

Shatter silence, raise hell, and run riot: music and gender in Spain, 2018–2021¹

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ABSTRACT

Gender issues in relation to contemporary music and within the artistic scene are a research topic of growing interest. This study focuses on the strategies adopted by women to resist gender inequalities in the music industry in the light of both cultural policies that continue to discriminate against them as well as the conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The data considered here were drawn from 40 radio interviews broadcast during the 2018–2019 season on the *Radio Nacional de España, Radio 4*; a second round of interviews was conducted in the spring of 2021 in the post-COVID-19 context, either by mail or phone. The interviews were organised into three analytical categories designed to provide details on subjects such as profession, prestige, and recognition of women's musical creations or productions, and how their representation was portrayed by the media and/or public. The results provided some findings relevant to the opportunities and careers women could access. Although the arts and culture are often viewed as 'women's worlds,' many sectors are permeated by cumulative disadvantages including gender stereotypes, difficulties in reconciling work and family life, objectification, and sexual harassment. The findings obtained in this current work are in line with these women's own responses, such as the following "The more I fight, the more I feel alive!"; "What if women had the power?"; and "No more twenty feet from stardom".

Keywords: gender, inequalities, music and artistic production, Spain; COVID-19

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SUMMARY

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CONDEMNED BY HISTORY

This article focuses on gender inequalities in the contemporary music industry in Spain, a country marked by strong gender inequalities and by patriarchal domination in its different social institutions including in schools, the labour market, family, and religion, among others (León, 2011). By the end of the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s, a process of modernisation (Bronsoms, 2007) had started with the fall of Franco's dictatorial regime (Guerra and Ripollès, 2021), which meant that artistic and cultural productions began to gain popularity among youth cultures (Guerra, 2020a). Nevertheless, ever since the beginning of this process of modernisation in Spain, gender inequalities have not only persisted but have become increasingly evident. They worsened even further with the post-2008 financial crisis (Alcañiz et al., 2015) and, more recently, with the COVID-19 pandemic (Guerra et al., 2021; Howard et. al, 2021).

Gender inequalities have been widely addressed from different perspectives in academic fields (Frith and McRobbie, 1979; McRobbie, 1991) encompassing the sociology of work, music studies, and gender studies. More recently, authors such as Sarah Raine and Catherine Strong (2019) in Australia, Paula Guerra (Guerra et al., 2018) in Portugal, Pauwke Berkers and Julian Schaap (2018) in the Netherlands, and Angela McRobbie (1991) in the United Kingdom have focused on topics such as the reproduction of gender inequalities in and through music or even in music as a form of resistance and existence — that is, as a way to denounce structural gender inequalities (Guerra, 2020b, 2021). Thus, the present research focused on understanding the persistence of discrimination practices, economic inequalities, and reduced career and leadership opportunities for female professionals in the Spanish music industry. This article was based on the content analysis of data from 40 semi-structured interviews with women in the music industry (Bardin, 2010).

HOW WOMEN CONTINUE TO FEEL GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Sam de Boise's (2017) research focused on gender inequalities in music scenes and the music industry in Sweden, a country prominent for its gender equality policies and preservation and encouragement of artistic and cultural productions. However, based on our case study (George and Bennett, 2005), it must be underlined that the political situation in Spain is different to Sweden because the former has a weaker economy and lacks political and social awareness of gender inequalities (de Boise, 2017). This, in turn, materialises as the gender disparity in opportunities, with women having unstable and more precarious artistic careers, earning lower salaries, and facing difficulties in rising to positions of power and leadership compared to men.

We intend to highlight and address these key points in the context of our analysis of the discourse of our interviewees. However, before we go any further, as pointed out by Reddy et al. (2020), there are many diverse interpretations of the word 'inequality' (Atkinson, 2015; Tilly, 1998). Indeed, it is a complex, multifaceted concept that occurs in different local, regional, and global contexts (Christiansen and Jensen, 2019). However, in Spain this concept of 'inequality' or 'gender inequalities' is inherent to a social and historical system of stratification grounded in key elements such as musical production/creation, careers, and representations. These elements form our analytical axes in this work, never forgetting that their manifestations vary according to local and regional historical contexts and the political and economic systems of each country (Córdoba and Ortiz, 2021).

Raine and Strong (2019) claim that since 2010, an unprecedented amount of attention has been directed towards gender issues within the music industry. Historically, studies such as those conducted by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s and 1980s, in which women were framed in secondary roles (as girlfriends, group-

ies, or sexual conquests), are almost endemic to the music industry. The criticisms directed toward the CCCS (McRobbie and Garber, 1997) triggered a desire to 'find' hidden women and thus, end their invisibility, which itself implied a rethinking of a set of concepts and methodologies (Guerra et al., 2018). However, these criticisms were made in relation to Anglo-Saxon countries, necessarily leaving out Southern European countries such as Spain and Portugal. A paradigmatic example is the research of Sarah Thornton (1995), which focused on the peripheral roles that were reserved for women, thereby preventing them from rising in the subcultural hierarchy. From an even more recent perspective, and close to the reality of the do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos from the punk subculture, Griffin (2012) noted that although only a few bands include women, there is also another relevant factor: men monopolise the organisation of concerts. These positions determine a type of discourse that is established in these scenes, leading these women to 'disappear' when the past becomes history (Strong, 2011). Nonetheless, we are still facing Anglo-centric realities.

From the viewpoint of the historical evolution of the music industry, Bennett and Guerra (2019) mentioned that women are unable to control the language and symbols used to reproduce power structures. Since the early days of the production and dissemination of music, sexist attitudes, the frequent absence of women in these spaces, in the media, on posters and on billboards, and denial of the use of technologies (Clawson, 1999) have all led to their current invisibility within the music industry. Focusing on the Spanish case, some reports have noted that women earn lower amounts in royalties and are less frequently aired on radio (Martinez, 2021). In fact, in Spain, the first study on gender inequalities and the roles played by women in the Spanish music industry was conducted by the Asociación de *Mujeres de la Industria de la Música* (Women in the Music Industry Association or *Asociación MIM*). In fact, we already mentioned a 2020 study that showed

that women in this industry have lower salaries (at around 70% of the national average),² a higher percentage of temporary unemployment, with only 27.09% holding leadership positions (Skillset, 2010), even though, paradoxically, they have higher educational qualifications than many of their male peers. Additionally, their study revealed that 79% of women had been working for 15 years or less within the music industry which they claim indicates “that, in general terms, and as also occurred historically in the labour world, women have entered [the industry] late” (*Asociación MIM*, 2020, p. 28). These inequalities also extend to the television and film industry.

As we can see from this report, the gender inequalities at the heart of the cultural industry in Spain have been little explored. In the academic, political, social and cultural contexts, some perspectives that have been emphasised are post-feminist approaches (McRobbie, 2009), focused on the relationship between women artists and the media. At the same time, some studies have highlighted the learning of instruments by women as a way to face the inequalities of the industry, given that women tend to be relegated to genres such as pop and in the role of vocalists (Bayton, 1998; Guerra et al., 2021; Wych, 2012). Either way, these contributions show that gender is a social construction that is successively created and recreated through multiple social interactions that mark everyday life (West and Zimmerman, 1987). In terms of gender inequalities, there are several forms of ‘doing gender’ (Dashper and Finkel, 2020) and in this context, women are assessed by their femininity and performance capacity and not so much by their musical abilities.

2 In 2017, the average annual Spanish salary was €26,391.84 while these women had an annual salary of €20,607.85 (*Asociación de Mujeres de la Industria de la Música*, 2020, p. 24).

MEANINGS AND METHODS

Here we started from a case study (George and Bennett, 2005) based on women in the Spanish music industry. In this sense, our main objective was to understand how women remain sexualised and stigmatised and how these aspects vary according to their age (Bronsoms, 2021). Based on this assumption, and with the intention of engaging in a multidimensional analysis, we used the contributions of Ragin (2008) and adopted a qualitative approach based on 40 semi-structured interviews featured on the weekly section *Where are women in music?*³ broadcast live on Catalan public radio, *Radio 4*, between September 2018 and June 2019, with each section lasting 25 minutes. The interviews had a temporal dimension and were organised with a longitudinal perspective and were simplified with axes such as personal context, visibility, and obstacles encountered (such as sexism and reconciliation of family life).

The bulk of the 40 interviews⁴ were with writers, photographers, journalists, cultural managers, directors, and programmers, excluding non-active professionals and genres such as opera. The same logic was adopted for the triage of music-making artists (Howard et al., 2021), by sorting the wide range of roles into musical genres (jazz, pop, soul, flamenco, fusion, punk, rap, rock’n’roll, and rhythm and blues [R&B]) and sub-genres (singers, trumpet players, bass players, guitar players, drummers, composers, violinists, DJs, and pianists). The ages of the participants ranged between 26 and 58 years and the sample covered different sexual orientations, ethnicities, social origins, and the rural/urban milieux. Finally, all the women were residents of and were professionally active in Spain and were recruited either by directly contacting them using a snowball sampling technique or by *Radio*

3 Interviews can be accessed at *Radio Nacional de España, Radio 4* (RNE). Section conducted by A. Bronsoms ‘¿On son les dones en la música?’ At the daily magazine *Amics i coneguts*. Season 2018–2019.

4 These interviews were originally conducted for a chapter in a doctoral thesis on the subject of gender exclusion in the 1980s to show how this discrimination has been perpetuated until the present day.

4 (RNE). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the precariousness and reduced the opportunities available to this collective (Fisher and Ryan, 2021) and so the interviewees were contacted again by phone or email in April 2021, when we centred our questions on their viewpoints on their working conditions and future, with the authors transcribing these conversations verbatim.⁵

BEING A WOMAN IN A MAN'S WORLD AND SHE SAID 'BOOM'⁶

According to Ridgeway and Correll (2004), gender is marked by a system of several levels and, in turn, by numerous inequalities such as those based on ethnicity and race, all of which subsequently translate into employment opportunities. We should also bear in mind that gender is much more than a mere attribute; it involves cultural aspects, social interactions, and identities. As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic brought structural inequalities to the fore, exposing a set of situations that could no longer be ignored by governments. Fisher and Ryan (2021) stated that, globally, women and people belonging to minority gender groups earn less, save less, hold less-secure and less-stable jobs, and are found in greater numbers in informal work sectors. The arrival of the pandemic made these social groups an easy target in terms of economic, social, and health vulnerabilities. The

authors further state that economic downturns can be thought of as 'he-cessions' and recoveries as 'she-coveries' (Fisher and Ryan, 2021, p. 238), because women are seen as the key players in the recovery of industries—that is, as the most resilient workers (Alini, 2020). This situation can easily be associated with the music industry given that, despite the forms of exclusion and segregation with which women have been targeted, historically, these same women continue to play a leading role in the industry. In fact, according to the *Asociación MIM* (2020), half the women in the sector are self-employed and work on a freelance basis, which reveals a search for alternative ways out, as well as a certain relevant entrepreneurial capacity.

In this sense, one of our interviewees, Tori Sparks, a 38-year-old flamenco fusion guitarist and producer said that the problems of gender parity and the situation of women in the world of music and culture in general had already existed before COVID-19:

So, it is like a disease of the system, that society thinks that women should automatically take on the unpaid work of taking care of the house and the family [...] as a musician, when I have been on radio interviews, how many times have I been asked what I would do if I had children and what I would do if I got married one day? They never ask a man about those kinds of things, because no one assumes that having a child means that a man cannot continue his career.

Sparks' opinion is shared by music journalist Anabel Vélez (aged 46 years), who stated that, "Women are constantly vindicating and demonstrating, something that does not happen to men." Indeed, both Tori and Anabel's discourses highlighted this epistemic resistance faced by women in the music industry. Drawing on the contributions of Catherine Strong and Fabian Cannizo (2019), women in the music industry—especially at the career level—face a number of constraints experienced from the perspective of their participation in informal and formal networks and reconciling their personal lives with work schedules. Music remains one of the

5 The article fully complied with the guidelines included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C364/01), especially with regard to Article 8 'Protection of Personal Data', including any information, private or professional, concerning an identified or identifiable natural person (Article 2(a) of EU Directive 95/46/EC). The guidelines contained in the General Data Protection Regulation No. 2016/679 have also been respected. The collection, processing, management and exploitation of data is similarly based on the guidelines provided by the Codes of Ethics of the International Sociological Association and the American Anthropological Association. The real names of the interviewees were used because their express consent was obtained.

6 Short excerpt taken from the song "She said 'Boom'" by the band *The Fifth Column*, 1990.

most interesting areas to pursue a career, especially for young musicians, despite its precariousness (Everts and Haynes, 2021). Not only do industry and economic factors play a fundamental role, but so do the media—namely newspapers, specialised magazines, blogs, and of course, social networks—as a current source of artistic promotion.

At the same time, and as we have already mentioned, some musical genres are the target of greater inequalities to the detriment of others. Examples of this are heavy metal (Berkers and Schaap, 2018), folk, and jazz. For instance, the number of women studying jazz is high, but the number playing it professionally is low. This lack of access to spaces and festivals, means of communication, and dissemination is related mainly to the deficiency of power logics. Although there is a certain amount of conditioning in the attainment of positions of power, management, and artistic programming by women, it is also assumed to be extremely difficult to break away from this imposition because of the shortage of reference models. As the president of *Mujeres en la Industria Musical*, Carmen Zapata, a 58-year-old cultural manager and programmer, clarified,

I guess that if the reference are female programmers, cultural managers or women working in the music industry, one of the things I see—in my immediate environment—is that women in my age group [between 50 and 60 years] are changing; they are reinventing themselves because they see that this industry will not have a place for them after COVID.

As Michele Paule and Hannah Yelin (2021) state, there is still a gender imbalance in the field of decision-making. The prevalence of this discourse can be understood within a discursive positioning, largely influenced by the media. Nonetheless, a series of high-profile projects such as Sheryl Sandberg's *Ban Bossy* (2014) in the United States and Edwina Dunn's (2017) *The Female Lead* in the United Kingdom mobilise role models—including celebrities and women from professional fields—in popular campaigns that aim to stimulate girls' leadership

ambitions. However, the same does not happen in Spain. The very concept of leadership (Campo, 2020) is also deeply unequal and segregating in the sense that traditional individualistic, authoritarian, and masculine connotations are often imposed upon women (Molero, 2009). For them to reach these levels of leadership, they eventually have to produce visions of role models that, in turn, tend to be simplistic and reductionist. Even in the exercise of leadership positions, parameters and limits are still established for female success (McRobbie, 2013), an aspect that was further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is a social weight—which is especially marked within leadership positions in the arts and culture industry—that women should invest in their academic and professional training on a permanent basis. In this sense, the opportunities offered to men with only a bachelor's degree are not equal to those offered to women with a master's or a doctorate degree. During her interview, Clara Peya, a 35-year-old prolific and transgressive pianist, claimed that the only way to counteract inequality is through the empowerment of women and she criticised and counteracted the patriarchal system guiding artistic careers (Green, 2001; Ramos, 2003). In fact, Clara even mentioned the importance of a quota system so that women can claim a space without having to adopt behavioural standards.

The music business, as a world, is already something perverse. I think the artistic world should be more evolved than [it currently is]—inhabited by men, made by men, white men. Where are the people of different races? I am in favour of quotas. I speak of opportunities, of women who do not have opportunities.

However, now focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we still do not know how this fight for gender equality in the music sector will be affected. Academic studies state that the pandemic has demonstrated the precariousness and insecurity of careers, in other words, it has exacerbated these trends. The views of our interviewee Fawda Trabelsi a 53-year-old cultural programmer, on

the pandemic demonstrated the irregularity and temporality of the working conditions that already existed in artistic and cultural activities. While artists (singers or instrumentalists) could resort to the digital universe as a tool to divulge their previous work, sound technicians, roadies, managers, and producers did not have the same possibilities. Which brings us to the initial point that, even in gender as a category, there are inequalities.

We made a lot of effort to program events, when we were allowed to, so that some artists could perform and receive economic benefits, minimising the importance of my part—that is to say, not charging at all. But when I think about it, I feel unhappy and very sad, and ask myself, ‘who would do something like this for me?’

Fawda tells us that, due to the pandemic, most jobs were cancelled without financial compensation.

My situation was even more affected due to job insecurity—without a contract, without being registered as self-employed. Consequently, this lack of regularisation (involuntary) does not allow me to access any type of regional or state aid. I just don’t exist.

The same view was expressed by Myriam Swanson, a 40-year-old singer, composer, producer, and performer who highlighted that the precariousness of careers in the music industry comes, to some extent, from the privatisation of the music world. Being a woman and gaining access to jobs in the music world is very difficult (Muñoz, 2018). This further complicates the precariousness because there is obviously no reconciliation with family needs. The more precarious the field of music is, the more the inequalities multiply. Moreover, according to Myriam,

The privatisation model imposed by the town councils is not the most correct one because they do all the culture programming outdoors and there are no other initiatives in other spaces. Another factor contributing to precariousness lies in the fact that in Barcelona there are only four universities for the study of music, which

is vastly disproportionate to the number of professionals dedicated to music. Added to this, the difficulty in making a living from live performances, because it is extremely difficult to be featured on a festival showbill and rely solely on performances in bars, further contributes to this precariousness. There is then, subliminally, a constant need for readaptation and reinvention.

Through the excerpts presented in this section, we can obtain a glimpse of the ways in which women frame their music activities: in a precarious context that often forces them to adopt a praxis such as DIY or entrepreneurship (Bennett and Guerra, 2019). The closure of venues because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the more recent reduction of audiences at shows, along with the scarcity of support and resources, makes the careers of these female musicians appear even more uncertain.

THE MORE I FIGHT, THE MORE I FEEL ALIVE!⁷

Following on from the previous section, here we propose an approach to the discourses of our interviewees with a special focus on the recognition they feel—or do not feel—regarding their artistic production. It is perhaps at this point that the media take on a major role since, to a certain extent, they are responsible for the invisibility of women. Cathy Claret, a 58-year-old pop, bass and flute player, and producer also tells us that, as a woman, she always has to work twice as hard because her fee is always lower than that of a man in the same position.

I feel like my talent is wasted. The press doesn’t want to know anything about me. The institutions don’t want me. How come the Japanese adore me, and over here—where I live—they don’t? I don’t know if it’s machismo, a lack of interest, but the more I fight, the more I feel alive.

7 Expression transposed from the narrative of our interviewee Cathy Claret.

For Marie Buscatto (2018), although the formal and informal barriers of the ‘art worlds’ (Becker, 1982) have been diluted, access to work in the arts still remains an arduous task for women. In other words, recognition of artistic work by women at the core of the contemporary art world is still a challenge, not only because of the pertaining gender issues, but also because of the musical genres that are adopted, in the sense that women tend to be over-represented in the media for musical genres considered feminine, such as pop. Since there is an association between musical genres and gender, it is immediately obvious that the same will happen with instruments. This devaluation was previously mentioned by Cathy Claret, who maintained that her talent was wasted, and is in line with several academic studies that have essentially focused on this point. In Claret’s case, she is recognised for her mix between flamenco and French music, but the same is also true for other styles such as electronic music or hip hop (Faure, 2004; Reitsamer, 2011).

On this point, Guerra et al. (2018) suggested that some musical genres, such as rock, tend to reflect a restricted social position of women and, even though they have already conquered a space for action—albeit a localised one—most women artists participate in traditional and stereotypical images. An example is Lady Gaga’s 2009 interview,⁸ in which she talks about the double standards for men and women artists. Following the affirmation of the existence of this double standard of representativity in the media and in industry, which clearly distinguishes men and women, we drew a parallel with the previous section, focusing on modes of resistance. One of the main movements to revolt against this lack of recognition of female artists was the riot grrrl movement, associated with the punk movement, which proposed a different way of conceptualising female voices. As discussed by Guerra et al. (2020, p. 21), this was related to alternatives to the ‘conventional norms of

femininity’. More recently, the riot grrrl movement has generalised to various artistic practices, such as ‘netactivism’ or ‘artivism’ (Guerra et al., 2020b), as well as to other musical genres such as funk. Activist and punk feminist Maritxu Alonso (31 years old) remarked that her main concern was to make women confer visibility to other women so that the latent invisibility of female discourses and productions could be counteracted.

The main thing is to refute this ignorance in the speeches in which the existence of women was denied in the scenes of the 80s and 90s and how in the books there is no interest in portraying their stories. I spent my adolescence in a small, isolated area of Cantabria. Punk, with its political message and creativity, penetrated me and came to me through tapes. Punk is a way to be yourself and find your space in the world. It is a form of expression that overflows. Punk is still a space from which you can say what you think, criticise the system, criticise yourself, and change the world.

Women in music continue to have supporting roles. Alonso even states that the existence of countless women who think about music, who write and produce it but do not step on stage, even in punk—a bastion against the system which has declared itself anti-machismo as a genre—has continued to perpetuate these stereotypes. An especially important step is to make visible the women who, at a historic stage, pioneered and changed these roles. For example, in the Spanish case, we can highlight Begoña Astariága, the bassist of the band Vulpes, a Basque punk group that made a difference by, among other things, being the target of an indictment by the Spanish Public Ministry in 1983, after a performance on a TV show.

Regarding the role of the media in diminishing and perpetuating these gender inequalities in the music industry, from early on, the media has been seen as a provocative place in relation to political, economic, and cultural power. However, this logic of contestation has not been recurrent in Spanish society—on the contrary, it has contributed to an

8 Lady Gaga’s interview excerpt. ‘Double standards and feminism.’ Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=habpdmFST0o>

under-representation of women artists and their work, resulting in the persistence of gender stereotypes, many of them rooted in the ideas of an oppressive political regime. When we talk about stereotypes, we do not just refer to physical characteristics, but also to other elements, such as artistic abilities (Buscatto, 2018). Women who perform outside the universe of pop have numerous difficulties in being dubbed ‘universal’ artists, ‘references,’ or ‘world renowned.’ Indeed, the successive and systematic hearing of these representations can make these artists the first people to devalue their own work (Buscatto, 2007). The labelling made and attributed to the work of the women we interviewed is in fact in line with the previous section, in the sense that it limits professional opportunities and progress within their artistic careers, as we can see in the case of Susana Sheiman, a 48-year-old composer and jazz singer.

In my case, I am classified to sing a specific style because of my age, I no longer have access to modern music. Masculinity in jazz is a norm. I just saw the documentary *Twenty Feet from Stardom* which shows women in the role of showgirls in these bands. The film shows a woman who recorded a song and is not credited for her work.

Still on the invisibility of women in the media, Andrea Motis, a 26-year-old trumpet and jazz singer provided a clear picture of the jazz scene in which women account for only 13% of performers.

Invisibility? There are many women who study jazz but there are very few playing. Festival headlines reflect this despite how numerous they are in schools.

It is important to note that the media play a key role in disseminating content that categorises women artists according to their aesthetic image and their bodies. The deep stigmatisation and pressure to which women (and their bodies) are subjected is in line with the data referred to in the *Asociación MIM* (2020) report, since they reveal that women can only position themselves within the music industry for an average period of 15 years, after which most are considered too old and aesthetically unappealing in

the eyes of the industry and of male audiences. In fact, Tim Wray (2003) states that artistic products, for the most part, fit into the logic of pleasing heterosexual men. Indeed, Susan Sheiman highlighted that in the specific case of jazz,

For women, the subject of image is terrible [and creates] unfair pressure. For men, on the contrary, is not even questioned. Instead, women with extraordinary voices end up dedicating themselves to dubbing or advertising because their physical appearance does not match the norm.

This excerpt from Susana Sheiman is interlinked with the opinion of another interviewee, Tesa, a 39-year-old rap singer, in the sense that she argues that all population segments—including, for instance, rural women—should be featured. In other words, Tesa views herself as an artist who aims, through her artistic expression, to promote protest messages. For example, we can highlight her song *Dones* from 2018, created in partnership with other female artists (Andrae, JazzWoman, and Eryfukksia) who were all guided by the same ideologies. In this sense, Tesa stated the following:

I believe in equality; I like people and I have always expressed this with a message of protest. I like to give visibility to rural people, to demystify [the idea] that people from small villages are illiterate. On the subject of country women, I have to vindicate them as brave and as fighters. All over the world we see examples of a sorority of women united against adversity and making a living. We must not underestimate this culture. I am very proud of my status as a woman from a rural area. Referents? I surround myself with many women and collaborate with them and I'm very lucky. I claim women's place on stage. What would happen if women had the power? Everything would be better.

Despite the existence of these negative views regarding women's visibility (or lack of it) in the artistic environment, there are few studies that show us how these women are discriminated against. If we previously spoke about the difficulty of access to leadership

positions by women in the music industry, *Músiques Sensibles Festival*⁹ director Cristina Torres, a 47-year-old manager, producer, director, and coordinator of concerts, festivals, and events, confirmed this and told us a little about her personal experience.

The *Músiques Sensibles Festival* [which she organises] is organically equal with the programming, 50% represented by women on the bill. As a woman, surely, I have suffered gender discrimination. The typical questions are: where is your boss? Have you done this all alone? I was not aware of the prejudices; they were a kind of weird situations [where you] either start laughing or [they] make you cry. I speak of prejudices also among young people.

Moreover, other interviewees also mentioned that the pandemic could potentially be a propitious moment for the cultural sector to change, in the sense that there would be a change in assumptions, motivated partly by the growing presence of women in social networks. Georgia Taglietti, a 56-year-old communication and digital director at Sonar Festival,¹⁰ remarked the following,

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant an important labour paradigm shift for the world of culture. A before and after that raises important questions about the intangible. We need to reflect about the cultural assets as an intrinsic feeling that must be protected, in addition to an economic sector. Job prospects are what will determine sanitary conditions. The future depends on each one of us, on how we want to rebuild, remodel, project, and evolve.

In the case of Georgia, it should be noted that she fits one of the profiles outlined by the *Asociación*

9 This is a festival that combines culture and music with social responsibility and citizenship as well as innovation. It aims to put culture and music at the service of society because they are seen as elements that promote development. More information can be found at: <http://www.musiquessensibles.com/el-cicle>.

10 A festival of music, creativity, and technology. It is one of the largest Spanish electronic music festivals and will arrive in Portugal in 2022. More information can be found at: <https://blitz.pt/principal/update/2021-05-28-Festival-Sonar-vem-para-Portugal-f177fc90>

MIM (2020) report, because she occupies a position of direction and management of a major event—the Sonar Festival. In fact, most of our interviewees belonged to the upper-middle class. We are talking about women who have had music lessons and access to a specialised education. In fact, these conditions, which have guided the careers of our interviewees, also denote unequal issues, because if we were talking about women artists from other backgrounds, we would probably be facing other perspectives and other difficulties.

The media, along with social networks, are currently regarded as the gatekeepers of the contemporary artistic and cultural scenes and as decisive in ensuring the success, or otherwise, of an artist. However, social media have also become a space for masculinity in the sense that they have adopted gendered language that builds narratives and ideals about women artists. The fact that women artists themselves lead their careers and make artistic decisions—a policy that is encouraged and preserved in Sweden, for example—is viewed as strange in Spain. In this sense, Gigi McFarlane, a 33-year-old soul singer, guitarist, and songwriter acknowledged that the road had not been easy for her, particularly regarding gender discrimination; however, she said, “Being a woman has made things easier for me.” A male artist in the same situation is seen as an innovative, capable artist and an example to follow. When we refer to a woman, she is labelled as incapable. Those are unfortunate examples that we acknowledge exist in countries with weaker economies and the absence of social awareness of gender equality. Within the scope of our interviews, one reference was constant: the fact that enormous importance is given to the work and support of other women—finding hidden women and ending their invisibility.

Thus, *Wom’s Collective*¹¹ (five women pop–soul composers aged 25–35 years) was created by Judit Neddermann, a 30-year-old singer and composer, to emphasise the power of women.

11 A women’s collective created for women aiming to fight for women’s rights within the music industry.

We are able to talk about women from different backgrounds such as the song about the new mother, or the woman who is empowered by other women and the song about the friendship between two women.

The designers and photographers for Judit Neddermann's album, as well as her manager, were women who believe that the music industry, in its traditional form, is obsolete, and that there is a pressing need for it to update and reinvent itself—perhaps driven by the pandemic—by going digital. Simultaneously, the productions of these women can also be seen as forms of resistance (Guerra, 2020b, 2021), mainly through the use or reappropriation of certain musical genres that are deeply male chauvinist, as previously mentioned. This is the case of the women's collective *Las Migas*, whose goal is female empowerment through flamenco. As its singer, Marta Robles, aged 45 years, said

We are aware that we empower women with this flamenco fusion but at the same time we cannot ignore that the world of flamenco is still very macho, even if as music it is passionate. In any case, people like to see two female guitarists on stage: singer and violin. It is true that we are also very active on social networks and manage ourselves. Regarding sexism, I think we are handling it very well. Media has a lot of respect for what we do, and it is highly valued that we are women and are our own bosses—no man directs us. I continue to see a much more masculine than feminine presence in everything, not only in music, but in all places—let's say sports, music, or theatre. In other words, that's what I see as a spectator, and it never ceases to amaze me.

Regarding the issue of musical gender, the position that women and men occupy within a band or in a group for a given musical genre is also evidence of gender inequalities (Berkers and Schaap, 2018). This is all the more evident when we focus on musical genres such as flamenco, where women tend to be represented as submissive. We perceive that the majority of our interviewees were influenced by flamenco, a traditional

and deeply masculinised Spanish genre, and artists such as Mariola Membrives, a 43-year-old singer, actress, and songwriter, give it a new twist by talking about gender equality, feminism, and social change.

Flamenco—and in general everything—lacks themes of inclusion. There are women who are undisputed creators of flamenco, pillars, but it is true that socially there is a lack of awareness of those who consider themselves feminist and make it difficult for us. For example, when a woman gives her opinion in a group of men, they seem to not listen and realise that those little details are necessary.

Rusó Sala, a 39-year-old Mediterranean author and songwriter, whose concept of song writing has Mediterranean, Sephardic, Andalusian, and South American roots, declared,

I work on a variety of projects such as, for example, one about motherhood, combining poetry with details for images, always with my commitment to women and making them visible.

NO MORE TWENTY FEET FROM STARDOM:¹² FINAL REMARKS

In Spain, a country marked by the presence of a dictatorship (Guerra, 2020a), it is possible to identify a historical component, but also one of ethnicity and race, related to the social construction of gender inequalities that today are so visible in various sectors of activity. Despite being historical and social conditions, gender inequalities have received increasing attention not only in academic fields, but also in the political, economic, and cultural fields. In several countries, such as Sweden, we see that societies have moved towards a logic of equality, but in Spain there is still a long way to go. It has become evident through this research that women still remain invisible in many fields of the music industry.

¹² Expression used by Susana Sheiman, one of our interviewees, in the course of the fieldwork and which conveys a strong meaning.

As we have seen, official data clearly enunciates the main axes where gender inequalities are felt. This is shown not only by these statistical studies, but by academic works such as those by Berkers and Schaap (2018) and Raine and Strong (2019). Drawing on the discourses of our interviewees, it was possible to conclude that women in the music industry earn lower salaries compared with men, save less, have less-secure and less-stable jobs, and are found in greater numbers in informal work sectors. In addition, they tend to have shorter careers than men because of the media and social constraints imposed upon them for reasons related to their aesthetics. In addition, they also have more difficulties reaching leadership positions, despite being better educated than men. At the same time, it is interesting to note that two of the interviewees whose discourses we present in this article assumed positions of leadership (at the *Asociación MIM* and the Sonar Festival) and that, despite this, they recognise this inequality, as well as the limitations placed upon women.

Although these issues have been unravelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, it became possible to prove, once again, that despite all these obstacles and constraints, these women artists continue to find ways to resist (Fisher and Ryan, 2021), whether through freelance work or through multidisciplinary, and thus not becoming dependent on the music industry to survive. Most of our interviewees mentioned that women had been reinventing themselves, precisely because they recognised that the industry, despite wanting them, did not have a place for them. The same applies to the case of the media, given that if we think of musical genres such as pop, the female figure assumes a prominent position, but most women artists, producers, programmers, and managers, among others, remain distant in the mainstream media—an aspect that, as the interviewees told us, largely contributes to their remaining invisible and marginal to an industry that increasingly seems to be male dominated.

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