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# Chilean and Transnational Performances of Disobedience: LasTesis and the Phenomenon of ‘*Un violador en tu camino*’

DEBORAH MARTIN

UCL, London, UK

DEBORAH SHAW

University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, UK

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This article analyses the performance *Un violador en tu camino* created by Chilean feminist theatre collective LasTesis, shared by millions and re-staged across the globe. It explores the relationship between the original piece and theorist Rita Segato’s insights on rape culture, and how it counters aspects of this culture. It examines how the transnational spread of ‘*Un violador*’ counters tendencies of MeToo, and examines four cases of the performance’s re-staging in Latin America and beyond, showing how they make manifest the pervasiveness of rape culture as well as how groups have adapted them to speak to local issues.

Keywords: activism, feminism, MeToo, protest, rape, Rita Laura Segato.

On 20 November 2019, Chilean feminist theatre collective LasTesis staged a powerful street performance, *Un violador en tu camino*, in Valparaíso, calling out rape culture and indicting the state and wider society for women’s oppression. The performance went on to be shared and re-staged in Spanish-speaking countries including Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Spain, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru, and Santo Domingo, and it has been reinterpreted in over 200 locations around the world (Cuffe, 2019). The original piece incorporates a powerful and catchy chant, references to Chilean national songs and accusations of rape against the instruments of the state, including the president. A dance routine recalls the humiliating poses women are required to adopt when detained by Chilean state forces, as well as utilising blindfolds and tight, stereotypically feminine clothing in a re-significatory way (Tesis, 2019). The opening lyrics are as follows:

El patriarcado es un juez/que nos juzga por nacer/y nuestro castigo/es la violencia que no ves/El patriarcado es un juez/que nos juzga por nacer/y nuestro castigo/es la violencia que ya ves (x2)/Es feminicidio/Impunidad para mi asesino/Es la desaparición/Es la violación/Y la culpa no era mía ni donde estaba ni cómo vestía (x4)/El violador eras tú/El violador eres tú/Son

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los pacos/Los jueces/El Estado/El presidente/El estado opresor es un macho violador (x2). (LasTesis, 2019)

The patriarchy is a judge/that judges us for being born/and our punishment/is the violence you don't see /The patriarchy is a judge/that judges us for being born/and our punishment/is the violence you now see/It's femicide/Impunity for my killer/It's disappearance/It's rape/And it wasn't my fault not where I was nor what I wore (x4)/The rapist was you/the rapist is you/the police/the judges/the State/the president/The oppressive state is a macho rapist (x2).

LasTesis are an interdisciplinary, intersectional and trans-inclusive feminist collective, whose members are Sibila Sotomayor, Daffne Valdés, Paula Cometa and Lea Cáceres. Interviews with them indicate that their performance was inspired by the writings of Argentine feminist anthropologist and decolonial thinker Rita Segato, and that it was conceived as an attempt to translate her theories into a format that would be accessible to those who would not ordinarily encounter them (Huenchumil, 2019).

After the Valparaíso interventions on 20 November, performances of 'Un violador en tu camino' were staged in Santiago on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Performances had, in fact, been planned for October 2019 but were postponed due to the massive protests that swept the country that month against the inequality and privatisation fostered by the current Chilean Constitution (inherited from Pinochet) and the government of Sebastián Piñera (2018–). The organisation Human Rights Watch reported on excessive force used by Chile's *carabineros* (police) and human rights violations, including torture as well as rape, sexual abuse and assault, with more than 11,000 people requiring medical treatment and 345 eye injuries caused by police use of anti-riot shotguns (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The report notes that 'Human Rights Watch collected credible testimony that police forced detainees, especially women and girls, to undress and squat fully naked, a practice banned by police protocols' (Human Rights Watch, 2020). 'Un violador' is, then, intimately bound up with these protests, known as the '*estallido social chileno*' in its timing, its response to the police abuse of protestors and its ideological alignment. As Lola Proaño argues, 'Un violador' is a performance of a feminism that also rejects neoliberalism (Proaño, 2020: 2); the dance moves incorporate reference to police malpractice through squats; and in turn the original performances in Chile can be seen as a way of women reasserting their visibility at a moment of heightened tensions and violence.

The Chilean performances of 'Un violador' thus resonate even more strongly following the protests that began in October 2019. The title itself is a sarcastic rewording of the 1990s Chilean police slogan, 'Un amigo en tu camino', and the LasTesis performances incorporated a verse from the '*Himno de los carabineros de Chile*':

Duerme tranquila, niña inocente  
Sin preocuparte del bandolero  
Que por tu sueño, dulce y sonriente  
Vela tu amante carabinero.

Sleep tight, innocent girl  
With no fear of outlaws  
For your carabinero lover  
Watches over your sweet and happy dreams.

As Dafne Valdés of LasTesis explains in an interview, this is a citation directed at the *carabineros* who use sexual violence to intimidate women protestors, and who claim to protect women while doing the opposite (Huenchumil, 2019). More broadly, the protest takes place within the context of other mass protests responding to the ascendancy of the ‘new right’ which in Latin America is informed by conservative elements of the church. Sebastián Piñera’s cabinet is male-dominated, and has been criticised for its anti-women policies, especially its opposition to the legalisation of abortion (Vivanco, 2018). As Rita Segato argues, throughout the Americas, an emphasis on the ideal of the family, defined as the subject of rights to be defended at all costs, has galvanised efforts to demonise and punish what is called ‘the ideology of gender’ and gender theory (Segato and McGlazer, 2018).

Feminist movements in Latin America have called into question the sanctity of the family and the conservative patriarchal state as its self-proclaimed protector by highlighting the abuses and violence against women that take place within the family and by the state and agents of its institutions: judges, state security forces, police, politicians – all groups explicitly named and denounced by ‘*Un violador*’. In Chile two recent political protests stand out as important precedents for ‘*Un violador*’: those against the reform of the education system in 2011, which saw the increase of art, performance and dance including flashmobs; and the ‘Mayo Feminista’ protests of May 2018, in which feminist student groups took over universities protesting the male-oriented and misogynist nature of education and research.

This article thus considers the ways in which LasTesis’s performance contributes to the relocation of art and theory, moving them from academic, theatre and museum settings to the streets: ‘*el arte fuera de sala*’ – as one placard held up by a male ally, during the first performance, put it. In addition, as we discuss, the performance was shared globally and digitally, further decentring any authorship associated with the original performances and thus contributing to a radically dehierarchised form of art activism. We examine the performance’s impressive transnational circulation and the cultural moment this responds to by discussing case studies of restagings in Chile, Mexico, Turkey, and India, all countries led by men with poor records on tackling gender-based violence, focusing in particular on commonalities and local specificities illustrated by the adaptations. With its origins in Chile and its widespread transnational adoption, ‘*Un violador*’ reverses the neo-colonial direction of travel of more individualistic cultural moments such as MeToo, reflected in its choice of the first person pronoun, which has its roots in the Hollywood star system. We contend that the theory and practice of ‘*Un violador*’ highlights a systemic form of patriarchal, state-sanctioned rape culture that it effectively challenges through breaking with regimes that consign certain bodies to specific spaces and positions, and inventing new subjects and new forms of collective, disobedient, performative enunciation.

### **‘*Un violador en tu camino*’: Theory, Politics and Aesthetics**

LasTesis’s performance transforms feminist theoretical knowledge and discourse into embodied street activism and, in taking theory to the street, counters public and populist conservative attacks on gender theory. An example of the latter was the hostility faced by queer theorist Judith Butler during a visit to Brazil in 2017, when an effigy of her was burnt by right-wing protestors (Gessen, 2020). LasTesis’s name expresses their aim, which is to deploy catchy and simple performance methods to share feminist theories

with those who may not have had the opportunity to read or analyse them (see Daffne Valdés in Huenchumil, 2019). For *'Un violador'* the group drew on Segato's analyses of rape culture and violence against women. Segato argues that the patriarchal myth of female disobedience and punishment is universal in the sense that it occurs as a foundational narrative in cultures found on all five continents, and that it is a pillar of rape culture (Segato and McGlazer, 2018; Segato, 2019a). LasTesis represent this idea with the first words of their chant: within patriarchy all women/girls are at birth 'judged' as disobedient and thus deemed deserving of punishment.

For Segato, the lack of importance given by the state (here she speaks in global terms) to the crime of rape has to do with the fact that it is considered a *crimen menor* (minor crime); it is associated with desire, passion, and with what is private. Crimes against men, on the other hand, Segato argues, are seen as crimes against *lo público* (what is public), given the equivalency between the masculine and the universal subject (Segato, 2019b). By naming the state as perpetrator (*'el estado opresor es un macho violador'*) and pointing the finger (literally, through the dance moves, as well as figuratively) at *'los jueces, el estado, el presidente'*, the performance draws attention to the unacknowledged continuities between so-called 'private' acts of violence and public institutions (see Figure 1). When the song denounces the rapist as 'you' – in past and present tenses – and names the pillars of the patriarchal state, it does not refer to one woman raped by one man in any one country, but rather presents a systemic abuse of women's bodies by a patriarchal apparatus. In *'Un violador'*, groups of women come together to perform in high-profile, highly symbolic state- and judiciary-linked locations, thus situating the crime of rape as a major, a general and a public phenomenon, rather than a minor, particular and private one; it constitutes a making-public of rape, and establishes the female body/female subject as something collective and public, and thus rape as a crime against *lo público*.

As Segato herself argues, feminism in the Southern Cone has been predominantly a *feminismo letrado* (lettered feminism), an elite and therefore a eurocentric feminism – by contrast with Central American feminism which has its origin in armed struggles and rural communities (Segato, 2019b). LasTesis's performance is both a product of these historical circumstances in the sense that, like the May 2018 protests, it originates in the university (LasTesis are graduates of the University of Valparaíso, where they are employed as researchers and lecturers at the Escuela de Teatro), but also acts to counter the elite tendency of Southern Cone feminism, bringing it to audiences and participants who have historically been excluded from the feminism of this region through their exclusion from universities and letters. For Catherine Walsh: 'The problem is when theory, theorising, knowledge, and thought are considered as only – or predominantly – the purview of academics and the academy' (Walsh, 2018: 28). She writes of a need for:

considerations that take us beyond the centrality of academia and its subjects, contexts and confines [in order to] confront the idea of historically excluded, subalternised and racialised peoples as 'objects of study', and consider how such peoples not only *act* but also produce knowledge and construct theory. (Walsh, 2018: 28)

Street performances of *'Un violador'* are accessible to a wide range of women either as participants or onlookers – those who are physically present, and those who view the recorded performances online – and not solely those who have access to places of learning. The street performance becomes a site of the production of knowledge and the construction of theory; following Walsh, the 'objects' of (feminist) study (women) are repositioned as 'subjects' and producers of embodied knowledge. *'Un violador'*

interpellates its audience through live street performance and through social digital media, with performances filmed and widely circulated by audiences; both the performances and videos of them are non-exclusionary, highly accessible forms requiring no educational or cultural capital for participation or understanding, although we recognise that access to the internet and devices is not within everyone's reach. The performance can thus be understood as a means of decolonising and dehierarchising elements of feminist theory and knowledge surrounding rape and violence against women. This is perhaps especially the case when we consider some of the contexts in which the performance has been re-staged, for example by the Indigenous women of the Escuela Antisuyu Warmikuna (an Indigenous women's centre for gender equality and environmental sustainability in Puyo, Ecuador). At the same time, the performance has been reappropriated by academia through its re-staging in academic settings, such as the University of Cork (10 February 2020), thus completing the circle ('Flashmob edit', 2020). In this case, the performance took place outside the classroom, thus disrupting the conventional codes of academia. The global phenomenon of '*Un violador*' performances, in locations ranging from public squares, parks and Indigenous communities, to schools, workplaces, universities and parliaments, crystallises a sense of rage which speaks to an intersectional feminism and crosses social, class, ethnic and age boundaries, boundaries of education, privilege and profession, and which deconstructs boundaries between theory and practice, academy and street, producing learning through collective, horizontal and non-hierarchical spaces and dynamics.

The performance is disobedient. As Segato (2019b) writes, in order to counter the patriarchal judgement of women as 'disobedient', a 'vital intensity of disobedience' must be embraced and performed. Disobedience is central to the new aesthetics of feminist rebellion in Chile, including those of the 'Yeguada Latinoamericana' performances also staged to protest violence against women, in which female performers appear naked from the waist down except for horses' tails (Vargas Rojas, 2018), and of the bare breasts and adorned balaclavas of Chile's feminist protesters of 2018, which according to Olga Grau were *rebeldías estéticas colectivas* (collective aesthetic rebellions) which left their mark on Chilean social memory (Grau, 2018), and can be seen as forerunners to the approach of LasTesis.

'*Un violador en tu camino*', too, is intentionally in clear contravention of the rules of polite society, especially inasmuch as these rules are bound up with gender norms and expectations of women, our behaviour and movement in public spaces. The assembly of large groups of women, the parodic appropriation of state slogans, and the use of forceful chanting and in-your-face physical movements to call attention to what is censored in dominant culture all constitute 'disobedient' acts. They are not 'civil disobedience' in the tradition of Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, as they do not peacefully break the law; rather they break symbolic and unwritten rules which in particular govern the behaviour and expectations of women. In patriarchal culture, the manifestation of female rage is a disobedient act and a marginalised phenomenon. As Chilean writer Alia Trabucco puts it, women are denied *emociones tan políticas como la rabia* (emotions as political as rage) (Trabucco, 2018: 154). Whilst '*Un violador*' is physically 'non-violent', its response to violence is one of rage, and LasTesis refer to '*la rabia*' as a condition of their work (Tesis and Riot, 2020). As Judith Butler writes: the work of non-violent protest does not necessarily '[inhabit] the peaceful region of the soul, where you are supposed to rid yourself of violent feelings or wishes or fantasy'. Instead, aggression can be 'cultivat[ed] into forms of conduct that can be effective without being destructive. [...] Rage can be crafted – it's sort of an art form of politics' (Butler in Gessen, 2020). The violence and

rage constituted and channelled by ‘*Un violador*’ break the pact of acquiescence which upholds rape culture.

The performance plays on a central juxtaposition of rape culture, that of invisibility on the one hand, and spectacle or performance on the other. Rape often takes place in domestic and private settings and is a taboo subject which women are discouraged from talking about, sometimes through threats to their life; the high rate of femicide in Latin America cannot be separated from rape (Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean [nd.]). On the other hand, Segato sees rape as an act perpetrated not out of sexual desire, but out of a desire for power, and of the need to *demonstrate* one’s power both for oneself and for others; it is therefore inherently a demonstration or performance (Segato, 2019a). There is thus a tension around rape as both hidden/silenced and shown/performed, compounded by the ways in which the hidden realities of such violence are displaced and displayed, glamorised and spectacularised as part of popular culture, as the raped and mutilated bodies of women fill our image-world, from cinema (e.g. *El secreto de sus ojos*, Campanella, 2009) to the *prensa amarillista* (sensationalist tabloid press), a practice which Segato argues makes the phenomenon ‘contagious’, liable to be copied (Trepiana, 2019). This interplay of visibility and invisibility is woven into the semiotics of ‘*Un violador*’, in which the use of blindfolds and the lyrics (‘the violence you don’t see’ and ‘the violence you now see’) combine with the effective visual spectacle which is the performance itself: it is loud and it is eye-catching in order to combat the forces of censorship and erasure.

‘*Un violador*’ revolves around a further juxtaposition: it produces the female body as both subject and object, as both resistant and subjugated, and it references the trappings of femininity both for direct protest and as a means of ‘staging’ femininity in order to think about and critique gender norms. Dance moves and chanting that explicitly posit women’s bodies as powerful, accusatory, and enraged are combined with moves which reference the humiliating poses required of women detained by the police (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** The Members of LasTesis Point Accusatory Fingers. ‘Colectivo LasTesis estrenará puesta en escena en torno a la histórica subalternidad de las mujeres colonizadas’ (2020)



Foto: © LASTESIS Valparaiso 29 de noviembre 2019

Costume is also central here: participants were invited to come in ‘party’ clothes, which are ‘traditionally perceived as signifying a heightened sexual availability’ (Gale, 2015: 319). Through costume, the performance protests victim-blaming that often centres around styles of dress (*y la culpa no era mía [ ... ] ni cómo vestía* (and it’s not my fault [...] nor what I wore), and asserts women’s right to presence in the street, however they are dressed, as well as foregrounding the historical construction and positioning of the female body. In this sense ‘*Un violador*’ can be understood as part of a history of feminist performance/protest in which the performers ‘use their bodies beside themselves, as if for a second time, as a means of making explicit the historical staging of that body’ (Schneider, cited in Gale, 2015: 316), including previous transnational feminist performance activism such as the ‘Slutwalks’, which also protested rape culture and victim blaming. ‘*Un violador*’ can be understood as a ‘political act’ in the sense in which Rancière defines it: performances interfere in and reconfigure what is visible and audible, making public that which is socially deemed to be private, combatting erasure and silencing. For Rancière:

Politics can [ ... ] be defined [ ... ] as the activity that breaks with the order of the police by inventing new subjects. Politics invents new forms of collective enunciation; it re-frames the given by inventing new ways of making sense of the sensible, new configurations between the visible and the invisible, and between the audible and the inaudible, new distributions of space and time – in short, new bodily capacities. (Rancière, 2010: 147)

Redistributions of space and its uses are also part of the political power of ‘*Un violador*’, and locations have been selected to highlight the complicity of state institutions with rape culture. ‘*Un violador*’ has been staged at Santiago’s Palacio de la Moneda, Quebec’s Parliament, London’s Chilean Consulate, Thessaloniki’s Police Headquarters, Santo Domingo’s Procuraduría General de la Nación (Office of the Inspector General), and the Eiffel Tower (Map about the performance, 2019). High-profile, state-linked locations magnify the assertion of a ‘right to appear’ made by these performances associated with the coming together of bodies in the street (Butler, 2015: 81). And performances of ‘*Un violador*’ specifically assert the right of women to appear and occupy public space. The public assembly of women in large groups, calling attention to themselves both through visual spectacle as well as loud chanting, constitutes a violation, and a rewriting of the rules of gendered public space. The dynamics of particular spaces are reconfigured, their uses and meanings changed.

‘*Un violador*’ protests a physical violence which is enacted on the bodies of women. Gendered violence and oppression is dependent on the organisation of bodies into a ‘natural order’ which consigns them to specific ways of speaking, moving, being and occupying space. For these reasons, the intense corporeality of the performance, and indeed the medium of performance itself, is entirely appropriate to the subject; ‘*Un violador*’ is a means of creating the ‘new bodily capacities’ of which Rancière writes, the new form of collective enunciation which breaks with the old regimes of the sensible and their distribution of bodies. In Latin America, the body has been a ‘chief artistic support and ground for political action’ (Polgovsky Ezcurra, 2019: 14), leading to a ‘proliferation of artistic practices that turned the vulnerability of the subject into an ethical and political basis for an art of dissensus’ (14). In Chile, for example, feminist writer and artist Diamela Eltit’s performance piece *Zona de dolor* makes visible, according to Polgovsky Ezcurra, ‘the political dimension of individual or “private” suffering’ inflicted by the dictatorial regime through the artist’s self-lacerated body

(Polgovsky Ezcurra, 2019: 25). More recently, the body has been central to artistic and performance-based protest culture in Chile, both during the 2011 protests and during the 'Mayo Feminista' of 2018. In the former, as Banda and Navea have shown, '*el cuerpo se convierte en un recurso para poner en obra la catástrofe, al ser portadora de la fragilidad de la existencia humana*'/the body becomes a resource for staging catastrophe, because of the way it is imbued with the fragility of human existence' (Banda and Navea, 2013: 23).

In '*Un violador*', subjugation, pain, humiliation and resistance are embodied, with humiliation re-enacted momentarily, before bodies shift to positions of accusation and empowerment. The use of the body in performance art and protest is a means of creating embodied knowledge in those who view or participate. Not only does '*Un violador*' take aspects of feminist theory from the academy to the street, it also transforms it into a kind of embodied thinking not accommodated within written or verbal discourse, and creates the space for transformation of individuals into collectives and (potentially) docile bodies into resistant ones, producing an 'embodied sense of agency among performers and participants' (Juris cit. Serafini, 2018; 15). '*Un violador*' is performative in the same way that Nelly Richard argues the 2018 occupations of Chilean universities were. Its participants begin to experience that for which they are fighting: 'anuncian-enuncian el cambio' ('they both announce – and enunciate – change') (Richard, 2018: 115).

### **'Un violador en tu camino', Ni una Menos and MeToo: Individualism, Collectivism and Transnationalism**

The rise of the MeToo movement (from 2017) in response to the multiple allegations of sexual abuse, including rape, made against the Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein and the subsequent global spread of #MeToo activism is evidence of a fertile climate for women's protests against sexual violence in the age of digital media. However, our focus on the global adaptation and reach of '*Un violador en tu camino*' as an example of transnational performance activism with its origins in Chile, indicates that the US should not be taken as the single origin point of global women's activism. This spotlight on '*Un violador*', and thus on the transnational impact of Latin American feminist activism, is also part of a decolonising project. Segato has noted the colonial power structures of social movements, including MeToo, comparing the Latin American *Ni Una Menos* movement against femicide to the US-originated MeToo movement in the following terms:

As far as *Ni Una Menos* is concerned, let's remember that there is a coloniality within social MOVEMENTS AS WELL. THAT COLONIALITY IS DECEPTIVE AND DISORIENTING. #METOO, WITH ITS ROOTS IN North American pilgrim-Puritan feminism, is directed towards and appeals to the paternity of the State, a third party as an indispensable arbiter of relations, a lawyer in the sheets, possibly as the only tool available in that ultra-individualist world. While #MeToo speaks to the state, *Ni Una Menos* speaks to all of us, men and women, it speaks to a society. (Segato, 2019b)



Whereas MeToo appeals to the state, '*Un violador*' critiques the state as the site of patriarchal violence. Members of LasTesis have also rejected working with government or declaring an affiliation with any political party, writing on their Instagram account on 3 February, *la política institucional JAMÁS será nuestro hogar* (institutional politics will NEVER be our home) (colectivo LASTESIS, 2020).

Yet despite differences in expressions of feminist activism, in the transnational world of social media, few high-profile movements are constrained by national borders, reductive meanings, or singular affiliations to any one hashtag or performance of political resistance. Indeed, MeToo activists have embraced '*Un violador*', while Latin American feminists have adopted and adapted the denunciatory power of MeToo. US MeToo activist groups have in fact have used performances of '*Un violador*' to highlight allegations of sexual predation against two high profile US figures: Weinstein and Donald Trump (Levine and El-Faizy, 2019). '*Un violador*' was performed outside the courtroom in New York at Weinstein's trial in January 2020, and activists followed this with performances on the same day on the subway, and outside the Trump Hotel (Gray, 2020). In turn, MeToo was adopted in Mexico by profession-specific #MeToo Twitter accounts that denounced sexual violence in a way that protected individuals too fearful to speak out without guaranteed anonymity (Shaw, 2019). Argentinean activists were also instrumental in importing but adapting MeToo, 'substituting the primary message of #MeToo – the sexual assault and harassment of actresses – with the Argentine feminist agenda of abortion, by framing this issue as a form of discrimination and violence against women' (Garibotti and Hopp, 2020: 186). As Garibotti and Hopp explain, 'this was despite the fact that it was preceded by the #NiUnaMenos movement from 2015' (186). #MeToo, #NiUnaMenos, and '*Un violador*' are among many nodes of new transnational feminist forms of activism in the digital age.

Nonetheless, we argue that the global reach of '*Un violador*', and its multilingual performances, have disrupted the neo-colonial power structures of social movements discussed by Segato (2019b), and witnessed in the Anglo and Hollywood-centric iterations of protest and resistance dominating the anti-sexual violence narrative. MeToo has faced criticisms for 'efforts to construct a "universal" account of sexual violence' and for an 'overt focus on white women's experiences of sexual victimisation in anti-sexual violence politics and activism' (Fileborn and Loney-Howe, 2020: 6). Lauren Rosewarne (2020: 178) also notes that a principal limitation of the MeToo movement is its inextricable link to Hollywood. By contrast, the strength of '*Un violador*' lies in performances by women of diverse backgrounds and nationalities. Transnationalism in this case works both with and against universalism, as each performance speaks to the pervasiveness of rape cultures, yet is adapted for each specific context. The performers give their own voices to words that they make their own – there is no fixed line-up or dominant story of rape; there are no stars or soloists; each performer has equal value. The addressee of the song – both linked to the state but also anonymous, and potentially everywhere – denotes a systemic abuse of women's bodies by a patriarchal apparatus that is collective, transnational and trans-historical, an idea that gathers force with each repetition, each new location.

These are multiple bodies in the performance, and the fact that not all women have been raped and not all men are rapists is not the point; the insistent use of the second person singular (*El violador eres tú* (You are the rapist)) situates this performance in the accusatory mode. This is not victimhood, it is abuserhood – it is not MeToo, it is WeToo and YouToo. In short, transnational collectivism characterises performances of '*Un violador*' and its attack on rape culture, while Hollywood's MeToo is characterised

by individualism. This is a question of emphasis: whilst MeToo builds a collection of individual stories which shines a light on the scale of sexual violence against women, *'Un violador'* and *Ni una menos* understand *a priori* that rape and femicide are rooted in misogynistic cultures, rather than in individual men.

## *'Un violador en tu camino'* Goes (Almost) Global

The difficult task of tracking the global performances of *'Un violador'* has been facilitated by Geochicas, a group of geographers, cartographers, sociologists and anthropologists (Cuffe, 2019) working 'to close the gender gap in the OpenStreetMap community' (Geochicas, 2020). The mapping of *'Un violador'*, their principal project of 2019, comprehensively pinpoints the locations of protests globally, as well as linking to further information including press coverage and video clips ('Map about the performance'). Geochicas's map reveals that there were performances in 200 cities in 2019 (Cuffe, 2019), with the main concentration in Latin America, North America and Europe (Map about the performance, 2019). Our case studies of adaptations in Chile, Turkey, India, and Mexico, highlight a shared experience of rape culture as a central pillar of patriarchy, as well as culturally and geographically diverse experiences of oppression.

### *Chile and 'LasTesis Senior'*

We have noted the political importance of the public locations of the performances, and one of the most historically significant venues was that chosen by older women, LasTesis Senior, inspired by their younger compatriots to stage their own performance. This took place on 4 December 2019 opposite the Estadio Nacional de Chile, a notorious centre of detention and torture for over 40,000 political detainees of Pinochet's regime (1973–1990) (Wood, 2016). The performance – organised by ten women's groups and attended by 10,000 women – was prompted by academic Marcela Betancourt's humorous tweet, calling for a staging of the dance specifically for women over 40, but without the physically demanding squats (Paranhos, 2019). LasTesis Senior stuck closely to the words of the original performance, but wore black and red in homage to women who were raped or murdered during the dictatorship (Flores, 2019). The references to impunity and disappearances in *'Un violador'* acquire a new resonance when performed by the older generation.

The 2004 Valech Truth Commission report, based on extensive interviews with those detained, detailed extensive and routine acts of rape, sexual violence and torture against women and men (Joffily, 2016; Kravetz, 2018). Mariana Joffily (2016) notes that the report concluded that 'sexual torture had been practised in the whole country, in practically all police detention centres', which gives a historical context to the lyrics that accuse the police of being rapists. One infamous site of rape and torture in Santiago de Chile was known as the 'Venda Sexy' (Sexy Blindfold) or 'The Discotheque' as the guards would blindfold the women detainees and play loud music as they were raped and tortured (Kravetz, 2018). These historical crimes are alluded to through the incorporation of blindfolds in the costumes of LasTesis and LasTesis Senior. In this cross-generational alliance, older generations of Chilean women learn from younger ones whilst ensuring that their historical experiences are remembered, and their aggressors denounced (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** A Shot of the Estadio Nacional de Chile Performance Organised by LasTesis Senior.



Source: [https://twitter.com/tv\\_monica/status/1202410159169048576](https://twitter.com/tv_monica/status/1202410159169048576)

### *Mexico*

A Mexico City performance took place on 29 November 2019 in the Zócalo, opposite the Palacio Nacional. The largest of many performances throughout the country (Map about the performance, 2019), its scale is an illustration of an intensification of protests against gender-based violence and femicide in the country, while certain elements of its staging highlight trans-regional Latin American concerns and alliances. It included women of all social classes, ages, sexual orientations and ethnic origins with thousands in attendance, filling the Zócalo (Hernández Castillo, 2019). Many women at this event wore the green bandanas associated initially with Argentinian calls for abortion rights, which highlights the transregional spread of feminist activist concerns in Latin America. As Claudia Magallanes-Blanco and Emiliano Treré note (2019: 119), a ‘green tide’ movement spread to Mexico via digital media from Argentina. Mexicans shared ‘the same demand for free, safe, and legal abortion for all women (as well as the green bandanas as a symbol)’ (Magallanes-Blanco and Treré, 2019: 119). Many of the women on the way to the ‘*Un violador*’ performance were also pictured carrying placards with images of crosses marked with #*niunamenos*, with #*niunamenos* adopted to speak to the specific issues faced by Mexican women and the alarmingly high instances of femicide in Mexico (Petersen and Shaw, 2020). Mexican government data reveals that 3825 women were victims of femicide in 2019, 7 percent more than in 2018 (Orsi, 2020).

In most ways the Mexican rendition reproduced the original Chilean performance, pointing to shared feminist concerns across the two countries. There were a few linguistic local adaptations, including, as organiser Fomy Pocket explains, the use of ‘*la tira*’, Mexican slang for police, instead of the Chilean ‘*los pacos*’ (Televisa News, 2019). As is the case in many Latin American countries, the staging of ‘*Un violador*’ in Mexico City is one in a series of many instances of feminist protest. On 8 March 2020, International Women’s Day, more than 80,000 women marched in the capital to protest sexual violence and femicide, followed the next day by a 24-hour mass strike by Mexican women (Petersen and Shaw, 2020). This march ended in the Zócalo with femicide protest song, *Canción sin miedo* (Fearless Song), performed by its (Mexican) composer Vivir Quintana and the Chilean singer Mon Laferte (‘*Canción sin miedo*’, 2020), a further example

of feminist artist-activists collaborating across the two countries to demand an end to gender-based violence.

### Turkey

Two performances in Turkey in December 2019 stand out for their resistance to state repression of women's rights. A street performance of '*Un violador*' took place on 8 December 2019 in the neighbourhood of Kadıköy, Istanbul, organised by the Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu platform (We Will Stop Femicide). Around 300 mainly young women congregated to perform '*Un violador*' in Turkish, dressed casually, but with no uniformity, although they wore the black blindfolds of the original performance. As the women began a second rendition in Spanish, they were corralled by riot police; at least seven were arrested and two allegedly severely beaten for the crime of insulting the president and disrespecting state institutions (BBC News Mundo, 2019). On 14 December 2019, in protest, members of the Turkish opposition CHP party (Republican People's Party), interrupted a parliamentary session to sing '*Un violador*' – to our knowledge, the only example of a performance in a national parliament. CHP member Sera Kadigil introduced its Chilean origin, explaining its purpose, and stating that thanks to the police action, Turkey is the only country where parliamentary immunity is required for it to be sung (Koca and Spicer, 2019). Female parliamentarians then performed part of the chant, whilst banging on tables and holding up photographs of twenty murdered women (Koca and Spicer, 2019). A total of 405 women were killed by men in Turkey in 2019 (We Will Stop Femicide, 2015). Here, Turkish feminist politicians lend their voices to the activists prevented from completing their street performance by repressive policing under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's conservative regime. Transcultural and transnational adaptation has taken place here through linguistic translation and has been repurposed to fit the concerns of Turkish feminists and their demand for better implementation of laws protecting women from violence (Yinanç, 2019).

### India

Performances in India also illustrate strategies of local adaptation to focus on urgent domestic issues. A performance in Delhi on 8 December 2019 connected sexual violence and femicide to the social inequities of the caste structure. The performance in Hindi added the following lyrics:

In the name of the caste  
In the name of religion  
We disappear  
We are exploited  
We carry the worst part of rape  
And violence on our bodies. (Noriega, 2019)

The performance was in response to the murder four days earlier of a 23-year-old woman who was burned alive by five men whilst on her way to testify in her rape trial (Ellis-Petersen, 2019; Noriega, 2019). The case drew attention to the fact that India is considered 'the world's most dangerous country for women due to the high risk of sexual violence and being forced into slave labor' (Goldsmith and Beresford, 2019). Organiser

Jyotsna Siddharth observed that it was decided to adapt '*Un violador*' in this way for the Indian context because the response to sexual violence varies according to caste, with crimes against lower-caste women receiving little attention (El Periódico, 2019).

As Geochicas member Isaura Fabra notes, 'In every place, the patriarchy presents itself a little differently. But the issue of rape is fundamental' (Cuffe, 2019). This is feminist knowledge, and it is knowledge that LasTesis's performance – a plastic and mobile phenomenon that belongs to whichever group performs and witnesses it – and its transnational afterlives help to reveal, to make tangible, accessible and deeply felt.

## LasTesis: New Ventures and Collaborations

Most of the performances of '*Un violador*' took place between October and December 2019 but performances continue and LasTesis have moved their activism online during the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. They have forged new collaborations, most notably with the (mainly) Russian anti-Putin punk collective Pussy Riot. On 27 May, LasTesis and Pussy Riot released a video manifesto (McGowan, 2020) featuring LasTesis and the Mexican Wendy Moira who is a member of Pussy Riot and director of Teatro Lúcido (Tesis and Riot, 2020). In it, the groups denounce police violence, and highlight the pandemic's exacerbation of the problems of hunger, poverty, domestic violence, and inadequate healthcare in an example of intersectional feminist activism. They connect police repression with patriarchy and 'savage capitalism' ending with the words, *no me cuida la policía, me cuidan mis amigas* (the police don't look after me, my friends do). Subsequently, the carabineros have called for LasTesis to be brought to trial, for intimidation of the police – the video features LasTesis standing outside a Valparaíso police station, and the words *fuego a los pacos* (set fire to the police). They also accuse LasTesis of fomenting acts of violence committed by protestors in November and December, which they link to performances of '*Un violador*' (Rivera, 2020). Yet this represents a failure by the police to accept responsibility for documented crimes that they committed (Chile: Events of 2019, Human Rights Watch), and to which the performance of '*Un violador*' was responding. This case has only succeeded in bringing LasTesis increased support, including a petition addressed to Sebastián Piñera's administration sent by leading Hollywood actresses, demanding that the *carabineros* charges be dropped – an example of the high-profile celebrity feminism associated with MeToo using its platform for transnational solidarity. An all-women list of signatories included Natalie Portman, Julianne Moore, Michelle Williams, Marisa Tomei, Zoe Saldana, Ashley Judd, Eva Longoria, America Ferrera, and Rosie Pérez (La Prensa Latina Media, 2020). LasTesis have also been recognised in *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people of 2020 list, with their entry written by Pussy Riot member Nadya Tolokonnikova (Tolokonnikova, 2020) (Figure 3).

Although it may be too soon to fully understand the significance and legacy of '*Un violador en tu camino*', this article has argued that LasTesis's performance has been significant in its translation of feminist theory for a non-academic setting, and its shifting of the location of knowledge production. Confronting and condemning rape culture through new forms of collective, bodily enunciation, its non-hierarchical, empowering format has created opportunities for self-transformation amongst participants and audiences. The power of '*Un violador*' is evidenced by the fact that it has taken on a transnational life of its own, with its message and impact gathering force as it has been adopted and adapted to multiple global locations, reversing and resisting the

Figure 3. LasTesis Feature in *Time* Magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2020.



Source: <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2020/5888485/lastesis/>

US-centrism of other recent forms of feminist protest. It has travelled far beyond what LasTesis had foreseen, making manifest the global pervasiveness of rape culture, and women's resistance to it, and launching LasTesis themselves into radical transnational partnerships of feminist activist art creation. '*Un violador en tu camino*' has given voice to a new recognition of the ways in which sexual violence against women is systemic and structural and has enabled a new coming together of women who draw strength from each other across borders.

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