

Femicide, Resistance, and Sisterhood in Silvana Estrada’s *Si Me Matan* Cathartic Performance

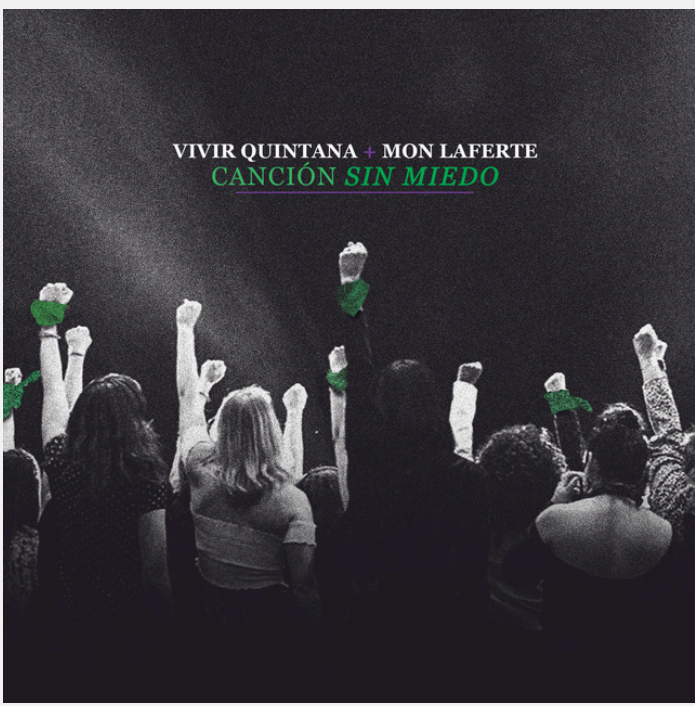
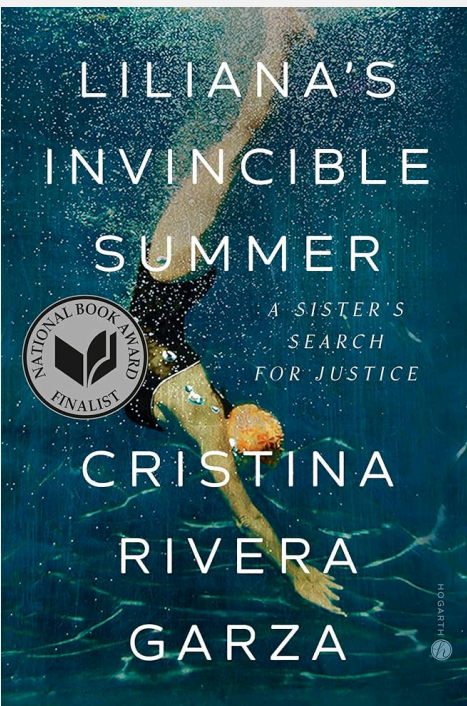
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Introduction

The rise of femicides in Mexico in 2020 sparked a wave of artistic responses from female artists, serving both as acts of mourning and resistance. Vivir Quintana’s *Canción Sin Miedo*, Silvana Estrada’s performance *Si Me Matan*, and Cristina Rivera Garza’s Pulitzer-winning memoir *Liliana’s Invincible Summer* create spaces for mourning and resistance against gender-based violence to reclaim women’s narratives and challenge oppression. This poster will focus specifically on the analysis of Estrada’s performance.



Context

Femicide, or feminicide, refers to the gender-based killing of women, a term first coined by Diana Russell (*Defining Femicide*, n.d.) and later adapted in Mexico by Marcela Lagarde to highlight the systemic nature of these crimes (Shulman, 2010). Mexico witnesses an estimated nine to ten femicides per day (Agren, 2021), a harrowing reality that has fueled feminist protests and artistic expressions. Concepts like sisterhood and hysteria play crucial roles in this analysis. Sisterhood unites women in collective grief and activism, while hysteria, once dismissed as irrational female emotion, is reclaimed as a powerful form of resistance. Works like Vivir Quintana’s *Canción Sin Miedo* and Cristina Rivera Garza’s *Liliana’s Invincible Summer* resonate with Estrada’s message, forming an intertextual web of art activism.

Analytical Framework

This analysis employs a performative lens grounded in feminist theory, affect theory, and concepts of catharsis and hysteria, to dissect Estrada’s performance *Si Me Matan*, exploring how it performs within political and cultural context in the feminist movement in Mexico. It conveys the collective pain and fear of Mexican women, offering emotional catharsis through sisterhood and resistance against femicides and domestic violence in Mexico.

The methods include:

- Lyrical Analysis: Examining how Estrada's lyrics convey vulnerability and strength.
- Visual Symbolism: Observing the presence of women of all ages in the performance, symbolizing collective mourning and resistance.
- Audience Reception: Reflecting on how the performance’s intimate setting fosters emotional connection and solidarity.

Findings and Observations

Estrada's haunting vocals and emotive phrasing convey a sense of raw emotion captivating the listener with the story.

Si me matan (If they kill me)
Cuando me encuentren (When they find me)
Que digan siempre, que digan siempre (Let them always say, let them always say)
Que fui cantora (that I was a singer)
Viviendo sueños, que como todas, crecí con miedo (Living dreams, and like everyone else, I grew up afraid)
Y aún así (And even so)
Salí solita a ver estrellas (I went out alone to see stars)
A andar los días (To walk the days)
Y aún así (And even so)
Salí solita a ver estrellas (I went out alone to see stars)
A amar la vida (to love life). (Estrada, 2021)

- Silvana Estrada's performance addresses love, loss, and resilience, highlighting the vulnerability of women in Mexico and their strength in the face of adversity.
- Estrada sings in a rustic garden, surrounded by 15 women of different ages, showing a range of emotions like seriousness, sorrow, and tears, reflecting the collective trauma of violence against women. The audience’s visible reactions and Estrada’s gesture of seeking a hug symbolize solidarity and emotional connection, reinforcing the song’s themes of resilience.
- The video underscores the alarming rates of femicides in Mexico, urging collective action, and resilience while highlighting support centers for women and the revolutionary phrase: ***Nos quitaron tanto, que nos quitaron el miedo*** (They’ve taken so much from us, that they took away our fear).
- The performance embodies the power of sisterhood, particularly in the context of Mexican women’s shared struggles with violence, fostering solidarity and support.
- Estrada’s performance provides emotional release, allowing the audience to process trauma collectively, fostering healing through music and art.
- This performance calls for continued action against femicides, empowering women to challenge oppression through solidarity and collective resistance.



Read full article, performance details, and lyrics here.

Reflection and Final Thoughts

Estrada’s performance transcends individual pain, embodying the intersection between art and activism. The creation of art amidst terror is not simply an act of personal catharsis but a political statement in itself. It disrupts the silence surrounding violence against women, creating space for them to speak their truths and demand justice. Estrada’s performance, much like the protests that frequently accompany International Women’s Day in Mexico, refuses to remain silenced. Whether through the destruction of monuments or the creation of music, these women are reshaping the narrative of resistance, articulating what it means to speak out, to demand justice, and to envision a nation in which their lives are no longer at risk.

Future Implications

This analysis creates an opportunity for further interdisciplinary exploration of the role of art in raising awareness about social issues, encouraging advocacy, policy changes, and support systems for those affected. By emphasizing emotional resilience, the power of embracing our emotions, and the necessity of community, art has the potential to inspire future activism that empowers marginalized groups, fosters healing, and helps us endure the emotional weight of activism, driving meaningful social change.

“A more humane and compassionate world is possible if we know to look outward and feel into.”
- Melissa Cain

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