrics narrates the experimentation of resources to sustain the emotional balance, improve the sense of well-being and get away from excesses like drugs and alcohol⁵;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=288Yicz3gQA>

⁴ On-line audio of “Calma y respira”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgc6vT_lihs

⁵ On-line audio of “El Paso”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUTs3_IsCp0

Andaba sintiéndome rara
y ya no sabía qué hacer,
entonces fui a ver a una maga
para que me limpie el aura y el estrés.
La maga me dijo que estaba
con mal de ojo otra vez,
y entonces, mientras rezaba,
tiraba un paso y movía los pies.
Era un paso mágico,
esos que en un minuto borran lo trágico,
era increíble, se derretía el plástico,
era infalible y a la vez tan práctico,
el paso mágico.

This song also talks about energies, in this case referred to the cleaning of bad vibes. A woman-magician possesses the ability or gift of healing through rites of cure that involve dance: “I left the magician with a new resource...”, the song continue. In the video clip, “El Paso” becomes pictures that support and explicit what the lyrics says but adds some more references, for instance at the beginning of the video when Ferreyra wakes up and the camera focuses on a lemanjá sculpture located next to her [see image 2]⁶. The female deity by excellence of the Candomblé is combined with the image of the magician in the video: an afro-descendent woman with white color traditional religious costumes. The comments of the video on Youtube point to receiving the song in the same spiritual terms: “I heard this song for the first time by chance one day that I had a panic attack and doctors diagnosed me with stress. It was like a sign to me... Every time I hear it, it lifts me up!!! genius Miss Bolivia”, “genius!!!! I adore you!!!! this song save me from all of my demons. You are bright!”, “You are a genius Paz!!! and let keep the good vibe on”.

2. Paloma del Cerro

Paloma del Cerro is the artistic name of group led by a female singer and composer who started the professional activity in music around 2010. As Paloma Kippes, previously she was dedicated to graphic design in film and advertising: “I was in Spain, working as advertising producer, with a six months contract. I was earning good money, but something inside of me told me It is not this”⁷. So she decided, as she says, “to let go”⁸.

Her musical works had a good reception of the public and prompt visibility. In 2011 she edited her first album, *Gozar hasta que me ausente*, together with Gerardo “Grod” Morel, in which they explore

⁶ Videoclip of the song “El Paso”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQjDSmzxhEw>

⁷ Zimerman, Gaspar. 17/01/2012. “Paloma Kippes: Superficies de placer”. Clarín journal, https://www.clarin.com/fama/paloma-kippes_0_SkKUoI_3vXI.html

⁸ 20/05/2017: <https://diariohoy.net/espectaculos/paloma-del-cerro-soltar-tiene-recompensa-95942>

musical possibilities from the expressive experimentation around the most traditional forms of Argentine folklore combined with electronic music: “A simple melody can take you out of the flow of thoughts and transport you to the sacred path”, can be read in the written presentation of the physical album.

In 2012 she had a group of devotional music in parallel, *Volver Acero*, together with two other musicians, Rodrigo Guerra and Nagendra, for the purpose of playing for several hours in a row to the elements of nature and their spirits⁹. Paloma’s vocal exploration comes from the *copla* or *baguala*, which she studied with Miriam García, disciple in turn of Leda Valladares. In an interview in 2012 she identifies her aesthetic concepts with artists who were already creating electro-folklore, recording sounds of nature and native instruments and processing them digitally, like Tonolec, Gaby Kelper or Zizek¹⁰. In 2015 her second album was broadcast, *Para bien*, with an animated image of the artist’s face as cover, from whose forehead a light or lighting is projected [see image 3].

The music broadcasting platform Last.fm define the experience of Paloma del Cerro as “The journey of finding herself in the singing”: “‘Music is a very strong means of transformation, singing breaks a structure and connects with the heart’, claims the artist, who at the present time in addition to taking singing lessons, she teaches them and carries on her own workshop”¹¹.

In January 2017 the group made a presentation in La Cúpula at the Kirchner Cultural Center. There you can see her displaying a performance, singing with the whole body, embodying a character. She is the only female artist on the stage, along with other three male musicians. But the visual scene is her; she does not interact with them that are on a retired plane. Paloma focuses on herself. She accompanies the singing with expressive movements, with specially designed costumes that often refer to animals, like feathers or artificial skins [see image 4]. She also incorporates some typical handmade items of the ethnic cultures of Argentina, like the cotton balls of the highlands, or the *mapuche* silver ornaments, but unmarked from a specific cultural reference. Likewise she combines traditional instruments like *birimbao*, *charango*, a Turkish drum, among others.

One of the songs on the first album is “*Curandera*”. There you can find a synthesis of her musical and performatic proposal;

Curando, curandera, curando

sacando, toda maleza

Curando, curandera, curando

sacando toda, impureza.

Agradecemos a la madre tierra

por todo lo que ella nos da

sacando toda impureza.

In the video of this song, Paloma Kippes is a bird-woman who appears to a girl in the forest¹².

⁹ Some of the songs that the group produced can be heard on Youtube, like the next one: “*Marimba*” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCmHpAQ5JIU>

¹⁰ Zimerman, Gaspar. 17/01/2012. “Paloma Kippes: Superficies de placer”. *Clarín* journal, https://www.clarin.com/fama/paloma-kippes_0_SkKUoI_3vXl.html

¹¹ <https://www.last.fm/es/music/Paloma+del+Cerro/+wiki>

¹² Video-clip of “*Curandera*”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4KHvziuVms>

When singing this song at times she performs effects of segmentation of a same sound as if they were digitally processed but mechanically; that is to say that her singing does not have a traditional look and neither do the sound that surround her. The thematic and the audiovisual connect with the popular and rural universe but through a contemporary sonority. Even an intermediate stanza of the song is interpreted in rap key by Paz Ferreyra as a guest.

The healing subject is very present in her work; "To me music is pure medicine"¹³. Her second album, *Para bien*, is made with Gerardo Morel, Ezequiel Luka, Migma and Lucas Penayo: "The album is presented as a celebration, a ceremony, a journey"¹⁴. One of the songs is "Para todas las mamitas del mundo", which takes the melody and initial phrase of a traditional song, "Reloj de campana", that Paloma knew through a Mexican female shaman¹⁵. In this song traditional percussion instruments (djembe, congas, kettledrum and bombo) converge with electric guitar, scratches in vinyl, keyboard and accordion. The modification of the lyrics is directly aimed to claim sacred female powers:

Reloj de campana tócame las horas
para que despierten las mujeres todas
porque si despiertan todas las mujeres
irán recobrando sus grandes poderes.¹⁶

The audiovisual material represents the song through a ritual in which non-human female forces intervene that collaborate in the awakening of Paloma itself. This song goes on emphasizing the hybridization of the spiritual references. As in the previous one, nature is the protagonist: the moon, the stones, the four elements (water, earth, fire and air). In this song, as well as in the video, also appears Paz Ferreyra but instead of impersonating Miss Bolivia in this case she represents a Hindu goddess who guides part of the ritual of awakening. Regarding this song of the album, Paloma Kippes says the following;

El despertar femenino tiene que ver con un momento que vivimos, que no tiene que ver solamente con la mujer, sino con lo sutil, con la escucha. No es sólo de la mujer la tarea, se trata de equilibrar esa energía masculina y femenina que todos tenemos dentro. (...) La idea tiene que ver con ablandar esa dureza, equilibrar y hermanarnos. La madre naturaleza es fraternal, y somos parte de eso, sólo que vivimos en un sistema que nos lleva a olvidar esa conexión en la que todo está entrelazado. Ahí vienen las cadenas, "una mentira produce mil mentiras", dice la frase. Uno elige todo el tiempo, no existe no elegir, lo hacemos desde que nos levantamos hasta que nos acostamos. Hay que arrancar por uno, porque vamos atrayendo. Es magnetismo puro.¹⁷

During the year 2018 Paloma Kippes spent much of the time out of Argentina, mostly on the coast of Mexico. She had been participating in many festivals on the Mayan Riviera for some time, field where international women meetings are held around the spiritual practices of which other Argentine female

¹³ https://www.clarin.com/musica/paloma_del_cerro-para_bien_0_Bkq0GttPXx.htm [20/05/2015]

¹⁴ https://www.clarin.com/musica/paloma_del_cerro-para_bien_0_Bkq0GttPXx.htm [20/05/2015]

¹⁵ In interviews the artist holds that "Reloj de campana" is a popular Mexican song, but there are also references of the song as Peruvian huayno.

¹⁶ One of the traditional versions, there are many, is the next one: Reloj de campana/cadenita de oro/ tocame las horas/ para retirarme.

¹⁷ https://www.clarin.com/musica/paloma_del_cerro-para_bien_0_Bkq0GttPXx.htm [20/05/2015]

artists have participated¹⁸. At the end of the year 2018 she settled down in that country.

3. Perotá Chingó

Perotá Chingó is a duet composed of Julia Ortiz and Dolores Aguirre that began in 2011, after a trip along the Uruguayan coast. They paid for the living expenses making music a la gorra; they had not thought of a professional project with music. At Cabo Polonio they met a film director, Pocho Álvarez, who was tracking a rock band, Alerta Pachuca. That same day Álvarez films them playing a song of Dolores Aguirre, "Ríe Chinito", and months later he shares the record on Youtube, which is viralized un to more than the 20 million views that it currently has¹⁹. The video started to be seen and to be shared by people from different places of Latin America, mostly from Argentina and from Chile, by making posts asking for "the band"²⁰: "A lot of mysterious things happened and it is nice that they have no explanation. The people who saw it for the first time did not understand what it was that caught them so much. Something absorbed them", recounts (Julia Ortiz at Plaza, 25/5/2018).²¹

This unexpected genesis founded a particular atmosphere that the duo picked up and held through their artistic proposal. In December 2011 Perotá Chingó is formed, incorporating Martín Dacosta on percussion and Diego Cotelo on guitar. So far they already three albums: *Un viajecito* (2012), *Perotá Chingó* (2013) and *Aguas* (2017). In the first two albums, they addressed some of their own songs but became especially known their versions of songs of various musical genres of artists from Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. Nowadays, they make tours to these countries in addition to Colombia, Chile, Mexico or Spain, filling spaces like the Voador Circus in Rio de Janeiro. As is the case with Paloma del Cerro and Miss Bolivia, their public is mainly composed of women, a thing that is repeated in the countries in which they present.

The spiritual discourse of Perotá Chingó was progressive. The album *Aguas* marked a consolidation point of their musical proposal and an emphasis on the spiritual. The visual art of the album has a mandala for each of the songs: "Es un disco mucho más personal, todas las canciones y letras son cosas que realmente nos han pasado, cosas que hemos transitado y que a través de la música las expresamos (...) Es más de adentro, más real." (Julia Ortiz at Leighon 5/12/17).²²

The presentation of their Facebook page says the following:

Perotá Chingó es el estrecho vínculo entre tensión y armonía de dos poderosas voces y el prodigio resultante de esa unión; así también la relación entre seres que excede lo concretamente musical. A primera vista, Perotá es movimiento, es el viaje, el amor por nuestra tierra y sus paisajes, el intercambio cultural y la integración de lo distinto; y todo eso se refleja fielmente en los primeros discos y años de su carrera donde aparece esa música fresca y descontracturada, de cara al viento, absuelta de géneros y desentendida de formas, poco pretenciosa desde la complejidad, pero capaz de hacer resonar algunas fibras internas y profundas de quien se entregue a escucharlos.²³

In the series of promotional images of *Aguas* used to broadcast the recitals you can see the artists in a desert landscape, wrapped in lightweight fabrics that cover their heads and part of the faces [see

¹⁸ The meetings of which Paloma del Cerro participated in Playa del Carmen are organized by Mujer Raíz (<https://www.mujerraiz.com.mx/inicio/>).

¹⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_aIuna5a8Dc

²⁰ in Ramos, Diana, 22/09/2014: <http://revistamito.com/entrevista-perota-chingo/>

²¹ <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/2137630-perota-chingo-un-veranoun-videouna-cancion-y-un-fenomeno-musical>

²² <https://www.nuevamujer.com/entretenimiento/2017/12/05/juli-de-perota-chingo-lo-nuestro-fue-una-cuestion-de-sincronia.html>

²³ <https://www.facebook.com/perotachingo/> [Date consulted: 18/01/2019].

image 5].

In Perotá Chingó the spiritual is organic. Airs of Argentinean and Latin American folklore with a novel stylistic turn, the songs do not present defined or closed ideas, they are brief and of individual phrases, with very different stanzas from each other.

In the middle of 2018 they offered many recital dates at the Buenos Aires ND Ateneo Theatre. During the part of the show they sang most of the songs of Aguas in full practically without interruptions between one song and another. Between ceremony and recital, the live proposal held the same climate than the album, of contrasts that are kept in a fairly homogeneous volume range that links the songs [see image 6].

The day before the recital an eclipse had occurred. One of the few comments between songs was Julia Ortiz referring to the energetic change of the event interpreted in astrological key: "How did you feel yesterday? How strong, right?".

"Toda vida" is one of the songs of Aguas;

Toda vida vuelve a caer

Vuelvo a caer

Como aprendiz

Como Dios

Como se ve en el fondo si me aquieto

Fundo lo opuesto en el amor

Muero y habito entera este misterio.²⁴

Before interpreting it at the recital, Dolores Aguirre, the author of the song, said that this was a very special song for her linked to a particular moment of her life. The lyrics expresses to a large extent the emotional character of the song, but the vocal style of the second voices emphasizes the aesthetic-religious dimension of the song, recreating certain version of heavenly chorus. One of the most intense moments of the recital was during the performing of "Reverdecer", a song in which Perotá Chingó returned to be just a duet singing a capella;

Fuerza natural, fuerza

No me falte al aire

para atravesar tormenta

cuando el trabajo sea reverdecer.

Y si me apuna el viento

No me falte el aire

Vuélvome a las alturas

²⁴ "Toda vida": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSvx2P_-fPc

Cuando el trabajo sea reverdecer.

(...)

Para avivar el fuego

No me falte el aire

Mi voz sea la herramienta

Cuando el trabajo sea reverdecer.

At the show she sang the song almost in the dark, forming a circle with their movements, singing and dancing. In September 2018 an audiovisual of “Reverdecer” was published that recovers the performance of the song in the recital.²⁵

Likewise, Julia and Dolores transmit a very strong union between them that has led to think that they were an emotional couple, and they tell that at one point they left that ambiguity free on behalf of the public.²⁶ Precisely, it is interesting to see what Perotá Chingó symbolizes in terms of complicity and making music among women. On the other hand, in another interview Julia Ortiz departs herself from feminism:

“Yo no soy feminista, ni machista”, porque me pasa un poco eso con todo. No soy de extremar nada, o sea no me voy a ningún extremo. Porque no es mi forma de expresarme, estoy completamente a favor de que cada uno encuentre su forma de expresarse y que si hay alguien que realmente siente el feminismo como su bandera me parece alucinante, no es mi forma de expresarme. Si me he dado cuenta que en las canciones, en los mensajes que damos, en la forma que tenemos de hablar a las feministas les gusta, se sienten identificadas. Pero no es mi bandera en particular. Con respecto a lo que es el despertar de la mujer yo estoy viendo que las mujeres están tomando una fuerza que es la que han tenido siempre. No es que ahora les está apareciendo. La mujer desde que puede parir, desde que tiene un cuerpo y puede tener un bebé es porque tiene una fuerza infinita. O sea es algo que es enorme. Entonces, lo que yo siento es que la mujer está empezando a valorar esa fuerza y entender que está buenísima”.²⁷

4. La Yegros

The last example remains. The description of this musical work is going to be narrower because there are elements that are reiterated and therefore it is not necessary to repeat. However, it also has its particularities, aesthetic and cultural ones: its inclusion is enriching because it reveals the insertion of these works in an international artistic circuit.

Mariana Yegros is known in the musical world as La Yegros. She is a singer and composer and she makes electronic music mixed with Latin American rhythms, highlighting the combination of Latin American popular genres, like cumbia and huayno, and of the most specific Argentine folkloric repertoire, like chamamé. This characteristic genre of the provinces of the Mesopotamia region of Argentina is associated with the family history of the singer. Mariana Yegros was born in Buenos Aires but her mother

²⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSvx2P_-fPc

²⁶ https://www.clarin.com/espectaculos/musica/perota-chingo-chicas-pasaron-youtubers-hippies-girar-mundo-canciones_0_S1K_wiagQ.html

²⁷ <https://www.nuevamujer.com/entretenimiento/2017/12/05/juli-de-perota-chingo-lo-nuestro-fue-una-cuestion-de-sincronia.html>

and her father come from the province of Misiones. She tells that in her house the music that was heard was cumbia and chamamé, a matter that bases her aesthetic choices.²⁸ She began studying at the Morón Conservatory, but soon she was selected to sing in the dance-theatre company called De La Guarda, that had been formed in 1994. At the time, De La Guarda caused an impact on the artistic field of Buenos Aires, among other things, by creating sophisticated spectacles in the use of technologies and at the same time linked it with traits of Argentine popular culture. Precisely, on this creative matrix will develop the solo career of Mariana Yegros;

Nosotros ya éramos conocidos en el underground de Buenos Aires. Underground pero a la vez en un sistema donde a la vez la música nuestra era innovadora. Gente que estaba más en contacto con lo nuevo era nuestro público, también muchos extranjeros que iban a las fiestas Zizek, que les gustaba escuchar algo diferente. Nosotros pertenecemos a eso, y éramos respetados en ese lugar.²⁹

But La Yegros becomes very well-known first in France, following the success in radios of massive public of the song “Viene de Mí” which gives name to her first album, in 2013. Since 2015 she lives in this country, and she keeps on associating with Argentine musicians for both the interpretation and the production of her albums. This is the case with Gabriel Kerpel -King Coya- who participated in her two albums. Kerpel had been the musical director of the spectacles of De La Guarda and of Fuerza Bruta afterwards, a connection point with Paloma del Cerro, who mentions this same musician as one of the references of her artistic research. After a professional growth that was expanding in Europe, La Yegros returns to Argentina to participate in international festivals, like Lollapalooza edition 2017. As a result of this participation, the journalistic note of an important local media titled the following: “The Argentine woman who makes the world dance”.³⁰

With airs of chamamé, one of the songs of the first album is called “Trocitos de Madera”, composed by Yegros and Kerpel. The sound of the accordion places the song in the context of the province of Misiones. The lyrics talks about a girl who cries pieces of wood, it is dramatic. The video of the song suggests questions about the depredation of the jungle of the province, like the digital sounds of the intro depicting the blows of an axe chopping down a tree.³¹ The message is ecological but not only because again what appears is an animated nature, in addition to images of an altar of the girl, or the green fluid that magically emanates from the man who represents the predatory entrepreneur as divine punishment towards the end of the audiovisual. In the middle of it, images of La Yegros singing with the band are interspersed, in a scene in which she appears as if directing the celebration of a ritual [see image 7]. In an interview the artist says that for live performances she herself decorates the stages, with fabrics and other objects, recreating the juggle of Misiones.

In this album there is another song which is entitled “El bendito”;

Bendita la noche bendito el frío

bendita virgencita de los fugitivos

benditos los diablos del Paraná

²⁸ Interview at Radio Francia. Publication date on Youtube 7/04/2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yf2X1a4z5IY>

²⁹ Interview at Radio Francia. Publication date on Youtube: 7/04/2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yf2X1a4z5IY>

³⁰ Carlos Iogna Prat, 17/02/2017 https://tn.com.ar/musica/hoy/la-yegros-la-argentina-que-hace-bailar-al-mundo_773315

³¹ Videoclip of “Trocitos de madera”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRS Huck-Yno>

bendita la niebla, bendito el yerbal.³²

In this song the chamamé it is shown as a blessed music, and it mentions a heterogeneous set of beliefs, mainly associated with Catholic cults, but also to religious practices from the Guaraní that inhabit that area of the country, bordering Brazil and Paraguay. At the same time, “El bendito” is one of the songs of the videogame FIFA World Cup of 2014. In 2016 her second album was published which name is Magnetismo. According to the artist it refers to the attraction energy of the public with the band, and at the beginning of 2019 La Yegros announced the edition of the third work titled Soltar.

In the interview with Mariana Yegros already mentioned, the journalist Jordi Batallé comments that it is not usual to see a woman leading ensembles of Latin American music, and she replies: “little by little we are taking the baton”.

5. Genealogy of the spiritual in the musical experiences of women

From these descriptions initially emerge two questions; on one side, if it can be identify when references of contemporary spirituality begin to show in the Argentine popular music, and on the other side, what can we find in history regarding the religious dimension associated specifically with the musical activity of women.

In the socio-anthropological papers the first considerations of new spiritualities in the Argentine popular music can be found in the electronic dance scene or dance that emerges in the 1990s, associated with the precepts of self-knowledge and autonomy of the New Age, also connected with the perception of the effects of designer drugs (Gallo and Semán, 2010; Lenarduzzi, 2012). In turn, these ways of conceiving and enjoying the musical experience were in relation to the “dis-hetero-standardization” of some dance practices. At the beginning of 2000, it also appeared in a more unsuspected atmosphere, like the tango dancing and the universe of the milongas of Buenos Aires. Notions of energy and relative autonomy within the choreographic codes took prominence in a dance style, the new tango, from the hand of a young generation of professional and amateur male and female dancers, consistent with the flexibility of the heteronorm whose most obvious exponent is the queer tango (Liska, 2018).³³

In the recent artistic history of Argentine popular music the singer Charo Bogarín, with the duet Tonolec, was pioneer in foray the electronic-folk from a performative or multidimensional setting, diving in the songs and other musical traditions of the Qom-toba people, and Guaraní afterwards.³⁴ Her artistic consolidation, which started around 2005, came with a musical proposal developed in visual terms with innovative costume designs and marking, most of all, Bogarín’s figure as a native woman of

³² Audio of “El bendito”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AnuawYM9mg>

³³ In the musical research of sociological perspective in Latin America, we do not find papers that address the religious issue, except for characterizations of certain rock recitals as contemporary rituals. During the twentieth century, the musicology did focus on analyzing religious music but predominantly of Catholic tradition, whilst from the 1960s onwards the ethnomusicology developed innumerable works on rituals, shamanic healing practices and sacred musical instruments in different ethnic groups and communities in the region. However, although isolated there are some signs of interest in these issues; in 2018 a compilation of works gathered in the book “La música y los mitos sobre México y Brasil” was published in Mexico, its editors come from letters and communication. This seems to be the influence of the decolonial proposals (and their strands) and of certain displacements of the subjects and interests of musical research in Latin American countries. In this book appears a paper entitled “Das epistemologías feministas decoloniais ao sagrado feminino em música no Brasil” from Laila Andresa Cavalcante Rosa which collects from the academic the valuation of the spiritual as a source of power of the feminine, aligned with the musical representations. It can also be mentioned that in 2017 the Ibero-American Association of Ethnomusicology (SIbE) made a first meeting dedicated to the topic: “Losing my Religion. Espiritualidad, religión y música popular” (Santander, December 15 to 17).

³⁴ Qom-toba and Guaraní are different ethnicities of Argentina.

strong personality. Currently Bogarín combines her constant presence in recitals and festivals with other kind of musical activities, such as the leading of group meetings for the exploration of the singing from the transmission of her knowledge on the musical cultures and the worldviews of native peoples in the Argentine territory. Previous experiences of musical projects related to the sacred songs of the Mapuche culture can be noted, the *tayül* related to the activity of the *machis* or Mapuche female shamans, such as the case of Aimé Painé in the 1980s and Beatriz Pichi Malem from 1990s onwards. In this respect we can think of the figure of Bogarín as an artist who articulated musical worlds dissociated until then: traditional singing in indigenous languages with the universe of electronics, only that she did not invoke non-human forces nor pointed the sacred origin of the original songs.³⁵ Leda Valladares, María Elena Walsh, Luisa Calcumil, Miriam García, Silvia Barrios, Graciela Mendoza, Anahí Mariluán are, chronologically, several of the female singers that brought to the stages the traditional songs of the native cultures of the Argentine territory. For the most part they have been women who were dedicated to these repertoires, a tradition within the tradition.

Another precedent of artists of a performatic bet on stages associated with images of popular religiosity is the Mexican singer Lila Downs, whose visibility in Argentina has grown after her constant visits to the country, succeeding in forming a local audience to the point that during the summer of 2019 she gave an important public recital in Buenos Aires, organised by the State. Also, the impact in Argentina of the Colombian group Bomba Estéreo identified with the name of *tropipop*, whose singer Liliana Saumet disseminates a plentiful collection of ritual images in the context of the jungle where she lives, the Tayrona National Park. Communication and ecological care of nature are aspects that are emerging over and over in the musical connoted with the feminine.

The pioneer works of music and gender by Susan McClary (1991) and Lucy Green (1997), that are currently classical references on the field, talk about the historical postponement of women in the musical activity. At the same time they emphasize that, in specific areas of the activity, generally considered of a lower range, women had a greater participation, precisely. One of them is singing; the voice is the “natural” instrument par excellence. At the other end is the performance of musical activities associated with technologies applied to the sound production, from electroacoustic music to digital composition in all its forms.

In the examples presented and analyzed, this division of roles is maintained: the female musicians sing and sometimes they compose; the male musicians play conventional and digital instruments and they produce the albums. The change offered by these proposals has to do with the spiritual senses of, or through, the music. But the emerging phenomenon of new spiritualities related to musical creation is not restricted to female artists. In Argentina, one of the most successful rock band these days is called Los Espíritus. It produced the first album in 2013. In its last album, *Agua Ardiente* (2017), the song “Perdida en el fuego” says the following:

Ardes, perdida en el fuego

vos sos, mujer,

de hoguera. (...)

Tus dones,

tus sombras

de bruja,

³⁵ In fact, Beatriz Pichi Malem already explored the electronic resources in her album *Plata* of the year 2000, but with much less resonance and dissemination.

se queman en la hoguera.

Nicola Cruz is an Ecuadorian musician who obtained an exponential international recognition, along with Chancha Vía Circuito with similar proposals. His musical work is anchored in digital technologies but recreating a naturalistic ritual universe. Also, he had meetings with female artists identified with the spiritual aesthetics of the style of Paloma del Cerro, such as Huaira. With her he premiered the video-clip “Colibria” (2015), which represents the story of a girl born from a volcano. Ultimately, the Latin American popular music identified with new spiritualities, even in male musicians, reiterates representations of female empowerment linked to the sacred.

Music, women and new spiritualities is an articulation that appears in a transversal way in productions of different cultural fields that include the mass communication. Jennifer López’s video-clip of the song “Anillo” (2018) contains a set of aesthetic-religious references and ritualities in line with the examples we saw before, only with some significant sense twists. The audiovisual shows scenes of a multicultural female conclave unmarked from Latin America immersed in sumptuous environments, as recreating the ruling elite of an exotic and authoritarian matriarchy. Queen more than Goddess, Jennifer López becomes intolerant with a man who courts her, who offers her almost everything she needs, except for the engagement ring.³⁶

On her part, Diana Eguía Armenteros analyzed the sacred performances of Beyoncé, associated with the increase of anti-racist political messages in her music: “Beyoncé abandoned the classic role of sexual object of the pop singers and has become a leader of the spiritual feminism. A current that grows in the underground of the United States and that invokes the council of the women and their empowerment.” (Eguía Armenteros, 2017).³⁷ Since Donald J. Trump positioned himself as political leader, various entertainment celebrities emphasized their opposition to the president who, among other things, is building a Christian identity of the United States, a country where different religions traditionally converge. Eguía Armenteros argues that the interest of the artists in differentiating themselves from the government has to do with the development of multiple forms of spiritual feminism. Furthermore, she points out the following;

El rescate de las formas antiguas del feminismo espiritual lleva un tiempo colándose por la cultura underground, especialmente entre la población hispana de los Estados Unidos, quienes se ven a sí mismas como herederas de la lucha feminista decolonial en un país cada vez más anti-latino, anti-queer y anti-mujer. (...) Raperas y brujas que se empoderan a través de rituales mágicos y sobreviven a su disciplinaria vida de high school.

The representations that are compromised in the musical performances relieved by Eguía Armenteros describe expressions very similar to those seen in the Argentine artists; matrilineal inheritance³⁸ and the council of women, the narratives about deities or forces of the traditional female, like Mother Earth, or about the exercise of roles of priestesses, witches or goddesses, and that redefine concepts of body, nature, family or community. Likewise, she argues that feminist spiritualities defy the patriarchal self-sufficiency, the capitalist productivity and the hetero-patriarchal binarism;

Es imposible discutirle a Beyoncé que es la abeja reina (Queen Bey), como se la conoce

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LryQJ25CnKU>

³⁷ The central example that Eguía Armenteros analyzes is the performance of Beyoncé at the Grammy Awards 2017 edition.

³⁸ It is interesting what Eguía Armenteros says that for the first time pregnancy is honored in pop music, because of the series of images of the pregnant artist.

popularmente, ella controla la cultura norteamericana como nadie, es una mujer empoderada y consciente de las batallas que aún se debe librar contra el racismo heteropatriarcal en los Estados Unidos. (...) En esta coyuntura hay que entender la encarnación en diosa de Beyoncé, quien convirtió una actuación de música pop en un ritual artístico-espiritual de empoderamiento de las mujeres y, especialmente, de las afroamericanas (Eguía Armenteros, idem, s/p).³⁹

In mass culture, for some years now, spiritual feminism has circulated in the form of speeches and therapeutic and leisure practices. Nicolás Viotti and Karina Felitti analyze these proposals taking as a puch the visit to Buenos Aires of Mía Astral in 2016, the Venezuelan spiritual advisor of impact on the Latin American mass communication who started with Youtube videos produced in homemade form from Miami. Combining astrology, meditation, Ayurvedic nutrition and Jewish spirituality, Mía Astral offers tools to self-manage life to a broad audience of women, through annual predictions books, social networking posts, and live conferences at theatres, like the one she gave in the Argentine city before two thousand people;

Mía habla a las mujeres y vive la astrología como una cruzada para empoderarlas y para que redescubran su fuerza espiritual y su energía femenina. Su cruzada es para que las mujeres entiendan los patrones de conducta que las hacen sufrir y recuperen su amor propio, aprendan a cuidarse mejor y a sobrevivir en un mundo difícil (Viotti and Felitti, 2016, s/p).

Viotti and Felitti contend that the followers of Mía Astral in many cases also take action for political demands, and they add an issue that seems fundamental; that this path of self-knowledge of common language functions as a female code of sociability among women.

On the other hand, some analysis can be taken about the current religious context of Argentina. Alejandro Frigerio refers to a progressive deregulation of the religious scene in the country from the return of democracy in 1983 to the present by which beliefs and practices conceived as popular religiosity were modified, previously present but in an incipient way and sparsely tolerated, that were slowly intervening the Catholic monopoly of the previous decades (Frigerio, 2007). In this respect, Nicolás Viotti and María Eugenia Funes (2015) analyze the recent articulations between spirituality and politics in Argentina, in particular, the links between the party coalition that currently governs the country with Mauricio Macri as President (Republican Proposal -PRO-) and the Art of Living Foundation (EADV) with Ravi Shankar as one of its best known references;

En Argentina las espiritualidades Nueva Era se han expandido hacia espacios novedosos, inesperados décadas atrás. Esto llama la atención sobre un proceso de desplazamiento que va desde el ámbito de la vida cotidiana hacia nuevos escenarios como la vida económica, la educación y la pedagogía, las producciones estéticas e incluso la política (Viotti and Funes, idem: s/p).

These researchers argue that the connections between PRO and a current of New Age Religiosity led to a good deal of the local critical intellectuality alleges that the advancement of new spirituality is part of the cultural neoliberalism, of atomizing individualism that prays that the only possible change is the personal one. In this sense, the work on Mía Astral also hinted the worries or misgivings on the part of other feminisms, of academic or activist currents, to narratives of female empowerment circulating in the cultural industry. Viotti and Funes explains that EADV is a foundation that encompasses a section of neo-Hinduism of proselytizing expectations the proposes to transform the highest spheres of power in the West from the spiritual wisdom of the East, and that identify this faction, even though it is the most

³⁹ A recent appreciation of the religious components in pop music can be found in a paper that revisits Madonna's work in the 80s, and that analyzes the appropriation of sacred elements as a resource of positioning in a musical circuit hegemonized by the male aegis (Lins Lima, 2016).

ambitious, as neo-liberal precepts is not only simplistic but it involves not being understood the political scenario to which they oppose, to some extent sealed by the Catholic dominance that rules the way of thinking the religion in our country.

Being introduced the debate and its complexities, what can we say about the senses that link the musical with the spiritual feminism?

Final considerations

This work reveals a relation between music and culture through the spiritual theme, through a set of aesthetic representations. In the artistic proposals of women that were analyzed we find spiritual narratives, on the one hand, linked to emotional healing resources, and, on the other hand, to magical powers mostly held by women. These powers are mainly plotted in the communication of women with the animal and vegetable world. What is expressed and how it is expressed in music may differ from one another, but they converge in a common density: to represent a kind of divine power associated with the female nature. Its ubiquity contributes to not clearly define what this power is about and what is it exactly. The four works are made by mixed bands, however, both practices and spiritual powers are in connection only with the feminine. Thus, women artists explore their creative and spiritual abilities through music. On another note, three of the female musicians give glimpse of some social and artistic crosses: Paloma del Cerro, Miss Bolivia and La Yegros.

In turn, the senses that narrow between women and natural world lead us to the question of the reiteration of the feminine as a biological essence now with a positive approach. Nevertheless, because it is not anchored in arguments of scientific rationality, is it possible to think about it in those same terms?

The relation between music and spirituality that is established through these examples makes it possible to think of belief systems in formation, of sets of aesthetic and cultural values around the current social initiatives of the women. It cannot be said that these are autonomously generated representations in respect of the male domain, but they do express a certain enhancement of the possibilities of creative experimentation and to trusting in their contribution to making music from a social position with a gender approach, feminized.

In the context of the informational globalization, it is constant to see the instantaneous replication of very similar cultural signs in very different areas. In women artists it is remarkable to see common speeches emerging from the heart of the industry and from the small-scale circuit independent of the commercial circuit. Likewise, both in the developed examples and in others mentioned throughout the work, the idea of the Latin appears as an element identified with the feminine spiritualities expressed in the music, between some ethnic-racial reaffirmation and the reproduction of exoticism: the primitivist naturalism of peripheral musical aesthetics updated by the prominence of women. Social and cultural inequalities around the world also operate in music appreciations and perceptions.

Apart from that, in different political and cultural activities associated with the women's movement, spiritual references recently appeared, for example in the massive demonstration of March 8, 2018, in the city of Buenos Aires [see image 8]; in art or historical exhibitions, and in other activities at cultural centres related to progressive thinking [see image 9].

Surely, other perspectives for analysis of musical works can be made. Between the resonance of the social and the contribution to the social, the musical creation has been accompanying the visibility of the oppressions of gender. The conditions of collectivization and organization of many women around this transversal inequality are represented in music in different ways. The spiritual is one among others. We will see to what extent they can converge as a process of cultural change capable of been perceived as plural and not unequal, establishing new aesthetic, religious and political hierarchies.

References

- Eguía Armenteros, D. (2017). "Beyoncé y el feminismo espiritual". *Revista Anfibia*, 4-09-2017.
- Cavalcante Rosa, L. A. (2018). "Das epistemologías feministas decoloniais ao sagrado feminino em música no Brasil". En: De la Garza, M. L.; Bonfim, C. (Eds.), *La música y los mitos. Investigaciones musicológicas*, p.303-326. Tuxtla Gutiérrez: Fray Bartolomé de las casas.
- Federici, S. (2015). *Calibán y la bruja. Mujeres, cuerpo y acumulación originaria*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón.
- Frigerio, A. (2007). "Repensando el monopolio religioso del catolicismo en Argentina". En: Carozzi, M. J.; Ceriani, C. (Eds.), *Ciencias sociales y religión en América Latina: Perspectivas en debate*, p. 87-118. Buenos Aires: Biblos/ ACSR.M.
- Frith, S. (2014). *Ritos de la interpretación*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Gallo, G.; Semán, P. (2009). "Superficies de Placer: sexo, religión y música electrónica en los pliegues de la transición 1990-2010". *Cuestiones de Sociología* (5-6).
- Green, L. (2001). *Música, género y educación*. Madrid: Morata.
- Hall, S. (1984). "Notas sobre la deconstrucción de lo popular". En: Samuels, R. (Ed.), *Historia popular y teoría socialista*, p.94-112. Barcelona: Crítica.
- Hollows, J. (2000). "Feminismo, estudios culturales y cultura popular". En: *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*, p.130-151. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Lenarduzzi, V. (2012). *Placeres en movimiento: cuerpo, música y baile en la escena electrónica*. Buenos Aires: Aidos.
- Lins Lima, M. (2016). *Religiosidade campo feminino sacro na performance de Madonna*¹. *Intercom-Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Interdisciplinares da Comunicação, XXXIX Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação*. São Paulo: 05-9/09/2016.
- Liska, M. (2019). "La banda de sonido del movimiento de mujeres". En: RINCÓN, O. (Comp.) *La reinención de lo popular*: 45-61. Buenos Aires: La Crujía.
- . *Entre géneros y sexualidades. Tango, baile y cultura popular*. Buenos Aires: Caserola, M. (2018).
- McClary, S. (1991). *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Viotti, N.; Felitti, K. (2016). "El cielo las hará libres. Mía Astral, astrología y feminismo new age". *Revista Anfibia*, 15/06/2016.
- Viotti, N.; Funes, M.E. (2015). "La política de la nueva era: el arte de vivir en Argentina". *Debates do Ner, Porto Alegre* 16 (28), p.17-36.