

Women with a loose tongue

A history of Spanish ladies who transgress Punk, Pop and Hip Hop.

by Doris Leibetseder

My focus is women who dared to cross the boundaries in traditional rock and pop music - those who gave their songs political content in order to change the world into a better place for women and queers.

Alaska (Fangoria) - the Spanish-speaking Madonna  
The most famous rebel woman in Spanish popular music is Alaska. As a teenager, she famously played Bom, a singer in a punk band in Pedro Almodóvar's first feature film, *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (1980). Stories of interfering women carry this film - like the housewife Luci, married to the policeman who rapes Pepi for "not-having-seen" her marijuana plants, who is about to have her first lesbian experience with Bom. The influence of the "La Movida" - the pop cultural movement of late '70s/80s Madrid - appears in Almodóvar's screenplay: alternative morality, the friendship between women, sexual "perversions", fashion and punk music all make their presence known.

Almodóvar has commented that the "movida" was the expression of that moment and that punk was the last big movement with a social, aesthetic and musical impact. His film was criticised for being amoral. The puritans were scandalised by the characters' behaviour, and the liberals were surprised with the film's aggressiveness: values are neither subverted nor trespassed in this film, they simply do not exist at all. *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* is overall a feminist film because it follows women who hold their destinations in their own hands.

After the film, Alaska became a star and constantly changed her style. The queen of the "movida" switched from punk to glam as she sings in *Rey the Glam*:

Con tu tacón de aguja  
los ojos pintados ,  
dos kilos de Rimmel ,  
muy negros los labios  
Te has quedado en el 73  
con Bowie y T-Rex.  
Hombreras gigantescas  
Glitter en el pelo  
esmalte de uñas negro  
leopardo y cuero  
Te has quedado en el 73  
con Bowie y T-Rex.  
Eres el Rey del Glam,  
nunca podrás cambiar  
ajeno a otras modas

With your high heels  
and your painted eyes  
two kilos of Rimmel  
very black lips  
You've remained in 73  
with Bowie and T-Rex.  
Gigantic shoulder pads  
glitter in your hair  
black nail polish  
leopard and leather  
You've remained in 73  
with Bowie and T-Rex.  
You are the King of Glam  
You will never be able to change  
alien to other fashions

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que vienen y van	which come and go
porque tú, tú,	because you, you
eres el Rey del Glam.	are the King of Glam.

Such songs as A quien le importa and Bailando became hymns for lesbians and gays, whilst the video to Hagamos algo muy vulgar is exemplary of a camp sensibility - as described by Susan Sontag in her article "Notes on Camp" - with its tendency towards kitsch and trash. Alaska, in her newly named band Fangoria, entered the mainstream and enjoyed gothic, techno and electro eras. Her punk roots and subsequent contribution to the subversive politics of the "movida" became lost in the popular consciousness.

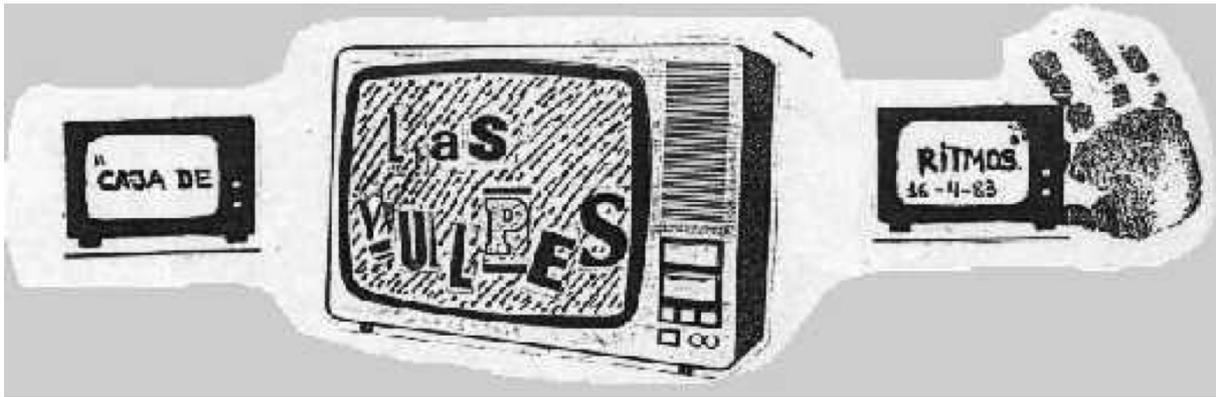
### Las Vulpes

The history of Las Vulpes, the first female punk band in Spain, is short but intense. Formed in 1983, these four women appeared on the Saturday morning television program Caja de ritmos, during children's hour, with their song Me gusta ser una zorra. They caused a polemic incident. After the transmission, the conservative newspaper ABC published the lyrics of their song:

Si tú me vienes hablando de amor,	If you are going to speak about love
qué dura es la vida,	how hard life is
o el caballo me guía,	and the horse which guides me
permíteme que te dé mi opinión:	let me give you my opinion
mira, imbécil, que te den por culo,	look, idiot, fuck off
me gusta ser una zorra.	I wanna be a bitch.
Prefiero masturbarme yo sola en la cama	I prefer to masturbate on
my	own in my bed
Antes que acostarme con quién me hable del mañana	than sleeping with
	someone who talks to me
	about tomorrow.
Prefiero joder con ejecutivos	I prefer to fuck executives
Que te dan la pasta y luego llega el olvido	who give money and then
	comes oblivion
Me gusta ser una zorra, me gusta ser una zorra...	I like to be a
	bitch....
Dejando a un lado mi profesión	Leaving my job aside
Te ofrezco un deseo de corazón	I offer you a wish from my
	heart
Voy a meterte un pico en la polla	I am going to put a wedge
in	your dick
Me voy a mear en tu cara de gilipollas	I am going to pee on your
	asshole's face
Me gusta ser una zorra, me gusta ser una zorra...	I wanna be a bitch, I
	wanna be a bitch...

The public scandal led to the discharge of the program's director, Carlos Tena, and the withdrawal of Caja de ritmos.

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[http://es.geocities.com/neuronas\\_en\\_huelga/Iniciospunkest.html](http://es.geocities.com/neuronas_en_huelga/Iniciospunkest.html).

Del fanzine La Teta Anatómica #3

Aged between 17 and 21-years old when they formed the band, Las Vulpes were Loles Vázquez "Anarkoma Zorrita" (guitar), Mamen "Evelyn Zorrita" (voice), Begoña "Ruth Zorrita" (bass), and Lupe Vázquez "Pigüy Zorrita" (drums). Justifying their lyrics, they said that they preferred to be bitches than be acquiescent: "We like how we are and we think that nobody has to be scandalised if we say that we masturbate, because this is natural, everyone does it. It is worse to show violent films and to force children to follow a certain kind of religion."<sup>1</sup>

Las Vulpes utilised the strategy of a subversive speech act - a performative statement or assertion - with their choice of stage names. "Zorra" is a Spanish insult for rebel women who fail to conform to their traditional female roles. Las Vulpes used the term as a form of self-empowerment, but the majority of people were not conscious of this intention or simply did not want to allow another role for women. As a sort of feminine parody, Las Vulpes recycled the song I wanna be your dog from Iggy Pop and The Stooges.

Jesús Ordovás, a presenter for Radio 3, recounted his experience of the band appearing on his program Diario Pop. Freedom of expression is granted at Radio 3, which is fortunate because as soon as Las Vulpes arrived at the studio they started to insult and provoke people there - yet, compared to the television program, nothing else happened.<sup>2</sup> With only one single, *Me gusta ser una zorra/ Inkisición* (Dos Rombos, 1983), the band dissolved. They attempted to kick-start their career with a new album, *Me gusta ser* (Oihuka, 2006), but split shortly after.

Las perras del infierno

A more contemporary band is Las perras del infierno from Iruña/Pamplona, who started to play in 2002. Originally three women and a man - Barbarella, Inés, Ander and Onceo - they were inspired by Las Vulpes and sang a cover-version of one of their songs, which they called *Me gusta ser una perra*. Their first album, *Somos las perras* (Rise Robots Rise, 2003), was followed in 2005 by *Intuición canina* (Subterfuge). They became

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an all-female band with Barbarella and Onne Wan (guitars), Miss Perraker (bass) and Demonica (drums), and split in 2006.

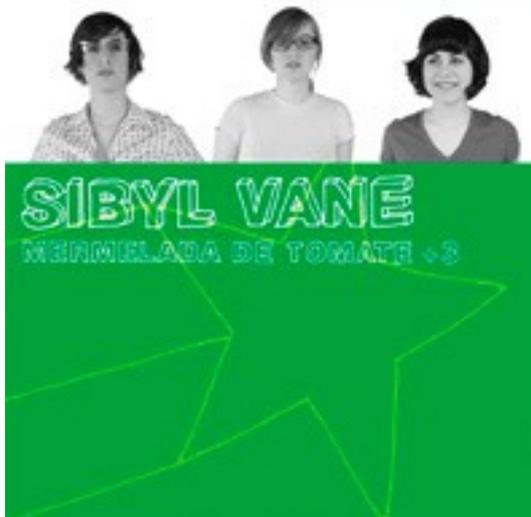


[www.elojocritico.net/webant/cultum49.html](http://www.elojocritico.net/webant/cultum49.html)

Their music was an imitation of punk; they played their instruments well and were good girls trying to be bad ones. They were a parody of Las Vulpes without having a political message. Considered from this viewpoint, Las perras del infierno are not really joining the gang of the Riot Grrrls.

Sybil Vane

The name of this group reflects the character Sybil Vane from Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* - Vane is the actress whom Dorian Gray falls in love with. This band, settled in Barcelona, brings to mind bands like Sleater-Kinney and the Breeders. Padi, Rocio and Luciana released their first album *Mermelada de Tomate* (Cydonia Records) in 2004, republished on BCore in 2005. The theme of its content is post-adolescence. Their second album *Turismo de interior* was released on BCore in 2006.



[www.myspace.com/sibylvanegirls](http://www.myspace.com/sibylvanegirls)

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Sybil Vane enjoy their music, describing it as "fun, simplicity, attitude" - just as rock 'n' roll should be. Their lyrics show intelligence whilst the pose is that of naivety, bringing a kind of freshness, in the sense of honesty without false shame. Post-adolescence appears in the lyrics to their first song Mermelada de tomate and Mushrooms from the same album:

Iba a decirte  
somos una explosión de feromonas

que solo parecen calmarse mediante

los deportes y la masturbación  
iba a decirte todo lo que te quería  
you

pero no me dio tiempo a sacar el poema (...) you but I had no  
time to fetch out the  
poem

I wanted to tell you  
we are an explosion of  
pheromones

which only cool down  
during

sport and masturbation

I was going to tell  
how much I loved

you but I had no  
time to fetch out the  
poem

Hongos  
No Mama!  
No entres en mi habitación.

Mushrooms  
No Mum!

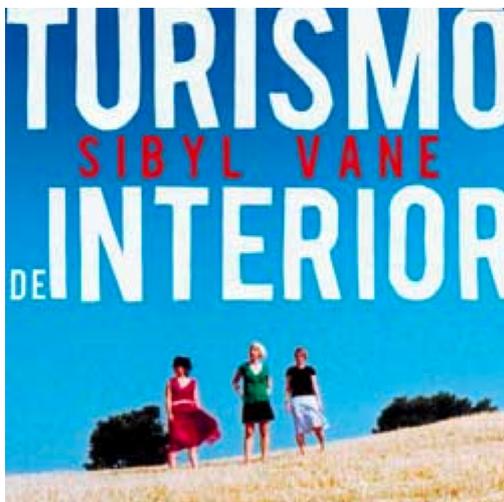
Do not enter in my

room!

Estoy en una extraña posición.  
Hongos, Hongos, ... Uuuuuuuuhhh!"  
Uuuuhhh!"

I am in a strange position.

Mushrooms. Mushrooms.....



[www.myspace.com/sibylvanegirls](http://www.myspace.com/sibylvanegirls)

Vanexxa

The album *Se rompe o se raja* (Subterfuge, 2007) builds a transition to Hip Hop, somewhere between rock and rap. Freedom and anarchism are her premises. If it comes out of her "balls" (translation from the Spanish "huevos") to begin to rap, she does rap; or if she wants to distort a guitar and to rap on top of it... That is the way she likes to do things. Esmeralda Martín writes that Vanexxa's music sounds like a mixture of rap, pop, rock, distorted guitars, some Latin flavour, and a

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voice with a strong character switching from rap to plain song with a tone between childlike and bitter.<sup>3</sup> What Vanexxa does on stage, however, is more of cabaret. An actress by vocation, Vanexxa transforms herself into a mistress of ceremonies and presents a show closer to theatre to highlight not just the songs but also characters, discussions, and interactions with the audience. This peculiar gala comes from different schools of experience: the street, alternative theatre, an open universe of influences that include female artists, fictional characters, mythic bands, theatre-writers, and even Bob Marley - her favourite poet.

Vanexxa celebrates her affinity to cabaret through costume: with black pants and a cutaway over a corset, black suspenders hold the white stockings that cover her slim legs. With a top hat over her long red hair and holding a cabaret's stick, she sometimes wears half of a black moustache painted on her face and one white glove.



[www.quedeletras.com/letra-cancion-superquay-bajar-87994/disco-se-rompe-o-se-raja/vanexxa-superquay.html](http://www.quedeletras.com/letra-cancion-superquay-bajar-87994/disco-se-rompe-o-se-raja/vanexxa-superquay.html)

Vanexxa openly plays with her sexuality: her appearance, her lyrics, her name - which she changed from Vanessa to Vanexxa - uses femininity as a weapon. There is provocation, irony and sexual arrogance in lyrics such as "I have a boyfriend I do not like at all. I take him over and over, but I do not feel anything."<sup>4</sup> In songs such as Superquay, Vanexxa also criticises contemporary society where only appearance has importance: to be beautiful and to have white skin. In the lyrics of her most famous song, she represents a dangerous female figure:

Desheredada	Disinherited (or Unfortunate)
Invítame al cine, invítame a cenar	Treat me to the cinema, treat me to dinner
Cómprame vestidos y llévame a bailar.	Buy me clothes and take me to dance
¿Tú crees que de mí te puedes enamorar?	Do you think you can fall in love with me?
Quando te duermas, todo te lo voy a quitar.	As soon as you fall asleep, I'll steal everything from you
Esto no es una canción bonita.	This is not a nice song

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Esto no es yo soy rebelde porque  
el mundo me ha hecho así.  
Vine buscando lo que no me han dejado,  
vine buscando lo que otros se han llevado  
En el testamento de la vida  
algo me correspondía:  
Sin creencias, se resuelve con violencia.

Y yo, ya no pienso en condicional:

Tendría, haría, sería...  
El condicional ya no promete  
ising  
así que hablemos del presente:  
Del que no tiene futuro oscuro

sin un duro, muros que separan el mundo.  
split

Intercambiamos, negociamos,  
¿nos hacemos un peta y nos vamos a follar?

This is not I am a rebel because  
The world has done this to me  
I came searching for what they  
hadn't left me

I came searching for what  
others have taken  
in the testament of life  
something belonged to me

Without beliefs, things are  
sorted out violently,  
and I, I do not think anymore in  
the ifs

I could, would, should  
The conditionals are not prom-  
anymore

so let's talk about the present:  
of those who don't have a dark  
future

Without a pence, walls which  
the world

we exchange, negotiate,  
Why don't we roll a joint  
and fuck together?

The fighting, warrior aspect of women is also described in  
other songs:

Cuentos Chinos

Pensé en apuntarme a clases de boxe-  
ing

a aprender a defenderme de todos los cerdos,  
all

me miran el culo, me miran las tetas

piensan y desprecian.

Chinese fairytales

I thought of registering in box-  
classes

to defend myself against  
the swine

who look at my bottom, look at my  
tits

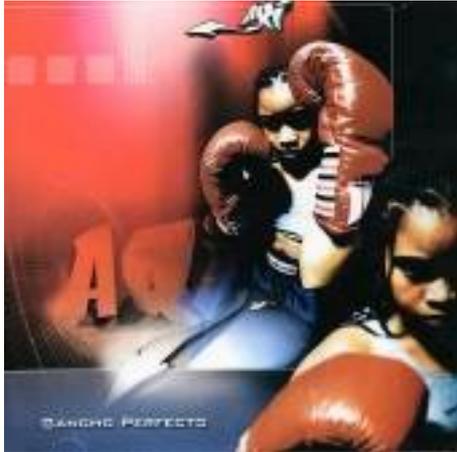
who think and show their contempt

An ancestress of this bad girl is Mala Rodriguez - the golden rapper of Spain whose albums include Lujo Ibérico (2000) and Alevosia (2003). Alevosia contains strong criticism of social circumstances; the song La niña is about a girl selling drugs. Rodriguez's third album, Malamarismo (2007), also brings in political topics such as heroin, young people on the street, violence against women, and racism.

Arianna Puello

The roots of women's Hip Hop in Spain, however, lay in the work of Arianna Puello. As a child, she arrived in Spain from the Dominican Republic when she was eight-years old and now lives in Gerona. Ari started rapping in 1993 and released El Tentempié (1998) and El Gancho Perfecto (Zona Bruta, 1999), before her first big success with La Fecha (Zona Bruta, 2001).

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[www.cduniverse.com/search/xx/music/pid/6838145/a/Gancho+Perfecto.htm](http://www.cduniverse.com/search/xx/music/pid/6838145/a/Gancho+Perfecto.htm)

In 2003, she released *Así lo siento* and her last album is *13 Razones* (Zona Bruta/Warner 2007). On the song *Oye lo que traigo* (Listen what I've Got) from *El Gancho Perfecto*, she introduces herself in the exaggerated Hip Hop style of self-affirmation:

Sí. Oye que traigo desde Gerona, A Ari, sí bring from Gerona, (...) parezco de repente y en el micro me presento, atento, sorpresa / (...) No hace falta que me baje los pantalones y enseñarte	Yeah. Listen to what I A Ari, Yeah I appear suddenly and I present myself through the micro, attentive, surprise, it is not necessary to let down my trousers and to show you, monótono what you have to have in order to take this microphone, mono- tone of rhymes and give them life I'm the red corpuscles run down your blood a swarm of rhymes, you exaggerate your hunger take the candy, let's go, beware of your good manners here, I'm the boss, the one who rhymes, it's alright
--	--

Female rappers often represent like rude girls ("gansta wannabes") and Ari takes this stance in *Kien es el siguiente* (who is the next one):

...tu cabeza yo rompo (...) no hay quien pueda hacer combate conmigo (...)  
acabaré contigo (...) es mi ataque te dejo como un aguacate maduro,  
duro así es como te doy (...) pequeña pero matona.

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...your head - I destroy (...) there is nobody who is able to beat me (...) I'll finish you up (...) it is my attack that will leave you like a mellow avocado, tough is the way I beat you (...) I'm small but I'm a tough cookie.

Another characteristic of rap is word-fights against other rappers:

Rimas de cinco rimbos las condiciones te opongo/tumba de versos para tu cabeza ahora te pesan no tener laflor tengo yo/conectas conmigo porque yo junté la fiesta/ya sabes que no hay nadie que te salve de esta/(...) aquí me tienes no te hace falta nada más qué va/la creme de la creme con la que vas aprender/soy la magnate.../Tus oídos se taponan con mis líricas asonas desde Gerona/Ari lleva la corona pequeña pero matona/el ritmo nunca me abandona (...)/esta fue mi misión desde el día en que yo nací/(...) quién es el siguiente a ver quien da más.

Rhymes with five rondos are the conditions I propose/ a grave of verses for your head now they are weighing you not having the flower I have/you connect with me, because I made the party/you already know that there is nobody who is able to save you from this/(...) here you have me nothing is necessary for you, not at all/la crème de la crème you are going to learn with/I am the tycoon,,,,/your ears are plugged with my assonant lyrics from Gerona/ Ari carries the crown, small but tough /the rhyme never leaves me (...)/this was my mission from the day I was born./(...) who is the next one, let's see who gives more.

In Arriba los buscavidas, Ari talks about the difficulties of the "lower class" and women who become prostitutes because they cannot find work:

Todas las puertas cerradas, mil patadas en el culo me han dado, he fracasado demasiado, el momento es desesperado, ya no me llega ni pa' dar de comer a mis criaturas, con la carita de ternura me piden leche, me piden comida, no tengo que darles estoy en la ruina, soy pobre pero humilde y esos pocos lo entienden, si no es porque no hay trabajo no me atienden, por emigrante, pero debo ser fuerte no quiero ver como en este país la miseria vuelve, voy a probar suerte en la oficina de empleos y allí que es lo que veo, tampoco sale nada, no me queda más remedio, de espantos ya estoy curada, pinto mis labios, maquillo mi cara, me voy a la calle a ver que me depara, a nueva prostituta ya está preparada, a por todas una vez más, a por todas, una más, una buscavidas más, ya tu sabes loco.

Every door closed, a thousand times they kicked me out, I failed too often, the moment is desperate, now I do not even have enough to feed my children, with their tender faces they ask me for milk, they want something to eat, I do not have anything, I am ruined, I am poor but humble, and there are few people who understand it, it is not because there is no work, but they do not care about me because I am an immigrant, but I have to be strong, I do not want to see how in this country poverty is coming back, I try my luck in the job centre and what do I see there, nothing works out, so I do not have another choice, from horrors I am already cured, I paint my lips, put makeup on my face, I go out on the street and look out for what is coming for me, a new prostitute, and once for all, once for all one more time, I'm ready, one more, another streetwise you, crazy person, already know it.

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The song *El bien y el mal* addresses a violent racist attack on a woman who defends her life and has a heavy conscience about whether her use of violence was justified:

(...) No puede ser que me retenga/ si quiero vengarme/(...) pero qué estoy haciendo ahora el alma me pesa/todo ha sido en defensa no puedo matarle/aunque él seguiría delante y acabaría con mi vida tan a gusto quedaría/(...) acaba de embarcarse en mi el mismísimo mal/(...) miro el bastardo en la cara, sonrío el hijoputa/quieres ver como te corto como Ari disfruta/está claro que venía por mi el muy canalla/quiere representar su raza en la batalla/lo sé por eso mismo acabaré con esta mierda/(...) a veces no hay que hacerle caso al bien sino al mal/(...)nadie sabe que pasó solo aquel nazi y yo/me defendí para vivir y ahora mira donde estoy/dónde está la frontera que separa el bien del mal.

(...) It cannot be that I retain myself/if I want to take revenge myself/ but what I am doing now heavily weighs in my soul/everything happened defending me but I cannot kill him/but he is pushing on and he would finish my life with satisfaction/but the evil is taking over me / I look in the face of the bastard, he laughs the son-of-a-bitch/ do you want to see how I stop you how Ari enjoys it/ it is clear that he wanted to chase me, the bastard/ wanting to represent his race in the struggle/I know it and that is the way I will stop this shit/sometimes one doesn't have to concentrate on the good but on the bad/nobody knows what happened, except I and that nazi/I defended myself to survive and now look where I am/where is the boundary that separates the good from the bad.

As an immigrant, Ari speaks through her songs about the racism she has suffered.<sup>5</sup>

Identity is a product of various historic, cultural and social procedures. Hip Hop identity politics concern the politics of "everyday life", abandoning essentialist and collectivist concepts of identity for open structures of interaction. There is no belief in an identity defined by nationalities. Hip Hop identity politics are about different types of identities represented in the world outside - as queer does, postcolonial identities are used as strategies. The search for new possibilities and potentials of resistance appears in the gender politics of Judith Butler and in the hybrid identities of Stuart Hall.<sup>6</sup>

Another strategy used by Hip Hop artists is postcolonial mimicry, as post-colonial theoretician Homi Bhabha describes it. In colonial mimicry, desire recognises "the other" as a subject of difference, almost the same but not quite - or "Almost the same but not white". Bhabha says:

Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both "normalized" knowledge and disciplinary powers.<sup>7</sup>

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The game of the "metonymy of presence" - in which mimicry plays with power - produces identity effects that are conflictive, fantastic and discriminatory and do not hide any essence or authentic "one-self". Judith Butler says the same in *Gender Trouble*: gestures, acts and desires produce, at the surface of the body, an identity which seems to be coming from the interior or from an inner nucleus. Within Butler's work, two different notions of performativity must be acknowledged: the performance of gender identity which refers to the theatrical acts which are voluntary; and the repetition (of a norm or law) and the subversive potential in this repetition with a difference (or in the sense of Derrida "différance"). Subversive speech acts, such as Las Vulpes' use of their alter-ego names, are examples of this type of resisting performativity.

Arianna Puello's songs use subversive strategies to (re)present a position between being a woman and being a migrant of colour. In Ari's words in *Rap Swing on 13 Razones*:

No buskas más! Rap Swing está aki nena/si buskas la gloria Rap Swing hasta allí te lleva/Rap sin nazis, Rap sin Rey/Rap sin censura para un mundo sin ley/Rap pa to las razas, gustos y colores/Tambien pa las lesbianas y pa los marikones/Rap kon faldas o kon pantalones/Para afrontar las kosas kon un par de kojones/Rap pa to las religiones... musulmanes, cristianos, judios y mormones (...)/golfos, rastreros y makarras.../Nadie se escapa al flor de esta negra kuando ladraaaaaa.<sup>8</sup>

Do not look for more! Rap Swing is here, girl/ if you are looking for glory, Rap Swing is carrying you 'til there/rap without Nazis, Rap without King/Rap without censorship for a world without laws/Rap for all the races, preferences and colours/Also for the lesbians and the gays/Rap with skirts and with trousers/Rap to confront things with balls/Rap for all religions...Muslims, Christians, Jews and Mormons/ Nobody escapes from this black woman when she baaaaaarks.

Notes

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1 "Nos gusta ser como somos y pensamos que a nadie debe escandalizar que digamos que nos masturbamos, porque eso es natural, eso lo hace todo el mundo. Es mas fuerte poner películas violentas u obligar a niños a seguir determinado tipo de religión". Interview with Las Vulpes, Algo de su Historia, [http://es.geocities.com/neuronas\\_en\\_huelga/Iniciospunkest.html](http://es.geocities.com/neuronas_en_huelga/Iniciospunkest.html).

2 Jesús Ordovás, "29 años de música pop española. Fiestas, cassettes y cintas abiertas", in Radio 3: 20 Años. Una crónica de la cultura pop en España (Valencia,1998), 24.

3 Esmeralda Martín, "Vanexxa. Filósofa de barrios bajos", MondoSonoro, 2007, 16.

4 Pablo Guimón, "Se llevan las malas", in El País Semanal Nr. 1.587, 25<sup>th</sup> February 2007, 37.

5 Claudia Monika Leitz, Untersuchung von Jugendsprache am Beispiel von spanischem HipHop, Diplomarbeit an der Universität Wien, Vienna, 2000.

6 Natalie Brunner, Foucault und HipHop. Auswirkungen der Disziplinarmacht auf minoritäre Subkulturen, Diplomarbeit an der Universität Wien, Vienna, 2002. 94.

7 Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), 86.

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