A r t i c l e s

"The claws of feminism": anti-feminist hate speech on Facebook and the sense of controlled urgency

Júlia Cavalcanti Versiani dos Anjos[i]

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9024-1267

[i](Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Escola de Comunicação, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação e Cultura. Rio de Janeiro – RJ, Brazil).

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze how antifeminist content published on Facebook mobilizes hate and uses it as a powerful political tool. The methodological path was to collect content made available in the pages of the mentioned social media website and to examine them using the Discourse Analysis from the Foucaultian perspective. I consider, therefore, that these enunciations exist in a context and meet the urgent needs of antifeminism. In this work, the need to promote a sense of controlled urgency will be specifically discussed: narratives are created to encourage both explosive and continuous reactions, in order to ensure that aversion felt for these militants retains its intensity and lasts throughout time. This strategy solidifies the union between the antifeminist group under the idea of confronting a terrible villain.

Keywords: Hate speech. Feminism. Anti-feminism. Facebook.

Introductory considerations

"I ended up falling in the claws of the feminist movement". These were the words used by activist Sara Winter[1] to justify her major change in behavior over the years, from a member

---

1   Sara Winter was how activist Sara Fernanda Giromini introduced herself at that moment. She had been acting as an activist against feminism at least since 2016, having announced in that year a political partnership with Jair Bolsonaro, a federal congressman at that time. In 2020, she appears in the media as one of the leaders of the "300 pelo Brasil" [300 for Brazil] movement, self-titled as a "right-wing organization". In one of their demonstrations, Winter and other militants marched towards the Supreme Federal Court (STF) wearing

of the group *Femen* to a conservative woman and antifeminist militant. Addressing an audience of about one hundred people who occupied the auditorium of the Igreja de Sant'Ana (Church of Sant'Ana) in the center of Rio de Janeiro, she told her troubled life story. Junkie brother, dysfunctional family, prostitution, sexual violence: this troubled path, according to Winter, was what led her to feminism.

Men and women of all ages gathered that Saturday afternoon, August 4th, 2018, to hear Sara Winter and four other young speakers at the First Brazilian Anti-feminist Congress[2]. Among the audience was me, the author of this paper. I attended the event as part of an investigation into antifeminist hate speech. Despite having the online environment as the focus of my research, the experience of watching, live and close, more than four hours of inflammatory speeches against feminism[3] confirmed the impossibility of seeing the social networks as an environment apart from the rest of society: the offensive words and images that I had been archiving from posts on Facebook were present there.

This paper is part of a broader research with the overall goal of investigating what narratives, ideas, and stereotypes are used to mobilize hatred against feminist women on social media websites. In earlier studies, I have addressed some lines of argumentation used to this purpose, such as the appeal to nostalgia to strengthen the conservative ideal of womanhood as opposed to the "degraded feminist" (ANJOS, 2017), the reference to the body and sexuality of activists, constructing them as monstrous (ANJOS, 2020a), and the use of misogyny as political rhetoric (ANJOS, 2020b).

In this paper, I delve into another specific strategy, identified in the discourse analysis of these pages, which I have called the sense of *controlled urgency*: the stimulation of a passionate reaction, but one that does not fizzle out and therefore serves to engage the audience and maintain it over time. This observation emerged from the following questions: how do apparently contradictory views about the same object coexist on the same Facebook page? How could feminists be ridiculous and a failure and, at the same time, an urgent and dangerous problem? I argue that this is not mere incoherence or coincidence: this creation of distinct truths about feminists is closely related to their context and the communicative needs of their enunciators.

---

masks, waving torches, demanding that the court be closed down, and threatening the Ministers. After the fact, Winter was arrested. Also in 2020, having left prison while wearing an ankle monitor, Sara Winter took action again, posting on the Internet the name of a 10-year-old girl who was exercising her legal right to terminate a pregnancy resulting from rape, as well as the address of the hospital where the procedure was taking place, and encouraging a crowd to attend the place in protest. In 2022, however, Sara Winter reported that she had abandoned the codename "Winter," preferring to use her husband's last name, Huff, and to lead a life away from activism.

2   More information on: 'Feche as pernas': o que pregam os participantes do 1º Congresso Antifeminista do Brasil ('Close your legs': what the participants of the 1st Brazilian Anti-feminist Congress preach). Época, 12/08/2018. Available at: <https://epoca.globo.com/feche-as-pernas-que-pregam-os-participantes-do-1-congresso-antifeminista-do-brasil-22964525>. Accessed on: 07/05/2020.

3   It is important to point out that the speakers at this event talked about feminism as a homogeneous group, terrible in its entirety, disregarding the fact that there are several lines of thought in this movement.

Methodology

The methodological approach was to analyze content available on Facebook, a digital environment that, at the time of the data collection, was the most widely used social network in Brazil. It is currently in the fourth position in the ranking of Brazilians' favorites, and continues to be the most accessed by the world population, with more than 2.91 billion active users, 116 million of them in Brazil[4]. Among the various possible analysis routes in the spectrum of this social network, I chose to focus on the pages where the posts have a public character, unlike those that take place in closed groups and would impose ethical obstacles to the research.

The choice of the pages being considered in this research came from the Facebook search tool, in which I used the term *antifeminism* and similar ones (*against/out/not + feminism/feminist).* Then, I gave preference to pages that demonstrate that they are active, posting frequently (at least weekly), and focusing on feminism, among other subjects. According to these criteria, the pages "Jessicão, a feminista" (Big Jessica, the feminist), "Anti-Feminismo" (Anti-Feminism), "Moça, você não precisa do feminismo" (Girl, you don't need feminism) and "Moça, não sou obrigada a ser feminista" (Girl, I have no obligation to be a feminist) were chosen.

I observed these pages for a period of six months (between November 2017 and April 2018) in order to gather a number of entries that would enable a varied universe of analysis. Thus, 351 publications were manually collected, adding content from the four pages - from which I proceeded to the qualitative bias stage, characterized, according to Fragoso, Recuero and Amaral (2016, p. 67), by a selection of the most significant elements for the research problem: "the number of components of the sample is less important than its relevance to the research problem, so that the elements of the sample are selected deliberately"[5]. It is known that, by choosing this selection, it is not possible to generalize the results, but it is adequate to evaluate the object in great detail.

In an initial analysis of the corpus, several lines of argumentation taken with the aim of politically delegitimizing feminist women were identified. In this paper, as previously stated, I will focus on one of these strategies and demonstrate some examples of posts that are representative of the type of narrative constructed by these pages. It is important to highlight that this narrative is not exactly about the specific subjects of each post – which, as I will present, range from women invading a church to allegations of paternal disapproval – but about the way in which the intertwining of these seemingly unrelated subjects manages to mobilize hatred against feminism quite effectively. The posts, therefore, will not be seen as isolated entities with a value on their own, but rather discussed in a way that makes it possible to understand the stereotypes and narratives being mobilized.

---

4   Ranking das redes sociais: as mais usadas no Brasil e no mundo, insights e materiais gratuitos [Ranking of social networks: the most used networks in Brazil and in the world, insights and free materials. Free translation from original.]. *Resultados Digitais*, 23 may 2022. Available at: <https://resultadosdigitais.com.br/blog/redes-sociais-mais-usadas-no-brasil/>. Accessed on: 03/11/2022.

5   All the quotes written originally in Portuguese have been freely translated to English. For the full reference, see the References section.

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun.,
São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

3/18

Such is the guideline of the Foucauldian discourse analysis (2008), that proposes to analyze enunciations as *rarities*, which only exist in very specific historical conditions, and which do not occur out of necessity, but through determined mechanisms of power and knowledge. The orientation of the Foucauldian investigation would be precisely to comprehend the principle according to which those signifying sets were able to appear and not any other ones, in addition to unveiling the relations of power and political struggle that shaped this world configuration.

Therefore, in this paper I pose these questions: in what context does it become interesting for the antifeminist pages to create and circulate certain truths about this movement? In what ways are these truths created by certain power relations and do they also reinforce them? To what urgent needs of antifeminism does the discourse of these pages serve?

Hatred, an effective technology for group bonding

Social networking sites can become actual "hotbeds" of chauvinismhomophobia, and the belief in white supremacy, as Vickery and Everbach (2018) remind us: web features such as mobility and the possibility of asynchronous communication provide the perfect conditions for the formation and mobilization of homogeneous and extremist groups that might not meet so easily, considering geographical and temporal boundaries. Moreover, the possibilities of comprehensiveness, replicability, persistence and content tracking turn activities such as data production, reproduction, and research into a commonplace occurrence for its users (boyd, 2011). In these cases, as Recuero (2013, p. 65) points out, an offense becomes more public, replicable, and widespread, "enhanced by the network itself and by the network's ability to reproduce the case and amplify its effects for those involved".

It is worth remembering, however, that this is not merely a problem of technology, but of a broader social issue. Considering online hate speech as a natural consequence of computer-mediated communication is a manifestation of technological determinism, characterized, according to Baym (2010), by viewing the media as the cause of social consequences and as a realm separate from the "real world". Hatred, insults and biases, however, spread through the social environment quite effectively, long before the advent of the World Wide Web. The issue is more complex and encompasses society as a whole. It is in this sense that Markus (1994) states that determinism, even when it views technology in a negative and apocalyptic manner, is an optimistic theory: if the perverse effects of electronic communication were caused only by the characteristics of the technologies themselves, everything would be solved by creating better tools or by moving away from them.

Another problem with this perspective is to place users as passive, not considering that individuals appropriate the media according to their social and relational goals. Polivanov (2015) reminds us of the need to question the argument that, on social networking sites, participants would simply display their private lives in a random and indiscriminate manner.

4/18

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun.,
São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

The author points to the fact that, in reality, individuals actively manage the content they post or fail to post on the web according to the impressions they wish to convey to the audience, "in a process marked by a largely conscious and reflected choice about the appropriate materials" (POLIVANOV, 2015, p. 153).

In addition to the invalidity of the idea that technology alone stimulates previously non-existent expressions of hatred, to properly address the problem of hate speech one must also discuss the incongruity of considering this emotion to be exclusively a figment of the mind of certain degenerate individuals, known as "haters". This view focuses on spectacularized crimes and extreme cases, ignoring the bigger picture and failing to address the root of the problem. Thus, it is not only limited, but also decontextualized and depoliticized. Decontextualized because it does not consider that these hate speeches and crimes express prejudices and stereotypes that reflect our history, values, and social conflicts and, therefore, are not isolated facts. Depoliticized because it obliterates the power relations involved in the brewing and circulation of this hatred. Focusing the discussion of hate on the figure of the hater, therefore, reduces a social problem to an individual issue and is consequently favorable to maintain the *status quo* (BLEE, 2005; LEWIS, 2014).

Hatred, in fact, often works as a kind of social cement, to the extent that it collaborates to build identities, shape moralities, and reinforce values (CHAVAUD; GAUSSOT, 2008). Each culture has socially approved hate objects that help establish and support the boundaries between right and wrong, good and evil - even if this process is not often admitted. Indeed, Gay (1995) places the cultivation of hatred at the heart of the civilizing project of the European bourgeoisie. This emotion allowed Victorian society to solidify itself as a homogeneous group and mitigate the internal fear of its own imperfections by directing aversion to the different *other*.

A meaningful analysis of hate, therefore, must abandon the idea of hate as an antisocial emotion, felt by isolated individuals, or inflamed with greater force only with the advent of social networking tools. On the contrary, it is possible to claim that hate is a powerful technology in the formation of social networks, considering them, in their *lato* sense, as human groupings constituted by interactions.

Hatred, in this way, integrates social and collective covenants for a variety of purposes, one of the main ones being the political use to build a closed group out of opposition to the *other*. To justify interference over time on another group, it helps that the "villain" to be dealt with seems almost invincible. It is not sufficient that the hated object is seen as execrable and irredeemably condemned, there must be something that turns it into, besides an urgent problem, a terribly complex issue that demands constant observation and interference. In other words: to mobilize hatred effectively, one cannot run the risk of allowing an easy solution such as a hasty withdrawal typical of disgust, a glancing away with contempt, or an explosive and angry confrontation. After all, what characterizes hatred is precisely its long-term persistence.

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun.,
São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

5/18

Even the death of the group or the individual considered a rival may not be enough for the one who feels this hatred: as Kolnai reminds us (2013, p. 143), this emotion usually accompanies its victim "beyond the grave", in a desire for the "eternal damnation on his soul". Therefore, the idea of hatred as a "stubborn" attitude is reinforced, that is, it endures over time and is "extraordinarily resistant to transformation" (BRUDHOLM, 2010, p. 309).

However, by instrumentalizing the political use of aversion, it creates some mystifications around it. Hatred is usually resignified as *righteous anger,* that is, a balanced reaction to harm (CHAVAUD; GAUSSOT, 2008). Additionally, it creates the illusion that there is an *end* to their action, both in the sense of a clear *purpose* - usually, to get rid of the group that is considered threatening - and of a *conclusion* - a future time when the group will have eliminated that problem and can rest peacefully. It is necessary, therefore, to believe that victory against the hated group will be possible, although difficult.

The antifeminist pages, then, need to establish a delicate balance between encouraging anger - sparking desire for immediate and effective action against events deemed absurd and unjust - and demanding other types of reactions - such as laughter, disbelief, and contempt, that generate long-term consequences and justify a continuous focus on this *other one*. I named this strategy as a sense of *controlled urgency*: something that stimulates passionate reaction, yet does not fizzle out and therefore serves to engage the audience and retain them over time.

In my analysis of the antifeminist pages, I consider it relevant to highlight a form of representation of women's rights activists that I identify as being especially important for this purpose, and which I will describe below as to how it is constructed. It concerns the image of feminists as savages and hysterical, as well as lazy and opportunists who, faced with their own failure, would seek to steal privileges from conservative men and women. Due to their so-called lack of control and the fact that they question privileges perceived as natural, feminists are seen as an urgent and dangerous problem, but at the same time they are delegitimized as sick, ridiculous, and losers, a view that does not demand such immediate action, but rather a continuous and watchful eye.

"Naked feminists": the stereotype of the unhinged woman

Women with their breasts exposed try at all costs to get through a human barricade that prevents them from entering a religious place to protest. In contrast to the angry female protesters, the men protecting the sacred building do not show any violent reaction - they only pray and hold hands. This peaceful reaction helps to highlight the aggressive attitude of the female activists, which appears disproportionate. This is the scene depicted in a video published by the "Anti-Feminismo" [Anti-Feminism] page (Image 1), which characterizes the men in question as "brave Catholics" and the women as "naked feminists" and "feminazi". This kind of content appeals to antifeminism because it makes it possible to link its rivals to the idea of extremism.

6/18

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun.,
São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

Figure 1 – Publication from the "Anti-Feminismo" page depicting an aggressive protest by alleged feminist activists[6]
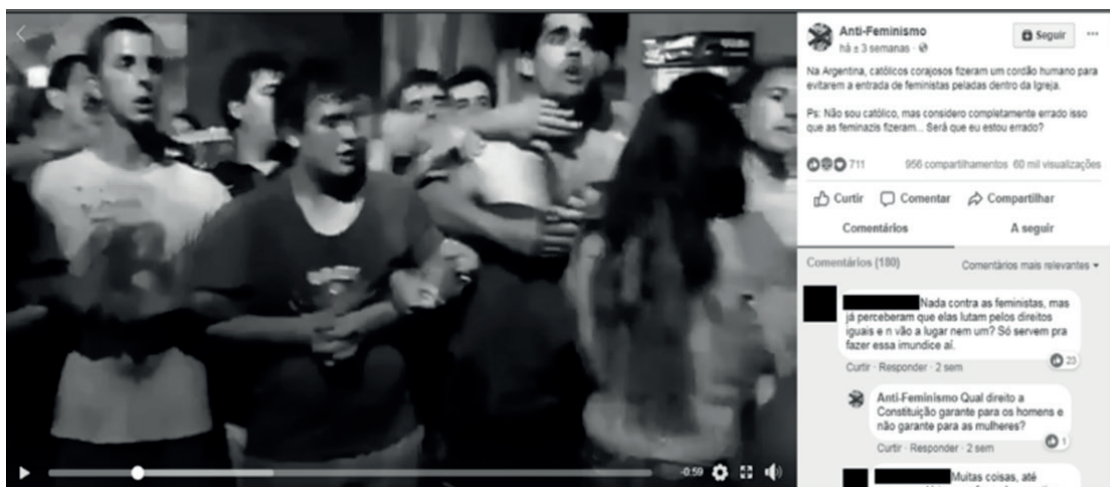
Source: research collection.

If the attack on a religious institution would already be unforgivable for many people, the pages offer yet other types of images to represent feminist protests that are deemed absurd, as in the case below (Image 2). The image shows a young, half-naked woman with a painted body and an iron object on her face. The text refers to her as an "it" and the caption of the publication then adds: "Too much feminism results in this!". As in the case of the church and in other cases identified by this research, there is no way of knowing if the woman portrayed actually identifies as a feminist - the page, however, acts as if this is a reliable representation and a common practice of the movement as a whole. More than mere exaggeration or generalization, I argue that this kind of narrative fulfills a purpose of delegitimizing the voices of women who take a stand against the *status quo* and attempting to isolate them from the rest of the female population and from political participation. If being a feminist is *this*, then the best thing for any *good woman* is to keep their distance.

6 Text from caption: In Argentina, brave Catholics form a human chain to avoid the entrance of naked feminists inside the church. Ps. I am not a Catholic, but I believe these actions on the part of the feminists are completely wrong. Am I wrong?

Figure 2 - Publication from the "Anti-Feminismo" page that shows a female activist protesting half-naked

Source: research collection.

The insistence on this stereotype of the unhinged woman has deep roots in anachronistic conceptions about the emotional and psychic life of women in general. Frevert (2011), when analyzing definitions from 18th century encyclopedias, realizes that it was a common idea at that time that women, creatures whose most intrinsic characteristic would be fragility, would lack the strength and judgment needed to moderate their affections - much less anger, which would in no way match the delicateness typical of ladies. The men, considered to be more rational and able to better control their emotions, when feeling something like anger, it was seen as a righteous anger, a reaction that, even extreme, would probably be explainable in the context in which it occurred (FREIRE FILHO, 2014; FREVERT, 2011).

In the 19th century, the association between the feminine and uncontrollable emotions was further perpetuated. It is possible to mention, for example, the Freudian belief that, due to the castration complex, women present a flaw in the formation of the superego, which causes the predominance of envy and jealousy in their mental life and makes it impossible for them to control their emotions properly, like men do (FREUD, 1996).

Through the aforementioned posts, I realize that in the antifeminist pages, this discourse about women produced in the 19th century, is transmuted and acclimated - no longer referring to all women, but specifically to feminists. Thus, historically gender stereotypes help determine how, when, where, and who can express what types of emotions (BRODY; HALL; STOKES, 2016)

8/18

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun.,
São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

By bringing up such ideas of imbalance and distemper associated with this group, therefore, contributes to barring women from identifying with feminisms and to seeing feminists as enemies. Depicted as lacking any sense of modesty and decency, the female activists are even seen in an animalistic way. In this way, dialogue would not only be undesirable, but impossible. The only way to deal with them would be confrontation, which becomes an urgent necessity.

"Never paid a bill": dangerous, yet lazy, villains

While some posts in the analysis depict the feminist as an aggressive and dangerous woman, as previously shown, others present them as lazy and a failure. At first, it may seem like a contradiction: how can one be a loser and, at the same time, a threat? However, I have identified that this is a tactic to control the urgency raised by the posts that trigger a more heated reaction. If the aim is to succeed in inciting the perennial emotion of hatred, it is necessary to instill the conception that this is a complex and almost insoluble issue that demands constant observation and interference. For this purpose, the stigma of the activist women as ridiculous and as failures contributes to this issue: unlike villains who act in a courageous manner and might even inspire some admiration from their rivals, the narrative to be created here is that of villains who act in a stealthy manner, always on the prowl to seize privileges from "good men and women".

The following post (Image 3) has a similar idea, stating categorically that feminists have no responsibility, do not work, and are in fact extremely dependent on men. The image creates a scenario in which feminists criticize men, but at the same time take advantage of them. Benevolently, they quietly tolerate the opportunistic and ungrateful women, until the moment they get tired of them, as the caption of the post puts it: "one day daddy gets tired of crying in the shower, goes out to buy cigarettes and never comes back!". It is interesting to observe that in this world of such generous patriarchs, even the men's moment of outburst is under control: they simply leave the house without making a fuss.

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun., São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

9/18

Figure 3 – Publication from the "Anti-Feminismo" page that dismisses feminists as irresponsible and dependent on men

Source: research collection.

Why is it so interesting for the pages against feminism to represent this movement that has laziness and opportunism as its main characteristics? This would be one way to associate it with a monstrous form. At this point, it is interesting to return to the idea of the moral monster, as conceptualized by Foucault (2001). As the author explains, the new economy of punitive power that emerges in the 18th century begins to see the criminal as someone who turns against natural laws, breaks the moral pact with society and prefers to follow his or her own interests, without worrying about the consequences for the community. In the context in which these ideas emerged, the first moral monster that appeared was political in nature: the figure of the despot, embodied, at the time, by Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, King and Queen of France.

From this point, I propose that the feminist emerges as a new political monster. According to the perspective demonstrated in the analyzed posts, women's rights activists, by challenging gender standards, would be breaking the social pact and thinking only of their own benefit - even worse, they would wish to impose, like despots, their practices on everyone and exterminate, like dictators, those who think differently. Thus, it is not surprising that they are often derogatorily referred to as "feminazi".

It is important to remember that this accusation - of a supposed tyranny that exists in the act of questioning rules and seeking change - affects several social movements. Groups fighting for the rights of LGBTTQIA+ population are accused of "imposing a gay dictatorship," the black movement is challenged for allegedly "demanding privileges", discussion on fatphobia is read as an "imposition on everyone to think it's beautiful to be that way".

This type of manifestation happens because social changes, in general, mean shifts in the networks of power, which usually bring about a feeling of revolt and outrage on the part of certain groups that feel that they are losing their field of action. Individuals of different classes wish to increase their possibility to exert power, but the will to reestablish this ability will be even greater when it is believed that it has been lost, since an already acquired right usually seems a natural part of belonging and its loss is felt very intensely (MANSBRIDGE; SHAMES, 2008). Thus, the reluctance to accept new social configurations turns into a feeling of being attacked, and the difficulty in acknowledging their own privileges, which seem natural, lead these people to reverse the situation and accuse the *inconvenient other* of wanting privileges.

The idea that feminists would like to usurp privilege aligns with what Stringer (2014) calls *Neoliberal Victim Theory:* progressive narratives of liberating the oppressed are reversed in a process that blames victims by viewing social vulnerability as a responsibility of individuals. If ensuring good living conditions is the sole and exclusive obligation of each citizen as a result of their labor, the legitimacy of a demand for collective change is undermined. In this sense, militant women are seen as exploiters who have not succeeded in their private lives and therefore wish to impose on others the role of solving their own problems. Such is the view depicted in the post below (Image 4), which defines feminism as a group of "losers in life who envy beautiful, winning women".

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun.,
São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

11/18

Figure 4 – Publication from the "Moça, você não precisa do feminismo" page, that identifies feminists as losers and envious[7]

Source: research collection.

The situation, however, gets worse, according to the antifeminist page in question. The feminists would not be satisfied with merely complaining: according to the text, they also wish to debase all women. In the text, feminists are represented as failures, but nonetheless dangerous. However low and despicable they were, they would hold some hidden form of power capable of influencing other women. It would then be necessary to proceed with caution. It is thereby demonstrated how antifeminism tries to maintain a balance between a sense of

---

7   Text from the image: I fight for the end of feminism. Text from caption: Feminism is the type of movement in which the leaders and the activists are losers that envy beautiful and successful women, and through feminism they want to lower these women to the same level of failure they are.

urgency in action and, at the same time, a call for consistency and perpetuity in the project against feminists.

"It is important to stay alert at all times": the hunt for the flawed woman

The page seems to envision a moment when feminism will be *over* but it is possible to ponder: in the way the terms of this dispute are set, could there be an end to it? I believe that it is not possible, since the definition of feminism becomes so broad that it can encompass any behavior that deviates from the narrow standard of conduct and morality comprised in the ideal femininity.

The feminist, according to this perspective, is not simply a woman who makes a certain political stand, but is defined as a *flawed woman*. Since the margin for error allowed in the standard of femininity is so small, those who in some way do not obey the rules set for people of their gender are liable to be placed in the same group as the feminists - even if they do not see themselves in that way. In other words: even if the antifeminist discourse does not disseminate hatred towards *any woman,* by outlining a narrow moral standard and labeling a wide range of behaviors as inappropriate, it makes *any woman* a possible target.

This is what Lillian (2007) observes when analyzing the speech of William Gairdner, a public figure with neoconservative affiliations in Canada: the term *feminist* becomes practically a code to refer to *any woman with whom he disagrees.* The *real women* are simply those who follow his worldview, whereas the label of *feminist* is imposed on anyone he wishes to publicly discredit. Instead of confronting them for their political stance, Gairdner derides them and resorts to stereotypes. Similar tactics can be observed in the analyzed object, as the following case illustrates (Image 5).

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun.,
São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

13/18

Figure 5 – Publication from the "Moça, você não precisa do feminismo" page that presents 3 types of feminists[8]

Source: research collection.

In the image, three types of feminists are listed - it seems at first an extremely limited classification, since the movement's lines of thought (intersectional, black, radical, liberal, Marxist feminism, etc.) are diverse. Upon observing the text, however, it is possible to see that it is actually a rather broad typification: even the one who "doesn't say much openly or acts militantly" is bluntly classified as a feminist due to "exacerbated vanity".

Another interesting aspect is the existence of the *closeted* category: according to the text, despite subscribing to the opinion considered to be correct regarding abortion and homosexuality and apparently following the textbook to be seen as a *good girl*, she is still a

---

8   Text from captions: "They are hypocrites and lost, but very dangerous. Their arguments are shallow, but can convince the unsuspecting and unprepared. It is important to stay alert at all times and argument against them! Sadly, the feminist movement takes advantage of deluded people to propagate their obscure agenda". Text from the image: Feminists. "The radical: Has a certain theoretical knowledge about feminism, is a pro-abortion and pro-homosexuality activist, names as sexist and patriarchal, everything that is opposed to her views. Some are masculine and rude, others are vulgar. The narcissist: shares many of the feminist precepts, as being pro-abortion and homosexuality, sex before matrimony, etc, but doesn't say it openly neither participates in demonstrations. Her blazing mark is an exacerbated vanity. The closeted: pretends to be a good lady but actually lives by many of the feminist precepts. She is against horrendous practices like abortion and homosexuality. Her feminism concentrates on family values, like motherhood and wifely duties. She uses her false quest for virtue as a mask to hide her wickedness". "Feminism is condemned to failure, once it is based on an attempt to revoke and restructure human nature". Phyllis Schlafly.

feminist due to her "pusillanimity" regarding "motherhood and spousal life". In other terms: if a woman is considered, by any reason, a bad wife or a slouch mother, then she is eligible to enter the category of feminist.

Besides reducing multiple female profiles to the same coefficient - something hateful and abject - the post contributes to the goal of maintaining an eternal hunt for the most diverse types of women who, for whatever reasons, may be considered unsuitable. While claiming that feminism "is doomed to fail" in the caption, they warn that "the important thing is to always be aware". And what will become of these "dangerous" women who "prey on deluded people" and propagate "obscure ideas"? The following post (Image 6) presents an idea.

Image 6 - Publication from the "Moça, não sou obrigada a ser feminista" page that fantasizes about the death of feminists[9].

Source: research collection.

The message is unequivocal: according to this point of view, feminists do not deserve any empathy, not even charity. They would be beyond salvation, and their deaths should be viewed

---

9   In the images, Superman walks by a building on fire. When he sees that the building houses a Feminist Global Assembly, he changes back into Clark Kent and calmly strolls alongside the flames.

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun.,
São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

15/18

with contempt or even satisfaction. The posts examined here demonstrate, therefore, that hate speech is not simply about statements that contain insults, curse words, or exude prejudices, but that it functions as an element of a context that persistently seeks to remove certain groups of people from the public sphere, without considering any chance for defense or salvation.

Thus, in an attempt to appraise the questions posed at the beginning of this paper, I consider that the antifeminist hate speech uttered by these Facebook pages exists by meeting an urgent need of antifeminism: to promote, in relation to feminisms, a sense of what I have called *controlled urgency*. Namely, the discourse mobilizes explosive but also continuous reactions, so as to ensure that the aversion to these activists retains its intensity and persists over time, solidifying the unity among the antifeminist group under the idea of confronting a great villain.

Final observations

Greek mythology has it that in a swamp in the Peloponnese region there lived a serpent of unimaginable size, the Hydra. Killing this beast would have been one of the Twelve Labors of Hercules, a demigod who would later be worshiped as a hero. This task, however, proved especially challenging, since by cutting off one of the Hydra's several heads, two others would grow in its place (BRANDÃO, 1986). The figure of the Hydra is useful to reflect on the phenomenon that I have sought to describe throughout this paper, namely, the mobilization of antifeminist hatred on Facebook pages by promoting what I have called a sense of *controlled urgency*.

In the content of the analyzed pages, feminists appear unified under one monstrous face - all of them, no matter their ideological current or individual characteristics, would be a danger to be dealt with. The many different types of feminisms that exist are homogenized as "the feminism", a terrible movement that would want to eliminate the femininity of women, attack manly men, and even target little children.

It would therefore be a terrible and pressing dilemma, but also extremely complex: while promoting a homogenization of all feminists as monsters, at the same time they mention a multiplicity of problems to which they are supposedly connected to and a diversity of behaviors that are labeled as typical of these militants.

Besides having "claws", as Sara Winter said at the Anti-Feminist Congress, apparently, in the perspective of the Facebook pages opposed to the movement, feminism would also be like the Hydra, a monster of many faces, difficult to be dominated. This would justify a continuous observation of this group, a constant interference to "reveal" and "uncover" feminists, even if they do not identify themselves in this way. This perpetual control proves to be extremely useful in strengthening the conservative community. If a common enemy always helps bring a group of good guys together, then the unifying force of a great villain who is never defeated and keeps reappearing unexpectedly in different forms is even greater. Even if it is presented as a just and purposeful reaction, hatred reveals itself as a stubborn and persistent emotion, engaged in a never-ending pursuit.

16/18

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun.,
São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

References

ANJOS, J. Nem Atena, nem Medusa: corpo, gênero e monstruosidade. **ENTREMEIOS** - Revista do Departamento de Comunicação da PUC-Rio, v. 16, p. 1-18, 2020a.

ANJOS, J. Misoginia como retórica política: o caso do movimento antissufrágio. **REVISTA ÁRTEMIS**, v. 30, p. 401-421, 2020b.

ANJOS, Júlia. O "anjo do lar" no século XXI: a página "Garota Conservadora" e a identidade feminina antifeminista. In: XV Congresso Internacional Ibercom, 2017, Lisboa. **Livro de Anais Comunicação, Diversidade e Tolerância XV Congresso Ibero-Americano de Comunicação IBERCOM 2017**, 2017.

BAYM, N. K. **Personal connections in the digital age**. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.

BLEE, K. M. Racial violence in the United States. **Ethnic and racial studies**, v. 28, n. 4, p. 599-619, 2005.

boyd, d. Social network sites as networked publics: affordances, dynamics, and implications. *In:* PAPACHARISSI, Z. (org.). **Networked self**: identity, community, and culture on social network sites. New York: Routledge, 2011. p. 39-58.

BRANDÃO, J. S. **Mitologia grega**. Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1986.

BRODY, L. R; HALL, J. A.; STOKES, L. R. Gender and emotion: theory, findings, and context. *In:* BARRETT, L. F.; LEWIS, M.; BRUDHOLM, T. Hatred as an attitude. **Philosophical Papers**, v. 39, n. 3, p. 289-313, 2010.

BRUDHOLM, T. Hatred as an attitude. **Philosophical Papers**, v. 39, n. 3, p. 289-313, 2010.

CHAVAUD, F; GAUSSOT, L. (org.). **La haine**: histoire et actualité. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008.

FOUCAULT, M. **Arqueologia do saber**. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2008.

FOUCAULT, M. **Os anormais**. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2001.

FRAGOSO, S.; RECUERO, R.; AMARAL, A. **Métodos e técnicas de pesquisa para Internet**. Porto Alegre: Sulina, 2016.

FREIRE FILHO, J. Comunicação, emoções e moralidade: a Internet como arquivo e tribunal da cólera cotidiana. In*:* Encontro Anual da ANPOCS, 38, 2014, Caxambu. **Anais**..., 2014

FREUD, S. Novas Conferências Introdutórias sobre Psicanálise. *In:* FREUD, S. **Obras Psicológicas Completas de Sigmund Freud**. Rio de Janeiro: Imago Editora. 1996. Vol. XXII.

FREVERT, U. **Emotions in history**: lost and found. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011.

GAY, P. **O cultivo do ódio**. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995.

KOLNAI, A. An essay on hatred (1935). *In:* MCALLER, G. (org.). **Politics, values, and national socialism**. London: Transaction publishers, 2013. p. 139-174.

LEWIS, C. S. **Tough on hate?** The cultural politics of hate crimes. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014.

LILLIAN, D. L. A thorn by any other name: sexist discourse as hate speech. **Discourse Society**, v. 18, p. 719-740, 2007.

MANSBRIDGE, J.; SHAMES, S. L. Toward a Theory of Backlash: dynamic resistance and the central role of power. **Politics & Gender**, v. 4, n. 4, p. 623-634, 2008.

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun., São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022

17/18

MARKUS, L. Finding the happy medium: explaining the negative effects of electronic communication on social life at work. **ACM Transactions on Information Systems**, v. 12, n. 2, p. 119-149, 1994.

POLIVANOV, B. Dinâmicas identitárias online: apontamentos sobre o que postar e o que não postar no Facebook. **Revista Comunicação Midiática**. Bauru, v. 10, n. 3, p. 151-166, 2015.

RECUERO, R. Atos de ameaça a face e a conversação em redes sociais na Internet. *In:* PRIMO, Alex. (org.). **Interações em Rede**. Porto Alegre: Sulina, 2013. p. 51-70.

STRINGER, R. **Knowing victims**: feminism, agency and victim politics in neoliberal times. East Sussex: Routledge, 2014.

VICKERY, J. R.; EVERBACH, T. (org.). **Mediating misogyny**: gender, technology, and harassment. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

About the author

Júlia Cavalcanti Versiani dos Anjos
Temporary Professor at the School of Communication of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (ECO-UFRJ) in Journalism and Communication. Doctoral student in Communication and Culture at ECO-UFRJ in the Media and Sociocultural Mediations research line. Master's degree from the same institution. Graduated in Communication – Advertising from ESPM. Currently developing a research project on femicide in the media. This work was carried out with the support of National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (*Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico,* CNPq). E-mail: julianjos@gmail.com.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

18/18

Intercom, Rev. Bras. Ciênc. Comun.,
São Paulo, v. 45, e2022119, 2022