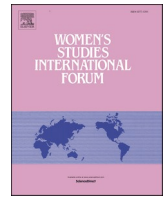


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# The Twitter Battle over the Trans Law in Spain: Mediatization of rage in the case of the podcast *Estirando el chicle*

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## ABSTRACT

Anger has been a part of the public debate in Spain, especially since the 8 M feminist mobilization. This article analyzes whether the mediatized rage surrounding the discursive dispute on Twitter between supporters of the so-called *Ley trans* (Trans Law) and those that oppose the proposed legislation can open up cracks in the affective injustice suffered by the trans collective in Spain. To this end, we will address the discursive debate generated from a sample of 7734 tweets published on the Twitter account of the Spanish feminist podcast *Estirando el chicle*. We will analyze the tweets following an analytical model of operationalization of the concept of anger competence (Chemaly, 2018) structured across three dimensions utilized successfully in previous studies (Núñez Puente & Fernández Romero, 2023): (1) the construction of the subject that enunciates the anger, (2) that which the mediatization of the anger allows to emerge, linked to the conception of affective injustice, and (3) the effects of affects. Our analysis of the discursive dispute on Twitter shows diverse discursive positions which inhibits the visualization of a reparation of the systemic violence suffered by the feminist movement, and within it, by trans people.

## Introduction

"In contemporary terms, the woke eat the woke" is the phrase with which the Spanish journalist and writer Juan Soto Ivars (2022) defines the situation that originated after the announcement of an upcoming interview with the feminist humorist Patricia Sornosa on the Spanish podcast *Estirando el chicle*, an openly feminist podcast which defends the LGBTQIA + collective. Soto Ivars is the author of a "theory of post-censorship" which, in his opinion, comes from "belligerent groups" such as the feminist movement which conducts "digital lynchings" against those who do not share their opinions (La Vanguardia, 2017). On August 10, 2022, the podcast announced on Twitter that Patricia Sornosa would be the next guest, an announcement which provoked an indignant reaction of a good part of the LGBTQIA + collective on the social network and followers of the podcast. Sornosa, who is characterized by her direct, sarcastic, and combative comedy, was singled out as a trans-exclusionary and transphobic feminist for her posts on Instagram and Twitter in which she openly opposes the recently approved Trans Law in

Spain, which recognizes gender self-determination. Accusations of her being transphobic stem from tweets such as: "The oppression of women can end today if we all choose to be men and get he' him pronoun tattoos. It's a seamless plan" (Sornosa, 2022). Her positioning, therefore, is in conflict with that of the hosts of the podcast, the comedians and screenwriters Victoria Martín and Carolina Iglesias. The hosts jointly created the podcast in 2020 after already garnering popularity through their separate careers as Youtubers and in their first project together, *Válidas* (2020), a self-produced webseries.

According to Martín and Iglesias, *Estirando el chicle* is "a comedy podcast that arises from the need to chew over all the things that outrage them" (*Estirando el chicle*, 2023). The program is fundamentally a "diverse and safe space" for women and the LGBTQIA + collective (*Estirando el chicle* (@estirandoelchicle), 2022) defined by humor through which it is possible to center their anger in the discourse surrounding inequality and injustice. The podcast is defined, in the words of its creators, as "a space free of machismo, racism, misogyny, homophobia or any other type of discrimination, a space that positions itself in

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defense of oppressed groups and offers them a voice" (Navarro, 2022). Thus, the mere act of inviting Sornosa to appear on the show unleashed a discursive dispute on social networks, particularly on the Twitter account of the podcast, as part of its followers reacted negatively and accused its creators of providing a platform for transphobic discourses.

Arguments such as those of Soto Ivars account for the difficulty of breaking the double bond of affective injustice that implies not only the suffering of violence that incites rage, but also the discrediting of the anger expressed (Kay, 2019: 592). The subject who enunciates this rage cannot find space for it in the discourse because she is forced to regulate her own emotions, thus reinforcing the social injustice she suffers (Archer & Mills, 2019: 75). Following Srinivasan, it could be said that the expression of anger in public reveals the possibility of "more violence and retraction" to which women in particular are bound as "victims of systematic injustice" (Srinivasan, 2018: 131).

The discursive disparity is amplified in the digital environment in such a way that the mediatization of anger often prevents the productive discussion of issues long claimed by feminist politics such as different forms of violence (Kanai & Gill, 2020; Mayor et al., 2020; Okech, 2021) in the public space. Thus, the transformative potential of anger is partially deprived of its capacity to discursively politicize demands mediated by media platforms (Banet Weiser, 2020). In the case of the debate surrounding Sornosa's invitation to *Estirando el chicle*, it should be noted that it is based in the context of division and struggle for control of the discourse in the Spanish feminist movement that drove the 2021 drafting of the so-called "Trans Law," and its subsequent approval in February 2023.

Given the presence of rage in the public debate, especially since 8 M of 2018 (Gómez Nicolau et al., 2021; Pando Canteli & Aurrekoetxea Casaus, 2020) and the subsequent rift that has opened up in the Spanish feminist movement surrounding the legislative changes that affect trans people, this article aims to analyze whether the expression of anger in discourses both for and against the proposed legislative changes in the Trans Law can open up cracks in the affective injustice suffered by the trans collective in Spain.

To that end, we will determine if mediatized anger is indeed productive and if it has effects on the affects. We will focus on a sample of 2251 tweets published in response to *Estirando el chicle* announcing Patricia Sornosa's appearance on the podcast to analyze the discursive debate they sparked. Utilizing critical discourse analysis as a methodological tool, we will examine the tweets following an analytical model of operationalization of the concept of anger competence understood as the ability to turn anger into something transformative (Chemaly, 2018: 261–262). This analytical model, which has been successfully implemented on other occasions, (Núñez Puente & Fernández Romero, 2023; Maseda García et al., 2022) unfolds in three dimensions of analysis: (1) the construction of the subject that enunciates the rage, (2) what the mediatization of anger allows to emerge according to the concept of "affective injustice," and (3) the effects of affects linked to the productive dimension of anger.

Following Chemaly (2018) it may be argued that women have been socialized to recognize anger and rage, both their own and that of the other. This is a rage that is experienced individually or collectively but, as Chemaly (2018) argues, it is mediated in social and political discourses framed in a hegemonic order designed to discipline of women's anger. However, according to Chemaly (2018), the mediatization of rage can generate an "anger competence". That is, anger is able to provide both women and subaltern groups with the ability to use rage as a tool for the identification of inequalities and their subsequent transformation. Thus, the concept of "anger competence" serves as a starting point for developing an analytical model that, as we have pointed out, deploys three dimensions of analysis. According to Ahmed (2010), we conceive of the three dimensions of analysis as the backbone of a kind of anger based on its political and potentially transformative character. Our analytical model is fundamentally based on the articulation of what Myisha Cherry (2021) calls "Lordean rage", that is, a specific form of

anger that can be both transformative and productive. Cherry lays out five variations of political anger: rogue rage, wipe rage, narcissistic rage, resentment rage and Lordean rage. Of these, Cherry (2021: 116–117) argues that Lordean rage is a form of anger that can be "a resistance figure compatible with compassion and empathy (24)". Lordean rage is embedded, in turn, in the work of Audre Lorde (1981: 127), who points out that anger "focused with precision can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change." Srinivasan (2018: 126), drawing on Lorde's work, argues that women's anger is not only a "source of energy" with political potential, but also a "source of clarification". That is, anger allows women to clearly identify the oppressions they suffer and the systemic nature of these oppressions.

### Whose rage is discursively legible?

The proposals of activism organized in the digital space, such as the #MeToo movement, as well as movements such as #8 M in the specific Spanish context, have contributed to demonstrating a new visibility of women's anger in the public sphere (Boyle, 2019; Clark-Parsons, 2019). In the case of Spain, what is known as the 8 M movement emerged in 2018 from the invitation to the International Women's Strike on March 8, which had a massive response in street demonstrations and in the circulation of calls to action on social networks via hashtags such as #8deMarzoHuelgaFeminista [8MarchFeminist Strike] and #MásFeminismoQueNunca [MoreFeministThanEver]. The call to denounce gender inequality was coordinated through different women's organizations throughout the country centralized in the 8 M Commission. The rage caused by the constant structural and symbolic violence that women receive crystallized in the 8 M movement, becoming a tool for the rearticulation of the feminist movement (Gómez Nicolau et al., 2021: 9–10). Female anger has found a space of emergence in the field of protests and politics (Cooper, 2018; Savigny, 2020; Traister, 2018). In this respect and in the specific case of the discursive expression of rage, feminist media theory has developed an abundant scientific literature on how anger operates in contemporary politics and culture, focusing especially on the analysis of the mechanisms by which rage is generated and mediated (Kay, 2019; Orgad & Gill, 2019). If we take a brief look at feminist scholarship on anger, we can see how, according to Wallaert (2023), there has been an argument in favor of its use as a political tool (Baily, 2018; Kay & Banet-Weiser, 2019) while recognizing its epistemic value as pointed out by Kulbaga and Spencer (2022). In this sense, the rage that has been silenced, as Baily (2018: 93) points out, is "not a raw unfocused energy" but rather a "knowing resistant anger que offers marginalized knowers a powerful resource for countering epistemic injustices".

The theorization of productive rage has also been developed by postcolonial and decolonial feminist studies. Kim (2013: 2) delves into a conception of anger that, endowed with a collective and structural character, "reflects conflicts within a society". In this way, Kim (2013: 5) shows that "individualized conceptions of anger exacerbates the structures that cause anger". For her part, Lebrón (2021: 801) delves into the processes of mobilization of rage to "navigate the constraints of colonial capitalism". In the same vein, Deer et al. (2021) explore Indigenous solidarity in relation to the expression of rage. Finally, it is worth mentioning the attention that anger has received from Black Feminist Studies. From Lorde's (1981) work on rage to Cherry's (2021) work – which we will deal with later – we find a large amount of scientific literature that addresses rage in connection with the productive processes of transformation of the conditions that generate injustice. In this way, Cooper (2018) advocates for embracing the messiness that is "becoming a feminist and becoming okay with rage", warning us of the transformative power arising from rage.

Similarly, Collins' (1999) work on the trope of the angry black woman as a controlling image argues that anger can be a productive response to situations of injustice. From the perspective of some black feminist works, authors such as Hooks (1995, 2000), Ahmed (2010) or

Smith (2000) maintain that rage can be a catalyst for processes of social change. Finally, we observe that the approaches to rage point out in a general way the processes of transformation that rage can activate, based fundamentally on the consideration of its collective and political character.

Anger has also been theorized and problematized by queer studies and trans studies. In this regard, Stryke (2006: 253) situates transgender rage in the context of the regulations imposed in a system that legitimizes “the viability of bodies”. In this way, a process of disidentification with assigned subject positions is activated, which encourages a rage that aspires to become a tool for transformation. Cowan (2014), in the same line of argument, argues that the concept of “the transfeminist kill/joy”, understood as “a set of proliferating dialectics expressed as the rage that comes into being through living the violent effects of transphobia”, contributes to providing a political dimension to the very notion of rage. In this sense, and in response to the anger expressed by the trans movement, Malatino (2020: 843) points out that there is a marked lack of attention to trans demands and experiences in feminist writing on rage. This, according to Malatino, indicates a vacuum for the expression of anger by those groups that consider themselves feminists and that contemplate their anger within the framework of the different gendered forms of oppression (2021: 843). Trans rage, and specifically its public expression, has been framed as fraudulent and hysterical (Bettcher, 2007). It is not, therefore, rendered as a rage intelligible in cultural or political discourse.

Although women's anger has been widely policed, regulated, and disciplined, trans anger does not completely obey the logics of women's anger since, according to Malatino (2020), cis women are recognized in their existence as subjects while trans people see how their own ontological existence is questioned (Aultman, 2021; Solá & Urko, 2014; Tortajada et al., 2020). Indeed, the anger articulated discursively by subjects whose ontological dimension is not recognized therefore lacks sufficient politicizing capacity to bring about social changes and transformations (Hayward, 2017; Serano, 2013). Rage, therefore, and its discursive construction, is neither necessarily nor inherently positive or transformative. Malatino (2020: 837) proposes moving beyond the dichotomy in which anger is understood in order to problematize the contexts in which it is amplified without constituting itself as a transformative tool. This leads us to wonder about the tensions that cross the stories of rage in which, at the same time, the discourses of the feminist movement and those of the trans movement converge and diverge (Phipps, 2016).

To explore which subjects discursively enunciate anger in the framework of feminist debate, it is necessary to understand how anger is mediated in discourses, particularly in those disseminated in the digital space that, as we will see in our case study, operate as elements of discursive disparity. Structures of feeling that inform the relationship between technology and politics can sometimes be useful in structuring collective action (Papacharissi, 2015; Papacharissi & Trevey, 2018). Despite this, the circulation of affects, especially on social networks such as Twitter, also makes it possible to commodify discourses converted into mere discursive fetishes or empty narratives (Dean, 2019).

Affects structure communication on social networks and are verbalized as emotions, such as anger, shaping discourses (Nau et al., 2022). Anger can fuel digital activism or it can feed the mere circulation of emotions contributing to the struggle for intelligibility in one's own discourse (Baek et al., 2012; Brady et al., 2017; Chen, 2020; Nordbrandt, 2021). The analysis of the discursive debate around the controversy raised on Twitter about the podcast *Estirando el chicle* will help us reflect on what happens when affects, rage in this case, circulate on the margins of collective action and social transformation.

### The Trans Law and the fight for the discourse

On February 16, 2023, the Congress of Deputies of Spain approved the so-called “trans law” or Law for the Real and Effective Equality of

Trans People and for the Guarantee of the Rights of LGBTI Persons. Irene Montero, Minister of Equality and militant of the left-wing political party Podemos, said in Congress that “this law repairs a historical debt of the State with trans people, it finally depathologizes trans lives and guarantees the right to self-determination of gender identity” (Borraz, 2022). Her party governs in coalition with the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) in a complex legislature defined by breaches opened by the Trans Law, among others (Requena Aguilar, 2023a).

The introduction of the law has been accompanied by intense political debate (Arias, 2022; Carrera Fernández & DePalma, 2020; Valdés & Blanco, 2022). The Trans Law dictates that minors between 12 and 14 years of age may request an official change of name and sex in their DNI (National Identity Document) with a judicial endorsement; minors between 14 and 16 with the consent of their parents or legal guardian; and individuals of 16 years and older may request those changes freely. Montero explained that the law established the right to self-determination of gender identity and its depathologization: “The State recognizes trans people's right to be who they are, without witnesses, without the obligation of hormones for two years and without any medical report that has to classify them as sick people” (La Moncloa, 2022).

However, the new norm that regulates and guarantees the rights of trans people has fractured the Spanish feminist movement, which is divided between support and rejection of some aspects of the law, especially those related to gender self-determination (Ferré-Pavía & Zaldívar, 2022; Requena Aguilar, 2023b). Positions related to trans activism argue that in Spain. Both the feminist movement and the positions scholarly feminism has split into two: egalitarian feminism and trans-exclusionary feminism. One faction argues that “trans-exclusionaries reduce the ways of being a woman or hinder the empowerment of the group they claim to defend, thus undermining their political capacity” (Ugarte Pérez, 2022). The opposing argument, tied to positions within political feminism linked to the PSOE, headed by the former Deputy Prime Minister Carmen Calvo, promoted the publication in 2020 of a manifesto alleging that the Trans Law endangers the criteria that define the identity of Spanish citizenship (PSOE, 2020). This position has been supported by some influential feminist scholars such as Amelia Válcárcel, member of the Council of State since 2006, who has affirmed that “trans law is not feminist nor is it typical of a democratic society” (Díez, 2022). For their part, feminist philosophers such as Ana de Miguel or Luisa Posada argue that the political subject of the feminist movement is women. According to Posada, identity struggles against the so-called heteropatriarchy should be allied with feminism, avoiding, however, the “deconstruction of the female political subject” (De Blas, 2019).

The law has also been strongly contested by a sector of feminist activism that has launched the “Alliance against the erasure of women”, a national entity that includes 140 women's organizations. Its website states that the Alliance is “an initiative that was born to highlight how the elimination of sex as a legal category erases women (...) and renders sex-based affirmative action measures useless” (Contra el borrado de las mujeres, 2022).

The debate leading up to the approval of the law intensified in the media, giving rise to a discursive articulation of what we could call trans rage as well as what certain sectors of trans activism has categorized as transphobic rage (Willem et al., 2022). Hashtags such as *HabráLey* (ItWillBeLaw) or *FuriaTrans* (TransFury) have circulated intensely on Twitter pointing out, from a position of anger, the need for ontological recognition of trans people, as well as a space for them within the feminist movement itself (Brascia & Ramírez, 2022; Robles, 2021). In the Spanish context, a sector of the feminist movement has framed some of the narratives on certain aspects of the new law as a threat both to women's rights and to women themselves. Hashtags such as *BorrarALasMujeresNoEsUnDerecho* (ErasingWomenIsNotARight) or *SexoNoesGenero* (SexIsNotGender) have arisen in opposition to a digital activism that politicizes trans rage to show the inability of the feminist movement, both from the academy and from activism, to build an

alliance against common environments of systemic oppression (Mala-tino, 2020: 835). In the case of our analysis, addressing both the discourses in favor of new legislative changes and those that oppose some of these changes will provide a more nuanced understanding of the productive dimension of rage, or the lack thereof.

## Methods

### Case selection

*Estirando el chicle* is a multimedia (podcast, video and live shows) and multiplatform program, produced by Podium Podcast (Grupo Prisa) which also enjoys widespread circulation on social networks. It became Spain's most-listened-to podcast in 2021, with an audience largely made up of young feminist women (RTVE.es, 2023). However, in the midst of its intense popularization and success, *Estirando el chicle* and, especially, its creators, had to face the controversy generated on Twitter by the invitation of the comedian Patricia Sornosa in the summer of 2022. Just two days after the announcement of Sornosa's participation in the program, and coinciding with the broadcast of the controversial episode, Iglesias and Martín issued a statement on August 12, 2022, in which they reaffirmed their special "commitment to the LGBTQIA + collective," including, "of course," trans people (Estirando el chicle (@estirandoelchicle), 2022).

In order to observe the (im)productivity of anger through the Twitter controversy of *Estirando el chicle* in the framework of the political and social debate on the Spanish Trans Law, we captured all the response tweets to the two tweets published by the @Estirandoelchicle account on these two key dates: firstly, the announcement of Sornosa's appearance on the podcast (August 10), and secondly, the joint statement from Iglesias and Martín on the launch of the Sornosa's episode (August 12). The tweets were extracted using the Academic API provided by Twitter and a proprietary script written in Python. This first data mining returned a total of 7734 tweets. Considering that the main analytical objective is discursive analysis, we systematize a series of keywords through a basic content analysis as a first approach to tweets' discourses: "Feminis\*" (461 tweets); "Odio" [Hate] (458); "TERF" (442); "Transfob\*" [Transphob\*] (417); "Cancela\*" (188); "Violen\*" (130); "Ley/es" [Law/s] (102) y "Espacio seguro" [Safe space] (53). This basic content analysis, integrating text mining, allowed us to select the most relevant tweets for our study. Thus, the final sample of the study is composed of 2251 tweets. The data selected for later analysis are recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. Finally, those selected tweets were analyzed following the feminist practice of critical discourse analysis (see Núñez Puente et al., 2021; Núñez Puente & Fernández Romero, 2022), understood as a type of analytic investigation on discourses which primarily studies the ways in which the social abuse of power, domination, and disquality are practiced, reproduced, and occasionally combatted, in texts and speech in political and social contexts (Van Dijk, 1999, p. 23). To do this, we have operationalized the discursive analysis around our three dimensions of anger competence:

The construction of the subjects who formulate anger in terms of their credibility and agency.

The potential revealing of inequalities and oppressions through the formulation of anger.

The potential transformative effects of affects such as anger.

Before proceeding with the results, a few comments on the limitations of this study should be made. Although investigations on Twitter can pose problems of representativeness (Blank, 2017), potential biases do not affect this study as it does not seek to generalize or extrapolate its results automatically but to explore a situated case on Spanish feminism and public conversation. However, we must take into account the limitations that Twitter imposes in terms of inequality: on the one hand, because there is unequal access to and legitimacy in the digital public space; and, on the other, because the platform's dynamics stimulate antagonism and confrontation. As such, an overly combative and

polarized logic is over-represented, while reflective, conciliatory or intermediate discursive positions are under-represented.

## Data and discussion

The results indicate that 66 % of tweets of the 7.734 sample are concentrated between August 12 and 14, 2022 (a total of 5102), coinciding with the simultaneous launch of the episode and the communication. That communication fed antagonism in the proliferation of messages in which two weaponized discursive positions were detected: those in favor of the Trans Law and those against certain aspects of that law. While intermediate discursive positions do exist, they represent a small minority in our sample.

In terms of the general dynamic of the conversation, we found both heated and sterile confrontations between people who defend the presence of Patricia Sornosa on the podcast and those who are against it. Their arguments transcend, generally speaking, this specific incident and are inscribed in the macrodebate that has emerged in Spain, particularly in the last three years, on the political subject of feminism sparked by the Trans Law and other norms. The meta-conversation on the program's Twitter centers on violence, hate speech, accusations of transphobia, feminisms, trans law and cancel culture, fomenting the circulation of emotions that only encourage the dispute over intelligibility in the discourse.

In analyzing the tweets, it can be inferred that in the various discursive positions we find a range of affects that enter the orbit of rage. Robert Plutchik's structural model of emotion (2000, in Nau et al., 2022, p. 2051) includes eight basic emotions (anger, disgust, sadness, surprise, fear, acceptance, joy, and anticipation) with three levels of intensity for each emotion. This model also proposes emotional dyads whose combination in turn leads to another emotion: thus, contempt, for example, would be the result of the sum of anger and disgust. That is why, in addition to anger, in the discourses we will find a combination of negative emotions such as weariness or fatigue that, as Nau et al. (2022, p. 2057) point out, are multifaceted and aimed at different objectives.

### Whose identity is more legitimate? The struggle for the political and enunciating subjects of feminism

According to the first dimension of anger competence, we will first focus on how the subjects who enunciate and formulate anger are constructed in terms of their credibility and agency. The characteristics of the subjects who participate in this combative discourse undoubtedly affect how their manifestation of anger is interpreted: either as an expression of agency or subjection or as an expression of power or impotence. We must clarify that this enunciative subject does not refer to an empirical subject. Rather, as we have pointed out, our object of study is the discursive positions of the subject. Such positions can be positions of power, and therefore enunciate an intelligible, unmarked and inherently productive rage (Falm, 2005); or to place themselves on the margins of the exercise of power and the ability to generate a space for political emergence (Butler, 2020). We are interested, therefore, in understanding what are the discursive modes that promote the visibility and naming of rage. In the context of the macrodiscourse on the political subject of feminism we note, in the exchange of tweets, a struggle over who is legitimized, and under what circumstances, to formulate anger in the public space. Said legitimacy is undoubtedly linked to the possibility of forming or not forming a space of appearance. Tweets containing the label "Feminis\*" contribute to the ontological discussion about what feminism is, what it should be and what it should do in the face of the trans question. Part of the conversation revolves around two topoi: "gender" and "woman." Some messages question what gender is, what relationship exists between sex and gender, what to do with gender from feminism, what it is to be a woman, how it is determined and if "feeling" or identifying as such is "enough" to "be": "*being a woman is not a feeling*".

In this sense, we identify an enunciatory subject that, from a position

of power, is legitimized to show her anger as a “true feminist” defender of women as a political subject of feminism, who is committed to abolishing gender, focusing on and not blurring the struggles of women: “Feminism has a political subject: the woman (adult female of the human species), a theory and an agenda (abolishing gender, prostitution, and surrogacy, equality and emancipation of women...). Feminism doesn't have to mother other causes #StopDelirioTrans [Stop-TransDelerium].” The anger and disgust shown by this subject revolves on what they qualify as misogynistic and homophobic “transactivism” embodied in (cis) men, gay men and trans women, whom they identify as “macho-women” or “penis-havers” who “spit violence on feminists”: “What white men love is to attack women wow \n They are only interested in feminism when it comes to forcing the inclusion of “trans women“ who are nothing more than gay white men + a wig.” In her view, this “transactivism” reinforces hegemonic representations of gender by reproducing gender roles, oppressing women and silencing feminists: “You shouldn't have to apologize for inviting a feminist woman. Transactivism is the same old machismo with a lot of glitter.”

Another enunciative voice also circulates in this space of digital dispute, articulating an angry discourse and even disparaging centered on feminists described as “transexclusive” for violating and launching vitriol towards the trans collective, and also for reinforcing the definitions of masculinity and femininity pointing to the gender binary and genitality: “The only ones who want to take away rights, who are transphobic and homophobic, are radical feminists (who are not feminists, because they reduce us to biology and to being a vagina with a uterus, as the Church has said for centuries). Don't confuse the reaction to hatred.” This subject who enunciates directs her anger towards “TERFs” (Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists) whom she does not consider feminists due to their hate speech against trans people: “And when I talk about you I mean the TERFs. Feminists are trans-inclusive because transphobia is not feminism.” The “TERFs” are identified as discursive allies of the far-right party VOX for their anti-feminist, homophobic and anti-trans stance embodied in stereotypically machista “gentlemen” who, like the “TERFs”, show indifference or disdain for feminist demands: “A woman who insults trans women, IS NOT A FEMINIST. And if you think it's feminist, take a better look because you live up to the transphobic speeches of the ‘gentlemen’ of VOX. I'll be damned if I'm anything like them.”

In this way, we witness a confrontation of discursive modes linked to different enunciative positions that is politically unproductive. The expression of rage, in this case, more than potentially transformative, in the sense conceived by Lorde – for whom rage is “charged with information and energy” (Lorde, 2007 [1984]: 127) – would be obstructive. The circulation and hyper-visibility of angry messages with opposing positions implies the difficulty of constituting them as tools for social transformation. The accusations of restricting freedom of expression between the different positions highlight the difficulty for anger to become, as Lorde points out, a powerful source of energy at the service of progress and change. This is the case, for example, when the podcast is accused of accommodating hate speech by virtue of a misunderstood “freedom of expression”: “@EstirandoChicle *How disappointing, not everything falls under a supposed ‘freedom of expression’ when it includes hatred of a group.*” However, from another position, the invitation of the hosts of the program to Sornosa is assimilated as an act of freedom while those who oppose it are accused of supporting cancel culture: “@EstirandoChicle *Listening to all parties shows that you are on the side of democracy and freedom. There is no need to apologize. Those who force you to cancel are closer to dictatorships. It's one thing to hate trans people and another to be against a law.*” As we said, it is difficult to find conciliatory positions that go beyond the hegemonic frameworks of the dispute in which the enunciative positions described are inscribed.

### Censorship, victimhood and deception: hatred to discredit the anger of the “other”

The second dimension of anger competence attempts to unravel what anger causes to emerge: that is, whether or not it is capable of revealing inequality and oppression through structures and practices. That is why it is essential to analyze the origin of anger within the context in which it arises and is expressed. This conception is linked to a social dimension of rage as a transformative emotion that attends to the environments in which it emerges, such as processes of precariousness, inequalities, violence, etc. (Gómez, Gámez, Maseda, in the press). As Ahmed (2004) points out, the emotions work to shape the ‘surfaces’ of individual and collective bodies. The fact of disassociating emotions from the stories that generate or produce them, contributes to transforming the subjects of the debate into “objects of feeling”.

In both enunciative positions, hate speech is used as a weapon to discredit the anger of the “other” in a struggle over which expression of anger is more legitimate. Some voices, a small minority, as we have said, call for a “debate” in the face of what they consider a “lynching” or for “dialogue and reflection” against “blind hatred”. However, we perceive that the circulation of messages without a message (Dean, 2019: 58), that is to say, messages that circulate which are reduced to the medium, does not address the contexts from which anger emerges, such as the injustices that affect both groups.

In this sense, the concept of “affective injustice”, which Srinivasan (2018) employs to refer to that which is triggered in conflicts where “the victims of oppression must choose between getting aptly angry and acting prudentially” is useful for our analysis; they are conflicts that “themselves constitute a form of unrecognized injustice” (p. 127). Thus, the challenge is to bridge the double bind faced by victims of oppression who must contain their anger if they want to be seen as credible in the public sphere (Kay & Banet-Weiser, 2019). That is why we consider the discursive dispute as unproductive, perceiving the difficulties in opening cracks in “affective injustice” and finding, however, a bitter debate far from the origin of oppression and focused on accusing other discursive subjects of pouring out an illegitimate and lacerating anger.

In this sense, we observe how numerous tweets deny that Sornosa's discourse is hate speech (“Patricia neither hates nor attacks”) or that the podcast promotes or welcomes such discourses: “Don't apologize girls, it's great to have a variety of perspectives and not gatekeep humor, since now you have to impose a single discourse and assume that having a different opinion is called ‘hate’ and you have to cancel it (the new bonfire)”. From this position there is therefore talk of an attempt to censor other positions and a “boomerang effect” by those who accuse them of spreading hatred that are, in their opinion, “those who use it most”: “Transactivism has turned the women's liberation movement into hatred. Sending a huge hug, @patriciasornosa.” Many tweets denounce that “transactivism” resorts to victimhood when it equates discrepancy with hatred, which they say they do not acknowledge, however, “when it comes to hatred towards women.”

From the other perspective, the discourse of “true” hate is equated with transphobia. The anger intensifies before the indignation at the fact that the program gives space to “a transphobic guest”, a disappointment whose depth is tied to the fact that the podcast could host misogynistic, homophobic or racist speeches: “‘Diversity of opinion’ does not include hate speech and discrimination. Giving voice to different opinions should never happen by protecting people who violate human rights. If not, it is not a ‘safe or diverse space’, as there are people opposed to diversity.” In that sense, they state that their position is one of defense against the “radical feminists” whom they accuse of promoting hatred: “Those ‘radical feminists’ call me Manolo, they call me a misogynist, they degrade me and try to humiliate me. The LGBTQI collective does NOT hate me, because I do not humiliate them, nor degrade them nor do I want to take away their rights such as the right to a dignified life. The HATE comes from the radfem.”

We see how, in this attempt to gain credibility, discursive positions

would like to detach themselves from their angry position by means of an “appropriate anger” and accuse others of constructing narratives of hatred outside the hegemonic frameworks that cancel excess as inappropriate and dangerous.

### Unproductive rage in diverse discursive positions: the ineffective calls for cancellation

The struggle for the most legitimate expression of anger is interwoven into a language defined by insult and ridicule. According to the third dimension of anger competence, which explores “the effects of affects”, we consider whether or not the discursive diversity in these terms is capable of visibilizing injustices and provoking transformative effects.

Indeed, García and Guzmán point out (in the press) that rage is considered “the feminist political emotion par excellence, insofar as it is recognized as mobilizing, potentially transformative, breaking the boundaries between the private and the public, a source of collectivity and knowledge.” According to [Lorde \(2022\)](#), anger is capable of achieving a “profound and radical modification of the assumptions on which our lives are based” ([Lorde, 2022](#), p. 160). It does not seem, however, that the circulation of affects in the digital environment we are studying manages to mobilize, but rather to limit. Anger and bitter disappointment, like the one perceived in this tweet: “@EstirandoChicle *Alright then, morality and ethics cheaply sold, anything to make money even if it means hosting transphobes who whitewash hate speech. At the end of the day, you are just another media cesspool. Goodbye*”, are combined with mockery or disgust in speeches that, in one way or another, do not succeed in transforming situations of injustice but rather close doors to change: “@EstirandoChicle @PatMirror @patriciasornosa @PodiumPodcast *That’s it. We already have enough transphobia and obstacles to advances in human rights with the far right. Pretty disgusting, really.*”

As we have indicated, one of the subjects who enunciates anger resorts to the term “transactivism” to label those who oppose the feminist position of “gender criticism” that is based on the experience of “women” and in the biological determination of sex. In turn, this position ironically rejects and ridicules the labels of “transhater” and “transphobia” that are understood as tools to coerce the debate: “Women breathe = transphobia / women sleep = transphobia / women give birth = transphobia”.

On the other hand, the enunciative voice that feels attacked by Sornosa’s appearance on the program does not take her appearance as a critical positioning or as an exercise in freedom of speech, but rather maintains that her mere presence is an aggression, regardless of whether or not she manifests her anti-trans position: “I feel very sorry for this because I adore you both, But if you invite a transphobic person, even if the subject is not discussed, it is whitewashing and exposure for that person. Would you invite Rocio Monasterio if you didn’t discuss her ideology but only talked about travel, for example?” (alluding to a deputy of the Vox party). In many tweets, users express their disappointment in the program, which they had believed to be a “safe space” for the LGBTQIA+ collective under the argument of accommodating different opinions and viewpoints. Thus, they show their anger at the program for placing homophobia, lesbophobia or transphobia on different levels: “Yeah, whatever you say. Now you only have TERFs applauding and defending your position while the [trans] collective points at you, the reality is that your audience is changing because now *Estirando el chicle* is a safe area for transphobes”.

The insult “TERF” is thus associated with that of “trans-exclusive” and “transphobic.” The anger over the loss of a safe space is sometimes directed at the creators of *Estirando el chicle*, accusing them of being complicit in giving popularity to “fucking TERFs.” “It pains me because it is an empty statement”—referring to the statement issued by the program to explain its position—“in which hate speech towards trans people is not condemned. Just look at the support of the TERF people. \n \n Also, they continue to give a voice to someone who ridicules and

excludes trans people. I thought the program had certain clear lines.” Those who feel targeted by this insult, however, associate it with a misogynistic and sectarian position, which is rendered as repetitive or dogmatic: “Cancellation by yelling TERF shows here that you can’t even have a relationship with someone who thinks differently or partially share a position publicly. You’re a sect.”

The criticisms about cancellation also characterize the expression of anger on the part of polarized positions. Some messages emphasize the aforementioned rupture of complicity and “betrayal”, while others accuse “transactivism” of exercising cancel culture against the podcast and, in its most extreme manifestation, the erasure of women by “the machos”: “Here you are the fascists, my dear ... so much “diversity” and whatever, but not diversity of opinion, wanting to cancel a woman (but no problem with men, since there’s honor among thieves) who doesn’t follow your creed #WokusDei”.

The cancellation and silencing of women is associated with a violent discourse against them exercised by “men self-identified as women who rape, murder and assault women with the same pattern of violence as other men.” In this way, the angered subject against the trans law fights for greater legal security for women, who suffer violence for the mere fact of being so; And not so much for the trans collective, which in their opinion is not subject to violence in the same way.

Meanwhile, the “transmisogyny” suffered by trans women is made visible by the other camp, identifying the denial of rights, representation or safe spaces, and the cancellation even of their own existence as another type of violence: “Trans women are killed with the same pattern of violence as [cis] women. It has been asked what trans women and women in general have in common. They share torture and rape. Even if it bothers you to hear that.”

The controversy over gender self-determination protected by the trans law is thus at the center of the struggle for the legitimacy of a rage expressed by diverse subjects. On the one hand, detractors raise concerns about alleged fraud that the law could bring about, airing the supposed dangers that it will entail for women: “That men enter women’s spaces, such as prisons (and end up raping), bathrooms and changing rooms (harassing and raping), sports (take podiums from women), parity quotas, laws (get rid of conviction by Gender Based Violence), etc? Yes, and more.” The other side categorically maintains that denying the utility and necessity of the law is an attack on trans lives: “Well, to say that they are not women in itself is already an oppression. Attacking the Trans Law that can help multitudes of trans people is also an oppression of trans people by TERFs.”

We see, in this way, that the accusations deepen the unproductive debate that follows the discursive mechanisms of the social network in which emotions are mobilized in a series of messages without a message that fail to articulate a productive and transformative rage.

### Conclusion

As we have seen, following the first analytical dimension that addresses the construction of the subject that enunciates rage from a discursive position, the mutual discrediting of the anger expressed from different positions ends up generating more violence towards and withdrawal from groups that feel especially discriminated against in different ways. Because of this, the anger on both sides remains unproductive, because rather than contributing to the social mobilization of support networks, it favors a debate with an individualistic approach within the framework of a neoliberal context. Likewise, in terms of the second dimension, we indicate that in this struggle, intermediate discursive positions are very much in the minority and lack credibility. This means that discursive antagonism fails to open cracks in the affective injustice and double bind experienced by victims of oppression. This antagonistic and unproductive logic is motivated by the very functioning of the Twitter platform, where we observe a continuous circulation of empty messages that hinder reflective debates and politically deactivate the anger expressed.

Although anger has served in the disciplining of women, it may also be articulated as a transformative tool through anger competence, allowing to open up a crack in affective injustice or by generating effects through the mobilization of affects through its mediatization. It is precisely anger which informs the demands of the trans movement, which nevertheless does not find a space of recognition in the discursive space by a part of the feminist movement. In the unproductive debate generated on Twitter, anger does not allow for the identification or transformation of inequalities for the LGBTQIA+ collective. On the contrary, the exchange of messages without a message deepens the discrediting of the anger expressed by the different opposing enunciative subjects.

In this way, as we have said we may perceive how the recognition of the subjects who enunciate rage impacts their intelligibility. Thus, trans anger arises from the absence of such recognition and in the struggle to find a place in the discourse that leads the collective to the obligation to regulate its emotions, thereby reinforcing the social injustice it suffers.

The dispute in the Twitter context exposed in the case study is constructed in an antagonistic fashion skirting the possibility of emergence of a reparation of the systemic violence suffered by the feminist movement, and within it trans people, while, from positions based on a growing cultural misogyny, the struggle for rights is reduced to a simple power struggle between conflicting positions: "Woke devours Woke."

Emotions, following the third dimension, circulate separated from their production, thus detaching the expression of rage from the context in which it arises. This means that this emotion is not able to highlight inequalities and oppressions and, in the scope of our study, it does not manage to break with hegemonic representations of gender. As such, we raise the need to find synergies and ways to promote common demands in a context increasingly hostile to feminist and trans movements. This would take advantage of the transformative potential of anger and its ability to politicize the demands, inequalities and injustices that activate it.

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