

Sorginak, Bruxas, Meigas, Bruixes... Performing Feminisms *in Spanish Folk Revival*

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Abstract

The imaginaries constructed around witches and witchcraft throughout history have reflected non-accepted social conduct and behaviors. Assuming women's bodies, knowledge, and social agency as a depiction of the savage, strange, and taboo figure. In this way, the witch linked to the feminine and negative aspects has been recently reappropriated and reshaped by feminism in the last decades.

In this study case, I examine how Spanish revival folk has reflected female gender models through musical practices. The main goal of folk revival is revitalizing a countercultural movement, which shows a context of a clash of ideologies and identities. Identities and ideologies related to feminism are acted out through the aesthetics of performance and its staging. These expressive practices could be termed feminist revival folk due to the implication of the musicians with the feminist agenda. For this purpose, it is presented an analysis of cases from different bands, all of them characterized by their bonds with tradition, modernity, and gender, as it is the case of Habelas Hainas, Huntza, Punkiereteiras, Roba Estesa or Tanxugueiras.

The witch as depicted by modern feminism, is used in this artistic and social movement as a rhetorical resource. The aesthetics are performed on stage and in music videos as a way of self-identification with these historically silenced, rebel, independent, and free women.

Keywords: *Folk Revival, Popular Music, Cultural Identity, Gender Imaginaries, Feminism*

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Introduction

This article examines the ways in which witches' imaginaries are performed in musical practices with some sort of bond with traditional music. Traditional music is a term used to denote a combination of different styles belonging to different geographical areas of Spain. Witch's representations emerge in this case as a means of identification with the feminist movement. The focus on witches in this research arises from the observation of this topic as a thematic axis in wider research on gender in Spanish revival folk.

In the last three decades, feminism and gender-related topics merged with musical practices, which according to its main features can be considered folk revival practices. The term folk revival as posed by Burt Feintuch (1993), Max Peter Baumann (1996), and Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill (2014) correspond in general terms to the view of this artistic phenomenon as a way of revisiting and reinterpreting the past culturally and constantly developing. Its dynamic conception implies a social interpretation attached to it as it reflects diverse discrepancies among the society regarding the meanings and past and present contexts.

This view of folk revival as well as the artist's definitions of tradition translates into the performance through lyric contents, stage aesthetics (Zebec, 2018), musical style, performance spaces, discourse, and narratives. The changes in the different understandings of folklore and the constant interaction between tradition and modernity in these artistic practices bring about new representations constantly developing through music and music discourse (Moore, 2001). As observed during fieldwork the own standpoint of each artist around the meanings of folklore and its dynamism determines the pathways for its musical development. This view about what means folklore and its links with music also varies during the life of their musical projects. The former statement is based on the view of the musicians, belonging to different Spanish musical traditions, who were themselves approached through fieldwork carried out in Spain from November 2019 to January 2022.

The focus of this article is an analysis of the methods employed in musical witch's representations contributing to the development of the construction of alternative female models in the revival folk movement. The question that emerges from this aim is: How are these depictions and views of witches used as a means of identity construction? What is the concealed meaning of its artistic use? The precedent of this feminist turn in folk revival dates back to the sixties and the social uses and activism of Spanish songwriters (Gonzalez and Pena, 2022). The progressive development of these artistic proposals leads to the ongoing and current tendency of different fusions of musical genres all of them associated somehow with what is conceived as traditional and, at the same time, mirroring the socio-cultural background of contemporary society related to its long-term evolution. This work contributes to the ethnomusicological corpus analyzing identity reconstructions in Spanish popular music produced in the last three decades; the interest in this research comes out given the scarcity of research on current uses of traditional music in contemporary Spain (Moreno, 2013; García-Flórez and Martínez, 2020). The lack of studies on this topic is shocking if compared with the relevant literature existent based in other countries on music revivals and modern elements on it (Gall, 2008; Ronström, 2010; Adams, 2012; Ramsey, 2013; Sweers, 2014; Akesson, 2016; Magnat, 2017).

This research substantiates in the examination of ethnographic materials from different artists based in Spain and involved in the revival folk movement like Acetre, Uxía, María del

Mar Bonet, Punkiereteiras, Roba Estesa, Tanxugueiras, Huntza and Habelas Hainas. Written and recorded materials such as personal interviews, interviews in the media, music videos, festivals and concert posters, and recordings comprise the main elements of this research. Drawing from these study cases we will pose different discursive strategies where the representation of witches is depicted for the purpose of negotiating gender roles and bringing up alternative models of female identities. In addition to the ethnomusicological fieldwork carried out, it is essential the literature review of relevant theory on witch symbolism concerning popular culture artistic representations and some other works on gender, tradition, and folklore. For this reason, firstly we approach the constructions of witch imaginaries as a historically constructed figure focusing on the gender domination strategies that his constructions reflect. As we aim to analyze musical practices, it is important to pay attention to former artistic representations of the witch as a reality and as a mythological character. The existence of a continuous dialogue between tradition and modernity on the study object calls for a brief discussion on the meanings of folklore and popular music due to its ambiguity and vagueness. Both fields as part of the cultural construction of society reveal social meanings and contents. All these considerations are materialized in the examples extracted from the artists mentioned above through lyrics, aesthetics, and semiotics. The references presented in the examples correspond to different time periods where the way of recalling the witch imaginaries takes on different forms.

Revisiting the Witch's Symbolism

The concept of the witch is present in most cultures generally defined as a female magic practitioner.¹ In western culture, one of the most popular definitions of witch and witchcraft in the Middle Ages by Kramer and Sprenger in 1482 was the foundation of a historical prosecution of women who for various reasons were perceived as a danger. However, this character has been the subject of reinterpretations and adaptations to different popular cultures to reflect what were the non-desired characteristics of each society.

As the imaginaries around witches diversified, narratives about witches developed until their reconstruction and reevaluation during the feminist movement from the 1960's onwards. As a consequence of this reassessment, it is necessary to differentiate between the depiction of the witch in popular culture before and after feminist appropriations. The production and reproduction of narratives in a society have an impact on how identity is recognized and how identity models are constructed, in this case the figure of the witch can be viewed as a mechanism for maintaining and creating gender inequalities in society. In any case, what we present here is a general outline of the features associated with witches based on a literature review constructed from an interpretation of personal experiences and popular narratives.

The definition of witch was highly influenced by theology and folklore. It is a changing concept, as is a demonized representation of elements that reflect authority so popular classes would get away from them. In the case of Spain, it was grounded on Christianity as the prosecuted behaviors and rituals matched with pagan traditions (Levack, 2013). As Broedel (2003) argues a wide amount of feminine mythological motifs rely on popular culture and traditions. This argument accords with Chollet's (2020) ideas of the witch as an intellectual, artist, knower of medical herbs, midwife, healer, or atheist. The stereotypes attached to these feared women were the participation in akelarres,² orgies, and worship of the devil.

The narratives and tales from popular culture were especially present in Euskal Herria (Mantecón y Torres, 2011) and Catalonia (Granados, 2018) due to the recurrent presence of inquisitors and the strength of witch-hunts in the regions. For this reason, the presence of witches in diverse forms of popular culture increased sharply and this was reflected in literature too as Eva Lara Albero (2008) proves.

The feminist reinterpretations of this figure between myth and reality are usually set during the 3rd wave of feminism. The periodization matches with the widespread claim in demonstrations ‘We are the granddaughters of the witches you couldn’t burn’ but we can find some musical examples that show that the process of reshaping the witch narrative and its new meanings was taking place a few years before (Quintano, 2021). This reinterpretation implies in the first place evidencing the traditional definition as a domination mechanism. In this way, the witch is now presented as a political category, a construction to re-think the relationships between femininity, sexuality, politics, spirituality, and culture.

Modern understandings of the witch suggest community participation and rituals, as it would be the case of feminist demonstrations, as processes of feminist empowerment. Empowerment is also present in a description of the witch based on the same features that were mentioned above giving them a different view of their shared knowledge as the consequence of being a feared non-formal authority, and its non-socially accepted behavior as a way of alternative femininity, and rebel model. This process is addressed by Michelle Rosaldo when mentions the anomalous situations of women in society, as an equivalent to Abu-Lughod’s (1991) perspective of women as the other. In some societies, women with power have been considered witches as an illegitimate power, a way of acquiring power transcending the domestic space, introducing themselves in fields restricted to men, or creating a society among them (Rosaldo, 1991).

Some scholars analyze witch’s representations in other cultural products (Sanders, 2007; Antinora, 2011, Stuever-Williford, 2021). All the research on the depiction of these figures in audiovisual supports indicates that visual sources are a platform for reshaping gender roles in modern society.

The process of taking consciousness about how the witch was historically used as a mechanism of delegitimation resulted in the recovery of this figure as an acknowledgment of past anonymous stories, evoking defiance and transgression.³

The Folk and Music

The field of folklore brings together two of the main elements of this research, witches and popular music. Both of them are cultural artifacts that reinforce collective identities through their message and meaning. As it was mentioned there are multiple and diverse definitions of the term witch and this is also the case with the term folk and popular culture which works at a conceptual level. Bearing in mind its multiple meanings, dichotomies and views we discuss the meaning or the common aspects of these meanings in the case of the participant artists. Some of these perspectives about the folk might seem opposed to each other but all of them point to a dynamic perspective on folklore as posed by Gramsci (1991).

All is folklore, all is the music of villages, with its different layers and influences. We have to use categories because capitalism, to sell, uses it in this way but it doesn't exist. All is a communal re-elaboration (...) I do folklore (Ugía Pedreira, personal interview, 16 January 2020).

The rejection of musical genre categorization is associated with the rejection of its commercial use, taking this into account, her definition of folklore is close to Gramsci's perspectives on popular culture, as an element on behalf of social classes and experiences of society. Ugía also points out the influence of the context in her artistic production as it shows how music can mirror the social system where it is framed.

Folklore is what is traditional in each place. With the triki⁴ it is always different, it is very different from what it was made in Viscay or Gipuzkoa⁵ we are just a few and we see it differently.

Also, it is a wide range, it can fit us, the most traditionalists, there is a wide variety. It implies also food, euskera,⁶ and the ways of living, not only playing triki, it is a transmission of values and knowledge that we receive progressively. We contribute with something and open new possibilities. (Maixa Lizarribar y Amaia Oreja, personal interview, 24 December 2022)

The performers of the band Amak, as well as Ugía, consider a holistic perspective of folklore, considering their artistic activity as a worthy element not only in musical terms but as part of the construction of meaning in every aspect of society.

100 years ago here only txistu⁷ was played, later Italian migrants when they were at the construction works of Urola's harbor brought the diatonic accordion, and now turns out that the diatonic accordion is traditional here, but it wasn't here for even 60 years if that with 60-year trajectory is traditional ¿will you tell me that what I do is not traditional? Tradition is a lie (Aitor Huizi, personal interview, 24 December 2019).

Questioning about tradition in musical productions leads to very diverse answers as these artists' practices are linked with tradition with different purposes. Most of them understand folklore as a musical source. In some cases, there is an interest in distinguishing their ownership, individuality, and originality of the musical product as a result of the widespread notion of "traditional" as something anonymous, collective, and referring to an undefined mythical past. Another posture that is found in these musical practices linked to the tradition, like in this case, the focus is on questioning the validity and legitimation of tradition based on the use of formal and aesthetic canons. Thus the oldest repertoire is established as a source to take ideas and result in an updated style which at the same time is assimilated as traditional without ignoring other musical style's influences.

The folk doesn't exist, it is a label used to sell something, we come from traditional music, and traditional music leads us to have many influences. Traditional music is not repeated as such, but it is in constant change, it is constantly transforming. Then when it is transformed and people create around it emerges popular music (Guadi Galego, personal interview, 16 December 2019).

Considering the four testimonies, Ugía Pedreira, Amak, Huntza, and Guadi Galego, about the meanings of folklore their answers seem contrary, "Tradition is a lie," "All is folklore," "The folk doesn't exist." However, all of them refer with these messages to folk or tradi-

tional music as a socio-cultural construction. The artists point out at the vagueness of this term, but at the same time identify their musical works as linked with folklore or traditional music. Nevertheless, folk can refer to musical practices and stylistic elements very diverse and bounded by different geographical areas with a common aim, the revaluation, and the development of local popular cultures. Henceforth we address music tightly connected to its surroundings and its social system.

Baumann (1996) states that folk revival is a stance about the past, present, and future, and each artist's perspective stabilizes or transforms traditions. From the main trends posed by Baumann, purism and preservation or syncretism, the examples we analyze are framed in the latter case. Syncretism is opposed to the usual view of folklorists who value changes in traditions as a loss, this perspective assumes the origin of traditions pointing at a fictional past. As such, revival practices are emerging sides of culture that take tradition as a symbol. In this case, the gender representations through revival are inspired by dissatisfactions with the present, this is why recontextualizations or activism seem inherent to it. Currently, the feminist perspective has been embedded in the Spanish revival folk as one of the main social concerns, which reflect contemporary interests.

Performing Witches

The singularities of the creative processes as communicative and symbolic phenomena, which are based on specific cultural codes to construct particular significations. The following cases are part of the Spanish revival folk as a reconstruction of identity, in this case, female identities. One of the multiple ways of reinterpreting and reconstructing identities through the revival movement is the use of the figure of the witch and other mythological feminine characters close to this figure. The means to perform witches in music have changed progressively from the mentions in the textual content around the 70s to their inclusion through aesthetics and audiovisuals along the 21st century.

This analysis does not attempt to show or point at the songs where witches are mentioned but to look at how witches are performed and how this character is presented, understood, and perceived. In short, there are five main portrayals of this mythological figure in the musical practice. Mythical figures which include witches and local beliefs and characters that might not be named "witches" but present the same characteristics. These cases are put on stage as an identification with the artist. Usually taking local tales and adding light changes to the stories as a tool for empowering the character. This kind of portrayal takes place mainly during the first stage of the revival folk. The first stage of revival folk in Spain, in short, focuses on textual changes with traditional melodies, which develop into compositions in the style of traditional repertoire. The second portrayal is the witch as a feared non-formal authority, which is closely related to the third model, as a knower of specific and diverse wisdoms. The fourth portrayal highlights this figure as a tool for oppression and social control as it takes as main reference witch-hunts and witch-burnings. Lastly, the portrayal of the witch as a rebellious and alternative femininity model.

The first case and probably the oldest although the date when she composed this song is unknown is Teresa Rebull's *Dona d'Aigua* (2004) this song is part of a compilation CD, *Teresa Rebull Cançons 1969-1992*. In this artist's production can be found many differences between the dates of composition and the date of recording due to the context of Francoist political repression as a woman and as a political militant in POUM.⁸ All her musical

production is in Catalan also as a way of linguistic militancy because all languages other than Spanish were prosecuted in this period. *Dona d'aigua* is a poem for which the artist composed the music. This is an example of the use of songs as a way of recovering myths with female main characters which at the same time reshapes the character. The *Dona d'Aigua* is a figure from Catalonian mythology represented as mysterious women who live in the water wearing cloaks. It is a symbol of fertility. This figure charms men and brings them wealth but if they make public who this creature is, they will lose everything. This song identifies Teresa with this character through her description of her clothes as the ones of this figure and its last phrase is «La dona d'aigua que ha eixit," "Water's woman that has come out."

Maria del Mar Bonnet is also a songwriter active since 1967, her musical production focuses on Catalonian folk songs merged with her own compositions. In her first years as a songwriter she was involved in the movement *Nova Canço*, an artistic and musical movement supporting political activism against the Francoist dictatorship and the use of the Catalan language.⁹ As part of her feminist activism through music, there are references to the association of women with witches. Her collaboration in the album *Catorze poemes, catorze cançons* [Fourteen poems, fourteen songs] (2000) which is comprised of musicalized *María- Mercè Marçal's* poems. *Cançó de la Bruixa Cremada* [Burnt witch song] is a song complemented by the poem *La bruixa de dol* [The mourning witch], where the witch imaginary is showcased as a rebel women's model and as a way to create an alternative to the stereotypes of traditional femininity comparing the history of witch prosecutions with traditional female roles as a mechanism of domination.

The recurrent use of the witch as a defiance model relates to the transgressive side of women as performers around the 1960's and 1970's and its social uses (Gonzalez-Varga & Pena-Castro, 2022). The representations of these artists in the media around the end of the 20th century looked for a depiction of vulnerability and sentimentalism focusing frequently on their personal and private life, a situation which contrasted greatly with the content of interviews with male artists focused on their professional life (Pajón, 2019; 2021).

The following excerpt corresponds to the band *Acetre* a band that started its activity in 1976. This band also took languages as a means of political activism in this case reinterpreting repertoire in dialects from Spanish and Portuguese. This repertoire was erased or translated to Spanish during the dictatorship as part of the political agenda. Among their compositions or reinterpretations, we can find songs where women are turned into the main character like *La Charramangá*, not officially recorded, *La capitana* (2003), *La alborada de Jarramplas*, *Bailes del pandero* (2003), *Mae Bruxa* (2007) or *El mercader de Zafra* (2011). *Mae Bruxa* (2007) is a song collected in Cedillo (Cáceres) it uses a dialectal variant of Portuguese specific to this village. This song presents the witch's imaginary of the feared non-formal authority. Taking Chollet's terms the witch is presented as an archetype of everything we are afraid of and as a way of delegitimization of women's knowledge (Rosaldo, 1991). It refers to the limitations of women in the public sphere. There is a Galician version of this song, *Túa nai é meiga*, which was also performed by Uxía, an activist Galician songwriter.

Que diga a verdade	Que digha a verdade	Tell the truth
Mas haja quatela	Pero con cautela	But with cautiousness
Tua mãe é bruxa	Túa nai é meiga	Your mother is a witch
Tenho medo del	Teño medo dela	<u>I'm</u> afraid of her.

Figure 1. Excerpts of Mae Bruxa and Túa nai é meiga with English translation.

In these cases, the witch presented as a vindication symbol becomes part of an attempt to acknowledge anonymous women in history and their inputs to traditional knowledge. At the same time, the artists and songwriters mentioned above were pioneers in their musical feminist activism through content and social contexts, which contributed to raising new female roles. As the above-mentioned band composed most of these songs in the last decade of the 20th century, moving to 21st-century musical practices, witch representations are focused generally on the activist appropriation of this figure, and rousing reflection around its audience on how witches have been represented and how this history means different strategies for gender oppression.

The music video and the song *Zer Izan* [What to be] (2017) by Huntza in collaboration with the bands Mafalda and Tremenda Jauría, a Basque band that mixes rock and traditional music, places the audience in a demonstration on the 8th of March International Women's Day. The song opens and closes with a background of feminist claims from these demonstrations. Through the lyrics, they refer to the Sabbath in comparison with the feminist movement, as an organized female collective. Alluding to the fear of collective action of women (Beteta, 2016) the lyrics bring up women's empowerment and the necessity of breaking traditional role models, "betraying traditions," which restricted women mainly to domestic space.

Tradizioak traizionatzean	Betraying traditions
Ileak puntan jartzean	With hair standing on air
Erratzak utzi ta mikrofonoak hartzean	Leaving broomsticks and raising mics
Hegan egitean... ez digute esango!	When flying, they won't tell!
Zer egin, nola esan	What to do, how to say it,
Nola egin ta zer izan	how to do it, and what to be.
[...] Entre hechizos y runas	Between spells and runes
Organizadas verás a las hijas del agua	You'll see organized the water's daughters
Entre sombras y lunas, su poder.	Between shadows and moons, their power.
[Excerpts of <i>Zer Izan</i> , and English translation]	

Figure 2. Excerpts of *Zer Izan* with English translation.

This song mixes Basque and Spanish lyrics, a common practice among some bands of the revival folk movement. As the artists state in this excerpt, they identify themselves with witches “leaving broomsticks and raising mics.” This statement presents them as a form of activism on stage; this idea is enhanced with the audiovisual content, which at the end of the video intersperses demonstration frames with live performance frames.



Figure 3. Images from *Zer Izan* music video (2017).

A similar use of music in reference to the Spanish history of feminist activism through arts can be found in *Heroïnes de la fosca nit* (2019). El Diluvi is a band defined as modern folk, which merges traditional music from Valencia with a wide variety of styles. This song mentions directly the poem *La bruixa de dol*, in this case, the reference pretends to showcase the poem as a benchmark for vindicating the liberation of women in diverse fields, “we are a hymn of liberation. The one that sang the mourning witches.” The author of this literary work, María- Mercè Marçal is also present in this song because she is a referent of Catalan and Valencian culture, “We are the daughters of Marçal.” Finally, it is also mentioned the popular and widespread claim of the 21st century, “We are the daughters of the witches you couldn’t burn,” which is displayed by an intergenerational female crowd.

Undoubtedly, this extensive use of the figure of the witch reappropriated by feminism in contemporary societies has a strong presence in politics and artistic spheres. For this reason, the witch means a symbol of revelry and the creation of community (Korol, 2016). In *Bruixes* (2016) by Roba Estesa, a Catalan band, in collaboration with As Punkiereteiras, a

Galician band that will be examined later, tells a story of witch burning in this case with a good end for the witches. This song imitates a popular literary Spanish form *romance*,¹⁰ which is very close to storytelling. The collaboration of a Galician and Catalanian band is especially meaningful as witch-huntings had a bigger impact in these regions as some authors pose like Lisón-Tolosana (1979) or Castell i Granados (2019).

Aesthetic Symbolism

Witches have been revisited not only through their mentions in song lyrics but also through aesthetics and the audiovisual. To illustrate this idea is presented the case of a music video, *Figa* by Tanxugueiras, and the uses of dresses, which try to recall these mythical figures, as is the case of Habelas Hainas or Punkiereteiras.

Moving towards a visual analysis it can be mentioned the music video of *Figa* (2021) by Tanxugueiras. About the meaning of this song, the artists state, “It was born as a journey for reviewing and questioning beliefs, or alleged guilts established in our society.” In this case, it also presents the musical negotiation between tradition and modernity, which appears in their other works combined with the discourse of feminist appropriation of the figure of the witch. Through two different narrative lines, the artists tackle witch burnings in a setting that brings us to a recreation of an undefined past, and the other with modern aesthetics with diverse references to tradition and popular culture merging past with the present.

In the first frame shot, modern aesthetics are merged with images of mythical characters in the background, in this case, the illustration of an Akelarre.



Figure 4. Frame shot of *Figa*'s music video (2021).

In the following sequence are presented some of the most relevant and meaningful screenshots of the narrative of the witch burning. The artists' attitudes, depicted as burning witches are completely passive and calm, in the next frame corresponding to the second image the witches are showcased without fire and coming along with other hooded women wearing black, which progressively uncover themselves. This scene represents artistically the feminist reappropriation of the witch imaginary as a way of empowering and creating a wide supporting community.



Figure 5. Sequence of screenshots of Figa's music video (2021).

Looking at the use of dance it can be appreciated how the band's purpose is to combine traditional and modern practices. In this way, along the chorus is displayed separately a dance with movements taken from modern dance focused on upper trunk movements and later on a different view is Aída Tarrío, one of the main artists of the band, using movements from Galician traditional dance, again with popular mythology pictures at the background.



Figure 6. Screenshots from *Figa's* chorus (2021).

At the end of the video, after the witch-burning scene the dance disposal changes. The representation of modern and traditional scenes is combined with performing a dance with movements coming from breakdance in a round positioning of all dancers around a soloist dancer where Aída at the end takes the soloist role with the traditional dance.



Figure 7. Dance sequence of screenshots of *Figa's* music video (2021).

This music video is a visual representation of Tanxugueiras' general approach to rethinking traditional music through aesthetics, music, and recontextualizations. Taking the topic of witch-burning as a way of historical cultural domestication with violent methods as a narrative still present in social memory to reformulate this social mechanism for supporting feminism.

Looking at the uses of aesthetics for referring to witches it is interesting the case of Habelas Hainas, a female quartet from Galicia that composes new songs based on traditional styles as a way of feminist vindication with current contents. Their multiple aesthetics on stage rejects the use of traditional costumes, which is a common feature among revival folk bands. Nevertheless, their aesthetics are also a way of identifying themselves and reappropriating the witch's imaginaries and narratives. The name of the band, Habelas Hainas refers to a Galician popular saying, which means, "I don't believe in witches but there are" [*Eu non creo nas meigas, mais habelas hainas*].

There weren't many female quartets in traditional music, we were doing something new, never done before with a horizontal working method. [...] The name, Habelas hainas... is for witches, burned theoretically for being witches but because they were free women, crazy, single... With a lot of knowledge that wasn't of interest due to powers in those times. (Patricia Gamallo, personal interview, 9 March 2020)

This is part of the band's definition by one of the artists. She also mentioned the dressings used in their performances as a thoughtful act full of meaning. These uses correspond to their effort for reappropriating the witch imaginary, which is also present in some of their songs from the album *Livres e Loucas* [Free and crazy] (2017).



Figure 8. Habelas Hainas performance on the street.

The dress we used the most for a while in our performances was totally white, each one of us in her own style but all together reminded to different aesthetics from underwear from traditional costumes “de cotío”¹¹ from 19th century or to medieval witches before being burned at the stake. (Patricia Gamallo, personal interview, March 9, 2020)



Figure 9. Performance of Punkiereteiras.

As it was mentioned before, the presence of popular beliefs related to witches in Galicia was stronger than in other Spanish regions. As well as in the case of Habelas Hainas, another Galician band already mentioned in this article, Punkiereteiras has sometimes used references to witches through their dressings on stage.

Conclusion

After analyzing a wide variety of cases where witches are depicted through different methods and techniques in musical practices linked to Spanish folk music, it is evident that all these depictions belong to musical practices that address tradition, modernity, and feminism in all cases. Each case represents shifting gender semiotics that matches with the social changes and context where it is developed. In this effort by artists to present a kind of music that constantly negotiates between tradition and modernity, witches, are a character that represents this relation with popular practices as a result of popular beliefs and mythology and modernity through the feminist reshaping of this figure. All these ties with different conceptual fields make witches an appellant resource in this artistic phenomenon.

Although gender is negotiated and contested in popular music from a wide range of musical genres, in this case the figure of the witch reinforces the alternative femininity models

raised in the revival folk movement. Specifically, the witch portrayed as powerful and wise is intertwined with pervasive narratives of modern feminism. A thorough understanding of musical depictions demonstrates how the aforementioned witch as a feared non-formal authority relates to modern practices bonded with tradition and how these artists due to the diverse meanings of folklore and tradition need to construct and justify themselves as musical authorities.

Contemporary reassessments of the meanings and depictions of witches, as it is particularly noteworthy in the fourth portrayal model, bring closer this figure to the artists analyzed enabling their self-identification with witches which at the same time engages with existing social critical discourses.

Endnotes

- 1 In this case, we focus on western representations and meanings of witches. For an outline of the presence of witchcraft in other cultures see: Kapferer, Bruce, ed. *Beyond rationalism: Rethinking magic, witchcraft and sorcery*. Berghahn Books, 2003.
- 2 Akelarre means Sabbat, this word is specially used in Euskal Herria.
- 3 Some of the relevant literature on witchcraft in Spain is written by Lecadre (2023), Morelló (2019), Moncó (2019) or Alberola (2011).
- 4 Trikitixa is a small diatonic accordion played widely in Basque Country since the 19th century.
- 5 Both of them are regions of the Basque Country.
- 6 Basque language.
- 7 Txistu is a three-hole recorder from Basque Country. Usually the performer plays txistu and a small double-sided drum.
- 8 Workers' Party of Marxist Unification.
- 9 See Novell (2009) for further information on the Nova Cançó movement and gender models.
- 10 Is a type of sung poetry which emerged from Spanish oral tradition. There is evidence of written romances since the 15th century although in oral tradition is believed to be an older tradition. This type of poems usually were sang by minstrels as a way of storytelling. This literary form is very present in traditional songs. A wide variety of topics can be found in these poems but in this case the focus is on the ones labelled as traditional, originally transmitted orally.
- 11 "popular" as opposed to formal dressings.

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