Bad Bunny’s Purplewashing as Gender Violence in Reggaeton: A Feminist Analysis of SOLO DE MI and YO PERREO SOLA

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Bad Bunny’s Purplewashing as Gender Violence in Reggaeton:
A Feminist Analysis of SOLO DE MI and YO PERREO SOLA.

by

Dairíne Hoban

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Dedication

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Abstract

Bad Bunny has skyrocketed to fame in the past few years, gaining worldwide recognition as one of the best reggaetoneros of his time. His self-promoted image as an ally to women’s movements and the Queer community has garnered him the recognition of being a role model for youth and as an anomaly in the misogynistic genre of reggaeton. However, few have looked beyond the assertion of allyship to see if his work truly does support women and anti-gender violence ideology. While scholarship on reggaeton has well documented the prevalence of gender violence in the lyrics, videos and overall culture of reggaeton, it has overlooked the silencing and erasure of women as a key part of the male domination of the genre. This thesis centralises silencing and erasure in Bad Bunny’s work to show how he is “purplewashing”, or using feminist ideologies to cover up the misogynistic aspects of his music. Further, this purplewashing is defined as an act of gender violence as it seeks to draw our attention away from the dangerous sexist ideology that is disseminated through his work.

The two main songs and videos that are analysed in this thesis to show that Bad Bunny is purplewashing are ‘SOLO DE MI’ and ‘YO PERREO SOLA.’ In these works, anti-gender violence movements are co-opted by Bad Bunny in order to better promote himself as an ally. However, both works include misogynistic features, like the silencing and erasure of women, which are in direct conflict with and heavily undermine the women’s movements that Bad Bunny claims to support. This thesis shows that although society is quick to label Bad Bunny as a role model for anti-gender violence, his work both contributes to and perpetrates the same misogynistic ideology that leads to gender violence.
Chapter One:
Introduction

“WOMEN!! As an experiment, leave your pubic area hairy (leave your coochie hairy) for a while. He or she who doesn’t want it like that, or is fussy, can move on. Whoever wants to eat you will eat you however you are. It wouldn’t bother an alfa male like me.”

-Bad Bunny tweets on May 22nd, 2018.

“Whoever doubts [my sexuality] can bring their woman to my house so I can set her to raising my children.”

-Bad Bunny in an interview when questioned about his sexual orientation.

These are the controversial quotes of reggaetonero Bad Bunny, who has emerged as not only one of the most successful musical artists of the past five years but also as a celebrity activist. He has become known for using his music as a way to denounce gender violence through performative art, and for showing his alliance for women and the Queer community.

Two of his songs, ‘SOLO DE MI’ (SDM) and ‘YO PERREO SOLA’ (YPS), which are the texts for analysis in this study, directly deal with the issues of gender violence against women.

SDM’s video tells the story of a woman who is being physically assaulted in the face by an

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2 ES “El que tenga duda que me traiga la mujer pa’ casa, para ponerlo a criar los hijos mios.” Interview can be found at: https://youtu.be/7DOkw0LRLZI
3 ‘SOLO DE MI’ translates to English as ‘Only my own’ and ‘YO PERREO SOLA’ translates as ‘I dance perreo alone.’
invisible aggressor and YPS incorporates feminist slogans and movements like “women rule” and “#notone[woman]less” into the video. By situating himself alongside these women’s movements, Bad Bunny opens himself up to a much larger audience in society that is far less tolerant of misogyny and sexism than the reggaeton community, where misogyny is typically expected and accepted. In this sense, Bad Bunny stands out against his fellow reggaetoneros as an anomaly who supports women and gender equality. I argue, however, that he is engaged in an act of “purplewashing,” an attempt to use feminisms to clean up his image. Bad Bunny fails to actually address the discrimination that he himself perpetrates, nor does he centre the experiences of women or minorities in his work. As his alliance with feminisms fails to address the actual concerns of women, and the alliance largely serves his popularity, I label his purplewashing as an act of gender violence in itself, and as a manifestation of the deep-rooted misogyny in reggaeton.

Bad Bunny and Reggaeton

Bad Bunny is a Puerto Rican trapero and reggaetonero who first gained a lot of attention for wearing nail varnish and dyeing his hair feminine coded colours, like pink, when he broke onto the music scene in 2016. His image provoked the hypermasculine style of reggaetoneros, which mirrors that of US hip hop and rap artists and largely involves oversized sports clothes, gold chains, and expensive sneakers (Nieves Moreno). By 2021, he has already acquired a large fan base of over 27 million followers, and he holds the record for the highest charting Spanish album on the US Billboard ever. This highlights not only the success of his career in such a short

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4 ES “las mujeres mandan” and “#NiUnaMenos.”
5 Trapero and reggaetonero are the words for male trap artist and male reggaeton artist.
amount of time, but also his large platform. He has won many awards but most notably, his album, *YHLQMDLG*, received the Grammy Award for Best Latin Pop or Urban Album at the 63rd Annual Grammy Awards.

He has also been heavily praised, by fans and media alike, for using his platform to bring awareness to issues like gender violence and inequality. This is remarkable because reggaeton, the genre that propelled Bad Bunny to fame, was censored and banned in its earlier years due to its promotion of gender violence (Negrón-Muntaner & Rivera 36). He has been rewarded for his activism when he received the Vision Award by the Hispanic Heritage Foundation, one of the greatest awards by Latinx for Latinx. His feature in *The New York Times Magazine* heavily praised him as a champion for women’s rights and the Queer community, noting that although he outwardly condemns gender-based violence on his own social media accounts, most of his advocacy takes the form of ‘performance art’. He also participated in Obama’s commencement address, signalling that he is an inspirational figure for our youth. He has created an image of himself as a supporter of gender equality, and as an anti-gender violence crusader. However, this image of Bad Bunny does not take into consideration the ways in which his work recreates the same ideologies that perpetuate gender-based violence.

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8 Vision Award: https://hispanicheritage.org/bad-bunny-to-receive-2020-hispanic-heritage-award-for-vision/


10 Obama’s commencement address: https://youtu.be/rxpTjcouaeQ
Reggaeton as a genre has been heavily criticised, in both scholarship and society, for promoting misogyny and gender-based violence. Born out of underground music, reggaeton became extremely popular in the neighbourhoods and housing projects of Puerto Rico during the 1990s.\textsuperscript{11} It blends old dancehall reggae beats with a hip-hop style and includes both singing and rapping in Spanish (Nieves Moreno; Rivera; Romero Joseph). Reggaeton adopted the misogynistic features of hypermasculinity and domination over women from underground music. As Raquel Rivera has noted, “Misogyny in underground ranged from excluding women from active participation in the genre, to lyrics where female domesticity was exalted and reinforced, to the uninvited groping of women’s bodies at clubs, to lines about violently punishing a woman for being “loose,” to rhymes about rape” (2009. 129). These more overt forms of violence, the female role as subordinate, and the promotion of violence towards women, have remained prominent in the culture of reggaeton, but the covert manifestations like silencing and erasure are just as problematic and are often not recognised as forms of violence against women. My analysis seeks to change this by showing how misogynistic silencing and erasure of women contribute to the issue of male domination of the genre of reggaeton but are not being recognised in the literature as serious forms of gender violence.

The perreo dance is a vital part of reggaeton culture that also clearly represents the misogyny that the genre embodies: the dominant male and the subordinate female yoked together through a dance that typically positions the woman in front of the man, grinding on him. The sexual nature of the dance, along with its name, invokes problematic imagery of female subordination in pornography. In their essay on the perreo dance in Cuba, Jan Fairley states, “to me, the relationship between doggy dancing and porn is direct and unequivocal” (286). I don’t

\textsuperscript{11} In the ‘Barrios’ and ‘caseríos.’
intend to problematise the sexual nature of the dance itself but I do want to acknowledge the gender roles in which the female is sexualised and subordinate to the dominant male does reinforce a negative image for women through the dance. Moreover, this assigned role for women leaves little room for participation in the singing and rapping or other more active roles in the musical production in the genre. As Alfredo Nieves Moreno contends in his essay ‘A Man Lives Here: Reggaeton’s Hypermasculine Resident’, “in many reggaeton songs, the participation of women is circumscribed to dancing and fulfilling male sexual desire. Women’s objectification within reggaeton eliminates almost all possibility of action and translates their presence into a prize or trophy that men exhibit, dominate, and manipulate” (256). In other words, perreo has evolved into a female dance that is performed by women for men, as their only value in reggaeton. Through the production of music videos where women are seen to only dance, perreo is being constantly reinforced as the female role. I will later discuss how perreo has been manipulated by Bad Bunny to encourage women to ‘celebrate’ female sexuality in a disingenuous attempt to paint perreo as a way of empowering themselves through the dance.

As previously noted, much research on reggaeton focuses on male domination of the genre. There is well-developed literature which explores how reggaeton overtly promotes a sexualised image of the woman; an image of the woman as subordinate; and gender violence. For instance, Marie-France Merlyn classifies this image of the woman in videos into three distinct categories: the dancing woman, the sexualised woman, and the objectified woman (302). To be specific, through the dancing of perreo, posing provocatively, and camera shots that fragment the woman’s body, the image of the woman in reggaeton videos is reductive to these visual representations which satisfy the male gaze. More problematic, however, is the positioning of the woman who enjoys her subordination, which is best created in the lyrics sung by women, who
are heard to willingly take part in violent sexual encounters. Isabel Ramos’ study states that women are represented as not only enjoying every sexual encounter, violent or not, with a reggaetonero but also that women are presented as fantasizing about being raped and having violent sexual acts done to them (72). This means that the role of the woman in reggaeton is mainly an object to satisfy the reggaetonero or an object to satisfy the male audience, even where the male desires to engage in sexual violence. I maintain that more importance needs to be placed on the role of women in reggaeton for this image of women to be improved. In this study, I show how Bad Bunny is purplewashing these negative images of women in reggaeton but continues to impede the role of women as active performers in the genre.

The role of women as performers and composers within the music and videos of reggaeton is not only understudied but is also under criticised as a form of violence. My project identifies this erasure and silencing of women in reggaeton as a key misogynistic aspect of Bad Bunny’s purplewashing. Merlyn’s recent study on the representation of women in the most popular reggaeton songs of 2018 does statistically show how underrepresented women are as performers and producers of reggaeton, “Eighty-six percent of the most listened-to songs are sung by men, ten percent are mixed, and only four percent are performed by women, and further, women are the minority in the composition of these songs (5.67%) (313). This means that not only are women underrepresented in reggaeton but when they are represented, it is often not as performers or producers. I maintain that this erasure of women as active participants in the making of reggaeton music is an act of gender-based violence, and one that is largely overlooked.

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12 ES “el 86% de las canciones más escuchadas son cantadas por hombres, un 10% son mixtas y solamente el 4% son interpretadas por mujeres, y que la presencia femenina es minoritaria en la composición de estas canciones (5.67%)” (Merlyn 313).
in the literature. Bad Bunny is complicit in this form of violence and it upholds the systematic male domination of the genre.

Bad Bunny’s feminist image also integrates neoliberal aspects of choice and empowerment through perreo which functions to legitimise female participation in their subordination. A recent study in Spain argues that feminism and perreo are being used to subvert the misogynistic genre of reggaeton. Nuria Araüna et al. contend that female reggaeton artists are parodying the conventions of reggaeton that position women as subordinate. They note that “women choose to ‘[dance perreo]’ because they enjoy it, makes them feel attractive, and therefore they want to be free to do it without being degraded by men” (Araüna et al. 43). In this sense, perreo is taking on a new meaning in which women are not dancing perreo for men, but for themselves. On the other hand, Merlyn problematises perreo as a space of empowerment, “the results of this study seriously question other positions (personal, experiential, from the reggaeton artists and the feminist activists), who propose that the sexualised music of reggaeton and its dance can be spaces of female empowerment” (Merlyn 318). I don’t fully agree with Merlyn here, and I do believe that in the reclaiming of a dance that has subordinated women, it can be re-signified. However, if we are to take perreo and read it as empowering to women because they choose it to signify something new, there is still a clear distinction between women deciding that perreo is empowering and men telling women that perreo is empowering, as is the case with Bad Bunny.

Bad Bunny making decisions about what is empowering for women is an example of how male domination is not only central to his feminist allyship but is a form of violence that silences

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13 ES “los resultados de este estudio cuestionan seriamente otras posturas (personales, experienciales, de las artistas del reggaetón y de las activistas feministas), que proponen la música sexualizada del reggaetón y su baile como espacios de empoderamiento femenino” (Merlyn 318).
female voices in reggaeton. In his essay on this topic, Nieves Moreno contends that reggaeton is a hyper-masculine environment and that violence is a central aspect. “This male domination may be noted in the gangster’s logic, the violence… and the forms of seduction narrated in the songs” (255). In other words, part of embodying the hypermasculine identity of the reggaetonero is exhibiting violence against women. Reggaeton showcases a multitude of ways to demonstrate violence against women, and Ramos points to five main categories in her study in 2015, “1) verbal violence against women, 2) sexual objectification of women, 3) objectification of women to prove men’s masculinity, 4) women as willing participants of violent sex acts, and 5) demeaning representation of female femininity” (68-69). As can be seen, “violence” does not always take the form of explicit physical aggression but can also include representations of women that are subordinated or negative, which reinforce the idea of male domination. While these categories are both useful and important, Ramos fails to categorise silencing and erasure of women in reggaeton as acts of violence against women, which I believe to be key features of male domination. These more covert types of violence are key to Bad Bunny’s work and are being purplewashed by his displays of feminist alliance. In Karina Arévalo et al.’s study in 2018, they concluded that gender violence in reggaeton is changing and evolving to new forms of violence which are becoming less overt. “On one hand, the types of gender-violence which involve domination through force (i.e. physical violence and sexual violence) appear to be losing relevance, only to be replaced by forms of violence which involve more subtle forms of domination like symbolic violence and psychological violence, which appear to be increasing (Arévalo et al. 20).”

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14 ES “Por un lado, los tipos de violencia de género que implican dominación a través de la fuerza (i.e. violencia física y violencia sexual) parecieran ir perdiendo relevancia, para ser reemplazados por formas de violencia que implican formas de dominación más sutil como la violencia simbólica y la violencia psicológica, que parecen ir en aumento” (Arévalo et al. 20).
becoming more covert but not less common. Similar to Arévalo et al.’s idea of symbolic violence, which acknowledges that “patterns, values and / or symbols that seek to reproduce inequality and domination of women by men in social relationships” is a form of violence, I maintain that the erasure, and thus silencing, of women in reggaeton must become a category of violence against women that is recognised as equally important (12).

Positioning Bad Bunny as a role model for feminism within reggaeton because of his allyship further upholds male domination within the genre, and suggests that female subordination and erasure are remedied by an acknowledgement of these issues by men. Feminist critiques of male role models for feminism propose that men are widely more quickly accepted as feminists (in contrast to women who are often critiqued for defining themselves as feminists), and also that celebrating men as feminists suggests that feminist success is thereby achieved or rooted in men identifying as such (Cobb; Rivers). Bad Bunny’s success as an ally to women as a reggaetonero is a clear example of this theory. Feminist media writer Andi Zeisler also criticises popular music stars for not doing the kind of feminist work that actually challenges some of the oppressive structures of sexism. “Media and pop culture have to help change the narrative whereby simply claiming an identity that’s feminist stands in for actually doing work in the service of equality” (Zeisler 167). Along this logic, Bad Bunny neither challenges the misogyny within reggaeton nor outside reggaeton. He has simply created a feminist image and uses it to stand out against his fellow reggaetoneros who are seen as misogynistic.

Purplewashing

My study, therefore, shows how Bad Bunny both relies upon and incorporates overt manifestations of misogyny in reggaeton in order to purplewash. By refusing to read his feminist
image or role model status as an achievement for women in reggaeton, I add to the research of problematising the male domination of the genre and show how Bad Bunny reinforces misogynistic ideology in his work. Consequentially, I define the new forms of misogyny in reggaeton as gender violence. These new forms of misogyny continue the subordination of women and the promotion of gender violence in the genre but do so under the guise of feminisms, or “purplewashing.”

“Purplewashing”, a term coined by activist Brigitte Vasallo, is the act of presenting something as feminist or using feminist ideology in an attempt to clean up the image of an institution, practice, or person. However, this clean up does not actually change the policies that discriminate, “It is the process of the instrumentalization of feminist fights with the intention of legitimising policies of exclusion against minority populations and is oftentimes racist” (Vasallo). Therefore, it stands against feminist struggles that strive for inclusivity and ending oppression for all oppressed peoples. The term purplewashing derives from the term pinkwashing, which seeks to achieve similar goals but concerning LGBTQ rights (Spade). Misogyny in reggaeton is so incredibly overt, that Bad Bunny’s feminist image stands out as an effort to change the face of reggaeton, but largely leaves women out of this change.

The feminist image that Bad Bunny creates in order to purplewash and appeal to women is also a performative one. In a recent study on activism regarding the Black Lives Matter movement, Peter Kalina defines a performative ally as “someone from a nonmarginalized group professing support and solidarity with a marginalized group, but in a way that is not helpful. Worse yet, the allyship is done in a way that may actually be harmful to ‘the cause’” (478). The term performative allyship does not, therefore, signal a helpful act of allyship, but it is a criticism

15 ES “Es el proceso de instrumentalización de las luchas feministas con la finalidad de legitimar políticas de exclusión contra poblaciones minorizadas, habitualmente de corte racista” (Vasallo).
of solidarity or activism that fails to support movements or groups in any way that is substantive. Further, there is typically some kind of reward involved for the ally, either a monetary reward or just a virtual pat on the back (Kalina 478). Bad Bunny’s feminist image can therefore be defined as performative because it lacks meaningful social action, but it has also rewarded the performer’s image, as discussed earlier. This is not to say that there are no positives to Bad Bunny’s performative allyship. By challenging hegemonic gender norms, Bad Bunny is certainly breaking binaries in reggaeton. Some of his work includes gay and lesbian couples in videos, Queer people, and lyrics that condemn homophobia. This is certainly to be commended in a genre that is so heavily steeped in homophobia and misogyny. However, to be committed to women’s rights or Queer rights means a commitment to centralising the experiences of women and Queer people in his work, something which Bad Bunny fails to do.

Moreover, his feminist messages invoke neoliberal and popular feminist ideologies which actually reinforce gender inequalities. While Bad Bunny’s feminist image could be criticised as “postfeminist,” and it certainly has some qualities, postfeminism requires a disavowal of feminism and gender inequality, which Bad Bunny actually relies upon. Therefore, neoliberal feminism is the more appropriate concept to describe the kind of feminism Bad Bunny disseminates. Neoliberal feminism acknowledges gender inequalities but places the responsibility on the individual woman to fix her own positioning in society (Banet-Weiser et al. 7). In this sense, we can analyse Bad Bunny’s work as neoliberal because it does not deny gender inequalities and includes “the neoliberal feminist subject… mobilized to convert continued gender inequality from a structural problem into an individual affair” (Rottenberg 420). Popular feminism analyses the increasing visibility of feminisms in mainstream media but defines them as “influenced by individualism, postfeminism and neoliberal corporate culture” (Banet-Weiser
et. al. 13). This allows us to critique the feminist message that Bad Bunny promotes in his work. In other words, central to these feminisms and Bad Bunny’s performative allyship is the neoliberal woman, who must challenge her inequality as an individual agent and avoid concepts of collective justice or men’s responsibility in ending gender violence.

By analysing Bad Bunny’s allyship to women’s movements using these feminist theoretical frameworks, we can see that it is in fact harmful and unhelpful to the social movements that he claims to support. Additionally, because of his performative allyship and failure to address the systemic and systematic nature of gender inequality within reggaeton, Bad Bunny supports male domination of the genre. What Bad Bunny is doing, using marginalised voices and the struggles of women’s movements as a place to cultivate wealth, is deeply problematic. More problematic is to have society position him as a feminist triumph, which truly underscores the absence of an understanding of feminist ideologies in popular culture. Any capitalist and neoliberalist structures that aim to maintain the subordination of women cannot align with feminist movements that seek to improve the lives and situations of women, and other minority groups that feminisms support (Baer; Jackson). Therefore, it is imperative to distinguish Bad Bunny’s alliance with anti-gender violence feminist groups as purplewashing, an act of gender-based violence, and a newly evolved form of the existing misogyny in reggaeton.

To prove Bad Bunny’s purplewashing is a dangerous act of gender violence and promotes sexist ideology, I will first look at his song ‘SOLO DE MI’ (SDM) in Chapter 2. I will contextualise the release of this song within the social movement in Puerto Rico at the time, which was condemning femicides. Then, I will analyse the lyrics and video of this song to show how it fails to centralise women’s experiences, and in fact, erases and silences women. I will argue that it promotes gender-based violence by falling into the trope of glorifying violence
against women and adding to the pornography of violence against women. Then, I will show how it relies on the neoliberal idea of individual empowerment instead of critiquing the systematic nature of gender-based violence. Lastly, I will highlight the dangers of this purplewashing to social movements. In Chapter 3 I will analyse ‘YO PERREO SOLA’ (YPS) and similarly discuss its historical context with the murder of the transgender woman, Alexa Negrón. Following this, I move to another feminist analysis of the music video and lyrics and show a similar decentralisation of women’s experiences despite the use of slogans from their social movements. I then discuss the issues surrounding Bad Bunny’s promotion of perreo as a site of female empowerment, and his problematic understanding of dancing as a way to end gender-based violence. Lastly, I again return to his purplewashing and explain how this song is a danger to feminist movements and women in general because it co-opts their feminist ideology for misogynistic gain. Chapter 4 concludes my analysis by first taking a look at Bad Bunny’s other work, and actions, which are highly misogynistic and are being purplewashed by these feminist songs. I then discuss the lack of female artists that Bad Bunny works with, the sexual exploitation of women in his work, the misogynistic lyrics, and his commitment to continuing to work with artists that are homophobic and misogynistic. Lastly, I reiterate how purplewashing is a new manifestation of the misogyny that already exists in reggaeton and has been a focus of much of the research discussed above. Bad Bunny’s purplewashing should be considered as an evolution of this sexist ideology and should therefore be considered as a type of gender violence.
Chapter Two: SOLO DE MI

Bad Bunny and La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción

In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, in 2017, Puerto Rico suffered greatly as many people lost homes and jobs. During this time there was a significant rise in gender-based violence. La Colectiva Feminista en Construcción (CFC), a Puerto Rican feminist collective, sought an audience with the governor Ricardo Roselló in order to have him declare a state of emergency. They believed this was necessary due to the murder of over 50 women in Puerto Rico that year, roughly half of whom were reported as the domestic partners of the perpetrators. In November 2018, the group camped outside the governor’s mansion to protest the violence against women. A month later, Bad Bunny released his song ‘SOLO DE MI’ (SDM) along with a video and a message denouncing gender violence, seemingly aligning with the CFC’s campaign. Therefore, with the song SDM, Bad Bunny situated himself as an ally to feminist movements. But he also undermined key feminist ideology by centralising himself and individual female empowerment as the answer to ending gender violence. By doing this, he placed the burden on the shoulders of the individual woman, and he ignored the systemic nature of gender-based violence. In this sense, his allyship echoed neoliberal ideologies, which seek to remove societal responsibility and convince individuals that the failure to assert their own agency is the only thing to blame for their oppression.

Two months after CFC camped outside the governor’s mansion and failed in their efforts to gain an audience with him, Bad Bunny was granted a meeting. In January 2019, Bad Bunny and Residente, another musician and activist, met with Roselló in his mansion to discuss the violence and poverty that had consumed Puerto Rico since the Hurricane. When posting about the meeting on their Instagram accounts, there seemed to be little evidence that gender-based violence was on the agenda for the meeting. Bad Bunny stated: “Here, ready for the Governor. Without sleeping we were able to enter the fortress to discuss options to resolve the crime on the island, education, the Fiscal Control Board, the audit, the debt and we earned a coffee. Thanks Ricardo Roselló for opening the doors to listen to us.”

Residente stated: “The sun came out, but we had the talk that we wanted.” This meeting seemed to seriously undermine the CFC’s efforts and the collective were quick to criticise the meeting by questioning if Roselló only meets with men. By not addressing the concerns of the collective and not including them in his privileged access to the governor, it appeared as though Bad Bunny’s alliance a month earlier was short lived.

This kind of activism and celebrity engagement with activism has been heavily criticised in the past couple of years. In her article “Fan Activism for Social Mobilization: A Critical Review of the Literature,” Lucy Bennett suggests that the interaction is an effort to trick fans into believing an authenticity of the artist through performed intimacy in order to “cultivate a fan base” (2.1). Similarly, this failure to address the concerns of the collective is an example of performative allyship which, as discussed earlier, shows solidarity with a group but in a way that is unhelpful to the cause. Bad Bunny’s engagement with gender-based violence activism and the

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17 https://www.instagram.com/p/BsfktWNFOMf/?utm_source=ig_embed
18 https://www.instagram.com/p/BsfmBwMhWHb/?utm_source=ig_embed
19 https://www.elnuevododia.com/noticias/locales/nota/lacolectivaorganizacionalacasoelgobernadorsolosereuneconhombres-2470282/?fbclid=IwAR2UYWlsodtUlgOgwaE2CO8yN10xOimqcr8athQ4Y8fFvWEUR1pSd0DrihA
CFC’s efforts was not only short lived, but failed to even move beyond acknowledging and criticising the issue to which he had professed his allyship. Further, when in a position of power to enact change, he failed to do so. In every way he failed to share his platform with the women to whom he had offered allyship, only a month before.

When Bad Bunny released his song and video, he wrote alongside them on Instagram,

“I’m not sure if cock fighting is abuse, but gender violence against women and the absurd number of women murdered every month CERTAINLY IS. When are we going to give priority to what really matters? We always want to blame everyone except the ones who are actually to blame. IT’S TIME TO TAKE ACTION NOW! I know there will be a lot of opinions, but I only want to say that you have to start somewhere, and everyone does their part, how they think they can. WE DON’T WANT ONE MORE FEMALE DEATH! Respect women, respect men, respect your neighbour, respect life! LESS VIOLENCE, MORE PERREO! (AND ONLY IF SHE WANTS IT, IF NOT, LEAVE HER TO PERREO ALONE AND DON’T FUCK WITH HER).”

This message has a deeply problematic ideology that is harmful to women. For example, his comparison of violence against animals to violence against women, and his backlash sounding ‘respect men’, as though a lack of respect for men is lacking in the dialogue about gender.

\[ \text{ES} \text{ "no estoy seguro si las peleas de gallo son maltrato, pero la violencia de género en contra de la mujer y la cantidad absurda de mujeres que son asasinadas al mes SÍ LO ES. ¿Cuando vamos a darle prioridad a lo que realmente importa??! Siempre queremos culpar a todos menos al que tiene la culpa. ES HORA DE TOMAR ACCIÓN YA! Sé que habrán muchas opiniones, pero yo solo les digo que por algo se empieza, y cada cual hace su parte como cree que pueda. NO QUEREMOS NI UNA MUERTE MAS! Respet la mujer, respete al hombre, respete al prójimo, respete la vida! MENOS VIOLENCIA, MAS PERREO! (Y SI ELLA LO QUIERE, SI NO DEJALA QUE PERREE SOLA Y NO LA JODAS)”. Taken from Bad Bunny’s Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bra_Qrh0Qm/?utm_source=ig_embed}
violence. But most importantly for this analysis of his purplewashing is the fact that he is insisting that gender-based violence is a problem that needs to be addressed and his call for less violence. Here, we can see that Bad Bunny’s aim with this song is certainly to align with the CFC’s campaign to end gender violence, and that his efforts to take action fell short when faced with the opportunity to speak to the person in power at the time. As his meeting with the governor showed us, Bad Bunny did have other issues he wanted to call attention to in terms of the condition of the Puerto Rican society post-Hurricane Maria, and perhaps he used the opportunity as another way to scrutinise the governor. Reggaetoneros have always had a tense relationship with the government in Puerto Rico, dating back to when the music was censored and banned (Negrón-Muntaner & Rivera; Rivera). Reggaeton only truly became ‘acceptable’ or more mainstream, when it brought international fame and pride to the country. In this sense, Bad Bunny used the CFC for his own gain and failed to advocate for women when he had the opportunity.

Considering the misogynistic traits of the genre, SDM certainly seems out of place within the genre of reggaeton. Feminisms in general seem at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum to reggaeton, since they seek to ameliorate women’s experiences and end oppression for all, while reggaeton promotes the erasure and subordination of women along with encouraging gender violence. I argue in this chapter, through a feminist lens, that SDM is in conflict with the campaign of CFC in ending gender-based violence, not only because of Bad Bunny’s actions, but also because the music, lyrics, and video for the song, are a clear example of purplewashing. This is done by appealing to women through aligning with the CFC campaign, but then incorporating the erasure of women, a pornography of violence, and minimising the collective efforts for ending gender violence in favour of an emphasis on individual responsibility. While
the incorporation of any kind of discussion and criticism of gender-based violence into reggaeton is certainly a welcome and positive change, delivery matters. It matters because when feminisms incorporate neoliberal ideals, they maintain white patriarchal systems of oppression. While it could be argued that Bad Bunny is somewhat restrained by the characteristics of reggaeton (and therefore sexist ideology), I argue that this song is an act of purplewashing reggaeton because of his attempt to appeal to women through alliance. This purplewashing is inherently dangerous as the song and video encourage men to view women in a negative way, and even more worryingly, this song encourages women to view themselves in this same way. This is done through the image of the victim of gender violence who saves herself, and the female empowerment message which becomes increasingly masculinised and aggressive. Bad Bunny generally presents an overarching view of gender violence from an obviously male perspective. In this chapter, I will discuss these issues through an analysis of the song and music video of SDM, beginning with the topic of the erasure of women, followed by the pornography of violence, and concluding with a critique of the empowered woman narrative. I will then bring these together to show how this song functions to purplewash reggaeton and discuss the larger implications of how it attracts a new listenership and promotes allyship with feminists, while maintaining sexist ideology.

**Erasure of Women**

As mentioned earlier, the erasure of women from reggaeton as active participants in the music making or performance is an under-criticised form of violence in the genre. In SDM, Bad Bunny aligns himself with a feminist movement against gender violence but simultaneously positions the victim in the voice of a man, therefore erasing the voice of the female victim of violence. This ‘male voice’ has many parts, firstly, the use of the Spanish possessive pronoun
‘tuyo’ means that the person singing the song is male.\textsuperscript{21} If Bad Bunny had chosen to use the pronoun ‘tuya’ it would have meant the singer of the song was someone who identified as a woman. Secondly, the voice of the singer itself is Bad Bunny, and therefore a male voice. Thirdly, by male voice, I also mean from a male perspective. This song does not centralise the woman’s experience in gender violence, but instead, I argue, shows us gender violence from a man’s perspective.

In the first verse of the song, Bad Bunny sings about ending an abusive relationship, “What we had is now dead. I’m sorry if it hurt you. It wasn’t me that decided. It was you who fucked up.”\textsuperscript{22} From the beginning, the lyrics set us up to believe that the woman has done something wrong, she is the person that failed in the relationship in some way. By positioning the male as the victim in this song, Bad Bunny undermines the CFC’s efforts to bring attention to violence against women. That is not to say that violence against men doesn’t happen, but it certainly doesn’t happen at the rate to which it happens against women (Gomez Escarda & Pérez Redondo; Ritchie). Bad Bunny later sings, “She saw me with another woman and got jealous, tell me mama what bit you? I shit on the mother that bore you, I wouldn’t get back with you for anything.”\textsuperscript{23} Here, the lyrics suggest that Bad Bunny has quickly replaced his ex with another woman, suggesting that women are expendable. Further, the aggressive slur against the mother of the woman who gave birth to his ex is derogatory towards women, and does not show the respect for women that he claims to support in his message on Instagram. Bad Bunny takes his lyrics to another level by stating he would be happy if his ex-girlfriend died by singing, “Raising

\textsuperscript{21} Tuyo and tuya are the Spanish possessive pronouns for ‘yours’.
\textsuperscript{22} ES “Lo nuestro ya se murió, Lo siento, si te dolió, No fui yo quién decidió, Fuiste tú que lo jodió.”
\textsuperscript{23} ES “Me vio con otra y se mordió. Dime, mami: ¿Qué te dio? Me cago en la madre que te parió. Contigo yo no vuelvo ni pa’ Dio’.”
bottles at your wake”. By celebrating female death in this way, Bad Bunny not only sends his listeners a negative message about the death of women, but he encourages the erasure of women through his lyrics. To celebrate female death, in any form, is to stand in direct opposition of the CFC’s efforts and is to further the misogyny of reggaeton by being degrading towards women, celebrating female death, and centralising the male voice in gender-based violence.

In fact, this male voice carries itself through the music video in which we see a woman, played by Venezuelan actress Laura Chimaras, as the main protagonist. For the first half of the music video, the woman stands on a stage, at a microphone, lip syncing to Bad Bunny’s singing. This ventriloquy type of show robs the woman of her own voice, even when she is in a position of power. Power, which is represented through the positioning of the woman on centre stage, is robbed from her as Bad Bunny sings for her and she is left lip syncing at the microphone. Her role in this song, therefore, becomes a visual one. Women in reggaeton usually fulfil the role of sexual desire for the male gaze and are often given the role of dancing perreo or if heard, sing in a sexual way to confirm their participation in subordination (Merlyn; Ramos). By not representing women as performers or producers in an active way, or a way that does not further subordinate women, reggaetoneros uphold male domination of the genre. The woman in this video is centred in the shot but her voice has been erased. She is also alone. One, white woman, alone, on a stage, dressed in a revealing blazer, experiencing gender violence (see Figure 1). This is the image that Bad Bunny would have us see of victims of gender-based violence. And this does not, in any way, represent the people who are perhaps most vulnerable to gender violence: women of colour, transgender women, queer women, migrant women, disabled women (Mueller

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24 ES “Alzando botella en tu velorio.”
et al.; Ritchie; Speed) Further, it echoes “victim blaming” narratives which suggest that women who dress provocatively are somehow deserving of sexual violence.

Not only is the image non-inclusive and victim blaming, but she also behaves in ways that do not seem to align with a feminist perspective of gender violence. This can be seen in her evolution from her vulnerable positioning on stage with her arms hanging down by her side, to her angry and empowered lip syncing and gesturing with her arms after she has been hit multiple times in the face by an invisible aggressor. In a sense, the violence empowered her to find her inner strength which allowed her to stop the violence. This vulnerability at the beginning is mirrored in the slowed down reggaeton beat and ballad-like singing of Bad Bunny. The use of the piano, and the slow build-up of music creates a sense of calmness and femininity that normally does not belong in reggaeton. This is then later juxtaposed with the aggressiveness of trap and the regular reggaeton beat towards the end of the song, which represents a more masculine sound and the overcoming of violence. By representing the female victim of gender violence in this way is another example of victim-blaming, and it positions women in a place that makes them responsible for physically stopping the violence they are experiencing. It does this by promoting a message that violence makes women stronger, therefore women should overcome said violence and triumph. In turn, this means that women who do not do this, are at fault and have themselves to blame. It also encourages an aggressive masculine response to gender violence, while feminisms remain aligned with pacifism. This is an extremely dangerous narrative to portray as being anti-gender violence, since it reinforces misogynistic myths of victim-blaming that distract and damage feminist efforts to end gender violence.

The erasure of the female voice cannot be underestimated in terms of the power dynamic created in this song. The chorus of the song, “Don’t ever call me baby again. I’m not yours nor
anyone else’s. I’m only my own. Yeah you know that I am not even a little bit yours” repeats the assertion that the protagonist belongs to nobody but themselves. While misogynistic ideology would maintain that women are objects and therefore can be owned, Bad Bunny’s lyrics suggest that we only belong to ourselves. The ‘we’ in this sense, however, referring to men. This is truly why this song can only be sung in a male voice, as misogyny continues to exist, and men continue to exert control over women. It means that this song cannot work as a female ballad of independence, because it sings about men asserting their independence. When the lyrics of the song in which the woman is seen as coming out subordinate, “sorry, it was your turn to lose,” are listened to in conjunction with the video, a truly confused message begins to emerge. This isn’t an ironic masterpiece; these lyrics remain true to the usual reggaeton of Bad Bunny, and the violence depicted in the video is only a snapshot of what this genre promotes.

**Pornography of Violence**

The violence depicted in the lyrics of the song quoted earlier, takes on a visual in the video as we see the woman get struck multiple times in the face by an invisible aggressor. In fact, we are somewhat invited to believe we are the aggressors, because of the use of the camera, which looks directly at the woman on stage. The protagonist lip synchs the lyrics while staring down the camera at her invisible aggressor and later in the video we see the camera turned away from following the woman into the VIP section of the club, as the bouncer spins it away. This insinuates that the male aggressor is behind the lens of the camera, and also that the viewer is complicit in the violence. This portrayal of a perpetrator does not positively impact how society

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25 ES “No me vuelvas a decir "Bebé" (¡No!) Yo no soy tuyo ni de nadie, yo soy sólo de mí. No me vuelvas a decir "Bebé". Ya tú lo sabe' que yo no estoy ni un poquito pa' tí.”
26 ES “Sorry, te tocó perder.”
views gender violence. By not putting a face or gender on the aggressor, Bad Bunny shies away from addressing male-female gender violence, and instead shifts full focus onto the victim. While giving the victim voice in gender violence cases is positive, we don’t see that here. Instead, Bad Bunny forces us to bear witness to violence and the voiceless woman ultimately saves herself from this violence. By keeping the aggressor invisible, Bad Bunny is protecting the people who are ultimately most responsible for gender violence, and that is men. And gender violence cannot be properly challenged by protecting the perpetrators.

Further, the violence represented in this video is glamorous. The woman is dressed in a sexy revealing blazer, which is low cut and shows her breasts (Figure 1). This invites the viewer to see her as sexualised. The video upholds misogynistic beliefs, perhaps suggesting that she deserves the abuse she receives. When the song opens, the light begins to focus on her, and she acts submissively looking down at the floor, and then into the camera. By slowing down the normally intense reggaeton beat, a chilled-out vibe is created before a break in the beat and a quick inhale from the woman sees her be struck in the face for the first time. As she is struck, Bad Bunny sings, “I’m sorry if it hurt you... it was you who fucked up”. Paired with the violence on screen we can see the victim blaming narrative being created, and thus the justification for violence. The ballad continues despite the violence on screen, which creates an eerie clash of calmness and brutality. By continuing on with the music, the violence is diminished, and the woman is forced to continue lip-syncing the song voiceless. In this way, violence against women is reduced to something that can be sung through, while dressed in sexy clothes, and something women are deserving of. The woman being struck in the face is the only image on screen; this certainly arouses some male viewers.
And if lyrics of reggaeton are persuasive to promote violence, surely a visual representation only further encourages violence (Cundiff; Greitemeyer et al.). According to Rebecca Whisnant’s study ‘From Jekyll to Hyde. The grooming of male pornography consumers’, consumers become desensitised to the levels of violence as they consume more and more (116). Further, Whisnant criticises the porn industry for manipulating the consumer by anticipating the guilt they experience as they enjoy portrayals of gender-based violence for their own sexual satisfaction but advertising it as something they will enjoy anyway (131). There is no doubt that reggaeton’s lyrics promote violence against women. But in a similar way to pornography, Bad Bunny’s video showcasing a woman being beaten up caters for the consumers who are no longer satisfied by a mere reference to violence against women through the lyrics.

Additionally, if this is supposed to be aligning with a feminist movement, the question that must be asked is: what does this image do for women? Women know gender violence exists. Women already know what it feels and looks like, as the majority of people who suffer gender-based violence are women. The pressure that this video puts on women to be ‘pretty’ and strong in the face of violence is dangerous to women who are suffering mentally and physically due to the trauma of gender-based violence. After each hit, the woman puts her hair neatly back in place after being struck, and continues to repeat the lyrics, “I am not yours, I am only my own.” With the delivery of this line it is important to remember that she is lip synching to the masculine form of ‘yours’ which truly undermines any assertion of power that she may represent. A perfect, pretty, and strong woman accompanied by a ballad and lyrics that are derogatory towards women and assert male independence from women. Further, this caters more to the male audience who will enjoy the display of violence and paired with the reggaeton music will find the viewing experience sexually arousing.
The “Empowered Woman”

All these elements build up to the overarching theme of the video and the song, that women should become empowered by the violence inflicted upon them, and that male domination ultimately wins. At the beginning of the first verse there is a break in the beat and the woman’s head violently swings to the right, as if she has been hit across the face. She turns her head back to face the camera and now has a large bruise on the right side of her face. The break in the beat here signalled that violence was about to come. The woman fixes her hair back behind her ear where it had fallen out of place when she was ‘hit’ and continues lip syncing. She appears a little shocked at first, but this expression starts to slowly change as she beings to lip synch with more attitude until she is hit again while Bad Bunny delivers the line “raising bottles at your wake.” This signals a foreshadowing of where the violence will lead for the woman, and Bad Bunny’s celebratory action towards the death of women. This time, she receives a black eye on the other side of her face but continues to fix her hair and mouth the lyrics of the song. This repetition of movements shows both the strength and resilience of the woman, but also clashes with the accompanying ballad. Upon Bad Bunny singing the lyrics “today I go to see what I can fish” she receives a blow to the nose and her head is again violently thrown backwards. When she straightens up, there is blood running down her nose. This is the last time she is struck, and on the second round of the chorus she puts her hands up in-front of her face to stop the next strike. When she lowers her hands, her entire demeanour has changed and she is smiling, strong, and her make-up has been refreshed. She has recovered from her bleeding and bruising and has gained an attitude and confidence which is seen as her head flicks upwards while she engages with the aggressor and almost invites him to try and hit her again. She unabashedly stares down
the camera; and her hands, which once sat limp down by her waist are now being used to accompany her lip syncing as she confidently lip-syncs, “you are not going to call me baby again” and shakes her finger. Spoken in the imperative mood this repeated line suggests that the woman’s verbal assertion of power gives her the power to stop her aggressor from manipulating her, a threatening speech act ends the physical violence. This image of the woman standing up to her aggressor problematically shifts the onus of ending gender violence onto the individual woman experiencing the violence. This is an inherently neoliberal idea, that we as individuals are responsible for changing the situations that society creates for us. Neoliberal feminism acknowledges gender inequalities but places the responsibility on the individual woman to fix her own position in society (Banet-Weiser et al. 7) This is exactly why this narrative is dangerous to women, and especially to the CFC’s campaign against gender violence, because “the neoliberal feminist subject … [is] mobilized to convert continued gender inequality from structural problem into an individual affair” (Rottenberg 420). In order to truly show alliance with anti-gender violence movements, there must be an acknowledgement that this is a global systemic and systematic issue, and it is not the responsibility of any one person to end. It is especially not the responsibility of the victim.

As the female protagonist’s demeanour becomes less vulnerable and thus less feminine, we see a shift in the music also. A loud siren signals the change from the slowed down reggaeton to trap, and Bad Bunny raps the second verse. Here the faster beat the typical dropped syllable of words embodies the intensity of trap. The video takes a shift from the monotony of the woman on stage as the curtain behind her drops to see Bad Bunny staring down on her from a balcony in a club. Again, we see a power dynamic in relation to height, with Bad Bunny being higher than the woman on the stage, even though she has become “empowered.” Here, he is seen to be
laughing and pointing with his friends at the camera, which implies that he is mocking the aggressor. This is again a problematic message to send out about perpetrators of gender violence. It suggests that making fun of them or laughing at them is a way to end gender violence. It tells us that the aggressor is someone who is to be made fun of and laugh at; he should not be taken too seriously. Is this how Bad Bunny thinks an end to gender violence will be achieved?

As the woman can now move into this masculine trap space, she is seen to be led there by Bad Bunny who holds her hand. She is happy and confident, and he is her saviour, taking her from this sad ballad and empty stage to a club full of people, fun, and laughter. Bad Bunny’s lyrics here exude the typical masculine aspects of reggaeton and trap by turning to the topic of drugs, partying, and women, “I have a shortcut, they’re from a prescription a friend brought me… go on, roll it and light it up… saw me with another woman and got jealous.” The rapping of the second verse in contrast to singing the first one, represents the attitude shift from bearing the brunt of violence to going out and having fun. This attitude also incorporates a sense of liberation as the man is freed from his ex, and the woman is freed from her subjection to violence. But Bad Bunny’s lyrics insinuate that he wants to hurt the woman who he broke up with, and he is celebrating this violence by partying. Is he the aggressor or the saviour?

As Bad Bunny leads the woman into the masculine space of reggaeton and the club, he encourages us to believe that this music is a place where women are safe and welcome, and that victims of gender violence are welcome. But this space is also one that promotes violence against women and embodies toxic masculinity. Even down to the presence of the bouncer who turns away the aggressor from following Bad Bunny and the woman into the VIP section of the club, he is big, male, and black. The portrayal of black men in popular culture as aggressive,

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27 ES “Te tengo un atajo. Son de recetario que un pana me trajo… Dale, enrola pa’prender.”
dangerous, lazy and above all, a threat to society is a trope criticised by scholars for supporting and encouraging racist beliefs (Davis and Friedman; Swain). “Masculinity is an integral ingredient in the phenomenon of racism and is a driving force behind it, and patriarchy is the overarching structure which enables racism and under which it thrives” (Davis and Friedman 5).

The use of a black actor in this role in the video is unsurprising since reggaeton and hyper-masculinity are so intrinsically linked. As the beat at the end of the song switches again to represent a faster version of the original reggaeton beat heard at the beginning of the song, we come full circle. Bad Bunny sings about wanting to dance perreo and dances with his arms around the woman. This scene is over sexualised and at the very end we can see Bad Bunny and his male comrades raise their hands to make the Latin Kingz symbol, and then Bad Bunny grabs the neck of the woman as he turns to flip off the camera (Figure 2). All of this masculinity and aggression on display is part of the toxic masculinity that reggaeton artists embody in their music and it ultimately supports a male domination of the genre.

The female protagonist, although dressed in a masculine but sexually revealing blazer and empowered through overcoming the violence perpetrated against her, still remains subordinate and secondary in this scene in the club. Bad Bunny has even taken over the lip syncing since the curtain fell and she no longer remains the centre of attention after she has been saved. In fact, she is out of the shot for most of the club scene except when Bad Bunny is dancing perreo with her. The return to the reggaeton beat at a normal pace communicates that all is good again, that the slowed down sadness and depression of the first have of the song has been remedied by the individual woman who stood up to her aggressor and can now go party with Bad Bunny and his friends in the club. Bad Bunny’s lyrics position the woman as having caused the issues in their relationship and actively wishes harm on her and celebrates her imagined death.
This is an example of misogyny typically found in reggaeton where women are always subjected to blame for negative experiences of the reggaetonero. It also reinforces the victim blaming narrative we have in society. It is unclear from this video, how violence against women is being criticised. Instead, it is actually glorified, sexualised, and masculinised.

**Purplewashing**

The above feminist analysis of the song and video of SDM show that this song is deeply problematic and harmful towards women through three main themes: the erasure of women, the pornography of violence, and the empowered woman as an answer to end gender violence. The song and video fail to support the CFC narratives of ending violence against women. But the message accompanying the video certainly aligned itself with the CFC’s mission. The reception of the video and song by the media also encouraged the connection to feminisms. For example, an NPR article described the song in the following way, “Solo De Mi [sic] ("Only My Own") is a ballad of independence. The accompanying music video was part of a campaign against domestic violence that features a battered woman singing the words.”

This shows that Bad Bunny’s message at the release of the song was a powerful tool in recognising that he is against gender violence, regardless of the subordination of women and glorification of gender violence that the video and music promotes. The image of the ‘battered woman’ in a reggaeton video is what shocked people. It seemed shocking because usually these videos only showcase women who are dancing and overly sexualised. However, the nuanced sexualisation of the violence she endured, and the erasure of this woman’s voice through the play on ventriloquy, are aspects of the same sexist ideology that overtly sexualises women in other music videos. Another article on

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the Billboard website referred to the song in this way, “Bad Bunny delivered one last surprise before the end of 2018. The Latin trap superstar premiered his new video “Solo de Mi” [sic] along with a clear message: he is against domestic violence, and women should be respected.”

Both of these articles fail to address any of the misogynistic elements in the song and video. They also fail to address how exactly he challenges or stands against domestic violence, other than stating that he does. The video and music do not challenge the subordination of women in society, nor even the subordination of women that his own genre promotes.

Further, the lyrics themselves do not reveal any anti-gender violence message, in fact, they promote violence and celebrate the death of the female character. The only lyrics that could be deemed empowering to women are the repeated “Don’t ever call me baby again. I’m not yours nor anyone else’s. I’m only my own. Yeah you know that I am not even a little bit yours” but they are problematically sung in the male voice and using the masculine pronoun ‘tuyo’. This means that it cannot be an assertion of female independence because it would have to be written in the ‘tuya’ form in order for this to make sense. Since there is no question in society whether men have a voice or power, it remains unclear how this interpretation is feminist and anti-gender violence in nature. Further, the ability for a heterosexual cis man to assert that nobody owns him, and that he has the power to decide if he will stay or leave an abusive relationship, again fails to address the systemic nature of gender-based violence.

It is difficult to understand SDM as a “ballad of independence” for women and even more difficult to understand how the media can position Bad Bunny as respecting women, considering the song he released only two months earlier. On the 11th of October 2019 Bad Bunny released ‘Mine’ with rapper Drake. ‘Mine’ has a typical reggaeton repetitive structure to

29 https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/latin/8490477/bad-bunny-solo-de-mi-video
30 ES ‘MIA.’
its lyrics in which the lines, “tell him that you are mine, mine. You know that you are mine, mine. You yourself said it, when I did it to you” are repeated throughout the song. In the accompanying video, women are dancing seductively around Bad Bunny, fulfilling the sexualised token female participant role of reggaeton. These lyrics overtly tell men and women that women are objects; they portray women as compliant, and thus reinforce that women themselves participate in this decision to be possessed.

Clearly there is not an enormous disparity between the lyrics in these two songs, but there certainly is in how they are being interpreted. In one, Bad Bunny claims ownership of a woman, and in the other he claims he doesn’t belong to anyone. But because he has chosen to put one with a video showcasing violence against women, this is automatically taken as a feminist anthem. Is Bad Bunny’s decision to support the movement a genuine one and has his own male privilege failed to address the flaws in his interpretation of the problem? I think this is too easy a defence for the reggaetonero who does not bother to even surround himself with people who are female or Queer. “I was surprised to learn how few women or queer people occupy Benito’s inner circle” (del Valle Schorske). In this interview in The New York Times, Bad Bunny discusses how he did not intend to write a song in defence of women. Originally, he was going to write it in the female voice, but he feared the message would get lost in a media hype surrounding his sexuality. I am unsure if Bad Bunny meant gender here, as clearly positioning himself as a woman or singing from a woman’s perspective might trigger conversations about his gender identity rather than sexuality. Regardless, it seems as though he shied away from the difficulties of getting a female perspective, and he chose not to centralise women in the conversation. Instead, he released the song with commentary that allowed him to get praise and

31 ES “Dile que tú eres mía, mía. Tú sabe' que eres mía, mía. Tú misma lo decías. Cuando yo te lo hacía.”
attention for supporting the cause. The media immediately flagged him, as seen above, as a supporter of women’s rights. This means that to them Bad Bunny is different from his misogynistic fellow reggaetoneros and is safe for people to listen to that stand against sexist ideology. But as my analysis has shown, this song in no way promotes a message that is positive for women.

By bringing important conversations to the table and introducing this narrative of anti-gender violence to reggaeton, there needs to be a follow through of commitment by the star before the media and fans jump to award this performative allyship. Performative allyship does not help women of domestic violence, it doesn’t get the CFC an audience with Roselló, it does not challenge the subordination of women in reggaeton, and it does not centralise women as active participants in reggaeton. Instead, his music promotes violence, silences women, and relies on neoliberal narratives of individuals overcoming systemic oppression as long as they adhere to normative masculine behaviours. In this sense, Bad Bunny seeks to present reggaeton as a safe genre for women to engage with by purplewashing the harmful misogynistic narrative that flows deeply through the genre. By doing so, Bad Bunny participates in gender violence and perpetuates the same ideology he claims to stand against. This image of the reggaetonero would gain him even greater notice in early 2020 when he finally decided to do what he didn’t do with SDM and write a song in the female voice, ‘YO PERREO SOLA’ (YPS). My next chapter provides a similar feminist analysis of this song and video he released that would ultimately see the star rise to international fame performing allyship with the murder of Alexa Negrón, a homeless transgender woman, in Puerto Rico. This song launched the reggaetonero into the limelight as an ally to women and the LGBTQ community, garnering him The New York Times Magazine feature and the Vision Award for his activism.
Chapter 3:

YO PERREO SOLA

Bad Bunny and Alexa

In February 2020, Alexa Negrón Luciano, a homeless transgender woman was murdered in Puerto Rico. Her murder was video recorded and published on social media for the world to see. The absence of fear in posting evidence of the crime truly highlighted the culture of transphobia and gender violence in Puerto Rico. In reporting the murder, many articles reported the killing of ‘a homeless man in a skirt.’ A few days later, Bad Bunny appeared on The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon to perform his song ‘Ignorant People’ wearing a long black skirt and a white t-shirt that had the words “They killed Alexa, not a man in a skirt” printed on it in response to the media’s reporting of the crime.32 This performance marked Bad Bunny as an ally and supporter of transgender people’s rights and lives on one of the biggest stages in television. His act of solidarity made more headlines than the actual murder itself, which shows the power that the artist has in terms of reaching an audience and mobilising people for an important cause. At the same time, it also established Bad Bunny as an ally of transgender people and the Queer community. Yet, to search for information about Alexa’s murder online will bring about many more results about Bad Bunny’s engagement than it will about the issues of transphobia or gender violence in Puerto Rico. This requires analysis because similar to his engagement with the CFC, it is unclear if the allyship is beneficial to the cause or if it is actually benefitting the

32 Song title: ‘Ignorantes’ and original translation of t-shirt: “Mataron a Alexa, no a un hombre con falda”. Bad Bunny’s performance can be seen here: https://youtu.be/-vgXqw5ARLE
artist more than the cause itself. In fact, it could be said again that Bad Bunny is drawing attention away from the plight of transphobia and gender violence because the focus is on his allyship and fearlessness in performing in the skirt and t-shirt, despite being part of an extremely misogynistic genre. This allyship with the Queer community is the stage that the song YO PERREO SOLA (YPS) takes place on, which was released the following month in March 2020.

While the song and video for YPS challenge certain normative misogynistic traits of reggaeton, it still continues the same trend that SDM did, by purplewashing reggaeton. In this chapter, I argue that Bad Bunny presents the song YPS as an anthem for empowering women in the face of gender violence, and the video claims to show allyship for transgender people and gender violence activism. However, I show that with the song and the video Bad Bunny participates in the sexist reggaeton ideology of erasing women from participating in the industry; over sexualising the female body; and reducing the collective efforts of the fight against gender violence down to the ‘individual empowered woman’, an inherently neoliberal idea which denies the systematic and systemic nature of gender violence. Further, Bad Bunny incorporates feminist signs and slogans into the video of the song explicitly makes the connection to feminist movements and their fight against gender-based violence. He makes a statement that this song *is* feminist or is an act of allyship to feminisms. But analysing the song itself, we can see how purplewashing in this instance can be deemed an act of gender violence, because the song functions as misogynistically as any other reggaeton song but presents itself as “safe” to women. In the following chapter I will analyse the music and video of YPS by first addressing the erasure of women and the implications this has within the industry and in society. Then I will move to discuss the problematic message of ‘dancing perreo alone’. This leads to an analysis of the hyper-sexualisation of women in the song and video, followed by an analysis of how Bad Bunny
again incorporates the ‘empowered woman’ as the answer to gender violence. Lastly, I will touch on how the feminist signs and slogans appear in the video and how this song should be viewed as an example of Bad Bunny purplewashing reggaeton.

Erasure of Women

Earlier, in Chapter One, I argued that the erasure of women as active participants in the making of reggaeton or its videos, other than fulfilling the sexualised object for the male gaze, is a form of gender violence in which reggaeton is complicit. In SDM Bad Bunny erased the female victim of gender violence by putting the song in the male voice, but here, in YPS he writes in the female voice instead of the male. In fact, the video flips what he did in SDM where we saw a woman lip-syncing to Bad Bunny singing, at the start of this video we see Bad Bunny, dressed in drag, lip-syncing to a woman singing.

The song opens with the lyrics sung by Puerto Rican artist Génesis Ríos, better known as Nesi, “You used to ignore me, now I ignore you. Before you didn’t want to, now I don’t want to. You used to ignore me, now I ignore you. Before you didn’t want to, now I don’t want to. No, chill. I dance perreo alone.” By having these lyrics, written in a female voice and sung by a woman, they make the message appear more authentic than the lyrics of SDM. By this I mean, if SDM had been written in the female voice and sung by a woman, it would have made more sense to women because they are the group that most experience the issue of gender-based violence. So here, Bad Bunny is appealing to women by creating intimacy through the use of the female voice, both in the lyrics and by using a female singer. Problematically, Nesi does not

33 This is seen by the ‘a’ in sola which represents it is a woman.
34 ES “‘Ante’ tú me pichaba’. Ahora yo picho. Antes tú no quería’. Ahora yo no quiero, no, tranqui. Yo perreo sola.”
appear in the video of the song, nor is she credited anywhere on the album. If we consider that this song is supposed to be a feminist anthem of sorts or at the very least a song of allyship, then naming women is important. Further, the following reggaetoneros and traperos were credited as collaborators on the album, Daddy Yankee, Yaviah, Ñengo Flow, Sech, Mora, Jowell & Randy, Anuel AA, Myke Towers, Kendo Kaponi, Arcangel, Duki, and Pablo Chill-E. Although these artists provided more than just a voice to prewritten lyrics, it is hard to ignore that all of them are men. By using only the voice of Nesi, we see that women’s voices can be used and bought for authenticity, but not acknowledged as collaborators. Nesi on this track simply provides something that Bad Bunny cannot, but something that he needs in order for the song to be successful in creating the connection to women and feminisms.

The opening lines of the song are accompanied by the tapping of a bright red stiletto boot. Then it quickly cuts to reveal that the boot belongs to Bad Bunny who is dressed in drag. He is wearing a bright red latex suit jacket and a tight short skirt with matching over the knee boots. He is also wearing a black wig styled as a mullet with tiny black sunglasses and a lot of jewellery (Figure 3). His top accentuates the fake breasts he is donning, and he is wearing red lipstick to match the suit. Not only is his look exaggerating the sexual side of women by being tight and made of latex, but he also touches his breasts as he is dancing. He holds his breasts right before a cut into a new character in the video, which is another Bad Bunny dressed in a revealing jumpsuit, with even larger breasts. This character has long hair and unshaven underarms and is dancing in a yellow room (Figure 4). The video cuts between these two drag Bad Bunny’s dancing as Nesi sings the lyrics, “I dance perreo alone.” The camera zooms in on Bad Bunny’s fake breasts and ass as he dances holding his breasts and crotch area. These two hyper-sexualised female characters, one being the red latex and the other with enormous breasts,
are what replace Nesi or any other woman from performing in the music video to the sound of Nesi’s voice.

Bad Bunny is making a statement here, that women can be replaced by men dressed as women. He appears to be trying to make some kind of connection with the murder of Alexa Negrón as others have suggested. To dance in drag, although shocking to the reggaetoneros and their hypermasculine community, does not have anything to do with being transgender. It seems both mocking of women who have been erased from this track and mocking of transgender women who fight for recognition of their gender and who constantly have to deal with discrimination. It is worse, even, than calling Alexa a man in women’s clothes. The lyrics, “I perreo alone”, sung by a woman, written in a woman’s voice, and being represented by a man dressed as a hyper-sexualised woman, are supposed to be empowering to women. But instead, the video representation sexualises women’s bodies and erases and replaces them with male bodies. This kind of treatment of women in reggaeton is not empowering, and neither is the message to ‘dance perreo alone’.

Dancing Perreo Alone

The lyrics of YPS tell the story of a woman who was ignored by a man and has become empowered to dance alone, “Before you ignored me, now I ignore you. Before you didn’t want to, now I don’t want to. No, chill. I dance perreo alone.” These lyrics don’t tell women that they can dance alone because they choose to, or want to, they communicate that this woman was rejected. This negative portrayal of women is common throughout reggaeton and highlights another misogynistic aspect to reggaeton in which Bad Bunny participates, where women are not only the object of sexual desire but oftentimes blamed for anything negative that might cause an
issue in the man’s life. For example, if he was to cheat, the woman would be responsible for his actions.\textsuperscript{35} Some examples taken from María José Gallucci’s study on the image of the woman in reggaeton sees women defined as, “[a] murderer, deceptive… abusive and malicious” (92).\textsuperscript{36} Bad Bunny continues to add to this in his own part of the song in which he raps, “She has a problematic friend and another that barely speaks, but the three of them are devils.”\textsuperscript{37} Again, calling women bad or devils is not empowering, it continues to add to the sexist lyrics that already exist which promote the subordination of women. He creates the image of this female protagonist as not only a negative one, for example calling her spoiled and comparing her to Nairobi, a ‘baddie’ in the popular Spanish television series, Casa del Papel. This is mirrored in the video by the first scene to explicitly incorporate women (as it is unclear whether the flower dances are women or not) where we see Bad Bunny chained up by a circle of women dressed as some kind of royalty (Figure 5). These women are dressed all in black with capes, gold headgear and have horns, again symbolising the devil. This reverse role of women being in a position of power is shown as negative because it is insinuating that women in positions of power will chain up men, or in some way hold them hostage. This is the kind of negative imagery that damages feminist movements and their efforts to have women in positions of power in society. This imagery speaks directly to the fears of misogynists.

Bad Bunny also creates a hyper-sexual female character but problematically, by using negative words, it sends the message that women cannot be this sexual or that it is wrong for women to be sexual, drunk, or to behave as this woman is behaving. Bad Bunny describes the

\textsuperscript{35} This was the topic of Anuel AA’s hit song ‘China’ featuring Ozuna, Daddy Yankee, J Balvin and Anuel’s partner at the time, Karol G, in 2019, in which the subject of the song cheated on his partner with a woman at the nightclub and this woman was then blamed for his actions, “No me echen la culpa, cúlpenla a ella”.

\textsuperscript{36} ES: ‘asesina’, ‘engañadora’… ‘abusadora’ y ‘maliciosa’” (Gallucci 62).

\textsuperscript{37} ES “Tiene una amiga problemática. Y otra que casi ni habla, pero las tre' son una' diabla.”
female protagonist as drunk and horny and states that “men are her hobby”, which seems to suggest that she is in a position of power. However, Bad bunny utilises one of the oldest tropes in reggaeton in this song in which he sings, “And she calls me Daddy” and the female voice sings “Daddy, keep going yes yes” in the background. The female voice also moans sexually as Bad Bunny calls her hot and compares her to a famous reggaeton star, “She is so hot, like Natti.” As I mentioned in Chapter 1, a deeply problematic image of the woman in reggaeton is the one of women who are willingly taking part in their subordination. Ramos analyses how the music both situates women as subordinate sexual beings that rely on men, and also presents them as willing participants in this subordination and objectification by creating the ‘sexy’ female guest on many songs which will repeat phrases such as, “keep giving it to me” and “harder ‘daddy’, harder” (72). In this way, as Ramos notes, the lyrics both encourage male listeners to view women in this subordinate sexualised role but, more worryingly, encourage women listeners to also view themselves this way (68). The use of ‘Daddy keep going’ and ‘yes daddy’ connects this song to its misogynistic roots in reggaeton but also functions to remind us of the positionality of women in reggaeton, and society, as subordinate to men. This message is explicit and overlooked by the media who claim this to be a feminist anthem.

The idea of women asserting that they can dance alone combined with the message in the video that says, “If she doesn’t want to dance with you, leave her alone.” Of course, this is only after women have in the first place, been rejected by men. But here Bad Bunny is asserting there is an issue with women not being able to dance alone. This theme that Bad Bunny has based this

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38 ES “A los hombres los tiene de hobby.”
39 ES “Y me dice ‘papi’ (Papi, sigue. yes, yes).”
40 ES “Tá bien dura como Natti.” This is in reference to Natti Natasha, a famous reggaetonera.
41 Ramos uses the original Spanish “papi” in her quotation.
song on, that women are sexually harassed in clubs by men, is just a small part of the worldwide problem of gender violence. But by continuing to sexualise women’s bodies in a way that men’s bodies are not, Bad Bunny is responsible for the same problem that he appears to be calling out with this song.

The idea of using perreo in the first place is an interesting move by Bad Bunny. As I discussed earlier, Araüna et. al.’s article maintains that new female reggaeton artists in Spain are resignifying perreo from a dance to satisfy the male gaze in music videos, to being something women do because they want to (43). It also seems convenient that a song that is meant to promote female empowerment by telling women to perreo alone, promotes women to perreo, and thus creates more opportunities for men to observe women dancing sexually to reggaeton music. This is exactly how Bad Bunny creates a buzz for his music, like many other reggaeton artists, he starts or promotes viral dance challenges. How does the promotion of women dancing to this song, recording them dancing perreo and posting it online, in any way supposed to end gender-based violence? Although women may feel empowered by asserting that they dance alone, or by reclaiming a dance that has long subordinated women in the industry, it is one thing for a woman to assert her want to perreo and another for Bad Bunny to tell women to feel or act this way and then to directly profit from it.

This is not the first time Bad Bunny has instructed women on how they should feel or behave. In May of 2018, the artist published some tweets that were also deemed to be pro-women stating that he prefers “a fat girl than a fake girl” and advising women to leave their pubic hair to grow to show them if their men are real ‘alfa’ men or not, “It doesn’t bother a real alfa like me”. These are, again, heavily focused on sexualising the body of women, which can

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be read as objectifying, but also appear to be used in a way to target women in order for Bad Bunny to portray himself as an ally. Therefore, he appeals to female fans by telling them the opposite of what they are used to hearing, but he is still a man telling women how they should feel, and this is problematic to any kind of ideology that seeks to end female subordination.

Lastly, on the topic of perreo, we mainly observe Bad Bunny dancing perreo by himself in this video. For a song based on women dancing alone, we do not see very much of women dancing by themselves, and the minimal images that do appear are somewhat of an afterthought to the video. The last 40 seconds or so sees some token women dancing alone on a yellow background in between cuts of Bad Bunny dancing. This appears like a calculated effort to include some women, of different ethnicities, sizes, and dress styles, into his video that is deemed a female anthem. Why do they appear so late? Why is Nesi not included in this group of women dancing? The song title, ‘I dance perreo alone’ also appears calculated, as the rest of the song other than this short chorus is sung by Bad Bunny and sings ‘she dances by herself’. Bad Bunny wanted women to be able to connect with this song and feel empowered, regardless of whether the song is actually empowering.

The “Empowered Woman”

The other aspect of my analysis is about the shifting of responsibility. As seen again here, Bad Bunny has shifted the responsibility of ending gender violence onto women. Although men are mostly responsible for this problem, and even though this is acknowledged in this song, the onus is still placed on women to feel empowered to dance alone and to stand up to male aggressors. To encourage women to assert themselves in this way is similar to the idea that women should be responsible for ending the physical abuse that we saw in the video for SDM. In
fact, in the video for YPS we see Bad Bunny, dressed in the red latex, fend off some male aggressors. They are shirtless, dressed in black trousers and boots slowly walking towards Bad Bunny with their arms making grabbing type movements. This is apparently Bad Bunny’s vision of sexual harassment. He then manages to magically whoosh them away with a flick of his hands. This video representation is troubling and mocks the reality of gender violence that Bad Bunny is addressing with this song. It also undermines the experiences of many women who experience harassment and violence.

In the video for YPS, Bad Bunny incorporates feminist slogans from activists that seek to end gender-based violence and harassment. These slogans appear after the hyper-feminised scene of pink flowers, in which Bad Bunny is also fully dressed in millennial pink dancing on top of a white convertible car. From the car and the colour pink to the sunglasses Bad Bunny is wearing it all indexes Barbie and the hyperfeminine (see Figure 6). While on the one hand this could be read as a critique of the pressures that women face in society to meet the expectations of femininity, I believe this is a tactic used by Bad Bunny to shock the reggaeton world. Similar to wearing a skirt on The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon or dressing in drag, when reggaetoneros step outside of what is expected from them within the hypermasculine genre they draw a lot of negative attention to themselves. Therefore, it can also be argued that Bad Bunny includes this pink hyperfeminine scene not to critique society, but instead to show just how feminine he can be, and therefore controversial in reggaeton. The green fisherman’s hat that Bad Bunny dons in this scene, along with the green stems in the flowers signals us to the next scene in which the feminist slogans appear.
Inclusion of Feminist Signs

The cut to the scene in which we see large neon writing with the words “Not one [woman] less” and “women rule” is initially jarring because of the transition from this hyper-feminine pink scene to a dark green one. Secondly, this transition to highlighting a really important feminist movement is undermined by Bad Bunny’s shameless self-promotion. The #Notone[woman]less movement, began campaigning against femicides in Argentina in 2015, but has since spread across Latin America and describes itself as a collective against all misogynistic violence.\(^{43}\) While it is true that the incorporation of this slogan is great publicity for the feminist movement, and thus for drawing attention across the United States and Europe where this music will be consumed, the ideology behind it still matters. As this collective clearly states on their website, the need for social narratives to change is extremely necessary. Gender violence does not exist in a vacuum. Issues of unequal pay, unpaid labour, and unending control over women’s bodies are just some of the examples that need to be addressed in our society if we ever expect women to even begin to have some control and respect in our society.

Women’s position in reggaeton mirrors and exaggerates the issues that lead to gender violence. And as mentioned earlier, oftentimes reggaeton explicitly promotes violence against women. Therefore, by incorporating these slogans into this scene in YPS alongside the lyrics “she was single before it was trendy” and “she doesn’t believe in love since ‘Fuck Love’” Bad Bunny mocks the idea of #Notone[woman]less by promoting reggaeton songs, which significantly add to the problem of gender violence and the misogynistic society in which we live. Bad Bunny is referencing his own songs, ‘Single’ and ‘Fuck Love’ with these lyrics.\(^{44}\) The


\(^{44}\) Amorfoda is a Bad Bunny song which loosely translates as ‘Fuck love’ and ‘Soltera’ is the other song.
first of these songs, ‘Single,’ sexually objectifies a woman and the second song, ‘Fuck Love,’ creates a negative character out of the woman who has hurt Bad Bunny and made him no longer believe in love. If these songs were not part of the typical tropes of reggaeton and the depiction of women in reggaeton lyrics, we might not think too much of them. But they are part of a problem in which reggaetoneros subordinate women and promote this sexist ideology. In using these lyrics, Bad Bunny disrespects the feminist slogans that he incorporates, and thus he undermines the ideology that they represent by including these lyrics that add to and encourage the issue of gender violence. It is also shamelessly self-promoting at a point in the video that Bad Bunny has chosen to showcase feminist slogans.

Later in this green scene, another Bad Bunny character dressed as a woman with a long blonde wig, a beret, sunglasses, and all-black clothing appears (Figure 7). We see this character dancing with quick cuts back and forth to the previous scenes along with a quickened reggaeton beat until it breaks with the lyrics “she dances perreo alone”. This line is delivered and then we see Bad Bunny as himself, dancing perreo with the other Bad Bunny in the blonde wig. He thrusts his hips and cheekily looks to the camera while dancing with his blonde alter ego and sticks his tongue out. This is a very self-indulgent move but more importantly, it also erases women in that it communicates women are not even needed for this role in which they have always been portrayed in reggaeton. It takes the first erasure of women in the song, in which Bad Bunny uses Nesi’s voice but plays the character of a woman himself, to another level. By erasing women from the position of dancing perreo with a man in front of two feminist signs, one of which is a campaign against the erasure of women from our world, is not only distasteful but is overtly misogynistic.
**Purplewashing**

The undermining of feminist ideology in this song and video begs the question of why these feminist signs were included in the video at all. I argue that this is purplewashing. By attempting to align with certain anti-gender violence movements, Bad Bunny can not only reach a new audience, but he also presents himself to society as a reggaetonero in a way that is tolerated better, as mainstream media becomes less accepting of explicit sexism. What is being overlooked, however, is the covert misogynistic aspects of this song and video which are part of the same problem. This kind of ‘feminism’ is neoliberal and popular, which means that it relies on ideologies that support the subordination of women in our society. These elements of women asserting their desire to dance perreo alone as a way of ending sexual harassment in clubs shifts the onus onto women to protect themselves. This represents neoliberal ideology in that it relies on the individual actor to save herself and pull herself up in society, rather than by challenging systematic and systemic issues of gender inequality. Popular feminisms also rely on this individualistic notion of power. By reducing the same collective efforts that are represented in this video to individual responsibilities, Bad Bunny communicates that gender violence is not a serious and systematic issue but instead it is something that individual women need to address by themselves. This is what makes this song a perfect example of purplewashing.

By presenting this song as feminist, because it explicitly contains feminist elements, Bad Bunny “performs” allyship with women. But upon deeper analysis, we can see that this song includes many of the misogynistic tropes associated with reggaeton since the beginning, and therefore stands in conflict with feminist ideology. This kind of deceit is dangerous because it presents reggaeton and Bad Bunny as inherently safe to listen to, or in other words, on women’s side in this battle against gender inequality. He also draws our attention away from the covert
and problematic misogynistic elements. By doing so, he creates a dangerous environment because listeners are led to believe that this song and video are representations of what is needed in the fight for gender equality. More problematic is the fact that he is claiming that women can just reject gender violence and thereby end it. Essentially, Bad Bunny is sending these messages to society that women need to stand up for themselves against gender violence and on their own; they need to fight for themselves. This trivialises gender violence and is in no way aligning with the collective efforts of the #NotOne[woman]less movement which is being represented. Further, society appears to be championing his efforts by viewing him as a role-model and activists which communicates that his efforts to appear as an ally are working. However, it is unclear how this song helps the movement, but it is clear how Bad Bunny gains from using it in his work.

Lastly, this song created serious controversy in the reggaeton world because fellow trap artist Anuel AA was suspected to have aimed a comment on his social media towards Bad Bunny dressed in drag which read, “Son of a bitch Bad Bunny playing transformers”, followed by feeling ill emojis. Although Anuel denied this comment was his and he claimed it was edited by online trolls, it created a huge backlash in the reggaeton community against him, with many people claiming it was homophobic. It also led to the defence of Bad Bunny, in which his dressing in drag became an indication of how he is different from other reggaetoneros. It made him stand out against the toxic masculinity of reggaeton in which dressing in drag is not tolerated. This controversy brought so much attention to the song and Bad Bunny that it again almost became an anthem for being against the misogyny that Anuel represented, but the song

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45 https://larepublica.pe/espectaculos/2020/03/30/anuel-aa-critica-a-bud-bunny-por-vestirse-de-mujer-en-video-de-yo-perreo-sola-instagram-eint/
and video itself avoided the critique or deeper analysis that it merited since intrinsically, it aligns more with the ideology that Anuel, and reggaeton, represent.
Chapter 4

Misogyny and ‘Real G’

The intrinsic misogyny that is seen in most of Bad Bunny’s other work is being purplewashed by these two “feminist anthems.” In this thesis, I have analysed the misogyny in Bad Bunny’s work to highlight what is being purplewashed by his performative activism. In this final chapter, I will look at some of his other songs and lyrics that starkly remind us of his commitment to reggaeton’s sexist ideology. Then I will analyse his attempts to maintain a hyper-masculine reggaetonero identity, including his comments and collaborations with other artists. Lastly, I will show how this purplewashing is an extension of misogyny and an act of gender violence in and of itself.

Bad Bunny’s Misogynistic Work

Misogynistic lyrics promoting the subordination and denigration of women are highlighted as a key problem in reggaeton. Maluma, a Colombian reggaetonero, released a song called ‘Four Babys’ in 2016 which was found to be the most misogynistic song in the study done by Arévalo et al. because it included the most references to gender violence in the lyrics (15). When this song was released, it became an important moment for women and anti-gender violence supporters, as it prompted an online campaign to have the song removed from music

46 ES ‘Cuatro Babys.’
The lyrics of this song are an example of how objectified women often are in reggaeton songs. For example, “I’m in love with four babies. They always give me what I want. Fuck me when I tell them to. They don’t give me excuses. Two are married, one is single, the other kinda psycho and if I don’t call she goes mad” and “Four girls, four personalities… different nationalities but when they fuck, they all scream the same”. If we compare these lyrics with lyrics from Bad Bunny’s famous 2016 hit ‘I’m Worse’, “Now I have loads of mothers in law. I have the white girl who gives me lap dances. The rocker I fuck with Vans. The black girls, the blond girls, the models, and that’s not counting the fans,” it is hard to distinguish what exactly makes Maluma’s song so much more objectifying than Bad Bunny’s song.

These kind of lyrics in a Bad Bunny song are not as out of place as one might. In 2018, Bad Bunny collaborated on the crossover track ‘It’s Delicious’ in which Marc Anthony, Bad Bunny and Will Smith sing about a woman who knows that ‘it [his penis] is delicious’ because she ‘already tasted it.’ Bad Bunny’s contribution to this song includes the lyrics, “In love with that ass, god bless it…Girl with the big booty… she makes me horny, and you can notice it”. Bad Bunny’s lyrics do little more than sexually objectify the female body. In 2019 Bad Bunny collaborated on an album with Colombian reggaeton artist J Balvin called Oasis. The first track on the album is titled, ‘Wet’ a double-entendre signalling to bikini clad women having fun in the sea but also being sexually pleasured. Bad Bunny’s lyrics in this song are quite similar to those in ‘It’s Delicious’ as he again sexually objectifies the female body, “That booty is a paradise like

https://www.change.org/p/retirar-el-videoclip-y-canci%C3%B3n-machista-cuatro-babys-de-maluma-denigrante-para-la-mujer


ES ‘SOY PEOR.’ “Que ahora tengo suegras de más. Tengo a la blanquita que me hace el lap dance. La rockerita que se lo meto a con to’ y Vans. La prieta, la rubia, modelos. Y eso es sin contar to’a las fans.”

ES ‘Está rico.’
Bora Bora”. Even on the same album as YPS, Bad Bunny released probably one of the most misogynistic songs released to date, ‘SAFAERA’ with Jowell & Randy and Ñengo Flow, which quickly became a viral sensation.\(^5\) This song, from beginning to end, encapsulates the misogyny of Reggaeton and Latin Trap by sexually objectifying the woman, and even incorporates the long tradition of the token female enjoying her subordinate position, “(¡Keep going!) (¡Keep going!) (Keep going daddy) (Daddy, Da-daddy).”\(^5\) Bad Bunny also started a TikTok dance challenge for the promotion of his song ‘SAFAERA’ encouraged women to dance perreo to the lyrics “Mami, what do you want? Your shark has arrived. I want to perreo you and smoke a blunt.”\(^5\) The videos uploaded to TikTok and Instagram, for Bad Bunny to judge, were mostly close-ups of women dancing perreo from behind, a perspective that is inherently male in that it recreates the position of perreo, where the male dances behind the female. These TikTok challenges function as a way to advertise his new music and to involve female fans. An evolved form of a technique already used in reggaeton songs where we hear the female voice participating in her subordination and enjoying it, therefore sending the message to female listeners that they too should participate and enjoy (Ramos 72). The result of this TikTok challenge is that women upload their videos sexualise their own bodies for Bad Bunny and other TikTok users to consume. In this sense it erases the need to hire or pay women to dance perreo to his music and also creates free promotion for his music. I contend that Bad Bunny’s brand relies on making women feel empowered through perreo for this reason, which when broken down we can see that

\(^5\) Safaera is Puerto Rican slang which loosely translates as ‘out of control’ or an attitude that represents promiscuity or debauchery.

\(^5\) ES “Baja pa’ casa que yo te lambo to’a (¡Sigue!) Mami, yo te lambo to’a (¡Sigue!) Dime, sierva (Papi, sigue) Si tú fuma’ yerba (Papi, pa-papi).”

\(^5\) Perrearte translates as perrear being done to the woman not with the woman, an subtle but important difference in terms of objectifying the woman. Shark in reggaeton is used to describe the male “hunter” of its female “prey”, in a sexual context.
he seeks nothing more than to use their bodies for his capitalist benefit and to satisfy the male gaze.

Not only does Bad Bunny fail to recognise female stars he has collaborated with, like Nesi, in general he has quite a limited circle of people he surrounds himself with. Writing for the *NYTimes Magazine* article, del Valle Schorske stated, “I was surprised to learn how few women or queer people occupy Benito’s inner circle. It’s an effect, no doubt, of his fame — he’s had mostly the same skater-boy, SoundCloud crew since high school.” This means that not only is he often speaking for women and showcasing what he thinks women need to do in his music like SDM and YPS, but the producers and directors and other people working with him are also cisgender heterosexual men. Women and queer people do not really exist in Bad Bunny’s inner circle. Yet still, he has become an icon, spokesperson, and ally for their rights in the reggaeton world. In fact, at times Bad Bunny has been explicitly homophobic. For example, when asked about his sexuality in an interview he replied, “whoever has a doubt can bring their woman to my house so that I can put her to raising my children.”54 This kind of response is not only homophobic but also sexist. It communicates that it is very important for him to establish he is not gay by asserting his masculinity by denigrating women.

**Hypermasculininity and Real G**

This assertion of hyper-masculinity can also be seen in his continued collaboration with other reggaeton artists that are famous for their homophobia and sexism, for example, Anuel or Ñengo Flow. His continued collaboration with these artists shows that Bad Bunny does not consider working with these artists to be in tension with his message against misogyny and

54 https://youtu.be/DE1nZ-L4jlg
gender violence. On his album YHLQMDLG, Bad Bunny collaborates with Anuel, probably his greatest rival in the trap world but also the same person who criticised him for dressing in drag, on the song ‘It’s Fucking Hard to Be Me’.\textsuperscript{55} This was not the first time Anuel exhibited this kind of toxic behaviour either. He was heavily criticised after he released the track ‘Untouchable’ in which he criticised and made fun of homosexuality, HIV sufferers, and victims of Hurricane María.\textsuperscript{56} When we take into consideration Bad Bunny’s activism for the victims of Hurricane María, including meeting the governor and protesting with the many people who wanted the governor to resign, it seems odd that he would continue to work with people that are in opposition to how he feels on such important humanitarian matters.

These kind of music alliances make it difficult to believe in the authenticity of Bad Bunny’s activism, which is why I deem it to be performative. He gains more from the publicity he receives from performing allyship than do the movements he pretends to promote. To say Bad Bunny is feminist or a feminist ally is even more problematic when he aligns himself with the gangster lifestyle. This lifestyle is deeply tied to the reggaeton lifestyle, with many reggaetoneros participating in gang activity and even spending time in jail for gun and drug related crimes, for example. When an online rivalry broke out in the reggaeton community between Anuel and Maluma, Bad Bunny was forced to choose which side of the fence his allyship truly lay on. In 2019, Anuel released a song in which he mocks Maluma with the lyrics, “Maluma never had flow, always real G [Gangster]”. He also wrote on his Instagram alongside another video of him singing the same lyrics as above, “Maluma= For the babys. Real G= Ñengo Flow, Real until death, a delinquent, a bandit, a son of a bitch!!!!”\textsuperscript{57} In this he is saying that Maluma was never a

\textsuperscript{55} ES “Está cabrón ser yo.”
\textsuperscript{56} ES ‘Intocable.’
\textsuperscript{57} ES “Real hasta la muerte, un Delincuente, un Bandolero.” “Real until death” is the name of one of Anuel’s Albums and delinquent and bandit are the names of songs on which he has collaborated.
part of the reggaeton gang that sees themselves as ‘real gangsters’ and instead he sings for female reggaeton fans. Women are often referred to as ‘babys’ in reggaeton music and culture. The difference between Anuel and Maluma is that Anuel belongs more to the trap world and the kind of reggaeton that sings about the gangster lifestyle. Maluma, on the other hand, often sings about relationships with women and his singing and rapping would be much softer sounding than Anuel’s. Further, Maluma truly belongs more to the commercialised, popular reggaeton. Whereas Anuel would be more aligned with the underground and street life, even serving time in federal prison for the illegal possession of firearms. Anuel states in this comment on Instagram that the real gangsters are Ñengo Flow, and himself, by quoting songs and albums that he has made or collaborated on. Then, Bad Bunny showed his support for Anuel by tweeting the line from his song, “Maluma never had flow, always REAL G”. This shows his alliance with the Anuel and other reggaetoneros that consider themselves to be ‘real G.’

This also explains why Bad Bunny has not been as criticised for the same kind of degrading lyrics for which Maluma was censored. Since artists like Anuel and Bad Bunny consider themselves to be part of this gangster world, they do not consider themselves to be making music for a female audience- unlike Maluma, who self-promotes himself as a ‘pretty boy.’ In this sense, Maluma was criticised by his target audience, women, because he went too far in objectifying them. In order for him to be successful, he needs to maintain a better balance of singing for his target audience. Bad Bunny on the other hand, seems to attempt to straddle both worlds. He creates an online persona through his tweeting, and Instagram page that shows support for women. Some of his music and videos attempt to do the same with acknowledging gender violence and feminist movements in SDM and YPS. But the issue is, that in order to maintain his ‘Real G’ status and image he must also produce music that fits that genre, which is
heavily misogynistic. As Ramos notes, “If sexualizing women captivates the attention of female and male audiences, reggaetoneros will continue to promote that “[misogynistic]” behaviour[sic], which unfortunately gives them the power to create and reinforce negative ideologies regarding women” (73). Bad Bunny’s misogyny is not noticed because his target male audience is typically expecting and wanting this to be a part of his lyrics, since it is fundamental to the genre.

Meanwhile the media and fans that really want to see Bad Bunny as the change to reggaeton seem to completely ignore his misogyny and only focus on the aspects of his career where he performs allyship. For example, nowhere in the article in *The New York Times Magazine* was it mentioned that he had performed at the *PornHub* Awards the year before. This seems bizarre since a performance like this is a really significant political statement. *PornHub* has been under fire for its enabling and profiting off of “mass sex trafficking, rape and exploitation of women and minors” as stated on the petition on *Change.org* that calls for the site to be shut down.58 *Change.org* provides a list of stories of trafficked women and children and argues that *PornHub* is complicit in the trafficking and rape of these women and children. What then does it say about Bad Bunny’s ideology if he performs at the *PornHub* Awards?

Similar criticism could be directed at the outspoken activist when the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement reacted to the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the artists tweeted “Bye, I’m gone.”59 Bad Bunny then remained radio silent as many other artists joined in mobilising and raising funds online to support the BLM movement and the people who were racially targeted by police during the protests.60 Fans and the media alike began to criticise Bad Bunny on his silence

59 ES “Bye, me fui.”
60 See Bad Bunny’s Twitter account: https://twitter.com/sanbenito?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor
until finally he spoke with *Time Magazine* and also released a statement in solidarity with the BLM movement, which is written like a song.\(^6\) In the interview with *Time Magazine* Bad Bunny stated, “There are artists who only upload a photo or a basic message just to calm public pressure or to look ‘good,’... Not me... I want to go deeper and see in what way I can serve, how I can support the fight against a systematic monster that has been [around for] centuries.” Taking into consideration what I have argued above, it remains unclear that Bad Bunny is any different from what he criticises in this interview.

**Conclusion**

In fact, I believe that purplewashing reggaeton is worse than the artists he criticises in his interview in *Time Magazine* because it is a much more calculated portrayal of allyship that aims to draw attention away from the misogynistic elements and gain recognition from essentially co-opting feminist movements and their ideologies. Instead of a male role model that aims to challenge male behaviour, Bad Bunny tells women how they should behave, and he places responsibility on them to ‘save themselves’ from gender inequality and violence. Gender inequality cannot be solved by male control over women. By not including women as active participators in the genre and by failing to recognise them when they are, Bad Bunny contributes to the ever evolving, but consistent, male domination of reggaeton. As I have shown with these two songs, SDM and YPS, Bad Bunny’s portrayal of ending gender inequality is detached from systemic and systematic social responsibility and represents a neoliberal and capitalistic ideology that ultimately seeks to maintain male domination and superiority.

\(^6\) https://remezcla.com/features/music/bad-bunny-silence-speaks-volumes/
https://time.com/5852446/bad-bunny-black-lives-matter/
By purplewashing his own career and ultimately the reggaeton genre, Bad Bunny presents an image of himself and the music that appears to align with the feminist movements that he references in his songs SDM and YPS. At the same time, he draws attention away from the misogyny still happening in these very songs and others, which is exclusive and degrading to women. This has had the negative result of people, from the media to the former president of the United States of America, thinking that this music is not misogynistic or thinking that this music is feminist. While there is nothing extraordinary about Bad Bunny’s music being misogynistic, considering the context of the reggaeton genre, it is dangerous to feminisms, and all collective efforts to end gender violence, when feminist efforts are being co-opted like this. To take a movement’s ideology or use their hashtags to his own advantage, shows that Bad Bunny’s aim is not to better women’s place in society, nor is it to end gender violence. Bad Bunny only seeks to better his own place in the music industry by upholding the same misogynistic male domination of the reggaeton genre, except this time, with a more diverse fan base.
References


Zeisler, Andi. *We Were Feminists Once From Riot Grrrl to CoverGirl®, the Buying and Selling of a Political Movement*. PublicAffairs, 2016.
Appendix I

Figure 1: Woman on stage in SOLO DE MI.

Figure 2: Bad Bunny grabs woman by neck in club scene in SOLO DE MI.
Figure 3: Bad Bunny in red latex outfit in YO PERREO SOLA.

Figure 4: Bad Bunny in drag with large fake breasts in YO PERREO SOLA.
Figure 5: Bad Bunny in chains held by queens in YO PERREO SOLA.

Figure 6: Bad Bunny in hyper-pink scene in YO PERREO SOLA.
Figure 7: Bad Bunny dancing in front of neon feminist signs in YO PERREO SOLA.
Appendix II

INSTRUCTIONS

Check all boxes that apply, and keep a copy of this form for your records. If you have questions, please contact the USF General Counsel or your USF Tampa Library Copyright Librarian.

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**CONCLUSION**

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This worksheet has been adapted from:

Cornell University’s Checklist for Conducting A Fair use Analysis Before Using Copyrighted Materials: [https://cuny.library.cornell.edu/policies/docs/Fair_Use_Checklist.pdf](https://cuny.library.cornell.edu/policies/docs/Fair_Use_Checklist.pdf)


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Class or Project: Thesis

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