FEMINIST YOUTUBERS IN SPAIN: A PUBLIC SPACE FOR BUILDING RESISTANCE*

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Feminism in Spain

The Spanish feminist movement has recently gained significant relevance both in Spain and outside (Campillo, 2018). Through massive demonstrations, the women's strikes on International Women's Day (8 March) in 2018 and 2019 in Spain, and a strong capillarity within diverse local settings and with social movements not only focused on gender, feminist collectives have managed to raise awareness, and legitimize their claims. As a consequence, the 'feminist' label is now connoted with positive meanings in mainstream culture, after decades of stigmatization. Journalists have put particular emphasis on the young age of feminist activists during the 8 March marches in Spain: there is a renewal going on in the Spanish feminist movement without losing previous generations' claims, thus bridging the generation gap around old demands such as legislation on gender violence, the pay gap or fighting against the feminization of precarity. As Galarza, Castro-Martínez, and Sosa Valcárcel (2019) have pointed out, Spanish feminism has clearly benefited from social media and online communication, which has allowed activists to increase their social capital and mobilize young and old. In fact, according to Hunt (2017) the incorporation of young women in the movement and the creation of new networks have allowed for a sense of unity among women, regardless of age, and despite acknowledging their different positions on the axes of inequality. This, in turn, has led to a transnational expansion of the movement, as well as a more sophisticated use of technology contesting discursive strategies online. We consider this transnationality, intersectionality, and technological empowerment to be part of what some authors have called the 'Feminist Fourth Wave' (Chamberlain, 2017; Cochrane, 2013), despite the controversial use of the 'wave' metaphor for referring to the feminist movement and the obvious geographical differences regarding discourses of feminism in different territories (McLean, 2020).

The aim of our research is to examine how feminist YouTubers in Spain are forging a digital public space for resistance, by delving into YouTube and analysing videos that share and help spread feminist ideas or actions in Spain. In this chapter we are focusing on the channels of activists like Andy Asadaf, Towanda Rebels and Irantzu Varela. As a *produsage* platform (Bruns, 2008) based on video, YouTube provides many young and digitally savvy people with a chance to participate in the construction of a public debate about gender inequalities, the historical role of feminism, and social

transformation strategies (Jouët, 2017; Lawrence & Ringrose, 2018). On this platform, new communication formats are being tested that establish relationships both with the feminist tradition and with celebrity culture (Araüna, Tortajada & Willem, 2019). At the same time the online violence, threats, and attacks on feminist YouTubers (Döring & Mohseni, 2019) and the attempts to silence them, are forcing the latter into articulating responses fast and developing sophisticated strategies of resistance and solidarity. We intend to highlight some of these strategies in this chapter.

The 'new luminosity' of feminism

The recent expansion of feminism into the mainstream as a broad conceptual framework - ranging from a commercial and neoliberal appropriation of feminism to grassroots activism - has come to replace the hegemony of postfeminism as defined by Rosalind Gill, one of the most prominent researchers in postfeminist culture (Gill, 2007). We will argue that postfeminism now shares a much more contended understanding of gender roles with this renewed and 'mainstreamed' feminism.

In communication and gender studies, postfeminist representation patterns have been one of the main concerns of Anglo-Saxon and North-European academics during the last decade (Gill, 2016b; Tortajada & Van Bauwel, 2012). Postfeminism is a cultural representation regime, suggesting that feminism has achieved formal 'equality' between men and women while omitting structural and embedded inequalities in cultural systems (McRobbie, 2004). Its assumptions somehow arose from the conjunction between neoliberalism and a popularized third-wave feminism. Since the early 2000s, it has occupied the substrate of most audio-visual and graphic productions addressing women, establishing narratives that put the emphasis on individual empowerment through competition on the labour market (neoliberal feminism) and has encouraged the recovery of some of the traditional values associated with femininity. In this postfeminist spectrum, the concept of beauty and the ability to generate sexual attraction - especially in its cosmetic-commercial realization - had a central role in the satisfaction of women (McRobbie, 2004; Gill, 2007), along with their capacity as consumers (Gill, 2008). While the meritocratic and liberal notions underlying postfeminism supposedly allowed for a diversification of gender identities and sexualities, in turn, they subsumed this diversity to standards of 'heterosexiness' (Dobson, 2011). The postfeminist framework and its liberal optimism have thus participated in rendering the structures of inequality invisible and holding individuals accountable for their own failure and success while promoting mechanisms of self-surveillance and self-demand in performing standard and marketable identities in terms of 'appropriate femininity' (Araüna, Dhaenens & Van Bauwel, 2018).

In more recent times, however - and partly as a response to this backlash - the labels and ideas associated with feminism have regained centrality and are now present everywhere, ranging from political discourses to commercial advertisements (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Rosalind Gill talks about "a new luminosity" of feminism (2016a,

2016b). Guerra Palmero (2019), on the other hand, has pointed out that the institutionalization of feminism goes hand in hand with a hostile, patriarchal and misogynistic reaction from neoliberalism and neoconservatism, against which feminism is now the most significant force of resistance. In summary, we are facing a scenario where feminist and postfeminist media discourses operate simultaneously, while misogyny and antifeminism are also strengthened (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Keller, Mendes & Ringrose, 2016), and where both left and right-wing political parties - at least in Spain - try to capitalize on the achievements of feminism.

Feminism on YouTube

YouTuber videos are the privileged objects of young people's audio-visual *produsage* practices, understood as actions carried out by people who adopt a double condition of *producers* and *users* (Bruns, 2008). Much of this *produsage* has to do with the presentation of the online Self in its various aspects, including the creation of the Self as a reflective (Genz, 2015) and political subject (Tortajada, Cabellero-Gálvez, Willem, 2019). At the outset, YouTubers who self-define as such mostly produce videos on their own (or in small teams), focusing on their image and what they have to say, acting as the enunciator and branding the style of a set of videos uploaded regularly on their channel. In stylistic terms, the camera usually emulates the position of the selfie with a constant medium shot of the YouTuber, who most of the time is sitting in a private space at home. Bedrooms, offices and living rooms are the most common backdrops for this type of videos. The domestic atmosphere, together with the first-person tone of the video, creates an environment of apparent proximity and trust between the performer and the public.

Teenagers have been reported to perceive YouTubers as personalities who are accessible, close and similar to themselves, and with whom they can identify (Pérez-Torres, Pastor-Ruiz, Abarrou-Ben-Boubaker, 2018). Adding to this illusion of a direct connection with the YouTuber is the relative possibility of followers to actually interact with them through likes, shares, and comments, or - in the case of other YouTubers - with videos of their own. In some cases, for example in the YouTube row involving the trans community in Spain (Tortajada, Caballero-Gálvez & Willem, 2019), dialectic discussions between YouTubers imply the positioning of their publics regarding the issues raised, tapping into broader debates regarding social and gender inequalities.

YouTubers can have one or several channels, and they sometimes specialize in a specific topic, but each YouTuber establishes a 'marketable' and intentionally styled personality. When successful, YouTubers become micro-celebrities: a kind of public personalities who - unlike television or cinema celebrities - need to constantly and successively upload new content (Jerslev, 2016). Regardless of the complexity of the content, YouTube videos generally have a 'didactic' or 'common good' aspect, in the sense that they intend to raise issues perceived as useful for a particular social group. In fact, the success of social media platforms like YouTube greatly depends on the

social response to its contents, and this often leads to mutual support groups or even learning communities (Araüna, Tortajada and Willem, 2019).

According to authors such as Szostak, YouTube "operates as a support network for women dedicated to the general goal of acceptance and respect" (2013: 56), and so we can assume its feminist potential within the discursive online space. In fact, the number of YouTube channels specifically dedicated to feminist issues has increased dramatically in the last five years. On other social media platforms movements such as #MeToo or #TimesUp have already spoken out against the rape culture (Mendes, Ringrose and Keller, 2018), heavily influencing the public opinion on this topic. Likewise, feminist YouTubers focus on making the audience understand the nature and demands of the feminist movement while contesting what they consider to be persistent manifestations of patriarchy and attacks on feminism (Araüna, Tortajada & Willem, 2019). Videos produced by feminist YouTubers combine theory with activism and, above all, humour. This kind of feminist practices (Jouët, 2017; Lawrence & Ringrose, 2018) not only contribute to generating reflective spaces; they also articulate and encourage ironic contestations of anti-feminism. The displays of resistance to constant attacks on feminism cover a wide repertoire of digital feminist pedagogies that connect with offline activism (Retallack, Ringrose & Lawrence, 2016), for example when YouTubers like Irantzu Varela mobilize a broader audience through a mainstream media outlet (i.c. *Público*). At the same time, these videos contribute to the creation of micro-celebrities or public figures of reference, whose popularity online opens up possibilities in other areas of action. All three YouTubers that we will analyse in this chapter have eventually become an online reference for feminism in Spain.

We will centre the attention on Spanish YouTubers Andy Asadaf, Towanda Rebels and Irantzu Varela, all three identifying as feminist. They connect with a young audience, embedded in contemporary feminism: all three are micro-celebrities on YouTube and have been invited for talks and conferences on feminism; Towanda Rebels has published the book #HolaGuerrera, and Irantzu Varela is the mastermind behind the feminist collective *Faktoria Lila*, regularly writes for the periodical *Pikara Magazine*, and has directed a documentary about sexist violence. This chapter will focus on the discursive and formal strategies employed by feminist YouTuber activists, and examine their ability to bend the neoliberal logics of YouTube as a personal-brand medium into a tool for awareness-raising and social commitment.

Social media as a space of awareness and self-reflection

Social media have been claimed as a space for socialization and exchange, from which young people build their identities and political affinity groups around certain topics or social issues (Szostak, 2013; Tortajada & Araüna, 2014; Keller, Mendes & Ringrose, 2016; Charles, Wadia, Ferrer-Fons & Allaste, 2018). If we look at the particular case of feminism as one of these issues, it is clear that contents produced by young people on social media since 2018 have been key to recovering the

popularity of the feminist movement, after about two decades in which the hegemony of postfeminism eroded the knowledge of the history and struggles of the feminist movement (McRobbie, 2004).

After years of ignorance and negative connotations, it is 'cool' again for a teenager to be a feminist (Retallack, Ringrose & Lawrence, 2016). As an example of this, Andy Asadaf addresses youth directly, with her trajectory of more than two years of pedagogical videos about feminism. Taking a reflective perspective about the origins of her online activity, in her video 'I used to be an anti-feminist (+critique and reflection on this channel)', Asadaf recognizes that as a teenager she was quite wary and mistrustful about feminism (see Figure 1). In this video, Asadaf explains the lack of reliable information about feminism in her formal education, as well as the scarcity of references to women who fought for their rights - or simply were relevant in the political, scientific or cultural field for that matter - in school curricula. This concern is shared by other YouTubers (e.g. Towanda Rebels), who have publicly recognized this lack of available tools to understand feminism, in what they define as a 'patriarchal culture'. The abovementioned video by Asadaf departs from the idea that online interaction allows young people to discuss and learn from each other – as it was through these debates that she 'learnt' the reasons why feminism was important. However, her video also reveals the double-sided nature of online communication: she had considered herself an anti-feminist when she was fourteen precisely because of what she had read and seen online back then. Asadaf goes on to tell her viewers how she fell in the trap of sexist 'fallacies' and, in her down-to-earth style, explains what a fallacy is and how it is built through the partial suppression of data and a very specific and tricky framing of these data. By believing these deliberate misinterpretations, spread by organized groups, she says, she became an anti-feminist. Only later, when some online feminist activists 'planted the seed of doubt' in her mind, she could reach a feminist awareness by way of rational reasoning.

Figure 1. Video 'I used to be an anti-feminist (+critique and reflection on this channel)'. *Asadaf. YouT ube.*

By recalling and re-telling her experience, Asadaf points to the relevance of social media and YouTube as informal learning tools, which can and should contribute to countering anti-feminist hate speech and messages that maintain inequalities (Tortajada, Caballero & Willem, 2019). In addition, Asadaf emphasizes the importance of deliberation, in a Habermasian sense, which occurs in these spaces (Habermas, 1987): despite the attacks and insults she receives as a feminist YouTuber, she reads these as a symptom of the need to produce more feminist discourse. As she says when remembering the launch of her channel: 'Precisely because of the attacks I received, I realized that one had to talk about feminism, that my channel had to focus on this'.

It is also interesting how Asadaf states that most anti-feminists do not label themselves as such, but instead use euphemisms such as 'I am not PC' or 'a freethinker'. These considerations match the current media and political language used by new misogynists, and by admitting that she used to be one of those people and framing their assumptions as a mistake, Asadaf positions herself into the current public debate. The explicitly pedagogical and discursive nature of Asadaf's videos, and her aiming at social transformation, are also materialized in her particular *mise-en-scene*: while the predominant film location of the average YouTuber is a room in the house (as discussed above), we see Asadaf against a flat backdrop of violet fabric that does not reveal any details about her privacy and draws the attention exclusively on what she has to say. In the montage of her videos, Asadaf also edits in slides, infographics and bullet points to illustrate her content. In fact, in most of her videos, she points out to her viewers that it is essential to continuously learn, inform and educate yourself, and to be responsible.

In conclusion, the video *'I used to be an anti-feminist (+critique and reflection on this channel)'* is an example of a process of reflectiveness and self-criticism occurring on social media, as well as an instance of 'authenticity' displayed by YouTubers as part of their personal reputation and credibility (Szostak, 2013; Araüna, Tortajada & Willem, 2019). In the same 'authenticity' vein, with videos like *'Branches and currents of feminism (+ what is my feminism?)'*, Asadaf describes the history of different feminist orientations and defines herself as a 'radical transfeminist'. Recognizing herself as someone 'who did not understand feminism before', she opens the door for other people to identify with her without judgement and start a process of change through information and awareness. This feminist consciousness will imply, as Asadaf warns, constant attacks of anti-feminist movements enjoying good health (Jouët, 2017). Like other YouTubers that we will analyse below, in videos like *'DECONSTRUCTING feminist topics'* Asadaf makes explicit the attacks and social constructions around feminism that she has experienced, and unmasks them through gender perspective analysis. Asadaf can be considered part of an online feminist activism that faces 'pervasive misogyny' (Lawrence & Ringrose, 2018) through discursive tools and a good sense of humour. Her videos can be seen as a form of resistance, as she does not give in to heterosexy attributes of female YouTubers, and undermines anti-feminist

attacks and unpacks stereotypes about feminists – such as the concept of feminazi – using subtle humour and not imposing her point of view in a dogmatic way.

Protests and laughs to combat anti-feminism

The above shows that social media enable new spaces for feminist practices where anti-feminist discourses are questioned and rejected (Jouët, 2017; Lawrence & Ringrose, 2018) in many ways, one of which is the use of humour. An example of this is Towanda Rebels' video *'How do you see it? We see it really bad' (2017)* in which two YouTubers denounce and criticize the role of the media in disqualifying feminist demands. Teresa Lozano and Zúa Méndez, the two young women behind Towanda Rebels, define their YouTube project as an attempt to deactivate patriarchy with laughs, irony, and sharp criticism. Their productions are another example of the potential of YouTube for feminism and resistance (Szostak, 2013; Pruchniewska, 2018; Araüna, Tortajada & Willem, 2019), as they invite viewers to reflect on the multiple daily inequalities faced by women and to identify and subvert misogynist media discourses.

Figure 2. 'How do you see it? We see it really bad'. *Towanda Rebels, YouTube.*

In *'How do you see it? We see it really bad'*, Lozano and Méndez stage an evening of watching TV wondering: what are we doing tonight? Should we suffer watching a talk show? They reproduce a piece of a TV show that exemplifies a trend: inviting people who have absolutely no training or knowledge to talk about gender issues, and who simply reinforce misogynist stereotypes and spread rumours against feminists and their achievements on live TV. During the twelve minutes that the piece lasts, they make fun of the supposedly qualified guests who have been invited to the show to talk about sexual harassment, and with a fine sense of humour they make their point that public TV in Spain 'has entered the game of broadcasting debates with little content and a lot of *macho* discourse'. In addition, they offer data to deconstruct the retrograde messages of the show host and the rest of the invited guests (for example with regards

to the myth of ‘false accusations’ of sexual harassment). At one point in the video, the host asks: ‘... and you, how do you see it?’ To which Lozano and Méndez respond promptly: ‘I see it really bad.’ Throughout the video, Towanda Rebels make a sharp analysis of the talk show with endless funny comments, laughing, learning and taking out their anger. In addition to this, they simulate innocence to make a point about the host and the guests being the first ones who want to kill any males who attack their daughters. After this passage and paraphrasing what has just been said, one of the YouTubers thinks out loud: “This has been amazing, this show has changed my life. What have I been doing so far? I don't know how to relate to men, I should treat them like this (stiff as a stick), be mean and hate them.” The video ends with a critique of this type of talk shows, suggesting they are tabloid and are constantly looking for business along the same line: “Do you know what line? The *macho* line”.

In their commitment to combat anti-feminist media discourses, Lozano and Méndez fight against a politically void concept of feminism (McRobbie 2004) and the dangers of the ‘visibility economy’ (Jouët, 2017), using their digital skills, self-reflection and humour. Their fresh and plain language is embedded in solid feminist theory and activism and is based on a reflective and supportive identity projected towards the community (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2003) and the creation of a culture of online support (Keller, Mendes & Ringrose, 2016). Towanda Rebels seek viewers’ complicity by staging the discomfort we all feel when watching certain kinds of media contents. They transport us to our own living room and put all the words in our mouths that we would be saying while watching the show. By labeling all this reactionary content as ‘amazing’, they make us laugh and force us to take a therapeutic distance, leading us from anger to reflection. The constant hints and sarcastic jokes about the misogynist talk show not only show us that this is a trickster debate like so many others and that we must keep our eyes open at all times but also capture our interest until the end of the video: a final, pedagogical and political allegation in which Lozano and Méndez criticize the patriarchal commodification of mainstream media. In this video, they make very clear how popular misogyny is running in parallel to the new visibility of feminism (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Keller, Mendes & Ringrose, 2016), and they use a strategy of saturation to re-contextualize sexist discourse and dismantle it from a particular and feminist point of view.

This new generation feminist activists are experts in producing innovative and disruptive content. Moving between political feminism, postfeminist culture and the knowledge economy (Pruchniewska, 2018), they somehow manage to confront both the individualistic feminism of neoliberal consumption culture (Rottenberg, 2014) and a whole range of post-feminist representations flooding social media (Araüna, Tortajada & Willem, 2019). Far from the sophisticated and ‘subversive frivolity’ of influencers’ practices (Abidin, 2016), feminist YouTubers in Spain use a casual though articulate discourse, full of political hints. A vital ingredient in their narratives is humour and irony, which were already used by other feminists in the past and now take on a new dimension thanks to the possibilities of social media (memes, cross-media

references, digital creativity). Thanks to this combination of hard data and irony, they are in fact contributing to the increase in audience and promoting feminist interconnection (Jouët, 2017; Lawrence & Ringrose, 2018). Their creative practices re-configure both digital media and the articulation of feminism itself (Zafra, 2011; Keller, 2012; Rentschler & Thrift, 2015; Jouët, 2017; Pruchniewska, 2018) and, despite attempts of neoliberalism to individualize women's experiences, they render visible a collective feminist struggle using a language of their own (Baer, 2016). Towanda Rebels' video as discussed above unmasks the role of the (public) media in a patriarchal agenda and makes the constant attacks on laws preventing gender-based violence, sexual harassment and the invisibility of women in Spain visible through reflection, denunciation and irony. These three intertwined strategies constitute a new way for young feminists to tell their stories on YouTube, ensuring that their cultural and political work on social media will ultimately lead to social transformation.

Places on the frontier

Another example of feminists fighting anti-feminism on digital platforms is the journalist and activist Irantzu Varela. In her Wikipedia entry, she defines her profession as *feminazi*. Irantzu Varela receives online and offline violence and hate speech daily. Her show *El Tornillo* (The Screw) is a feminist micro space on La Tuerka, a programme broadcasted online by Público TV. El Tornillo reflects on issues related to feminism while being critical of the feminist movement itself, applies a gender perspective to social analysis, and contests attacks on feminism. Varela's '*El Tornillo and the violent feminists'* (see Figure 3) is a sarcastic monologue on 'violent feminists' where she deconstructs one of the recurrent attacks on feminism - its supposed violent actions – with facts and figures. At the beginning of the video she appears masked, wielding a drilling tool to announce that 'the program is going to be very brief, as violent feminists do not exist'. Then she explains that in the history of feminism nobody was ever killed, injured, kidnapped or tortured in the name of feminism and that this kind of false discourses are spread by those who feel threatened by a struggle that aims to end all kinds of oppression and privilege. To prove her point she uses a couple of characters to caricature types of people who are reluctant to feminism. The first character is a bearded guy embodying a sexist and homophobic masculinity, who defends his ideas vehemently, without arguments, imposes his judgment and does not expect to be answered. The second is a female character wearing an animal print headband, representing a femininity that considers feminism as 'unnecessary', with no awareness of the feminist struggle, defending a neoliberal discourse (essentialistic, naive and anti-feminist). These characters contest Varela's position, although she does not answer them, she just leaves it up to the audience to judge for themselves.

Figure 3. 'El Tornillo y las Feministas violentas - En la Frontera'. *Irantzu Varela. El Tornillo, Público TV.*

Irantzu Varela defines 'El Tornillo' as a 'place on the frontier', from where she presents the constant attacks on feminism as absurd and ridiculous, in line with other online feminist practices (Lawrence & Ringrose, 2018). Although their visibility is low compared to mainstream popular feminism, these micro spaces promote feminist interconnection and solidarity by defending feminism in a creative and novel way (Jouët, 2017; Lawrence & Ringrose, 2018). Online feminist sarcasm very successfully serves the aim of pointing at misogyny and sexism as desperate and old-fashioned attempts to undermine feminism (Rentschler & Thrift, 2015). For instance when Towanda Rebels call the talk show guests *'umpalumpa'* while beating their chests as if they were Tarzan or the kind of voice Irantzu Varela uses when embodying the bearded man, who tries to be smart but cannot help but look dumb. All of these feminists construct a discourse against oppression and present themselves outside the stereotypes of 'angry' feminists or 'man-haters'. Humour is by large the best strategy for resistance. Far from depoliticizing the message, fun-making and irony reinforce the agency of both the performers and their audiences by widening the horizon of what is possible (Álvarez, Platero & Rosón, 2014) and giving way to a new form of digital feminist literacy (Lawrence & Ringrose, 2018).

Discussion and conclusion

After years of reorganization, marches and protests - which have led feminism to becoming a movement with major capacity for mobilization in Spain and outside - the challenge now is to establish cultural narratives and practices that can counter the rise of sexist violence and neoconservative bigotry globally. In spite of frequent criticism of digital activism in terms of 'clicktivism' or 'slacktivism' (for an overview see George & Leidner, 2019) - we argue that the YouTubers analyzed in this chapter undoubtedly prove that digital activism has a real impact on mobilization – both on and off-line –, their practices being an essential element of Fourth Wave feminism (Chamberlain,

2017; Cochrane, 2013) and profoundly political. These YouTubers have a fundamental role in the further expansion of feminism into the mainstream and interconnect women of all ages, ideologies and classes. But this is not an easy task: despite the skillfulness and power of the YouTubers we have looked at in this chapter, and of many other online activists, people who openly identify as feminists are constantly harassed online (Mantilla, 2013). There is no doubt that activist YouTubers operate in a hostile environment, where reactionary machismo and misogyny are now hegemonic: content creators who do not respond to gender stereotypes and standards, or who decide to talk about feminism, receive sexist and violent comments instantly (Döhring & Mohseni, 2019). One only has to look at Irantzu Varela's YouTube channel or Twitter timeline to realize how many haters and trolls she has to deal with on a daily basis. At one point, in October 2019, Varela's personal details – including her phone number - were made public on Twitter by one of her haters with the aim of threatening her[1]. These attacks are intensifying as populist movements and extreme right-wing parties take a rise.

The above-mentioned YouTubers and their videos establish some features of contemporary feminist digital activists: humour, participation, and effectiveness. Although this is a convenience sample of three, it is clear that f rom the outset, we see how content creators adopt some of the features of memetic communication, particularly by using irony and parodic cross-references to patriarchal tropes. Authors such as Cochrane (2013) had already suggested, despite controversies, that sense of humour is one of the features of the so-called fourth- wave feminism. In the case of our YouTubers, humour acts out as a protection against verbal aggression and the social pressures that they receive as a consequence of their online activity. Faced daily with so-called 'gendertrolling', YouTubers like Irantzu Varela release resistant responses based on sarcasm and parody, and by making sexist attitudes look ridiculous (see Figure 4). The three YouTubers we have examined can afford to use humour precisely because they manage a broad set of reliable data and theoretical knowledge about feminism, which allows them to ridicule the insults and attacks disguised as notions of 'common sense' by misogynist opinion makers.

Indeed, the punch and sarcasm in YouTube videos are features that help messages go viral, but in the case of feminist YouTubers, this may also contain pitfalls. On the one hand, they are at risk of not being understood or not taken seriously by audiences who are less familiar with the codes of memes and other kinds of humour on social media, which may ultimately lead to a backlash against feminism in specific segments of society. On the other hand, by entering the field of irony, feminist sarcasm is often paid back with even more sarcasm and ridicule coming from neoconservative populist movements, who have been managing sexist humour for a very long time. Regardless, feminist activists (should) keep on settling the fight online, as they have proven to be

[1] https://twitter.com/IrantzuVarela/status/1184476029777338369

skilful navigators on social media, capable of capturing contemporary ways of steering the narrative despite the risks.

Figure 4. Use of humour in response to gendertrolling. (1/2) 'The insult' (*I knew this fat bitch was going to come and piss us off, go to the gym, it's healthy, although you are happy with your joints and chopped*) - (2/) 'The trauma'. *Irantzu Varela, Twitter, 10 Jan 2020.*

From the start feminism, understood as social activism has considered the occupation of the streets as a necessary means for making the struggle visible in public spaces, a site that had always been denied to women. In Spain, this concern for the public space has been constant until today and culminated in a landslide success of women's strikes on 8 March 2018 and 2019 in the whole country. Currently, feminists everywhere are aware that the public debate and the battle for hegemony are not only settled on the streets, but also on social media. Consequently, one of the strategies is exposing feminist debates online trying to provoke empathy and reflection in a smart albeit informal way. Cool young people declaring themselves feminists on YouTube and producing feminist videos is a personal and political statement that serves both to popularize feminism and to reinforce processes of personal transformation, which until now was very difficult to achieve using conventional media outlets. Although feminist YouTubers operate in the margins, their number and plurality of representation attracts and connects other activists - both on and offline - and encourages a broader circulation of feminist demands and struggles.

Future research should look into feminist online activists' fan forums and followers' comments to gain understanding in how their audiences interconnect with feminist discourses.

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