

Hamilton College

Hamilton Digital Commons

Student Scholarship

Works by Type

8-2023

Digital Transfeminism in Response to TERF critiques of the Trans Law in Spain

Bailey Black '24
Hamilton College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.hamilton.edu/student_scholarship

Citation Information

Black, Bailey '24, "Digital Transfeminism in Response to TERF critiques of the Trans Law in Spain" (2023).
Hamilton Digital Commons.

https://digitalcommons.hamilton.edu/student_scholarship/85

This work is made available by Hamilton College for educational and research purposes under a [Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 4.0 license](#). For more information, visit <http://digitalcommons.hamilton.edu/about.html> or contact digitalcommons@hamilton.edu.

Hamilton College

Digital Transfeminism in Response to TERF Critiques of the Trans Law in Spain

Bailey Black

Activism and Digital Queer Culture in the Hispanic World

Professor Marcelo Carosi

22 Aug. 2023

In March of 2023, the Trans Law (La Ley Trans) entered into Spanish law, and now provides trans individuals greater access to gender identification changes. With this law in effect, Spaniards can legally change their gender identification and name on their identification cards (DNIs) at 16 with only a declaration, compared to previous laws that required proof of gender dysphoria and some medical treatment, usually hormone therapy (El Confidencial). This law has been well recognized for its progressiveness and divisiveness around the globe, being reported by Human Rights Watch, Reuters, Le Monde, Euronews, and BBC, to name a few.

However, trans rights have had a rocky history in Spain, being pushed far out of the public consciousness during the reign of military dictator Francisco Franco. The Franco period, from 1939 to 1975, was characterized by extreme gender normativity, in which women were expected to engage in mandatory social service and men were expected to fulfill the role of “soldier-monk” or exhibit crusader-like traits (Winchester 105-106). The role of women and men was thus heavily policed throughout the period and left little room for gender discourse. These differences were encouraged even at the medical level; the Franco regime encouraged medical practitioners to highlight the women’s role biological in reproduction, thus teaching submission and maternity as the natural biological functions of a woman’s body. Birth control was illegal, although the large family ideal of the regime was often not met, indicating its covert usage (Winchester 109-110 and 112). Propaganda focused predominantly on maintaining these gender norms, framing women’s roles inside the home and with goals of improving the home despite existing in public spheres in the 1960s as gender norms began to shift (Winchester 110-111). However, the existence of social service, amongst other factors, according to Enders and Radcliff, led to an increased sense of autonomy and political influence for women (Winchester 106). Winchester argues that “feminism operated in Spain under the Franco

dictatorship, giving it a solid foundation so that within a year of Franco's death Spanish feminism was thriving" (112). Despite the strong legal and political condemnation of homosexuality, there was still evidence of socially accepted homosexuality in various sectors of Spanish life, and female homosexuality, not defined by courts, went largely unpunished, although deviance from traditional gender norms had negative impacts on individual women (Winchester 114 and 116). According to Ruiz-Rico, Spanish courts struggled to categorize transgender people, especially when referring to cases of homosexuality, especially when the individual's biology did not conform to gendered norms (Winchester 114-115) and punishment for transvestism fell under homosexuality as opposed to having its own category in Spanish law (Platero 599). Encounters with tourists and other Western influences also shifted norms and perceptions of gender and sexuality, including increased prostitution (Winchester 118). Gender marking on DNIs disappeared between 1962-1981 and Platero argues this is due to heavy gender norms that left no room for confusion (600).

The post-Franco period was characterized by significant growth in LGBTQ+ rights, but trans rights were often marginalized even from LGBTQ+ communities and movements. Transgender Spaniards, after Franco's death, participated in a variety of social movements, including the fight for legalizing homosexuality and decriminalizing prostitution (Platero 598). Trans women have been participating in the national feminist conventions since 1993 (Platero 604). The late 1980s and early 1990s began a period of increased visibility for trans issues, with the first transgender organization in Madrid founded in 1987 (Platero 603). An increased number of organizations led to the formation of the National Federation of Transgender Organizations in 1996 (Platero 603). This visibility included discussions of healthcare for trans citizens, and in 1999, regions like Andalusia developed gender disorder health units, which had

to partner with other health organizations or the public healthcare system for surgical procedures (Platero 602). The early 2000s continued to feature trans activism in other arenas and the term “transfeminism” was used for the first time in 2000 (Willem 186). In regards to specific trans issues, the early 2000s were predominantly occupied by the fight for name changes on DNIs and public health (Platero 598). A variety of laws in Spain at the time indicated that there must be a clearly gendered name on DNIs (Platero 600). In 2006, trans convicts could request prison location based on appearance, even if the name on their DNI didn’t match that appearance (Platero 602). The Equality Act (La Ley de Igualdad) was passed in 2007, and allowed trans people to change their names on DNIs with medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria and 2 years of treatment (usually considered hormone treatment) (Platero 598 and 601). In 2010 a judge allowed a child under 16 to undergo gender affirming surgery, leading to a precedent for a younger age of consent and the president called for the World Health Organization to remove transsexuality from the International Classification of Diseases (Platero 602). Before the national Trans Law was codified, different autonomous communities in Spain had laws for auto-determination of sex: Euskadi in 2012 and Canarias in 2014 (Sevilla Lorenzo and Barandela). In addition, a variety of non-discrimination and health access laws have been put in place in a variety of autonomous communities in Spain, including Catalonia, Madrid, the Basque Country, Galicia, and Andalucia (Platero 603).

Support to evolve these local laws into the national Trans Law came primarily from United Left (IU), Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE), Catalonia Republican Leftist Party (ERC), and Catalonia Nationalist and Green Party (IPCV) (Platero 604). There has been support from parts of other parties as well, but with different rhetoric: the phrasing for Popular Party (PP) is more around “afterbirth error” (Platero 604). Platero claims that the Catholic Church is an actor

to consider, and has not been “as antagonistic [about trans rights] as they have been regarding same-sex marriage rights” (604). However, the discourse has been very mixed, particularly in the trans community: there has been an increased emergence of trans exclusionary radical feminist (TERFs) sentiments, particularly online, such as on Twitter and Instagram (Willem 187). The Spanish feminist party historically has excluded trans feminists (Willem 186). In 2020, social party feminists and Confluencia Movimiento Femenista released separate “manifests” claiming that the Trans Law would be dangerous for women (Willem 187). TERFs online are primarily associated with PSOE or other privileged groups and argue that the “erasure” of sex as a biological category endangers women as the oppressed minority (Willem 189). They also argue that they have been harassed by queer activists and have been silenced (Willem 190). These feminists claim to be true feminists trying to stop sexism because they believe that trans activism could “undo” the work of previous feminists; their policing of feminist spaces for “gender deviation” doesn’t permit trans activists in feminist communities (Willem 190). As a result, #BorradoDeMujeres trended online, criticizing the law as erasing women (in reference to #ErasingWomen in response to US discrimination policies discussed in 2021) (Willem 190-191). They argue that men can infiltrate women’s spaces if all that is required is a declaration of gender dysphoria (Willem 192). The Ministry of Equality has come under heavy scrutiny and criticism from these feminists, especially given the shift of power to being led by Irene Montero, of Unidas Podemos, referring to the Trans Law as the “Montero bill” (Willem 193-194). According to Willem and coauthors, these TERFs use misleading or falsified news as well as incorrect or misleading interpretations of scientific research (196).

This paper will examine the usage of transfeminism as a digital method of confronting TERF critiques of the Trans Law in Spain. This paper will first give context about the concepts

of transfeminism and TERFs, comparing transfeminism to biologism, which is commonly used by TERFs. Digital activism will be examined through the lens of transfeminism using the Instagram profiles of three different trans Spanish activists: Angela Ponce, Penélope Guerrero, and Elizabeth Duval. In examining these activists, this paper will answer the following questions: how are trans activists responding online to biologist claims made by TERFs? In what ways does their transfeminism look different? In what ways is it similar? What makes their strategies effective?

Transfeminism: the intersection of trans activism and the feminist movement

One of the primary works that popularized the term “transfeminism,” Emi Koyama’s “The Transfeminist Manifesto” clarifies the intersection between trans activism and the feminist movement (Giles). According to Koyama, transfeminism is included in feminism under the following principles: that all people have the right to define their own identity and that all people have the right to make decisions about their own bodies (245). This is a cornerstone of feminism, relating specifically to the various expressions and experiences of women as they deviate from traditional gender roles and access healthcare like abortions, respectively. These principles also encapsulate the demands of the trans community, in seeking the legitimization of their identities and their access to gender affirming care. Koyama argues that this inclusion of the trans community can only “benefit the [feminist] movement” (244).

This manifesto is in direct contrast to the narrative of feminism claimed by TERFs, many of whom use biologism to explain gender and gendered experiences. According to Van Anders, “biologism is the belief that biological factors are both deterministic to and the essence of specific human phenomena,” including gender and sex (33). Thus TERFs argue that the experiences of trans women are not the experiences of “real” women because their biology has

“determined” their identity. The difference between these two definitions of feminism is at the center of the debate surrounding the Trans Law, dividing feminists in Spain. It has become a question that many trans activists in Spain are wrestling with, explicitly and implicitly.

One of the videos circulating in discussions of the Trans Law, from elDiario.es, exemplifies the current debates. Titled “Revientan el acto del 8M e Irene Montero responde: ‘Las mujeres trans son mujeres’” and uploaded on March 8, 2023, the video shows various women interrupting discussions held by the Ministry of Equality on International Women’s Day. According to the video description, these women are interrupting to protest the Trans Law and yell over Irene Montero, the Minister of Equality. The Minister, according to the video description, encouraged the women to come up to the stage and share their ideas. The video shows Irene Montero responding to these women, saying that trans women are real women and that her job as the Minister is to respect and support human rights. The video has 10,944 views, 456 likes, 0 dislikes, and 387 comments as of June 12, 2023 (‘Revientan El Acto Del 8M’; full transcript in Appendix).

This video is in many ways representative of the discussions happening across platforms about the Trans Law. It shows the Minister and eight other women, seated behind two white tables with microphones, in front of various supporters, presumably, of the Ministry, and a purple backdrop with various cartoon outlines relating to women. The interrupting women ask Irene Montero, “What is a woman?” and the Minister responds by asking the women to confirm her assumption that these women don’t believe real women can have a penis. Montero argues that this assumption goes against the Ministry and the human rights the Ministry is trying to protect, stating that it is the patriarchy, not trans women, who are hurting women. She claims that trans women are real women and says “long live the fight for women, for all women” (“que viva la

lucha de las mujeres de todas las mujeres”; my trans; ‘Revientan El Acto Del 8M’). Similar to many conversations on other platforms, it shows the division of feminists on the definition of womanhood, with one side arguing that women are biologically female and that saying otherwise erases the particular discriminations experienced by women as a result of their biology, while the other side claims that not accepting trans women as real women is discrimination and goes against human rights. The Ministry of Equality stands by the latter, hence supporting the Trans Law.

Many of these discussions are furthered in the comments:



Mgh Medioelfa 3 months ago

Pregunta de examen a Montero: ¿Qué es un gato? Respuesta de Montero: Los gatos merecen ser tratados con respeto. Nota del examen: cero.

30 Reply

[30 replies](#)

One particular user, Mgh Medioelfa (MM) criticizes Montero for not answering the question “What is a woman?” posed by disagreeing feminists at the conference, comparing her response to a zero on a test when the test asks “What is a cat?” if the student responds with “A cat deserves to be treated with respect.” As of June 12, 2023, this comment had 30 likes and 30 replies.



habinson 3 months ago

La pregunta de esa terf a la Ministra, es una pregunta capciosa. La tuya, es simplemente inverosímil.

1 Reply



Mgh Medioelfa 3 months ago

[@habinson](#) Es capcioso preguntar qué es una mujer:

RAE

1. adj. Dicho de una palabra, de una doctrina, de una proposición, etc.: falaz (ll embustera, falsa).
2. adj. Dicho de una pregunta, de una argumentación, de una sugerencia, etc.: Que se hace para arrancar al contrincante o interlocutor una respuesta que pueda comprometerlo, o que favorezca propósitos de quien las formula.


CONCLUSIÓN:



Hay que saber muy bien y decir millones de veces qué es el patriarcado, pero mejor no hablar de lo que es una mujer, ni definirlo ni nada, todo sea que el Ministerio se nos moleste, y mejor aún dejar de decir la palabra mujer, que ya va siendo hasta de fachas, porque de hecho ya dicen algunos que es ofensivo y no se sienten representados con esa palabra. Pero no ningunean a las mujeres en general, para nada, ni sueltan violadores sus leyes, para nada, son los y las y les jueces que son fachas, fachos y faches. Y si ves unas bolas colgando en el vestuario femenino y alzas la voz porque hay un tío en el vestuario de mujeres y ellas no quieren p n s mientras ellas o sus hijas o madres o amigas se cambian de ropa o se duchan: fachas, de Vox, nazis, tránsfobas o terfs, confirmado. Mundo distópico es poco, Orwell se volvería a la tumba del susto si alzara la cabeza.

Show less

3 Reply

One of the replies, by user habinson, calls the women who interrupted Montero “TERFs” and critiques their “selfish question,” further stating that MM’s comment is “simply far-fetched.” MM responded to this comment with additional comments, claiming that women who didn’t want to have to change with trans women with a penis are called “fascists, of the Vox political party, Nazis, transphobes or TERFs.” This comment thread is only one of many similar arguments about the Minister’s response to biological feminism. However, there are additional comments praising and thanking the Minister:

 **Eva Parra Brunetto** 3 months ago
no hay una política como tú Irene, gracias por defendernos

 14  **Reply**

▼ **4 replies**

 **SuperDucado** 3 months ago
Gracias Ministra!!!!!!!

 4  **Reply**

▼ **1 reply**

These different comments indicate that there is a large split between TERFs and transfeminists, increasingly polarizing the feminist community in the country. Thus the primary debate over the Trans Law is the debate between transfeminism and biologism.

Angela Ponce: Achieving the ideal feminine body to challenge biologism

Despite claims that trans women are not “real women,” Angela Ponce, model and activist, has proven this claim wrong on the international stage. In 2018, Angela Ponce made history when she was crowned Miss Universe España and became the first trans woman to compete in Miss Universe (‘Transgender Day of Visibility’). Although Ponce didn’t win the competition, her presence and title as Miss Universe Spain suggest support of trans women as

“real women” by supporting her participation in a competition historically perceived as the ultimate notion of femininity. As “the Greatest Celebration of Women,” the Miss Universe organization hosts an annual Miss Universe pageant that determines the winner via “personal statements, in-depth interviews, evening gown, and swimwear” and therefore exemplifies role models for women (Miss Universe). Competing for this title, Ponce indicated that her identity as a trans woman did not make her any less of a woman and that trans women can “compete” with real women. Since the competition, Ponce has modeled for a variety of brands like Pantene, Dior, and Shein (Arroyo). In this way, Ponce became a beacon of hope for the trans community, giving further visibility to the lived experiences of trans people. The acceptance of Ponce into the modeling and pageant community further underscores the visibility and validity of the trans community in popular culture. This has been Ponce’s goal, stating in a video from Miss Universe’s YouTube channel that as long as she can help the lived experiences of people change and increase tolerance, “I don’t need to win Miss Universe, I just need to be here” (‘Transgender Day of Visibility’). Ponce’s activism through modeling and body visibility thus provides an example of what trans women can look like and that trans women can look like “real women” according to conventional beauty standards.

Ponce is also active in feminist activism online, supporting the transfeminist idea that feminism can support and further the rights of trans women. Many of her posts detail her life as a woman, sharing lived experiences of women such as body shaming and celebrating her body, as well as her activism for women’s rights.



One of her posts details her comfort in her body despite its changes, citing her change in size and the negative comments she's received. However, she states that there is "nothing she would want to change" about her body, encouraging women to love and support their own bodies ("No hay nada que quisiera cambiar"; my trans; 'Confianza es la nueva belleza'). She also shared a post with a translation of her words, saying that she represents all women in activism ('Debemos ser la voz'). This narrative combats and confronts the TERF narrative that trans women don't experience the same struggles as cis women and supports Koyama's idea that trans women supporting other aspects of the feminist movement further both the trans and feminist movements. This narrative is supported by many other women, seen in the positive responses to her posts. Her comments sections are full of support, posting fire emojis or heart emojis with a variety of positive comments: "You are radiant," "You are precious," and "QUEEN" being the top comments on her body image post (my trans; 'Confianza es la nueva belleza').



She continues to receive support from other pageant competitors, such as Virgina Limongi Silva, Mireia Lalaguna, and Sthefany Guterrez Guterrez, who said “marvelous” in response to her pride post (‘You wanna see me’). Based on the support and agreement from other women, she is speaking to common experiences and thus reinforcing her place in the fight for women’s rights as a woman.

Her primary confrontation of biologism on her Instagram is the presentation of her body as an ideal female body. While the examination of her body as a trans woman is often not the primary goal of her posts, such as that of her above post where she aimed to discuss body image, the connection between her feminist activism and her body bridges the gap between trans activism and feminist activism, showing the legitimacy of trans women to exist corporally in women’s spaces. She does encourage this reading in some of her photos, however, adding the hashtag “happy pride” in the description of her nude photoshoot with Ivan Durmont (‘You wanna see me’).



53,982 Me gusta

angelaponceofficial You wanna see me... 🏳️? Watch me.

.

#happypride
@ivandumont

This photo celebrates the female body and the legitimacy of that body to exist in public spaces, which is a goal of the feminist movement. However, her body doesn't just exist as a feminine body but as a trans feminine body, which forces viewers to confront their beliefs about the "biology" of real women, as she "passes" as a woman. The simultaneous celebration of her womanness and queerness helps to further the visibility of the queer community as well as the transfeminist movement to include trans women's issues in the discussion of women's issues. Her Instagram is thus full of the nuances of being a trans woman, being able to support and protect the trans community as well as women's rights. Therefore, the transfeminism showcased in her Instagram posts challenges biologism in that her body is the ideal feminine body, legitimizing her experiences and existence as a woman, which is furthered by her support of

women’s issues that indicate a shared lived experience with cis women.

With her take on transfeminism comes a response, specific to what Sari M. Van Anders describes as “internal bio/logics,” by TERF critics. Defined as a form of biologism that claims that those most “interior” and biologic factors are the most “essential features of gender/sex,” TERFs thus argue that gender affirming surgeries or other cosmetic procedures only further support the idea that genitals aren’t more descriptive than genes in determining gender/sex because they can be changed and are not “interior”(33). The negative comments seen on her Instagram posts in this paper critique Ponce under this definition of biologism. One user said in a comment on her body image post that Ponce “was born a man” and that “beauty pageants are for women who were born biologically women”. This comment received 11 likes as of July 2023 and one response, saying that beauty pageants “permit all women to participate, not just cis women” to which the user responded: “She’s not a woman so a uterus of plastic was put in, the biology is clear and they won’t change the natural order for her abnormal illnesses” (my trans; ‘Confianza es la nueva belleza’).



alcasser_coolor 27sem

Y dijo que no es un hombre que quiere ser mujer, pero el nació hombre y quiso ser mujer, me van a caer entre muchos, pero los concursos de belleza son para mujeres nacidas biológicamente mujeres, ponganse bravo el que se quería molestar.

11 Me gusta Responder Ver traducción



laqueseavecina789 1sem

No, los concursos permiten que participen todas las mujeres, no solo las mujeres cis.

Responder Ver traducción



alcasser_coolor 1sem

@laqueseavecina789 ella no es mujer así se ponga utero de plástico, la biología es clara y no van a pretender cambiar las cosas naturales por sus enfermedades anormales

1 Me gusta Responder Ver traducción



miltonsp89 7sem

Nunca tendrás ovarios.

31 Me gusta Responder Ver traducción

Another comment on her pride post simply states: “You’ll never have ovaries” (‘You wanna see

me’). These comments align with the TERF narrative that although trans women may “look” like women, they will never be “real women” because of their internal biology, like having a real uterus or ovaries. Ponce has not responded to these comments but continues to post images of her body and life, which can be considered a response in and of itself.

Ponce thus exemplifies transfeminism in her support of feminist issues and her presentation of her body but does not directly combat internal bio/logics. Her activism primarily stems from the achievement of the ideal female body, showing that trans women can also achieve conventional femininity. This by no means undermines her identity as a trans woman or is indicative of “conformity” to patriarchal ideals, but rather supports the transfeminist claims that trans women should be able to decide for themselves how they present their bodies to the public, if at all. Her presentation serves as one example of the ways that trans women might exist, and her existence as it aligns with other cis women contradicts TERFs’ claims that trans women are not “real women.”

Penélope Guerrero: Redefining the ideal feminine body to challenge biologism

Of notable contrast to Ponce’s transfeminism is activist and model Penélope Guerrero. Her message, on her TedTalk in 2021 and ongoing in her Instagram posts, is that one’s sex does not define one’s gender identity or, more importantly, one’s experience as a trans person. In her TedTalk, Guerrero grapples with the ideas of sex and gender, revealing that “I don’t have ovaries, but I do have balls and I’m proud of them” (“Qué es ser mujer?” 7:58). She challenges not only the biological “basis” for gender but also the requirements or motivations of trans women. Koyama claims that trans women often feel pressure to “prove” their femininity via gender stereotypes or medical, cosmological, or hormonal procedures (246). Guerrero, though certainly not the first, presents an underrepresented narrative of the trans experience, in which a woman’s

genitals are not a defining characteristic of her gender experience. Although Guerrero doesn't cite Koyama or another transfeminist specifically, her definition of feminism, in which everyone has bodily autonomy and freedom to live as they choose, aligns with Koyama's definition of transfeminism as Ponce's does, but challenges the ideal feminine body in a way Ponce's activism does not.

On December 31 of 2022, Guerrero posted a picture of herself and wished everyone a happy new year in the photo. The second photo in the series was further zoomed in.



Only 3 days later, Guerrero posted a video responding to the flood of comments she had received about the post, claiming that her post “didn’t represent” the trans experience, that it “repulsed”

people online, and that her photos should be “private.” Guerrero responded to these comments, saying that she won’t even think of hiding her body the way it is and that the way to normalize the trans experience is the photo she posted. She further reflects on the identities of the people posting comments, saying that one particular comment was made by a trans woman. This supports Koyama’s claims that trans women feel the need to prove their femininity and thus conform to physical and social stereotypes of cis women created and maintained by the heterosexual patriarchy.

Guerrero’s activism is a particularly strong explanation of activism against the biologism framework. According to Van Anders, the implication of biologism is that it “locate[s] gender/sex in one true natural form that can only be authenticated by others” (33). Guerrero’s self-authentication, despite rejection from individuals in the trans community and the feminist community, denies the right of others to determine her identity. This self-identification is strongly supported by the Trans Law and transfeminism as a framework, thus serving as activism against the kind of supposed “feminism” that TERFs argue.

Guerrero is active in her responses to others, recently publishing a video that showcased the responses she received on the street when walking in public. This video features peppy music as Guerrero walks the streets, zooming in to highlight whistles, glances, and yells of “beautiful” and “gorgeous” from onlookers. The video ends with Guerrero walking past another woman who says “beautiful” and the text on the video then says “Reminder: not everything is a cocky catcall, be yourself darling” (‘Hace poco’). Guerrero captions the video with reflections about walking in the street and the responses she gets. She critiques the famous “then don’t wear that” phrase, saying “Then you find yourself sacrificing your own right to be and exist” (‘Hace poco’). Walking in the street without fear of catcalls is something that many women fear, and

thus, similar to Ponce, Guerrero is showcasing the ways that trans women experience similar challenges to cis women, furthering the transfeminist narrative that feminism applies to all women. Guerrero continues to be active in her response to others, as seen in her video about the responses she received from her photo and this video, where she is seen responding to catcallers in the street. Her activism, although similar in transfeminism to Ponce, is much more direct, calling out those who disagree with her statements and showing the faces and reactions of people to her in real time.

Guerrero is thus challenging TERF narratives explicitly through her Instagram, examining the responses of others and critiquing them, as well as defending her right to exist in her body in whatever way makes her most comfortable instead of the way that women, even trans women, “should” look. Her transfeminism is thus aligned with Ponce’s in supporting women and the ways that trans activism and feminist activism intersect, but also going beyond to redefine what trans womanhood can look like.

Elizabeth Duval: Transfeminism in Gen Z

Younger activists, such as Elizabeth Duval, are moving away from explicit discussions of the body to more seamlessly integrate transfeminism in their activism. Duval, a 22 year old Spanish writer, has been prominent in trans and feminist activism in Spain and showcases the way that younger generations can engage in transfeminist activism. As a trans woman, a young writer, and a prominent activist in the political arena, Duval has been dubbed “the voice of a generation.” When asked about this title in an interview with *elDiario.es*, she claimed that the concept of generations “doesn’t interest her much” and that other identities, such as gender or class, are more impactful in one’s life than one’s generation (Miró). However, her growing list of accomplishments is only made more impressive by her age. In 2021, she had already

published four books, had degrees in philosophy and writing, wrote as a columnist for *Público* and *El Paíz*, and worked with channel Playz (Elizabeth Duval). One of her novels, *Reina*, speaks heavily to recent world events, like the Notre Dame fire, International Women's Day, and the Yellow Vest Protests (Miró). Simply by virtue of her lived experiences, Duval responds to these issues and centers her works around issues of particular concern for younger generations.

Although it's unclear whether differences between Duval and Ponce and Guerrero's activism stem from generational differences, Duval does engage with various forms of activism in a more fluid capacity. Duval has recently announced her participation in the Spanish political party Sumar, as the speaker for feminism ('Hoy tengo'). As a part of Sumar, Duval has posted a variety of videos of her in interviews and other speaking engagements, discussing a variety of feminist issues, one of which is the Trans Law. In one video, published on July 12, Duval discusses the inconsistencies in the right's reaction to the law, stating that she personally had benefited from a similar law that existed in Madrid in 2016, and with the Trans Law, is now nationally recognized ('Hace falta pedagogía'). Duval masterfully walks the line between the personal and the professional, sharing her own experiences but supporting and reaffirming the experiences of others through her activism as the feminist speaker for Sumar. There is no clear distinction between her trans activism and her feminist activism, highlighting the ways that activists can seamlessly integrate transfeminism into activist discourse.

This seamless integration may be the result of her generation's more fluid outlook on gender. In a TIME article, author Jean M. Twenge says that "for Gen Z (those born 1995-2012), the whole concept of gender is more fluid," and Duval's presence in politics and activism encourages this concept to take center stage. Perhaps this is part of why Duval encourages younger generations to get involved in politics. When Duval announced her participation in

Sumar on the 4th of July, she encouraged younger generations to speak up and take charge of changing their country for the better.



Duval asserts that “it’s the responsibility ... to add my strength to stop what we have left of the world from unraveling” (“Es la responsabilidad ... de añadir mi esfuerzo para impedir que lo que nos queda de mundo se deshaga”; my trans; ‘Hoy tengo’). Her depictions of a shared responsibility to better the community and the world serve to encourage her generation to use their own definitions and understandings of gender to support both feminist and trans activism. She also implicitly encourages political activism in younger people through example. On her Twitter, Duval showcases a variety of activism, through talks with organizations such as Futuro En Común, which provides spaces for various movements to fight against inequalities and for

environmental sustainability; through discussions with journalists and philosophers about current governing in Spain organized by journal *El Grand Continent*; through activism with Sumar with well-known activist Carla Antonelli and movement leader Yolanda Diaz. All of these encounters result in intergenerational discussions and showcase Duval making space for younger generations in political debates. Despite Duval's protest that generational differences are far less important than other issues, her activism seems to create space for and encourage activism from Gen Z, bringing trans and feminist issues into the hands of future generations.

Similar to Ponce and Guerrero, Duval's activism includes both feminism and trans activism. In an interview with BBC, Duval said "I'm probably more feminist than LGBT fighter" (Hernández Velasco). Her statements about the importance of feminism underscore Koyama's claims that trans rights are intrinsically linked to women's rights. Similar to Guerrero's claims that transfeminism should allow individuals to exist in a variety of different ways, Duval asserts that she has been fighting for individuality among the media that tries to homogenize the trans experience. Duval mentions in her book, *Reina*, that she was considered "the comfortable version of what being trans meant" by the media, having been converted into a trans public figure instead of an individual person (ch. 10). This desire for individuality is also a common demand in transfeminism, as shown by Guerrero, in not defining the trans body or experience in one particular way, just as women should not be defined in one particular way.

Also similar to Ponce and Guerrero, Duval uses her body to engage in activism, but as an active body as opposed to a visible body for public consumption and activism. Duval posted a series of photos on July 23, 2023, when she went physically to vote for her political party, Sumar. Her caption reads: "for hope and for liberty. Because Spain deserves more and is more diverse and proud than them. For the future, for Sumar, to broaden our democracy and construct

more dignified lives for everyone” (my trans; ‘for hope’).



Her body, unlike Ponce and Guerrero, is not pictured to encourage viewing of a trans body, but rather serves as a statement of a trans body enacting change in Spain. This example further underscores her specific kind of activism, in which the personal and political, the feminist and the trans activist, are inseparable. She exhibits her personal activism, in going to vote, as well as her political activism, in supporting a political movement she is a part of. She exhibits feminism in acting as the feminist speaker for Sumar and by her use of the feminine version of “everyone” in her post (compared to the masculine version that is conventionally used in Spanish when referring to mixed groups), as well as her trans activism in supporting liberal politicians and exemplifying a trans woman empowered. These kinds of activism all masterfully combine into what is easily described by Koyama as transfeminism.

Of additional consideration in Duval’s activism is the timing of when Duval transitioned. In her BBC interview, Duval stated that she began transitioning earlier in her life, coming out to her parents at the age of 13 (Hernández Velasco). Based on this, Duval may feel more closely

aligned to the feminist movement, having spent all of her adult, independent life as a feminine presenting person. Koyama brings up the age at which one transitions to discuss the nuances of experiencing male privilege. One of the primary critiques of transfeminism, according to Koyama, is that trans women have experienced male privilege and thus are more privileged than cis women. Koyama explains that trans women may indeed experience male privilege, but are also oppressed as trans people (248). Duval, in contrast, states that she has experienced more discrimination as a lesbian than as a trans woman (Hernández Velasco). Perhaps this is why transfeminism and the feminist movement are so important to Duval; her experiences align closely in many ways with the issues that cis women face. This by no means undermines her identity as a trans woman but rather reinforces Koyama's claim that the feminist movement serves to support trans as well as cis women.

Overall, Duval's transfeminism is less corporeal focused and more politically focused, but similar to Ponce and Guerrero, supports transfeminist ideals of bodily autonomy and individuality. Especially in becoming the feminist speaker for a major political campaign, Duval asserts that she, as a trans woman, can speak to the experiences of women and thus support a political campaign in furthering feminist issues. This contrasts TERFs' claim that trans women don't have the same experiences as cis women. Furthermore, Duval's exploration of various political and personal factors represents a more complex and nuanced understanding of transfeminism, perhaps aided by her generation's evolving view of gender as fluid and mutable.

Conclusion

Transfeminists, such as Ponce, Guerrero, and Duval, respond to the TERF critiques that have emerged in response to the Trans Law by challenging the biologist underpinnings of their critiques. Through these challenges, these women are achieving and redefining what a "real

woman” necessarily is, and move to engage with viewers beyond trans activism to engage in a more holistic view of transfeminism. Both Ponce and Guerrero center their responses around their bodies to directly combat biologist critiques against them as women, while Duval engages in a more political and conceptual approach, fueled by Gen Z’s fluid notions of gender. These approaches are not contrasting, but rather exist in conversation with one another to complete a response against TERFs. Ponce’s transfeminism supports trans women in engaging with ideal standards of feminine beauty, which supports Guerrero’s transfeminist claims that beauty and womanhood can exist in many different ways. Duval encourages people to engage with transfeminism on the conceptual and political scale, thus showing not just the different aspects of transfeminism but also the ways that it can exist as activism. Overall, these activists broaden the conversation about trans women’s roles in feminism and underscore the need for laws such as the Trans Law in order to benefit not just trans women but all women.

These activists are but a small collection of the kinds of activism seen online, and are primarily engaged with activism through Instagram. A variety of other activism, on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and online forums, also informs the discussion of transfeminism in Spain. This analysis is thus limited to the particular activists studied and the particular platform used by them. Future research might engage with the kind of critiques made by TERFs and how their online activism looks, as well as the broadening of research of critiques of biologism beyond the scope of the Trans Law, Spain, and a Western perspective. This analysis could also be furthered by examination of the intersection of race, language, age, and class to further understand the impacts of the Trans Law and TERF critiques of it for a variety of Spaniards.

Appendix

Translated transcript of clip of 'Revientan El Acto Del 8M'; my trans:

1: Minister, what is a woman?

Montero: I believe that it's important that we understand that women, by virtue of being women, are at greater risk of suffering violence, greater risk of suffering from poverty, and because of that it's important that we make policies that respect all women.

1: (interrupting) But, what is a woman?

Montero: Maybe what you want to explain is that there aren't women who have penises, to say that trans women aren't women?

1: That's right.

Montero: But my obligation, as the Minister of Equality, is to respect human rights and like I said to you, the only condition here is that this is a safe space where human rights are respected, where it's not said that trans women aren't real women.

1: If you don't know how to define what a woman is and don't know why we're oppressed, it's because of the condition of sex with which we were born (shouts of dissent from the audience) logically, the feminists, logically, the feminists are in agreement that trans people suffer discrimination (cut) as women we have been born with a material fact, with a biological reality that you are denying (cut)

Montero: We can have different visions but our obligation as a government and my obligation as the minister is to fulfill human rights, and saying that a trans woman isn't a woman is to position yourself in conflict with these most fundamental rights, in conflict with human rights (applause) (cut) who makes our houses, our places of work, our places of business unsafe are not trans

people, they are aggressive machistas, it is the patriarchy, and against that, we all have to fight and all have to fight bodily and long live the fight for women, for all women

Original transcript (via Youtube):

1: ¿Ministra, que es una mujer?

Montero: Yo creo que lo importante es que sepamos que las mujeres por el hecho de ser mujeres sí tenemos más riesgo de sufrir violencia más riesgo de sufrir pobreza y por eso es importante que hagamos políticas que respeten a todas las mujeres.

1: (interrupting) Pero, ¿qué es una mujer?

Montero: Quizá lo que nos queréis explicar es que no hay mujeres que tengan penes decir que las mujeres trans no son mujeres

1: eso es

Montero: pero mi obligación como ministra de igualdad es respetar los derechos humanos y como os decía La Única condición aquí es que este sea un espacio seguro donde se respetan los Derechos Humanos donde no se dice que las mujeres trans no son mujeres

1: si no sabes definir lo que es mujer y no sabes por qué se nos oprime que es por la condición con el sexo con el que nacemos (shouts of dissent from the audience) lógicamente las feministas lógicamente las feministas Estamos de acuerdo en que las personas trans sufren discriminación (cut) las mujeres hemos nacido con una materia con un hecho material con una realidad biológica que vosotras negáis (cut)

Montero: se puede tener visiones diferentes pero nuestra obligación como y nuestra obligación como gobierno y mi obligación como ministra es cumplir y hacer cumplir los Derechos Humanos decir que una mujer trans no es una mujer es posicionarse en contra de los Derechos

más fundamentales en contra de los Derechos Humanos (applause) (cut) quien convierte en inseguras nuestras casas nuestros centros de trabajo nuestros espacios de ocio no son las personas trans son los agresores machistas es el patriarcado y contra eso tenemos que luchar todas y ponemos el cuerpo todas y que viva la lucha de las mujeres de todas las mujeres.

Works Cited

- Arroyo, Pamela. “Ángela Ponce: ¿Qué Fue de La Primera Modelo Transgénero Que Participó En Miss Universo 2018?” *La República*, 2023,
larepublica.pe/espectaculos/famosos/2023/01/17/angela-ponce-que-fue-de-la-primera-modelo-transgenero-que-participo-en-miss-universo-2018-miss-mundo-espana-evat.
- de Diego, Sara. “Feijóo Eliminará Igualdad Y Derogará La Ley Trans: ‘Es Más Fácil Cambiarse de Sexo Que Sacarse El Carné.’” *El Español*, 6 June 2023,
www.elespanol.com/espana/politica/20230606/fejoo-eliminara-ministerio-igualdad-deroga-ley-trans-cambiarse-sexo-carne-conducir/769423130_0.html.
- Duval, Elizabeth. [@_elizabethduval]. “Hace falta pedagogía con la Ley Trans...” *Instagram*, 12 July 2023,
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CumkgsRKuET/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>
- . ---. “Hoy tengo algo que anunciaros...” *Instagram*, 4 July 2023,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CuRS3n7KF0H/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>
- . ---. “Por la esperanza y la libertad” *Instagram*, 23 July 2023,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CvCMktRKGpT/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>
- . *Reina*, eBook, Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial España, 2020.
- . [@_elizabethduval]. *Twitter*, 22 June 2023, https://twitter.com/_elizabethduval?lang=en
- El Confidencial. “Así Es La Nueva Ley Trans: Autodeterminación de Género Desde Los 16 Años y Veto a Las Terapias de Conversión.” *El Confidencial*, 16 Feb. 2023,

www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2023-02-16/claves-ley-trans-autodeterminacion-genero_3576971/.

Elizabeth Duval, elizabethduval.com/. Accessed 22 June 2023.

Hernández Velasco, Irene. “Elizabeth Duval: ‘He Soportado Muchísimos Más Comentarios Asquerosos Por Ser Lesbiana Que Por Ser Trans.’” *BBC News Mundo*, 31 May 2022, www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-61608678.

Giles, Harry Josephine. “F-Words: The Many Languages of Transfeminism.” *On the Engender*, 28 Sept. 2020, www.engender.org.uk/news/blog/f-words-the-many-languages-of-transfeminism/#:~:text=Emi%20Koyama%27s%20Transfeminist%20Manifiesto%2C%20which,own%20bodies%2C%20identities%20and%20expressions.

Guerrero, Penelope. [[@penelopeguerrero](https://www.instagram.com/penelopeguerrero/)]. “Este año las campanadas las doy yo...” *Instagram*, 21 Dec. 2022,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Cm1McXZtvQa/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>

---. ---. “Hace poco salí a la calle...” *Instagram*, 6 Apr. 2023,

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CqsZjkhubFg/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>

---. ---. “No es la primera vez...” *Instagram*, 3 Jan. 2023,

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cm9dL0VJdRt/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>

Koyama, Emi. “The Transfeminist Manifiesto.” *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century*, edited by Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier, Northeastern University Press, 2016, pp 244-259, *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=1090876&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Ministerio de Igualdad. Gobierno de España, <https://www.igualdad.gob.es/Paginas/index.aspx>

Miró, Francesc. “Elizabeth Duval, Escritora y Activista Trans: ‘En Redes Sociales Podemos Pasar de La Despreocupación a La Histeria Brutal En Un Momento.’” *elDiario.es*, 16 Mar. 2020,

www.eldiario.es/cultura/entrevistas/entrevista-elizabeth-duval_128_1025480.html.

Miss Universe. JKN Universe. <https://www.missuniverse.com/about>. Accessed 23 July 2023.

Platero, Lucas. “The Narratives of Transgender Rights Mobilization in Spain.” *Sexualities*, vol. 14, no. 5, 2011, pp. 597–614, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460711415336>.

Ponce, Angela. [@angelaponceofficial]. “Debemos ser la voz...” *Instagram*, 28 June 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BzQzMK7IPt2/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>

---. ---. “La confianza es la nueva belleza” *Instagram*, 26 Oct. 2022,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CkLi0uKjBCK/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>

---. ---. “You wanna see me” *Instagram*, 3 June 2023,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CtCl9LrrgWx/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>

“¿Qué es ser mujer? Relato de una chica trans | MI TED TALK || @penelopeguerrero0.” *Youtube*, uploaded by Penélope Guerrero, 27 May 2021,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDKSnb_vNgY

"Revientan El Acto Del 8M e Irene Montero Responde: "Las Mujeres Trans Son Mujeres"."

YouTube, uploaded by ElDiarioes, 8 Mar. 2023,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1VYdiJSTOM.

Sevilla Lorenzo, Jaime, and Marta Barandela. “El Mapa de Los Derechos Trans En España: De La Autoafirmación de Género al Vacío Legal.” *elDiario.Es*, 20 July 2018,

www.eldiario.es/sociedad/personas-trans-comunidades_1_2037615.html.

"Transgender Day of Visibility: Miss Universe Spain 2018 Angela Ponce | Miss Universe."

YouTube, uploaded by Miss Universe, 31 Mar. 2022,

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3N6FwAKeygw.

Twenge, Jean M. "How Gen Z Changes its Views on Gender." *TIME*, 1 May 2023,

<https://time.com/6275663/generation-z-gender-identity/>

Van Anders, Sari M. "Bio/logics." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1-2, 2014,

pp. 33-35.

Willem, Cilla, et al. "Trans-Exclusionary Discourses on Social Media in Spain." *Identities and*

Intimacies on Social Media: Transnational Perspectives, by Krijnen, Tonny, et al,

Routledge, New York, NY, 2023, pp. 185-200.

Winchester, Ian K. "Constructing Normativity: A Historiographical Essay on the Codification

and Regulation of Gender and Sexuality in Franco's Spain." *Bulletin for Spanish and*

Portuguese Historical Studies, vol. 42, no. 2, 2017, pp. 104–119,

<https://doi.org/10.26431/0739-182X.1258>.