

Miriam Lisa Ljubijankic

miriamlisa.ljubijankic@sbg.ac.at

Ens.hist.teor.arte

Miriam Lisa Ljubijankic, "Plot Twist: Unexpected twists in the sexist narrative of reggaetón", *Ensayos. Historia y teoría del arte*, Bogotá, D.C., Universidad Nacional de Colombia,, Vol. XXVI, No. 42 (enero-junio 2022), pp. 97-119.

<https://doi.org/10.15446/ensayos.v26n42.114129>

ABSTRACT

Building on ideas of feminism and post-feminism, this paper looks at the development and reception of reggaetón, which has been associated with buzzwords such as machismo and sexism, especially at the beginning of its emergence around the turn of the millennium. Its aim is to show what roles these two concepts have played in this Latin American pop music genre since its emergence. It discusses and illuminates ambivalences within the genre on an artistic level as well as impulses and turning points in its reception using examples from artistic projects and post-feminist voices of women who experience reggaetón as positive for themselves and have been able to establish new perspectives in the context of sexism, feminism and the freedom of female sexuality through it.

KEY WORDS

Reggaeton, Latin American pop, feminism, post-feminism

TÍTULO

Cambio de última hora en la trama: Giros inesperados en la narrativa sexista del reggaetón

RESUMEN

Partiendo de las ideas del feminismo y post-feminismo, este trabajo examina el desarrollo y la recepción del reggaetón, género que desde que emergió a comienzos del milenio ha estado asociado a términos que como machismo y sexismo, que adquirieron rápida vigencia en su descripción y su objetivo principal es examinar que papel han tenido estos dos conceptos en el desarrollo de este género musical latinoamericano. Además, discute e ilustra los impulsos y puntos de inflexión en su recepción y las ambivalencias dentro de este género a nivel artístico, tomando como ejemplos voces y proyectos artísticos post-feministas que consideran el reggaetón como positivo y han establecido a través de él, nuevas perspectivas en el contexto del sexismo, feminismo y la libertad de la sexualidad femenina.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Reggaeton, pop latinoamericano, feminismo, post-feminismo.

Miriam Ljubijankic is currently completing her MA thesis at the University of Salzburg on proxemics in picture and sound as a method for analysing film musicals. In previous works she has explored feminist, postfeminist and queer theoretical aspects of music and dance in the reception of the popular music genres. Since 2018 she has been working as a teaching assistant for dance studies and the doctoral programme at Schwerpunkt Wissenschaft und Kunst, in addition to tutoring dance and movement analysis at the University of Salzburg and Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich.

Miriam Ljubijankic finaliza sus estudios de Maestría en el Programa de Música y Danza en la Universidad de Salzburgo con un trabajo sobre proxémica en el análisis de imagen y sonido para el análisis de películas musicales. En trabajos anteriores ha explorado las perspectivas y teorías feminista, postfeminista y de queer studies para el estudio de la recepción de géneros de música popular. Desde 2018 trabaja como asistente del Programa doctoral de Cooperación Ciencias-Artes de la Universidad Paris Lodron y el Mozarteum de Salzburgo, adicionalmente a tutorías en el análisis de danza y movimiento en la Universidad de Salzburgo y la Ludwig-Maximilian University de Munich.

Recibido 1 de septiembre de 2021
Aceptado 10 de octubre de 2021

Plot Twist:

Unexpected twists in the sexist narrative of reggaetón

Miriam Lisa Ljubijankic

Introduction

When someone explains to those around them that they want to work on reggaetón as a final thesis of their studies, the likelihood is that the reactions will be unanimously characterised by a blank face, followed with the question: “What is that?”. At least that was the case with the author of this paper. After some explanation and musical examples, the reactions differed. “Oh! The one with the half-naked girls on the beach or in the streets? Quite awful!” – this came from some female acquaintances whose opinion is much appreciated by the author of this work. Especially in regard to challenging discussions on gender normatives and narratives. The reaction of the male circle of friends can essentially be boiled down to an unimpressed “Oh!”, accompanied here and there by a dramatic shrug of the shoulders. But then they were all united again in naming the first example that came to mind: “So... *Despacito*!”.

‘Despacito’ (slowly) the author of the present work also wants to deal with the subject of sexism, the oppression of women and the tabooing of female sexuality in the pop music genre centered here. At first glance, these three aspects seem to go hand in hand. But in small, comprehensible steps – pasito, pasito – this paper is showing that depending on the perspective, they should not only be differentiated, but can even lead to a mutual blockade.

In recent years – it is even be a valid argument to pinpoint the phenomenon back to the appearance of *Despacito* – there has been a growing interest in questioning critical, established attitudes towards the genre of reggaetón in the context of discrimination,

especially in the field of gender studies. This growing interest can be traced both in freelance journalism and in academic contributions. Publications of master's theses, articles in academic journals, podcasts, contributions and blog entries on internet platforms bear witness to this. There have also been artistic attempts to redefine the genre, to make it more political, critical and open and to shape it, make the trend towards new perspectives within and outside the subculture evident. The formulation inside the subculture includes artists and consumers who are active in the scene. Outside the subculture, on the other hand, describes the reception of the genre and its environment from an outside perspective. The new perspectives address different levels. It is about the content of texts as well as representations of artists associated with reggaetón. In addition, new approaches to ways of looking at things always open up possibilities for recognising and paying attention to potential that previously seemed unthinkable. The same has happened in reggaetón with regard to sexism, feminism and the freedom of female sexuality and will be demonstrated in this thesis.

Reggaetón has probably been one of the most controversially discussed and condemned music genres of our time since the Turn of the millennium. This is not only true for the Latin American pop music scene or the Latin American region, on the contrary. Particularly on the level of cultural studies, the debate has been intense and critical, especially on an international level. Numerous articles deal with violence and sexism as the main themes in the context of reggaetón. These debates are especially essential when looking at the first years of reggaetón. In this context, song lyrics glorifying domestic as well as openly practised violence against homosexuality and women are the main focus of the contributions. It should be noted that the roots of the critical content of these texts in the established gender constructions in Latin America and their transfer into the everyday role models of the subculture are only excerpts from the topics that were dealt with several times in the multilingual space.

This paper looks at the development within the genre and its reception, drawing on the ideas of feminism and post-feminism. The aim is to show what role these two movements have played in reggaetón since its emergence.

At the beginning of the paper, the terms feminism and post-feminism will be explained. Since a much larger paper than this one could be written on this topic, the explanation is limited to those aspects of the two movements that are important for the further course of the argumentation. The first chapter lays the foundation for defining the terms feminism, post-feminism, objectification and subjectification in the following and for ensuring a conscious use of these terms.

Subsequently, the problems of chauvinism, sexism and violence in early reggaetón are discussed, as well as the criticism of them from different circles and their respective methods. On the one hand, academic discussions in the form of scientific publications and studies are cited. On the other hand, an activist project by a group of Colombian students is presented,

which aims to raise awareness of the content of criticised songs in reggaetón through visual representations. The transition to the next chapter is formed by protest movements within the genre by female artists who introduced feminist impulses by reversing the role images or satirical texts, and artists of the genre are presented who use various methods to work for the inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community in reggaetón.

Finally, various publications are cited in which female sexuality in reggaetón is addressed. These consist of journalistic articles and a study by the Universitat Rovira i Virgili and serve as examples of the perception and reception of the genre in terms of post-feminism.

About Post-Feminism

The concept of post-feminism in this work will be based on Angela McRobbie. She understands post-feminism as a movement, a view that occurs at a point in time when feminism is no longer necessary in its social form. In order to understand post-feminism, it is first necessary to become aware of the basic idea of feminism.

The first evidence of the term feminism can be found in the 18th century in the course of the French Revolution. In the course of the 19th century, the term was consolidated for the first time and subsequently women's movements have increasingly been appearing in the form of activist women's associations.¹

This is therefore a time in which gender segregation had already shaped society for centuries. Women are not entitled to vote in political decisions, nor do they have unrestricted access to education, training and career choices. The woman's main task is to bear children and to support the man who provides for the family. The fact that this continues to be the case decades after the turn of the 20th century is particularly clear from advertisements for household appliances, kitchen utensils and the like, as well as various women's guidebooks, although there have already been successes of emancipatory movements. The number of working women increases in the first half of the 20th century, women gain greater access to education and training, and in the course of the century more and more countries have decided to include women in the political decision-making process and also give them the right to vote. In regions where these developments are not yet observable and at, least to a large extent, consolidated in society, the situation of moving from feminism to the subsequent post-feminism is therefore not yet given.

One could even say, feminism can be seen as a non-violent battle for equality and equal rights for men and women. Once the goals of the battle have been achieved, there is no longer a need for fighting, although a critical approach to the issue should by no

¹ Barbara Thiessen, "Feminismus: Differenzen und Kontroversen", in *Handbuch Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung*, (Eds. Ruth Becker), Beate Kortendiek, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2010, pp. 37-44 (p. 37).

means be lost. The metaphor of battle is also used by Angela McRobbie, who refers to Giddens and Beck.² The fact that only in a few cases one can speak of complete equality should also be critically noted at this point. However, a detailed elaboration of this topic would go beyond the scope of this thesis. In this chapter, the basic ideas essential for the written treatment of the feminist and post-feminist movements in reggaetón will be deciphered and explained.

In order to achieve the goal of feminism, i.e. emancipation, it is obvious to think that it was necessary to level the playing field between women and men. Phrases like ‘the woman is the weaker sex’ are unthinkable in feminism. However, hidden in all the necessary processes of emancipation is also the danger that female attributes are relegated to the background. While women’s self-determination over their bodies comes to the fore, the issue of female sexuality, for example, seems to be a sensitive area. Perhaps a radical cut is necessary to put the focus on the priority of social equality between men and women. After all, in the broadest sense of sexuality, there is an undeniable difference between men and women. Namely, that of anatomy, biological processes within the body, as well as genetics and hormonal prerequisites. Although physical differences between the sexes are independent of equality, the role of women, which from today’s point of view is suppressed, has been legitimised for centuries with these differences. It is very likely that for this very reason, feminism diverted the gaze away from sexuality and towards the emancipation of women outside of it and within society. The approach to female sexuality will become essential in the course of this work, and in reggaetón it stands in a particularly ambivalent relation within the discussion of the genre.

Since the aspects of feminism relevant to this thesis have been elaborated, post-feminism will now be discussed in more detail. Angela McRobbie’s understanding of post-feminism follows on from the explained problem of female sexuality. One aspect of her definition of post-feminism is the self-evidence of the fact that a woman is able to live out and enjoy her sexuality freely, even if she is not in the situation of a married woman with a husband.³ A fundamental idea on women’s sexual freedom in post-feminism was outlined by Rosalinde Gill in 2009. In her article “From Sexual Objectification to Subjectification: The Resexualisation of Women’s Bodies in the Media”, she addresses the fact, which at first glance seems contradictory, of sexualising representations of the female body in the media at a time when feminism has been fighting for women’s equality for decades. In her contribution, she explains that the serious difference lies in the step from objectification, in its meaning synonymous with dehumanisation, to the subjectification of women:

² Angela McRobbie, “Post-Feminism and popular culture”, in *Female Media Studies*, 4, 3 (2004), pp. 255-64 (p. 260).

³ *Ibid.*

“Indeed, what is novel and striking about contemporary sexualised representations of women in popular culture is that they do not (as in the past) depict women as passive objects but as knowing, active and desiring sexual subjects.”⁴

This observation can be decisive for a consideration of reggaetón, the dance of the perreo typical of the music and semantic contents of song lyrics of the genre in recent years from a post-feminist perspective for new perspectives. It offers an alternative to the often critical viewpoints on the hypersexualisation of women. The inversion of the woman as a passive object to a consciously acting and active subject relieves her of dependency and paves the way for even more liberality in the female lifestyle. This is particularly evident in views on the perreo, as well as in the contents and attitudes of female representatives of the genre. First, however, we will take a closer look at the critical discourse on that part of reggaetón that has long been decisive for the attribution of the genre as a misogynist and sexist music movement.

Critical examination of reggaetón in the context of sexism

When Reggaetón is spoken and especially written about, it has for a long time been predominantly associated with the problematic messages regarding the value of women. Texts that deal with women as sex objects are already excluded from Angela McRobbie’s idea of post-feminism. This is because one of its foundations, as explained earlier, is the shift from objectification of women to subjectification, which she relates to Rosalind Gill. So as long as women are treated as sex objects, a post-feminist approach is almost impossible and a critical treatment is legitimate. It is not only violence against women that corresponds to a representation of the genre that contradicts post-feminism. In this chapter, two things will be pointed out on the basis of various critical debates in academia. On the one hand, the presence of the sexual objectification of women in the semantics and symbolism of song lyrics of reggaetón, and on the other hand, that aggressive and violence-glorifying sexism in the genre cannot be seen as universally valid, but they rather manifest themselves much more as a temporary phenomenon of early reggaetón.

From a perspective in which feminism is necessary for society and emancipation has not yet been sufficiently achieved, there are also plenty of occasions in reggaetón, viewed from a reflective distance, to critically examine the messages. The beginnings of reggaetón in particular are marked by machismo, chauvinism and the degradation of women. This is expressed in the song lyrics, in which the artists sing about sexual and also domestic

⁴ Rosalind McGill, “From Sexual Objectification to Subjectification: The Resexualisation of Women’s Bodies”, in MROnline, 2009, <https://mronline.org/2009/05/23/from-sexual-objectification-to-sexual-subjectification-the-resexualisation-of-womens-bodies-in-the-media/> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

violence against women, among other things, in addition to the obvious view of women as objects. In a study of 179 lyrics from 2008, Zaire Zinet Dinzey-Flores looked at the themes in them and analysed them statistically. Her work shows that the most widespread theme in Reggaetón at that time is sex, with a share of 43%. Violence plays a role in 18% of the texts. Dinzey-Flores also mentions other themes in her study, such as lovesickness, poverty or social and political positioning. However, these topics account for a maximum of 11%. The remaining 27% are divided into several minor groups. Later developments of the genre seem to have changed the content, but a more detailed investigation of this would require an equivalent study, which would go beyond the scope of this work.⁵

Building on this study, in 2012 Kristina Bedijs examined the image of women constructed in Reggaetón in close connection with the concept of machismo. She used this term in her publication as follows:

“[...] die männliche Promiskuität und Potenz, die sexuelle Repression der Frau, die körperliche Betonung der Männlichkeit und der derbe Sprachgebrauch.”⁶

In her article, Bedijs analyses the lyrics of six hits from reggaetón from the period between 2003 and 2005, highlighting the sexual objectification of women. In the further course of her paper, she also cites reversing examples, which will be addressed in the following chapter. In the six titles examined in which an objectification of women can be observed, there is a recurring motif of the man as a predatory cat and the woman as a playful but inferior kitten to the man. Bedijs also points out that in some texts, the woman's unbridled sexuality is tamed by the man, and in some cases, this is done with the help of violence.⁷

In PopScriptum, published by the Research Centre for Popular Music at the Humboldt University in Berlin, the article “Power Relations, Gender Asymmetries and Body Configurations in Reggaetón” was published in 2016. In it, José Miguel Gálvez goes into more detail about the violence and the unbalanced relationship between men and women in reggaetón, which he calls gender asymmetry. In a critical examination of the genre, Gálvez invokes a methodological pluralism that goes beyond the semantic analysis of texts and seeks to understand and examine reggaetón as a cultural phenomenon. To this end, he cites musicological subdivisions into two sound aesthetics and links them to the semantic meaning of the texts. He distinguishes between tropical and synthetic sound aesthetics and

⁵ Zaire Zinet Dinzey-Flores, “De la Disco al Caserío: Urban Spatial Aesthetics and Policy to the Beat of Reggaetón”, *Centro Journal*, (2008), pp. 35-69 (p. 47).

⁶ Kristina Bedijs, “Entonces mami, tú quieres más duro. Traditionalistische und sexistische Frauenbilder im Reggaeton”, *Let's Talk About. (Texts About) Sex*. Eds. Marietta Calderón; Georg Marko, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012, pp. 1-9 (p. 1).

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3 – 6.

observes that the frequency of sexist content in songs that can be assigned to the synthetic sound aesthetics is significantly higher than in those that correspond to the characteristics of the tropical sound aesthetics. In this context, Gálvez also cites texts for argumentation, although in his paper these are clearly more aggressive text excerpts.⁸

Furthermore, Gálvez also deals with the perreo as a typical dance style of reggaetón and reflects on the bipolar approach in its critical reception. What the term perreo refers to, is a little dog and is an allusion to the sexual position. In perception, it usually polarises into two interpretations. On the one hand, there is the one in which the woman is subjected to the man and serves him as an object to satisfy his needs; on the other hand, there is the view that the woman takes a leading role through her active part in the dance. She sets the tempo, intensity and more through her body movement. This theme is also taken up in the last chapter, where it is examined from a post-feminist perspective.

All of the written discussions and studies cited have a common denominator. It emerges from each study, not always equally clearly, but nevertheless, that sexism and machismo are a defining subject of the genre, but do not apply to the entirety of reggaetón. This is the case in Dinzey-Flores' study, which tabulates which themes are still represented in the song lyrics, or in Bedij's treatise, which finally alludes to a reversal of objectification and subjectification in McGills' sense. Ultimately, it is Gálvez who classifies Reggaetón into different aesthetics and, with the help of this method, clearly shows that especially the aggressive reggaetón characterised by fantasies of violence constitutes a part of the genre, possibly even limited to a certain period.

Activist critique of reggaetón from a feminist motivation

Criticism of sexist attitudes within the first wave of reggaetón is exercised on different levels. On an academic one, in the form of numerous critical academic papers, articles and works from various disciplines and perspectives. Furthermore, on a political and journalistic level, which will not be dealt with in detail in the context of this work.

This chapter will focus on activist projects through artistic means. In 2014, for example, a group of Colombian students decided to raise awareness of problematic lyrical content in the genre with an online project. The basic idea was to raise awareness of language with regard to gender-specific violence. For this purpose, text excerpts were incorporated into photographs in which the scenes formulated by the artist are depicted

⁸ José Miguel Gálvez, "Machtverhältnisse, Genderasymmetrien und Körperkonfiguration in Reggaeton", in: *PopScriptum 12 – Sound, Sex und Sexismus*. Forschungszentrum Populäre Musik der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2016, <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/handle/18452/21072> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

photographically, unembellished. The photographs show scenes of domestic violence or the emphasis on the subordinate view of the woman and the superiority of the man.⁹

In that case, far removed from academic treatises and research papers, the problematic nature of the content conveyed is presented in a text-analytical way and demonstrated visually. It is therefore possible to speak of a critical examination on a scientific level with the help of contemporary artistic media.

Another form of criticism of the sexism that was strongly represented at the beginning of Reggaetón can be located within the music genre itself. This form of purely artistic protest and a counter-movement will now be shown in more detail. The boundaries of artistic headwind in the form of projects are partly blurred with feminism in reggaetón, which is mainly represented by the female members of reggaetón, the so-called reggaetoneras, and by definition also shows tendencies towards post-feminist attitudes. Nevertheless, this paper will attempt to distinguish between targeted criticism of the genre and the mediation of (post-)feminist attitudes by female artists. In the context of this paper, the focus is on productions with activist motivations.

As a first example of such a project, the collaboration of Chicos y Mendez with Flavia Coelho will be presented. In their joint production *Reggaetón feminista*, the multilingual text speaks out against gender asymmetries and also works with targeted allusions to violence, which has been repeatedly addressed in this work. With lines like “Les ovaires ne les condamnent pas à vivre à genoux”¹⁰, translated “The ovaries do not condemn her to live on her knees” the artists clearly speak out against the oppression of women. Another example is found in the line “respeito começa em casa prática do direito das mulheres”¹¹. “Respect begins at home, the practice of women’s rights”, in this can be read a summary of the problem around the issue of domestic violence. “Aquí no hay juguete, Aquí se comparte, aquí no se maltrata”¹², this lyric passage can be translated as: “Here there are no toys, here there is sharing, here there is no abuse”. In the context of the song’s title, the allusions to the problematic content of the reggaetón genre are clear. In the music video for the song *Reggaetón Feminista*, the singer has sat down between ladies at the table and can be recognised as Frida Kahlo. There is a complete absence of provocative clothing on women’s bodies throughout the video and apart from the singer, who presents himself as

⁹ See: <https://usalarazon.wixsite.com/usalarazon> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

¹⁰ Chicos y Mendez feat. Flavia Coelho, “Reggaetón Feminista”, in: *Genius*. 2019, <https://genius.com/Chicos-y-mendez-reggaeton-feminista-lyrics> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

Frida Kahlo, no other men appear. Likewise, all the women are busy with active tasks at the table for themselves, reading, pouring drinks and toasting each other.¹³

The focus of the representation of a woman here is thus not on the dancing, lightly clad body, as is largely customary for the genre. Chicos y Mendez's collaboration with Flavia Coelho alludes in the text to the conveyed image of gender imbalance and seeks reconciliation and equality. In the video, this message seems to be underpinned by refraining from gender asymmetrical representations. The asymmetry between men and women, but also the individuality of sexual identities, will now be the subject of the following section of this paper.

Reggaetón and LGBTQIA+

This subchapter deals with artist personalities who take an activist stance in regards to the LGBTQIA+ community with their Reggaetón songs. Firstly, Romina Bernardo and her art are introduced, showing how a satirical protest action can turn an activist artist into a reggaetónera. Then, the internationally successful artist Bad Bunny is presented, who publicly shows his support for nonbinary and transgender gender identity through activist performances in his live performance as well as his music videos.

Argentinian Romina Bernardo is a musician who admits to homosexuality and is open about it.¹⁴ In this way, she confronts the prevailing machismo in Reggaetón in 2017 on two levels that find a place in many discussions about the genre. In addition to the gender asymmetry in the messages, the treatment of LGBTQIA+ movements is often criticised and depicted as problematic. Romina Bernardo's initially satirically motivated music began in 2013 under the project name Chocolate Remix.

"In reggaeton, a lot of songs talk about sex. I thought it would be great to use it to talk about other kinds of sex."¹⁵

The artist had the idea to address the sex in female homosexuality in her lyrics and thus ironically react to the hypersexualisation of women from an exclusively heterosexual perspective. The satirical and provocative approach of her idea is also reflected in her stage name Choco, which is an allusion to the slang term torta or tortillera, used to refer to homosexual women. Her initially as satire intended project developed into a continuing

¹³ Chicos y Mendez feat. Flavia Coelho, "Reggaetón feminista", in: *You Tube*. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvmEEIMsbKY> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 11.08.2019].

¹⁴ Ella Jessel, Ella, "Chocolate Remix: the lesbian reggaeton artist taking on the supermachos", in: *The guardian*. 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/may/07/chocolate-remix-lesbian-reggaeton-taking-on-supermacho> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

career as a musician, whose critical spirit is still reflected in the lyrics of her songs. In 2019, for example, Chocolate Remix released the song *Ni una menos* as a single, criticising the perpetrator-victim reversal and singing about how a woman's clothing or behaviour is no excuse for violence of any kind perpetrated on her.¹⁶ She has also become successful through international and transcontinental live performances at reggaetón events, especially in the LGBTQIA+ scene. Other artists, who have established themselves in the genre through parody, are Tremenda Jauría and Ms Nina, whose projects were also examined in the previously announced study by the Universitat Rovira i Virgili. Although, or possibly because of, the examples of parodic activism listed initially speak out against the established attitudes associated with reggaetón, it stands to reason that these same projects have opened doors within the genre for both women and LGBTQIA+ movements. This represents a turning point in the history of the genre's development.

The observation that the proportion of female reggaetón artists is steadily growing also emerges from the university's study. In their 2019 publication "Feminist Reggaetón in Spain: Young Women Subverting Machismo Through 'Perreo'", the projects and productions of Brisa Fenoy, Tremenda Jauría and Ms Nina are examined for their parodic and feminist messages. In doing so, the researching individuals refer to a movement that is taking place primarily in Spain.¹⁷

Regardless of whether Romina Bernardo and her triggered changes in dealing with LGBTQIA+ issues in Reggaetón have influenced Bad Bunny, this artist seems to be unavoidable when it comes to current developments within the genre in relation to gender-fluid currents.

Already in his music video for the song *Caro*, which was released on Youtube.com in January 2019, Bad Bunny plays with boundary dissolutions between men and women. This is expressed on several levels: Firstly, the video begins in a bedroom that strongly recalls the stereotype of a teenage girl's room in her parents' house, as seen in almost every teenage film of the 1990s. Sitting in it are two people who are initially unrecognisable. However, it is clear that they are two people sitting at a table and one person is painting the fingernails of the other, who is wearing a white bathrobe, while fine gold rings adorn the fingers of the same hand. As the camera zooms out it turns out to be Bad Bunny receiving the meticulous manicure. After another change of camera angle, instead of Bad Bunny, a young woman with the same hairstyle as the author of the song sits on the chair, rises and begins to perform the song. The performer takes on the role of the artist in the main part of the video, also standing in front of a car together with other men in

¹⁶ Chocolate Remix, "Ni una menos" in: *Musixmatch*. 2019, <https://www.musixmatch.com/de/songtext/Chocolate-Remix/Ni-una-menos> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

¹⁷ Nuria Araña; Monica Figueraz-Maz; Iolanda Tortajada, "Feminist Reggaeton in Spain: Young Women Subverting Machismo Through Perreo", *YOUNG*, 28, 1 (2020), pp. 1 – 18.

a housing estate. There she does not wear a dress that emphasises her feminine charms, but wears the same outfit and sunglasses that Bad Bunny puts on at the End of the video.¹⁸

Remarkable things happen here on two different levels, which will be discussed in more detail here. On the one hand, it is noticeable that the female performer does not elicit any other reaction from the men by the car, as Bad Bunny does herself. She seems to stand in the foreground as a performer, while the men behind her converse without objectifying her in any way with sexual connotations. It is also in this sequence that, in another change of camera angle, Bad Bunny takes over the performance instead of the performer. The two are only seen together in one frame in the last sequence of the video. Bad Bunny sits cross-legged on the floor opposite the performer, who gives the impression of a biological female mirror image, and vice versa. The two look into each other's eyes, slowly approach each other through careful touches until they end up kissing. Through this kiss, an intimate gesture, Bad Bunny already breaks at first sight with the stereotype of female attractiveness that has become established in many pop genres. Long, full hair, figure-hugging clothes, the presentation of the female body and jewelry that emphasises all these charms. None of this is found in the actress kissing Bad Bunny with the loose Bermuda trousers and jacket like oversized T-shirt with short cropped hair. The kiss also proceeds as if mirrored from both sides, approaching at the same and cautious pace, whereby clichés about dominance and submission between men and women are also left out of this video. This video is not only a visual representation of the tolerance of women as equal members of a community, it is much more about their acceptance and acceptance.

If the idea of the acceptance of the woman in this concrete example is linked to the fact that she takes on the role of Bad Bunny in most of the video, the next step can be taken. One that goes in the direction of the aspect of LGBTQIA+ in Reggaetón discussed in this chapter. It seems very likely that the inclusion of the woman is less about an actual, physically individual woman. Instead, it suggests that the artist's non-binarity and acceptance of it is itself represented in this video. In particular, in the kiss at the end of the video, there seems to be a reconciliation through mutual acceptance. On the one hand, the kiss can represent a unification of inner conflict, on the other hand, a depicted definition of self-love in the truest sense of the word.

Bad Bunny's siding with the LGBTQIA+ community was also demonstrated during a television appearance on The Jimmy Fallon Show in February 2020, attracting widespread media attention. This appearance took place just a short time after a fatal attack on transgender woman Alexa Negrón Luciano, who was described in the media as a man in a skirt. Bad Bunny insisted on accepting the sexual identity of the victim and showed this

¹⁸ Bad Bunny, "Caro", in: *YouTube*. 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bg64AFnRnkc> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

by wearing a skirt during his performance and a T-shirt with the words “Mataron a Alexa, no a un hombre con falda”, which translates as “They killed Alexa, not a man in a skirt”.¹⁹

On 27 March 2020, Bad Bunny released the video for his song *Yo perreo sola*, in which he himself appears as a transgender woman. The song features a female voice that belongs to a young woman named Nesi, who sings the chorus, and Bad Bunny, who raps the verses. However, the performance of the vocals in this video is done by the rapper himself, including the female vocals. When the female voice is heard, the artist appears as a transgender woman, at other points as a man. The scenes in which he dances as a woman literally take over the text of the protagonist dancing alone, because Bad Bunny, in his drag-influenced performances in this video, is either alone in the frame, with other women moving independently of each other and also for themselves, or dancing while isolated men are out of any reach. The dance is thusly characterised by an isolation in its visual representation, which, however, does not have a negative connotation, but is marked by a self-confident appearance. When Bad Bunny appears as a man, it is noticeable that although he wears the clothing that corresponds to the stereotype of the rapper, namely loose baggy trousers, a wide coat, sunglasses and a hat, at the same time shades of pink dominate the sequence in terms of colour and the pink-painted car on which he stands and performs is surrounded by flowers. Bad Bunny thus once again removes boundaries between male and female clichés and the attributes that go with them and presents itself as genderfluid.²⁰

However, a look at the lyrics of this single is also essential, because Bad Bunny sings about the situation of a woman and takes post-feminist positions. It is about a twenty-something woman who wants to dance for herself, celebrates her life as a single woman in a club and repeats over and over that she dances alone. “(Yo) perreo sola”, i.e. “I dance the perreo on my own” is the line that is sung twelve times in the 3:20 that the video lasts, the modified version of this text passage “Ella perrea sola”, “She dances the perreo on her own” another eight times.²¹

¹⁹ Stephen Daw, “Bad Bunny Paid Tribute to Murdered Transgender Woman on The Tonight Show”, in *Billboard*. 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/pride/9325371/bad-bunny-tonight-show-trans-woman-tribute> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020]; Harmeet Kaur, Rafy Rivera, “A transgender woman’s brutal murder has shocked Puerto Rico and renewed a conversation about transphobia”, in *CNN*. 2020, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/02/29/us/alexa-puerto-rico-transgender-killing/index.html> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020]; Canela López, “Bad Bunny paid tribute to a murdered transgender woman on the Jimmy Fallon Show”, in: *Insider*. 2020, <https://www.insider.com/jimmy-fallon-bad-bunny-paid-tribute-to-murdered-transgender-woman-2020-2> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

²⁰ Bad Bunny, “Yo perreo sola”, in: *YouTube*. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtSRKwDCaZM>, 00:24 – 03:12, [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

²¹ Bad Bunny, “Yo perreo sola”, in: *Letras*. 2020, <https://www.letras.mus.br/bad-bunny/yo-perreo-sola-part-nesi/> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

In its lyrics, the song insists on the protagonist's free, unrestricted and single dancing, without negatively tainting this circumstance with impressions of loneliness or the rejection of potential dance partners. It is clear that it is the protagonist's decision based on a previous ignorance by an unknown counterpart. "Antes tú me pichaba'. Ahora yo picheo. Antes tú no querías. Ahora yo no quiero."²² The translation to these lines of the song can be as follows: "First you disregarded me. Now I disregard. Before you didn't want to. Now I don't want (you)". This text passage functions as a prechorus to the actual chorus of the repetitive "Yo/Ella perreo/perrea sola", suggesting that this disregard described at the beginning is related to the emancipation of dance with itself. The post-feminist thought with regard to the emancipation of female sexuality in turn emerges from the lines "Fuma y se pone bellaquita. Te llama si te necesita. Pero por ahora está solita".²³ Translated, these passages mean "She smokes and becomes pretty. She calls you when she needs you. But for now she is alone". In this context, the being needed of the undefined person here does not refer to a neediness that transports the protagonist into a relationship of dependency, but almost stands for a use to satisfy her (sexual) needs. In this way, Bad Bunny overturns the established relationship and behaviour between man and woman as it has long been portrayed in Reggaetón and its reception.

Last but not least, Laura Álvarez Trigo was able to discover that the rapper also references slogans in his video that were associated with movements in which women's interests were demanded and supported. These are the statements "Ni una menos" and "Las mujeres mandan".²⁴

"Ni una menos" is also the title of a song by the homosexual artist Romina Bernardos, as explained at the beginning of this sub-chapter, in which she addresses the issue of sexual assault against women.

The slogans and the phrase that serves as the video credits, so to speak, in combination with the song lyrics, underpin Bad Bunny's supportive stance regarding the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as the emancipation of women. "Si no quiere bailar contigo, respeta, ella perrea sola", the statement with which this artist visually ends his music video, means something like "If she doesn't want to dance with you, respect that she dances the perreo alone" and hovers almost admonishingly as a reverberation over this Reggaetón song released a few months ago.

The examples given are from the last six years and are based on the critical reception of the early history of reggaetón. In contrast, reggaetóneras have been recorded early in

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Laura Álvarez Trigo, "Bad Bunny *Perrea Sola*: The Gender Issue in Reggaetón", in: *PopMec*. 2020, <https://popmec.hypotheses.org/2297> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 13.09.2020].

the genre and have thus accompanied it since its formative years. Names like Lady Ann, Ivy Queen, K-Narias and Mara are only a small selection of the female artists who are considered as such.²⁵ Other names would be Lisa M and Tomasa del Real. As already mentioned, reggaetóneras often carry tendencies towards post-feminist messages, for example in their self-awareness regarding their own sexuality. Recent examples of this include *Sin pijama* by Becky G and Natti Natasha, and *Tusa* by Karol G and Nicky Minaj. Both songs were released in 2019.

The increasing proportion of LGBTQIA+ artists who use the musical aesthetics of reggaetón goes so far that it has developed into a subgenre called Neo-perreo. Ms Nina, La Delfy and Sailorfag should be mentioned here as representative artists of this sub-genre, as they are also described by Valentina Mariebelle in her article “Ich mache das worauf ich Lust habe.’ Eine neue Generation von Künstler*innen wie Bad Bunny geben dem Reggaeton eine politischere Richtung” from July 28th 2020.²⁶

In the activist projects, on the other hand, the priority seems to be the dissolution of gender asymmetries. Possibly this is precisely where the difference lies between reception-based activism and female artists who are called reggaetóneras. Exploring this, however, would take a larger scope than the present work allows.

Post-feminist views on reggaetón

In this last chapter, perspectives from post-feminist movements, in the sense of women’s self-confident and self-evident handling of their sexuality, their bodies and their appreciation outside of music productions in the genre, will be presented. The following sub-chapters present examples in which young women talk about their passion for Reggaetón, each with different approaches, in the form of public blog entries statements in a video available on Youtube.com. The citation of these entries in no way lays claim to scientific evidence that aims to generalise the statements and thoughts contained therein. Rather, it is intended to show the diversity of possible alternatives of processes triggered by reggaetón.

²⁵ Anna Kopecka, *Feminism within Reggaeton. How do Female Artists Appropriately Reggaeton Scene as Space for Feminist Agency?*, Faculty of Social Sciences Master of Science Thesis, Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit, 2015, pp. 45 – 62.

²⁶ Valentina Mariebelle, “Ich mache das worauf ich Lust habe.’ Eine neue Generation von Künstler*innen wie Bad Bunny geben dem Reggaeton eine politischere Richtung.”, in: *Neues Deutschland*. 2020, <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/1139676.ich-mache-das-worauf-ich-lust-habe.html> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 13.09.2020].

“Our version of reggaeton was girl power”.²⁷ This sentence by Aliénor Salmon, whose contribution from which this statement originates will be examined in more detail later in this chapter, is remarkable because on the one hand it clearly speaks of “girl power”, but at the same time of a version of reggaetón. Here, despite all the positively connoted processes she describes, Salmon seems to be aware that there are different “versions” of reggaetón. These versions can allude to differences in artistic, aesthetic design as well as receptions. In each of these possible facets, it is undeniable that different approaches are very likely and depend on too many factors to list within the framework of this work. Without claiming to be exhaustive, some of these aspects will nevertheless be addressed. The artistic motivation, the aesthetic influences and developments from personal experience of the artist person, but also of the production and PR mechanism behind it, which often creates an artist figure out of an artist person. In reception, personal experiences and the resulting preferences, but also dislikes, sensitisations, i.e. one’s own prioritisation of contrary perceptions can also be decisive.

As an example of such a perception, which stands in contrast to widespread criticism of reggaetón, Luna Morado and her views on it will be cited below.

Criticism of Criticism

Luna Morado is a Croatian psychologist, DJane and self-proclaimed “Liberty Lover”. She runs a blog where she captures her critical spirit in publicly accessible entries – including a confronting text on the subject of Reggaetón, feminism and freedom. In “Reggaeton, feminism, sex and liberty” she calls herself a “reggaetonera de Corazon” right at the beginning.²⁸ She then opens the topic and criticises in her entry the moral stigmatisation of Reggaetón, which in her eyes also includes the stigmatisation of personal and private preferences of reggaetóneras. She states that campaigns that act against Reggaetón also affect the personal preferences of reggaetóneras. Since, in Morado’s eyes, they do not address actual problems or offer effective solutions, Morado concludes that the ultimate goal is to limit a woman’s right to self-determination. She describes it as a paradox that the attempt of these campaigns to limit the degradation of women degrades them to a completely different level. Namely, by questioning their personal and intimate life choices, or their ability to deal with the consequences of those choices, thus questioning the decision-making capacity of women themselves. In doing so, she alludes to *Usa la razon*, among

²⁷ Aliénor Salmon, “How to be a Feminist and love Reggaeton”, 2020, <https://bailandojourney.com/2017/10/05/how-to-be-a-feminist-and-love-reggaeton/> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 31.08.2021].

²⁸ Luna Morado, “Reggaeton, feminism, sex and liberty”, 2019, <https://lunamorado.com/objektivizam/reggaeton-feminism-sex-and-liberty/> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

others, as comes out later in her text, by describing the figurative representation of brutal, possibly metaphorical passages from song lyrics.²⁹

“Surely that is a far more degrading message than any that could be sent by (depersonalized) lyrics of any (reggaetón) song.”³⁰

From Morado’s critical stance towards campaigns against reggaetón emerges an idea that is often neglected in gender-critical discussions and discourses. Namely, that post-feminist idea of a woman’s free decision without having to fear being criticised and condemned for it in return – regardless of the gender or attitude of the person making the judgement. The paradox Morado describes here opens a door for reflection and shows an alternative perspective to look at reggaetón and the sexist reception of this genre. It seems all the more valuable here to take a step back and, from a distance, consider and reconsider the reception in this new light in which it is placed by Morado’s statement. The problem of subjective perception and seemingly objective criticism arising from it is also addressed by Morado:

“Without an objective criterion, one person’s subjective interpretation of what is harmful is no more valid than the subjective interpretation of a second person who disagrees with the first. If emotions are the criteria, everyone is right; and that is a very slippery slope.”³¹

Furthermore, the author emphasises the danger that the perceived threat to one’s own ego leads to the independence of the other person and their individual value system being ignored. This happens, among other things, when aspects of a music genre and the associated subculture that are individually classified as morally critical, are generalised as such and a shift from subjectivity to objectivity occurs. Fittingly, Morado describes, as an example, the fallacy of the general insult of women based on the perception of individual women.

“If some women find themselves offended by a set of lyrics, and others don’t – how justified is the claim that the lyrics were offensive to women in general?”³²

Taking a generalising judgement from a subjective perception that springs from personal values runs the risk of restricting artistic freedom. However, a critical stance should in no way be ignored in the process and critical voices should not be silenced. Nevertheless, Morado goes back to the *Usa la razón* campaign and brings up an aspect that seems essential in the consideration of this campaign. Namely, the role of metaphor taken in the lyrics

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

of the songs. This is about metaphorical idioms that are woven into reggaetón songs. She criticises the literal figuration of the scenarios described, a process that undoubtedly leaves no room for context or metaphorical interpretation.³³

“In the case of the anti-reggaetón campaign, the people behind it made a conscious choice to put certain songs under the limelight and to visually interpret them in a malicious way, purposefully removing any and all figurativeness from the text proper. The lyric “I’d like to nail you” was printed alongside a picture of a woman being nailed to a wall, “she likes it rough, she likes to be eaten out” was depicted as cannibalism.”³⁴

The author’s arguments aim is to loosen the strict view of reggaetón and tries to trigger a thought process with questions she addresses to the reading person, taking a step away from established and, in the first impression, irrefutable points of criticism.

Luna Morado is not alone in her quest to use alternative spotlights to illuminate the shadows of reggaetón and thus cast negatively connoted aspects of the genre in a different light by looking at the criticism of it from a different angle.

Disinhibition of female sexuality through reggaetón

In her article “Reguetón y tradición”, historian and literary scholar Carolina Sanín shows that explicit sexual content, as it has been and still is observed in reggaetón from many sides under a critical eye, that this language is not a phenomenon of our time. In her reference to the lyrics of medieval minne and troubadour texts, she makes it clear that love songs have been directly linked to sexual content for centuries. She sees something positive in the gender asymmetry, which is condemned in many quarters, in the man’s task of awakening an irresistible desire in the woman. It is the woman’s longing for the man from which she derives the man’s vanity, which is interpreted by other recipients as machismo. In contrast to romanticised lyrics in ballads, which are characterised by heartbreak, for Sanín the sexuality of women takes centre stage; semantically as well as in dance. Above all, she emphasises the link between sexual desire and pleasure by singing about the sexual act itself. This is done at the moment of happening, rather than yearning or nostalgic recollection of the experience.³⁵

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Carolina Sanín, “Reguetón y tradición”, *Vice*. 2019, https://www.vice.com/es_latam/article/vbw4b9/regueton-y-tradicion [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

It seems obvious that the author refers exclusively to reggaetón lyrics that are far removed from productions with violence-laced content, but rather to those songs that stand out through explicitly sexualised language.

In addition, as already mentioned, Sanín also talks about the perreo. Instead of accentuating it as a dance that manifests the subjugation of the woman, she describes it as a transference of a real sexual encounter in which the woman is the centre. She takes this further and sees in the movements performed by the woman also an allusion to those physical actions that bring her to symbolic climax in unison with the music.³⁶

The perreo is also the main focus of the next author. Catalina Ruiz-Navarro is a feminist activist and journalist from Mexico. She already emphasises the problem of the objectification of women at the beginning of her article. She attributes the view that the perreo is a discriminatory and degrading dance form towards women to the sexualisation of the female body resulting from this very objectification. Like Carolina Sanín, she refers to a centuries-old phenomenon. However, Ruiz-Navarro does not build on medieval love literature, but criticises the established association of sexualisation with submission. She further argues that in Latin American culture, a woman can only be considered professional if she avoids being perceived as a sexual being. In other words, when her sexuality is suppressed or even completely repressed in order to avoid becoming an object.³⁷

In Ruiz-Navarro's view, the perreo is an opportunity for the dancing woman to take the lead, as she sets the pace and intensity of the dance act through her movements and also has the choice of who she shares this moment with. This is precisely where she sees the perreo as an affirming and empowering experience for the woman. Moreover, in her account, the dance of reggaetón creates space for female sexuality without having to use metaphors or euphemisms.³⁸

In summary, both authors see reggaetón and the dancing of the perreo as an opportunity for women to openly give space to their sexuality. Linguistically as well as physically, female sexuality can re-enter without inhibition through a protected framework of music and dance, provided that the woman is no longer seen as a sexual object, but that the perception of a sexual subject as defined by Rosalind McGill takes place and becomes established.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Catalina Ruiz-Navarro, "Una experiencia empoderadora: las mujeres y el perreo", in: *i-D Vice*. 2018, <https://i-d.vice.com/es/article/nezzk7/las-mujeres-y-el-perreo-catalina-ruiz-navarro> [zuletzt aufgerufen am 14.09.2020].

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Opening up one's own body (image) with reggaetón

British-French Aliénor Salmon writes about her connection and experiences with and through Reggaetón in her blog entry with the meaningful title “How to be a Feminist and love Reggaeton”. With a Master's degree in War Studies, she has devoted herself entirely to her passion for dance after spending some time doing field research in Mongolia, Thailand and Malaysia and working for UNESCO. In her blog *Bailando Journey*, she shares her experiences that have taken her across the globe in search of new dance impressions. Among other things, she describes her time in Puerto Rico, where she learned to dance reggaetón at the Coabey Dance Academy in 2017.³⁹

This entry is primarily with regard to the inner processes of re-perspectivisation and questioning of one's own established attitudes triggered in connection with, of all things, this music genre with its primarily negative connotations. In Salmon's case, this refers both to body image and to a (supposedly) emancipated way of thinking in society.

“Something about Puerto Rico had changed me. I saw women of all shapes, sizes and ages wearing whatever they wanted, and carrying it so well. They don't care what other people think. They looked great not because they had perfect bodies, but because they exuded confidence. For the first time in my life, at 30 years old, I bought clothes I had never imagined wearing, and it was strangely liberating.”⁴⁰

This description of the inner process that Salmon experienced shows that the body image and everything related to it in Puerto Rico is different from a European one. For example, the representative part, what is conveyed through clothing and one's own body.

This becomes even more clear later on, as Salmon writes of being apprehensive when it came to filming the choreography, as it included risky, provocative movements. An inner conflict arose, as she was committed to women's empowerment and gender equality, and doubted whether it could be justifiable in this position to perform this choreography and release a video of it. In conversations with others at Coabey Dance Academy, one particular statement led to a new direction in her thoughts, according to Salmon⁴¹:

“Did you ever think that being able to wear whatever you want, and being able to dance however you want, might make you a feminist?”⁴²

The situation Salmon is describing here, the dilemma in which she finds herself and her way out of it in a manner she did not expect, is exemplary for a shift from a feminist

³⁹ Salmon, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

to a post-feminist attitude in the sense of the factors that form the basis of this paper. Feminism seems to reach its limits here at the point where, however, an essential part of the movement is at stake: women's freedom to move without restriction. Regardless of whether that is at home, in the streets, or on the internet, and regardless of who sees her doing it, not to be judged for how she chooses to live her life, as long as she does not cause harm to anyone else. At this point, a door could be opened to ethical questions regarding boundaries of togetherness. However, such a discussion would go beyond the scope of this paper and would require a separate paper. Since this discussion does not seem to be relevant to the research objectives of this paper, this option is only mentioned here.

Statements on the streets

The fact that the dance of reggaetón, the perreo, plays a leading role in new approaches to the reception of this music genre with post-feminist perspectives is not only evident in the fact that journalistic articles and blog entries on women's sexual freedom are based on it. That the liberal treatment of female sexuality in reggaetón is perceived and experienced in dance is also evident from a video produced by Red Bull Music and released in summer 2018. The name of the video is "How Reggaeton Is Empowering Women. Hasta Abajo." In this, women are given the opportunity to express their point of view on reggaetón, perreo and the importance of feminism in it without extensive articles and argumentation. It begins with the sentence:

"There can't be perreo without feminism, in my opinion, and the reason why it's been so successful is because women back it up".⁴³

This statement confirms that the dance of the perreo is not necessarily perceived as subjugation, but that the experience of dancing can have positive connotations and be empowering as is also evident from the following quote:

"Perreo to me is a way to express my sexuality through movement. I get to choose who I dance with. I get to choose who I grind up on. And I have control over the situation."⁴⁴

This wording of the merits of the perreo confirms Catalina Ruiz-Navarro's position in the context of the perreo. Another statement that emerges from the video criticises the demonisation of female sexuality and does not relate it to the musical productions of Reggaetón but to social attitudes:

⁴³ Red Bull Music, "How Reggaeton Is Empowering Women. Hasta Abajo", in: *YouTube*. 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMOPc9xQr_I, 00:00 – 00:07 [zuletzt aufgerufen am 11.08.2019].

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 01:42 – 01:52.

“The biggest stereotype is saying that (reggaeton) is marginalizing women, it’s bringing women down. Demonizing women’s sexuality is really the problem.”⁴⁵

In the eyes of the women who are given space to express their opinions in the video, the problem lies not in the music, not in the genre, but in the attitude of society. This is also expressed in another statement by the DJane Rosa Pistola:

“I don’t think music is misogynist, people are misogynistic. People choose to offend others. Music has nothing to do with that. I can’t comprehend how a human being can be offended by music.”⁴⁶

This statement indirectly reflects a theme that has already been addressed in the subchapter about Luna Morado. As has already been described, it is up to the person consuming the music to interpret it. The fact that a song or a genre cannot be simply boiled down to being offensive or degrading, as such a perception depends on numerous individual factors, underpins the statement quoted here that it is not the piece of music that attacks the listener.

The mindset that music itself cannot be problematic seems obvious. However, this position should be treated with a cautious eye, because the messages conveyed in its lyrics or by the artists can and should certainly be viewed critically. Labelling music as unproblematic thus works only if sonic and instrumental aspects are considered. In any case, the core message of the video clip seems to be that music should not be unreflectively prejudiced. From this it can be concluded that even seemingly obviously sexist genres should constantly be examined in a new and open-minded way. The present work shows, using reggaetón as an example, that its contents and reception can change considerably. Furthermore, it is fair to say that aspects that are perceived negatively at first glance, like the explicit sexualisation of women in semantic and physical terms, can be opened up anew by looking at them from other perspectives.

The examples presented in this chapter clearly show that the accusations of sexism against reggaetón are not always universally agreed upon. It is remarkable that especially women’s voices counter and contradict these charges.

On the one hand, by pointing to and representing alternative views and trains of thought that attribute enriching aspects for women to reggaetón. In particular, this applies to the emancipation and “de-tabooisation” of female sexuality. On the other hand, with the perception of degradation, different positions of women express themselves by openly and vehemently contradicting established points of criticism. If the different positions are considered objectively, this results in an ambivalence within the reception of the genre to a challenging extent for research.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 01:26 – 01:34.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 02:14 – 02:28.

Conclusion

If the genre is considered in its entire development and that of its reception, a shift in the consideration and role of women from objects to subjects can be observed. Very similar processes to those in feminism seem to have taken place within a music genre. The initial situation is characterised by a chauvinistic attitude that declares the man to be the decision-maker over the woman. The woman is considered an object of the man, in the sense of objectification as dehumanisation and also as being far more inferior in value to the man. Her clear role is to obey him and satisfy his needs. Whether feminist movements in reggaetón have led to a development away from this attitude or not cannot be determined within the framework of this paper. However, it is quite conceivable that feminist protest movements, especially with their satirical content or the radical exclusion of male presence as emphasised in *reggaetón feminista*, have laid the necessary foundation for distancing themselves from messages characterised by discrimination and machismo. In any case, however, the reception and current examples of the genre under discussion bear features of the shift of women from object to subject in the sense of Rosalind Gill's thesis. This points to a current post-feminist attitude in the genre and its reception, which is also supported by the examples given in the previous chapter.

As already mentioned in the first chapter, it is important in post-feminism to maintain a critical view of the social differentiations between men and women. This is necessary in order to maintain a regression of the successes achieved by feminism. This includes not forgetting the misogynist roots of a genre like reggaetón in its beginnings and not completely excluding a critical approach.

The examples contained in this paper, both from the artistic side and the post-feminist-influenced statements, do not claim in any way to redefine reggaetón. Rather, it is clear from the content cited how treacherous the attempt at such a supposedly objective definition can be and shows one danger of it. To be more specific, that it can lead to a subjective reduction of a musical genre such as reggaetón.

The narrative of the degradation of women and members of the LGBTQIA+ scene in the reggaetón environment was widespread for a long time. For a time, it even seemed to be considered proven when looking at the numerous criticisms from different corners. But if the perspectives are realigned and a step is taken back to look at the genre from a neutral distance, including voices of reggaetóneras and current developments within the (artist) scene, it quickly becomes visible that Reggaetón can no longer be reduced, if it ever had been, to a representative manifestation of Latin American machismo. The genre has increasingly expanded in recent years to include female artists, as well as recipients who have raised their voices to advocate for a post-feminist aspect that offers a space for female sexuality in favour of women. In addition, there are feminist music projects that openly critique this narrative, but equally introduce and present an unexpected twist by writing a reggaetón song with feminist content. In the LGBTQIA+ community, despite its reputa-

tion as being homophobic for a long time, reggaetón is embraced, consumed and produced by its members themselves, and at least one male artist who has established himself commercially and internationally as a Latin artist breaks stereotypes of machismo in his music videos. Considering all of this, there are some plot twists that disrupt a common narrative of this genre in many circles and minds and continue to open up new perspectives.

As already noted previously, it would be interesting to carry out an analysis of the lyrics of reggaetón songs from 2009 onwards with regard to the thematic focuses in the development of the genre and to evaluate them. This could lead from a possibly subjective impression to well-founded, clear, and objective insights into the change in thematic and content-related emphases within the genre.

Another research potential lies in the deeper investigation of the reception of reggaetón within the fan culture. One possibility here is to create surveys regarding the perception of lyrics, impressions at events, as well as aesthetic experiences when consuming the music in general. The evaluation of such a comprehensive survey could provide an insight into the current state of reggaetón from a sociological perspective and lead to a wider perspective, for example, on the level of (pop) cultural studies.

Furthermore, the motion of reggaetón in the context of LGBTQIA+ movements also seem to contain a scholarly potential for research of significant dimension. Questions about further artists from this scene as well as reception in this context in the form of statements, presence of the genre through events and the like could on the one hand, as already explained, signify a paradigm shift of reggaetón and on the other hand prove prejudices against precisely this even more widely. In any case, impulses for changes in this direction are to be noted and a further development of the points mentioned could enable essential insights for the future handling in scholarship in the context of reggaetón.