

THE SPANISH POLITICS OF MONSTROSITY:

QUEER UFOs, FEMINAZIS, AND OTHER FANTASTIC CREATURES

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Main supervisor: Christine Quinan (Utrecht University)

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Utrecht University

Faculty of Humanities

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FACULTY OF
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Gemma
Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree
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ABSTRACT

What is a monster? Whom or what characterizes monstrosity? This thesis explores how monstrosity is being depicted by the Spanish far-right political party, Vox. From a feminist and queer perspective this study seeks to analyze Vox's political discourses about LGBTI and feminist people, exploring how family values, but especially the figure of the child, shapes certain lives as monstrous and not others. Hence, by taking the feminazi and Gaysper as case studies, figures that I discuss as Spanish monsters, the focus will be primarily on Vox's narratives and, from there, it will be observed how contemporary political understandings of Spanish monstrosity are related to queerness. On the one hand, departing from these case studies, this research examines how the monster's power is being used as a far-right political tool that intends to destroy feminism and LGBTI people by portraying queerness as a symbol of monstrosity; while, on the other hand, it also aims to question how the monster's destructive power can be used as a queer empowering tool against that same destruction. Therefore, I propose various strategies that can be useful critical queer tools for working through patriarchal and nationalist violence. To do this, I finally suggest the re-appropriation of queer monstrosity and the embracing of queer negativity, which, through this thesis, I demonstrate to be (in)adequate resistance strategies for monstrous alliances.

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Os quiero.

*A mis padres,
Ana y Javier*

“I WRITE THEORY TO MAKE MY FEELINGS SEEM MORE LEGITIMATE”

By Alok

...
(2017, p.16)

**CELEBRATING MONSTROSITY:
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SPANISH POLITICS OF
MONSTROSITY**

**DON'T THINK
OF A
MONSTER!**

“Don’t think of a monster!

What sort of monster did you imagine? Was it the monster you had been expecting? Perhaps there was more than one? What sort of figures might we expect to find gathered together under the rubric of monster?

[...]

Let us take a closer look”¹

Some time ago, while researching the topic of monsters, I found myself reading a children’s book titled *Yo mataré monstruos por ti* (2011) written by the Spanish musician Santi Balmes. In the book, Martina cannot sleep at night because she is scared of the monsters’ world under her bed. Those monsters are colorful, walk upside down, and Martina is terrified of being kidnapped by them. Meanwhile, in the monsters’ world, there is a girl-monster named Anitram who is scared of the strange world under her bed. A world inhabited by humans that walk upside down and might kidnap her. One night, while Martina and Anitram are sleeping, their arms slide out of the bed, touching each other’s hands. This first encounter allows them to realize that they were scared just because they did not know each other yet.

Yo mataré monstruos por ti (2011) is a story that encourages children (and adults) to embrace their monsters, which in the book’s case are seen as that which is different or unknown. That book made me wonder, who (or what) is a monster? There are no easy answers to this question because, just as David J. Skal (2012) remarks, when we start talking about monsters we are “soon speaking about all kinds of things” (p.xi). As well, by being interested in monsters we are “in some ways going back to (regressing to?) our roots. In all their strangeness, monsters are always leading us home” (Henriksen, Bülow and Kvistad, 2017, p.3). Home, for me, is Spain. Monsters lead me back there.

¹ Lee, Halilovich, Landau-Ward, Phipps & Sutcliffe, 2019, p. 26.

Henceforth, this thesis is situated in Spain and explores Spanish monsters. Since there is not one Spanish monster, but many, this research focus on understanding Vox's, the Spanish far-right political party, idea of monsters. Vox is a far-right Spanish political party who advocates for traditional values of "family" and "life". Their political discourse, with fascist connotations², makes us recall Franco's Spanish regime. By echoing fascist ghosts of the past, Vox has been generating enormous interest in Spain, fascinating some, and horrifying others. Since its creation in 2013, and despite its youth as a political party, Vox has been gaining political ground in several Spanish communities, a reality that became blatantly clear after their political rise in the Andalusian elections³. Therefore, by analyzing Vox's monstrosity narratives, I aim to explore how Vox's politicians are creating Spanish monsters through a concrete narrative that attaches "monstrous"⁴ characteristics to LGBTI⁵ and feminist people.

Henceforth, this thesis is guided by one question, how are far-right Spanish politicians signifying LGBTI people and feminists as monstrous? To approach this question I analyze speeches that affect me in different ways and that are close to my own experience, environment, and/or personal life. Conceiving myself as a feminist bisexual woman that directly suffers from the attacks of the far-right, is an opening point to understanding why I decided to choose some discursive examples as case studies and not others. As well, by acknowledging my personal position through the evolution of this thesis, I want to highlight how as a white, western, cis person with an able body, my discourse is entangled with power relations that simultaneously creates, disrupts and belongs to interrelated networks of power. As Rosi Braidotti (1994) argues through a Foucauldian understanding of power:

the production of scientific knowledge works as a complex, interrelated network of truth, power, and desire, centered on the subject as a bodily entity. [...] "Power" thus becomes the name for a complex set of interconnections, between the spaces

² To see an example, among others, of Vox political references to fascism, see: Vox España [Vox España] (October, 8, 2018) ¡Fachas!. [YouTube]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKayOL-HE30&t=21s>

³ Vox entry into Andalusian governmental power in 2018, has positioned them as the fifth political power in the Autonomous Community. Winning 12 parliamentary seats, they became strategic allies for a right-wing political coalition between Ciudadanos and Partido Popular.

⁴ I use monsters, monstrous and monstrosity as synonyms.

⁵ LGBTI refers to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexual, transgender and intersex people. As well, while using "LGBTI" in this thesis, the term will include other sexual orientations and gender-non-conforming and/or non-binary identities.

where truth and knowledge are produced and the systems of control and domination. (p. 76)

This scientific, political and personal style, inspired by Rosi Braidotti's (1994)⁶ rhizomatic and nomadic understandings, implies my engagement in the development of new ways of thinking about human subjectivity through experimental research. It also implies a creative process that plays with temporalities and emotions, taking the risk of writing about past, future and present while, at the same time, the study analyzed is being produced. In other words, I research how far-right political discourses are attaching monstrosity to LGBTI and feminist people before, during and after the Spanish general elections of 2019; hence, I am inevitably exposing myself to an analysis that will be in continuous movement. Accordingly to that personal exposure, I would be lying if I did not acknowledge that diverse feelings will emerge while seeing myself (and others) portrayed as monsters; therefore, this research involves different emotions such as fear, love, anger, hate, hope, disgust and/or sadness, emotions that shape this project, from the beginning to the end, as a subjective one.

In feminist discussions, scholars have engaged in conversations about the complexity of objectivity (Harding, 1993), acknowledging that “in conventional accounts, socially constructed beliefs only get to count as opinions” (Harding, 1993, p.50), a conventional way of knowledge production has especially been confronted through the “subjectivity” of feminist, queer and race standpoint understandings. Henceforth, following a research style that takes distance from conventional understandings of objectivity, this thesis proposes its own methodology which, in a way, is a queer scavenger methodology that “attempts to combine methods that are often cast as being at odds with each other, and it refuses the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence” (Halberstam, 1998, p.13) and, in another way, is a feminist methodology nurtured with Haraway's (1988) perception of situated knowledges, where feminism is understood as a science that loves “interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the party understood” (p.589), and where translation is conceived as “interpretive, critical and partial” (p.589). Indeed, as Haraway (1988) eloquently points out, “there is no single feminist standpoint because our maps require too many dimensions for that metaphor to ground our visions” (p. 590). Thus, this thesis does not intend to present itself as objective; instead, it presents itself as a research

⁶ See Rosi Braidotti (1994) for detailed analyses.

that tries to take distance from an essentialist way of knowledge production. Just as Adrienne Rich (1987) noted in *Blood, Bread and Poetry*, “I come here with notes but without absolute conclusions” (p.211).

This research project is divided as follows. Chapter one starts by exploring who, or what, is a monster. Thus, drawing upon Rosi Braidotti’s (2002) idea of figurations, I underline the importance of conceiving monstrosity as an ever-changing and situated perspective, an idea which has been also explored by other scholars such as Jack Halberstam (1995), Jeffrey Cohen (1996) and Margrit Shildrick (2002). Drawing on those scholars and their perspective on monsters, I suggest that monstrosity narratives signify nationalist conceptions about the “other” and the “stranger”, where the monster symbolizes something “beyond the normative” (Shildrick, 2002, p.29) and, therefore, different from the nation. Through that idea, and drawing on Jasbir Puar’s (2007) insights in *Terrorist Assemblages. Homonationalism in Queer Times*, I note that “some homosexual subjects are complicit with heterosexual nationalist formations rather than inherently or automatically excluded from or opposed to them” (Puar, 2007, p.4), while, others, which I call the “stranger monsters”, are excluded.

Throughout the first chapter, I take inspiration from Susan Stryker’s (1994) essay *My words to Victor Frankenstein above the village of Chamounix*, which links monstrosity with the transsexual body. Drawing on Stryker’s perception, I discuss my own understanding of the power of monstrosity and, from there, I situate this research as one that is interested in exploring how the monster’s power is, on the one hand, being used in the Spanish context to destroy feminist and LGBTI people; and, on the other hand, to question how can we use the monster’s destructive power to empower monstrosity alliances against that same destruction. From there, I elaborate on the complex discussion between the uses of identity politics and queerness and, from that point, I explain my decision of using “LGBTI” and “Feminist/s” categories as a political strategy due to their strategical utility in the analyses that I am carrying out. Though, I also introduce the term “queer”⁷ as a category that highlights a political and conscious way of living that marks “a point of tension to normativity” (Martin-Baron, 2014, p.53), and henceforth, queerness is understood as an act of provocation against homo and hetero-normativity (Martin-Baron, 2014).

⁷ I will use queer and queerness as synonyms.

In chapter two, I explore historical and political understandings of monstrosity. Drawing upon Silvia Federici's (2004) book *Caliban and the Witch. Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, I give a general overview of European and, more concretely, Spanish colonialist uses of monstrosity during the European witch-hunting's, which I conceive as an othering political tool that reinforces an idea of the nation that excludes some bodies and welcome others. An idea, I suggest, that follows an strategy based on an inclusion/exclusion logic, dividing between us/them, human/monster, subject/other. Subsequently, basing on that, I draw upon Sara Ahmed's (2004) book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* and her study about the affective politics of fear. By engaging with Ahmed's analyses of fear, I underline how that emotion is used as a tool that substantiates nationalist narratives and monstrosity discourses. Then, extrapolating Ahmed's analyses to the Spanish context, I explore how the rise of the Spanish far-right has been nurtured with fear, which, as I explain throughout the second chapter, has been growing on the strength of Partido Popular (PP), the Spanish right-wing political party. By using politics of fear, I suggest, PP's politicians have been nurturing and leading the way towards the rise of the Spanish far-right. That reasoning is based on the review of the right-wing political government from *Los Indignados* movement (on the 15th of May of 2011) till nowadays. Hence, by analyzing various PP's fear policies, such as the "Gag Law", I explore how the right-wing has favored the rapid spread of Spanish far-right supporters from 2011 to 2019, leading to a more visible and tolerated far-right narrative that is shaping LGBTI and feminist people as monsters.

In chapter three and four, I elaborate on the uses of the child as a symbol that reinforces an idea of Spanish futurity that relies on heteronormative privilege. For doing that, I explore how those political narratives exclude the possibility of a queer future, since a futurity that projects "life" through the "commitment to a set of values widely thought of as extra political: values that center on the family, to be sure, but that focus on the protection of children" (Edelman, 2004, p.1), situates queerness on the side of monsters. Henceforth, building on Lee Edelman's (2004) observations in *No Future. Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, I explore the different uses of family values but, more concretely, of the symbolic children, as a political tool that shapes queerness as a monstrous threat for the Spanish nation. For showing that, this thesis proceeds by analyzing public statements and interviews conducted with Vox politicians between 2018 and 2019. As case studies, I use two figures that I discuss as Vox's understandings of Spanish monsters:

the Feminazi and Gaysper. These figures lead me to explore Vox's monstrosity arguments and, hence, discuss how the far-right political party is shaping feminist and LGBTI people as dangerous for the Spanish nation.

Throughout the first case study, presented in chapter three, I introduce the reasons why the "Feminazi" is conceived as a Spanish contemporary symbol of female and queer monstrosity. From there, I explore how the Feminazi is being depicted as a monster through Vox's narratives, portraying feminists, in Vox's perspective, as women that are in opposition to "life" values, such as children, motherhood and the family. Continuing on, in chapter four I explore the second case study: a ghost emoji painted with the colors of the rainbow flag and baptized by the LGBTI community as "Gaysper". Basing my analysis on that case study, I explore how the ghostly emoji, which was used in Vox's twitter as part of their political campaign against LGBTI people, has been re-appropriated by the LGBTI community and, contrary to Vox's LGBTI-phobic intentions, has become a resistance symbol against Vox's continuous provocations. Then, by building on these two case studies, I ultimately propose various queer resistance strategies for monstrous alliances. These strategies, which I consider as relational tools based on monstrous re-appropriation, are based on the uses of queer negativity and discomfort against the rise of far-right narratives. To sum up, the monsters that flourish along with these pages are conceived as revelations of contemporary Spanish political, cultural and nationalist conceptions of difference. Hence, by taking a closer look at Spanish representations of queer monstrosity, this thesis ultimately aims to offer critical queer tools that may appear as useful in order to work through patriarchal and nationalist violence. Tools that could build alliances between queer monsters and embrace the re-appropriation of queer monstrosity, its negativity, and the uncomfortableness that it produces, as a way to counter far-right violence.

Finally, in view of the Spanish far-right political background, queer monstrosity presents itself as a paradox, meaning that it remains stigmatized and demonized; but, also, its re-appropriation offers the possibility of subverting cultural constructions and, consequently, disrupting them. Therefore, this work arises from the importance of continuing to build a theoretical and activist field of queer monstrosity, where the re-appropriation of queer negativity is considered as a powerful enemy against systemic discrimination and oppression. Henceforth, in a context where the far-right is knocking at European doors, this thesis arises from the need to remain critical and to keep

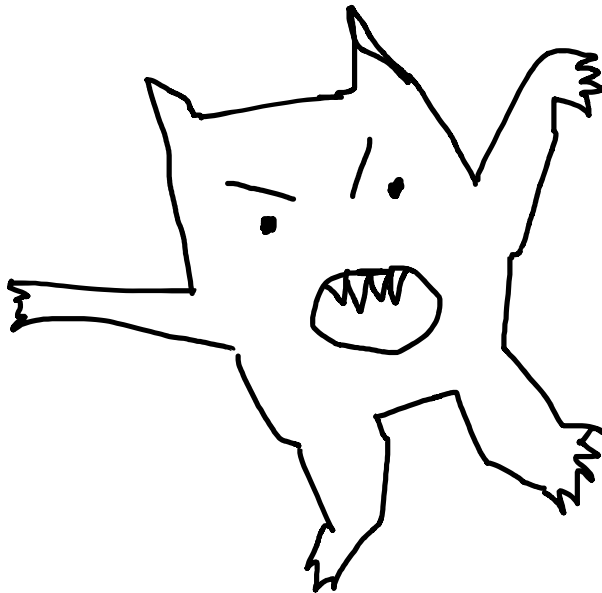
questioning the present in order to imagine and create different futurities. As Eduardo Galeano's (1993) poem, with which I finish this introduction, beautifully states, *las utopías sirven para caminar*, utopias help us walk to different horizons and, in the actual Spanish context, we have to keep walking towards a horizon where the far-right, and sympathizers, did not arise to stay but, instead, to be finally destroyed.

To that end, as an academic (and activist) practice, I present a thesis that analyses Spanish nationalist and far-right discourses through the study of queer monsters, exploring potential feminist and queer tools that may help us burn down the rise of fascist, nationalist and patriarchal discourses. Therefore, this monstrous thesis is born from the aim of continuing monstrosity discussions from, and especially for, the Spanish context. A monstrous understanding that emerges from the pain, sadness and fear of the political situation in her home, but also from the hope of adding further and updated knowledges and tools based on feminist and queer understandings, wishing that they may help to bring some light into a context where hate is starting to abound. Following Halberstam (1995), "we need monsters and we need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities" (p.27). Therefore, this thesis is an encouragement to slide our arms out of the bed and embrace the monster. An invitation to become (and take care of) the monster and, in the process, (consensually) hold hands with other monsters. A personal - and therefore, political - tenderness act that wants to look at the monster's face "from the love of wanting to see"⁸. A recognition of our monstrous power. A monstrous insubordinate act. A performance.

*Ella está en el horizonte.
Yo me acerco dos pasos y ella se aleja dos pasos.
Camino diez pasos y el horizonte se corre diez pasos más allá.
Por mucho que yo camine, nunca la alcanzaré.
¿Para qué sirve la utopía? Para eso sirve, para caminar.*
(Eduardo Galeano, 1993)

⁸ This quote was obtained from: D'Emilia, Dani & Chávez, Daniel B. (2015). Radical Tenderness Manifesto [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://danidemilia.com/radical-tenderness/> (accessed February, 19. 2019).

CHAPTER ONE
WHO (OR WHAT) IS A MONSTER?



“But it isn’t the jobs they do-like fry cook, nurse or farmer that makes them the M.O.B. [Mean, Ordinary & Boring] NO! it’s the fact that most of them believe only in what they can see, smell, taste, touch, hear or buy. They say ‘because monsters couldn’t possibly be real, then they’re not real.’ The dictionary says the word monster comes from the latin word ‘monstrum’ which means ‘to show’ (like demonstrate) but the M.O.B says ‘we’ve never seen monsters, so they can’t be there’... the truth is that there are a lot of things we don’t see every day that are right under our noses – like germs and electricity and just maybe – monsters are right under our noses, too.”

≈ My Favorite Thing is Monsters ≈

Emil Ferris, 2018

Monsters are everywhere: on the street, in the club, at home, under the bed – on the bed, on television, on the Internet. Monsters are in my imagination, out of it and in between. Monsters are humans, post-humans, animals, cyborgs, machines. It is harsh to face the monster, to acknowledge the monster, because they take different shapes, *se transforman*, they change.

“Monsters are

dynamic

forms.

They

move

around.”⁹¹⁰

Then, who (or what) is a monster? In this chapter I suggest that monsters are figurations embedded in a historically and culturally specific context. In *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, Braidotti (2002) discuss figurations as:

not figurative ways of thinking, but rather more materialistic mappings of situated, or embedded and embodied, positions. [...] By figuration I mean a politically informed map that outlines our own situated perspective. A figuration renders our image in terms of a decentered and changing entity. [...] We live in permanent processes of transition, hybridization and nomadization, and these in-between states and stages defy the established modes of theoretical representation. A figuration is a living map, a transformative account of the self – it is no metaphor. (p.14)¹¹

Drawing on Braidotti’s idea, I conceive monsters as a transformative figuration in an ever-changing transition, a living map embedded in situated perspectives. Therefore, the appearance and study of monsters’ (or monstrous) figurations help us understand what, how and who is creating monsters in specific contexts. As the humanities scholar Jeffrey Cohen (1996) points out in his analyses of monsters in *Monster theory. Reading culture*, monsters are the embodiment of a certain cultural moment, “a time, a feeling, and a place

⁹ Lee, et al., 2019, p.30.

¹⁰ Original format.

¹¹ Original English translation.

[...] A construct and a projection” (p.4). On that basis, I propose that by situating the reading of monsters in a concrete place and, therefore, culture, we are able to understand how and why monstrous characteristics are being created. As Cohen (1996) explains, “the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically ‘that which reveals,’ ‘that which warns,’” (p.4). This means that the study of monsters will reveal the “cultural” boundaries between normality and difference, between human and monster. However, these boundaries are not neutral; on the contrary, they are embedded not just in culture, but in historically and contextualized locations. That idea keeps bringing me to one underlying question when it comes to discussing monsters: “what is it that makes something, or someone, “monstrous”?” (Lee, et al., 2019, p.33). One possible answer, as Richard (2019) explains, is that monsters can emerge from “within” me:

monsters can [also] emerge from ‘within’ me. For example, in addition to having dreams inhabited by monsters, I can see myself as a monster, or regard my thoughts or behavior as monstrous, and other people can seem monstrous to me (and I to them). (Lee et al., 2019, p.33)

As well, as Margrit Shildrick (2002) puts it in *Embodying the Monster. Encounters with the Vulnerable Self*, the monster is perceived as “something beyond the normative” (p.29) since the monster’s characteristics are those that stand against the values that we associate with, and choose to call, normality (Shildrick, 2002). These values, as Shildrick (2002) explains, are “always caught up in historically and culturally specific determinants” (p.29) and, therefore, they determine what counts as normative and, indeed, as monstrous (Shildrick, 2002, p.29).

Drawing on the previous ideas, I see the emerging of monsters as something, or someone, closely related to a process of signification. In that sense, when you see yourself and/or other/s as a monster, the monster is signifying something or someone that is considered not-human. As Susan Stryker (1994) acknowledges in “My words to Victor Frankenstein above the village of Chamounix”, bodies conceived as monstrous are excluded from the human community. By linking monstrosity (Frankenstein’s monster) with the transsexual body, Stryker (1994) points out that the attribution of monstrosity to transsexual bodies implies perceiving them as less than fully human, as bodies that are “in war with nature” (pp.238-239). This process of signification has punitive consequences, and I agree with Stryker when she highlights that the word monster has power to harm: “the stigmatization

fostered by this sort of pejorative labelling is not without consequence. Such words have the power to destroy transsexual lives” (Stryker, 1994, p.239). That said, I also agree with her claim that the word monster may provide the power to resist that very harm: “I want to lay claim to the dark power of my monstrous identity without using it as a weapon against others or being wounded by it myself. I will say this as bluntly as I know how: I am a transsexual, and therefore I am a monster” (Stryker, 1994, p.240). Stryker (1994) suggests that by accepting the word monster it can be dispelled from its destructive power (to harm) and, by embracing it, the people that share Stryker’s path¹², may discover the enlivening power that lays in the darkness within themselves, within the “monster” (Stryker, 1994, pp. 240-251). With that in mind, the reading of the monster that I propose in this thesis is interested in understanding how the monster’s power¹³ is being used in the Spanish context. Thus, on one hand, I will focus on the analyses of far-right political discursive constructions about LGBTI and feminist monstrosity, where monsters are conceived as something, or someone, that must be punished and/or excluded (power to destruct); while, on the other hand, I will explore and suggest resistance strategies for monstrous alliances. These alliances will be considered as relational tools based on the embracing of monsters’ negativity and uncomfortableness, offering, in that way, strategies that may be helpful in order to reclaim monstrosity as a force in opposition to the rise and tolerance of far-right political narratives.

Hereafter, in this chapter, I build upon nationalistic uses of monstrosity in processes of subjectification and exclusion, where the symbolic monster delineates the limits between that which is consider as normal and that which is perceived as different from the nation. These “monsterring procedures”, as I will explain, are closely linked with feelings of fear, where the monster evokes fear in as much as it symbolizes a threat for the national order of things. Thus, I suggest, monstrosity is closely linked with the fear of queerness, since queerness is portrayed as dangerous for the hetero and homo-normative idea of the nation’s futurity. Under that nationalistic logic, some, mainly white, monsters are welcome, while others, especially queer and trans people of color, are excluded. Therefore, in order to understand how queerness shapes monstrosity and vice versa, I will

¹²As Stryker (1994) puts it: “if this is your path, as it is mine, let me offer whatever solace you may find in this monstrous benediction” (p.251).

¹³ I am interested in analyse how that power is being used to destruct LGBTI and feminist lives, and, at the same time, how it is being used by LGBTI and feminist people to resist those attempts of destruction.

be drawing on various theories that will, finally, nurture my own understanding of “queer monstrosity”.

STRANGER THAN OTHERS

According to the first definition of *monstruo* (monster) in the “Diccionario de la Real Academia Española” (2014), a monster is a “*ser que presenta anomalías o desviaciones notables respecto a su especie*”, meaning that a monster is a being that exhibits anomalies and deviations regarding its own species¹⁴. Due to the broad (and subjective) spectrum of that definition, monsters can also be understood as that which is different from its own species. As Braidotti (1994) points out, “the monster is the bodily incarnation of difference from the basic human norm; it is a deviant, an a-nomaly; it is abnormal” (p.78), and “following the analysis of the philosophical ratio suggested by Derrida and other contemporary French philosophers, it can be argued that Western thought has a logic of binary oppositions that treats difference as that which is other-than the accepted norm” (p.78). The monster, understood as the embodiment of difference that helps us to create the imaginary notion of normality, has also been framed as an “other” by trans-feminist Spanish academics such as Lucas Platero and María Rosón (2012). In their article “*De ‘la parada de los monstruos’ a los monstruos de lo cotidiano: La diversidad funcional y sexualidad no normativa*”, Platero and Rosón (2012) focus on the intersection of disabilities and non-normative sexualities, explaining how the idea of difference is being constructed through “a notion of <<normality>> that nurtures from a monstrous and abnormal <<other>>” (p.140). On this theoretical basis, I interpret the monster as the representation of the other, and the other as the embodiment of difference, *lo raro, lo abyecto*.

The idea of the monster as the “other” has also been framed by Cohen (1996). Cohen affirms that monsters show us who is the “other”, an “other” that is threatening to destroy the cultural apparatus that sustains and constitutes individuality (1996, p.12), explaining that:

in its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond—of all those loci that are rhetorically

¹⁴ All translations from Spanish to English in this thesis are my own unless otherwise noted.

placed as distant and distinct but originate Within. Any kind of alterity can be inscribed across (constructed through) the monstrous body, but for the most part monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual. (1996, p.7)

Behind that process of recognition, a discursive strategy is taking place, which I name as a “monstering procedure”. Monstering procedures attach monstrosity to certain embodiments and not others, those procedures also involve recognizing that some monstrous embodiments are seen as more monstrous – and therefore dangerous – than others for the nation: stranger than others. As Ahmed (2000) states, when we recognize someone as a “stranger” we are “defining ‘us’ against any-body who is a stranger, what is concealed is that some-bodies are already recognised as stranger and more dangerous than other bodies” (pp.3-4), also she suggests that “it is the processes of expelling or welcoming the one who is recognised as a stranger that produce the figure of the stranger in the first place.” (2000, p.4).

Then, monsters are divided among two categories: “strangers” and “others”. In that sense, those monsters conceived as “others” are tolerated as long as they stay under control while maintained in-between the national borders; but, on the contrary, the monsters conceived as “strangers”, should not be welcome and/or expelled from the nation, which, generally, translates into a nationalist, racist and xenophobic idea that divides between “our”¹⁵ (“other”) monsters, and “their” (“stranger”) monsters. In that sense, as Ahmed (2000) explains, strangers are “already recognised as not belonging, as being out of place” (p.1). Meaning that, when recognizing monstrosity through difference, we are also defining the characteristics of the “strangers” and the “others”, and it is in the layers that are shaped where the discursive idea of “different from our nation” gives face, ideals and form to monsters.

For example, let’s think about homonationalism as a monstering strategy that divides between “other” and “stranger” monsters. Homonationalism, a term coined by Jasbir Puar

¹⁵ As an illustration, we can think about Spanish Islamophobic discourses that serve as an excuse to perpetuate racism. I will use one common comment that I often come across when I go back to my hometown in Almería, Spain: “we need to protect “our” women from “them””. That “them” refers to Muslim people in general. Meaning that, while “we” (the Spanish nation) control “our” (women) monsters, “them” (Muslim people in general), conceived as monsters, are not welcome.

(2007), refers to those nationalist strategies that “welcome” some LGBTI people to the nation, while excluding others. As Puar (2013) states:

homonationalism is fundamentally a deep critique of lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses and how those rights discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity that continue to accord some populations access to citizenship—cultural and legal—at the expense of the delimitation and expulsion of other populations. (p. 337)

In that sense, homonationalism takes part in the neoliberal accommodationist economic structure and “engenders niche marketing of various ethnic and minoritized groups, normalizing the production of, for example, a gay and lesbian tourism industry built on the discursive distinction between gay-friendly and not-gay-friendly destinations” (Puar, 2013, p.338). In order to establish a nation as “gay-friendly”, a national pink-washing process takes place. The term pink-washing has been used in order to refer to those neoliberal governmental practices which provide minimum legal rights to LGBTI people (i.e. same-sex marriage), while promoting the country as “tolerant” and “modern” to the outside (Platero, Rosón, and Ortega, 2017). In that sense, pink-washing has become an strategy that aims to enhance a mainly white, well-off, gay/lesbian tourism (also known as pink tourism) while discriminatory laws against racial and religious minorities are being implemented under the excuse of their possible dangerousness for women and LGBTI people (Puar, 2013).

At this point, if we talk about “gay friendly” countries and their exclusion/inclusion homonationalistic characteristics, we can find two kind of monsters: the other and the stranger. Hence, even if, on the one hand, the gay/lesbian “other” embodies monstrosity due to its “homosexuality”, which has been historically related to death and perversion (i.e. AIDS epidemic); on the other hand, whiteness and cisness become two of the key “identities” for their incorporation to the capitalist system as a homonormative¹⁶ monster, becoming, in that way, figures of life and productivity (i.e. same-sex marriage). This phenomenon, as Puar (2007) explains,

¹⁶ Homonormativity refers to a way of life that reproduces, accepts and does not question western ideals, white privilege, patriarchy, capitalism, homophobia, sexism, racism...etc. Predominantly, homonormative people are white, western, cis-men, with a non-disabled body and from a well-off social class (Platero, Rosón and Ortega, 2017).

produce[s] (in tandem with gay tourism) gay-friendly and not-gay-friendly nations; the queer “market virility” that can simulate heteronormative paternity through the purchase of reproductive technology; the return to kinship and family norms implicit in the new lesbian “global family”, complete with transnational adoptee babies; and market accommodation that has fostered multibillion-dollar industries in gay tourism, weddings, investment opportunities, and retirement. (p. XIV)

This also gives rise to the “inclusion” of some LGBTI monsters, as long as their homonormativity stays under control; while, other monsters, who are not, cannot or do not want to be incorporated into homonationalism, particularly queer and trans people of color, are still symbolized as those who should be excluded. Hence, just as Haritaworn, Kuntsman and Posocco (2014) explain in *Queer Necropolitics*, there are some “queer subjects invited into life and queerly abjected populations marked for death” (p.2), which, as Christine Quinan (2016) states in drawing on *Queer Necropolitics* (Haritaworn, et al., 2014), means that:

certain (queer) bodies are cultivated for life and (re)production, while others are marked for death or are let die, constructing a dangerous line between legitimate subjects and illegitimate non-subjects. [...] among these “non-subjects” are, in particular, queer and trans people of color who experience racism, homophobia, and transphobia along with other forms of oppression and subjection, including xenophobia, sexism, poverty, ableism, and criminalization. (p.32)

In that sense, the “stranger” monster, conceived as a non-subject that does not align with the nationalist order of things, becomes a symbol of death. In other words: on behalf of homonationalism, some monsters support and accept the minimum legal rights granted to homosexual people, even if that means to live at the expense of the discrimination and exclusion of the “stranger” than “other” monsters. The latter, which are more dangerous for the nation, I will call the queer monsters.

QUEER MONSTROSITY UNDERSTANDINGS

While talking about queer monstrosity it has to be emphasized that both monstrosity and queerness are complex terms, which should be carefully studied as an encompass of multiple identities. That complexity reaffirms that monstrosity and queer conceptions differ in each context, since some people, characteristics, or identities, are considered as more monstrous, and more queer, than others. However, in this research, as I will explain next, I decided to use identity categories such as “LGBTI” and “feminist/s” to explore how queer monstrosity is being portrayed. Since, even if I am conscious that I may indulge in generalization, I found it as the most useful way for identifying which queer characteristics are generally, and mostly, being depicted as monstrous among far-right narratives in the Spanish context.

In Spain, the term “queer” is often translated as “*transmaricabibollo*”¹⁷, which reflects the Spanish LGBTI critical re-appropriation of insults such as *marica*, *bollera*, *Bi de viciosa* and/or *travelo*. Nonetheless, as Lucas Platero and María Rosón (2012) explain:

The word queer, in the Spanish context, is often related and translated with terms such as *maricon*, *travelo*, *bollera*, *raro*, *torcido*, etc. and the truth is that it has a difficult translation. To translate the term “queer” in Spanish, and to be able to not just talk about sexuality, or males, is hard. Also, when translating it, it is often forgotten that queer theory emerges under the wing of critical feminism. (p.138)

In that sense, the use of the word “queer” still remains in academic spaces. One of the reasons why is that it is hard to find a Spanish term that encompasses the whole history behind the word “queer”. For example, when we translate the term queer into Spanish the result is a colloquial vacuum and, instead of seeing queerness as “a politic of boundary disruption and category deconstruction” (Gamson, 1995), there is an incomprehension of, and an instant disengagement with, the term. Based on this consideration, I suggest that using categories as a political strategy is still necessary in Spain, since, as Leslie McCall (2005) explains “it is impossible to fully escape the normalizing confines of language because new relations of power/knowledge are continuously reinscribed in new systems of classification, and yet it is impossible to avoid using categories strategically for political purposes”(p.1777). Hence, on the one hand, the need of using “LGBTI” and “feminist/s” categories in this thesis comes from its strategical utility in the specific

¹⁷ Trans + Marica + Bisexual + Bollera = TransMaricaBiBollo, where *marica* translates as faggot and *bollera* as dyke.

context that I am studying. However, that does not mean that I perceive those identities as fixed and stable, neither as an essence, I understand categories as ever-changing. Though, on the other hand, in order to de-construct those categories, I will strategically introduce the term queer to signify those political and conscious ways of living that reject, and resist, homo and hetero-normativity. Then, in that understanding, being queer does not necessarily highlights a concrete sexual orientation or gender, instead, it “marks a point of tension to normativity” (Martin-Baron, 2014, p.53), becoming an act of provocation (Martin-Baron, 2014) that challenges the idea of categories, which in this case are “LGBTI” and “feminist/s”, as fixed and stable.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As it has been shown in this first chapter, the analyses on cultural values, which are embedded in a concrete time and place, allow us to better understand and take a closer look at the different strategies and national purposes that give rise to the (re)production and/or apparition of monsters. However, it is important to highlight that not everyone is affected by monsterring discourses in the same way, since some monsters are conceived as more monstrous than others, stranger than others. Therefore, for specifically exploring far-right conceptions of queer monstrosity, I situate this thesis in the Spanish context and ask “how are far-right Spanish politicians signifying LGBTI people and feminists as monstrous?” By addressing this question, in the following chapters, I will explore how the far-right Spanish political party Vox uses family values in order to constitute LGBTI and feminist people as queer monsters and, therefore, as those that should be feared and/or excluded from the Spanish nation. Though, in the following chapter, I will firstly elaborate on the background which have led to the rise of the far-right in Spain. A pertinent point of departure for a better understanding of the Spanish context and the specific case studies of this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

SPANISH POLITICS OF MONSTROSITY

“Fear works to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others”
(Ahmed, 2004, p.69)

Nowadays we are living in a time when far-right political parties are gaining ground not just in Spain, but all over Europe.¹⁸ Narratives nurtured with racism, xenophobia, sexism, transphobia and homophobia have been used by far-right political parties in order to win in the 2019 European elections. For that purpose, the far-right has been following a discourse that excludes those considered as “others” and “strangers”, which are seen as dangerous monsters that threaten to destroy the nation. In the case of Spain, political parties have been fighting to win the general Spanish elections of 2019, on the past 28th of April. As a political strategy to win the elections, the far-right was, and still is¹⁹, showing their attempts to exclude those people - LGBTI, feminists, illegal immigrants and people of color - that, in their opinion, do not represent the Spanish nation. This political phenomenon is neither new nor insignificant, since portraying white heterosexual men as the image of nationalism, purity and sameness has been used throughout European history as a political and cultural pretext that self-justifies colonialist, patriarchal, military, imperialist and capitalist functions (Cohen, 1996, p.13).

As Silvia Federici (2004) explains in *Caliban and the Witch. Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*²⁰, monsterring discourses that portrayed women as witches and black men as devils, manufactured European misogynous and racist ideologies where blackness and femaleness were seen as “marks of bestiality and irrationality” (p.200) and conformed “the exclusion of women in Europe and women and men in the colonies from the social contract implicit in the wage, and the consequent naturalization of their exploitation” (p.200). Therefore, constructing difference as monstrous under the shape of

¹⁸ The far-right has already gained political ground in places like Spain, The Netherlands and France.

¹⁹ Even if the left-wing PSOE won the elections, they did not obtain the absolute majority of votes; which is needed to govern. Henceforth, they require a political coalition-building to create a ruling majority.

²⁰ See Silvia Federici (2004) for deeper insight into how the rise of capitalism was closely related with a war against women (p.14).

witches and devils was used as a European political initiative whose aim was to unify the terrain in the politics of the new European nation states, the construction of a new patriarchal order, and the development of capitalism (Federici, 2004). For doing that, among other politics of fear, the European witch-hunt persecutions made use of “multimedia propaganda to generate a mass psychosis among the population.” (Federici, 2004, p.168). On that basis, the idea of the Spanish nation is nourished from monstrous discourses that line up with genocides such as the Inquisition’s witch-hunts or the killings of indigenous people during the colonization of America. A national history that has not been officially recognized as a massacre, but as part of the humiliating chauvinistic and racist Spanish national pride. That “pride” help us give a clearer understanding of the foundation upon which Spanish monstrosity discourses are being built.

At the present time, far-right narratives are still using monstrosity discourses as an othering strategy that excludes women, LGBTI and people of color in Spain, by marking them as dangerous, perverted and irrational monsters. Strategies which, again, are based on politics of fear in order to divide between us/them, self/other. This othering strategy works by “aligning subjects with collectives by attributing “others” as the “source” of our feelings” (Ahmed, 2004, p.1), therefore, those who are not considered “us”, in not being us, are a danger for what is “ours” (Ahmed, 2004, p.1). Consequently, those people that are seen as the embodiment of difference, such as LGBTI people, feminists and people of color, are portrayed as monstrous “others” and/or monstrous “strangers” by far-right politicians; and, therefore, should be feared, punished and/or excluded from the nation (Cohen,1996). In that sense, monsters are being used as a warning for those who dare to question the Spanish patriarchal and nationalist system, demarcating “the bonds that hold together that system of relations we call culture” (Cohen, 1996, p.13) and calling “horrid attention to the borders that cannot—must not—be crossed” (Cohen, 1996, p.13). Accordingly, monstrosity discourses are a reminder about the consequences of crossing those borders, fostering two main fears: being attacked by monsters, and/or becoming one (Cohen, 1996, p.12). In that sense, as Sara Ahmed (2004) explains in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, fear “works to contain some bodies such that they take up less space. In this way, emotions work to align bodily space with social space.” (p.69) Therefore, fear works as a strategy that shrinks monsters’ mobility, while, at the same time, the threat that monsters produce, controls and regulates bodily national mobility itself:

In this way, fear works to align bodily and social space: it works to enable some bodies to inhabit and move in public space through restricting the mobility of other bodies to spaces that are enclosed or contained. Spaces extend the mobility of some bodies; their freedom to move shapes the surface of spaces, whilst spaces surface as spaces through the mobility of such bodies. (Ahmed, 2004, p.70)

On that basis, by asking, “how are the right-wing fear policies based on monstrosity discourses help the far-right reach Spanish politics?”, the next section will review the political procedure that has given rise to the emergence of the Spanish far-right from 2011 to 2019, and, as a consequence, has led to a more visible and tolerated far-right monstrosity procedure. This monstrosity procedure, which, as I will explain, started with the Spanish right-wing political party PP, has been possible due to the Gag Law, a policy of fear that has criminalized and weakened the Spanish left-wing movements. Thus, I suggest, that the PP has lead the path that gave rise to the far-right political party and has allowed and enhanced Spanish tolerance in regard to Vox monstrosity narratives against people of color, LGBTI identities and feminists.

FROM THE 15M TO THE RISE OF VOX

I was born in 1993, I am a millennial²¹. So very millennial. I grew up reading the Harry Potter saga, feeding my Tamagotchi, playing with Barbies, reading the comics of WITCH, choreographing the Spice Girls with my cousin and, as a teenager, trying to understand why my Sims (and I) were never happy enough. Based on my own experience, I may say that Spanish millennials are on the borderline between “digital natives” and “digital outlanders”. What I mean by saying this is that not all millennials grew up immersed in digital technology, for example, neither my friends or I had a Smart-phone as kids, our Wikipedia was Microsoft Encarta, and/or our favorite cartoons were not available on an Internet streaming platform. Therefore, technologies grew up with us, but we were not born among them, just as Javier Ayuso (2017) remarks in an article for *El País* newspaper, millennials, also named as “Generation Y”, are caught in between the old and the new. Hence, Spanish millennials:

²¹ The term millennial refers to people who were born between 1980 and 2000. Millennial is, however, not an homogeneous category, in “each country's millennials are different, but because of globalization, social media, the exporting of Western culture and the speed of change, millennials worldwide are more similar to one another than to older generations within their nations” (Stein, 2013, para.3).

are labelled as those that may form an army of lazy, narcissistic and spoilt people; however, young Spaniards that are in between 18 and 34 years old, are also critical, demanding, reformists, slightly materialistic, committed, digital and participative. But they think that society is in debt with them. (Ayuso, 2017, para. 2)

The Generation Y²² is also known as the best-academically-trained generation, while, at the same time, is the most extensive brain drain that Spain “has ever” seen (Doncel, 2017). The economic crisis (2008 - present), the lack of employment and the effects of the real estate bubble between 2008 and 2014, forced many Spaniards²³ to move to other countries and find better job opportunities (Jones, 2018a). That situation has led to a great feeling of disenchantment among the Generation Y, a feeling that has been reflected in social movements such as the 15th of May of 2011, also known as the 15M.

The 15M was a manifestation and camping occupation that started in La Puerta del Sol in Madrid, and expanded to the whole country. It was a diverse and heterogeneous²⁴ movement that was protesting against the economic and political Spanish system. An outraged protest, also known as “*Los Indignados* movement”, that pointed out the Government’s²⁵ failures for fulfilling their political promises. Therefore, as Fajardo (2011) explains in an article for *El País*, titled “*Del 11-M al 15-M*”, the 15M has been a historical process that germinated due to the government’s enlightened despotic tendency to govern on behalf of the people, but without the people. To give an example of the government’s²⁶ despotic attitude, we can go back to 2003 and recall Jose María Aznar’s decision to take part in the Iraq war, neglecting public opinion and the millions of citizens that took to the streets to voice their rejection to participate in the Iraq war (El País, 2013). One of the results of that governmental decision was the Madrid train bombings in the 11 of March of 2004 (Yoldi, 2006), a jihadist attack that took the life of 192 citizens (RTVE.es/Agencias, 2019). Therefore, as Fajardo (2011) remarks, the 15M was not an inexplicable social phenomenon (as many politicians suggested), but a demonstration

²² By using “millennials” and/or “Generation Y” I will be concretely referring to Spanish millennials.

²³ In 2009, 1.47 million Spaniards were living abroad. In 2017 the amount has risen, reaching 2.40 million (Molina, 2017).

²⁴ It was a very heterogeneous movement in regard to identities - such as age, genders and political ideologies.

²⁵ The 15M was a strong critique against all Spanish Politicians from both, the right and left wing.

²⁶ At that time the right-wing political party Partido Popular, led by Jose María Aznar, was governing.

triggered by the economic crisis and several historical and political European and Spanish events such as:

The referendum proposed by the PSOE to integrate Spain into the OTAN, after previously opposing to it; the support of the PP government to the declaration of war against Iraq, in the famous meeting in the Azores, with a 90% of the population against the war; The PP manipulation of the terrorist attacks in 2004 as an attempt to win the general elections and to, afterwards, attack the PSOE, after all their proclaims in favor of the anti-terrorism unit; the PSOE government submission to international markets and their social cuts decreed [...] (Fajardo, 2011, para.9)

These events, Fajardo (2011) explains, have led to the loss of Spanish politicians' credibility, pointing out their political opportunism. In the middle of that despairing background, the rise of the 15M brought with it new and fresh hopes for systemic change, which evolved into what some call "the most interesting political development since the death of Franco in 1975" (Beas, 2011, para.2). The movement itself was not related to a political party, embracing an apolitical spirit reflected in their slogan: "They don't represent us". The slogan aim was to highlight the failure of political bipartidism and a shared opinion that conceived "the conservative Popular Party (PP)²⁷ and the Socialists of the PSOE²⁸ as two sides of the same coin." (El País, 2016, para.3). Nowadays, the 15M has slowly dissolved. At least, as a formal movement, the 15M has lost followers to the extent that in 2018 there have not been any demonstrations (Sanmartín, 2018). But, even though, it planted the seed that led to the end of Spanish bipartidism because, since then, new parties and politicians have emerged.

After the 15M, and before the general Spanish elections in 2015, two strong political parties emerged: the liberal party Ciudadanos²⁹, led by Albert Rivera, and the left-wing

²⁷ As the Partido Popular (PP) explains in its webpage, the PP was first known as "Alianza Popular", a post-dictatorship right-wing coalition founded in 1976 and led by Manuel Fraga. In 1989 the coalition transformed into Partido Popular. Nowadays is led by Pablo Casado. To learn more about this party see: <http://www.pp.es/conocenos/historia> (accessed April 15, 2019).

²⁸ The Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), led by Pedro Sánchez, was clandestinely founded the 2 of May in 1879, and it was one of the first socialist parties of Europe. As they explain in their webpage, PSOE claims to be a socialist and left-wing party. To learn more about this party see: <http://www.psoe.es/conocenos/> (accessed April 15, 2019).

²⁹ Ciudadanos, led by Albert Rivera, consider itself a progressive, liberal, democratic and constitutionalist political party. To learn more about Ciudadanos see: <https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/origenes> (accessed April 14, 2019).

party Podemos³⁰, led by Pablo Iglesias. On the one hand, Ciudadanos “emerged first in Catalonia but expanded throughout Spain, [and] was able to gain 40 seats and 13.9 per cent of the votes” (Rodríguez Teruel, J & Barrio, A., 2015; Simón, 2016, p.493) in the general elections of 2015. On the other hand, Podemos managed “to forge pre-electoral coalitions with other parties in Catalonia (En Comú Podem), Valencia (Compromís Podemos Es el Moment) and Galicia (En Marea) which, together, obtained 69 seats and 20.6 percent of the votes, only two points less than the PSOE” (Fernández-Albertos 2015; Simón, 2016, p.423). As Simón (2016) points out in his analyses of the 2016 general election, the main challenger was the political party Podemos. Podemos appeared along with the 15M ideals, and was conceived as a possible solution against bipartidism and what they called as “*casta*”³¹. This leftist party started with a strong bottom-up approach, based on what they named as “*círculos*”³² strategies, and was publicly committed to use the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house³³. As *The New York Times* (Minder, 2015a) pointed out in 2015, Podemos was “radically shaking up Spain’s political establishment” (Minder, 2015a, para.4), promising, among other things, to restructure the debt and change those laws that allowed the rich to keep stealing from the poor (Minder, 2015a). Hence, Podemos’ ideals were seen by many Spaniards as the best opportunity to politically disrupt the Government from within. This conception could be verified in 2015 Spanish General Election when the emerging parties, Podemos and Ciudadanos, entered the Parliament for the first time, marking “the end of Spain’s bipartisan system” (Minder, 2015b, para.8). These results led to a broken government and a second inconclusive general election in June 2016, although, “after the Spanish Socialist party (PSOE) chose to abstain to break the political paralysis and avoid a third election” (Jones, 2016, para.2) the right-wing party Partido Popular (PP), led by Mariano Rajoy, finally ended up governing the country until 2018.

³⁰ Podemos, led by Pablo Iglesias, is a left-wing party that has been popularly classify by the right-wing as “far-left”, “*bolivarianos*” and “*chavistas*”. In their web-page they consider themselves to be the party that prioritize the feminist claims of the 8 of March, pensioners , youth and the environment. To learn more about Podemos see: <https://podemos.info/programa/> (accessed April 14, 2019). In 2016, EQUO, Izquierda Unida and Podemos, created a left-wing alliance named “Unidas Podemos” (Redacción ElHuffPost, 2018).

³¹ Pablo Iglesias used to define “*casta*” as “*los mayordomos de los poderes económicos y los bancos, la gente que no representa a los ciudadanos, la que gobierna en contra de los intereses de la mayoría en situación de privilegio*”. – referring to the high economic class that owns the economic powers and the Banks, the people that do not represent the citizens, and the people that governs from a privilege position against the citizens’ interests (Rubio, 2015, para.7).

³² To read more about Podemos *círculos* politics see: <https://podemos.info/circuitos/> (accessed April 15, 2019).

³³ Here I am referring to Audre ’s quote (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983) “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” (pp.94-101) in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*.

During the years of the PP government (2011-2018), relevant social and political episodes have occurred in the country, such as the Nóos case, the Spanish bank bailout, the Bárcenas Affair, the Wert Law, King Juan Carlos I abdication, the ascension of Felipe VI as King of Spain, the end of ETA, the Gürtel case, and the 2017 Catalan independence referendum, among others (Vega & Gonzalo, 5 of June, 2018). As well, after the 15M, diverse social movements such as El Tren de la Libertad, 9M and 14N general strikes in 2012, ACAMPADA FEMINISTA SOL or the feminists of Ve-la-luz hunger strike, have been raising their voices against political corruption and PP policies. The growth of social movements did not go unanswered by the government; indeed, they increased police control and applied the Gag Law, a fear policy whose aim was to control freedom of speech.

Departing from that political background, I will analyze how the Popular Party has laid the groundwork for the irruption of the far-right³⁴ political party Vox, led by Santiago Abascal, on the national scene. I will analyze the key facts for understanding Vox's success and rise of popularity among Spaniards, which has led to a higher tolerance among Vox's monstrosity discourses against LGTBI identities, feminists and people of color. Thus, I will start by giving an overview of the implementation of the *Ley de Seguridad Ciudadana* – Law on Public Safety³⁵, popularly known as “*Ley Mordaza* - Gag Law”, and will pay special attention to understanding how it has been used by the Partido Popular as a politics of fear to demonize social movements with leftist ideals and portray them as a monstrous threat to the nation, with the aim of, henceforth, eliminate the leftist public resistance that is/was fighting against their retrograde politics.

ENTRE BROMA Y BROMA, LA VERDAD ASOMA

³⁴ Vox, a new political party led by Santiago Abascal, considers itself as the party of extreme necessity. Their project focus on the protection of the “natural” family and the life. It has been popularly classified by some Spanish people as the extreme/far-right, and by others, such as the journalist Iñaki Gabilondo, as a fascist party (Escolar, 2019). In this thesis I will follow the political expert Pablo Simon, and his classification of Vox as a far-right political party (Núñez, 2018). To read more about Vox see: <https://www.voxespana.es/espana/que-es-vox> (accessed 15 April, 2019). To read Iñaki Gabilondo's insights about Vox see:

https://www.eldiario.es/politica/Inaki-Gabilondo-Vox-franquismo-exactamente_0_878762528.html (Escolar, 2019). To read Pablo Simon complete analyses of Vox see:

<https://www.noticiasdenavarra.com/2018/12/17/politica/vox-reune-las-claves-de-la-extrema-derecha-es-un-partido-autoritario-xenofobo-y-populista#Loleido> (Núñez, 2018).

³⁵ The complete and official title for the “Gag Law” is “Ley Orgánica 4/2015, de 30 de marzo, de protección de la seguridad ciudadana.”

There is a Spanish saying that states: “*Entre broma y broma, la verdad asoma*”. That saying literally translates as “between joke and joke, the truth comes out”, meaning that there is a degree of truth in every joke. Back in 2016, David Broncano, a popular Spanish humorist and television presenter, charmingly portrayed the impacts of the Gag Law on, especially, the lives of Spanish citizens with leftist ideals – such as 15M activists, feminists, public figures, rappers, performers, and/or Podemos sympathizers. In a funny and colloquial way, David Broncano explained the Gag Law like this³⁶:

In Spain, there are people that believe that freedom of speech is going through a difficult time due to the Law on Public Safety. Which many, many of you here call “Gag Law”... but that is just because all of you are Bolivarian, all of you are dog-flutes, ¡vegans!, ¡15M!, ¡Willy Toledos!, all of you are fuckers. (#0, 2016)

In my view, Broncano’s jokes are right when claiming that anyone who protests against the Gag Law³⁷ is described as “*bolivariano*”, “*perroflauta*”, “*Willy Toledos*”, and/or “15M”, among others, terms that have become insults that criminalize the left-wing by mainly portraying them as supporters of Venezuela’s “communist dictatorship”. This criminalization and demonization of the left-wing, which portrays leftist people as a threat to the nation due to their “terrorist” and “communist” ideologies, becomes specially clear when considering that, since 2015, the Gag Law has enabled the state to police and accuse of hate crimes and/or praising terrorism more than 70 people (López-Terrá, 2017). These sentences publicly demonized the defendants and witch-hunted feminist, anarchist, communist and/or, more generally, people with leftist ideals, converting the Spanish twenty-first century into a contemporary remake of the Spanish Inquisition. To sum up, left-wing activists and/or public figures were portrayed as dangerous for the Spanish nation, and therefore, as monstrous beings that threatens to destroy Spain and should be punished by law.

Three of the main characteristics used to portray leftist people as monsters were based on claims about hate crimes, praising terrorism or offending religious sentiments (Llanos &

³⁶ This text is a part of a monologue of David Broncano. See the complete monologue in: #0 [#0]. (2016, December, 13). LocoMundo: Atrevidos bolivarianos perroflautas #LocoMundo11 | #0. [YouTube]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z66AqCDqu74>

³⁷ For a general overview of the most repressive points of Spain’s gag law see: <https://www.thelocal.es/20150701/the-ten-most-repressive-aspects-of-spains-new-gag-law> (Jones, 2015).

Rubio, 2018). For example, one popular and publicly controversial Spanish case that illustrate these monsterring procedures, which were allowed and enhanced by the Gag Law, is the case of the puppeteers in 2016. The accusation was directed at a puppet show in Madrid, which: “featured a policeman who tried to entrap a witch. The puppet officer held up a little sign to falsely accuse her, using a play on words that combined Al Qaeda and ETA, the Basque separatist group” (Minder, 2016, para.1). Paradoxically enough, a show which attempt was to make visible how Spain’s antiterrorist laws have been misapplied and, instead, used for witch hunts (Minder, 2016), had to face charges that accused the puppeteers of “glorifying terrorism and promoting hatred” (Minder, 2016, para.2). Finally, almost a year after, the Spanish judge dismissed the charges against the two puppeteers, considering that the evidence was insufficient (Minder, 2017). Another example is the case of Willy Toledo, a Spanish actor who was accused of offending religious sentiments by conservative and far-right groups:

The Spanish Association of Christian Lawyers filed a complaint with the public prosecutor after Toledo published a post on Facebook in 2017, in which he expressed his indignation over a court probe into three women in Seville who, in 2014, paraded a large model of a vagina through the city streets, in an imitation of a religious procession, dubbing it the “coño insumiso,” or “Insubordinate pussy.” (EFE & El País, 2018, para.2)

Toledo, who ignored two summons to appear in court and was finally arrested and brought into trial (EFE & El País, 2018), was accused for publicly posting messages such as:

I shit on God and have enough shit left over to shit on the dogma of the saintliness and virginity of the Virgin Mary. This country is unbearably shameful. I’m disgusted. Go fuck yourselves. Long live the Insubordinate Pussy. (EFE & El País, 2018, para.3)

As Cristóbal Gázquez, the spokesperson for BGD Abogados, explains for an interview for *El País*, “In recent years, freedom of expression is being persecuted in Spain under three accusations [...] hate crime, praising terrorism or for offending religious sentiments” (Llanos & Rubio, 2018, para.8). Willy Toledo’s case is an example of religious offences, which clearly aligns with, and promotes, Spanish’ conservative

religious and catholic believes, while enhancing the demonization of those who do not share (and are critical with) them.

These examples are not isolated episodes, but a part of what I see as a left-wing-witch-hunt that includes a public monsterring procedure that has demonize singers such as Valtonyc, Pablo Hassel, César Strawberry, Ajax or Prok, feminist activists, FEMEN activists, twitter users like Cassandra Vera and comedians such as Eduard Biosca, among others. A political and national situation of fear that has been possible and allowed due to the right-wing Gag-Law policy. Therefore, I suggest, that the feeling of fear produced by the right-wing monsterring procedures, which have been legitimated by the implementation of the Gag Law, has resulted in the strengthening of a high tolerance among Spanish people to monsterring procedures due to two facts: their fear of being accused of crime and/or their fear of leftist ideals. Where the second fact means that the right-wing demonization and witch-hunt of people with leftist ideals, has led to the Spanish conception of leftist people as extremists and radicals that embody monstrosity since they have become an “imminent” danger for the safety, security and well-being of the Spanish nation. Just as *The New York Times* (The Editorial Board, 2015) pointed out, the main purpose of the Gag Law was to: “help the ruling party [referring to the PP] maintain its hold on power by discouraging the anti-austerity protests that have snowballed into widespread support for the populist Podemos party” (The Editorial Board, 2015, para.4). In that sense, the PP strategies have been restricting the mobility of certain bodies, portrayed as a monstrous threat, as an attempt to control the “left-wing” and those people conceived as a “danger” for PP conservative ideals. As Ahmed (2004) suggests, “it is no accident that in political rhetoric, freedom and fear are increasingly opposed: the new freedom is posited as the freedom from fear, and as the freedom to move” (p.70). Then, it is not surprise that due to the application of this law Spain is consider to be passing through an era characterized by a wave of repression (López-Terra, 2017) and of becoming a country that is disturbingly harken back “to the dark days of the Franco regime” (The Editorial Board, 2015, para.5).

The right-wing policies of fear caused a great deal of unrest, especially among the left-wing in Spain. Though, the emergence of a series of PP corruption cases led to a change in the world of politics and, hence, getting rid of the PP’s government became possible. As Sam Jones (2018b) stated in *The Guardian* newspaper, it was in May of 2018 when Spain’s opposition socialist party filed “a no-confidence motion against the prime

minister, Mariano Rajoy, a day after his governing People's [PP] party was found to have benefited from an illegal kickbacks-for-contracts scheme" (Jones, 2018b, para.1). The no-confidence motion passed with 180 votes in favor, 169 against and one abstention, resulting in the Spanish presidency resignation of Mariano Rajoy and in the inauguration of the leader of PSOE, Pedro Sánchez, as the seventh president of Spain (El País, 2018).

THE RISE OF VOX

Eight and a half month after the no-confidence motion, Pedro Sánchez called for new parliamentary elections in April 28, 2019. Though, PP's corruption charges and "soft" governmental decisions against the left-wing, Cataluña independence, women's and LGBTI rights and illegal immigration weakened the right-wing political strength and their voters confidence, which, as a result, gave rise to an unexpected turn of events for Spanish politics: the rise of the far-right led by ex-PP voters³⁸.

The arrival of Vox, a nationalist, populist, xenophobic, nativistic and authoritarian political party (El País, 2019)³⁹ in 2019 general elections, adds Spain to the list of European countries that are experiencing the rise of the far-right. Since 2018, Vox has been gaining political ground in several Spanish communities, situating them among the five most-voted-for parties. This reality became blatantly clear after their political rise in the Andalusian elections⁴⁰, a fact that has continually grown and taken on a national dimension. But, how is Vox captivating so many people in such a short time? Pablo Simón, a Spanish political expert, explains in a video for *El País* (2019) that 60% of the voters of Vox were PP voters. Simón points out that the average Vox voter is male, with an upper middle-income and with a strong preference towards recentralization policies. As well, Simón explains, Vox owes its success to two key facts: the constitutional Catalan crisis in 2017 and the socialists coming to governmental power by negotiating with Catalonian pro-independence parties. Although, I would propose three additional key

³⁸ The leader of Vox is Santiago Abascal, ex-member of the Partido Popular party. As well, Vox's voter profile is a "man in between the ages of 35 and 44, living in a city with less than 100.000 citizens, with undergraduate studies, whom belongs to the "old" middle class (small entrepreneurs, freelancers and farmers) and that is a ex-voter from PP or Ciudadanos. The voter identifies its ideology as extreme-right" (Gil, 2019, para.1).

³⁹ As the Spanish political expert, Pablo Simón, explains in a video for *El País* (El País, 2019). To see the video go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQZYRzdjTpo> (accessed April 15, 2019).

⁴⁰ Vox entry into Andalusian governmental power in 2018, has positioned them as the fifth political power in the Autonomous Community. Wining 12 parliamentary sits, they became strategical allies for a right-wing political coalition between Ciudadanos and Partido Popular.

points that may add to that explanation: First, their “life” and “family” proposals, which promote chauvinistic and LGBTI-phobic ideals, such as the withdraw of the gender violence law and the elimination of same-sex marriage, among others. Second, their openly racist ideology⁴¹, which promotes political measures such as the expulsion of all illegal immigrants from Spain, and the building of a wall around Ceuta and Melilla’s border with Africa. Thirdly, and finally, as I already explained in this chapter, the PP Gag Law enforcement, which has carried out a left-wing witch-hunt and promoted a culture of fear among the country, while enabling the enhancement of far-right speech without any consequences.

Since Vox’s appearance, there have been numerous in-depth articles⁴² and reports analyzing the keys of their political rise. It is interesting, though, that hardly any of them mention Vox’s chauvinistic and LGBTI-phobic ideology⁴³ as one of the keys of their popularity since it is through a rhetoric of “life”⁴⁴ that Vox mainly justifies its political narratives. The fact of political experts ignoring Vox’s “life” proposals as key points for their political rise becomes especially appealing if we take into account that the Vox voter is mainly male, as the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS)⁴⁵ affirms (Gil, 2019), and that some of the most frequently occurring themes that come up among public interviews done to Vox politicians, as I will analyze in the next two chapters, are about feminism, LGBTI people and gender ideology. But, not only that - their fight against what they call “gender ideology”⁴⁶, their public categorization of feminists as feminazis⁴⁷, and

⁴¹To read more about how racism has been key for the rise of Vox in Andalucía see (Arroyo, Cachero, & Mora, 2018).

⁴² See (Pardo, 2018; Gil, 2018 & Minder, 2019).

⁴³ To see a detailed analysis that includes Vox’ chauvinistic and LGBTI-phobic discourse as one of the key points to understand the rise of Vox, see (López, 2018).

⁴⁴ This is based on monstering strategies that aim to destroy queer lives by portraying them/us as something, or someone, that must be destroyed or excluded from the Spanish nation.

⁴⁵ The Spanish public research institute survey.

⁴⁶ Javier Ortega Smith, Vox general secretary, explains in an interview for Cadena Ser (2018) that gender ideology is an ideology “that comes from all the international lobbies promoted by the United Nations, claiming that what we have to do is to divide society between women and men, a society where there are not equal rights and obligations, but laws that establish the presumption of innocence for only a part of the society, and the presumption of culpability for the other part. An ideology where, for example, the burden of the proof is broken but the principle that says that who accuses has to proof the culpability of the defendant is not maintained. But, specially, an ideology that has totally failed in their aims to eradicate the scourge that they wanted to end with. With scourge I mean the violence against the woman, that has not become smaller, or anything like that” (Cadena Ser, 2018).

⁴⁷ The Real Academia Española defined the term “feminazi” through twitter as: "La voz «feminazi» (acrónimo de «feminista» + «nazi») se utiliza con intención despectiva, con el sentido de 'feminista radicalizada'" (Redacción, Barcelona, 2019) – meaning that the term feminazi, an acronym for <<feminist>> + <<nazi>>, is a pejoratively term that is being used in order to refer to “radicalised feminists”.

their conception of LGBTI people as children indoctrinators⁴⁸, have been the strongest points of their political ideology and electoral campaign. Hence, I wonder, do the political experts, such as Simón, Pardo or Minder not want to talk about feminism, LGBTI people and queerness? Are they not interested in our lives? Is it not important enough? I will leave those questions as something for the political experts to think about. However, I would like to better conclude this chapter by suggesting a different political analysis in order to understand Vox's popularity and political rise among Spain. I argue that since the 15M there have been five key points to understand the far-right political appearance in Spain:

1. Nationalism as a reaction to Catalanian 2017 independence referendum.
2. PP demonization of leftist ideals as a reaction against social movements, reinforced through the Gag Law.
3. The fragmentation of the Partido Popular as a result of political corruption.
4. Chauvinistic and LGBTI-phobic ideology.
5. Racist ideology.

Thus, with the intention of making a more feminist and queer comprehensive analysis, and due to the lack of research about Vox chauvinistic and LGBTI-phobic ideals as one of the key facts for understanding Vox success, I will focus this study on understanding how Vox's proposals related to gender ideology, family and life, are being used as monsterring strategies that target LGBTI and feminist people. Hence, by drawing on the hypotheses that those monsterring strategies are part of one of the strongest reasons to understand Vox's success, in the following chapters, I will focus on how Vox's narratives are shaping certain lives as monstrous and not others. For that, I will explore two figures that I discuss as Spanish monsters: the feminazi and Gaysper. Departing from these case studies, this research will examine how, on the one hand, the monster's power is being used as a far-right political tool that intends to destroy feminist and LGBTI people by portraying queerness as a symbol of monstrosity; but, on the other hand, it also aims to question how the monster's destructive power can be used as a queer empowering tool against that same destruction. From there, I shall demonstrate that one of the most successful political messages that Vox is sending to Spain is that feminists and LGBTI

⁴⁸ As I explained in this thesis introduction by using Rocío Monasterio's example (EUROPA PRESS, 2019).

people are monsters since they are different from their idea of the traditional Spanish nation, and, as such, they represent a danger for the future of Spain.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FEMINAZI

“SCUM is against the entire system, the very idea of law and government. SCUM is out to destroy the system, not attain certain rights within it. Also, SCUM – always selfish, always cool – will always aim to avoid detection and punishment.”

SCUM Manifesto

Valerie Solanas

(2004, p.24)

In this chapter, I discuss the symbolic figure of the feminazi as one of the Spanish contemporary conceptions of female and queer monstrosity. The term feminazi originated in the 90s “with the shock-jock Rush Limbaugh [...] using it to describe, in his improbable phrasing, ‘a feminist to whom the most important thing in life is ensuring that as many abortions as possible occur’” (Williams, 2015, para.1). Nowadays, the term has become a popular insult in Spain used to generally undermine all feminist movements by portraying them as a group of radical, extremist and crazy women that hate men. For instance, as I have (foot)noted in the previous chapter, the word has been recognized by the twitter of the Real Academia Española, which describes it as: *"La voz «feminazi» (acrónimo de «feminista» + «nazi») se utiliza con intención despectiva, con el sentido de 'feminista radicalizada'"* (Redacción, Barcelona, 2019) – meaning that the term feminazi, an acronym for <<feminist>> + <<nazi>>, is a pejorative term that is being used in order to refer to “radicalized feminists”.

The derogatory term owes some of its actual popularity among political discourses to the Spanish ultraconservative and Catholic organization Hazte Oír. This is illustrate, for example, by the controversial bus campaign released this year by Hazte Oír (EP, 2019), whose main message was: “It’s not gender violence, it’s domestic violence”, and was calling on the leaders of the right-wing coalition, Casado, Rivera and Abascal, to repeal the gender laws because they “discriminate men”. Moreover, as *El País* explains, the bus displayed an image of Adolf Hitler wearing make-up and the symbol of feminism on his military cap, launching the hashtag “#StopFeminazis” (EP, 2019). Thus, instead of denouncing the term feminazi as a token of respect to the victims of both the Nazi Holocaust and gender violence, its pejorative use has been standardized and legitimized by only one of the three political parties above-mentioned: Vox. Indeed, if we look at Vox’s political agenda, we will see that the far-right party vows to the values espoused by the bus of Hazte Oír. For example, in Vox’s measure number 70 of their “*Vida y Familia*” (“Life and Family”) political program section⁴⁹, they want to repeal the Law of Gender Violence with the same Hazte Oír rhetoric:

Withdraw of the Law on gender violence and of all regulation that discriminates one sex against another. In its place, enact a law on intrafamily violence which

⁴⁹ To see Vox political program: Vox España (2019). 100 medidas urgentes de Vox para España. Retrieved from: <https://www.voxespana.es/noticias/100-medidas-urgentes-de-vox-para-espana-20181006>

will equally protect the elderly people, men, women and children. Abolition of radical feminist organisms, effective prosecution of false allegations. Child protection in divorce proceedings.



Figure 1: Hazte Oir bus with the hashtag #StopFeminazis – Picture by El Independiente (2019)

Consecutively, in their measure number 71⁵⁰, Vox proposes to undertake the commitment of the implementation of the “*Ley de Violencia Intrafamiliar*”-“Law on Intrafamily Violence”, where family is understood as “father, mother and their children”⁵¹. This measure pretends to secure the creation of a family ministry, stating:

⁵⁰ To see Vox political program: Vox España (2019). 100 medidas urgentes de Vox para España. Retrieved from:

<https://www.voxespana.es/noticias/100-medidas-urgentes-de-vox-para-espana-20181006>

⁵¹ As Rocío Monasterio explained in an interview for La Jungla Radio. To see the complete interview: La Jungla Radio. [La Jungla Radio]. (2018, June 12) Rocío Monasterio de VOX se sienta a charlar con J.A. Abellán. [Youtube]. Retrieved from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9MtlgxTPPk>

Creation of a Family Minister. Enactment of an organic law for the protection of the natural family which will acknowledge the natural family as an institution previous to the State. We will look for the still distant convergence with the European average in relation to family allowances.

Moreover, Vox's indirect support of the ultra-catholic Hazte Oír values and their fight against feminism can be clearly observed in the way in which its politicians have become increasingly unreserved in backing the term *feminazi*. Hence, although there is no express mention of the term in their political agenda, Vox political representatives are using it, or its synonyms "radical feminists"/ "supremacist feminists", to articulate an anti-feminist discourse, since, for Vox, contemporary feminism, which is also named by Vox as "feminazism", refers to a totalitarian group composed by "women that insult and assault, and that say that in case of doubt, the man's neck in the curb"⁵² (Cadena Ser, 2018), as Javier Ortega Smith, the General Secretary of Vox, explained in an interview for la Cadena Ser.⁵³ Through those statements, Vox seems to suggest that feminists pretend to pursue the same monstrosities done by Hitler's dictatorship, and/or that feminist women are comparable to Hitler and Nazism. In that same interview, after being asked if Vox compares Hitler and Nazism to feminism, Javier Ortega Smith explained Vox's understanding of "real" feminism by using the following arguments:

No, not the women, of course. I would never name my mother, or my Vox female-colleagues, as Nazis. I am referring to those women that take part in those totalitarian groups, which we [referring to Vox] call *feminazis*, and that take part of female-law-firms that they name as feminists. Look, when I talk about feminists I like to talk about other women, you know? Concepción Arenal, for example. [...] Look, if feminism means to stand for women, then I am also one. [...] Look for example at the women of our party, I plea you to invite them one day: invite Alicia Rubio who is a woman, or Rocío Monasterio. They will tell you the barbarities that all these groups have said.

⁵² These arguments are based on hymns that have been sung during feminist demonstrations, such as "*¡Polla opresora a la licuadora!*" "*¡En caso de duda tú la viuda!*" and "*¡Machista, pardillo, tu boca en un bordillo!*".

⁵³ To see the complete interview: Cadena Ser. [Cadena Ser]. (2018, December 5). Entrevista | Vox carga contra las "feminazis" y niega que exista la violencia machista. [YouTube]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKcf5UC8U1E>

Groups that, by the way, are subsidized⁵⁴. The business that they have is impressive. They [referring to Rubio and Monasterio] could give you all the data. I mean, we defend the woman, absolutely, and we are against any kind of discrimination against the woman. But that is one thing, and another thing is those people that believe that the woman has to be something like a dominatrix against the man. And that is not the reality. (Cadena Ser, 2018)

In the light of these arguments, the feminazi is perceived as a symbolic abjection that must be excluded by Vox. Then, as Creed (1999) explains, “although the subject must exclude the abject, it must, nevertheless, be tolerated, for that which threatens to destroy life also helps to define life. Further, the activity of exclusion is necessary to guarantee that the subject take up his/her proper place in relation to the symbolic” (p.253). In this respect, the feminazi becomes an “illustration of the work of abjection” (Creed, 1999, p.253), a monstrous symbol that represents an anti-feminist totalitarian group formed by aggressive women that want to hurt men and that aim to achieve a “gender-ideology” Valerie Solanas’ dictatorship of terror. In this monstrous becoming, monstrosity is defined through its relation, or better said, opposition, to life. By studying Vox as the subject that defines the abject, and the abject as the feminazi monster that threatens life, this chapter will explore how the abject is being defined by Vox understandings of life.

In order to explore the construction of the abject within Vox’s discourses of life, I propose that the way in which the monstrous feminazi is being constructed as abject is under the logic of opposition to family values and the symbolic children.⁵⁵ Thus, I will explore how Vox depicts the feminazi as a queer monster that attempts to destroy the subjects that commit “to a set of values widely thought of as extrapolitical: values that center on the family, to be sure, but that focus on the protection of children” (Edelman, 2004, p.1). As far as the protection of family values are conceived as the hope that maintains the stability of the symbolic order (Creed, 1999), the “feminazi” will be conceived as a symbol that threatens to cross the limits that delineate Vox’s heteronormative idea of Spanish bright

⁵⁴ But Ortega does not explain who is giving that money or gives any data about how much money feminazis get. In fact, along the interview, Ortega does not give any data to support any of his arguments about “feminazis”.

⁵⁵ As Alicia Rubio, Vox mobilization secretary, explained in an interview for LaContra.Tv, radical feminists are shaped by “their opposition to maternity and heterosexual couples and their children”. To see the complete interview: La Contra TV. [La Contra TV]. (2019, March 16) Alicia Rubio: “El feminismo se ha convertido en un extraordinario negocio”. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUBBejr8vn0>

futurity. Henceforth, by signifying futurity through family values, Vox aims to maintain a heteronormative framework functioning, a fantasy that shapes our collective reality and alienates the subject through the reproduction of, as I will explain in the next point, reproductive futurism (Edelman, 2004). Though, since the signifier, as Edelman (2004) points out, “only bestows a sort of promissory identity, one with which we can never succeed in fully coinciding because we, as subjects of the signifier, can only, be signifiers ourselves, can only ever aspire to catch up to whatever it is” (p.8), the feminazi, as queer, can never signify futurity since Vox’s futurity is signified in opposition to queer monstrosity, where the queer is understood as that whom “insist on disturbing, on queering, social organization as such - on disturbing, therefore, and on queering ourselves and our investment in such organization” (Edelman, 2004, p.17). And, also, because the signifier, let’s just say it, does not exist.

I. FAMILY

In this discussion, the symbolic order is represented by reproductive futurism (Edelman, 2004). As Edelman (2004) analyses in *No Future. Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, “reproductive futurism” uses the imaginary figure of The Kid and The Children as the symbols of life and future, and queerness as the symbol of its destruction. In general terms, Edelman (2004) discusses reproductive futurism as those:

terms that impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations. (p.2)

For Edelman (2004), as far as the Child symbolizes the future of signification, heterosexual sex becomes the subject and it is conferred with the “cultural burden of signifying futurity” (p.13). In this respect, Edelman (2004) suggests that the subject, whether liberal or conservative politically, is compelled by the conservatism and defensive structure of the ego, which is marked by “the rigidity of identity as experienced by the subject, and the fixity of the Imaginary relation through which we (re)produce ourselves” (p.13). Therefore, this conservatism of the ego “compels the subject [...] to endorse as the meaning of politics itself the reproductive futurism that perpetuates as reality a fantasy frame intended to secure the survival of the social in the Imaginary form

of the Child” (Edelman, 2004, p.14). In the case of Vox politicians, reproductive futurism becomes their fantasy frame and, through it, they intend to perpetuate heteronormative families as a reality, while, on the other side, LGBTI and feminist people are situated outside of that reality and, therefore, as an object outside of Vox’s fantasy frame.

In order to exclude LGBTI and feminist people from Vox’s reality, Vox politicians attach queer monstrosity to them. For example, during an Intereconomía’s special report dedicated to analyzing contemporary feminism, which was titled “La Dictadura del Feminismo Radical” - “The Radical Feminist Dictatorship”, Alicia Rubio’s, Vox’s mobilization secretary, argue that:

Indeed, the third feminism starts with lesbian’s relationships. There are [referring to the third feminism] feminist women of this kind: lesbians “in itself”. But there are other women that decided lesbianism as a fight against heteropatriarchy, as a social fight. Naturally, these women hate men. And they gave rise to, shall we say, a fourth generation [referring to feminism] that is reaching tremendous levels of radicalism. (Intereconomiatube, 2017)

From here, we can consider that lesbianism is one of the main characteristics that characterizes feminazism, or radical feminism, as an object that threatens to destroy reproductive futurity through the destruction of “men”, just as Rubio claims: “these women hate men”. Therefore, lesbianism, as an object that also marks another object (feminism), is not only outside of reproductive futurism but also constructed as a danger to it: “a fourth generation that is reaching tremendous levels of radicalism”. As well, Rubio’s assertion of the existence of a fourth generation of radical feminism conformed by “lesbians that hate men” is reminiscent of a moment “when lesbians insisted on speaking within feminist spaces, [and] were rendered monstrous: think back to Betty Friedan’s description of a lesbian presence as a “lavender menace” (Ahmed, 2017, p.227). Therefore, attaching monstrosity to feminist movements due to their *elected* lesbianism, situates feminists against heteropatriarchy, and hence, they become queer monsters that stand against “normality” (Shildrick, 2002). Henceforth, queerness starts to characterize feminists as feminazis by situating them in “the side of those not “fighting for the children,” and the side outside of the consensus by which all politics [or in this case Vox] confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism” (Edelman, 2004, p.3). Then, Vox arguments bring up one idea: as far as the feminazi threatens to destroy the symbolic order

of reproductive futurism, heteronormative families and their children should be protected against it. Monasterio makes a similar claim:

We have to protect the family as the fundamental pillar of society, where the children are best educated. Where the father and the mother complement each other when it comes to educate those children. And where they try to educate them through a set of values. Values which not only will convert those children in academically excellent people but , also, integral people.⁵⁶

In that statement, Monasterio portrays reproductive futurism as the best option to achieve children's "integrity" and, therefore, an "excellent" future. A conception that is only possible if the symbolic heteronormative family and its values educate those children. Thereby, to ensure a Spanish bright future means ensuring a present that will always be "mortgaged to a fantasmatic future" (Edelman, 2004, p.112) in the name of the "excellent and integral" adults that those children will thus become (Edelman, 2004)⁵⁷. Hence, Monasterio remarks the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity as the foundation of society: "an erotically charged investment in the rigid sameness of identity that is central to the compulsory narrative of reproductive futurism"(Edelman, 2004, p.21), where heterosexuality represents integrity and excellency, and, consequently, everything outside of it symbolizes perversion and failure.

Moreover, during "The Radical Feminist Dictatorship" Intereconomía report, Rocío Monasterio and Alicia Rubio had the chance, along with two more interviewees, to expand upon Vox's perspective on contemporary feminism. During this debate, Rocío Monasterio claimed that contemporary feminism intends to confront women with men. Likewise, a similar statement was supported by Alicia Rubio, who suggested that contemporary feminism has deprived the word "feminism" from its "real" identity as a movement that seeks for equality between women and men; but, not only that, Rubio also claimed that the purpose of contemporary feminism is to ensure women's supremacy. In that line of inquiry, Monasterio claimed that the fundamental goal of that kind of radical feminism is to destroy the family, because, as she said, if feminists destroy everything

⁵⁶ To see the complete interview: La Jungla Radio (2018).

⁵⁷ I am following Edelman's (2004) analyses on Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Cornel West op-ed piece, which was published in the Boston Globe and coincide with Mother's Day in 1998. The campaign was called "Parent's Bill of Rights" and was related to marriage, fathers and mothers (p.112).

that anchors the Spanish individual to society, they will be able to control the nation (Intereconomiatube, 2017).

Based on the previous arguments, Monasterio stated that “for Vox, and for Spain, family is a fundamental pillar of society and it anchors you to it. In that sense, without family there will be a manageable and moldable individual, an individual that could be controlled” (Intereconomiatube, 2017). Meaning that Vox’s conception of family, which consists on a father, a mother and their children⁵⁸, is the responsibility to epitomize the maintenance of Spain’s wellbeing. In that sense, Spain’s wellbeing is only possible by securing the nurturance of the symbolic Child within heterosexual families. Accordingly to Vox’s sense, I suggest that the Child “alone embodies the citizen as an ideal, entitled to claim full rights to its future share in the nation's good, though always at the cost of limiting the rights ‘real’ citizens are allowed” (Edelman, 2004, p.11). That logic, based on arguments that aim to preserve a phantasmal Child that allows the social order to exist is “a notional freedom more highly valued than the actuality of freedom itself, which might, after all, put at risk the Child to whom such a freedom falls due” (Edelman, 2004, p.11). Such assumptions are emphasized in, for example, Rubio’s⁵⁹ anti-abortion statements for Intereconomía: in line with the “radical feminist dictatorship” debate, Alicia Rubio declared⁶⁰ that Spanish feminism is “tremendously radical” and that it has “practical hate” against men because “*hay mujeres ya que abortan a sus fetos varones*” – meaning that there are women that abort their fetuses if they are males⁶¹ (Intereconomiatube, 2017). Through those claims, it can be understood that Rubio’s Internet-based arguments are publicly assuring the existence of a feminazi-conspiracy against “male-children”. In that way, her arguments situate feminazis as a threat for the future of Spanish children and, accordingly, to the future of Spain itself. In order to protect those “male” fetuses, Vox politicians claim that abortion should be illegal⁶², even if that means refusing abortion to the future people that those fetuses might become (Edelman, 2004). Those arguments situate Vox far-right political discourse on the front

⁵⁸ As Monasterio stated in an interview for La Jungla Radio (2018).

⁵⁹ To see the complete interview: Intereconomiatube [Intereconomiatube]. (2017, April 1). Especial Informativo | La dictadura del feminismo radical. [YouTube]. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LA-47_VedK8

⁶⁰ Idem.

⁶¹ In that interview, Alicia Rubio claims to know this information because she has been “researching about this on the Internet” for a long time.

⁶² Vox proposes to withdraw the abortion Law in the 56th point of their political program. To access to Vox political program see: Vox España (2019). 100 medidas urgentes de Vox para España. Retrieved from: <https://www.voxespana.es/noticias/100-medidas-urgentes-de-vox-para-espana-20181006>

lines of a battle *for* the children; a “pro-life” battle that aims to preserve a family where its figurative child becomes the symbol of the nation’s future, and heterosexuality its guardian and defender. To sum up, Vox politicians are telling us: without men there are no heterosexual families; without heterosexual families there are no children; without children there is no future; and without future there is only death. A political rhetoric where feminazism symbolizes the end of Spanish heteronormative and patriarchal structure and, therefore, the end of reproductive futurism.

II. CHILDREN’S EDUCATION

“An architect and a mother of four kids: Rocío Monasterio, the female voice of Vox”, claims a title of *El Confidencial* (J.Madrid, 2018). By highlighting along the article that Monasterio is a woman that “finds it very easy to balance her professional life and her motherhood” (J.Madrid, 2018, para.6), *El Confidencial* shows Monasterio as a caring mother and as a successful business woman. As well, the article claims that Monasterio, “whom has a youthful appearance in spite of her 44 years”, will be a name that soon “many people will know” (J.Madrid, 2018, para.8). In essence, what *El Confidencial* is claiming is that Monasterio is the perfect embodiment of the super woman, a super woman is expected to complete all the tasks of an ideal mother and housewife, while maintaining the career goals of the modern woman (Holt, n.d.). In the case of Monasterio, she becomes Vox’s super woman due to three main facts that were continuously underlined by *El Confidencial’s* article: she works outside the home, she is a happy mother and, despite all of that, and in spite of her age, she stills look young. That idea has been reinforced through Monasterio herself, who has been using her own motherhood and professional career as political tools that encourage Vox’s family and life political proposals. For example, in a program for Intereconomía, the president of Vox in Madrid claimed that radical feminists will conceive as a barbarity a woman that says that “you can have a perfectly happy life, a husband that complements you....[...] and even further [they will conceive it as a barbarity] if you say that you work in the construction industry...” (Intereconomiatube, 2017)⁶³. In this way, by publicly showing herself as a devoted mother, Monasterio uses her own “super woman” figure as an attempt to demonstrate that mothers can get wonderfully along with family and labor reconciliation while, on the other side, “radical feminists” are trying to prevent that to happen; a political

⁶³ To see the complete interview: (Intereconomiatube, 2017).

tool that aims to symbolize feminists in opposition to maternity but, also, in opposition to the children and the family.

In line with her “super womanhood”, Rocío Monasterio represents Vox’s “Mother picture” in 2019 Spanish Politics. Indeed, if we take a look into her political interviews or her Instagram posts,⁶⁴ we can see how she often uses her motherhood to build Vox anti-feminist argumentations. For example, in her Instagram post on the 7th of January of 2019, she posted a picture of her daughter with a pink doll-baby crib, stating: “Ohhh, I cannot believe my eyes! A victim of the patriarchy who still likes dolls, cribs and the pink color!!! What an aberration! After years seeing her mother in the construction work surrounded by cranes, *ferralistas*...and the girl does not want an excavator...she wants a pink doll...go to sleep cutie! So the supremacist #feminists don’t see you!!!”. In this case, Monasterio’s post reinforces an idea that asserts that gender stereotypes are something natural just because her daughter plays with pink dolls in spite of seeing her mother working for a construction company “for years”. By using her daughter as “the child” that represents “all those children” that “supremacist feminists” see as an “aberration”, Monasterio seems to suggest that children that reproduce binary gender stereotypes are in danger of a feminazi attack. Therefore, by the act of omission, Monasterio denies the existence and life struggles of those children that *do not* reproduce binary gender stereotypes, and, consequently, she refuses to acknowledge LGBTI realities and life struggles, such as, for example, that the major causes of bullying in Spain remain motivated by sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ To see Monasterio’s Instagram post see: Monasterio, Rocío [@rociomonasteriovox]. (2019, January 7th). Where she posted a picture of her daughter with a pink doll-baby crib, where the following sentence is added: “¡Ohhh, lo que ven mis ojos!” ¡Una víctima del patriarcado a la que le siguen gustando las muñecas, cunas y el. [Instagram post]. Retrieved from: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BsT9nO8Aqwq/>

⁶⁵This assertion is based on the Spanish statewide federation of lesbians, gays, trans and bisexuals (FELCTB) research data, which published an online article about the main causes of bullying between children. To see the complete article: FELGTB. (2018, May 2). El acoso escolar hacia menores LGTB sigue siendo el principal de España. Retrieved from: <http://www.felgtb.org/temas/educacion/noticias/i/14588/307/el-acoso-escolar-hacia-menores-lgtb-sigue-siendo-el-principal-en-espana>



Figure 2 - ¡Una víctima del patriarcado! – picture by Rocío Monasterio⁶⁶

Monasterio’s Instagram post does not differ greatly from her political arguments. For example, in Intereconomía’s “radical feminist dictatorship” special program (Intereconomiatube, 2017), Monasterio suggested that gender ideology indoctrination is a “real dictatorship”, but that the worst part of it is that “now they are going for the children since they are little, so they can instill them all this ideology. In that way parents cannot say anything about it, moreover, we cannot oppose to it and if we do oppose to it we are sanctioned” (Intereconomiatube, 2017).⁶⁷ This signifies that since feminazis aim to indoctrinate Spanish children through queer monstrosity, feminazis are endangering Spanish “collective future” (Edelman, 2004, p. 113), remaining as a diabolic symbol that has the force to prohibit parents from educating their children in a happy heterosexual environment (Edelman, 2004). These comments are directly related to Monasterio’s view on maternity, which, as she stated in that same interview, she conceives to be under a radical feminist attack (Intereconomiatube, 2017). Henceforth, the feminazi is conceived as a danger to maternity since, as Monasterio said, they are “attacking” it. In that way, the feminazi becomes an stigmatized other that, as Edelman (2004) remarks, “in general

⁶⁶ Monasterio, Rocío [@rociomonasteriovox]. (2019, January 7). ¡Ohhh, lo que ven mis ojos!! ¡Una víctima del patriarcado a la que le siguen gustando las muñecas, cunas y el. [Instagram post]. Retrieved from: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BsT9nO8Aqwq/>

⁶⁷ As we may be able to appreciate along Vox statements, they do not give any official data to support their economic conspiracies. By contrast, they merely repeat the same arguments, such as “they receive a lot of money” and/or “they are subsidized”, over and over again.

can endanger our idea of the future, conjuring the intolerable image of its spoliation or pollution, the specter of its being appropriated for unendurable ends [...] threatening all end to the future itself” (p. 113).

In that way, I suggest that Vox understands feminazis as a group that is conjuring up an intolerable and monstrous queer image of Spanish futurity through children’s education. Since by claiming that LGBTI lobbies and gender ideology are indoctrinating the children in the schools, Vox politicians support their “feminazi” and LGBTI hate-speech. Alicia Rubio’s claims for Intereconomía (Intereconomiatube, 2019) can be read as an example of that:

The LGBTI law⁶⁸ is an authentically social shame. That law, if Vox can ever do something about it, will be abolished. Because that law violates a lot of fundamental rights. And not just that, but if we really want to defend the children, we do not have to defend homosexual children, if such a thing exists, or the trans children. We have to defend all the children.⁶⁹

Like Monasterio, Rubio also claims that all the children are threatened by LGBTI and feminazis’ Gender Ideology and, therefore, they should be protected while, on the other side, the existence of LGBTI children is being questioned: “we do not have to defend homosexual children, if such a thing exists, or the trans children” (Intereconomiatube, 2019). Then, on this occasion, it is Rubio’s act of questioning which directly neglects the existence of LGBTI children and, consequently, “protecting the children” finally translates into the protection of “children’s heterosexuality”. In that sense, Vox’s arguments promote the protection of the heterosexual future and its heterosexual children, disregarding LGBTI realities such as the fact that more than 40% of trans people

⁶⁸ While talking about the LGBTI Law Vox is referring , as they state in their political program, to “Ley de Derechos LGTBI” – “LGTBI rights Law”. But, even if there is not a Spanish LGBTI Law named that way, I imagined that they are referring to the “122/000097 Proposición de Ley contra la discriminación por orientación sexual, identidad o expresión de género y características sexuales, y de igualdad social de lesbianas, gais, bisexuales, transexuales, transgénero e intersexuales”, also known as “Ley de Igualdad LGTBI” – “LGTBI equality Law”. Anyhow, as they state in their political program, they want to eliminate any Spanish LGTBI institution and/or law that protects LGTBI people, since, as they state in their political program, they are “clearly ideologically-based”. To see Vox political program: Vox España (2019). 100 medidas urgentes de Vox para España. Retrieved from:

<https://www.voxespana.es/noticias/100-medidas-urgentes-de-vox-para-espana-20181006>

⁶⁹ To see the complete interview: Intereconomiatube [Intereconomiatube]. (2019, February 14). Alicia Rubio de Vox: ‘La Ley LGTBI es una vergüenza social’. [Youtube]. Retrieved from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gXETjKOr0M>

interviewed in 2018 by the Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gais, Trans y Bisexuales (FELGTB) survey were threatened or psychologically abused in Spain in 2018.⁷⁰ However, Vox politicians insist on anti-queer, anti-LGBTI and anti-feminist politics and laws since they consider “gender ideology indoctrination” to be unsafe for children. Just as Alicia Rubio affirmed, “there are feminist movements that are like real sects, they take the female children, and they wash their brains in such a way... very young girls. And at the end they transform them into activists from nowhere, because they don’t really know why they are fighting for” (Intereconomiatube, 2017). Hence, it is in that way how Vox’s political approach situates feminazism in opposition to children, regarding it as a monstrous threat to them.

In order to shape the feminazi threat, Vox has associated feminism and LGBTI people with various monstrous characteristics based on science-fiction, where I find the alien to be as the most apt one. For example, Vox’s arguments about feminazis recall popular films such as the Men in Black series, wherein the top-secret Men in Black agency, in order to prevent the destruction of the earth, needs to police and maintain under control all the aliens that take human forms and live in-between them. In the Spanish case, Vox could be the top-secret Men in White agency. For example, in one of Vox claims, Alicia Rubio suggested that feminazis are abducting “young ladies”⁷¹, “this is a poor young lady that has been abducted and does not even know what she is fighting for” (Intereconomiatube, 2017), she stated while referring to a FEMEN activist. Even though Rubio does not clearly refer to feminazis as aliens, by using the term “abduction” the monstrous association between feminists and aliens shall appear in our minds. Henceforth, by symbolizing the poor Spanish children’s destruction through the alien feminazi, Vox is creating a threat in our minds, where the monstrous feminazis are shaped as unknown aliens that represent that what is “beyond the limit”(Ahmed, 2000, p.1), that which we have failed to identify (UFO-unidentified flying objects) (Ahmed, 2000, p.2), and that which represents the danger of the unknown (Ahmed, 2000, p.2). Therefore, that alien figuration becomes a symbol that recuperates all that is dangerous about the unknown into the singularity of a monstrous (and alien) form (Ahmed, 2000, p.2). Thus,

⁷⁰ This assertion is based on FELGTB research data. To see the complete article: FELGTB. (2019, March 15th). Más del 40% de las personas trans encuestadas por FELGTB sufrieron amenazas o maltrato psicológico en 2018. Retrieved from:

<http://www.felgtb.org/temas/realidades-trans/noticias/i/15332/239/mas-del-40-de-las-personas-trans-encuestadas-por-felgtb-sufrieron-amenazas-o-maltrato-psicologico-en-2018>

⁷¹ To see the complete interview: Intereconomiatube (2017).

when Rubio talks about “abduction”, an alien image of a queer UFO led by feminazis may appear in our minds, drawing us into a narrative that portrays feminazis as monsters that “may get inside our heads: they may infiltrate us; they may even appear as (like) humans” (Ahmed, 2000, p.2), suggesting that if the queer UFOs land in Spain, the terror will also land with it. Vox makes the choice simple: either we annihilate feminazis, or feminazis will visit apocalypse on Spain.

But, even if Monasterio⁷² ensures that the feminazi dictatorship is already here, since feminazis are responsible for atrocities such as grounding male-children without their break time, the journalist Àngels Barceló has denied it, and fortunately (fortunately?) no evidence has been produced of any such constraints. Yet, Monasterio emphasizes repeatedly that male children are being discriminated against precisely because they are male, as she claims in the below interview excerpt:

Rocío Monasterio: Yesterday, in a school from Huelva, they decided that male children will be grounded without their school break in the 8M.

Àngels Barceló: That is not true, because we have talked with the people that is responsible for the school and the only thing that they are going to do is that the female-children are going to go earlier out to the school break.

Rocío Monasterio: That happened after Vox denounced it. Because if Vox wasn't there, all of you would be here talking about the 8M while a child, due to the fact that is a male, will be grounded without school break. That is the kind of equality that you are defending here, because the reality is that all that you want to do is to collectivize women.⁷³

Even though these arguments have been put forward as falsehoods, Monasterio's lies seem to have been forgiven by their sympathizers⁷⁴ because, after all, Vox is just trying to protect the Spanish children. Above all, what Vox is trying to do is to protect Spain

⁷² To see the complete interview: Cadena Ser [Cadena Ser] (2019, March 7th). 8M: Debate sobre feminismo y mujer con políticas españolas. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJii9nMTXt4>

⁷³ Idem

⁷⁴ I base this argument in Vox political rise in the past April 28, 2019 general elections. Since, thanks' to 2.677.173 Spanish voters, Vox entered into the Spanish government with 24 congress seats (Cué, 2019).

against those feminazis that are threatening to destroy and pervert what is “ours”: our children, our family, our heterosexuality, our masculinity, our women. Hence, in order to maintain a symbolic order that will ensure Spanish reproductive futurism, Vox embraces a futurity so blindly committed to the figure of the Child that will justify refusing LGBTI and gender violence protection laws to the children, but also to the adults that some children will thus become (Edelman, 2004, p.29)⁷⁵. Under that rhetoric, who is going to oppose the symbolic child? who is going to take the side of the monstrous feminazis? who, as Edelman (2004) questions, “would, after all, come out for abortion or stand against reproduction, against futurity, and so against life?” (p.16) but, most of all, who will dare to leave the Spanish male-children without their break?

FEMINAZI, THE CONTROVERSIAL TERM

Throughout this chapter I have explored far-right political narratives and how they aim to signify Spanish feminist and LGBTI movements as queer monsters that are indoctrinating children. Through the analyses of the symbolic children, I exposed how Vox politicians’ public statements portray feminists as feminazi monsters, which are especially characterized by their violent, radical, and queer attitude against family, motherhood and the children. On that basis, I suggest that Vox narratives, which are supported by family values, shape the feminazi monster as an apocalyptic symbol that represents the destruction of the order of things. Therefore, it is through its opposition to life, symbolized by the reproduction of the heterosexual family, children and motherhood, where the feminist embodies the feminazi monster inasmuch as it represents “something beyond the normative that stands against the values associated with what we choose to call normality and that is a focus of normative anxiety” (Shildrick, 2002, p.29), and where what counts as normative, “and indeed as monstrous” (Shildrick, 2002, p.29), is caught up in the symbols of reproductive futurism.

As a conclusion, I insist that feminists should situate themselves against the cult of the Children and the Family and the political order they enforce. For doing that, feminism has to choose queerness and not choose a future marked by the reproduction of a

⁷⁵ In this quote I am paraphrasing Edelman referring to Bernard Law’s, the cardinal of Boston, statements about giving health care benefits to same-sex partners in the United States. Edelman states: “With this fatal embrace of a futurism so blindly committed to the figure of the Child that it will justify refusing health care benefits to the adults that some children become” (Edelman, 2004, pp.28-29).

heteronormative nation as the disciplinary image of the imaginary past, or as the site of a projective identification with an always impossible future (Edelman, 2004, pp. 30-31), feminism has to welcome the queer UFOs and choose the apocalypses as a place to build, as a place to grow. Hence, I finally wonder, can feminism embrace the feminazi and, therefore, accept queer monstrosity as a way of resistance? Should feminism reclaim its queerness and re-appropriate the term feminazi and all the negativity that lies within it? I do not have an unequivocal or simple response to these questions since the term feminazi is a complex symbol to be re-appropriated by feminists. Due to its terminological and historical construction, the notion of the feminazi represents an offence not just to feminists, but also to the Victims of the Holocaust, and hence, it is a symbol that does not just belong to one oppressed group, but to many, thus, inasmuch as “the insult isn’t just to feminists, but also to the victims of totalitarianism past and present, it’s not something feminism can simply decide to own” (Williams, 2015, para.6). As the feminist writer Laura Bates concurs, using the term feminazi against feminists is “a desperate attempt to demonise us [referring to feminists], and it’s frustrating, because if it wasn’t such an offensive word, you could actually start to embrace it and own it” (quoted in Williams, 2015, para.6).

Therefore, contrary to what has happened with insults that have been used to punish feminists and LGBTI people and symbolize them as monsters, such as, for example, “marica”, “bollera”, “viciosx” or “travelo”, which have been re-appropriated by feminist and LGBTI communities in Spain, with the term “feminazi” we are facing a quite controversial issue. Hence, I finally suggest to strategically re-appropriate feminazi’s monstrous characteristics, while leaving the term “feminazi” aside. That is, instead of re-appropriating the feminazi symbol, we might re-appropriate the queer feminist characteristics that lie within it; where queerness represents the embodiment of all those categories that are being used by, in this case, Vox and the far-right, in order to portray feminists as “monsters” due to their “opposition” to heterosexuality, maternity, family and the children. In that sense, as a proper monstrosity act, I propose to embrace all the negativity that symbolizes Vox’s political discourse about the feminazi, making visible (and loud) those queer and feminist claims that are against heteronormativity, that are pro-abortion and pro-sex, that are against the super woman, maternity and the heteronormative family as symbols of brightness, futurity and progress. From there, I leave open a possible start of a queer feminist manifesto for monstrous alliances, based on uncomfortableness as an act of queer disobedience and on the embracement and

celebration of all the symbolic destruction that may come from that as a response to the far-right provocations.

After I had completed the third chapter and begun this one, the Spanish general elections took place on the 28th of April and, luckily for many, the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), leaded by Pedro Sánchez, was the most-voted political party. However, even if, on the one hand, the left-wing Spanish government has the best prospects of governmental success, it should also be taken into consideration that Vox has entered parliament by winning 10.3% of the votes and 24 seats in the Spanish Congress (Manfredi, 2019). Thus, Spain joins the list of the European countries with a far-right political trend that continues to grow and, hence, it becomes extremely important to refute their far-right monstrosity rhetoric as a strategy to eliminate them from the root. As an example of that “refuting”, in the previous chapter I analyzed the “feminazi” symbol as a complex and controversial term to re-appropriate. On the one hand I have, therefore, proposed to leave aside the terminological re-appropriation while adopting, on the other hand, the symbolic “feminazi” monstrous characteristics, a proposal that I have introduced as a possible strategy for queer resistances against the far-right violence and their continuous provocations against feminists and LGBTI identities.

Henceforth, in this chapter, I would like to propose a different example of queer resistances for monstrous alliances, where the re-appropriation of a concrete monster has proved empowering for the LGBTI community against Vox’s political offences. Therefore, I focus here on Vox’s latest political campaign’s strategies on election day: a twitter and meme publication against “their enemies”. Though, through analyses of that publication, I will especially center on their representation of “LGBTI” identities as a ghostly enemy and will explore how through that symbolism, Vox has given birth to a new queer monster baptized by the LGBTI community as Gaysper, the gay-ghost emoji.

BEFORE GAYSPER

On the 5th of July of 2018, Vox published a formal communication about the “Gay Pride” party on their webpage⁷⁶. In this communication, Vox proclaimed that the Spanish “Gay Pride” is an ideological imposition that violates neighbors’ rights and the municipal regulations. As well, that communication claimed that the “Gay Pride” misuses Spanish public goods. Hence, as they stated, Vox denounces “Gay Pride” because “being proud

⁷⁶ Vox España. (2019). Vox sobre las fiestas del <<Orgullo Gay>>. Retrieved from: <https://www.voxespana.es/noticias/vox-sobre-las-fiestas-del-orgullo-gay-20180705>

of concrete sexual practices” has become a celebration that violates citizens’ fundamental rights. Moreover, Vox explains that:

This kind of celebration and the reasons that make it happen give rise to clearly scandalous activities that are taking place in public places and on the sight of adults and minors that, whom should do it, is not taking care with due respect for the intimacy, consciousness and personal moral of the citizens.⁷⁷

Hence, since Vox considers “Gay Pride” as “scandalous” and harmful for adults and children, it should not be visible, neither a public festivity. On that basis, Javier Ortega Smith has proposed to “send” the Madrid gay pride from the city center to the Casa de Campo, a park complex which is situated downtown and away from central Madrid (León, 2019). From there, Vox’s LGBTI-phobia becomes visible as far as they are only concern about “Gay Pride” disturbances and dirtiness, while on the contrary, the garbage and disruptions generated by other religious or sporting multitudinous events, such as Holy Week or San Fermín, for example, have thus not been questioned (León, 2019). Moreover, Vox’s denouncement against “Gay Pride” upholds its arguments by attributing immorality and perversion to LGBTI people and by signifying LGBTI identities as “scandalous”. Therefore, by portraying LGBTI people as dangerous for adults and children’s morality and consciousness, they justify the necessity of Spanish citizens’ “protection” by “sending” LGBTI people away from the city center to Casa de Campo.

Vox’s proposals finally translate as LGBTI invalidation where Vox is telling to LGBTI people: you are not normal enough, heterosexual enough neither good enough to be on the public space. However, you are monstrous enough, queer enough, scandalous enough, immoral enough, to not be welcome. This is not the first time that Vox has shown similar intentions regarding LGBTI people; for example, in Huelva, a Vox politician stated: “we want to remove the gay flag from the Huesca Casino because each person’s sexual orientation should be in their house and in their bed” (laSexta.com, 2019, para.1), and Alicia Rubio questioned the existence of trans and homosexual children while advocating for striking down the LGBTI Law, as I pointed out in the previous chapter. Hence, Vox’s political strategies and public statements, which have a clear LGBTI-phobic pattern, are aiming to separate the “civilized” from the “uncivilized”, the heteronormative person

⁷⁷Idem.

from the queers, the human from the monster, maintaining, in that way, the idea that the LGBTI monster, which threatens to indoctrinate the humans and pervert the children with its immorality, should be out of the human sight. Through that rhetoric, queerness stays invisible, under control, on lock.

THE BIRTH OF GAYSPEER

At the end of the Vox general election's political campaign, Vox's LGBTI-phobic statements took a ghostly shape: the LGBTI monster. It was on elections day, the 28 of April, when Vox tweeted a post titled "¡Qué comience la batalla!" – "Let the battle begin!", the tweet⁷⁸ attached an image of an armed Aragorn⁷⁹ in one of the Lord of the Ring's scenes, whom was carrying on its back the Vox's logo and the Spanish flag. As well, the far-right party's meme⁸⁰ showed diverse LGBTI, feminist, anti-fascist, Catalanian and mass media symbols, which were portrayed on top of the Lord of the Rings orcs and on the front line of the battle. Vox's provocation has not been left unanswered, by contrast, the controversial tweet garnered 8.600 comments and 6.700 retweets, it has been denounced by the LGBTI association Acrópolis, from Madrid (EFE, 2019) and, also, it has given rise to a new LGBTI icon: a ghost painted with the colors of the rainbow flag. The ghostly emoji, which has been baptized as Gaysper, an acronym for Gay and Casper, has been humorously hijacked by the LGBTI community and transformed into the new LGBTI "mascot". Hence, through Gaysper's re-appropriation, the LGBTI ghost has been deprived of its "terrific" and "invisible" monstrous connotation (Cantó, 2019). Due to Gaysper's popularity, after one week from its publication, the

⁷⁸Vox [@vox_es]. (2019, April 28) ¡Qué comience la batalla! #PorEspaña. [Tweet Post]. Retrieved from: https://twitter.com/vox_es/status/1122427641750011904?lang=en

⁷⁹ Lord of the Rings' Aragorn is the "son of Arathorn, pal of hobbits, scourge of orcs and wielder of a legendary sword." (Jones, 2019, para.1).

⁸⁰ A meme is an image, text, video, idea, painting, etc. which normally has a humorous nature and that is commonly used on the Internet to make fun of someone or something.



Figure 3 – Let the battle begin!- Tweet and meme by Vox⁸¹

⁸¹ Vox [@vox_es]. (2019, April 28) ¡Qué comience la batalla! #PorEspaña. [Tweet Post]. Retrieved from: https://twitter.com/vox_es/status/1122427641750011904?lang=en

ghost has undertaken various shapes and colors aiming to depict the different identities represented in the rainbow flag - which is not one, but many - and, as a result, has given rise to various queer ghosts such as Bisper, Lesper, Pansper or Transper. On the contrary of Vox’s LGBTI-phobic desires, LGBTI and queer visibility has risen.



Figure 4 – La familia de fantasmas LGBTIQ, by @hachecabezas⁸²

It is not the first time that Spanish LGBTI people have re-appropriated LGBTI-phobic insults. Spanish words such as “*bollera*”, “*marica*” or “*travelo*”, which have been historically used to punish, humiliate, terrorize or displace queerness, have been embraced by the LGBTI community as a form of queer resistance. Hence, in order to

⁸² The authorship of the image is unknown, though the designer of the ghost emoji is known as “bailey”, from the webpage redbubble.com. The image was retrieved from a Tweet post by: Hache Cabezas [@Hachecabezas] (2019, April 30). Las rupertas de la suerte que coleccionábamos de pequeños estaban bien, pero hubiera preferido a #Gaysper, #Lesper, #Bisper y a toda la familia de fantasmas LGTBIQ+. [Tweet]. Retrieved from: <https://twitter.com/Hachecabezas/status/1123186174804353024> . To take a look into Bailey’s designs see: https://www.redbubble.com/es/people/bailey?ref=artist_title_name (accessed on 2019, May 22).

dispossess those words from their derogatory use, instead of rejecting them, they have been embraced as terms that define queer identities. In such a way, as the linguist Lola Pons explains for *El País* (Cantó, 2019), the key to the process of terminological re-appropriation is its illocutionary force, meaning that insults are elements which are codified as offensive due to cultural reasons. Hence, there is nothing in a word that makes it insulting in itself, but people codify it as insulting. This is because when a collective re-appropriates an insult as a characteristic feature, the collective destroys all its illocutionary force (Cantó, 2019). Therefore, Gaysper's case is just another example for LGBTI re-appropriation, which has proved, again, that words, symbols and now, emojis, memes, and monsters, *pueden cambiar de bando* – can switch sides.

In contrast to the feminazi, the monstrous Gaysper has been stripped of its insulting connotation and, thus, unquestionably re-appropriated and welcomed by the LGBTI community. In that way, the Gaysper case leaves us with a triumphant taste, where LGBTI alliances against political oppressions rekindle forces and strengthen to keep fighting against, and through, patriarchal and nationalist violence. Moreover, I conceive Gaysper as an empowering symbol for LGBTI people since Gaysper's re-appropriation, and Bisper, Lesper, Transper, Pansper...etc, by becoming viral, have reminded Spain that LGBTI people are not alone: we are supported, we are valid, and we are loved. In this sense, viral messages that reinforce LGBTI alliances, communities and interpersonal relationships, are important for healing and resisting, especially in order to reach those LGBTI people that are not, or cannot, be "visible".

IS IT QUEER? RE-THINKING GAYSPER AS A SYMBOL OF QUEER RESISTANCES.

It is appealing how the LGBTI community has recognized a ghost as an icon, and how, at the same time, it has embraced it through that recognition. Where a rainbow ghost appeared in order to situate LGBTI people as invisible, unreal, terrific and monstrous, on the opposite of Vox offensive intentions, Gaysper has been reclaimed, welcome, loved and transformed into the new LGBTI symbol. Consequently, LGBTI cyberactivism, through hashtags (#gaysper), tweets, memes and artistic drawings, among others, has created a ghostly LGBTI supportive on-line community for LGBTI monsters' alliances, opening up a public space on twitter to discuss and reject the rise of LGBTI-phobic discourses. It is in that sense when Gaysper does symbolize LGBTI rights of belonging and existing in the public space. Hence, to sum up, I suggest that LGBTI alliances, which

are based, in this case, on the re-appropriation of an insulting emoji, can be considered as LGBTI resistance tools between oppressed groups that prove helpful to resist and go through the rise of Vox's intolerance.

Can we say, then, that Gaysper has become a queer resistance symbol against the far-right? There are no easy answers to this question, since various forms of LGBTI resistance and visibility (such as, for example, "Gay Pride" or "World Pride") are also intimately linked with white privilege and capitalism. Hence, even if Gaysper has created a visible alliance between LGBTI people, by becoming a symbol against the rise of far-right political narratives -- as well as it has also proven that there is a strong community fighting against hate and LGBTI-phobia -- it is not yet clear if Gaysper has become a LGBTI and, also, queer icon that challenges homonormativity and homonationalism, but, let's specially remark, white and cis privilege. Hence, even if, for now, this question stays unanswered, we must keep questioning who is being represented through symbols as Gaysper, who is welcome in Gaysper's LGBTI community, and who is still regarded as more monstrous than others.

CONCLUSION

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MONSTROUS FEELINGS

I conclude this thesis by taking my personal experience in order to highlight the importance of making visible queer and feminist fights against Vox narratives: going back to election week, which I spent in my hometown, made me realize, or better said, remember, the personal despair that I used to feel while living in a little town in Andalusia due to, among other things, intolerance against feminism and LGBTI-phobia. By being away from my (strongest) feminist and queer support groups during some weeks that have been strongly marked by political discussions, I have had to remember how it feels to lonely⁸³ endure continuous LGBTI-phobic and anti-feminist conversations that have brought back deep feelings of despair, weariness and anger. It is, though, interesting to see how that sense of powerlessness and of lack of understanding began to dissipate after a long-conversation with a very special little queer monster whom, inadvertently, encouraged me to continue writing this conclusion. Firstly, among other things, the little monster gave me the chance to meet Gaysper. Secondly, he reminded me of the reasons that writing this thesis is important: we need to build queer and feminist alliances, communities and interpersonal relationships, since they may give us the strength to continue fighting for queer LGBTI and feminists resistances and, therefore, existence. Or, to simply, get out of bed.

The conclusion of this thesis is about my favorite queer monster. My favorite queer monster was born in a southern Spanish town and has identified himself as gay since he was a kid. Sometime ago I thought that he never needed to hide his queerness, but, recently, I realized that I was wrong. He had to hide his queerness because his femininity and sexual orientation was punished by his classmates in high school, he was conceived as a monster, different from the other boys, not normal, and because of that, he was bullied. Henceforth, despite his fairly young age and despite of having family support, he suffered bullying, he needed to change schools, he felt lonely, he needed to go to therapy, he suffered street harassment and he tried to commit suicide. I did not know some of these things, but the curious part is that the monster told me his story because I told him mine. From there, we made an alliance, a queer interconnexion, we understood each-other, we tried to heal together. Maybe he found in me an ally, a confident, or maybe he never really talked to someone who has passed through similar things. During our conversation, among other things, I explained to him one of my earliest homophobic experiences. I told him: the other day I was with two heterosexual family members. In that moment, one man

⁸³Though, thank you to all the friends and family that really try to understand and support me.

that I just met, came to us and started to talk about his kid. His kid, he said, liked to touch boobs when he was little. Though he recognized that that was a “strange” habit for a kid, he said that he was glad that his child liked boobs and that he was taking that “path”, because, at least, he was not coming out like those gays of these days. I do not know what hurt me more, the blatant ignorance and disregard of his words, or the accompanying calm silence with which the other two people faced his words to, subsequently, claim something like, “well, man... everyone can do whatever they want, you know”. On my side, in order to avoid another fight and its corresponding mental and emotional exhaustion (which did happen anyways), I decided to leave. Though, to be honest, I really regretted not telling him to go fuck himself.

The interesting part of this story, and the point that I would like to highlight, is the monster’s answer to it: “Those types of comments are the ones that make people like me end up trying to commit suicide. You know, I would have said that to him because talking about suicide always makes people feel uncomfortable”. I was shocked. I really was. But I do not know for certain if I was more impressed with the facts, which I did not know, or with the wisdom of his words. He was truly right, we need to make people uncomfortable, but, also, to – continuously – face those kinds of arguments alone is exhausting. It is killing. It is mentally draining.

Therefore, since in the previous chapters I concluded by suggesting various feminist, queer and LGBTI resistance strategies against the rise of the far-right in Spain, as a conclusion to this thesis, I want to propose one more thing: we need to embrace and re-appropriate queer monstrosity as a way of building alliances against the far-right violence, since queer “negativity” and the uncomfortableness that it produces is a strong queer tool to respond and face that violence. Edelman (2004) argued that “rather than rejecting, with liberal discourse, this ascription of negativity to the queer, we might, [...] do better to consider accepting and even embracing it” (p.4), for that, the little queer monster becomes a wonderful example, just as he says: “let’s talk about what makes the other – the oppressor – uncomfortable”, let’s do it and let’s celebrate it. Let’s talk about queer monstrous characteristics. Let’s talk about abortion, non-normative sex, suicide, polyamory, queer kinships, lesbianism as a political choice, STD, HPV, candidiasis, menstruation, pregnant men or the end of masculinity. Let’s insist on talking about monstrous characteristics, on celebrating monstrosity, on recognizing it (Halberstam, 1995). Let the monsters’ rave begin.

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