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## **‘Mijita Rica’: The female body as a subject in the public space**

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# **‘Mijita Rica’: The Female Body as a Subject in the Public Space**

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## **Abstract**

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The politeness system is one of the most subtle and everyday forms of gender violence. Harassment in public is a socially accepted practice in Chile, where the ideological background crosses the various social spheres and remains rooted in the national and Latin American ethos. This article questions its bases, revealing the symbolic violence, gender hierarchization, and the reproduction of the ideology of separate spheres infused in street "flattery".

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**Keywords:** politeness system, gender inequality, symbolic violence, Chile

# ‘Mijita Rica’: El Cuerpo Femenino como Objeto en el Espacio Público

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## Resumen

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El sistema de cortesía es una de las formas más sutiles y cotidianas de violencia de género. El acoso callejero es una práctica validada socialmente en Chile, cuyo trasfondo ideológico cruza las diversas esferas sociales y permanece arraigado en el ethos nacional y Latinoamericano. Este artículo cuestiona sus bases develando la violencia simbólica, la jerarquización de género y la reproducción de la ideología de las esferas separadas inscrita en los “halagos” callejeros.

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**Palabras clave:** sistema de cortesía, desigualdad de género, violencia simbólica, Chile

The re-articulation of social movements in Chile, the so-called ‘awakening of the national collective consciousness,’ has generated a critical attitude concerning the role of government figures and the fulfillment of their duties. It has also encouraged criticism of the neoliberal system established during the military dictatorship.

On the other hand, criticism of the educational system mobilized the civil population, creating a large social movement that expanded towards awareness of the social and environmental costs derived from the current economic system in Chile.

This process has still not led to a general public examination regarding the normative quality of gender. However, various organizations have started to focus on situations of discrimination and violence.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the various events that have led to greater access of women to power and the public world since 2006,<sup>2</sup> and the symbolic significance that has, the reproduction of gender inequalities is still rooted in Chilean society. Observation of the practices of daily life is one of the most subtle but powerful tools to monitor this phenomenon, since this reveals the systematic reproduction of these inequalities.

This article aims to reveal the basis of this phenomenon by analyzing the practice of *piropos*,<sup>3</sup> contributing to the social awareness of the sexist background of these practices. In fact, this mass discursive practice, penetrating the whole of society, reveals the nature of the prevailing politeness system in a country as being hierarchical and shows how *piropos*, even the least insulting ones, reproduce an ideology of separate spheres (bordering on the free transit of women in the public space) and reinforce the idea of heterosexuality and androcentrism, in a seductive manner, as being the norm.

### The Piropo

*Benaiga de donde viene, quien sabe pa' dónde va.  
Por hoy día se lo merece, mi linda pase no ma'*  
(Several authors, 2008, p. 27)

There are various concepts for the term *piropo*. The Real Academia de la Lengua Española (2014) defines *piropo* as a “*lisonja, requiebro*” (flattery or a flirtatious remark), that is, a form of compliment. According to Mariana Achugar (2001, p. 127):

Piropos are compliments with an amorous or sexual expressive tone, usually said by men to women. The setting is usually the street where the participants do not know each other and can remain anonymous. Participants are anonymous to their interlocutors but they usually perform for an audience of peers.

Dobрила Djukich (2004, p.2) corroborates this view:

[...] el que se produce entre *un(a) emisor(a)* quien le dice algo a *un(a) receptor(a)* desconocido(a) en la calle. El piropo es callejero, improvisado, ocasional, una costumbre oral y popular. Ahora bien, sólo cuando forma parte de un proceso de *conquista*, enamoramiento, flirteo, noviazgo... entonces es el primer eslabón de un ritual amoroso.

It is a common mistake to identify the use of *piropos* as being part of the amorous conquest.<sup>4</sup> This error can be explained if one considers the history of the transformation of the meaning of *piropo*, which started at the beginning of the 17th century. Because of its etymological origin –“*fire like*”– this red gemstone stone or metal alloy of gold and copper was symbolically used to represent the blushed cheeks of a “beautiful young woman” in the verses of Arias de Montano (1590) “en un contexto de incitante sensualidad.”<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, it has also been suggested that the origin of the meaning comes from Quevedo (1580-1645), who started it flattery in his poetry.<sup>6</sup> A third thesis is offered by Milà (2004), who suggests

that *piropo* could be a derivation of the medieval *romancero* and its later performance: singing in groups below the balcony of the beloved, a practice framed by concepts of romantic love and which ends up being carried out by a solo singer:

Cuando la flecha de la historia hizo que los grandes y pequeños romances medievales quedarán muy atrás, irrumpió la costumbre del piropo cantado en cuadrilla. Y luego, visto el éxito, el mozo aislado, repitió en la calle las frases surgidas de su ingenio. Al no tener instrumento alguno que acompañara al cante, se limitó a recitar la copla y al no estar amparado por la noche, se fue desarrollando una técnica nueva que incluía una plástica específica. Acombar el cuerpo, arrimarlo, estampar la frase a quemarropa, al oído inicialmente; luego, en la fase evolutiva siguiente, el alarde pasó a ser representado para la contemplación de los transeúntes y haciendo gala de vozarrón.<sup>7</sup>

One of the arguments for explaining why the *piropo* is considered flattery can be found in the fact it is framed within the current politeness system in Chile. The politeness system involves the range of norms that we as a society, as a cultural conglomerate, agree to impose on ourselves in order to conduct harmonious social relationships, communication, and speech. Those norms represent the mentality and the behavior that all members of a given community are expected to share.<sup>8</sup> Through analysis of them, as discursive practice, we can understand about the place of utterance that the subjects assume, their roles during the interactions between them, and their development in the public space.

The transformations in gender constructions and the roles associated with them throughout the 20th century, specifically regarding (the possibility of) their development in the public space, also transform the suppositions and expectations regarding the limits of the politeness system, “basándose en su conocimiento y apreciación de los papeles posibles y el tipo de relación aceptable entre hombres y mujeres [and LGTB groups, I add] en la comunidad.” (Achugar, 2002, p. 178). However, what happens if the participants of a certain act of communication –such as *piropos*– do not agree on the limits of the shared politeness system? That is, what happens if they disagree on the roles and the possible kind of relationships between

them? This would show that the politeness system is built on a hierarchical system and that the “communicative event” actually occurs within the dimension of power (Scollon & Scollon, 1995).<sup>9</sup>

“La diferencia entre el hombre como emisor del piropo y la mujer como receptora generalmente pasiva, refleja la diferencia de poder entre ellos. La mujer como participante menos poderoso y con menos poder en la esfera pública no tiene acceso al uso de la palabra. El hombre como participante con más poder en el grupo social tiene la posibilidad de iniciar la interlocución y terminarla sin considerar o esperar respuesta alguna de su interlocutora.” (Achugar, 2002, p. 177)

The enactment of the street *piropo* generally has four characteristics (Achugar, 2002): first, it takes place in the public space and among strangers; secondly, the man is the one who has the right to speak; thirdly, it is expressed to women, but for an audience of peers; and finally, the use of the second person singular form in Spanish (tú), implies a close relationship constructed by the speaker, which is based on the his perception about the social relationship between women and men.<sup>10</sup>

The social representation of the traditional roles of women and men is staged, reproduced, and naturalized through *piropos*. *Piropos* contain the heterosexual conservatism that implies: active man–passive woman, aggressive man–submissive woman, productive man–reactive woman, and man as the desiring subject–woman as the desired object. In the specific case of use of *piropos*, this conservatism has also a strong patriarchal impression that directly defines the public sphere as being eminently masculine, blurring all other categories that cross the social hierarchies (class, ethnicity, educational level, etc.) reinforcing the vulnerability of free transit of women in the public space.

When practiced, street *piropos* invade the ‘vital space’ of the woman, an assertion that in few cases is metaphorical. The *piropeador* (the performer of the *piropo*) “estira el cuerpo, tensándolo hacia atrás, dando la sensación de que así va a saltar sobre la presa. También el canon del piropo acepta arrimar el cuerpo hacia el de la hembra como el mataor (sic) acerca la muleta al morlaco (...) el piropo se lanza a pocos centímetros del objeto de lisonja y

a la cara; salvo aquellos, naturalmente, aquellos (sic) piropos que glosan los cuartos traseros de la anatomía femenina” (Milà, 2004).

Woman “prey”, woman “female”, a woman anatomically dissected by the look of the one who utters the “compliment”, a look that dissects the body, blurring identity or belonging, by which the woman ceases to be a person; her possession of that body is expropriated, which is now a discontinuous, fragmented space. These pieces of woman “son vistos como unidades independientes, separables de sus portadoras, y recombinables en imágenes eróticas producidas a voluntad del espectador” (Gil, 1992, p. 108). This “visual sexism” does not merely stop at looking and dramatization, but is also expressed through discourse:

“No menea tanto la cuna que me despierta al niño”  
 (Don’t rock the cradle so much, you could wake the baby!)  
 (Meaning: the movement of one’s hips could ‘wake’ my penis)

“Si ese es el camino, ¿cómo será la meta?!”  
 (If the road looks like that, what will the goal look like?!  
 Meaning: If the legs look like that, what will the vagina look like?)

¡Con ese par podría alimentar a un regimiento!  
 (With those two, you could feed a regiment! Alluding to the size of the breasts)

¡Con esa delantera, ganamos el mundial!  
 (With that forward line, we’ll win the World Cup! Alluding to the breasts)<sup>11</sup>

If we focus our attention on the specific narrative of the *piropos*, we can see within them symbolic reproductions of the hierarchical order that women and men occupy socially:

“Implicit in these linguistic expressions are conceptual models of love and romantic relationships between men and women as well as a model of the roles men and women have in these communities [...] The linguistic choices that Spanish-speaking



men make when making piropos reflect their underlying beliefs and system of ideas about women and their relationship with them. Metaphor is the linguistic device most commonly used in piropos.” (Achugar, 2001, p.3)<sup>12</sup>

Achugar also emphasizes four categories of metaphors about women that are used when making *piropos*: “Women are like food”, “women are like cars”, “women are divine creatures”, and “women are rewards for men’s courage.”<sup>13</sup> These categories reflect the roles socially assigned to women. Even though there are other categories in the compilations I have reviewed<sup>14</sup>, I will not include any others in order to avoid unnecessary repetition of examples, since the intrinsic meaning remains the same despite the different use of metaphors.

#### **‘Women are like food’:**

“¡Oye! Se te cayó un papel... el que te envuelve ¡bombón!”  
(Hey! You dropped a piece of paper ... your wrapping paper, bonbon!)

“¡No camine por el sol bombón que se me (sic) puede derretir!”  
(Don’t walk in the sun, it might make you melt, my bonbon!)

“¡¿Qué hizo Costa<sup>15</sup> para que los bombones caminaran?!”  
(What did Costa do to create bonbons that can walk?!)

“¡Quién fuera papa frita para acompañar ese lomo!”  
(Who wouldn’t be a fried potato to go with that fillet!)

Or, “¡Quien fuera papa para acompañar esa cazuela!”  
(Who wouldn’t be a potato to go with that casserole!)

“¡Más rica que pan con chanco!” Or, “¡Más rica que cazuela de condor”, or “más rica que un bistec a lo pobre!”.

(Tastier than bread with pork! Or "Tastier than condor casserole",  
"tastier than steak and chips")

“¿Quién se comiera ese repollito?”  
(Who would eat that little cabbage?!)

Here women are identified as foods, objects to be enjoyed by the man, linking culinary pleasure to sexual pleasure. This association reinforces the active role of the man and the passive role of the woman. The objective of the woman, in terms of culinary delight, is to be appreciated, tasted, and eaten by men. Her sexual role is submissive, passive, and her transit through the public sphere is an announcement that “the dish is served.” All this without mentioning the traditional association between women and the kitchen.

**‘Women are like cars’:**

“Tantas curvas y yo sin frenos”  
(What curves and me with no brakes!)

“Con tu parachoques me estrellaría encantado!”  
(I would willingly crash into your fenders!)

“¿Qué camión y yo con poca carga!”  
(What a truck and me with so little load!)

“¿Quién fuera aceite pa lubricarle (sic) el motor?!”  
(Who wouldn't be the oil to lubricate your engine?!)

“Eres la bujía que enciende mi máquina!”  
(You're the spark plug that turns my machine on!)

“¿Quién fuera piñón pa (sic) encajar en tu corona?!”  
(Who wouldn't be the cog to fit into your gear?!)

The relationship established between women and cars emphasizes the man's role as driver and that of the woman as the object driven, as a space to control, or as a part.

The effect that a woman produces on the man stands out in these *piropos*: the desire to crash, ride, or mesh with. The woman is the one shown to be responsible for that desire, a situation that supports the gender determinants –whose origin goes back to various spheres, but mainly to the Judeo-Christian tradition and its Eva– which makes the woman responsible for the male “outburst”. Despite the introduction of this supposed female action (“to tempt”, “to incite”, etc.), the focus of the information privileges the man's experience. This argument, taken to the extreme, is often used by rapists when trying to shift responsibility: “She was asking for it.”

### **‘Women are Divine Creatures’**

“A San Pedro se le quedó abierta la puerta del cielo, porque se están cayendo los angelitos” Or “¿Hicieron un hoyito en el cielo que están cayendo angelitos?”.

(Saint Peter forgot to close the door of heaven, because the angels are falling down! Or, did they make a hole in heaven because angels are falling down?)

“Para qué morirme, para qué voy a querer ir a cielo si hay angelitos como tú aquí en la tierra?”

(Why would I die, why would I want to go to heaven if there are angels like you here on Earth?)

“Si los ángeles fueran como tú, me moriría ahora mismo”.

(If angels were like you, I would die right now!”)

“¿Haría una religión para adorarla, mi diosa!”

(I would create a religion to adore you, my goddess!)

“Que Dios la guarde y me dé la llave!”

(May the Lord protect you and give me the key!)

In these cases, women are affected by the actions of others, they fall or escape from them. Thus, even though in this kind of *piropo* the woman is a participant in the action, her experience is out of her own control or is an objective, namely the goal of the actions of the speaker. In addition to this, the use of diminutives benefits the construction of a –fictional– closeness between the participants, while simultaneously marking the difference in power between them, since the diminutive form is directly related to the role assigned to the woman (angel or divine being) in these *piropos*, diminishing her importance.<sup>16</sup>

### ‘Women are the Reward for Men’s Courage’:

“Si Adán por Eva se comió una manzana, ¡yo por ti me comería el mercado!” Or, “Si Adán se comió una manzana por Eva, yo por ti me comería un cajón con etiqueta y todo.”

(If Adam ate an apple for Eve, I would eat the whole market for you!  
Or, if Adam ate an apple for Eve, for you I would eat the whole box,  
label and all.)

“Si amarte fuera pecado, yo habría nacido en el infierno.”

(If loving you was a sin, I must have been born in hell.)

“Por ti cruzaría la cordillera en alpargatas”

(For you I would cross the mountains in sandals)

“Por un beso tuyo... el mundo”.

(For a kiss from you... the world)

“Cruzaría mares por saber tu nombre”.

(I would cross oceans to know your name)

“Si tan sólo me miraras, yo me atrevería a caminar descalzo entre las brasas”.

(If you just would look at me, I would dare to cross the embers barefoot)

These *piropos* emphasize the actions of the man (what he would do or give) and transform women into a goal. What is relevant here is the masculine courage, their capacity of sacrifice, a kind of self-mythopoesis about the virility of the speaker. The female role is to be passive-receptive of that willingness.

### **Beyond Words – Closer to the Words**

*Me gustas cuando callas porque estás como ausente*

Neruda, 1924

Gender discourses, their roles, and rules, are naturalized through the reproduction of statements that penetrate the latticework of social discourse, from official and public discourse to everyday discourse: “En una sociedad jerárquica, no hay espacio que no esté jerarquizado y no exprese las jerarquías y las distancias sociales de un modo deformado y sobretodo enmascarado por el efecto de la naturalización”(Bourdieu, 2000a, p.120). As argued by the historian Laqueur (2001), these are the same structures that end up bordering on constructions about sexuality; we could go beyond that and see, together with the biologist Anne Fausto Sterling (2006), how sciences have created two sexes: man and woman, how it has determined a normative and quantifiable duality (in centimeters, hormones, organs); a hetero-normative –and androcentric– system<sup>17</sup> where spaces and bodies belong to *men*. Within this scheme, women’s bodies do not belong to themselves. Instead they are a common good for all Chileans (meaning all Chilean men<sup>18</sup>). When those bodies transit the space reproduced as masculine, domination is evident at the individual level; that domination system is inscribed on the bodies:

“[A las mujeres] todo el trabajo de socialización tiende a imponerle unos límites que conciernen a la totalidad de su cuerpo.... las mujeres permanecen encerradas en una especie de cercado invisible... que limita el territorio dejado a los movimientos y a los desplazamientos de su cuerpo (mientras que los hombres ocupan más espacio con su cuerpo, sobre todo en los lugares públicos).” (Bourdieu, 2000b, pp.41 and 43)

This capacity of embodiment of domination is part of the process of subjectivization, which, according to Michel Foucault, is “la manera como el sujeto hace la experiencia de sí mismo en un juego de verdad en el que aparece una relación consigo mismo (*rappor à soi*).” (Gabilondo, 1999, p.365) Parallel to this game of truth within the subject, the process of subjectivization implies incorporating the discursive network of a society, “to subject oneself” to that society: “la ‘sujeción’ es el proceso de devenir subordinado al poder, así como el proceso de devenir sujeto.” (Butler, 2001, p.12)<sup>19</sup> Being immersed in a society in which our process of becoming subjects makes us subject to the precepts about our bodies as a “public good” and limits our freedom of transit, of permanence, and habitation of the public sphere. As a result, we are constructed as subject-objects:

“... determinar lo que debe ser el sujeto –a cuál condición está sometido, qué status debe tener, qué posición debe ocupar en lo real o en lo imaginario– para llegar a ser sujeto legítimo de tal o cual tipo de conocimiento... se trata de determinar su modo de ‘subjetivación’ (...) es también, y al mismo tiempo, determinar bajo cuáles condiciones algo [alguien, agregó] puede llegar a ser objeto para un conocimiento posible; cómo ese algo ha podido ser problematizado como objeto por conocer; a cuál procedimiento de partición ha podido estar sometido para desprender la porción considerada pertinente. Se trata, por lo tanto, de determinar su modo de ‘objetivación’.” (Gabilondo, 1999, p. 354)

This domination, these games of truth regarding the process of constructing women as subject to the production about them and their bodies that can be freely produced by men, turning them into objects, is the practice of the street *piropo* in abstract terms: “Los comentarios sobre nuestro aspecto físico nos desvían de nuestro lugar de interlocutoras a objeto. Incluso cuando pretenden ser amables nos están sacando de la relevancia del argumento para poner de relevancia nuestro cuerpo sexuado.” (Maffia, 2011).

This dislocation of the position of the subject, of the place of woman in this act of communication, implies a construction of vulnerability that is expressed in limitations of her freedom: changing her route to work, crossing

the street to avoid walking past a construction site, not walking alone, not wearing certain clothing, covering and hiding those parts of our bodies that are dissected by the hetero-anatomist... *Piropos* are, at the end of the day, a kind of symbolic violence: “La violencia simbólica impone una coerción que se instituye por medio del reconocimiento extorsionado que el dominado no puede dejar de prestar al dominante al no disponer, para pensarlo y pensarse, más que de instrumentos de conocimiento que tiene en común con él y que no son otra cosa que la forma incorporada de la relación de dominio.” (Bordieu, 2000b, p.6).

This “incorporated form of the relationship of domination” is what generates approval and even enjoyment of street *piropos* by some women, validating the masculine look as a judge of their beauty, as the dominator in the public sphere, as valid speaker in an act in which she is neither speaker nor participant, but simply the object that is “acclaimed”: “[Es] taba comiendo helao (sic) con mi mami, y un caballero me dijo quien fuera helado, para que me pasaras la lengua (...) en todo caso no fue muy lindo ya que venía de una persona un tanto mayor, pero si me lo hubiera dicho alguien más joven yo feliz... suben el ego estas cosas.” (Several authors, 2009).

The question is why does this woman feel flattered and her self-esteem increase based on *piropos*? The answer comes from the interpretation of Judith Butler regarding the process of interpellation (Althusser): “La interpelación es un acto de habla cuyo ‘contenido’ no es ni verdadero ni falso: su primera tarea no es la descripción. Su objetivo es indicar y establecer a un sujeto en la sujeción, producir sus perfiles en el espacio y en el tiempo. Su operación repetitiva tiene el efecto de sedimentar esta ‘posición’ con el tiempo.” (1997, p. 62)<sup>20</sup> It is that sedimentation, generation after generation, that comprises our own construction as subject to the gender discourse, subject to the look of the other for him to grant us our existence. Thus, the street *piropo*:

“pone de manifiesto una vulnerabilidad anterior con respecto al lenguaje, una vulnerabilidad que tenemos en virtud de ser seres interpelados, seres que dependen de la llamada del Otro para existir. No hay forma de protegerse contra la vulnerabilidad primaria ni contra la susceptibilidad de esa llamada de reconocimiento que concede

existencia. No hay forma de protegerse contra la dependencia primaria de un lenguaje del que no somos autores con el objetivo de adquirir un estatus ontológico provisional. De este modo, algunas veces nos agarramos a los términos que nos hacen daño porque, como mínimo, nos conceden una cierta forma de existencia social y discursiva.” (Butler, 1997, p.52)

Therefore, after assuming this “concession” of existence, is can be us who interpellates the speaker of the *piropo*, us who transform the illocution of this “performative utterance.”<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, it is the subjection itself that gives us the possibility of agency. In the words of James Scott (2004, p.71): “Las relaciones de poder son, también, relaciones de resistencia.”

### Postscript

Even though my interest and objective in this article is to reveal the normative constructions, implications, and scope of the practice of street *piropos* in relation to the female gender, I believe it is necessary to consider the notion of masculinity that this implies.

The masculinity is also an everyday construction that implies the necessity of its performance, not only in front of women or LGTB groups, but mainly in front of their peers:

“Los significados de la masculinidad, (...) son referidos no solamente por lo que los actores dicen, piensan y/o confiesan sobre el ser hombre. Es igualmente relevante considerar las formas y contextos particulares en los cuales tales significados son puestos en acción, esto es, producidos socialmente. *Performance*, por lo tanto, no significa meramente actuación o repetición de un guión preestablecido. En la puesta en escena, esto es, en la referencia pública, en el mínimo y máximo detalles de cómo los hombres se relacionan con otros hombres y también con mujeres, los significados precisos son tanto afirmados cuanto creados.” (Andrade, 2001, p. 115)



The ‘normative constructions’ I have mentioned gain an special impetus when the transformations are in the basic aspects of life (food, housing, etc.), as well as when the qualities usually considered as pillars of virility<sup>22</sup> are influenced by the reconfigurations of gender roles in a society, especially if we consider how fast these changes have been since the second half of the 20th century. It is in this context that the permanent validation of masculinity becomes necessary:

“El privilegio masculino no deja de ser una trampa... que impone en cada hombre el deber de afirmar en cualquier circunstancia su virilidad... La virilidad, entendida como capacidad reproductora, sexual y social, pero también como aptitud para el combate y para el ejercicio de la violencia... es fundamentalmente una carga. En oposición a la mujer, cuyo honor, esencialmente negativo, sólo puede ser definido o perdido, al ser su virtud sucesivamente virginidad y fidelidad, el hombre ‘realmente hombre’ es el que se siente obligado a estar a la altura de la posibilidad que se le ofrece de incrementar su honor buscando la gloria y la distinción en la esfera pública (...) Todo contribuye así a hacer del ideal imposible de la virilidad el principio de una inmensa vulnerabilidad”  
(Bordieu, 2000a, pp.68-69).

Vulnerability that is contrasted through performative re-affirmations of their hegemonic position, of their virility... the *piropo* becomes “la expresión de una dimensión de la masculinidad, aquella que se construye en el espacio público.”  
(Andrade, 2001, p. 23).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> One example of this can be found in the initiative to create an anti-discrimination law (law 20,609, of 12.07.2012). This resulted from the social pressure after the murder of Daniel Zamudio because of his homosexuality. Particularly relevant to this article is the recent constitution of the 'Observatory Against Street Harassment in Chile' (Observatorio Contra el Acoso Callejero en Chile), an organization in charge of exposing and reporting on the everyday violence suffered by women.

<sup>2</sup> To have a female president of Chile (M. Bachelet, 2006-2010 and her reelection in 2014-2018) for the first time after her work as first executive director of the United Nations Entity for Gender, Equality and the Empowerment of Women (19.09.2010 – 15.03.2013); the scores given by the Global Gender Gap Report in 2010, showing a reduction of inequality between men and women; a woman becoming President of the Chilean Senate for the first time (Isabel Allende, 2014); the central role of female leaders of various organizations (for instance, the Federation of Students of Universidad de Chile, the female coordinator of secondary studies), among others.

<sup>3</sup> A common translation of *piropo* is the English term “compliment”, but it does not carry the same meaning, nor the same cultural significance. While the content of ‘compliment’ has positive connotations and its speaker is considered to be neutral, the Spanish term is usually produced by a male subject and its connotation is commonly negative. For this reason the term *piropo* will be used throughout the text.

<sup>4</sup> A frequent problematic aspect among the definitions available in some dictionaries and texts that develop the term. An example of this is the German study *Spanische Umgangssprache* by Werner Beinbauer in 1929. Later, the author conducted a deeper analysis of his first study of *piropos* and published an independent version “Über ‘piropos’”. *Volkstum und Kultur der Romanen*, 1934.

<sup>5</sup> (In a context of inciting sensuality) “Versos latinos de *La retórica* de Aries Montano de 1569 en los cuales Américo Castro cree ver una posible razón. Los versos describen unas mejillas ruborizadas de una bella joven de color rubí [pyropus]”. In Fridlitzius (2009), p. 9

<sup>6</sup> Quevedo. A una dama señora, hermosa por lo rubio: “Pues lléguese la mañana/con sus perlas y sus ostros/a sus dos labios que allá/se lo dirán en piropos” in Corominas. “Quevedo la usaba culteranamente como ‘requiebro, flores, palabra lisonjera que se dice a una mujer bonita’, abriendo así el camino para donjuanes que saben valerse de la palabra como arma para sus conquistas”. Soca, Ricardo. *Piropo*. Retrieved (2014, March 20) from <http://www.elcastellano.org/palabra.php?q=piropo>

<sup>7</sup> Concerning the “piropos” of male groups Milà (2004) adds; “Cuando se hizo el día, la cuadrilla seguía de taberna en taberna. Seguía siendo preciso demostrar, no solo quien estaba enamorado, sino quien era más machito. Apareció así el piropeo en grupo [...] Sin duda, el piropo en voz alta, indiscreto y chillón, a menudo ofensivo, debió nacer entre estas compañías cuando hacerse consideraron que la virilidad y el arrojo se demostraba realizando alardes ante los cofrades. El piropo dejó de estar amparado por la nocturnidad, dejó también de ser un lance entre dos, dejó incluso de tener como objeto a la mujer hermosa para ser una demostración de virilidad ante los propios.”

<sup>8</sup> For the definition of ‘politeness system’, see Scollon & Scollon (1995). For its intercultural relationship see Álvarez (2010). For further information about the relationship between *piropos* and the politeness system see Achugar (2002).

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 3 in particular: “Interpersonal politeness and power”. The authors define three politeness systems. According to this analysis, the Chilean system would be part of the *hierarchy politeness system*, a system with asymmetrical relationships: “The participants recognize and respect the social differences that place one in a superordinate position and the other one in a subordinate position” p. 45.

<sup>10</sup> “A nivel discursivo-semántico, la diferencia de poder entre los hablantes se manifiesta por el hecho de que no hay turno para la mujer (interlocutor oyente), por el control del tópico por parte del enunciador (hombre), y por la referencia directa o indirecta a la mujer como objeto [...] Las opciones léxico gramaticales de los piropos (conjugación en segunda persona singular) evidencian una forma de tratamiento informal y cercana en la que el hablante

construye una cercanía entre los participantes que no está basada en la relación social entre ellos sino en su percepción de la misma. Esta construcción de la distancia y el espacio entre los participantes refleja la diferencia de poder entre los mismos” (Achugar, 2002, pp. 179-180).

<sup>11</sup> Here I want to point out that I will not include the so-called “antipirosos”, that is, cruder versions of these ‘compliments’. For instance: “No tengo pelos en la lengua porque tú no quieres”; “Guachita, ¿por qué no me regala su sonrisa vertical?”; “Mijita quién fuera laxante pa hacerla cagar”; “Guachita por qué no me chanta un peo en la tula ¿ha?”; “Quien fuera perro pa culiarte en la calle”; “Mijita, le haría bailar samba el clítoris a lengüetazos”; “le chuparía las tetitas hasta gstarle el pezón”; etc. For a musical compilation of this contents online access: <http://www.musica.com/letras.asp?letra=1179711>. (last visit: 20.03.2014).

<sup>12</sup> The author's analysis of *piropo* is based on the concepts of Lakoff & Johnson, that is to say, the piropos as metaphors, as “ways of partially structuring one experience in terms of another.” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p.5).

<sup>13</sup> This four categories are included in the two works quoted.

<sup>14</sup> There are several categories depending on the focus of the research (about women, rhetoric analysis, content analysis, etc.). For instance, in Achugar's work (2002), there is the fifth category “el acompañante” (“the escort”): “Vaya con Dios señora y déjeme a la nena”; “Harto grande la señora para andar jugando con muñecas”. We could also add the category “quien fuera...” something like “I would like to”: “quién fuera noche para caerle encima”; “quién fuera bolsa pa llevarla de la mano”; “criminals”: “a quién hay que matar para ser dueño de tus ojos”; “deberían sacarle una parte por exceso de belleza,” etc.

<sup>15</sup> Costa is the name of a well-known chocolate and confectionary company in Chile.

<sup>16</sup> Comparing this category with the preceding one, here we can see the reinforcement of the traditional dualist representations of women: either a saint or a whore.

<sup>17</sup> In this part, even if the use of the patriarchal term worked perfectly, I prefer to avoid it in the case of street *piropos* (male superiority over the female). I think this could also mean that the practices of symbolic violence that also affect all other genders become invisible.

<sup>18</sup> In Chile you can go to prison if you have an abortion, even if you are a victim of rape, if the fetus does not have chance of survival after birth, or if the woman's life is at risk.

<sup>19</sup> Considering this aspect, the author adds: “es imposible que el sujeto se forme sin un vínculo apasionado con aquellos a quienes está subordinado, entonces la subordinación demuestra ser esencial para el devenir sujeto” p.18

<sup>20</sup> According to Butler: “La interpelación es un acto de habla cuyo “contenido” no es ni verdadero ni falso: su primera tarea no es la descripción. Su objetivo es indicar y establecer a un sujeto en la sujeción, producir sus perfiles en el espacio y en el tiempo. Su operación repetitiva tiene el efecto de sedimentar esta “posición” con el tiempo” (Butler, 1997, p.62). For the reference to Althusser see *Aparatos ideológicos del estado*. The author uses Althusser's term *interpellation* without adopting his concept of ideology. Instead, she links *interpellation* to power in Foucault's sense. Regarding this see Butler (2001).

<sup>21</sup> “Cuando la obra utiliza el lenguaje como dispositivo se comprende su significado a partir de la estructura de un enunciado performativo: la locución (emisión) varía en su ilocución (fuerza de emisión) para constituir y crear su perlocución (efectos). Se propicia una decodificación del lenguaje, pero su uso modifica el significado, desviando la atención sobre el sentido de la palabra, hacia las condiciones de su emisión [...] Lo performativo o performático no es calificativo de la performance, sino más bien forma parte de los medios de interpelación a través de los cuales nos relacionamos hoy en día. Las huellas que deja el sentido del lenguaje en los sujetos, es información que deviene en agencias (Butler, 1997,

2002, 2007, 2011), eslabones que permiten la comprensión en las culturas. Agencia, es la noción que se crea en tanto un discurso activamente suscita una norma, es decir, toma parte la teoría performativa del discurso y de la acción: al decir algo, hago algo, que producirá ciertos efectos en quienes escuchan, dadas ciertas condiciones para que ese acto de habla sea afortunado (Austin, 1982). Podemos ver reflejada la agencia al abordar el significado de un discurso desde la dimensión identitaria que arroja respecto de un sujeto o varios, se activa gracias a un tiempo, contexto y cultura, pero delimitada allí, en ese momento”. Brzovic, 2014<sup>22</sup> Qualities that are no longer exclusive to men, but shared with all genders: paid work, strength and physical vigor, political participation, etc. (Corbin, Vigarello & Courtine, 2011).

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