

# **Colonial Legacies of Knowledge Production: The Political Spirituality of the Green Tide Feminist Movement**

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## Abstract

The project undertakes a sociology of knowledge to contribute to the understanding of enduring colonial presents (Povinelli, 2006) by looking at the colonial conditions of possibility of knowledge production in the Argentine Green Tide feminist movement. I analyse how the Green Tide, widely credited by public opinion with reviving feminist activism and theorisation in Latin America and beyond, produced the discourse of a radical, decolonial feminist spirituality centred around the figure of the Witch as a figure able to mobilise imaginaries and activists against the modern episteme of Man (Wynter, 2003).

Through Foucauldian (1972) discourse analysis of Green Tide feminist essays, newspaper articles, scholarly papers, collective manifestos, social media posting, and the timelines of Green Tide protest between 2015 and 2020, I look at the conditions of possibility of the Green Tide discourse and situates it within a global political economy of power and knowledge (Deleuze, 1999). Insofar as the Green Tide situates itself both nationally and internationally as a feminist, radical, and decolonial emancipatory project from the South, the thesis is attentive to the “convivial relations” (Puar, 2017a: xxii) of coexistence and mutual informing between the Green Tide discourse, Argentina’s ongoing colonial history, and contemporary mobilisations of Indigenous women.

I trace the articulation of the Witch to the Green Tide framework of liberal sexual politics in combination with a popular democracy, and in alignment with race as not whiteness/Europeanness, seeming to rearticulate the sexual politics toward more radical political alternatives. Overall, I argue that by mobilising the Witch, the Green Tide makes a claim to decoloniality, Southernness, and racialised otherness vis-à-vis the Global North, especially so in relation to the country’s recent history of subjection to international financial institutions and national rise in neoliberal conservative politics. However, the thesis’ argument is that this is possible through a representational conflation (Spivak, 1988) of subalternity, indigeneity, non-whiteness, and popular democracy.

Representations of an ‘otherwise’ to the episteme of Man are made especially feminist through the Witch as a figure of Southern feminine otherness akin to indigeneity. By producing the feminine difference of the Witch as a difference from modernity through the conflation of racial and classed categories, the Green Tide produces a feminist discourse from the South that elides its racial epistemic and structural conditions of possibility and subsumes difference from the episteme of Man to the primacy of the sexual subject.

## Preface. Acknowledgements

To write these initial pages I turn to the etymology of ‘acknowledging’, which the Merriam-Webster dictionary presents to me as a 1500s blend of “to recognise”, “to disclose”, “to take notice of”, “to make known”, “to express gratitude”. I am drawn to these definitions because they allow me to articulate the silences, the “NO”s, the refusals to engage that made this project possible. As the thesis wants to show, what is uttered and what is not responds to the enduring colonial legacies of knowledge production.

In 2020, during the initial phases of the project, I envisioned the possibility of contacting activists tied to the Argentine world of spirituality, feminism, and anti-colonial politics. I was particularly interested in people who took on this issue by identifying in terms of racial difference from the projects that constituted nationhood as white and European, as in the case of Argentina (Restrepo, 2013; 2020), even more so at times where the country was undergoing a moment of cultural re-description as darker (Aguiló, 2018) and *mestiza*.

My hope, disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, was to articulate a collaborative project, or, at least, set up conversations with them as knowledgeable informants. I was not interested in making them participants and to transform their words into data because I had already set my interest on the Green Tide knowledge production. Hoping to craft an accountable and participatory research project, I reached out to them so to set up collaborations that would inform on the direction of my thesis. I was able to have conversations with some, but not with others. And those that I was able to start, unfortunately did not last until the end.

I therefore take advantage of this space to frame the importance of silence and refusal to engage in a context where relations between academics in the Global North and activists in the Global South can be difficult and precarious, subjected to histories of extraction and appropriation. What I mean by this, is that the refusal to respond to my messages did not mean I could not relate and learn from the work of these activists, spiritual practitioners, and knowledge producers, including their critiques of knowledge production and feminist activism. On the contrary, the silent “no” meant for me a deeper engagement with the underlying questioning that refusal implied.

In acknowledgement of refusal as an important moment in the colonial legacies of knowledge production, then, let me start by saying that the most important insights I learned

when I tried to contact Afro-Dominican scholar and activist Jennifer Rubio, anti-racist and feminist educator known on Instagram, at the time, as @CiguapaDecolonial. Rubio worked with two Argentine-related racialised activists in the field of spirituality, anti-racism, and feminism: the Aymara-Quechua Argentine, London-based community organiser Ángela Camacho, known on Instagram as @TheBonitaChola; and the Afro-Venezuelan, Argentine-based astrologist Corina Páez (@LunaExaltada). Together and separately, these three activists often created content regarding the racial, gendered, and colonial histories of spiritual practices and their relationship with national projects, the political left, feminist activism, and a variety of religious and spiritual traditions.

When faced with their silence to my requests, I enrolled in their workshops and learned from their perspectives. I could have not understood some of the subtleties, or histories, of racial and colonial relations in Argentina and its contemporary manifestations without participating in these trainings. I also thank, in this sense, the non-conversations with the collective *AFROntera Colectiva* and with the Mapuche Chilean collective *Rangiñtulewfü Kolectivo Mapuche Feminista*. Similarly, I am grateful to workshops organised by the Afro-Argentine organisation *DIAFAR*, and for the WhatsApp chats with Helena from the Chilean Afro-diasporic organisation *Kilombo Negrocentricxs*.

The relevance of this dis/engagement cannot be overstated, even more so considering the boundaries of who the subject of knowledge is supposed to be, how knowledge ought to appear and be disseminated, including what can appear in a methodology section of a doctoral thesis and what not. I therefore extend my deepest thanks to those who, even for a short period of time, engaged in conversations with me. As we tried to articulate a mutually benefitting exchange, it became clear that at the time of global pandemic my urgencies as a doctoral student were, at times, very different from theirs. Over time, the conversations dried out. One of my hopes, as I conclude this project, is to return to these organisations and activists with something they find useful.

Thank you, then, to the Peruvian spiritual practitioners *Kuntur* and *Luz*. From them I learned to discern how racial categories were operating in both everyday experiences and in how political groups are divided. I treasure their anecdotes of participation at feminist strikes and encounters in Argentina, and for sharing with me where and when they felt at home or uncomfortable. Thank you as well to the workshops, chats, guidance, and friendship of Caru, who at the time coordinated the Chilean-based migrant collective *Brigada Migrante Feminista*. Caru taught me how to look at the role of social media, visibility and attention. They once asked me: can you claim to be anti-racist when you take

a picture one week of the year, and the rest of daily problems of racism remain uniformised to your colours, slogans, and claims?

My recognition goes also to the Argentine-Chilean collective *Ayllu Warmikuti*, who told me about the internal disputes within both Chilean and Argentine feminism, and about forms of internal colonialism that were highlighted while others went unnoticed. They also taught me to direct my attention to the economy behind the spiritual marketplace, as a circulation of spiritual goods and services. As they pointed out: who was recovering what, to be redistributed towards whom, at what price. In other words, if there was a ‘recovery’ of knowledges, where were these found, who took upon themselves to circulate them. Who, in other words, was going to be geographically and economically able to access the ‘recovered’ knowledge as resistance to modernity?

The Argentine-based activist and community organiser Kali too was foundational to the insights provided by this thesis. Kali helped me understand some of Michel Foucault’s and Leticia Sabsay’s work well before I approached their texts myself. Kali was not ashamed to continuously redirect my attention to the role of the intellectual and academic institutions in the reproduction of how we think, see, imagine, and organise the world. Always leaving a (silent) space for me to understand my own decisions, positions, and choices, the conversations with Kali anchored my understanding that what is urgent and eventful for some but not for others is informed by colonial histories.

Alongside these knowledgeable informants, I want to give thanks to the people in my life that made the thesis possible through conversations, community-organising, activism, and academic and institutional support. I am grateful to Mailén Milocco Herrera, who is one of my dearest friends, a fellow theory-reader, fierce political mind, and, as it happens, a witch. I cannot imagine any knowledge I might ever produce again without her insight. I am most humbled by the patience and wisdom of Moné Vasquez Ladrón de Guevara, who taught and guided me, cautiously, in the Mapuche Chilean world of struggle and joy. Through halts and encouragements, I approached any collaborators and developed lines of analysis by being put back on the straight and narrow by my dear friend, colleague, community organiser and marvellous artist Moné.

Thank you to Carlos, for anchoring me to the Argentine every day instead of the logics of academic professionalisation in the U.K. Thanks to my Amsterdam community, in particular Moné, Adriana, Chandreyi, Anabella, and Sofi, for the years of never boring experiences and learnings across our political commitments and differences. Thank you to the collective Papaya Kuir and to the lawyer, poet, animal-rights defender Amalia.

I am, of course, also deeply indebted to my family. I am grateful to my parents for the material support and the deep-seated irony that dragged me here. And, of course, I am grateful for the conversations, memes exchange, life crisis emergencies, hidden mischiefs and beyond that I shared with my sister across oceans and university degrees. I also want to thank my aunt and uncle for their hospitality, kindness, and the huge library. A special acknowledgement goes to my maternal grandmother, who passed away so close to the conclusion of this project. Her stories taught me much about how the organisation of power relations, seemingly so distant, shape lives to their core.

Many thanks go also to Newcastle University, the Geography, Politics, and Sociology office and Jenny Dawley specifically for their incredible patience and support. Thank you also to Mwenza Blell, Loes Veldpaus, Karenza Moore, Ruth McAreavey, Ruth Graham and Jan Dobbernack. Thanks to the Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies and the Postcolonial Theory Groups. Thanks to the conversations with Jasbir Puar, Shireen Hassim, Alyosxa Tudor, SM Rodríguez, Rahul Rao and Eric Fassin. I am also grateful to Claudia Briones for the long zoom call discussing Indigenous persecution and land grabbing in Argentina. Thanks to Ezequiel Adamovsky and Karina Felitti for allowing me access to some of their papers.

I close the circle by recognising the unspeakable amount of work my academic supervisors Stephen D. Seely, Diane Richardson, and Silvia Pasquetti put in for me and this thesis. Thank you for the endless supply of coffee, human and bureaucratic support, theoretical discussion, commentary and critique, without which this thesis would not be half of what it is. I am also grateful for the support of my doctoral student colleagues in Newcastle University and around the world for the discussions and the company.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the ongoing genocide of Palestinian people in Gaza. Because this thesis is concerned with emancipatory efforts and colonial presents, I believe important to firmly keep an eye on whose lives and imaginaries are being condemned to death and expendability, and on the structures that make these possible. My acknowledgement goes to the unconceivable determination, wisdom, kindness of colleagues and friends Daoud Ghouli, Omar Hmidat, and Hala Shoman. Physically and thematically away from Palestine, this research is neither epistemically nor politically distant from it. This thesis is much influenced by these struggles and by the refusals to engage, then it is by the scholarly theories and empirical contributions I thread through in the pages that follow.

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## List of Abbreviations

AMMAR	– <i>Asociación de Mujeres Meretrices de la Argentina en Acción por Nuestros Derechos</i> or Association of Argentine Harlots in Action for Our Rights.
ENM	– <i>Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres</i> or National Women’s Encounter.
IMF	– International Monetary Fund.
LGBTQIA+	– Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer or Questioning, Asexual, and more.
MCD School	– Modernity / Coloniality / Decoloniality School.
MMDIBV	– <i>Movimiento de Mujeres y Diversidades Indígenas por el Buen Vivir</i> or Indigenous Women and Diversities Movement for the Good Living.
PNE	– <i>Encuentro PluriNacional de Mujeres, Lesbianas, Trans, Travestis, Bisexuales, Intersexuales y No Binaries</i> or PluriNational Encounter of Women, Lesbians, Trans, <i>Travestis</i> , Bisexuals, Intersexuals and Non-Binary People.
PRO	– <i>Propuesta Republicana</i> or Republican Proposal.
YPF	– <i>Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales</i> or ‘Fiscal Oilfields’, Argentina’s state-owned energy company.

## Chapter 1. The Incense Question

### 1.1 Researching a Feminist Spirituality in Argentina

The *Ni Una Menos* [Not One (Woman) Less] feminist collective was first articulated in Argentina in early 2015 out of the high number of feminicides, estimated at one killing every 30 hours.<sup>1</sup> The first rally, held in Buenos Aires on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, gathered at least 200,000 protesters (Llorente, 2020). The mobilisation was articulated again the following year, with multiple countries (Chile, Perú, Bolivia, Brazil, Spain, and México among others) organising their own demonstrations, and consolidating the lemma as a transnational movement. Since then, feminist mobilisation continued to grow, involving more and more associations across the Argentine territory, organising in all provinces and main cities, and establishing numerous dates to protest across the year.<sup>2</sup>

In 2015, as I prepared to attend one of the first mass protests of the organisation, I remembered how two years before I had gone to my first *Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres* [Women's National Encounter], the annual self-convoked feminist country-wide assembly started in 1986. Historically, the *Encuentros* bred several feminist claims turned landmark bills.<sup>3</sup> In 2003, out of a workshop on Strategies for the Right to Abortion, the *Encuentro* had given birth to a grassroots organisation called *La Campaña para el Aborto Legal, Seguro, y Gratuito* [National Campaign for Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion]. *La Campaña* formalised their purpose and structure on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005, and thereafter started campaigning to legalise abortion in Argentina. Since 2018, the Argentine and Latin

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<sup>1</sup> One of the first *Ni Una Menos* activities was a reading marathon against feminicides. On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015, writers, artists, journalists, and activists gathered in Buenos Aires for three hours to read texts they had written, but also to listen to family members of the victims and pieces written by the victims themselves. *Ni Una Menos* is inspired by the words of the Mexican poet Susana Chávez, who, to denounce feminicides in Ciudad Juárez, wrote: “Nor one woman less, nor one more dead”. After several violent killings of women, on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the remains of 14-year-old Chiara Páez were found under her boyfriend's house. A few days earlier, when the girl had disappeared, organisations against gender-based violence had started organising a protest in front of Congress. They coalesced on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, under *Ni Una Menos* as their main claim (Llorente, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> There are no public official records of participation assessments in protests in Argentina. Information can be retrieved through newspaper articles, institutional press releases and activists' comments to the press or on their communication channels. In this case, specific numbers, however tentative they might have been, appeared almost solely to refer to CABA, with a few exceptions addressing broader national but geographically unspecified attendance.

<sup>3</sup> A notable example is Law 24.012 from 1991, which sought to increase women's representation in government by establishing a 30% gender quota in political parties' electoral lists. The Encounter's workrooms provided the groundwork to achieve other important bills on gender-based violence and femicide, human-trafficking, and reproductive health and education (Bruno Marcó, 2014).

American revival of feminist activism, born out of *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*, has come to be known as *Marea Verde* or Green Tide.<sup>4</sup>

In June 2018, when street mobilisation exploded around the parliamentary debate on the abortion law, Argentine feminism became actualised in the Green Tide. The name came from the visual impact innumerable green handkerchiefs raised up in protest demanding the legalisation of sexual and reproductive rights. The handkerchief was a symbol introduced by *La Campaña* but part of a broader feminist protest culture of high-intensity performances (Presman, 2020). Feminist activists and intellectuals referred to the Green Tide as the fourth wave of feminism in the country and the broader Latin American region, circumscribing the idea of ‘waves’ by arguing that feminism is always present and subject to tidal movements with its crests and troughs (Freire, 2019).

When the movement emerged, in 2015, it was composed of numerous pre-existing and locally rooted organisations (Torres, 2021), and as it expanded rapidly in many Latin American and Caribbean countries, reaching the U.S. and Southern Europe, it became constituted by an even larger multiplicity of actors. In this thesis, however, I refer to the two main Argentine organisations credited with starting and fuelling the Green Tide: *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*. I am including both the initial 2015 materialisation in *Ni Una* and its 2018 actualisation with *La Campaña*. Whereas the first primarily focused on violence against women and feminicides, and, as I outline below, a critique of economic violence, the latter propelled the massification of the demand for reproductive rights, centralised around the legalisation of abortion.

Between 2015 and 2020, in the mixture of high-impact performances, chants and drums that brought marching bodies into a rhythmic movement timed with that of the protest, I noticed the increased incorporation of ritualised elements of performance and spiritual vocabulary. My attention was drawn mostly because as feminist rallies and encounters articulated in 2015, spiritual-based remarks, ideas, and standpoints were strongly rejected due to established secular traditions of feminist articulation (Felitti, 2019b). Nonetheless, as time passed, reactions changed. I remember seeing feminists steering away from someone burning incense in 2015, to a reverse scene in 2019 when feminists would circle the incense burner waiting for their turn to be cleansed; all while in the streets activists would brand the green handkerchief in unison and sing “we’re the granddaughters of the witches they couldn’t burn,” and the “ancestresses” were invoked in

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<sup>4</sup> Sometimes it is referred to as Green Wave in other English translations.

the 2020 parliamentary debate for the legalisation of abortion (Agencia Efe, 2020, 2:30:42-2:31:21). How did that happen?

This question, seeking to understand the conditions of possibility that prompt the shift from a secular feminism to a feminist spirituality, guides this research project. In particular, the research focuses on how feminist knowledge producers invested in the search, description, and articulation of a feminist spirituality, eventually producing a feminist spirituality centring around the figure of the Witch. Similarly, on how the Green Tide feminist spirituality relates to the movement's identification as an anti-colonial project from the Global South and a pioneering country in the sphere of gender, sexual, and reproductive rights. My research has therefore the aim to critically explore the epistemic conditions of possibility that make such a shift possible, producing the Witch as a new knowledge formation able to mobilise thousands of feminists in Argentine streets.

The project is grounded in a Foucauldian (1972) discourse analysis. As such, it looks at the discursive and non-discursive conditions that make possible the emergence of the Green Tide Witch discourse and situates it within a global political economy of power and knowledge (Deleuze, 1999). As I further illustrate in the methodological chapter (chapter 3), in this thesis I analyse Green Tide feminist essays, newspaper articles, scholarly papers, collective manifestos, social media posting, and the timelines of Green Tide protest between 2015 and 2020 through what I call an archive-assemblage methodology that draws on Puar (2017a) and Derrida (1996).

The project intends to explore three facets of the emergence of Green Tide political spirituality that were informed by, and informed, the main research question. Simply put, these three facets include, firstly, what prompted the shift in the streets and the interest of knowledge producers in a feminist spirituality. Secondly, what brought feminists to gravitate around the figure of the Witch more than other spiritual figures, such as the Goddess. Thirdly, how did the feminist knowledge production of a feminist spirituality centred around the Witch relate to ongoing discussions on modernity/coloniality (Quijano, 2000), on the enduring colonial legacies of knowledge production and representation (Povinelli, 2002; 2006), and on the histories and presents of race and colonialism in Argentina (Alberto & Elena, 2016; Aguiló, 2018; Taylor, 2021). In what follows I first explore these three facets, and then, in the next section, I introduce the thesis research question and main research aims. I conclude by describing the organisation of the chapters and my main arguments.

### ***1.1.1 An Emerging Knowledge Formation***

In the Argentine context, studies on the role of religion or spirituality in sexual politics have mostly focused on conservative interventions of religious actors in public debate (Jones et al., 2018) and law (Vaggione, 2018), and on feminist responses to the Catholic Church's influence. Regarding the latter, Vaggione (2018) described feminist and LGBTIQIA+ strategies as mostly focused on detaching legislature from its Christian heritage. This was possible by defending laicism within institutional and legislative practice, and by visibilising religious pluralism. The initial reactions of the movement to the incense burner can be situated in this tradition, where the Church was a major conservative actor to challenge, and the patriarchal legacies of this institution to be exposed, discussed, and eventually deconstructed.

Feminist organisations therefore actively incorporated favourable Christian positions in their campaigns, aiming to reclaim diverse religious experiences to advocate for a more inclusive Church and for the advancement of sexual and reproductive rights, particularly the legalisation of abortion. For this reason, Argentine historian Karina Felitti (2019b) describes feminist secular traditions more precisely as anti-clerical and laic. But the disgust against incense burners I observed can also be traced to what Felitti (2019b) described as a distrust against expressions of individualist spirituality of New Age matrix, popular at the time. In her ethnographies, Felitti (ibid.) reports how feminist activists expressed animosity against then popular New Age spiritual tradition promoting self-centring ideologies, which clashed with the collective character of Argentine feminism.

Forms of spirituality related to New Age traditions had increasingly been used, in Argentina, as new technology of governance to enhance individual behaviours aligned with neoliberal policies and state discourses of entrepreneurship (Viotti, 2018); and as biopolitical tool of population management, for example for the improvement of living conditions in Argentine prisons through meditation and yoga (Viotti, 2021). The promotion of neoliberal morals through spirituality was publicised from the highest spheres of government. In 2008, when future conservative President Mauricio Macri was Mayor of the City of Buenos Aires, he signed a cooperation agreement with guru Ravi Shankar, founder of the Art of Living Foundation, with the aim to promote personal and spiritual growth (Viotti, 2015).

Within this framework, scholars argue, the “most spiritual sectors of the [neoconservative government party],” promoted the “first spiritual mega-conference in

Latin America [...] revolving around ‘personal change’, ‘dialogue’, and ‘love’” (Semán et al., 2018: 529). A few years later, between 2015 and 2019, during the Presidency of Mauricio Macri<sup>5</sup> and his political party *Cambiamos/PRO*,<sup>5</sup> the Argentine economy plummeted under the neoliberal policies and a 57bn USD loan (Goñi, 2018). Macri’s government approached the country’s problematic inflation with an ultra-orthodox monetary policy and austerity measures aimed at curbing public spending. The government ended up contracting consumption drastically, and had no impact whatsoever on reducing inflation, which instead exploded. In three years of government, prices augmented more than 180%, with a 50.3% annual peak between 2018 and 2019 – the highest inflation index in the prior 27 years (López & Schorr, 2019). Salaries in the private sector suffered a 10% reduction, whilst those in the public sector were cut by 30%. Almost all social welfare initiatives faced significant budget reductions, eventually deepening the inflationary dynamics and loss of real income for every waged sector (ibid.).

As the Presidency of Mauricio Macri took place at the same time as the Green Tide developed, and given the unpopular neoliberal policies implemented by his office, it is perhaps not surprising that feminists would react negatively to a spiritual discourse aligned to neoliberal ideals useful to the ruling party’s ideology and political-economic measures.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Juntos por el Cambio*, *Cambiamos* or *PRO* (*Propuesta Republicana*) [Together for Change, Let’s Change, or PRO (Republican Proposal)]. Among the sectors of the national landscape that consistently integrated the political block of *PRO*: private financial actors, high revenue agrobusiness companies, energy provider companies, and a consistent section of the national media companies and of the justice system.

<sup>6</sup> Macri is also known for his esoteric beliefs, which he has in common with many Argentine Presidents, both conservative and not. The beloved Juan Domingo Perón, for example, was known to rely heavily on the *brujo* López Rega (who is believed to have ultimately led Perón to his ruin). In the 1990s, Carlos Menem would consult oracles and astrologists; and all the Presidents of the 2000s, regardless of their political flag have similarly been object of speculation. Lately, the conservative anarcho-capitalist Javier Milei was elected by Argentines for the 2024-2027 presidency. He has publicly declared how his Tantric practice influences his political decisions; it is furthermore said that with the help of a medium, he consults his political and economic decisions with his dead dog. He is known of not being shy of receiving counsel from tarot readers and other ‘witches’. Some information in regard to this presidential curiosity can be found in Álvarez (2023).



Figure 1. Green Tide protest in Buenos Aires (2019).

In 2015, election campaigns were underway while *Ni Una Menos* developed and quickly gathered support. By mid-2016, as the first consequences of *Cambios*' political economy started to show their precarising effects on the population, *Ni Una Menos* was already capable of achieving mobilisations in the hundreds of thousands in all major cities. Throughout *Cambios*' government, which coincided with the growth of the feminist movement, the Green Tide positioned itself as the major social force opposing the national and transnational neoliberal entities (Méndez, 2020; Mulinari, 2023).

The feminist distrust towards individualistic and apolitical expressions of spirituality (Felitti, 2019b) is therefore to be understood in the context of a feminist movement facing an entanglement of gender-based, reproductive, and economic violence, as exemplified by figure 1; the banner says: "Without Legal Abortion there is No One Woman Less – Against the IMF, Austerity, and Debt." Overall, the nauseated expressions of those protesters running away from incense in 2015 could have been both a reaction to conservative deployments of Christianity and a refusal to accept neoliberal morals of individual responsibility.

At the same time, however, the shift in the scene I witnessed talked about new emerging dynamics. As I mentioned earlier, I went to my first *Encuentro* in 2013, before *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña* articulated into the Green Tide. By 2018, feminist *Encuentros*, always characterised by fairs, stalls, and craft(wo)manship, were inundated by what Felitti (2019b) described as widespread offer of spiritual goods and services tied to New Age forms of syncretism, or spiritual bricolage (Greenwood, 2005). Stalls transformed also at Green Tide gatherings and protests. Among the spiritual goods and services that



became widely available: menstrual and lunar calendars, sustainable menstrual cups or pads tied to natural gynaecology; incense, *palo santo*, white sage and other herbs for cleansing, focus, balancing, etc.; oils, candles, and stones; sex toys, crystal wands and Oni eggs for the awakening of sacred sexuality; tarot card or astrology readings, and resources on shamanism and different traditions of Indigenous cosmovision and rituals. Stalls would also offer participation to Tantric workshops and Reiki healing sessions or lessons, and a great number of books on feminist and queer critique, body autonomy, reproductive health, folk tales, folk medicine, goddesses and ‘witches’. These events would also figure, often, bands and artists dear to the feminist and queer demands of the crowd (Liska, 2023), with many of their lyrics discussing personal issues, sexism, and spirituality through the image of *curanderas* and witches (Liska, 2019).

The scene in the streets was accompanied by a digital landscape offering proximities between the feminist activist sphere and that of spiritual or esoteric practices, often clustered around the figure of the Witch.<sup>7</sup> As I strolled on Argentina’s hot Instagram hashtags at the time – *#NiUnaMenos*, *#VivasNosQueremos* in 2015, and the addition of *#AbortoLegalYa*, *#MareaVerde* in 2018 – the anti-clerical messages oriented mostly at raising awareness on the patriarchal operations of the Church would be at times overshadowed by a variety of posts and profiles sharing feminist readings of astrology, feminist tarot reworkings, tantric exercises or courses, herbal and customary remedies and rituals, reinterpretations of traditional Greco-Roman mythology and the ‘rediscovery’ of the feminine power in Indigenous traditions, as well as in accounts of historical accusations of witchcraft.

Felitti (2019b) argues that such expression of spirituality is pivotal to the Argentine feminist movement, although less publicised than the strategically visible plurality of Christian beliefs and the anti-clerical, laic position of the Green Tide. While spirituality is still perceived as “opium in the guise of incense” with “misunderstandings, suspicious

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<sup>7</sup> Following scholar of religion Laurel Zwissler (2018a: 23), I do not capitalise ‘witch’ when referring to the historical or present-day people accused of witchcraft, as this is not a chosen term. I capitalise instead ‘Witch’ when it acts as a figure able to mobilise multiple meanings, practices, identities, and communities. Therefore, when appropriate, I capitalise references to the Witch such as ‘She’, ‘Her’, ‘Witchcraft’, and ‘Coven’. When the term appears as direct data or literature quotations (i.e., “witch”), I leave the term as in the original text. Finally, I only place ‘witch’ and annexed terms in inverted commas every time I speak about how the word is being used (i.e., “[...] the word of power ‘Witch’ [...]” (e.g., p. 106) I do so to distinguish between my analysis of the Witch and the description of the keywords I utilised to gather data.

looks and mutual ignorance” (ibid.: 210), Felitti observes a deep, intricate overlap between spiritual and secular feminist spaces.

The reason for this alliance can be traced, firstly, to how, in Latin America, “new spiritual movements” participate of the public space by enunciating themselves as “decolonising utopias in respect to categories of race, nation, gender, and to the central role conceded to nature as a living being” (de la Torre & Semán, 2021: 34). In this context, it does not come as a surprise that spiritual groups taking distance from neoliberal ideologies are usually defined by Argentine feminist opinion as the antipode of the social model proposed by Christianity, considered patriarchal and authoritarian (Felitti and Prieto 2018). Moreover, Felitti (2019b) argues that the expressions of spirituality circulating across the Green Tide presents a socially oriented ethic that aligned with the collective character of Argentine feminism. Steering away from the most apolitical and individualist conceptualisations of the sacred, such as those promoted by neoliberal actors, the alliance with secular feminists is possible mostly thanks to a shared demand for corporeal autonomy and more social intervention, welfare state, and rights (Felitti 2019b).

While Green Tide expressions of spirituality draw heavily from the New Age repertoire of “energy, positive philosophy, ecology and personal growth” (Semán & Viotti, 2015 in Felitti, 2019b: 201), they also focus specifically on woman-centred efforts for self-empowerment and care, corporeal and emotional knowledge, and on the “sexual processes of menstruation, fertility, abortion, childbirth and menopause” (ibid.: 205). Here, the pelvis, the uterus, hormones, and the experience of the body appear to allow participants to have feminist, emancipatory experiences of spirituality. Overall, conveying how dense the imbrication of spirituality and feminism is in the context of the Argentine feminist mobilisation for the legalisation of abortion, Felitti (2019b: 194) observes a “secularised feminism permeable to spiritual practices and an increasing participation of women who define themselves as spiritual in feminist demonstration.”

These scenes lead Felitti to conclude:

Although their sources of legitimacy – a renowned theorist like Silvia Federici or the wisdom pulsing in the uterus – and modes of realization differ, the process of autonomy and subjective construction based on the materiality of the body brings together secular feminists and spiritual feminists.  
(Felitti, 2019a: 157)

Felitti’s ethnographies, and her analysis, let transpire a feminist spirituality closely related to the feminist agenda.

My research interest centres precisely on the feminist eagerness to participate of the magical atmosphere surrounding these elements that, for demonstrators, emerged as spiritual. In other words, how in the street and in social media alike, certain practices are presented as spiritual practices that aligned with and aided the feminist movement. This coming-together of practices and meanings seems to be reiterated in street aesthetics and chants, but also by journalists, intellectuals, and academics. Feminist interest is not solely a matter of street aesthetics, but a topic discussed by knowledge producers arguing how the spiritual can be feminist.



*Figure 2. Personal photo (24/03/2019), Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice.*

In this landscape, the Witch emerges as the figure where even skeptical feminists come close “without realising” to the spiritual movement (Felitti, 2019b: 196-197). No other forms of spirituality were close to be circulated, discussed, and recalled as much as those about “witches, natural gynaecology, and the return of the goddess” (ibid.: 201). Felitti identifies in the focus on specifically feminine corporeal knowledge and autonomy the connecting bridge between the spiritual practices of women’s circles and the feminist claims of the Green Tide (Felitti & Rohatsch 2018; Felitti 2019a, b). These common concerns would compensate for the apolitical New Age morals (Felitti 2019a, b) that are uncomfortably close to neoliberal tenets of austerity.

Figures 2 and 3 offer an example of the street aesthetic I witnessed multiple times. Figure 2 portrays a group of demonstrators at the 2019 mobilisation for the Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice, held yearly on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March. The Day commemorates the victims of Argentina's 1976-1983 civic-military dictatorship, and in figure 2 is possible to see how one of the symbols of civic resistance to the dictatorship (the white scarves of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo<sup>8</sup>) is combined with the green handkerchief, symbol of the Green Tide, and with a pointy hat that recalls the figure of the Witch.

Figure 3 portrays a participant at the International Feminist Strike in 2019. They wear the green handkerchief of *La Campaña* asking for Legal, Safe, and Free abortion, and have the popular protest chant “we’re the granddaughters of the witches they couldn’t burn” painted on the chest. The ‘q’ takes the form of the feminist symbol of Venus ♀. The rhinestones (pixelated in the image) speak of the “glitter generation” (Elizade, 2018: 90): the “aesthetical-expressive” signature of the Green Tide generation of feminist activism, characterised by a spectacularised and performative dimension (Elizade, 2018; Presman, 2020).

The interest in a spirituality focused on the Witch is reiterated by feminist press. During the vigil of the huge mobilisation for the International Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, leading conservative newspaper *La Nación* published a short lifestyle article titled ‘The Not-So-Secret History of the Witches You Should Know’ (Giménez, 2018). It begins by stating: “If I say witch, what do we think first? [...] Being feminist is complicated, because

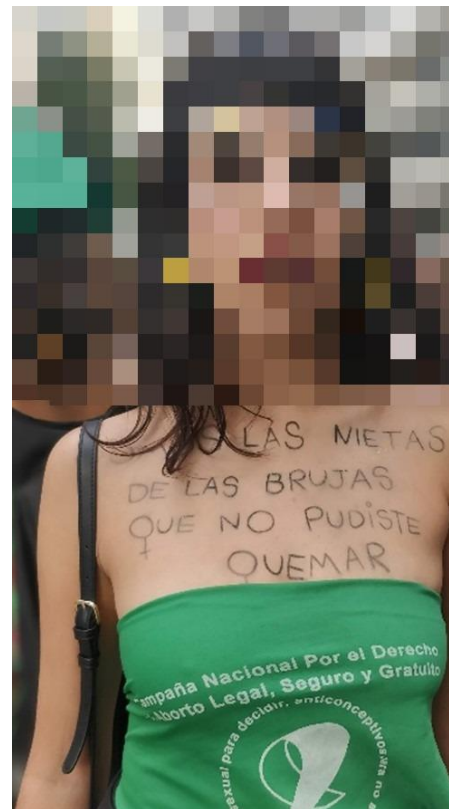


Figure 3. Personal photo (8/03/2019), International Feminist Strike.

<sup>8</sup> The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo are a human rights association and peaceful resistance movement formed in response to the civic-military dictatorship (1976-1983) in Argentina. Their final goal was to find their forcibly disappeared children, grandchildren, and relatives. The Mothers began demonstrating in the Plaza de Mayo, a public square in front of the Argentine presidential palace to petition for the return of the *desaparecidos*. The Mothers became known for their decision to wear their children's diapers as headscarves, embroidering the names of the disappeared on the headscarves and holding weekly demonstrations in the Plaza de Mayo. The Mother's use of the white headscarf became, thereafter, their symbol. The Green Tide handkerchief portrays the white headscarf in its centre, as visible in figures 2 and 3, in what Elizade (2018) argues is the construction of a feminine genealogy of demand for human rights and democracy.

with the gender lens on, everything in this world, from beginning to end, needs to be readjusted” (ibid.: para. 1-2). Analogously, in the leading left-wing newspaper *Página12*, journalist Ivana Romero (2019) published a piece titled ‘A Rebel Genealogy: Who Are the Contemporary Witches?’.

In it, Romero discusses French essayist Mona Chollet’s (2018) ‘Witches, the Undefeated Power of Women’. Summarising the text, Romero writes:

[...] since the XV European century, the term ‘witch’ abandons all honorific title and becomes the mark of infamy that is worth torture and death of tens of thousands of women. Up until that time many women healed the sick, helped to give birth and to have abortions. [These] knowers of nature did or undid spells, they offered filters and potions, and they were the only help the people could turn to. In this way, without intention, they were defying the incipient expansion of capitalism as hegemonic model of production. (Romero, 2018: para. 5)

The idea of a spirituality revolving around gender and economic violence, which recalls the Green Tide’s antagonism to the 2015-2019 neoliberal government of Mauricio Macri, is also indicated in two academic interventions. One of these is published in a peer-reviewed journal, the second in feminist magazines. These are, respectively, ‘The Spiritual is Political,’ published by Karina Felitti (2019b) in the peer-reviewed journal *Religion & Gender* and the essay by *Ni Una Menos* theorist and activist Verónica Gago (2018) titled ‘Spirituality as Force for Uprising’, published in the local left-wing magazine *Lobo Suelto*.

The latter seems to indicate a spirituality propaedeutic to one of the Green Tide lemmas “we’re going to change it all” (Sandá, 2018: para. 1), whereas the first, through her ethnographic participation among women’s circles and gatherings, makes the point for how the Green Tide developed a spirituality that is inseparable from its political claims. In other words, a spirituality centred around the figure of the Witch was able to pass through the distrust inspired by the neoconservative spiritual ideologies promoted, among others, by a highly contested government, and became an interest of feminist knowledge producers.

Felitti further exemplifies such active production of spirituality as political in how she brings herself into the picture, from doubter to first-hand testimonial of her body’s enactment of change (Felitti, 2019a: 148; 2021a: 555). Describing her initial approach to the circles of women spirituality that seek sexual empowerment and liberation, Felitti (2019a: 148) reports being surprised by participants’ choice to avoid hormonal contraception in favour of abstinence during fertile days “as the Vatican proposes.” Skeptic, Felitti (ibid.) asks for what reason “aren’t these girls demanding to the state more

contraceptives to avoid abortion and legal abortion as La Campaña claims?” If her initial rejection talks about the same discomfort I witnessed towards the incense burners in the feminist demonstration, Felitti (2021b: 145-146) later describes changing her approach, her way of thinking, and eventually her life by undergoing ethnographic research in a way that similarly reflects the shift in the street. The scholar (ibid.) narrates that as her fieldwork progressed, she questioned the secularisation of her own bodily and emotional experience as well as that of the feminist movement.

In this sense, Felitti places these forms of feminist spirituality, centred around the materiality of the body and demands to the state, in opposition to Cartesian knowledge and the Western idea of secularism. In so doing, Felitti is alluding to the possibility of an otherwise to modern and colonial ways of knowing, which brings her to see in spirituality a feminist emancipatory potential. Felitti (2019b: 199) writes: “It is important to clarify that the distinction between spiritual and feminist spaces is purely operational since I suggest problematising this separation.” In other words, Felitti goes beyond describing why women’s circles consider themselves feminist, to argue, in her analysis, that the spiritual *is* feminist and political because together with providing autonomous health practices it does not stop asking the state for rights, all while offering the possibility of subjective transformation of the body, emotions, and processes of health, reproduction, and pleasure.

As such, the first aim of this research project is *to explore the transition, in Argentine feminist knowledge production, from a secular feminism, defined vis-à-vis the Church and neoliberal New Age actors, to a feminist spirituality*. In other words, how the Green Tide spirituality became increasingly conceptualised as what Gloria Anzaldúa called a “spiritual activism” or a “politics of spirit that facilitates interwoven individual and collective change” (Keating, 2008 in Keating, 2021: 95). This research aim is informed by how the transition in street reactions towards the incense burner relates to how feminist knowledge producers shifted towards an *arguing for* a feminist spirituality.

This leads to the second aspect of my research aim, namely *how is it possible for the Witch to become the bridge between spirituality and feminism*. I am referring to how the shift in the street and in knowledge production would not have been possible without, and in turn articulated around, the figure of the Witch. These investments in the Witch are exemplified in one of Felitti’s ethnographic accounts, where the scholar (2019b: 196) transcribes the words of a leftist militant at the 2019 8<sup>th</sup> of March massive protest in Buenos Aires. While playing a song that Felitti recognised within the spiritual repertoire, the woman at the same time strongly criticised spirituality and saved the Witch “for being

‘women burned by the Church because of their free sexuality and their use of plants for healing’” (Felitti, 2019b: 196). In the militant’s words, the search for sexual liberation is mediated through an alternative therapeutic model that is explicitly associated to feminine experiences. The reclamation of reproductive rights is mediated, at least in part, by recurring to the Witch. In turn, the Witch brought the feminist claims towards “supra-earthly” forces and personal power (Felitti, 2021a: 562–563).

On the one hand, the conflation between witchcraft and feminist politics is not a new phenomenon. Scholar of religion Laurel Zwissler (2018a: 11) argues that, at least in the U.K. and the U.S., it can be traced back to feminist reclamations for political rights between the 1880s and 1920s.<sup>9</sup> During the 1960s, departing from the idea that, perhaps, historical witches were engaging in alternative religious practices, neopagan practitioners developed earth-based, egalitarian religions, with strong feminine figures of the sacred (Zwissler, 2018a: 12-13). This colluded with the idea of women's feminine, biological, emotional, cognitive, spiritual difference, as well as with women’s skills in healing, midwifery, and agricultural knowledge (ibid.).

For Zwissler (2018a: 14), it translated in women having “an inherent connection to nature, spirituality, and unconscious powers,” and how, “[i]n this sense, every woman is inherently a Witch.” These assumptions informed the activism of the 1960s U.S. feminist group W.I.T.C.H. (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell), and arguably, the feminist deployment, nowadays, of the slogan “we’re the granddaughters of the witches they couldn’t burn,” readapted from Tish Thawers (2015) novel ‘The Witches of BlackBrook’. Similar relationships were articulated in the 1980s’ Argentina, where the Association of Woman Work and Study (*ATEM*) started publishing the magazine *Brujas* [Witches] (Torricella, 2013).

On the other hand, Green Tide instances evidence a feminist investment in spirituality and the figure of the Witch not only as a cultural symbol, but as a possibility to ‘readjust’ the current system as one based on heteropatriarchal gender roles and capitalism, which refers to the Green Tide fight for abortion and against austerity measures of *Cambiamos*, and also alludes to broader systems of knowledge and social organisation. Importantly, these are investments that actively involve feminist knowledge producers beyond the national boundaries of Argentina. The link between an emancipatory spirituality

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<sup>9</sup> At the time, suffragists turned to historical witch trials to illustrate the extremes of patriarchal violence, and to counter-act ideals of gender complementarity that described women as delicate and belonging to the private sphere (Zwissler, 2018a)..

and esoteric, magical practices has come to the forefront of academic interest, not just as ‘object of study’ but as an active proposal for radical left alternatives in the Anglophone sphere as well.

Wicca,<sup>10</sup> for example, at the intersection of equal gender relations, a ‘recovered’ relationship with nature, and esoterism, has been praised for being spiritually and politically disruptive (Pignarre & Stengers, 2011). More recently, in a 2021 paper in *Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies (GLQ)*, Alexa Winstanley-Smith (2021: para. 1) argues that queer astrology has returned as an “antitraditionalist, anticonservative mode of rethinking human biography in community.” While cautious, Winstanley-Smith (ibid.: 111-118) formulates the possibility of instrumentalising astrology’s “critical and creative potential” for radical left politics. Analogously, from September 2024 the University of Exeter will offer an interdisciplinary master’s degree in Magic and the Occult, stating that “a recent surge in interest in magic and the occult inside and outside academia lies at the heart of the most urgent questions of our society. Decolonisation, the exploration of alternative epistemologies, feminism, and anti-racism are at the core of this programme” (Hall, 2023: para. 4).

The interest in spirituality, particularly associated with the figure of the Witch as the possibility to develop an alternative (decolonial, emancipatory) epistemology can be understood as an emergent counter-discourse. This is a practical engagement in the political struggle (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977: 209) in opposition to dominant paradigms of understanding and regulating lives, social worlds, and their organisation. Spirituality serves the search for an alternative epistemology, a practice to enact change and new ways of living together. As a counter discourse, spirituality is associated with emancipatory politics, including decolonial theory and decolonisation – something that Felitti’s reading of the Green Tide spirituality as opposed to Cartesian rationality and Western secularism signals deeply, as it explicitly does the University of Exeter master’s degree in Magic and the Occult.

This informs the third aim of my research. Namely, to explore *how does the Witch spirituality of the Green Tide relate to ongoing efforts to decolonising modern epistemology*

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<sup>10</sup> Wicca is a modern syncretic form of earth-centred paganism. It is considered an alternative spirituality or religion movement evolved from Western esotericism (Luff, 1990; Fisk, 2017). It is considered the largest, most influential, and most studied form of contemporary paganism (Strmiska, 2005). Wicca has a particular attachment to Witchcraft, as it is estimated that its name derives from the Old English forms for ‘witch’. Wiccans often link themselves to the pre-Christian past and refer to witchcraft as those pre-Modern practices rather than the witch-hunts (Fisk, 2017).



*and searches for an alternative episteme in a constitutive context of enduring legacies of colonialism.* Here I rely on Sylvia Wynter's (2003) and Elizabeth Povinelli's (2002; 2006) theorisation on how global grids of knowledge and representation function along lines that foreclose certain possibilities of thought and life, while enabling others, and how these un/possibilities are informed by what Povinelli calls enduring colonial presents. As such, I look at the Green Tide's Witch in its "convivial relations" (Puar, 2017a: 116) with the enduring colonial legacies of knowledge and power, and, specifically, how these manifest in contemporary Argentina. In this way, I aim at going beyond the taken-for-granted, and what 'makes sense' as a knowledge formation, to visibilise how such knowledge formation was possible in the first place. In other words, the third research aim of the project seeks to understand how the Witch spirituality becomes possible as an alternative episteme in a context where ongoing colonial knowledge and power are its constitutive conditions.

Such aim is underpinned by the understanding that, in Argentina, discussions of colonialism and its effects have endured what Argentine historian Walter D'Elia (2010) has called a historiographic silence. There is an absence of discussion, in Argentina, on how Argentine nationhood, similarly to other settler colonies, is based on the enslavement of Black bodies, Indigenous extermination, displacement, appropriation of lands, and the articulation of racial difference. As I discuss chapter 2, Argentine language (Barbero, 2023), cultural production (Aguiló, 2018), national formation (Adamovsky, 2012), and political economy (Lublin, 2021) continue to be structured by the colonial and racial histories of the country. Even though these histories and their present effects are often invisible, operating as silent racial grammars (Barbero, 2023), an ongoing presence that is particularly visible is, for example, the renewed securitarian wave against Indigenous rural communities (Briones & Lepe-Carrión, 2024) and urban shantytown communities (Bonvillani, 2020). The third research aim of this project is therefore to be read as an effort to situate the Green Tide knowledge production of a feminist spirituality both in relation to current counter-discursive efforts to decolonise our modern episteme and a continued renewal of colonial, racialised presents.

Such conundrums make themselves visible in another instance of Felitti's (2021a) analysis. If, on the one hand, the feminist and anti-capitalist lens proposed by the Green Tide addresses some of the epistemological tenets of modernity, including the globalised colonial aspects of capitalism (Méndez, 2020; Mulinari, 2023), feminist knowledge producers also seem to leave unaddressed questions that would directly confront their framing of spirituality as disruptive to modern epistemology.



Figure 4. Post by Jennifer Rubio, @ciguapadecolonial, 5/07/2020.<sup>11</sup>

I am referring to how, within an edited collection of papers on religion in the public space in Latin America (de la Torre & Semán, 2021), Felitti (2021a) discusses the public construction of the Witch as a feminist symbol of the Green Tide. The Witch and Her practices are described, including folk-related dances and characters, uses of drums, and chants as decolonial and *mestizo*. *Mestizaje* is one of the persistent characters of Latin

American racial formations, and usually defined those ‘mixed’ populations that are neither European, nor African, nor Indigenous (Wade, 2021: 25-26). While signalling a racial difference from whiteness, *mestizaje* can be deployed for both anti-racist efforts and for the silent reproduction of structural, race-based hierarchies (Alberto & Elena, 2016; Moreno Figueroa & Wade, 2024). As Felitti (2021a) associates the Witch and the Green Tide with anti-colonial political and epistemological practices, Felitti seems to leave unaddressed critiques of whiteness and coloniality.

Namely, the scholar writes that she acknowledges the existent of critical decolonial postures to the feminist reappropriation of the Witch and to this effect cites a post (figure 3) from Jennifer Rubio, a Dominican activist, musician, and educator: “Dear white feminist, you are the granddaughter of no witch, your grandmother was Catholic and 500 years ago would have enslaved mine” (Felitti, (2021a: 549) Felitti offers an explanation immediately afterwards, clarifying Rubio’s post as a criticism against “the appropriation of the witch without the revision of the privilege of being a white feminist, and the fact of transforming in object of consumption those ancestral beliefs that could only be transmitted by racial and cultural inheritance” (ibid.). In a footnote, the scholar adds that the criticism was replicated by Georgina Orellano, sex worker and General Secretary of AMMAR,<sup>11</sup> the sex workers’ union of Argentina (Felitti, 2021a: 549), and known

<sup>11</sup> *Asociación de Mujeres Meretrices de la Argentina en Acción por Nuestros Derechos* or Association of Argentine Harlots in Action for Our Rights.

representative of brown and shantytown people.<sup>12</sup> Georgina Orellano shared Jennifer Rubio's original post on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, on her official account (@geororellano) with the caption "you are whose granddaughter?" (Orellano, 2020).

Felitti's statement of acknowledgement is positioned at the end of one of the paper's sections, and it is of note that there was no further engagement with a criticism coming from two activists positioned in racialised environments, both within and outside Argentina. As soon as the acknowledgement is 'complete', Felitti closes the section, and, under a new subheading, proceeds to describe the "Witches of Today" and how these Witch spiritual practitioners/activists appropriate the public space in the context of Argentina's Green Tide.

Felitti repeats the operation a few pages later. There, she compares a folk dance, which is read as a local Argentine Witch dance by her and her participants, with the decolonial praxis of how recovering Indigenous dance can "propose an alternative to the problems of the present" (Felitti, 2021a: 555). In Felitti's lens, feminist Witches are recovering not a European-style Witch, but those "Indigenous, African Americans,<sup>13</sup> mestizas, and migrants that with their healing arts and ways of interpreting the world compete with the political, medical, and religious structure" (Felitti, 2021a: 555-556). Towards the end of the section, Felitti (ibid.) mentions that the massive expressions of contemporary feminism include dances and chants accompanied by ancestral or folk dances and drums.

Felitti, then, writes that

such operations, presented as mestizaje and decolonisation – and at times critiqued, for the contrary – make possible for the women of the spiritual circuit a mode of public participation not so distanced from their own individual and group practices, insofar as ritual dance is almost always present in women's circles. Witches, as a figure of power that secular feminism represents as resistant to capitalist advancement and as having knowledge of contraception, birth-giving and abortion, dangerous knowledges for the patriarchal goals of demographic control and control of female sexuality, also add the dominion of magic and spells or incantation [*conjuros*]. The feminist witch therefore weaves genealogies among women of history and those that mobilise in the street. (Felitti, 2021a: 556-557)

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<sup>12</sup> Georgina Orellano (@geororellano) reposted Jennifer Rubio's original post on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (Georgina Orellano, 2020)

<sup>13</sup> In the original "Americans" denotes "of the Americas"; "African-Americans" is therefore to be read as people of African descent living in the whole continent of the Americas.

No further engagement with the criticism she cites follows through, and once again Felitti proceeds to open a new section.

Felitti's analysis of the Green Tide Witch signals an identification with colonised and racialised peoples and a move towards the search and enactment of a radical otherwise through the reference to decolonisation and ways of interpreting the world. Felitti (2021a: 551, 555, 560) reckons that this is mostly a cis-gendered and urban middle-class phenomenon that could be subjected to critiques of whiteness (and heteronormativity) (ibid., 2021: 549, 555-557). At the same time, once the acknowledgement of the criticism is performed in between hyphens, her analysis moves on.

This image, this production of knowledge framing the Argentine Green Tide Witch as part of a legacy of identities affected by colonialism and racial structuring while seemingly leaving race and colonialism unaddressed, arguably functions as a silent archive (Hartman, 2008). Through mentioning and moving on, the question of race and colonialism reproduces the omissions that constitute an obstacle to any significative interpellation. In this operation, the racial and colonial standpoint is a present absence: it is brought in only to move on from the problem. What would it mean to interrogate the Green Tide, and their intellectuals' production from the standpoint of racial and decolonial critiques, remains suspended. Such is the question that this thesis aims to take up.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

In summary, spiritual, esoteric, or magical practices and figures like the Witch are being increasingly linked to feminism, queerness, and anti-racism as a 'decolonial' exercise: breaking with the oppressive modern epistemology of patriarchy, heteronormativity, capitalism, white supremacy, and anthropocentrism to explore, find or found an alternative way of being in the world. At the same time, however, the Green Tide discourse of the Witch is constituted in the context of enduring colonial conditions of knowledge and power, which can manifest in (non)discussions and (non)knowing.

Insofar as spirituality is linked to decolonial searches for epistemic alternatives both in the Global North and the Global South, as both an activist and academic interest, this research project therefore focuses on the Green Tide political spirituality as a knowledge formation; this is, as an operation of the order of truth (Foucault, 1972) that makes certain understandings possible and not others. The relevance of this project is highlighted by the

emphasis on the conditions of possibility (Foucault, 1972) for such knowledge formation to be possible in the first place.

As I further illustrate in the theory and methodology chapter (chapter 3), I understand the emergence of a knowledge formation such as the Witch as inextricably tied to the colonial and racial history of Argentina, a presence that, in turn, relates to the colonial legacies of knowledge production and circulation (Povinelli 2002, 2006; Wynter, 2003). In other words, examining the rise of Green Tide spirituality within the framework of feminist, queer, anti-racist, and decolonial movements invites us to focus on how the systemic impacts of race and colonialism shape our articulation of feminist issues. These are, therefore, the underlying aspects underpinning my research project, and, as such, they bring into context the following questions and interpretations.

To reiterate, the research aims guiding this project are to explore the transition, in Argentine feminism, towards a feminist spirituality, and specifically how feminist knowledge production was involved in the articulation of an emancipatory spirituality centred around the figure of the Witch as a figure of decolonisation, queerness, feminism and anti-capitalism; or, in other words, as a figure for an alternative epistemology. In this sense, following Foucault (1972), I conceptualise the Green Tide feminist spirituality as an emerging knowledge formation. Moreover, given the relevance of a de/colonial emphasis in the search for a different epistemology, the project aims at understanding the emergence of the Witch feminist spirituality in its relation to the colonial history of Argentina and its ongoing structuring presence. As such, this thesis aims at exploring the Green Tide Witch in relation to the ongoing global, and local, colonial legacies of knowledge and power.

Designed to address these research aims, the main research question guiding this project is: *what are the conditions of possibility that allow the Green Tide and its knowledge producers to pose the problem of decolonisation, anti-racism, anti-capitalism, queerness, and feminism, as a problem addressed by a spirituality centred around the figure of the Witch?* As outlined in the previous section, this research question, designed to respond to the three primary aims of the project, is informed by, and conducive to exploring, the three facets of the emergence of the Green Tide feminist spirituality: the shift in the street and in knowledge production towards a feminist spirituality, the centrality of the figure of the Witch, and the Witch's relation to the search for an alternative episteme in the context of enduring colonial legacies of knowledge and power.

### ***1.2.1 Problematising the Green Tide Feminist Spirituality***

The research question is organised around Foucault's notion of 'problematisation' (Rabinow, 1984). Foucault distinguishes between problems and problematisations to say that the way an empirical or political problem is framed takes place in an ontological and epistemological framework that makes that specific problem – and not others – possible in the first place (Rabinow, 1984).

For it to become a 'problem' in the sense that it is something worthy of a political question or project, it means there is an underlying onto-epistemological structure that allows for that unique formation to become a political problem, question, or project:

To one single set of difficulties, several responses can be made. [...] But what has to be understood is what makes them simultaneously possible: it is the point in which their simultaneity is rooted; it is the soil that can nourish them all in their diversity and sometimes in spite of their contradictions. [...] But the work of a history of thought would be to rediscover at the root of these diverse solutions the general form of problematization that has made them possible even in their very opposition; or what has made possible the transformations of the difficulties and obstacles of a practice into a general problem for which one proposes diverse practical solutions. It is problematization that responds to these difficulties, but by doing something quite other than expressing them or manifesting them: in connection with them it develops the conditions in which possible responses can be given; it defines the elements that will constitute what the different solutions attempt to respond to.  
(Rabinow, 1984: 385)

In other words, problematisation redirects research towards how conditions of possibility of thought constitutes the elaboration of problems and practices (Koopman & Matza, 2013).

For example, Foucault (1978) shows how the political question of same-sex rights refers to the underlying problematisation of how, in the modern episteme, human beings are understood in terms of sex. In regard to the issue of problematisation, Koopman and Matza (2013) explain that it serves the project of denaturalising the seemingly natural, or inevitable; in other words, "that our conceptual assemblages are contingent" (ibid.: 834). The reflection induced by Foucault (1978) is therefore one that interrogates how the problem of spirituality as political, feminist, or emancipatory, is possible in the first place; and how this problem finds its solution, at least in the Green Tide, in a spirituality centred around the Witch. This is exemplified by the changing attitude towards the incense burner, and a proliferation of knowledge production around searches for an alternative epistemology rooted in spirituality.

The emergence, in the Argentine feminist scene, of a political spirituality that is enunciated as feminist, queer, anti-capitalist and decolonial is part of an increasing trend among both activists and scholars. By this I mean that the emergence of a decolonial feminist counter-discourse of spirituality is rooted in the knowledge production of scholars, activists, journalists, and intellectuals not as an *object* of study but as a proposal for its enactment, as a reading that is *argued for*. In other words, when it comes to the Green Tide feminist movement in Argentina and its relationship to spirituality, scholarship is producing empirical and theoretical studies that highlight the potential alignment of certain rituals and beliefs to the ideals of feminist, queer, anti-capitalist, decolonial politics identifying as a “decolonising utopia” (de la Torre & Semán, 2021: 34).

The emergence and permanence of discussion on these topics raises the question of the underlying conditions of thought that allow for such discussions to emerge. The question is furthermore necessary when the knowledge formation of the Witch is critically interrogated but, as illustrated in Felitti’s (2021a) dealing of an anti-racist and decolonial critique, such interpellation seems to be elided with the result of reiterating the Witch as a figure of a decolonial, alternative episteme. Interrogating the conditions of possibility for this becoming, means looking at the underlying epistemic structure that allowed these issues to become problems in the first place, informing their solutions as well as responses to criticism for those solutions (as illustrated in Felitti’s case).

As such, problematising the emergence of the figure of the Witch connects to the issues of what brought feminist activists to seek the incense burner instead of running away from her, and why is it the Witch who gathers such interest. Despite presenting a variety of Christian beliefs in favour of sexual politics, neither feminist queer theologies of liberation – that have originated in the region and proven useful to counteract the Church (Felitti, 2019b) – nor the figure of the Goddess have been able to gather attention and attract feminists to spirituality as much as the Witch. So how is it the Witch, specifically, that has become a subject of attachment in Green Tide feminist politics?

Finally, this thesis will investigate the racial and colonial dimensions of the conditions of possibility of the Green Tide discourse of the Witch, for example by looking at how critical interpellations of Argentine feminism are (non)discussed and (non)addressed. How racial and colonial histories of Argentina manifest in the feminist spirituality counter-discourse, are extremely relevant considering the colonial legacies of knowledge production. On the one hand, Black, Indigenous, and Critical scholarship recognises the decolonial potential of religious and spiritual practices (Harding &

Mendoza, 2020; Yountae, 2020; Keating, 2021). On the other, spiritual practices can reproduce racialised (Maya, 2019) and settler colonial conceptualisations (Morgensen, 2011) of nation, self, and politics of alliance (Lynn, 2021).

Felitti's (2021a) interaction with critique points to productive effects of a (silent) racial grammar, one that contributes to obfuscate the country's social organisation and modes of production. And yet, the Green Tide is not immediately readable along 'racial' lines, or racial and colonial ignorance. As I illustrate in more depth in the next chapters, the Green Tide developed in concomitance to the Indigenous Women and Diversities Movement for the Good Living [*Movimiento de Mujeres y Diversidades Indígenas por el Buen Vivir* or *MMDIBV*], which organised around land and cultural recognition to the Argentine state, as well as against police violence, land grabbing, and other forms of colonial violence. The *MMDIBV* participated, at times, in feminist initiatives without necessarily identifying as part of the Green Tide (Soria, 2021). In one of these instances, the *MMDIBV* proposed to change the name of the National Women's Encounter into PluriNational Encounter of Women, Lesbians, Trans, *Travestis*,<sup>14</sup> Bisexuals, Intersexuals and Non-Binary People [PNE] to signal the participation of Indigenous People that do not fit the category of 'nation', and sex, sexual and gender non-conforming persons that do not respond as 'women'. The Green Tide recognised this demand and stood in alliance to the *MMDIBV* against a section of the Encounter's organising committee. In this sense, as I explore in chapter 6, the Green Tide did recognise national histories of genocide and racial stratification, including ongoing reiterations of police violence and extractivism.

What emerges, then, when the Witch spirituality is interpellated by the racial formations deriving from the country's colonial history? And how does the feminist ambiguity, exemplified in Felitti's analysis, play a role in it? These are the 'convivial relations' I refer to, and that this thesis is set up to explore. The cluster of questions I am asking are then attached to the underlying question of problematisation: what are the conditions of possibility that allowed the development of the question of a feminist spirituality and the figure of the Witch in Argentine feminism that is part of a broader trend

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<sup>14</sup> *Travesti* is used in Latin America to designate people who were assigned male at birth and develop a feminine gender identity, but cannot be merely translated as transgender, transvestite, or drag. Malú Machuca Rose (2019) writes that "Travesti is classed and raced: it means you do not present femininely all of the time because you cannot afford to. It means the use of body technologies to transform one's body does not come from a doctor's office but from resourcefulness in the face of *precarización* [...] Travesti is the refusal to be trans, the refusal to be woman, the refusal to be intelligible." (ibid.: 242-243).



within anglophone academic interests. This thesis therefore develops an argument about the productive effects of such knowing and not-knowing.

To conclude, there are three reasons why my problematisation poses an important question in the context of how racial and colonial legacies play out within movements that understand themselves as decolonial and emancipatory. First, the Green Tide, within feminist politics, was considered a before-and-after. It prompted a renewal of protests and feminist conversations in the country and abroad, to the extent of being positioned, as I described in the first pages of this thesis, as the fourth crest of feminism able to bring together different claims under a unified demand and become a radical transnational possibility. One of the reasons for this was the Green Tide's ability to theoretically tie critiques of gender and reproductive violence to economic violence, a reading that was prompted by the development of the Green Tide while the government of Mauricio Macri (2015-2019) deepened the economic crisis suffered by the Argentine population. Regarding this point, the thesis shows that while the Green Tide was considered a before-and-after, the movement and its discourse of a feminist spirituality centred around the Witch did not represent an epistemic break.

Second, one of the key characteristics of the movement was to build transnational alliance and massification. For example, the 8<sup>th</sup> of March protest was transformed from International Women's Day to International Feminist Strike (Gago & Mason-Deese, 2019), with protests in more than 200 cities around the world in 2017 and 2018. One of the reasons why this transnational success was possible was precisely the Green Tide emphasis on capitalism as much as on patriarchy, which in turn informs the movement's identification as a before-and-after. The point on the Green Tide's emphasis on transnationalisation is important because to seek alliance and massification in a globalised geopolitics of knowledge poses the question of knowledge and power in relation to representation and resonance. It also poses the question of who the subjects of this enunciation are. In this sense, my analysis shows how while the Green Tide positioned itself as a leader of a radically plural movement from below and innovative feminist theorisation, it did not shift the global arrangement of knowledge production.

Thirdly, these concerns are relevant insofar as Argentina is a country with Indigenous, migrant, and Afro-diasporic movements on the rise (Soria, 2021; Silva, 2022), and with numerous and recent incidents of institutional discrimination and violence against communities or individuals that can be somewhat interchangeably read as shantytown, impoverished, or racialised (Bonvillani, 2020; Briones & Lepe-Carrión, 2024). Moreover,

recent years have seen the rise of international, state, and provincial interest in Argentina's rare mineral resources, of pivotal importance for green technological development. These interests have clashed with Indigenous communities in Northern Argentina (Puente & Argento, 2015) in the South of the country (Briones, 2007; Briones & Lepe-Carrión, 2024). In regard to this final point, then, the thesis argues that Green Tide takes place alongside a rise in Indigenous, migrant, and Black movements that criticise histories of colonial and racial violence, without, at the same time, addressing its 'convivial relations' with how racial relations, informed by colonialism, continue to structure social, political, and economic relations in the country, including forms of colonial violence. This is because, as I show throughout chapters 4, 5, and 6, the Green Tide situates itself as a break with a colonial *past* and vis-a-vis supra-national force of the Global North and elides over internal present legacies of colonialism.

The necessity of interrogating the racial and colonial dynamics in the making of feminist spirituality are therefore central in, and for, a political claim that seeks to be emancipatory, insurgent, and decolonial. To be perfectly clear, it is not in the interest of this research project to define what 'spirituality' or 'spirit' is or ought to be; nor am I interested in a sociology of racial relations of Argentina. I am concerned with the epistemological emergence of a knowledge formation, namely a decolonial feminist spirituality from the South, and with how colonial presents are constitutive of the Green Tide discourse of the Witch spirituality. In other words, the project is guided by an interrogation of a discourse of spirituality, particularly associated with the figure of the Witch as an alternative and radical epistemology from the Argentine experience of the Green Tide, and to examine colonial flows, continuities and tensions in the globalised context of a liberal economy of knowledge production and representation.

### **1.3 Chapter Outline and Main Arguments**

The thesis is composed of six chapters, including this Introduction. In the next chapter, I offer a brief theoretical and empirical review of the literature at the intersection of critiques of the colonial order of knowledge, sexual politics, and race in Latin America and in relation to Argentine feminism. I move between decolonial ideals and the structural effects of colonialism, race, gender, and secularism in Latin America and Argentina. Overall, it emerges a critique of the subject of (Latin American) feminism, overrepresented in the white/*mestiza* middle-class woman and the importance of Black feminist Latin

American thought for these debates. I introduce the history of Argentine feminism and the grammar of the *popular* as a movement ‘of the people’; including its importance as a category entangling race and class, often positioned in opposition to colonial and imperialist projects. Finally, I discuss the Green Tide within this history and highlight its ambivalence in relation to colonial presents of racial difference and forms of financial dispossession.

Chapter 3 brings together the theoretical and methodological framework that made this project possible. Drawing on Sylvia Wynter’s (2003) revision of Michel Foucault through W.E.B. Du Bois (1986) and Frantz Fanon (1963; 1967), I begin by threading together literature on the modern episteme, or our current system of thought, to show how it is connected to the ways we structure our social and political worlds. In my theoretical standpoint, this is how the conditions of possibility of thought inform the organisation of the world. Drawing on literature on colonial enterprises (Stoler, 2009) and modern settler states (Povinelli, 2002; 2006), the chapter concludes by understanding the colonial organisation of life as differential trajectories of life and death (Povinelli, 2002; 2006), where certain people and populations have to be sacrificed for the flourishing of others. For Wynter (2003) this sacrifice is also necessary for the survival and reproduction of the episteme itself. In other words, the sacrifice of some populations and life-worlds is necessary to sustain a global way of knowing about the world and ourselves (ibid.). Here I am interested in highlighting the role of hope (Povinelli, 2002; 2006), knowing and not-knowing (Stoler, 2009), insofar as investments in one’s epistemic legibility are related to colonial trajectories of life and death.

After positioning my standpoint in relation to the MCD School, which also discuss the relationship between colonialism and knowledge production, I proceed to explain how I translate Wynter’s (2003), Stoler’s (2009), and Povinelli’s (2002, 2006) insights into a sociology of knowledge production. I analyse Foucault’s (1972) theory of knowledge and what he calls the conditions of possibility of thought. I continue my operationalisation of theory into what I have called archive-assemblage methodology drawing on Puar (2017a) and Derrida (1996). This approach is designed to analyse the Green Tide spirituality both as a knowledge formation constituted in a field of power relations, across political interests and actors, and as a knowledge formation that aims at bringing together feminist, queer, Southern, and anti-colonial claims.

The methodological framework is also designed to analyse the material I was able to access as data throughout 2020 and 2021, a time during which movement and gathering

were severely restricted due to the Covid-19 outbreak. My methodological design relies on publicly available online documents intended for dissemination. To search, identify, and collect data I utilised what Povinelli (2006) calls “literalism of the referent” as a technique that allows looking at how concepts are deployed in chains of meanings that make fields of knowledge and expertise. Via keyword search and snowballing reference, I gathered relevant data in Green Tide sites of knowledge production. This part of the chapter is made of different sections, each of which goes over a different site of knowledge (written pieces, social media, timelines) which operate as the same discursive text. As I explain there, these are not to be understood in linear order or as enclosed unities of analysis but as a unified discursive field (Foucault, 1972).

Chapter 4 is concerned with a Foucauldian archaeology of knowledge, in this case the discursive formation of the spiritual as political, where the Green Tide spirituality is constructed as feminist. I illustrate how spirituality is operationalised around the figure of the Witch through chains of meaning, or how referents are brought together to build connections between feminist politics and a variety of spiritual tradition and activities. In the second part of this chapter, I describe how the Witch is possible through the discursive strategies of *genealogy* and *knowledge*, and how it produces the discursive objects *body* and *desire*. One of the main findings of the chapter is how the Witch is produced as a radical, insurgent other against the modern episteme of Man, therefore becoming anti-Man. *Genealogy* and *knowledge* serve to discursively articulate this position, and *body* and *desire* are produced as the wherein the Witch’s radical political agency resides. Through this analysis I am also able to identify how the Witch is constructed around keywords, or words of power (Stoler, 2009) of ‘precarity’, ‘debt’, and ‘*popular*’ [‘of the people’]. I explore these in chapter 5, whereas in chapter 6 I examine ‘race’ and ‘colonialism, that operate as unaddressed, but constitutive, epistemic categories.

The main argument of chapter 4, then, is that the Witch is constructed through a sexual, anti-capitalist and epistemic difference antithetical to the modern episteme of Man (Wynter, 2003). In this sense, the Witch is organised as a counter-discourse (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977: 209) against the current model of civilisation and humanness or Man, but only by recentring categories of gender and sexuality, which are already racialised categories. Chapters 5 and 6 look at these racial conditions of possibility for the Witch to become a feminist spirituality.

In chapter 5, I undertake a genealogical analysis of knowledge to look at the conditions of possibility of the Witch as anti-Man. By looking at the words of power

'popular', 'precarity', 'debt', I examine the existential character of the struggle between the Witch and Man. This is what I refer to as the Green Tide's and the Witch's event-ness, through which I demonstrate how the Witch is discursively produced as a political category of thought and action for collective articulation against the episteme of Man. In the second part, I focus on the role of academic knowledge production in articulating a discourse of and for the movement. The third section concludes the chapter by observing how the discursive concepts of 'precarity' and 'popular' link the Witch's feminine difference to a subaltern 'the people' fundamentally anchored in uneven economic South-North relations.

Overall, in chapter 5 I show how a mosaic of precarised experiences (e.g., factory layouts, lack of access to housing or water, land reclamation, or decreased pension income) serve the Green Tide's claim to a political common ground, while feminist attention is recentred on sexual and reproductive rights. The main argument of chapter 5 is therefore that the Green Tide discourse's claim to subalternity, as well as its ability to mobilise massively both nationally and transnationally, would not be possible without claiming to be a *popular* movement. At the same time, however, this serves to recentre the sexual subject, and the green Tide movement as its privileged actor, as the most apt to fight the hegemony of the episteme of Man.

Finally, in chapter 6, I analyse the racial condition of the episteme of Man (Wynter, 2003) as the unaddressed condition of possibility of the Green Tide discourse of possibility. My argument, started in chapter 4, is that the Green Tide elides the racial condition of possibility of our episteme, in turn reproducing racial tropes that make the Witch possible as Southern and subaltern. I also argue that this elision is productive to the Green Tide discourse, enabling it to be positioned vis-à-vis the Global North as a radical politics of feminist decoloniality while eliding the internal colonial, racial history and present of Argentina.

In the chapter, I address how the Witch is constructed as *speaking as* 'the people' (Spivak, 1988: 70). I show how this happens through efforts at depicting a local Argentine Witch, different from Her European 'pointy hat' counterpart, which materialised through parallelisms with Indigenous female power figures, producing the Witch as a 'darker' subject of resistance. I then discuss how the Witch is articulated as *speaking for* 'the people' (Spivak, 1988:70) through an analysis of the long lists of difference that make their appearance in Green Tide collective manifestos. In particular, I examine the 2018-2022 dispute around the name change of the National Women's Encounter, an initiative led by

the *MMDIBV*. I conclude the chapter by analysing the colonial legacies of life and death trajectories (Povinelli, 2006) in relation to the Green Tide discourse of the Witch.

Through accounts of the *MMDIBV* leader Moira Millán and analysis of Green Tide posts after the legalisation of abortion in December 2020, I argue that the Green Tide deployed their own categories of thought and action (for example that of the Feminist Strike) and those born out of the *MMDIBV* (for example ‘plurinationality’) differentially, redirecting attention and continuing to foster mobilisation to their own demands and instances of mobilisation. Through this chapter I demonstrate how feminist attention, hope, and suffering, respond to operations of a racialised discourse and its life/death trajectories, and how the Indigenous ‘us’ is reinscribed in a feminist ‘we’.

Overall, my argument is that spirituality becomes possible as feminist politics through recentring the subject as primarily sexual and eliding the racial condition of the modern episteme, thus reproducing the episteme as a modern discourse of sex and race. The Conclusions are summarised in chapter 7, where an outline of my key arguments is brought together with final reflections.

## **Chapter 2. The Green Tide Spirituality in Context**

### **2.1 The Feminist Search for a Different Episteme**

In the previous chapter I signaled the interest, by both the Green Tide and knowledge producers around the world, in grounding decolonial efforts in the search for an alternative epistemology, and the identification of spiritual, esoteric, magical practices to address the task. The call to a different model of knowledge in relation to modernity refers to well-established anti-Enlightenment critiques, which auspicate the development of an alternative epistemology, less androcentric and anthropocentric (Harding, 2013). These critiques oppose the ideal of an ‘objective truth’ and argue that is instead a partial representation of the world invested in the maintenance, and reproduction, of colonial relationships of power (Harding & Mendoza, 2020).

In Latin America, in particular, scholarship has emphasised how the modern knowledge system is inseparable from the colonial enterprise (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010; Marcos, 2019), for the establishment of racial, labour and gender relations (Lugones, 2008; Segato & McGlazer, 2018) and political relations and systems, including democracy (Mendoza, 2022). Among diverse decolonial practices of knowledge, one Latin American school of thought, the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (MCD) school has become one of the leading contemporary approaches to the entanglements between colonialism and modernity (Harding, 2021).<sup>15</sup>

In a review of anti-colonial feminisms’ philosophies of science, Feminist philosopher Sandra Harding (2021) highlights how the MCD strives to produce inquiry that “reaches towards the possibility of non-Eurocentric modes of thinking” (ibid.: 41). To this effect one of the “productive tensions” identified by Harding (2021: 43-46) is the colonial epistemological legacy of secularism. The critique simultaneously addresses Western science’s production of a “disenchanted world” where the world is to be known only in rationalist secular terms (Harding, 2021: 45) and how each religion produces its own culturally specific secularism, for which modern Western epistemology and connected

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<sup>15</sup> As Harding and Mendoza (2020) explain, theoretical analysis and activist efforts of colonisation and decolonisation in Latin America (and beyond) are not reducible to the MCD School. The MCD School is the most known to Anglophone international scholarship, but many decade-long Latin American debates have no connections to them. In fact, some scholars and activists are critical of the MCD School for being produced and circulated in and by the U.S., and for failing to give proper credit to already existing non-English speaking, feminist, and Indigenous research on colonialism (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010; Harding & Mendoza, 2020).

fields of knowledge would be explicitly Christian (and, some argue, specifically Protestant) (Harding, 2021: 46).

As such, the search for an alternative episteme and practices of knowledge, highlighted by both spiritual feminists of the Green Tide and by its knowledge producers, can be connected to a broader counter-discourse of (modern, colonial) system of knowledge that is well rooted in Latin American scholarship and, increasingly, in the Anglophone speaking international academic community. In other words, the relationship between a discourse of civilisation and that of secularism, in association with specific deployments of racialised gender and sexuality categories, is central to the colonial project.

Yountae (2020: 4) argues that “[...] the secular has been serving as the ideological banner of modern Western universalism, which preserves Western/ Christian hegemony while depoliticizing (the notion of) religion.” If, as Lugones (2008) argues, during colonisation the Christian-informed capitalist-oriented gender relations were the most civilised form of humanity (2008), it was only in the 1990s, in a constructed opposition to ‘Islam’, that civilisation as secularism was deployed in gender and sexuality through a proposition of sexual freedom (Scott, 2018).

In Latin America, discussions on spirituality and secularism in the analysis of modern/colonial knowledge emerge clearly in relation to sexual politics. Amidst a Latin American scholarly debate on whether gender, as a concept, is an absolute colonial imposition over Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples (Lugones, 2008; Espinosa Miñoso, 2014) or whether pre-colonised peoples too had hierarchical gender roles and conceptions that were intensified under colonial rule (Cabnal, 2010; Paredes, 2010; Segato & McGlazer, 2018), Harding and Mendoza (2020) argue that gender is nonetheless at the centre of coloniality, the struggle for ancestral knowledges’ resurgence,<sup>16</sup> and an innovative philosophy of science.

Sandra Harding and gender studies scholar Breny Mendoza point at how the recent Indigenous and Afro-descendant Latin American efforts to recover and reinvent ancestral philosophies, or cosmovisions, carry the potential to epistemically rupture the Western mode of knowledge. More specifically, it would be an intrinsic spiritual experience of ancestral knowledges that offers an important breakthrough (and re-enchant the world). To provide us with an example, Harding and Mendoza (2020: 112) discuss Sylvia Marcos’s

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<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the different currents in Latin American decolonial feminist thought on the matter of hierarchical gender relations before, during, and after colonisation, see Harding and Mendoza (2020) and Harding (2021).



Indigenous “incarnated spirituality” (Marcos, 2019: 120-121) as a form of knowledge where spirit and matter, body and mind, thinking and feeling as important Cartesian hierarchical binaries that foreground modern scientific knowledge, appear to be disrupted at their epistemological core.

According to Indigenous scholars worldwide directly engaged in the analysis of colonial knowledge production, in the experience of Indigenous Peoples themselves there is in fact no distinction between knowledge systems and spirituality (Wilson, 2020; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). The conceptual separation that we operate even by bringing the two terms together with a coordinating conjunction like ‘and’ points to the colonial presence of a rationalist secularism. This is so to the extent that Indigenous and Afro-descendant activists continue to resist efforts to secularise their knowledge, insofar for them it results in yet another colonial extraction that distorts their knowing and detaches it from the unique experience of each Indigenous group (Harding, 2021: 45).

Similarly, in Anglophone America, sexuality or the erotic is at the centre of counter-discursive efforts to reshape the modern worldview, as well as for finding the tools and ways to effect transformation. This is a tradition of activism, artistic production, and scholarly endeavour that relies heavily on the legacy of feminists of colour and their struggle against racialised and colonial forms of oppression (Maya, 2019; Keating, 2021). Among them, Audre Lorde (1984) affirms the experiences of U.S. Black women as subjected to racialised and gendered colonial histories and finds in spirituality – as creative and emotional psychic endeavour – a force to enact paths of transformation.

Gloria Anzaldúa, another U.S. feminist of colour (of Latin American origin) seeking in spirituality a political movement, argues that spirituality disrupts the colonial legacies of modernity by allowing people affected by colonialism to access the rediscovery of rituals and beliefs “hidden in the hearts of oppressed people under layers of centuries of traditional god-worship” (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983: 195). In this vein, in a short reflection in *Religion & Gender*, AnaLouise Keating cites Anzaldúa and Jacqui Alexander to express her interest in “exploring how a politics of spirit that bridges the sacred and secular might open new avenues for ontological explorations. [...] to develop innovative spiritualities employed in the service of social change” (Keating, 2021: 95).

Through the words of, among others, Audre Lorde (1984) Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1983), bell hooks (2001), and Jacqui Alexander (2005), then, spirituality as a counter-discourse has been defined and experienced as a site of refuge, rest, resistance, rebellion, recovery, reinvention, and prefiguration. At once space to take stock, recover,

and fight against enduring harms, in their writing spirituality also appears as the space for the possible, a site where to develop, produce, articulate a force for radical transformation; not as generalisable universals nor individualised practices looking only ‘inward’, but a communal endeavour oriented at healing and transformation.

A point in common in these approaches are generational histories rooted in centuries of systemic violence and marginalisation. Both in Latin and Anglophone America, the turn to spirituality for a counter-discourse of decolonisation, is therefore closely tied to the striving for a different consciousness and relationship with the world. This speaks of efforts in transforming the modern, Western, White, heteropatriarchal framework that underlies our episteme and how it constitutes our organisation of the world. The search, recovery or reinvention of a knowledge other to that of modernity, is represented in its intertwinement with spirituality by its *par excellence* instance of the Indigenous and Afro-descendant experience, at least in the Latin American region and field of studies, as a representation of the colonised (see Harding & Mendoza, 2020).

However, to appeal to a different consciousness or conjuring of a different world through spirituality does not necessarily imply the disruption of structural inequalities. For example, neopagan initiatives (Fisk, 2017), including sacred feminine (Fedele, 2012; Longman, 2018) and queer spiritualities (Morgensen, 2011), and Wicca (Luff, 1990; Fisk 2017) and Witchcraft (Cornish, 2023) have often been questioned for problematic appropriations of Indigenous cultures. The case with the Goddess movement<sup>17</sup> in its U.S. and U.K. forms is, for scholar of religion Kavita Maya (2019), the stark contrast between the postcolonial ideals of the movement and their inability to address the structural inequalities along racial lines. While the U.K. Goddess movement dreams of a plural, interconnected, post-patriarchal and post-racial world and consciousness, Maya (2019: 53-55) argues that they end up reproducing universal understandings of ‘woman’ and ‘patriarchy’. Being positioned as an emancipatory or liberating practice or counter-discourse, then, even when formally challenging colonial inequalities, does not necessarily equate with challenging structural inequalities derived from colonial enterprises.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> As Kavita Maya (2019) explains, here it is important to signal that not all Goddess practitioners are feminists, and that, particularly in the Global South, for a spirituality to be considered feminist it does not necessarily require proximity with the Goddess movement.

<sup>18</sup> See Harding and Mendoza (2021;0) and Harding (2021) for an overview of important internal debates among Indigenous Peoples and groups in relation to decolonial politics, whether state sanctioned as in the Bolivian case or community based as in Guatemala. The main argument is that there is no perfect, or absolute, decolonial politics and that structural inequalities will manifest within and across Indigenous activist groups on the basis of class, gender, education, etc.

For queer ethnographer Scott L. Morgensen (2011), in settler states such as the U.S., queer desires to be akin to Indigenous People manifests in imitations of Indigenous culture and feelings of inheritance. The Radical Faeries communities in the U.S., Morgensen (ibid.) argues, seek to ground their queerness in Indigenous land, spirituality, and ethics as more ‘natural’; not effected by the dispossessing effects of modern heteropatriarchy. However, Morgensen finds that Radical Faeries reproduce themselves and the nation as part of the project of settler colonialism.

I make this point because, on the one hand, my intention is to situate the emergence of a feminist spirituality in the Green Tide as part of a broader social context that has never been evenly and homogeneously subjected to the Catholic Church (Semán et al., 2018), and where political uses of spirituality are deployed in multiple ways across the political spectrum, and according to diverse political ideals or necessities. Here, the diversity of belief in relation to Christianity or the Catholic Church cannot be read as inherently disruptive. For example, recent research in Argentina shows the extent to which the non-institutionalised repertoire of positive energy tied to the individual had effects in institutions (Viotti, 2018) and the overall population (Mallimaci et al., 2020), including neoconservative poles (Semán et al., 2018) *and* feminist ones (Felitti & Viotti, 2016).

On the other hand, I refer back to Maya’s (2019) analysis of the Goddess movement in the U.K., as she reminds us that “representations of spirituality are structured by the power relations of gender, colonialism, race, class and disability” and the extent to which “hegemonic representations of spirituality in the U.K. are structured around the objectification and erasure of women of colour as subjects produced by complex gendered, racialised (post)colonial histories” (Maya, 2016: 1). Tracing the emergence of the Green Tide spirituality as part of a tradition of feminist, queer, anti-racist and decolonial efforts, asks us to keep the attention on how the structural effects of race and colonialism are an intrinsic part of how we understand and tackle the problems posed by feminism and to allow feminist perspectives to be interacted with by the structural effects of race and colonialism in, and from, different locations and histories.

## **2.2 Racial and Colonial Tensions in Latin American Feminism**

Scholars of coloniality and colonialism have emphasised the extent to which the colonial enterprise produced a novel racial and racialising Western knowledge (Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003) in ways that were entangled with relationships of gender, sexuality,

kinship. Lugones (2008) famous thesis, for example, is that gender was a category reserved for the Europeans, deemed the only completely human and civilised race. In the U.S., one of the main critiques of Western liberal feminist currents has been their concern with leaving the household in pursuit of professional careers and not remaining tied to childbearing, whereas enslaved women were forcibly separated from family into coerced labour (Carby, 1987; Norwood, 2021). The critique also called for extending reproductive rights' demand beyond abortion and against forced sterilisations (Prisock, 2018; Norwood, 2021).

Similar histories have been recorded in Latin America, where Indigenous and Afro-descending people have been, sometimes unknowingly, forcibly sterilized.<sup>19</sup> Harding and Mendoza (2020: 109) too point to how one of the elements bringing together Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and *mestizo/criollo*<sup>20</sup> feminists is a “fatigue with ethnocentric gender ideologies and Western feminist theories.” At the globalized level, these critiques have shown how deployments of ‘feminism’, ‘gender’, ‘sexuality’, ‘LGBTQIA+’, are used in neo-colonial, neo-imperial enterprises under the discourse of civilization – most notably as justification for war against ‘Islam’ – (Sabsay, 2015).

In general, in international development and aid programs, the deployment of these categories is assimilating struggles and identities within a claim to globalised sexual citizenship, and with the presumption of a shared political agenda (Sabsay, 2016a). This is significant as not only international or transnational institutions make effective use of these categories, but as Latin American movements do too with results that are productive for the reproduction of colonial dynamics and epistemologies (Espinosa Miñoso, 2014). Sociologist Karina Bidaseca, in the context of pre-Green Tide feminism in Latin America, has called it “white women trying to save *mujeres color café* [coffee-coloured women]” (Bidaseca, 2011: 98).

Black Latin American decolonial feminist philosopher Yuderlys Espinosa Miñoso (2016b) points to the tendency, which she argues is visible both in academic and activist endeavours, of what she calls a *racismo de género* [gendered racism]. It represents the difficulty, based on race and class privilege, of recognising how women have different

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<sup>19</sup> See Vasquez Del Aguila (2022) for the case of Peru between 1996 and 2000; Muniz Oliveira (2021) for a case-study of forced sterilisation in 2018 Brazil, and Sanchez-Rivera (2023) for current eugenic efforts in Mexico.

<sup>20</sup> ‘*Criollo*’ is a term used since the time of the Spanish conquest to designate the Europeans born in the colonised territories of the Americas. The term extends to their descendants. In Argentina, it typically refers to the descendants of the settlers who inhabited the country before the immigration waves of the 1880s-1930s.

experiences and urgencies, which translate in a different standpoint for “those racialized impoverished within a heterosexual order” (ibid.: 50). Espinosa Miñoso’s critique is a direct elaboration of Latin American Afro-feminist and Indigenous thought as well as Women of Colour and Third World Women critiques of liberal feminist thought, and as such she develops an analytical lens to look at Latin American feminisms.

These analyses link the political articulation of feminist activism (agendas, strategies, claims) to feminist knowledge production. The Black Latin American decolonial feminist Ochy Curiel Pichardo (2009), for example, elaborates on how the theoretical canon in Latin American feminist production remained tied to European or U.S. genealogies, concepts, and authors. For her this includes the global invisibilisation of the 1970s and 1980s Latin American Afro-feminism, often obfuscated by the global popularity of U.S. Black theories of feminist and sexual liberation.<sup>21</sup>

One of the main concerns, alongside politics of citation that re-establish the geopolitics of knowledge production (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010), is the definition of what constitutes a ‘liberated woman’ for feminism in Latin America, both in theory and in practice (Espinosa Miñoso in Rosa, 2021: para. 16). In a few words, Espinosa-Miñoso concern is that the subject of Latin American feminism is overrepresented in the category of the Latin American white/*criolla* bourgeois woman (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022), for which ‘liberation’ subtly implies becoming more and more alike the white, bourgeois, European or North American woman (Rosa, 2021: ibid.).

For Espinosa Miñoso (2022) this is reflected in feminist theorisation as well as activism. Focusing on the latter, she highlights how it has been the struggles of racialised, impoverished, and often non-cis, non-straight communities that steadily question the established tenets of feminism, and how, despite this, a small group of educated elites, often white or *criollas*, retain the ability to decide which claim to pursue and how (Rosa, 2021). Even in Argentina, which she recognises as a pioneering country for Latin American queer feminist studies and activism (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022), the struggles of marginalised communities that brought the movement to the regional forefront were often obfuscated by the citation of U.S. queer scholars: Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, Joan Scott, and Paul B. Preciado among others (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022).

Espinosa Miñoso offers a double lens of analysis. On the one hand she develops what she calls a “critique of the Eurocentred feminist reason” (Espinosa Miñoso, 2014),

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<sup>21</sup> Some of these authors include Brazilians Lélia Gonzalez, Djamila Ribeiro, and Sueli Carneiro.

putting into question the onto-epistemological tenets of different feminist theories, from radical to liberal. One of these is the “universalisation of sexuality as the ontological basis of the subject” (Sabsay, 2014: 52 in Espinosa Miñoso, 2022: 211), which results in the overrepresentation of a centric sexual subject despite a fragmentation induced by decades of classed, raced, geolocated discussions (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022: 216-217). In summary, alongside a transnational, globalised colonial dynamic, Espinosa Miñoso (2009) signals an “internal colonialism”<sup>22</sup> as epistemic violence produced by hegemonic feminists of the South over marginalised women within their own countries.

On the other hand, Espinosa Miñoso invites scholars and intellectuals to ask how racism or racial relations might be at the basis of any feminist programme (Rosa, 2021). In an interview with *Revista Brújula* (Rosa, 2021) the scholar is asked what she thinks about the transnationalisation of the Argentine Green Tide, its lemmas, vocabulary, symbols, and annexed focus on the legalisation of abortion. The predominance of transnational, institutional, juridical, NGO feminism in the region and in Argentina is decades-long, pre-dating the burst of the Green Tide and had already been criticised for its contribution in maintaining both global and internal colonial dynamics.<sup>23</sup> Regarding the Green Tide Espinosa Miñoso responds the prompt by asking questions: how has abortion become the central theme of Latin American feminism? Who defines which are the feminist politics of urgency, the vocabulary, the strategies deployed? How have the green colour and the green handkerchief become so important to feminist politics worldwide? Espinosa-Miñoso leaves the question mark open.

Espinosa Miñoso understands that for its quick territorial spread and its resonance, and the seemingly homogeneous transnational use of symbols, vocabularies, and strategies, the Green Tide is to be considered a hegemonic feminism in the region, with struggles inherited from European feminism (Rosa, 2021). Espinosa Miñoso, here, is not pointing at an interest, from the Green Tide, to conform all expressions of feminist articulation to their own lemmas and strategies. The Colombian scholar is referring, instead, to the Green Tide focus on juridical and institutional recognition of abortion rights, which she discussed as Eurocentred feminist reason in pre-Green Tide papers (i.e., Espinosa Miñoso, 2014), and in connection to criticism of transnational feminist activism in the region. Here, the

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<sup>22</sup> For Latin American discussions of internal colonialism see also González Casanova (1969) and Rivera Cusicanqui (2010). To my knowledge, there is no existing English translation of González Casanova’s book. Nonetheless, in footnote 14, Rivera Cusicanqui (ibid.: 108-109) suggests González Casanova (1965) ‘Internal Colonialism and National Development’ as an article where the author explores similar themes.

<sup>23</sup> See (Mendoza, 2002; Curiel Pichardo, 2009; Espinosa Miñoso, 2009; Bidaseca, 2011)

question she poses is not what the Green Tide is doing so that other organisations acquire Green Tide symbols and language, but how is it possible, in the first place, that these organisations uncritically adopt such framework of political analysis and articulation.

In the rest of the interview (Rosa, 2021) Espinosa Miñoso focuses on inviting feminists in the Latin American region to devise vocabulary, strategy, symbols, and theories resonating with the structural conditions of each territory instead of automatically deploying the Green Tide's. However, inaugurating the possibility of addressing the Green Tide also within its national borders, she continues to ask: who defines agendas, rhetoric, and points of view? Who produces feminist theory, and who defines strategies? From which bodies and experiences? Which voices are validated, and on the basis of which racial/ethnic, class or geopolitical standpoints?

In Argentina, the issue of racial formation and colonial histories are rather controversial topics. While the country has traditionally seen itself as white and European and by many scholars considered a settler colonial state that produced its own whiteness through the erasure of Indigenous and Afro-diasporic people (Salvatore, 2008; Lublin, 2021; Taylor, 2021), it has recently started to see itself as poorer and 'darker', suffocated by predatory financial powers of the Global North (Aguiló, 2018). In alignment with this identitarian move, critiques of global economic relations, have often brought to read the Green Tide as an anti-colonial movement, where the economic relationship to international financial institutions is seen as colonialism (Méndez, 2020; Mulinari, 2023) and the problems of labour and reproduction are considered "one of the most stagnant, long-lasting, profitable, and persistent elements of an indisputably colonial and patriarchal system of exploitation" (Gago, 2020: para. 10).

At the same time, however, Argentina has demonstrated consistent difficulties in talking about racial formation and racial difference at the national level, as well as addressing long-lasting inequalities of racial nature deriving from the colonial experience and state formation (Briones, 2008; Adamovsky, 2012; Barbero, 2023). Aguiló (2018), regarding the 'darkened' self-perception of Argentines, also signals that it has taken place mostly in terms of consumer and cultural production, leaving intact the country's racial/colonial social structuring. The persistence of the country's racial organisation makes itself present both in the conservative backlash starting with Macri's presidency in 2015, but also in the previous left-wing model of 'progressive neoextractivism' (Lublin, 2021).

The (non)discussion of racial difference, histories, and inequalities through silence and erasure in Latin America is a widespread phenomenon, even more so in those countries

that have constructed their national identity as primarily white European, as Argentina did, through the systematic persecution, invisibilisation, and always incomplete national belonging of Indigenous (Nagy, 2022; 2023) and Black people (Restrepo, 2013, 2020)<sup>24</sup> throughout the process of national formation to the present day.

In Argentina, hierarchical racial structuring has remained “masked, hidden, and displaced” (Wade, 2010: 44), as race is noticeable only through proxy terms or allusions. Notable examples are references to foreignization (Gayles, 2020), for example in talking of third world, Latinamericanisation or Africanisation of the country (Aguiló, 2018), or by references to external populations such as migrants (Aguiló, 2018; Barbero, 2023). Racial categories can also be deployed in allusion to the past, for example to the residues of a prosperous nation-building past where Argentina was ‘the granary of the world’ (Adamovsky, 2012; 2016). Race can also appear silently through culture or class references, for example talking about shantytown or impoverished communities with terms like *negro*, *trigueño* or *villero* [black-dark, corn-skinned, or slum-dweller] (Adamovsky, 2012, Aguiló, 2018), or in relation to specific cultural products like shantytown cumbia [*cumbia villera*],<sup>25</sup> and images of picketing and protest (Ramallo, 2017; Aguiló, 2018).<sup>26</sup>

Barbero (2023: 101) argues in fact that “silences remain central to Argentine ‘racial grammar’ [...] these silences are often ‘active’ (Sue, 2014), ‘contractual’ (Sheriff, 2000), and policed and (re)enforced in public discourse by different sectors of Argentine society.” In Felitti’s (2021a) paper, Jennifer Rubio’s interpellation, if addressed, would have put into question the way in which the problem of the Witch-centred feminist spirituality is framed in the Green Tide. This engagement however does not take place, therefore resulting in an exercise closely recalling the silent grammar of race in Argentina, exercised through present absences. The impossibility to name and articulate racial difference in Argentina, and, effectively, addressing its enduring consequences lingers in Felitti’s dealing with the racial critique to which she is indirectly posed.

Whereas academic interpretations of the Green Tide and secondary data on the Green Tide itself seem to exemplify the operations of a silent racial grammar for the

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<sup>24</sup> See also Ocoró Loango, 2010; Ramallo (2017) Edwards (2020), and Gayles (2020).

<sup>25</sup> Shantytown or slum *cumbia* is a genre that originated in 1990s Argentina as poverty and economic precarisation was increasing. It typically uses vocabulary of the slums and deals with themes of daily life of *villas miseria* (the term for shantytowns) such as poverty, drugs, gun violence, the football culture analogous to ultras or hooligans, clashes with authority, promiscuity. For some references on the political use of cumbia in relation to ethnicity and class in contemporary Argentina, see Albarces & Silba (2014) and Albarces (2015).

<sup>26</sup> On the topic of silence, it is worth noting the absence of racial categories, until recently, in the national census and other relevant statistical tools enabling “statist silences” (Barbero, 2023: 104) useful to the national ideal of whiteness.



recentring of white international canons, the Green Tide does position itself as an allied movement in anti-colonial struggle. In this sense, as a social movement, the Green Tide (in my focus on *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*) is not easily situated within a firm tradition of feminist activism in the country.

In regard to racial grammars, silent or otherwise, Moreno Figueroa and Wade (2021) have pointed out that outside of Anglophone circuits people on the ground might use terms different from those international scholarship is used to. In Latin America, anti-racist activism often appears through alternative grammars, for which issues of land, deprivation, or multiculturalism effectively address racial and colonial histories and their legacies while circumscribing the term ‘race’ (*raza*). For this reason, the two sections that follow I briefly discuss the history of Argentine feminisms and the Green Tide, particularly in relation to issues of race, colonialism, and the grammar of the *popular* [of the people].

### **2.3 A Brief History Argentine Feminism and the Green Tide**

The Green Tide is at time positioned as a Southern movement able to set the example to self-centred Global North, and “not so very Western, not so very white [...]” (Moltoni, 2021: 3-4). Politics scholar Rocío Moltoni provides an account of the crests and troughs of Argentine feminism to show its regional roots, modes of organisation, and main claims. To avert the Eurocentred idea that feminist claims were born with the French Revolution, Moltoni cites Ochy Curiel Pichardo (2009) and names the Afro-descendant Sargent María Remedios del Valle (“mother of the fatherland”), who led some of the Independence wars in Argentina in the 1800s, as possibly the first relevant figure for Argentine feminism. At the end of the century, Argentina saw the increased participation of women in access to education and civil and political rights. Anarchist and communist women intellectuals wrote about the oppression of women at home and at work and made radical proposals in terms of free love and motherhood (Moltoni, 2021).

The early 1900s see the first institutionalisation of feminist groups and demands in the country. The first women enter universities and start organising in the First Feminine Congress in 1910, with state support through party, union, university, and activist political militancy, Argentine women obtain the right to vote in 1946 (Moltoni, 2021: 7). Moltoni here specifies that while these women belonged to different social classes, they were all

white, and that the obtention of the vote was tied to classed and Eurocentred ideals of motherhood ('we have maternal obligations, we ask for rights in exchange').<sup>27</sup>

At this time, women organised in gender-specific associations and promoted the organisation of strikes or congresses. They focused on achieving formal equality in law and access to higher education. The second crest, in the second half of the 1900s, was inspired by the U.S. claim "the personal is political", but with the local declination "democracy in the streets, in the home, and in the bed" (Moltoni, 2021: 8). Similarly to their Northern counterparts, claims focused on reproductive rights, sexual pleasure and freedom, the political role of affect, the recognition of unpaid domestic work, and the access to political participation (ibid.).

Expressions of feminine or womanist spirituality like the Goddess Movement, centred around women's bodies and feminine deities, emerged during this time in the U.S. and U.K., and spread around the world (Maya, 2019). Felitti (2019b) traces some of the Argentine women's circles' practices that participate of the Green Tide to the Goddess Movement, particularly through the circulation of foundational texts of the Goddess Movement in Spanish and, to some extent, also a practice of shared rituals.

Drawing on Chilean sociologist Julieta Kirkwood, Moltoni (2021) reports that between the 1950s and 1980s, women's participation in politics grew, but without putting forward specifically feminist demands. Feminists focused instead in resisting the wave of authoritarianism and dictatorships that engulfed the region (ibid). The city of Buenos Aires, however, saw in this period the birth of important feminist and lesbian and gay organisations such as the Homosexual Liberation Front. All these groups took advantage of known local political strategies but were also inspired by U.S. consciousness raising groups. Overall, they organised around talks, congresses, and seminars (Moltoni, 2021).

All feminist activity in Argentina stopped during the 1976-1983 civic-military dictatorship. However, some of the violences perpetrated against women and queer people by the authorities were reinterpreted and addressed with the Green Tide.<sup>28</sup> During this time,

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<sup>27</sup> The most known Argentine feminists of the time are, in fact, the white/*criollas* Elvira Rawson de Dellepiane, Fenia Chertkoff and Alicia Moreau de Justo.

<sup>28</sup> One of the historical demands of the queer collective in Argentina in regard to the dictatorship is the recognition of the violences perpetrated against LGBTIQ+, *travestis* and transexuals. One of the historical lemmas of the human rights movement against the dictatorship, 'They were 30.000 *desaparecidos*' is declined to say that 'they were 30.400' to include members of the queer collective. The demand, based on a testimony received by one of the investigators on the dictatorship and its crimes against humanity, was raised with strength since the raise of the Green Tide and its attention to queer rights. See Agencia Presentes (2020); Noticias UNSAM (2022); Brovelli (2023).

a significant movement that later inspired the Green Tide is the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo.<sup>29</sup> As the dictatorship came to an end, feminist organisations resumed with previous themes (maternity, sexuality, marriage) but with the addition of new ones: women's poverty, limited access to education and power positions, and divorce (which was obtained in 1987).

After the dictatorship, lesbian militancy separates itself from the broader 'homosexual' claim creating their own groups (Barrancos, 2014), but it is in the 1990s that feminist claims start shaping the state sphere with the creation of the Subsecretary of the Woman (Moltoni, 2021: 9) and feminist and queer knowledge production is produced, or translated from the U.S. (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022). In great part received and translated in Argentina, this foreign intellectual production was circulated in Spanish to the rest of the Latin American region (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022).

The most recent internationalist impulse of Latin American feminism began in 1975, with the First Worldwide Women's Conference in Mexico. Breny Mendoza (2002) argues that the period inaugurated with the Conference saw an increasing institutionalisation of feminist organisations, demands, and strategies. Feminists sought primarily to access power positions in higher education, state or government institutions, or in private enterprises. This time also marks what Mendoza (2002) has called the 'NGOisation' of feminism, the strategy of drawing financial aid to the region through the creation of NGOs centred around women's issues. For Mendoza, this meant that the local tradition of small-community organising around specific problems and solutions was trumped in favour of Latin American regional- or country-wide action, in a process that disenfranchised grassroots organisations of their knowledge and problem-solving skills in favour of depositing it into institutions and the feminists working within them. Importantly, this condensation of feminist savoir-faire into the professionalised sphere reflected class and racial lines, with white or *mestizo/criollo* feminists, highly educated, occupying NGO or state positions of power (Mendoza, 2002).

Taking stock, Moltoni (2021:10) concludes that there have been so far no records of the efforts of racialised groups or individuals and their contribution in the shaping of feminist activism in Argentina, reinstating, in a way, its "white norm". In terms of strategies, Moltoni summarises that alongside instances of knowledge circulation like

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<sup>29</sup> While the Mothers did not articulate their demand as one of sexuality or marriage, they did articulated as one of democracy and human rights, which will support the articulation, in the 2010s, of the demand for the legalisation of abortion as a similar issue of human rights and democracy (Elizade, 2018). I analyse the significance of this inheritance in more depth in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

consciousness raising groups, conferences, and informal talks, Argentine activism has been characterised by increasing national and international institutionalisation, the juridical codification of feminist claims, and the theoretical production around gender and sexual diversity. All these strategies, Mendoza (2002) and Espinosa Miñoso (2016a) argue, so far continued to respond to Eurocentred logics privileging juridical and institutional codification of feminist claims, as well as the increased institution of the ‘feminist professional’, highly educated and competent to exercise institutional functions.

One of the alternative models of the late 1990s is the Black feminist thought that emerged in Brazil, which informed the feminist activism and scholarship of authors such as Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso and Ochy Curiel Pichardo in Colombia. In Argentina, however, these seem to have not reached scholars and activists as much as Northern theories and authors (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022). Feminisms diverging from this “white norm” started to gain visibility at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when difference “explodes” (Moltoni, 2021: 10) with the concept of intersectionality.<sup>30</sup> In Argentina, however, difference is not manifested in terms of race but in terms of class – which Moltoni argues is a more privileged axis of analysis to understand social oppression in Argentina.

The 2000s in Argentina are extremely important to understand the imbrication of race and class in the country, which lead to the ‘darkening’ of the national imaginary, as argued by Ignacio Aguiló (2018). Between 1998 and 2002, the country underwent a period known in English as the Argentine ‘great depression’. Its origins are found in the (neo)liberalising economic reforms imposed by the dictatorship and the U.S.’s Operation Condor but are more strictly traced to the free-market reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s. These included the Argentine government’s attempts to maintain a fixed exchange rate between the Argentine peso and the U.S. dollar (Pucciarelli & Castellani, 2014; 2019). It is estimated that during this time Argentine’s economy shrank close to 30%, with over 50% of the population living below state poverty lines and 25% living as indigents (ibid.).

Overall, the depression caused widespread unemployment, protests, a default on the country’s foreign debt, and, as the 2000s approached, the creation of alternative currencies, the fall of multiple governments, and riots. The deepening crisis foregrounded the raise of

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<sup>30</sup> Some Latin American scholars have preferred the concept of *imbricación* [imbrication]. Like the theory of intersectionality, imbrication seeks social justice. the concept of imbrication points to the analysis of social and historical dynamics and less on identities (Falquet, 2022). Proponents of this conceptualisation argue that it is better suited to think collective political projects around which to build wide alliances, able to simultaneously fight all the dimensions of the current racist-colonial-heteropatriarchal capitalist way of production (ibid.).

the *piquetero* movement.<sup>31</sup> At times affiliated with unions or political parties, as the depression caused more unemployment and poverty, more and more Argentines joined spontaneous protests and strikes. December 2001 brought the height of the crisis when the government restricted people's ability to withdraw cash from banks. As crowds started to gather spontaneously in protest, on December 19<sup>th</sup>, President Fernando de la Rúa declared a state of emergency and resigned. Protesters responded by rioting in the main cities of Buenos Aires and Rosario. Four more Presidents succeeded de la Rúa in the following eleven days, during which at least thirty-nine people (including minors) were killed by security forces (Pucciarelli & Castellani, 2014; 2019).

In Argentina, these experiences of organised and unorganised protesting, the extreme poverty and the survival strategies of commonality that were organised in each neighbourhood, are associated with the concept of *popular* movement, and its feminine, women-centred or women-led expressions are known as *popular* feminism (Moltoni, 2021). An example of these are women picketing and preparing common pots in *popular* kitchens, or those organising neighbourhood goods-exchange markets. *Popular*, which in this context can be translated as 'of the people', is a concept of long trajectory in Latin America and Argentina and has been deployed differently depending on the decade and authors' political anchorages.<sup>32</sup>

In general, the Argentine concept of *popular* can be divided into three categories (Chiriboga, 2022). As an economic category that looks at labour, it usually refers to groups of lower income and precarious employment relations. A second facet of the concept amplifies the economic definition to include cultural aspects of economically precarious groups (like *cumbia villera* or the *popular* kitchen). The third category, Chiriboga (ibid.) argues, is influenced by broader Latin-American studies, whereby *popular* sectors are characterised by daily social actions of organisation and struggle.

Another strand of thought understands *popular* as those groups that decide to leave their forms of debate and articulation outside of party, union, or religious structures (Díaz Lozano, 2020), with a political attention for grassroots democracy (Mazzeo, 2007). In this sense, *popular* has often been understood as an exercise of autonomy from institutionalised

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<sup>31</sup> The *piquetero* movement is one of the grassroots movements of Argentina, centred around experiences of deprivation and poverty. It comes from 'picket' and stands for a form of demonstration that blocks road traffic, causing significant disruption. It began in Argentina during the 1990s, to protest the political and economic measures of then-President Carlos Menem that led to the 2000s depression.

<sup>32</sup> '*Popular*' can be traced to Italian sociologist Gino Germani (Germani, 1999) exiled to Argentina in 1934. For more discussion see also Zibechi (2003a, b) and Nicanoff (2014).

forms of political participation. In this context, an autonomous movement is a social movement that makes efforts to remain self-sufficient from institutional or private spheres, and that is often characterised by seeking internal consensus, participation, and collective action away from political or economic dependency from institutional structures (Díaz Lozano, 2020).<sup>33</sup> In the Argentine case, Svampa (2009) argues that the 2001 crisis represented a watershed for how to understand inequalities in the country, including the emergence of specific characteristics of *popular* movements: territorial anchorage, direct action strategies, widespread use of assemblies, and autonomy.

In Moltoni's (2021) analysis, in the context of Argentina's early 2000s, *popular* feminism was associated with the struggles against poverty imposed by the 1980s and 1990s neoliberal policies, but also with the sex work organisations led by well-known *travesti* community organisers like Lohana Berkins and Diana Sacayán, often of *villero* [shantytown] origin. The main claims of those who gathered around a *popular* feminism at the time were the resistance against *machista* violence, and the demand for dignified work (Barrancos, 2014). Since many women participated in spaces of political articulation (*popular* kitchens, neighborhood associations, cooperatives, unions) another characteristic was the increased questioning of the internal dynamics of other militant spaces from women and *travesti* perspectives (Korol, 2016).

It is important to emphasise that beyond discussions of how the Green Tide is positioned or described, *popular* traditions are often demarcated in terms of race, class, and colonialism. For example, for Svampa and Pereyra (2003), Argentine *popular* currents are part of a broader Latin American social movement trend of the 2000s like the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil, the Zapatismo in Mexico, and the organised Indigenous movements in Bolivia and Ecuador. Similarly, for Díaz Lozano (2020), the *popular* and autonomous tradition of the Latin American region cannot be understood without the regional Afro-diasporic movement, exemplified in the thought and activism of the GLEFAS school (Latin American Group of Studies, Formation, and Feminist Action), founded in 2007 by Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso and Ochy Curiel Pichardo among others.

The fulcrum of these *popular* struggles would then be an entangled struggle of anti-racism, anti-colonialism, anti-capitalism and feminism, in a way that challenges otherwise dominant or hegemonic forms of feminism (Díaz Lozano, 2020: 517-521). Some of its

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<sup>33</sup> For more discussion on the interplay of *popular* and autonomous see Gargallo (2004); Curiel Pichardo et al. (2005); Korol (2008a, b); Díaz Lozano, (2020).

figures, embodiments of collective struggles, are the Black Brazilian and Lesbian *favela* activist Marielle Franco, the Argentine *travestis* Lohana Berkins and Diana Sacayán, and the Indigenous Honduran environmental activist Berta Cáceres, but also, for example, Kurdish women fighters of the Women's Protection Units involved in the Syrian civil war (ibid.).

*Popular* movements/feminisms are therefore marked by their collective and entangled articulation of struggles in ways that resists state and institutional attempts at capturing aspects of social life (Díaz Lozano, 2020). In this sense, one final aspect of what defines a *popular* movement identified by Díaz Lozano is the occupation of public space such as the street. The scholar (ibid.: 528) writes about it as “the distinctive historical mark of a movement that inscribes its demands in its collective and individual bodies and brings [these demands] into spaces of physical confrontation with patriarchal capitalism and the state.”

When it comes to the *popular* category and the association of certain movements or groups with it, then, I argue that it is important to consider the internal diversity of this concept, and its accent on a multiplicity of forms, claims, and global or local attachments. Nonetheless, these different characterisations highlight the association of *popular* with the struggles of deprived classes, of racialised urban or rural communities, with anti-imperialist initiatives, and with political efforts of collectivism, autonomy, and use of the public space. As it emerges from this compilation of texts, *popular* feminism would then be a non-Western and non-White feminism because of its capacity to incorporate different identities, urgencies, and perspectives (Palma, 2017; Korol in Smaldone et al., 2019). Nonetheless, this analysis risks remaining tied to the identification of a broader ‘patriarchy’ as the problem and in equality and inclusion in politics and law as the solution (Bidaseca, 2011).

## **2.4 The Green Tide and the Question of Race and Colonialism**

After the experience of the early 2000s, the Green Tide is the most recent iteration of feminist articulation in Argentina. For Moltoni (2021), the Green Tide inherits forms of organisation and claims that respond to both the institutional interests of higher-educated feminists and the daily survival needs of *popular* feminists. The Green Tide recovers the method of the strike in 2016-2017, which was internationalised in 2018, and the attention to economic violence and deprivation.

The Green Tide has been able to circulate knowledge and stir mobilisation through consciousness raising groups, conferences, talks, and seminars, while also pushing for institutional and juridical recognition of their claims, the dissemination of curricula based on gender and sexuality issues (Bolla, 2019) and the access to institutional power-making spaces as transformational feminist agency (Lopreite & Rodríguez Gustá, 2021). In effect, propelled by *La Campaña* and with the support gathered after five years of *Ni Una Menos* initiatives, in 2020 Law 27.610 granting access to safe and free abortion passed amidst national and international celebration.

Since then, and thanks to decades of feminist articulation oriented at state and legislation, Argentina has become recognised for its progressive legislation in matters of gender, sexual, and reproductive rights. Argentina has pioneered globally becoming the first country in Latin America to legalise same-sex marriages (including same-sex adoption) in 2010, and with one of the most comprehensive transgender rights laws in 2012. Moreover, between 2019 and 2021, as a direct response to the Green Tide, the state responded to feminist demands creating the Ministry of Women, Gender, and Diversity, which established women and LGBTQIA+ rights as primary state goals becoming an example of activist participation in manifestations of state feminism (Lopreite & Rodríguez Gustá, 2021). Finally, in 2021, campaigning by the feminist movement also achieved a 1% employment quota law for trans and *travesti* people in the public sector, and a Presidential decree included the ‘non-binary’ gender option in identification documents.

However, the success of the Green Tide cannot be solely attributed to their critique of gender-based and reproductive violence. As I anticipate in chapter 1, since conservative President Mauricio Macri was elected in 2015, the Green Tide progressively took on the battle against economic precarisation alongside gender, sexual and reproductive rights. The government of Mauricio Macri (2015-2019) implemented austerity measures aimed at creating enough public saving to reinvest in ‘development’ projects and to stimulate private international investments, but the government incurred instead in a severe financial deficit and in 2017 signed what has come to be known as the largest IMF loan ever granted at 57bn USD (Goñi, 2018). The agreement with the IMF implicated a dramatic reduction of public spending, deepening inflationary dynamics (Lopez & Schorr, 2019). The IMF loan was strongly opposed by public opinion and opposition forces, as the previous 12 years of government by progressive Presidents Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner had successfully managed to pay in full the outstanding debt Argentina had accumulated up to that point and establish extensive social welfare initiatives.



Mobilising both for reproductive rights and against the creation of further debt and precarisation, the Green Tide has in fact been recognised for its ability to theoretically and politically tie critiques of conservative sexual politics to the dispossessing effects of austerity measures and predatory economic politics. It is because of this entanglement of precarisation and feminicide, and later the legalisation of abortion, that some consider the Green Tide to have been able to achieve “the sought-after goal of fostering a highly diverse mass movement” (Friedman & Rodríguez Gustá, 2023: 245). The Green Tide resonated with the *popular* struggles of the previous decades, and, for this reason, at times it has been considered a radical movement from below or “not so very Western, not so very white” (Moltoni, 2021: 3-4) and with an emphasis on “participatory democracy and pluralism” (Gago, 2022: para. 2).

Some of the Green Tide methods in relation to the struggle for abortion have been understood as *popular* altogether. For example, Palma (2017) and Korol (in Smaldone et al., 2019) jump from characterisations of the *popular* to examples taken from the Green Tide, with the citation of some of its theorists. While I return to this issue in chapter 5, it is worth mentioning that this claim is often made in reference to self-managed collectives that participated of the Green Tide but did not have the same ground-breaking status and mobilisation ability of *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*.<sup>34</sup> Another element that would situate the Green Tide among at least a partial tradition of *popular* movements is their use of the street: “Thousands go out to the streets as if to a fight or a party. Manifesting with their painted, nude bodies [...] covered in glitter [...] exposing the diversity of shapes, abilities, colours, choices, singing, dancing, performing, [...] shouting” (Díaz Lozano.: 528-529).

On the other hand, however, Moltoni (2021: 14) warns about the extent to which anti-racist struggles have not yet been codified in and through Argentine feminism, urging a shift in the paradigm. In a similar vein, scholars have highlighted the importance of looking at internal power dynamics to understand if and how they leave behind the experience of different identities (Revilla Blanco, 2019; Soria, 2021). The same concern is expressed by the sex worker and *villera* leader Georgina Orellano (2022), who in her book

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<sup>34</sup> An example are the collectives that guaranteed access to safe abortion before and during the articulation of *La Campaña* and its successive 2020 law codification (Díaz Lozano, 2020: 527). Some of those participating of the Green Tide, for example the collective *Socorristas en Red*, claim “legal abortion anywhere” to signal that the state should not capture women’s reproductive rights and practices. On this group, see Burton (2017), Ceccoli & Menoyo (2022), Lucchetti et al. (2024).

*Put a feminist: Histories of a sex worker* [Feminist Whore: Stories from a Sex Worker] prompts asking questions about the internal power dynamics of the Green Tide.<sup>35</sup>

These concerns resonate with the open questions left by Espinosa Miñoso (Rosa, 2021), which conceptualises the Green Tide and its claim for the juridical legalisation of abortion as a hegemonic feminism in the region tied, at least partially, to Northern genealogies of feminist theorisation and strategy. For example, Espinosa Miñoso highlights how in its Latin American expansion, the Green Tide has circulated symbols, slogans, and rhetoric. One of these is the shared argumentation that it is the poor who die from clandestine abortion, and that they “don’t have voice” (ibid.: para. 6).

Recalling Karina Bidaseca’s (2011: 98) “white women trying to save brown women,” the question mark with respect to the Argentine Green Tide’s role in racialisation and race in their own theoretical production and political articulation remains open. This is the case even when race and class in Argentina are closely entangled, and in a contemporary context of cultural darkening that does not equate with the disruption of a racialised social structuring (Aguiló, 2018). As Georgina Orellano (2022) argues in her book, there are questions to be answered about who benefits from whose suffering.

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<sup>35</sup> For how the feminist-informed new Ministry of Women, Gender, and Diversity (2019-2023) turned down the expectations of sex workers in an exercise of epistemic violence, see Daich (2024).

## Chapter 3. Conceptual and Methodological Work

### 3.1 Conditions of Possibility of Thought and the Organisation of Life/Death

The relationship this project sets out to explore is that of the colonial conditions of knowledge production as they manifest in the Green Tide production of a feminist spirituality, in turn centred around the figure of the Witch. My departing point, here, is the understanding that systems of thought are inextricable from the ways of organising the world and its designated zones of sacrifice (Wynter, 2003), and that the enduring epistemic rules that inform both are a direct legacy of colonial enterprises.

In other words, systems of thought – to be understood as grids of organising rules that define what is intelligible and what it is not, what is true and what is false (Foucault, 1972) – are interlaced with systems of organising and distributing life and death (Povinelli, 2006; Wynter, 2003): who and what has to die for the episteme and its organisation of the world to survive and be reproduced.<sup>36</sup> For the modern episteme to persist – this is, to continue ordaining our way of understanding the world – it requires that ways of organising life continue being defined along unequal investments of hope and prosperity masked as universal while constituting who, what, and how to be intelligible within the colonial system of thought and its categories of signification, identification, enfleshment, and recognition.

Caribbean philosopher Sylvia Wynter (2003), in her revision of the Foucauldian analysis of the modern episteme through Frantz Fanon (1963; 1967) and W.E.B. DuBois (1986), argues that the foundational organising rule of our current modern/colonial episteme is a racialising rule dividing humans into those worthy of survival and those expendable. Critically, for Wynter (2003) this sacrifice is not just for the survival of others, but for the survival and reproduction of the episteme itself. In other words, the sacrifice of some populations and worldviews is necessary to sustain a global way of knowing our world and ourselves.

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<sup>36</sup> Throughout this thesis I present and deploy concepts of ‘sovereignty’, ‘life’, and ‘death’ in ways that are not always concerned with Foucault’s own conceptualisation of these terms. ‘Life’, for examples, is often deployed by the feminist discourse as ‘sustainability of life’ in relation to Judith Butler’s (2015) concepts of *popular* sovereignty, vulnerability, and interdependence. I discuss these in chapter 5 as part of the discourse I analyse. On the other hand, I mainly deploy ‘life’ and ‘death’ in Povinelli’s (2002; 2006) terms of the ‘differential trajectory of life and death’, which frames my theoretical and analytical standpoint. Finally, the way in which the Green Tide discourse uses *popular* sovereignty as the site of political sovereignty (chapter 5) differs from Foucault’s (1978) identification of sovereignty as the nation-state’s power over death opposed to his the notion of biopower as power over life.

Foucault (1970; 1972) proposes an analysis of how the meaning and practice of knowledge changed in modern Western thought, arguing that knowledge is constituted and situated: it is an arrangement of specific power relations. Systems of thought, which Foucault calls “epistemes” or “discursive formations,” are therefore regulated by underlying rules that function independently of an individual's awareness. These rules establish a framework of conceptual possibilities, shaping the limits of thought within a particular field and time of history. To be clear, epistemes refer to these implicit “rules of formation” (Foucault, 1970: xii) governing what constitutes a legitimate form of knowledge or claim to truth. These rules, in “any given culture and at any given moment,” define “the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice” (ibid.: 183).

For Foucault (1970), knowledge acquired its modern configuration – it became the modern episteme – in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with new sciences of life (biology), labour (political economy), and language (linguistics). The unique trait of the modern episteme was how new categories and formalisations, organised around the idea of natural interest and biologically evolved traits, produced ‘Man’ as both its object *and* subject (Foucault, 1970). Foucault argues that Man, as a representation or idea of human being, is an epistemological concept constituted in modernity. Man, here, appears as a figure of knowledge constituted by underlying rules defining what human nature and humanity is (and ought to be). As such, Man is not just an object of modern science, but also the constituted subject around which the modern order of knowledge is centred on.

Sylvia Wynter (2003) elaborates on Foucault to argue that Man is constructed as a specific conception of the human; its “genre” or “descriptive statement” (ibid.) is specifically Western and bourgeois. The Western, white, bourgeois Man is, in other words, overrepresented as humanity itself. It is this precise configuration that continues to be representing ‘the human being’ entirely while also working as an impossible standard to achieve. What Wynter is highlighting is that access to the status of being human is based on hierarchical difference, while at the same time functioning as the standard of general humanness.

The episteme of Man, for Foucault (1978), is primarily produced in biological terms of sex, reproduction, and sexuality, which he calls the “apparatus of sexuality”. It is sexuality that regulates racial and classed differences defined, too, in biological terms organised around the reproduction and fitness of the species. In a Foucauldian view it is sex at the centre of Man because it is reproduction, informed by the new science of biology,

that defines the management of individuals and populations. In other words, as populations became increasingly understood through an evolutionary biological ‘racial’ scale, they started to be managed through governance of reproduction, sex, and sexuality (Foucault, 1978) so to achieve or maintain (ideologies of racial) betterment (McWhorter, 2004).

For Wynter (2003), the shift to the modern episteme, or the episteme of Man, is organised primarily along racialising lines that originated not in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as an effect of the sexual regulation of populations as Foucault argued, but in the process of colonisation initiated in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This difference between Foucault (1978) and Wynter (2003) is foundational to the theoretical underpinning of the project. For Foucault, biological ‘race’ is an effect of sexual regulation of populations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; for Wynter, it is foundational to modernity from 15<sup>th</sup> century colonisation (therefore preceding the later regulation of sexuality).

When “Man” and the modern episteme are defined solely through Foucault’s 19<sup>th</sup> century apparatus of sexuality, female sexuality emerges as the reference of difference. Race and sexuality here intersect at the individual and collective level, where the latter mediating the former. The African woman becomes the physical referent of a sub-human sexuality that conceives her as incapable of becoming the desirable European ideal of femininity (McWhorter, 2004). More specifically, the African woman, in Foucault’s Man, as the physical referent whereby to place the biological difference from both the sexes (difference from the white man) and human races (difference from the white woman). This sort of absolute difference from Man (too different to be of the same species) established all African people as not-completely-human and served to position all the variants from the white bourgeois Man into different categories of biological unsucces (Wynter, 2003; McWhorter, 2004).

What Wynter (2003) argues, however, is that the African woman was already racialised as not-completely human; not for her proper sexuality or lack thereof, but because her sub-humanness had already been defined through the early modern episteme, initiated with the 15<sup>th</sup> century colonisation and based on the Colour Line of Christian ideals of salvation and damnation.<sup>37</sup> The racialised differences that were foundational to the

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<sup>37</sup> Wynter (2003) traces the Christian origins of the Colour Line to the biblical tale of Noah’s Curse of Ham. That is the biblical tradition where the sons of Ham were cursed with blackness as stained with sin, and condemned to be servants of Japhet and Shem, hence justifiably enslaved. By reference to the Christian theological organisation of the world across the shift that the conquest of the Americas signified, Wynter (2003) is pointing to how epistemes do not abruptly end to give raise to a new one, but how changes are informed by elements of continuity. For Wynter’s (2003) discussion of the Christian theological epistemic order and the move towards Man1 and Man2, see 301-311.

organisation of the world in the 15<sup>th</sup> century cannot be understood in today's biological terms, but for Wynter, following Fanon and DuBois, it was nonetheless organised around the Colour Line, or the identification of a difference based on phenotypical, cultural, and religious diversity. Racialisation, in Foucault's terms, is intended in the sense of degeneracy of the (human) race, whereas for Wynter (2003) it is a demarcation of (proper, standard) humanness on the base of colour that originated in its uniquely modern way with the 15<sup>th</sup> century colonisation, and that informs access to life and death.<sup>38</sup>

I therefore understand 'racialisation' as the constitution of zones of sacrifice (Wynter, 2003). While dependent on "physical referents" (ibid.), I read 'racialisation' as an ordaining rule that informs access to humanness, life and death, both epistemically and materially. For Povinelli (2006), this extends to peoples and entire cultural, social worldviews and cosmogonies. Not only do histories of colonialism inform persistent forms of racial knowing and political encoding, but the episteme itself – its rules and categories – is racialised. Some populations and ways of arranging truth and falsity will be sacrificed for others to survive and thrive. Sacrifice is not just for the benefit of a specific population, but also for the survival of the episteme as both one that is centred upon Man, and the one organising our social worlds.

Wynter traces the emergence of the episteme of Man to the 15<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance and the conquest of the Americas, and specifically in how the emancipation from the Christian theocratic order allowed lay intellectuals and monarchies to claim the temporal power of the Church. Three events, Wynter (2003) argues, prompt this shift: the rediscovery of pre-Christian philosophy (which offers a new understanding of the self), the Copernican revolution (which shows that the Earth is not at the centre of the universe), and the conquest of the Americas. The latter not only disproved Christian geography and the world as narrated by the Bible but also prompted the expansion of European monarchies into territories inhabited by a new 'kind' of people (Wynter, 2003: 275-283).

Concomitant to the political and economic needs to emancipate from the temporal power of the Church, giving birth to the Enlightenment and political theories of rational government, the encounter with the Amerindians prompted a redefinition of how powerful European subjects were different and superior to their subjected others. All other ways of being human and of knowing different from the Christian-informed European humanist

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<sup>38</sup> Race, Sex, and Colonialism are strongly debated topics in Foucault's work. For a reference, see Stoler's (2002) 'State Racism and the Education of Desires: a Colonial Reading of Foucault'. For more discussion on Foucault's contribution to the genealogy of race, see McWhorter (2004, 2005).

project (different “genres” or “descriptive statements”) were not seen as *other* ways that where ‘out there’, but as a *lack* of proper humanness according to the Western worldview (Wynter, 2003: 282-283). For Wynter, anti-Blackness, as a Colour Line, was already present within the Christian imaginary and geography, but Amerindians were not. The encounter with a new kind of people, together with the disapproval of the theocentric order, prompted the need for new ways of regulating difference, and, crucially, justifying the political interests of European monarchies vis-à-vis the Church (Wynter, 2003: 301-311). One of these new regulatory ways was the category of Reason, which was promptly codified in law with the effect of legitimately expropriate Indigenous lands and resources (Wynter, 2003; Shelton, 2020) and established the novel “descriptive statement” of ‘humanness’.<sup>39</sup>

In the period between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, then, Wynter (2003) identifies a first stage in the formation of the episteme of Man (“Man1”). This is an early and not yet complete secularisation where the episteme of Man is defined by Reason as the ability to govern oneself and others (“homo politicus”). The second stage, which gives the episteme of Man its current configuration (“Man2”), which is equivalent to Foucault’s Man, is traced by Wynter to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when God is completely abandoned to reappear as the evolutionary law of Natural Selection, thus defining humanness through biological and economic ‘selection’.

Wynter understands the shift towards Man2 to be prompted by the need to manage populations in the new nation-state formations, where the non-landed bourgeoisie sought to emancipate from the landed aristocracy. Darwin’s theory of the origin of the species allowed for a redefinition of humanity in biological terms, for which there was no more Divine argument for the superiority of aristocracy. However, new modes were required to explain and secure differences among peoples. The pinnacle of humanness, Wynter argues, was placed in those successful, because selected by evolution *and* the Invisible Hand of the free market. Man2 placed the wealthy, white, bourgeois Man as the evolutionally selected master of Natural Scarcity (“homo oeconomicus”) (Wynter, 2003: 321). The evolutionary law of Natural Selection, as the descriptive statement of Man2, thus analogises biological Natural Selection and the economic Invisible Hand into a modern episteme. Humanness, then, becomes defined in bio-economic terms.

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<sup>39</sup> See Shelton (2020) for an account of how, already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, forms of international law and treaties defined the status of non-European and non-Christian populations as less rational, and how this classification served to lawfully justify the enslavement of peoples and conquest of territories.

There are two elements in Wynter's work that I find useful to deepen this project's understanding of colonial legacies of knowledge production. The first is the extent of the continuities in the episteme of Man through its two iterations, which continue producing colonial presents. The second is how the modern episteme is founded and continues to (re)produce a racial line of life and death that was inaugurated with Man1 as a lack of proper humanness.

In relation to the first element, Wynter illustrates how the humanist epistemic shift initiated a process of secularisation, where it was not the unintelligibility of God to ordain the world anymore, but Man-made processes by virtue of Reason first, and then market and natural Laws. In Man1 the process of secularisation is incomplete, as it is God who allocates rationality as the ability to govern one-self and others. If, before, Christians had no will power over God and His decisions were always incommensurate, in Man1 God delegates the ability to decide, govern, and will be based on a racialised description of Reason (Wynter, 2003). The episteme of Man2 is fully secularised and the world-making quality of God is reallocated to Natural Law of Selection: certain populations and individuals are biologically and economically more selected than others to survive and thrive (Wynter, 2003).

Whereas there can be shifts within an episteme (Foucault, 1972), it tends to be organised according to the epistemic rules of possibility that made the episteme possible in the first place, hence dictating its continuity. In this sense, Wynter (2003) observes a continuity between the two orders of knowledge in their foundational condition of possibility. The extra-human agency appointed to God in the theocentric regime later become, passing through the god-ordained appointment of Reason, the extra-human agency of Natural Law. The Christian damnation of the flesh became, through secular displacement, the humanist condemnation of Unreason, and later the biological and economic condemnation of the Dysselected (Wynter, 2003: 317).

In this sense, in a fully secularised episteme such as Man2, the God-like agency is re-organised around the evolutionary law of Natural Selection. Hence, Man2 is not a rupture with Man1 insofar the extra-human agency is reproduced into a fully secularised bio-economic order. Wynter's (2003) point, here, is that the Christian epistemic rule of dividing peoples and individuals into those who are destined for salvation and those destined for damnation is maintained throughout the episteme of Man, and so does its justification through extra-human agency even though its categories (Reason/Unreason; Selection/Dysselection) change accordingly to political and social shifts and contingencies.



The life/death Christian categories of salvation/condemnation are repropounded, fully secularised, in the production of human and sub-human first as rational/irrational and then selected/dysselected, but still respectively salvable and expendable (Wynter, 2003).

Peoples and populations thrown in to the “space of Otherness”, by virtue of Reason and Natural Law, were first considered less able than Western white bourgeois men to be fully adult and rational, and later biologically unequipped (or “unselected”) to survive in the naturally scarce order of the free market. The damned flesh became, first, the irrational inability to control impulses and passions (Unreason), and later the biological-codified limits for proper humanness, ability, morality (Dysselection).

As an organising divide, in Christian-based European societies life/death was framed in terms of God’s choosing of the Christian to be His bearer on Earth, a righteous group of humans opposed to inherently corrupt and expendable others defined by their damned, sinful flesh (Wynter 2003: 259-263; 276-279). In Man1, the category of expendability was transposed into what Wynter (2003: 279) calls a “space of Otherness” made of those considered less human than Man: Africans, Indigenous populations, women, the poor. In this sense, the episteme of Man (including its “space of Otherness”) is constituted through an order of life and death.

Racialisation, as a hierarchical division based on colour that informs expendability, is not a biological formation on the base of sex that appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Foucault (1978) argued, but a conceptualisation of the human that began with colonisation of the Americas in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The difference is that, in the episteme of Man1 (late 15<sup>th</sup> to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century), race is organised along the Reason/Unreason axis, while in Man2 (after mid-19<sup>th</sup> century), it is organised in bio-economic terms of Selection/Dysselection by evolutionary and market (i.e., ‘natural’) forces. In other words, the sexual subject, or Foucault’s (1970; 1978) “Man” responds to Wynter’s (2003) Man2. Whereas for Foucault (1978; McWhorter, 2004) biological classifications of race emerge as a consequence of how the apparatus of sexuality concerned individuals and populations alike in the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial enterprises, for Wynter it is the racial organisation of the episteme and of humanness in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Man1) that informs the 19<sup>th</sup> century codification of the episteme of Man into the apparatus of sexuality (Foucault’s Man or Man2).

The second point I draw from Wynter (2003), which I have already anticipated, is the extent to which these dividing lines of life/death, human/sub-human, knowing subject/irrational being are distributed around what Wynter (2003: 265-266) calls a

“physical referent” or the Colour Line, and not extra-human agencies. The criteria organising the divide, reified in social inequalities, is for Wynter dependent on phenotypical differences that were necessary for 15<sup>th</sup> century colonisation and Man1, and subsequent Man2 racial formations in biological terms.

To justify the conquest of the Americas and the enslavement of Africans, European monarchies and lay intellectuals needed to appoint some beings as non-humans, hence worthy of survival/salvation as ‘true’ humans (i.e., Christians) would have been (Wynter, 2003: 288-303). Wynter, therefore, finds the criterion to make these decisions in the cultural, religious, and colour differences perceived among non-Christian/European communities. In our episteme of Man2, these referents were researched, classified, and deployed in biological terms to justify ‘race’ as a biological category, and in turn legitimise already existing social structures. This translates, for Wynter (2003), in how we organise our political, social, cultural, and economic life according to these rules of engagement, while continuing to appoint it to extra-human agency as if it was God-given or naturally ordained.

Wynter (2003: 267) illustrates her argument through the example of I.Q. tests in the U.S., which seem to magically reify the racial myth that Black U.S. Americans have ‘naturally’ lower I.Qs. than White U.S. Americans. She contests these “apt descriptions” against a social structuring that systemically marginalises Black people through lower-quality education, overincarceration, and underdelivered social services. Wynter (2003: 267) is here pointing to a racially informed process of “systemic stigmatization” and “social inferiorization,” by which she means the production of impoverishment and deprivation that, on the one hand, serves to confirm the extra-human order categorising certain people and populations as ‘not-exactly-human’; on the other, to legitimate their subordination to the wellbeing and interest of those ‘properly human’.

I want to stress how alongside tracing continuities and ruptures in the episteme of Man, Wynter ties the organisation of the episteme to the organisation of life/death. Her argument is that across shifts, the categories that organise knowledge (what is knowable, by whom, etc.) function along a racialised human/non-human line, where what falls in the first is saved or biologically successful and the second simply is not. The “space of Otherness” works as zones of sacrifice for the survival, and reproduction, of the episteme itself as a way of understanding and organising the world and ourselves as subjects, including our grids or representation and enfleshment.

The distribution of life and death inevitably allocates expendability in all those falling into the “space of Otherness” in favour of those who can fulfil the mandate of appropriate humanness. Those “others” will “lawlikely be sacrificed as a function of our continuing to project our collective authorship of our contemporary order onto the imagined agency of Evolution and Natural Selection and, by extrapolation, onto the ‘Invisible Hand’ of the ‘Free Market’” (Wynter, 2003: 317). Such racial logic, trackable to the exploration voyages of 15<sup>th</sup> century European monarchies and the conquest and enslavement in the Americas and Africa, functions as the unconscious epistemic rule of the modern episteme. Wynter therefore highlights that the modern episteme of Man is racialised, and so are its conditions of possibility.

In other words, following Wynter (2003), the ongoing legacies of structural inequalities are pivotal to the maintenance of this order of truth, and of the sacrificial role that the “space of Otherness” fulfils. Broadly speaking, the construction of who is ‘other’ and which diversity is reinscribed in the episteme – how difference is enacted, how it is recognisable – is a system of intelligibility that responds to norms that necessitate a zone of sacrifice for it to function materially.

### ***3.1.1 Epistemic Legibility as Life and Death***

What I am keen to highlight, here, is the extent to which the enduring colonial presence of categories of thought continues to invest in certain worldviews and experiences (“life-worlds”), leaving others on the scarce end of the international distribution of hope, wellbeing, and value (Povinelli, 2006: 8-13). Elizabeth Povinelli (2021) has referred to the colonial condition of knowledge as the enduring legacies of colonialism. Systems of thought are translated in the organisation of social worlds that unevenly distribute survival, resources, rights, and recognition (Povinelli, 2002; 2006). Globalised, colonial systems of thought produce modes of identification and being a subject intelligible for governance at both the national and international level. They also produce the possible alternatives that are being imagined as necessary to go beyond, or disrupt, such modes of identification and governance. In so doing, they continue to reify colonial investments in which worlds or worldviews are worthy of survival and which are not.

By looking at contemporary Australia, Povinelli exposed how liberal frameworks of multiculturalism (2002) and love (2006) reify unequal systems of power that originated with British colonisation. In the first case it emerges that colonised subjects are required to fulfil impossible standards of Indigenous authenticity. In the second, the deployment of

liberal categories of gender and sexuality impedes Indigenous forms of intimacy, leaving Indigenous groups to be managed by (colonial) categories of governance. Indigenous social worlds and worldviews, incommensurate for colonial regimes of truth and their categories, are ‘underinvested, crippled, and left to rot’ (Povinelli, 2006: 10).

In Povinelli’s analysis, systems of thought – which she (2006: 4) calls “the inherited background against which we distinguish between truth and falsity” – work as a matrix of legibility that shapes how experiences of life are apprehended and how it provides a social matrix similarly shaping normative identities, divisions and possible alternatives. Povinelli’s is inserted in a scholarly tradition that seeks to tie the semantic quality of systems of thought with the materiality of the body, with practice, with the agentic quality of matter (see Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In this sense, for Povinelli, systems of thought are enfolded and serve to produce not only social systems but also our sense of self.

As colonial enterprises claimed to provide universal regimes of humanness and prosperity, they instead accumulated wealth while producing and circulating poverty and death for bodies, worldviews, practices that were left behind. Regimes of truth and falsity inscribed categories into bodies, livelihoods, and social worlds of people and populations, with the result (or purpose, Povinelli (2006) writes) of unevenly distributing life, value, health, hope; and, as Wynter (2003) argues, with the effect of reproducing the same episteme that organises such distribution. The way in which the experience of the body is mediated through systems of truth and falsity, with their matrix of legibility, reifies in an “uneven distribution of the flesh” (Povinelli, 2006: 8). In other words, systems of thought are felt, experienced, expressed at the individual and social level, leaving entire social experiences prey to the racialised modern distribution of life and death.

Ann Stoler (2009) has similarly articulated this relationship as grids of intelligibility that inform imperial rule, governance and management, a persistence that she has called colonial presence or imperial durability. For Stoler (2009), what is noticed or considered urgent, what is placed in the position of requiring attention, hence political discussion and action, is epistemically comprehensible because of the existing systems of knowledge that allow categories, concepts, and problems to be readable, legible: they respond to existing grids of recognition.

In this sense, knowledge and thought, including what can be imagined or discussed and what emerges as a result, is possible on the basis of the existing epistemic rules as well as contingent political needs. Stoler (2009) understands these emergent problems, in the sense of epistemic habits or categories, so to signal that for something to be understandable

it needs to rely on, and reference, the underlying governing structures of intelligibility. For example, exploring colonial Dutch archives, Stoler (ibid.) highlighted to what extent imperial rule was dependent on the efforts to recognise and distinguish forms of racial difference, which in turn relied on unacknowledged manifestations of racial knowing and not-knowing.

I rely on Stoler's analysis because she draws attention to how modern racial knowledge was necessary even when it manifested in confusion and not-knowing. What was possible to say, what was taken for granted, and what could not be articulated depended on the modern system of thought and was eventually manifested in the imperial management of rights, representation, and reform that created, or attempted to create, an imperial management of racial divisions. In turn, these efforts invested the world with images and formations that were previously not required and non-existent. It follows that the modern system of thought is based on organising rules that permit the categorisation of the world, and that the ways of organising life reify these divisions, rather than proving them right as pre-existent, natural condition (Wynter, 2003).

Resonating with Wynter, Povinelli writes:

What at first was a misrepresentation becomes an accurate description. [...] we might ask, what is being done to produce the world in their image? The dynamic transformation of the facts on the ground is not merely a transformation of social values, economy, and political institutions, but the transformation of life-forces, of ecology and environment, of disease trajectories.  
(Povinelli, 2006: 15).

In this sense, colonial forms of recognition, internationally globalised in their liberal configuration (Povinelli, 2006), function as systems of epistemic legibility. In it, the colonial organisation of knowledge, with its racial, gendered, and sexual connotations, remains foundational to the organisation of political, social, and economic life into life or death.

Stoler and Povinelli offer important arguments and examples of how epistemes are governed by rules that are their condition of possibility. At the same time, these conditions of possibility are unveiled as the grid of what allows us to (not) imagine, (not) understand, (not) debate, (not) to hope for and (not) to invest in, as a mark of how life and death are structurally distributed, and as signs of the reproduction of the episteme. In other words, my departure point for this project is that whether explicit or not, the conditions of possibility of modern knowledge are marked by 15<sup>th</sup> century colonialism and its enduring

effects, including its racialising organisation of the world. This quality continues to be manifested and renovated in the structuring of life and death.

Within the colonial system of thought, life is structured through institutions, policies, ideologies, etc., that define which experiences, meanings, senses of self and community, worldviews, and political efforts (alongside environments, cultures, and peoples) are worthy of life (Povinelli, 2006) and which function as zones of sacrifice (Wynter, 2003). For me, this means that the modern episteme, as a system of thought, informs the material realities of colonisation and racialisation, life and death. The racial rule of the episteme of Man continues to be actualised in systems of domination that have the effect of confirming the extra-human agency of Selection/Dysselection. To be intelligible, legible within the colonial system of thought and its categories of signification, identification, enfleshment, and recognition responds to unequal investments of hope and prosperity: where and with whom health and hope are placed and where and with whom despair and death are placed, while masked as universal for the reproduction of the episteme of Man.

### **3.2 A Political Sociology of Knowledge Production**

To articulate a political analysis of the colonial conditions of knowledge production in Argentine feminism, I departed from a sociological approach attentive to colonial flows of power and knowledge as they shape grassroots debates. Following Foucault, my understanding of knowledge is that it is inseparable from the power relations that make it possible. In this sense, “power/knowledge” indicates the mutually informing dynamic for which knowledge is a form of categorising the world without which the exercise of power would not be possible, and where a claim to truth would not be sustained without an arrangement of power relations that legitimises it (Foucault, 1972; Deleuze, 1999).

At the same time, my interest in the relationship between colonialism and knowledge requires to situate the conceptual and methodological standpoint of power/knowledge in relation to the philosophical model of the Modernity/Coloniality of knowledge, which also discusses colonialism and knowledge production. Aníbal Quijano (2000), for example, argues that the production of knowledge in modern epistemology or science is based on the dissociation of subject and object that, he argues, originated with the colonisation of the Americas.

According to Quijano and the Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality [MCD] School<sup>40</sup> more broadly, colonialism informed modes of producing knowledge and systems of signification of both the colonised and the colonisers. Where the former saw their knowledge annihilated, suppressed, or expropriated, the latter relied on the difference with the colonised to raise their form of knowledge to the only possible true one. The ‘coloniality of knowledge’ refers therefore to the long-standing power relations that were inaugurated with the Americas’ colonisation, and how they continue to inform knowledge production beyond the formal end of colonial administrations (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Sylvia Wynter (2003), in fact, relies on Quijano’s (2000) observations to place the creation of a racial divide as one of the organising epistemic rules that inaugurated the episteme of Man in its two iterations.

The modernity/coloniality theory shares with my approach the understanding that which knowledge is produced, which one is relevant, who can produce it, and who benefits from it, continues to be informed by legacies of colonialism. In this thesis, however, I understand knowledge differently from how it is described by the modernity/coloniality school. Quijano (1992) refers to knowledge as the philosophical exercise of modern rationalism, or to what Wynter (2003) referred to as the episteme of Man1 or Reason/Unreason. Knowledge, from the standpoint of the MCD School, is usually discussed as the Eurocentric scientific knowledge system that took its modern shape in the 1500s. It has as its core tenets the pursuit of objective truth, which legitimises the claim to science’s universal validity. These are possible thanks to the concept of rationality and the epistemological distinction between the subject of knowledge (the rational, knowing subject) and its object (the known object).

Eurocentric knowledge works by constructing binary hierarchical relationships (Quijano, 1992; 2007), exemplified by the subject-object relationship. It reflects the hierarchies between colonisers and colonised, Europeans and the other races, Europeans and Nature, and so on. If only European culture and subjects are rational, therefore properly knowing subjects, then the rest are non-rational and cannot be knowing subjects, only objects to be known (Quijano, 2007: 173). In this sense, the subject-object relationship that is posed at the epistemological level in the modern scientific paradigm, for the MCD School, becomes a metaphysics of the colonial relationship itself.

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<sup>40</sup> The Modernity / Coloniality / Decoloniality School proposes an analytic of coloniality that originated around Quijano’s (2000) coloniality of power.

The philosophical approach of the MCD School informs us on how the creation of subjects and objects works as a model of the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000), therefore unveiling how the production of knowledge in Modernity is invested in the reproduction of hierarchies, and particularly so within the form of rationalism that modern science developed. But while this model can be useful in clarifying the trappings of modern epistemology, to begin from it to look at the flows between colonial legacies and knowledge production risks considering every relationship between subject and object as a colonial relationship.

For example, understanding the subject-object relationship as a colonial relationship, it would be readily acceptable to understand political deployments of spirituality as subversive to the colonial relationship, characterised by rationalism and Christian-based secularism. I touched on this characterisation in the Introduction and chapter 2 to show how easily the feminist spirituality of the Green Tide could be read along the lines of the liberatory non-modern spirituality evoked by Gloria Anzaldua, Cherrie Moraga, Jacqui Alexander and bell hooks. In other words, understanding knowledge only as Eurocentric knowledge and knowledge production would lead to the understanding of spirituality as a radical or insurgent knowledge practice because it is subversive to the modern, colonial rational relation between subject and object.

My point here is that rather than understanding any knowledge produced within the episteme/political system of modernity as a manifestation of the rationalist metaphysics of subject-object, the manifestation of colonial presents can be traced more fruitfully by looking at the signs and marks of (racialised) trajectories of life and death. Foucault's (1972) methodology of discursive practice allows me to sociologically understand the Green Tide spirituality as an alternative knowledge practice, a counter-discourse to hegemonic rationalist modern science. But it is, nonetheless, a knowledge practice, and as such its relationship to colonialism and its enduring legacies looks differently than in a modern/colonial metaphysics of power.

Through a lens informed by Wynter and Foucault, a knowledge like modernity's, with its subject/object colonial relationship, can be explored in how it is constituted in the first place, and how it moves, reconfigures, and happens in specific moments, objects, knowledge formations, etc. As a discursive practice, spirituality needs to be approached as an articulation of what is sayable and what is not, what is visible and what is not, and as the links that make certain configurations possible and not others beyond the subject-object



relationship. Furthermore, as a discursive practice, spirituality is informed by the power relations within which it emerges, and in turn enables ways of operationalising power.

These, as I argue by following Wynter (2003), Povinelli (2002; 2006), and Stoler (2009), will be informed by the legacies of colonialism on the arrangement of power relations in trajectories of life and death. In other words, this project requires a sociological understanding of how knowledge is produced, how the episteme is assembled, which Foucault's discursive framework provides. Discourse refers here to a system of knowledge, a system of rules, conventions, categories, and practices that regulate what can be said, imagined, and thought. In other words, it organises what is acceptable as knowable, sayable, seeable (Foucault, 1972; Deleuze, 1999) and how, consequently, the world can be structured.

As a system of knowledge, it is not separated from its political and historical context, but it is dependent on it. A discourse is therefore not just the logic allowing the organisation of elements or archive (knowledge), but also an operation of power struggles within a determinate context (power). Consider how Wynter (2003) traces the emergence of the episteme and political order of Man1 to the contingent needs of monarchies and lay humanists vis-a-vis the temporal power of the Church, and the emergence of the episteme of Man2 to the interest of the non-landed bourgeoisie. Similarly, my Foucauldian approach is therefore grounded in the empirical projects of inquiring about an emergent phenomenon in the present, not in making a transcendental claim (Koopman & Matza, 2013).

Foucault's discursive practice, informed by Wynter's emphasis on racial colonial conditions of possibility, is a framework that allows to politically trace the Green Tide feminist knowledge production within a global political economy of power/knowledge, one indeed shaped by colonial histories and their enduring legacies. Whereas the MCD School approach is concerned, in a way, with the macrophysics (or even metaphysics) of power that thinks about the way the global grid of coloniality is necessarily reproduced in every relation, my approach is that of a microphysics of power (Foucault, 1975)<sup>41</sup> that allows for tracking contingent power relations in the enduring colonial present, even when silently invested in an everyday practice. In other words, I am suggesting thinking about how the contingency of power relations manifests in the continuity of the episteme of Man, rather

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<sup>41</sup> See 'The History of Sexuality Vol. 1' (Foucault, 1978), pp. 92-102, for an account of the macrophysics of Power and the microphysics of power relations.

within the MCD School framework in which the coloniality of power has the same model as the coloniality of knowledge.

### **3.2.1 Operationalising Discourse: Archive-Assemblage Methodology**

Departing from a theoretical premise that is interested in how contingent power relations inform which knowledge formations can emerge, and how these formations are shaped (Foucault, 1972) in ways that give continuity to colonial orders, I am interested in investigating how spirituality, and particularly the Witch, but not equally other figures, became increasingly mobilised as a category of Southern feminist anti-colonial thought and action at the time of Green Tide mobilisation for legal abortion.

The Green Tide became popular during the first neoconservative government of *Cambemos* and its extremely depriving economic measures, part of a right-wing wave of governments in Latin America. As such, the movement developed a theoretical framework and political strategy tying reproductive rights to economic violence, expanding their anti-capitalist critique as an anti-colonial critique (Molinari, 2023). The same time-period saw the rise of the Indigenous Women and Diversities Movement for the Good Living, who organised around community claims for recognition of land, against institutional violence, and for social and environmental protection from renewed extractivist waves driven by the increased demand for rare minerals for renewable energy technology (Monfort, 2021).

How, then, did the Green Tide's demand for legal abortion, against violence against women, and against neoliberal economic politics and morals meet with a securitarian wave rolled out against impoverished urban communities, stained with racial and classed assumptions over criminal activities (Bonvillani, 2020), and against rural Indigenous communities engaged in land reclamation or protection struggles (Briones, 2023)? One notable example centred around the *Encuentro*, which underwent a heated discussion, initiated by the *MMDIBV*, to change its name from National Women's Encounter to the PluriNational Encounter of Women, Lesbians, Trans, *Travestis*, Bisexuals, Intersexuals and Non-Binary People [PNE]. The *MMDIBV* suggested the change to signal the participation of Indigenous People that do not fit the category of 'nation', and sex, sexual and gender non-conforming persons that do not respond as 'women'. *Ni Una Menos*, at least formally, stood in alliance.

In this scenario, my design of a methodological framework is concerned with what happened at the encounter of feminist and anti-colonial claims. Concretely, I depart by framing the knowledge formations that construct the 'spiritual' as a decolonial enterprise

of feminist politics as a contemporary emerging site of academic enquiry and political contestation (Stoler, 2009): Which articulations of ‘spiritual’ knowledge are translated as anti-colonial thought and action; who publishes what and where, how, where, and to whom is the content disseminated; what is said, which meanings are taken for granted, and what is not said; where are hope and investment placed, and on which themes, claims, moments of protest is feminist attention concentrated?

The knowledge produced by academics, intellectuals, and activists of the Green Tide movement offers a privileged site to trace the flows of power/knowledge that configure their discourse of feminist spirituality. I therefore examine the knowledge formations produced by and for the two main Green Tide organisations: *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*. I focus on data that was publicly available online and that was published with the intent of dissemination: social media posts and organisational documents of the two Green Tide organisations, newspaper or specialised magazine pieces written by or for Green Tide supporters, academic papers deploying a Green Tide feminist standpoint or similarly written by Green Tide supporters.

Moreover, I analyse the type of knowledge produced and circulated during important moments of Green Tide feminist gathering, given the historical importance of these instances for feminist formation, community-making, and discussion (Moltoni, 2021) which are also at the basis of their understanding as *popular* and anti-colonial (Palma, 2017, Korol in Smaldone et al., 2019; Méndez, 2020; Mulinari 2023). I excluded the possibility of online interviews or focus groups with knowledge producers, consumers, or activists, mostly because the theoretical premise of the project rendered knowledge publicly available online an ideal repository wherein to search, sample, and collect data in the form of text.<sup>42</sup>

Focusing on Green Tide’s production and circulation of knowledge allows me to research feminist dynamics in a space of self-definition. My methodology is therefore designed to capture the connections and relations between different fields and sites of expression, such as the Green Tide and the *MMDIBV*, or the feminine spirituality groups and gatherings that have been addressed by Karina Felitti (2019b, 2021a), or at specific instances such as the *Encuentro*’s name change. Here I am not pointing at a causal

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<sup>42</sup> The decision not to include human participants setting up online interviews or focus groups was also supported by ethical considerations. As this project was developed during the Covid-19 outbreak, I considered that to ask for participants’ time and labour at such an ‘exceptional’ time would have been insensitive to the urgencies and needs people in Argentina were facing.

relationship between what happens in the spiritual groups, feminist activism and Indigenous activism, or with the connected practices of the Argentine state, or any other actor. Nor I am hinting at the constitution of clearly delimited case-studies. Rather, I am concerned with the relationships of overlap, interplay, incoherence, encounter and disencounter that characterises the discursive field of power relations (Foucault, 1972), or what Jasbir Puar (2017a: 116) calls the “convivial relations between distinct yet entangled forms of power.”

Insofar as colonial presents play out contingently and divergently, looking at the knowledge produced by the Green Tide across other fields of knowledge production and activism holds the potential of drawing the lines of how trends of inclusion and representation play out in a multifaceted and, at times, contradictory way. To be perfectly clear again, I am not interested in the knowledge produced by the *MMDIBV*, or groups of feminine spirituality, but in registering feminist reactions, interests, silences, in relation to adjacent albeit separate occurrences and unfoldings. In this sense, the encounter with other fields informs feminist dynamics of knowledge production as they are expressed in a space of potential alliance with the *MMDIBV* or in the dispute around the PluriNational Encounter.

To tackle the challenges of identifying, sampling, and collecting data for an analysis of power/knowledge, I propose a synergy of assemblage and archival methodology that works synchronically to identify the operations of discourse across these disjunctive spaces. Both approaches offer enough methodological freedom to analyse how epistemic categories, meanings, and themes relate to each other across different sites and processes into the emergence of a feminist spirituality. Assemblage allows me to expose how, for however disjunctive they look, epistemic claims, categories, and formations are possible on the basis on a shared grid of intelligibility. Those meanings and practices but not others will be thinkable (Stoler, 2009) but they also allow a relation of conviviality between seemingly distant processes (Puar, 2017a). At the same time, archival methodology reiterates the relevance of underlying rules of discourse that make certain formations more possible than others to be thought, understood, and resonate as they are intentionally configured as a coherent unity (Derrida, 1996).

Assemblage, translated from its original French *agencement*, traditionally focuses on the ontological diversity of agency, looking at the capacity of networks of matter to act beyond individual beings (De Landa, 2006; 2016). It also pays close attention to human interdependency with technology, infrastructure, ecosystems, as well as narratives, cultural

or juridical frameworks, etc. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Arguing for the instability of assemblages in ways that cannot be fully grasped by representational politics and subject positions, assemblage traditions highlight the agentic role of connecting itself, therefore pointing to often unacknowledged but nonetheless established habits of thought. In other words, meaning and subjectified identities are a result of moving connections that exist not as *a priori* entities but rather as a constant process of relating – an assemblage – of patterning, stratification, resonance (Phillips, 2006).

I was inspired by Jasbir Puar's (2017a) 'Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times', where she looked at a variety of primary sources, often disjunctive, to undermine the "naturalized sexual scripts of terror that become taken-for-granted knowledge formations" (ibid., 2017a: xxiii). Puar shows how sexuality, race, and nationalism come together into a "terrorist assemblage" that serves the imperial needs of the U.S. nation-state. The understanding of 'queer' as a radical identitarian posture is exposed and questioned, while revealing how these identitarian trends foster U.S. imperial, securitarian politics: racialised populations come into being through the assignment of il/legitimate forms of queerness.

In the foreword to 'Terrorist Assemblages', Tavia Nyong'o (Puar, 2017a: xiii) describes Puar's approach to assemblage as "arranging action"; an emphasis on how assemblage methodology produces not a finalised collage of eclectic sources but a way of looking at how relations of force bring together a 'patterning' with capacity for acting in the world. To shift experiences of identity and representation, and so the categories underlying these experiences, Puar (2017a) reads De Landa's (1991; 2002) and Deleuze & Guattari's (1987) assemblage with Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality. Contemporary knowledge formations come to be understood as "multi-causal, multi-directional, liminal" encounters, where the accent of analysis is "on motion rather than gridlock" (Puar, 2012: 59): on how identities or knowledge formations are mobile and reactive to their environment (including power relations), rather than static carriers of essentialised qualities.

Puar's methodology does not search for the linearity or causality of claims but to account for the "convivial relations" entertained between queerness and securitisation (Puar, 2017a: xxii). And, in so doing, Puar denaturalises expectations about how knowledge is produced and visible. It is precisely these "convivial relations" that I point at when I mention the moments of encounter and disencounter between the Green Tide's production of spirituality as decolonial, the *MMDIBV*, and the Encounter's name change.

However, while Puar analyses the relations between the seemingly distant or even opposed (securitisation and queerness), I address the seemingly allied, concomitant, or adjuvant. The Green Tide progressively developed an anti-colonial discourse based on financial impoverishment (Mulinari, 2023), and, as I show in chapters 5 and 6, explicitly declared themselves in complicity with similarly positioned movements and struggles such as the *MMDIBV*'s. The Green Tide therefore locates itself in a position of sameness with anti-colonial claims, including Indigenous ones. My intention is precisely to destabilise identities like 'feminist', 'Southern', or 'spiritual' by rethinking them as provisional assemblages constituted only within certain grids of legibility, where identities, resistance, and prefigurative proposals become readily recognisable and enactable. In this way, I work through colonial legacies of knowledge production not as binary poles to occupy but as continuous tensions always in dispute that are informed by, and inform, trajectories of life and death.

Those practices of connection, silence, and conviviality inform about how the spiritual, feminist, decolonial 'common sense' of the Green Tide is possible (Stoler, 2009). Assemblage, then, draws on a variety of material sources not randomly nor to eclectically support a specific argument, but to uncover how objects, affects, temporalities, categories of thought and ways of organising life are related to each other, how their meanings and practices are mutually produced in trajectories of life and death (Povinelli, 2006).

In the preface to 'Terrorist Assemblages', Puar (2017a: xxiii) understands it as "the building of an alternative historical record, archive, and documentation of our contemporary moments." I approach data gathering similarly, although not as in the production or completion of an archive. In his theory of knowledge, Foucault (1972) distinguishes between the episteme and the archive, insofar as the first reflects the relations between discourses and the second is the law regulating what can be said, therefore holding these discourses and their regularities. In this sense, archives work epistemically as repositories of what is knowledgeable and how knowledges can relate to each other. Similarly, archives work as repositories of what is unintelligible, and the relations among the thinkable that allows to produce novel knowledge formations. The modes of organisation of an episteme can be therefore thought of as archival laws. Archives, organised in and through a grid of intelligibility, inform in turn assemblages. Archive-assemblage, then, can be thought as what is epistemically (and materially) possible to assemble, what *agencement* can be arranged.

Whereas Foucault's (1972) understanding of the archive is useful to deepen my theoretical standpoint on how knowledge is produced through laws and grids that organise its conditions of possibility, methodologically I understand the process of data collection as a process of challenging, as Puar (2012; 2017a) did, the most promptly available narratives and their political correlates. In such effort of complicating the ready-to-read application of thought and categories, I rely on Derrida's (1996) theory of the archive, which stresses on the principle of 'gathering together'.

Here I do not aim at giving a 'more complete' representation of radical discourses of feminism and decoloniality through the making of a political spirituality. Nor do I want to produce another, separate archive of the contemporary happenings of Argentine feminism. I am keen to clarify this point because one aspect of Derrida's (1996) theory highlights the archive's aim of coordinating an ideal configuration, a form of unity. The archive manifests a drive for finishing it, completing it, and making a claim to truth based on such completeness. At the same time, however, Derrida questions these established practices to raise the question of the politics of the archive: who controls it, controls the past and the future of what can be said, remembered, and thought. What is left out determines the archive and the criteria organising it.

For Derrida (1996), the archive is always already unfinished and unfinishable. One the one hand, then, this project stresses on the unfinishedness of any archival endeavour, including mine. When it comes to the data I collected and its analysis, I make no claims to be conclusively giving a complete picture of the topic I set out to explore. Gayatri Spivak's (1988) theory of subalternity and representation comes to mind, with the reminder to resist modernity's efforts of codifying all that is different from the West's ontology within frameworks of multiculturalism and diversity. For Spivak, these frameworks do not account for what is outside the modern grid of legibility, but rather reiterate existing trajectories of life and death. In other words, I am keen to avoid a sort of 'here is what you need to finally represent X better' (Puar, 2017b).<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, applying the principle of 'gathering together' (Derrida, 1996) permits me to look at how the knowledge formation on the Green Tide feminist spirituality is kept together at times coherently and at times diffractively, and how it produces a knowledge formation that has agential capacity, an assemblage with political correlates.

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<sup>43</sup> Drawing on Spivak (1988), in 'The Right to Maim', Puar (2017b: 18-31) calls this the problem of the "epistemological corrective" that assumes epistemic problems of exclusion can be resolved by representing things 'more accurately'.

For example, the Green Tide spirituality attracted participants in the street and contributed to the unique aesthetics of the Green Tide, which in turn had the effect of resonating transnationally. Moreover, it also brought global scholars to proactively participate in a reading of feminist spirituality of the Green Tide as a disruptive, insurgent, radical political spirituality.

Where assemblage methodology invites not taking for granted and questioning the categories and objects that form any given unity, archival methodology offers a way to follow grids of intelligibility as they assemble and flow away. Inspired by Puar's (2017a) assemblage method, I depart from different sites of knowledge production, and organise the process of identifying, gathering, and selecting data according to the Derridean (1996) archival practice of following existing connections of themes, knowledge producers, institutions including, given the digital quality of data, mutual citations, hyperlinks, symbols, aesthetics, times, and places.

Drawing on Puar's (2017a) variety of primary sources, I do not limit my data to any specific format. These connections inform chains of thought and meaning, including silences, contributing to the assemblage of the Green Tide spirituality. As I explain in the next sections, working with different formats carries the necessity of approaching each format according to the technique more apt for it. Gathering data from social media accounts, for example, requires a different technique than the access and gathering of essays and news articles. All these formats are, however, unified by the Derridean (1996) logic of 'gathering-together' and by the assemblage they constitute.

I simultaneously remain attentive to the unexpected juxtapositions and conviviality and tracked what emerged when following established lines of thinking, categories of thought and practice. While Puar's assemblage allows, methodologically, looking across units through the relations they form, Derrida's archival approach permits to observe, in those relations, what are the laws informing proximity and distance, what are the words that carry conceptual weight, around which concepts, and practices meaning condenses, and what is left out. As a result, I jump across different fields of enunciation (the press, specialised feminist magazines, activist social media, scholarly publications, street aesthetics, etc.) by following the emergent patterns that indicate the working of an epistemic, or archival, law of organisation.

Mine might seem a somewhat 'undisciplined' way to organise research techniques. Disciplinary divisions, however, are foregrounded by the episteme itself. So, although the materials I collect might appear 'undisciplined' from the point of view of any one given



discipline (with its internal rules about what constitutes proper ‘data’), my data collection is not ‘random’, because the episteme *is* the underlying set *of rules* of knowing (Foucault, 1972). In this sense, the data collection for behind my epistemic analysis is ‘undisciplined’ but nonetheless rule-governed.

### **3.2.2 Analytical Tools for Discourse Analysis**

In a Foucauldian discourse analysis, statements that are made on social media, in a book, at a public event, on social media are on the same discursive plane. Foucault (1972) understands systems of thought as a system of statements, a general system of the formulation and transformation of statements. The discursive plane cuts across possible unities or areas of deployment (i.e., the book or the hospital) so that a specific set of meanings are possible only when mediated by such epistemic framework. Statements, then, are not a sentence but an expression, or enunciation, of the episteme. Discursive statements fulfil in this way the enunciative function of conveying a very specific way of knowing and meaning. The organisation of these statements into a system of possible knowledge Foucault (1972: 145-148) calls the archive of what can be said, or the system that informs the formulation of statements.

This means that statements are not just a sentence, a word, or an utterance, but rather an epistemic enunciation: they convey how is it possible for us to think what we think. I analyse the data collected not as unitarian entities but as a collection of material offering different ways of relating and resonating. It follows that the different formats of data are to be understood in their quality of discursive statements operating in the discursive plane, hence not needing to be analysed through their pre-defined units (the press, academia, social media).

Similarly, the relations drawn with other close or distant processes need to be understood not in a relationship of direct causality, or linearity, but rather as fields of convivial relations (Puar, 2017a) of power/knowledge. It is these relations across fields that uncover proximities and distances in the operation of discourse and the power relations that constitute it. The first element of power/knowledge, the organisation of elements that constitute a discourse, can be examined with an archaeological analysis. This analytic allows one to analyse single domains of practice, such a system of thought (knowledge), and uncover its essential structure.

If archaeology addresses historical knowledge formations as the visible combination of what is intelligible in a way that is unique to each historical formulation

(Deleuze, 1999), the genealogical analysis, on the other hand, is preoccupied with examining the power relations that inform the constitution of knowledge at any given point in history. As Koopman (2008) illustrates, the genealogical analysis is not just an analysis of power (as such could be done through archaeology as well), but an investigation of the interaction among knowledge formations. Genealogy is “neither power nor knowledge, but rather the interaction between power and knowledge” (Koopman, 2008: 343).

The genealogical analysis of power therefore allows one to account for the transitions and transformations that contingently (not in an inevitable rational linearity) shape systems of thought. Genealogy does not search for origins nor seek to establish a linear development but aims to reveal an often-contradictory past and co-constitution between the organisation of power relations and the articulation of claims to truth. For Koopman and Matza (2013), if problematisation, as an approach, serves to denaturalise the emergence of problems and practices, then the analytics of archaeology and genealogy together “uncover *how* our different conceptual assemblages are contingently composed” (ibid.: 834).

The archaeological analysis of discourse invites looking at this system of statements as they are formed in a stratification of their discursive and non-discursive elements (Foucault, 1972). The latter are the socio-economic practices, or the environment within which a discourse takes place. Foucault distinguishes between these two elements insofar as discursive elements can be analysed without having a causal link to the non-discursive processes. Discursive elements speak instead of unities of discourse such as objects, strategies, concepts, and subject positions (Foucault, 1972), which in turn operate the mediation between sentences and meanings (Foucault, 1972; Deleuze;1999).

An archaeological exploration of discourse describes the relations between statements as they come together in a regular manner in the discursive plane: when they refer to the same object, when they refer to a coherent concept, and by the persistence of themes or strategies, as well as which subject positions the discourse allows. In the data, I analyse text structure, succession of content, use of headings and subheadings, as well as how abstract thought was eventually translated into political proposals. In this way I identify the archaeological elements that compose Foucauldian archaeological analysis: concepts, strategies, objects, and subject positions.

Identifying the formation of concepts in discourses is a central step in the analysis of a knowledge formation. Concepts do not have to be considered as self-sustained entities but rather as a group of relations (Foucault, 1972: 59-62). It will be then the analysis of

what kind of law, or rule, allows the emergence of concepts, to inform the genealogical analysis of power – how those rules, hence the discourse, are possible. Throughout my empirical chapters, I identify which are the explicit concepts that are formed by the discourse of spirituality as feminist/political. To do so, I refer to what Stoler (2009) has called words of power. Stoler relies on Deleuze's (1999) reading of Foucault to define words of power as categories with conceptual authority. Not any word can fulfil the role, only "those that 'revolve around different focal points of power,' that are 'set in play by a particular problem'" (Stoler 2009: 36). For me, it means that around these words there will be discussion, effort, and deliberation over their use specifically around the 'problem' of a feminist spirituality.

An archaeological analysis of knowledge also requires looking at discursive strategies, objects and subject positions produced. Discursive strategies refer to moments of equivalence and/or incompatibility among statements, pointing to a coherent systematisation that allows the emergence of objects and concepts (Foucault, 1972: 64-68). The discourse formation itself is dependent on the different strategies deployed in it. On another hand, through the deployment of strategies, a discursive concept or word of power congeals several discursive objects.

While a word of power or discursive concept is a way of linking objects, those objects represent the space wherein the discourse can develop. Objects are defined by Foucault as the domains, the areas that are delimited by strategies that allow one to speak of something (Foucault, 1972: 46). In other words, discursive objects are the space of practice, where the discourse finds its place of enactment. Discursive objects point to what becomes a unified unit of thought, what becomes distinguishably visible and sayable as intelligible units. If discursive objects are the domains, constituted by a discourse on the base of the rules of engagement of the episteme, wherein a discourse can unfold into existence as something as a claim to truth, discursive subjects refer to what kind of subjecthood is formed. When it comes to the formation of subject positions, discursive statements do not determine which individuals can occupy it, but rather what standpoint is going to be occupied by anyone who is going to be a subject of the discourse (Foucault, 1972: 95-96).

I identify the discursive concepts that are explicitly deployed by the Green in 'Witch' and 'Popular'. I progress with the genealogical analysis of the conditions of possibility of these two words of power through chapters 4 and 5. 'Race', which is foundational to the modern episteme, remains instead unacknowledged and explored in

chapter 5 through the Green Tide relationship to the *MMDIBV* and the PluriNational Encounter. Therefore, while in chapter 4 I look at the discursive formation of the Witch, the discursive strategies that make it possible, the objects and subject positions it produces, in chapters 5 and 6 I focus on how these concepts, strategies and objects are possible epistemically, and which epistemic possibilities they allow.

A tool I found analytically useful is Derrida's (1996) notion of 'impression'. I discussed how Derrida's exploration of the archive was useful for understanding both my deployment of discourse analysis and the data collection process. It was in relation to the archive that Derrida (1996: 29) preferred the term 'impression' to that of 'concept': "[w]e have no concept, only an impression, a series of impressions associated with a word.<sup>44</sup> To the rigor of the *concept*, I am opposing here the vagueness or the open imprecision, the relative indetermination of such a *notion*" (italics in original). Derrida here argues that when any archive is being assembled, so are its categories of thought. In this sense, they will be a site of discussion, which for Derrida marks the interaction of forces at play.

Derrida's (1996) thinking resembles Stoler's (2009) understanding of words of power as a site of discussion that is dependent upon and marks the field of power relations. The relevance of bringing Derrida's 'impression' into my understanding of discourse analysis and discursive concepts or words of power, is that a category of thought might often appear disjointed or fractured as a manifestation of the push and pull among forces; it appears as it is assembled, in its quality of enabling agency. I believe the notion of impression offers the analytical ability to identify discursive concepts or words of power beyond their materialisation into just one notion (which here I have called referents or keywords).

The ability to identify a category of thought across a disjointed vocabulary in virtue of how discursive strategies bring them together well espouses my assemblage-archive method, which identifies the chains of meaning making possible the connection between 'spirituality' and feminist politics through literal and non-literal referents. Linking chains of reference as impression is therefore a useful analytical tool to explore how the operationalisation of 'spirituality' emerges from the data, from feminist sites of knowledge production. As I explore what vocabulary is deployed in the chain of meaning that makes

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<sup>44</sup> I am enclosing 'concept' in inverted commas to signal that I am not referring to discursive concepts, as in my Foucauldian discourse analysis. Here, 'concept' refers to Derrida's own use as self-enclosed and often rigid unities and is briefly deployed to make a methodological point on how referents can come together in ways that are not straightforwardly identifiable as pre-formed units of meaning or 'concepts'.

possible the connection between ‘spirituality’ and feminist politics, I allow the operationalisation of ‘spirituality’ to emerge from these chains of reference. But as I do so, I am also able to identify which vocabulary, referents, terms are deployed in the making of the discursive concepts or words of power that form the discourse’s epistemic categories.

Derrida’s (1996) ‘impression’, visible by following chains of meaning, thus allows me to analytically see different notions clustered together in the formation of a category of thought, which I operationalised in the keyword, snowballing, and cross-reference search technique. So, while I identify the discursive concept or word of power ‘Witch’, I will often refer to it as ‘spirituality’. Similarly, when I explore the word of power ‘*popular*’ in chapter 5, I will often refer to it as clustered around ‘precarity’, and ‘debt’. As I analyse chains of reference, different notions will come into play not as synonyms but operating in a cluster.

On the one hand, such coming together gives a sense of vagueness and relative indetermination typical of an ‘impression’ (Derrida, 1996: 29-30). This is a sense of disjuncture found at the centre of discursive production insofar it signals the epistemic operation of keeping it together despite its dispersion (Foucault, 1972). On the other hand, for however disjointed, this coming together represents how, in a discourse, impressions agglomerate around words of power (Stoler, 2009). Such densities functioned as the other face of ‘impressions’ as an analytical approach to follow chains of meaning, to sense impressions, and to identify words of power around which epistemic categories are clustered. I am building on Stoler’s (2009: 35) use of Deleuzian ‘density’ as sites where we can see a thickening of efforts of knowledge production, where discussion takes place, words of power are created, and that give a rhythm to the archive, the assemblage, or the discourse that allows one to identify the epistemic rules that make it possible.

The discursive concepts or words of power I analyse, therefore, are dispersive impressions (Derrida, 1996) as well as thickening densities (Deleuze, 1968 in Stoler, 2009). If notions are clustered around a word of power giving a sense of vagueness, how they are condensed together is a trace of their organising principle or epistemic rule. In other words, the epistemic conditions of possibility that make the Green Tide discourse of a feminist spirituality can be explored as different notions cluster together around words of power and into necessarily disjunctive yet dense epistemic categories.

Stoler (2009: 32-37) has argued that the possibility of creating new common senses is dependent on existing frameworks. In a similar vein, Povinelli (2002, 2006) has investigated how novel combinations of epistemic classifications can promote comprehension of social issues that perpetuate established modes of knowledge. The thesis

therefore explores what are the underlying existing rules that allow the ‘spirituality as feminist/political’ as thinkable – as an emerging possibility for thought that responds to, and informs back, the enduring colonial present of differential distribution of life and death (Povinelli, 2006).

### **3.3 Feminist Knowledge Production: Data Search and Collection**

In the last sections I explain how I am simultaneously interested in the intentionally constructed unities of discourse and in the assemblage resulting from the seemingly unrelated or the seemingly adjacent, and how I approached data analysis under a Foucauldian archive-methodology framework. In what follows I detail how I structure my methodology, identifying sites of data collection and designing data-gathering techniques. Insofar as my focus is on the Green Tide knowledge production of political spirituality, I remain primarily attached to knowledge produced in and from the Green Tide, even when looking at it in relation to its contiguous spaces.

I step out of the Green Tide to look at the history and political proposal of the women-led Indigenous movement *MMDIBV*, not to analyse its claims, knowledge constructions, or political strategies, but with the purpose of looking at the Green Tide through the conceptual categories, arguments, and timelines of the *MMDIBV*. In this regard, I focus on the PluriNational Encounter’s name change, a process that the *MMDIBV* initiated in 2018 and that in early 2024 was not yet solved. Finally, I look at the Green Tide creation of a feminist timeline, at how issues were represented, how mobilisation was fostered, and how allied themes, organisations, or claims were made present, or not. I also include one section on my use of social media and one on the sampling method used to gather relevant texts.

I divide these subsections according to the technique I followed for each format to understand and gather data: the knowledge produced by intellectuals of the Green Tide requires a different approach than the organisation of timelines, and both differ from the case of the Encounter’s name change. I operate this division here, in writing, mostly to account for the different choices, rationales, and details of data gathering as an exercise of methodological assemblage (Puar, 2017a). However, I am keen to stress that this necessary operational separation does not translate into separate case-studies as unities of analysis. Each of these approaches, in fact, cuts across each-other. I could not identify Green Tide intellectual production without social media, which is also foundational to the construction

of the Green Tide timeline and the movement's relationship to the *Encuentro* and the *MMDIBV*.

Social media was of paramount importance for the circulation of feminist texts, theorisation, claims and the fostering of mobilisation in the streets (Torres, 2021). Similarly, understanding how the Green Tide timeline is constructed offered important insights about who wrote what and when, unveiling Green Tide investments in certain claims and mobilisation moments rather than others, which in turn can be placed in relation to their stated alliance to the *MMDIBV*. Moreover, the approach I utilise to find data of Green Tide knowledge production (what intellectuals have written and circulated), provides me with method of looking across and within texts, social media posts, images, street aesthetics – Derrida's (1996) 'gathering together'. This is the case even when data concerns, for example, interviews to the *MMDIBV* leader Moira Millán during her discussions of *MMDIBV*'s actions. This logic serves to further position the Green Tide reading of a feminist spirituality in relation to an Indigenous movement that developed at its same time and with equally disrupting actions (including the PluriNational Encounter's dispute). Whereas I present them in linear succession, these approaches (and their presentation in written sections) are parallel to each other.

Together, these analyses problematise how hope, prefiguration, urgency and attention are distributed, which problems become discussable and which not (Stoler, 2009; Puar, 2017a) in the making of the Green Tide spirituality. Throughout the chapters, I present and analyse data interchangeably and not according to each of these logics, offering perhaps a more accurate understanding of what assemblage looks like in the Green Tide case. Finally, by approaching these assembled formats with literature on the historical, economic, social, and political history of Argentina, through the chapters I provide insights on how they are informed by, and inform, trajectories of life and death (Povinelli, 2006). In other words, on the otherwise unacknowledged conditions of possibility of the Green Tide feminist spirituality.

### ***3.3.1 Green Tide Sites of Knowledge Production***

To begin with, I researched the knowledge produced and circulated by knowledge producers tied to the Green Tide. The relevance of knowledge produced and circulated by and for the Green Tide relates to the importance of the Green Tide on the new impulse of feminist activism, theorisation, and professionalisation in Argentina and Latin America.

This quality informed the Green Tide's attentiveness to their transnational resonance, including the progressive building of Argentina as a feminist and 'gay-friendly' nation.

Moreover, Argentina presents a strong tradition of public intellectuals, where scholars and researchers often participate of political life aiding social movements or their causes and intervening in public debates through non-scholarly outputs, including group discussions, assemblies, talks, and seminars (Barrancos, 2015; Mu & Pereyra-Rojas, 2015). Local branches of *Ni Una Menos*, *La Campaña*, or supporting collectives, often organise reading circles and open libraries as part of their conscientisation strategy, and as an opportunity to create feminist culture, support, and change.

Given the centrality of Green Tide claims for the legalisation of abortion and against gender-based violence, parliamentary debates and other important moments of feminist mobilisation have seen prosperous writing, wherein different issues have been discussed in press, television, social media. It is notable, in this sense, the relevance of social media calls from actresses and journalists for the *Ni Una Menos* outburst in 2015 (García Crespo, 2015).

The kind of knowledge produced and disseminated during the timeline of the Green Tide expansion is therefore pivotal to understand how spirituality is articulated as a specific knowledge formation so to address, consciously or not, issues of colonialism, racialisation, impoverishment, and political life. I look at how spirituality was addressed by feminist writings in feminist spaces oriented at creating change in the social tissue, and therefore to understand which constructions of 'feminist spirituality' or 'feminist political spirituality' are produced. Within the Foucauldian framework discussed above, I am referring to institutional knowledge (academic), public opinion (journalistic), and social movements' (grassroot) expressed in various formats: pamphlets and official organisational communications, social media posts, essays, interviews, news articles, podcasts, academic papers, but also dates and places of encounter.

The knowledge produced by academics continues to hold a privileged position for the conceptualisation of political theories, the articulation of political strategies, and for their diffusion across civil society (Mu & Pereyra-Rojas, 2015; Espinosa Miñoso, 2022). This is so even if the production itself is not oriented towards research-specific outputs such as specialised journals, but is rather presented in the form of essays, analysis, or opinion articles for the non-specialised public, which are often preferred. Precisely for the character of public dissemination, I was not strictly interested in the knowledge produced in the form



of academic papers, but rather in the broader category of knowledge produced by academics tied to the Green Tide.

In other words, the academic production used as data in this thesis takes the shape of scholarly papers, as well as other writings produced by scholars: interviews, essays, manifestos, or the exhibition they helped curate. I do not engage with their arguments, but I show the role of academic production in the discourse of a social movement and how discourse operates across formats in the same discursive plane (Foucault, 1972). In other words, I analyse them to illustrate how they produce spirituality as feminist and decolonial as opposed to engaging in theoretical disputes with them.

Journalistic production was at the centre of the Green Tide strategy of visibilisation (Fernández Hasan, 2019). For this reason, I focus mostly on the press sympathetic to the Green Tide, disregarding of the political view of the news company. An example would be accounts narrating a protest with an effort of explaining the Green Tide's claims to broader civil society, or a specialised feminist magazine analysing any given occurrence from a feminist standpoint. Finally, I understand that grassroots organisations who articulate social movements are knowledge producers independently of their relationship with institutions (Espinosa Miñoso, 2014; Barrancos, 2015).

I am distinguishing between academic, journalistic, and grassroots production only for the purposes of clarity, to give an account of the different sites wherein knowledge can be produced and found, and specifically so in the context of Argentine feminist articulation. These are often overlapping spaces, for instance with members of activist spaces participating in a feminist magazine or editorial, or with academic talks being published on the organisations' social media accounts. It is important, moreover, to signal that these sites of knowledge production, their producers, and circulation they operate on the same discursive plane (Foucault, 1972).

Such methodological openness reflects Puar's (2017a), who for 'Terrorist Assemblages' relied on a diverse array of sources from governmental texts to interviews, print media, and film. Overall, for the analysis I develop in the empirical chapters, I rely mostly on the work of Green Tide scholars and their published work not in academic outputs but in those intended for the non-specialised public: newspaper pieces, specialised magazine articles, introductions or forewords to books, interviews, talks, or citations in social media posts.

I also included secondary data recovered from Karina Felitti's ethnographic accounts of Argentine expressions of feminine spirituality, particularly those referring to

the proximity with the Green Tide. One of the problems I had to address, specifically regarding Felitti's research, is the interplay between academic production as sources of existing knowledge and sources of secondary or primary data. Karina Felitti offers the sole thick ethnographic research on the topic of feminine spiritual practitioners in relation to the Green Tide, at least that I have been aware of. As a peer-reviewed academic source, her descriptions offer a vivid portrayal of what I witnessed many times in the street.

I rely on these as secondary data to add richness to my own arguments and descriptions.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, her proposal to read these expressions of spirituality as a political, disruptive spirituality, places her work among those knowledge productions I am interested in analysing. In this paper I therefore draw on Felitti's (2019a, b; 2021a, b) extensive ethnographies on the expressions of feminine spirituality and their overlap with Green Tide spaces to provide context, but I analyse her arguments about the Witch as part of an Argentine knowledge production on spirituality as feminist and decolonial.

Lastly, I bounded the search for data in both time and space. I remain mostly attached to the Green Tide timeline of birth and development up to the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore covering the main period of 2015-2020. This choice was informed by both the drastic change in focus brought by the pandemic and by the needs of having some time distance between the events analysed in a doctoral project. At the same time, I made some exceptions for material that was particularly illustrative of the argument but was published after 2020. Assemblage has been shown to be a method able to adapt to specific needs and dynamics of each instance of data gathering (Fox & Alldred, 2023). In this case making exceptions responded to the need to show continuities and ruptures even outside of my established boundaries and constituted unity of analysis.

Geographically, I actively targeted timeline events in, and written accounts about or from the three main Argentine cities: the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA), Rosario, and Córdoba. The three cities and their surroundings form an area commonly known as the Humid Pampas, which concentrates approximately 60% of the national population (35.7% alone in the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires, surrounding CABA) (RENAPER, 2021). Reflecting the demography, the most attended of feminist gatherings, as well as the most publicised, were situated in this region and with the predominance of events organised for and by the Capital CABA. In term of spatial boundaries too, I include

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<sup>45</sup> Insofar as this project took place concomitantly to the Covid-19 pandemic and its restrictions on mobility and gathering, it was impossible for me to officially collect my own fields observations.

relevant material appearing from and by other Argentine localities, as well as outside of Argentina if referring to the Argentine Green Tide and if of specific bearing to my arguments.

The inclusion of odd-dated and variously geolocated data at points of this dissertation favours the understanding that the construction of a feminist spirituality was not an isolated moment of feminist knowledge production that ended with the pandemic. Nor was it strictly concerned with only the cities of CABA, Rosario, or Córdoba. As I emphasise in the last chapter, in fact, while not immediately related to the Green Tide, there is a broad, transnational tendency in finding in feminist, queer, esoteric magic a transcendental tool for decolonising the modern episteme. It is beyond this project's ambition to track these global flows, but it nonetheless draws attention to the existence of these flows and their manifestation in different locations.

### ***3.3.2 Literalism of the Referent for Data Gathering***

The methodology is structured on what is gathered-together to 'make sense' of the knowledge formation of the Green Tide spirituality while both jumping across different sources and making the effort of denaturalising its categories of thought. It is the operationalisation that feminist knowledge production makes of spirituality that, I argue, is fundamental to its proximity to feminist politics.

For this reason, I avoid taking a defined understanding of 'spirituality' and how it might differ from 'religion', preferring instead to let it emerge from the data. I follow what Elizabeth Povinelli (2006) calls the literalism of the referent. Povinelli refers to a tendency that emerged in gender and sexuality studies as these attended their transnational character, for which "aspects of social life not explicitly self-characterising as sexuality or gender per se tend to enter sexuality either through a grammar of concatenation or through a transformational grammar of pleasure, desire, and sexual identity" (Povinelli, 2006:11).

Povinelli traces how the Western tradition of gender, sexuality, and feminist studies were introduced into academic institutions and governance institutions as part of global processes of transnationalisation, and how, as gender and sexuality studies became increasingly mainstreamed into everyday life, they contributed to mediate ideals, forms, bodies, and practices at a global scale. In academic environments, this level of international circulation resulted in the practice of understanding, translating, transforming a diverse arrange of social experiences into the language, categories, and arguments of gender and sexuality studies.

In Povinelli's analysis (2006), the translation happens through the deployment of grammars and referents, where the referents 'gender' and 'sexuality' are often literally deployed as an addition to other referents, usually categories used to describe and conceptualise aspects of social life such as 'race', 'poverty', 'climate change', and so on. The transformation into the realm of gender and sexuality can manifest either by analysing for example 'race', 'poverty' through the lens of gender and sexuality studies; or through the literal addition of the 'gender' and 'sexuality' referents, resulting in the formula 'poverty and sexuality'. The latter works as a grammar of concatenation; while the former case, which Povinelli calls a grammar of transformation, sees experiences of racialisation or of economic deprivation "treated as transformed by sex and gender – as being sexualized, feminized, or engendered" (Povinelli, 2006: 11).

Povinelli's (2006) central argument is that both grammars produce the effect of making non-necessarily sexual or gendered spheres of life part of the proper domain of gender and sexuality studies, and therefore serve a disciplining function within the liberal economy of knowledge production. Fields of life are subsumed to Western categories of thought and governance: sex, love, eros, intimacy, gender, together with all those spheres of life attached to it, become possible to be understood, recognised, practiced, and governed only through these literal referents.

For example, Povinelli discusses how Australian politics of recognition are based on liberal discourses of love and intimacy that shape the experience of Indigenous Australians and their conversation with institutions. "Voices and bodies" of Indigenous Australians are shaped even though these discourses do not reflect their social world, environments, and relationships, and even though these relationships could be defined by kinship in the Indigenous experience (Povinelli, 2006: 22-23).

Gender and sexuality studies have at times produced yet another way to determine how modes of being and living are captured and become legible only through established categories of liberal recognition, and always within the colonial, globalised grid of liberal intelligibility (Povinelli, 2006). These acute observations point to the way in which concepts and, in this case, categories, referents, or keywords, can work in service of the colonial capture of different aspects of peoples' lives. Povinelli invites scholars not to remain too attached to the knowledge formations and practices that are established as referents in their disciplines. Otherwise, (Povinelli, 2006: 13) argues, we risk reducing all experiences to a "quasi-universal economy of pleasure and desire," therefore continuing to enact and renovate the enduring presence of colonialism.

I take particular interest in Povinelli's analysis because of her focus on categories, use of vocabulary and grammar. The delimitation of fields of study and governance relies on categories as modes of recognition, and in turn categories and fields are often identified and deployed through keywords. Methodologically, the value of looking at the Green Tide's feminist knowledge production through their literal deployments of 'spirituality' together with 'gender' and 'sexuality' as literal referents is to highlight how the assemblage of a feminist decolonial spirituality looks at the core of its epistemic attachments. It also allows me to trace those formations and attachments as they are enmeshed with other referents and experiences of social life, and, finally, to situate them within the colonial history of Argentina and a global economy or grid of recognition.

In the context of online search for publicly available documents, the literalism of the referent is also a promptly operationalisable methodological technique. Because knowledge formations are constructed also by identifiable referents (Povinelli, 2006), they can be found by searching for these referents in online repositories of text. Not only essays, news, and otherwise written material can be found through internet or repository-specific keyword search. Calls to events, official communications, structure of encounters, and social media posts can, too, be accessed online through web platforms and by deploying targeted keyword search strategies. Moreover, once key sites of information have been identified (e.g., *Ni Una Menos*' official website), content can be scanned for those referents that are not always resulting from on-page keyword search technologies.

To begin with, I identified main sites or outlets circulated and consumed by the Green Tide. Starting from *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*'s Instagram, Facebook, and organisational websites, I detected outlets, oeuvres, and authors often discussed. In terms of oeuvres and authors, Silvia Federici's and Judith Butler's work appeared time and time again, alongside, for example, books from French essayist Mona Chollet. Whereas I do not discuss these oeuvres nor their author's work in detail, throughout the chapters I emphasise their role within the Green Tide production of a feminist spirituality.

As for the outlets, alongside *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*'s social media and organisational webpages (I say more below about my choice to focus on Instagram), I identified two Argentine feminist publishing houses, *hekht* and *Tinta Limón*. Both present a generally leftist catalogue and specifically feminist literature. I noted specific collections, cover aesthetics, as well as which texts, if any, were positioned as particularly relevant, popular, or in any other way distinguished. I also selected one specialised online feminist magazine, *LatFem*, and three online magazines positioned on the left, with varying degrees

of radicalism and national circulation: *Lobo Suelto*, *Marcha*, and *Revista Anfibia*. On the other hand, I selected three main national Argentine newspapers: *Clarín*, *La Nación*, and *Página12*. I choose these outlets for their relevance in the Argentine landscape of feminist activism, and, in the case of the newspapers, for their national reach and ability to form opinion.

I then searched within these repositories for material regarding the theme of spirituality in its connection with feminist activism. In a first instance, I carried out this research inserting literal referents or keywords in the search bar of websites or by deploying Google search optimisation techniques. I singled out the referents or keywords on both theoretical premises and preliminary analysis or secondary data. So, for example, following the theoretical underpinning of how epistemes work in grids of intelligibility and, as Povinelli (2006) showed in the case of gender and sexuality studies with grammars of concatenation or transformation, I looked for ‘spirituality *and* feminism’ or ‘spirituality *and* sexuality’.

At the same time, I relied on existing data on the topic to understand which referents were used in the context of Green Tide mobilisations. Karina Felitti’s papers were the most fruitful site, in this sense, to gather a sense of which other keywords I could deploy in my data search. Tied to spiritual practices, Felitti (2019b) highlights the extent to which it is the figure of the Witch that attracts anti-clerical feminists and practitioners of feminine spirituality alike. ‘Witch’, *bruja*, was therefore selected as another key referent to search data with, together with the specific referents of Argentine feminism: *Marea Verde* [Green Tide], *Ni Una Menos*, and *Campaña para el Aborto Legal, Seguro, y Gratuito*.

As a result, I searched each site or repository for the keywords *espiritual*, *espiritualidad*, *bruja* [spiritual, spirituality, witch] and google.com.ar with google search optimisation techniques, which involve using specific characters to obtain results within specific parameters. For instance, to search within the newspaper *Página12*, I typed: ‘pagina12.com.ar: espiritualidad AND feminismo’ [pagina12.com.ar: spirituality AND feminism] to optimise the identification of suitable data. Inserting the website’s URL guarantees results published only on the selected platform, whereas AND is a logic operator to type between keywords for desired results that contain both keywords in the same text (although not necessarily in the same sentence). Alternatively, to search for ‘spirituality’ or ‘witch’ in relation to the Green Tide, I typed: ‘pagina12.com.ar: *espiritualidad / bruja* AND *marea verde*’.

In this thesis I am also attentive to the idea of non-literal referents, or at least adjacent ones. Knowledge formations are constituted by the curation of proximities and distances (Derrida, 1996), and new associations of meanings into chains of reference. Non-literal referents are also powerful indicators of all that exceeds gender and sexuality studies and politics, as well as their construction of spirituality. It is in these sites that, contingently, links to what Argentine Green Tide feminist knowledge has operationalised as feminist spirituality can be found.

To identify non-literal referents, I traced the terms found in newspapers, essays, and manifestos that emerged after literal referents search, and in the secondary data provided by Karina Felitti. I also relied on existing literature on women's spirituality, Indigenous spirituality, and other practices understood as spirituality in relation to social movements, liberation struggles, and other similarly emancipatory efforts to carve out some of the literal referents that referred to spirituality in Argentina and Latin America as well as in the Anglophone West and in Continental Europe.

Notions like 'goddess', '(collective) healing', 'care', 'harmony', 'nature', '(new) consciousness' are quite common. Within Spanish-speaking Latin America, these notions are present (translated) together with local referents. Among the latter there are '*chamanismo*', '*curanderia*', '*gualicho*',<sup>46</sup> 'medicine women' (and men). I found referents in the form of functions – for example 'healing', 'reconnection with nature', 'bodily knowledge' – or practices – astrology, tarot, Reiki, Tantra. As I researched the deployment of these referents to find their connections and use within renowned feminist knowledge producers and outlets, I reached texts where spirituality was not mentioned literally but nonetheless discursively deployed via these referents as functions or practices.

In this way I was also able to identify other functions or practices that, within feminism, were employed in proximity to spirituality. Examples are 'creative expression/creation', 'empowerment', 're-enchantment of the self and the world' and 'Bach flowers', 'rituals', 'dancing', 'ancestry', 'mythology', 'poetry', and various other artistic forms. 'Witch' and 'witchcraft' appeared as referents of central importance, at the intersection of functions (becoming a Witch) and practices (Witchcraft). Chapter 4 analyses

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<sup>46</sup> *Curanderia* can be translated as 'folk medicine' but relates to underground types of Indigenous or 'enchanted', magic, medicine. Similarly, *gualicho* gets close to 'charm', or 'spell'. Together with *chamanismo* [shamanism], *curanderia* is often considered a form of alternative medicine or part of the traditional cultural medicine of Indigenous communities.

data portraying these jumps across the discursive plane, where different practices or notions tied to spirituality appear in proximity to feminism.

Alongside the keyword search inspired by Povinelli's (2006) literalism of the referent, for each repository or site of knowledge production, I took note of who wrote the piece, when, if it was published elsewhere, if any other articles were cited or linked in, and which intellectuals or oeuvres were mentioned. I also observed the pictures or illustrations and researched their author, including other sites of exhibition. For each potential data item, I therefore amplified the research by looking within the website, and in broader systems of information gathering (Google), for the articles cited in the text, for the intellectuals, artists or authors named, and for the oeuvres that were mentioned.

This sampling technique was extremely relevant for the identification of data that I would have otherwise missed. As a technique, it provided a quite operational understanding of how chains of meaning work in their linkage through referents, as both keywords and categories of thought.<sup>47</sup> As I discuss in chapter 5, from my data search I was able to gather a core of texts, authors, and sites of knowledge production that intensively cited each other and who actively participated in the community organisation of *Ni Una Menos* or *La Campaña*. These texts, authors, and sites, while mutually cited more than once, also appeared independently through my searches in different sites, through generalised information search, and at times unexpectedly through one or two snowballing connections.

Following literal and non-literal referents, via keyword search and snowballing can offer a vivid sense of how categories of thought, fields of study and political action, and sites of knowledge production can be connected to each other. However, I bounded my data collection to the circuits of knowledge production and circulation connected to *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*, or the Green Tide in general, as speaking as or for these organisations (I say more in relation to this and Spivak's (1988) theory of representation in chapter 6). In my preliminary research I encountered individuals or collectives that would talk about the radical possibilities of spirituality but did not identify or speak as and for the Green Tide. One of these groups is the *MMDIBV*, which I discuss below. Others, extremely relevant to the making of this project, I introduced and thanked in the Preface.

Secondly, I did not carry out specific searches with each single one of these referents. I made this choice when a referent was too far away in the grammars of

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Jalali & Wohlin (2012), for a discussion of how database search and snowballing referencing produce overall similar results, and for highlights on the strengths and weaknesses of both techniques.



concatenation or transformation, in a way that was no longer recognisable through the core, literal referents. Alternatively, when its presence did not modify the chains of meaning articulated by previously identified referents. Often, as in the case of ‘healing’ and ‘reconnection with nature’, referents appeared around core categories, like *bruja* or *curandera*. In other words, I relied on the referents that most appeared in the texts that most seemed to condense chains of meanings and arguments about the radical possibilities of spiritual feminism. In this project I therefore focus on the articles that discussed how spirituality could be feminist, leading me to denaturalise how both spirituality and feminism are conceptualised.

Finally, throughout the data gathering, I kept in mind Espinosa Miñoso’s questions about the Green Tide (Rosa, 2021), and particularly in relation to the *MMDIBV* and the PluriNational Encounter. I remained attentive to the chains of meaning and related practices of epistemological importance for Brown, Indigenous, Afro-descendant or *villero* activists. Did they appear in the Green Tide formation of a feminist spirituality? If so, how, where, when, and by whom? In relation to what? And with which deployments? These relations, not so easily readable along the lines of either/or colonial and decolonial, are beacons for tracing power/knowledge political economy and its effects, and are part of those convivial fields I am interested in.

### **3.3.3 Gathering Data on Social Media**

While inserted in both a territorial and institutional tradition of feminist articulation, one of the Green Tide novelties was the pivotal role of technologies of information and communication conscientisation and mobilisation including the construction of new narratives (Fernández Hasan, 2019; Acosta, 2020; Presman, 2020; Torres, 2021).<sup>48</sup> In this sense, the relationship between feminist discussion points and their mediatization has been conceptualised as a mutual entanglement (Laudano, 2018).

At the onset of the first protest in 2015, journalist García Crespo (2015) describes how a tweet from fellow journalist Marcela Ojeda, enraged by Chiara Páez femicide, became the starting point of a multitudinous convocation. Together with Twitter (Fernández Hasan, 2019) the visual impact of Instagram became a central political tool (Acosta, 2020). As such, my investigation of Green Tide media is prompted by their relevance in the political action of the Green Tide, and the role they had in disseminating

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<sup>48</sup> Social media-based activism is a trend that has also been observed in the U.S. with #MeToo. In this regard, see Phipps (2020, 2021) and Zakaria (2021).

feminist knowledge production (Fernández Hasan, 2019). In this sense, my research is not directed at exploring Green Tide's digital activism, cyber-activism, or the dynamics between communication and politics. Nor, as I explore below, Green Tide's art-activism or the dynamics between communication, aesthetics, and politics.

Among the different social media options, I selected *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*'s Instagram accounts for their central role in the movement. Instagram and Twitter were preferred to other social media at the time (Fernández Hasan, 2019; Presman, 2020; Torres, 2021), but Instagram grew exponentially as the Green Tide developed (Acosta, 2020). Moreover, it is the social media that, at least until 2019, in Argentina generated more engagement (Acosta, 2020) and that was most used by the generation of the Green Tide "millennials and centennials" (Torres, 2021: 359).

In relation to discourse, archival logics and technology, Derrida (1996) emphasises the technological conditions at the base of any archival endeavour. He discusses how print informs formats, lengths, signs – what is to be known and what not, as well as how it is to be known. Similarly, informatic technologies such as the internet, and social media in particular, allow the information to circulate in ways unique to these technologies, and to engage with knowledge as it was unthinkable before, in turn contributing to determine what is knowable, seeable, and sayable, and what is not.

With digital information and communication technologies, the access, sharing, and modification of information is radically different that in a print-only technology of knowledge. In this sense, Internet technologies do have a role in how knowledge formations and discursive practices come together. The workings of Instagram's algorithm are not public knowledge, and its modes of organising information remain for the most part private ownership of Meta Platforms, Inc. It is in relationship to these thoughts that, I believe, knowledge formations are assembled, at least in part, by technologies of information.

For example, on *La Campaña*'s Instagram utilisation, Torres writes:

The technological possibilities of Instagram its accessibility and expansion factors add to a cultural process of the feminist movement: its users and their active participation. [...] The potentialities of Instagram developed in a context in which users wanted participation or were stimulated into it, beyond symbolism.  
(Torres, 2021:373)

One of the technological possibilities of Instagram, identified by Torres (ibid.), is the stimulation of engagement. In the *La Campaña*'s Instagram, this manifested into

encouraging users to create or interact with stories and content and using green or purple filters, hashtags, and citations (Torres, 2021: 363-371).

Torres (2021) understands this active making of the Green Tide through their social media accounts as a discursive practice, which eventually resulted in how “walking around the city having the handkerchief tied to the backpack had its equivalent in the profile picture” (ibid.: 373). Not only was Instagram one of the preferred methods of communication of the Green Tide, but, as a technology of information (and knowledge) it also encloses unique conditions of possibility for knowledge formation, including the Green Tide’s. However, while I am keen to highlight the role of technology in the production of knowledge, my concern is not in studying these conditions. By this I mean that I approach social media data as discursive text, and I apply the same technique of Povinelli’s (2006) literalism of the referent instead of social media-specific techniques such as web scraping.<sup>49</sup>

For both *La Campaña*’s and *Ni Una Menos*’ Instagram account, I searched the entirety of the account from first publication to the first posts of 2021. At times I also relied on *Ni Una Menos*’ and *La Campaña*’s Facebook accounts, for example when I landed on Facebook accounts or posts cited within newspaper articles, essays, or other social media posts. On Instagram it is not possible to operate keyword searches. I therefore analysed the accounts’ posts both one by one, and as an overall composition of images visible when scrolling down an Instagram account. The visuals are not analysed as images but, again, as discursive text, identifying referents and chains of meanings. As I examine in chapters 5 and 6, these general views of the account too told a story about meanings, priorities, urgencies, and how feminist attention was mobilised and fostered.

I repeated the exercise with the examples of street aesthetics I extrapolate as secondary data, some of which I introduce in chapter 2. In the Green Tide social media, the posted picture of a feminist protest represented both a portrayal of what was happening in the street, and a visibilisation of what the organisations wanted to show, circulate, enunciate. The visual nature of Instagram, moreover, gives me an excuse to bring the aesthetic dimension of the Green Tide to the forefront, and in turn further justifies my choice to focus on this social media platform.

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<sup>49</sup> Web scraping is a data extraction technique that can be used on any website. The webpage is downloaded, its data extracted and reformatted into, for example, a spreadsheet. This is a technique that allows to access data on engagement and dissemination, clusters of or nodes of interaction, and so on. For a web scraping study of *La Campaña*’s Instagram, see Acosta (2020).

The movement then claimed visibility also thanks to new aesthetics and repertoires, amplified by mediatic visibility. The Green Tide's aesthetic culture relied on a celebratory atmosphere (Moltoni, 2021), where protesters went to have fun, show-off, and be as they liked (Díaz Lozano, 2020). This has, in part, been tied to the young age of participants, which some have called the "glitter generation" for their use of rhinestones, make-up and glitter, and 'the daughters' in reference to the activism of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo (Elizade, 2018). For Presman (2020), aesthetic interventions were the great protagonists of the Green Tide. Creative strategies and aesthetic configurations extended to both a lived experience of the street and their amplification, both mediatic and transnational. The handkerchiefs became symbols of complicity in everyday spaces (Elizade, 2018) and of feminist occupation of the public space (Presman, 2020), flowing transnationally as one of the material elements of circulation, community-making, and political strategy (Felitti & Ramírez Morales, 2020; Espinosa Miñoso in Rosa, 2021).

As Felitti (2019b) reports, moments of feminist protest were often accompanied by fairs with music, food stalls, craft(wo)manship, workshops, talks, artistic interventions, etc. These moments of protest became artistic performances in and for themselves (Presman, 2020). The rise of the green handkerchief, with protesters singing in unison some of the lemmas of the movement, known as *pañuelazo* [handkerchief-ade] became a collective instance of activist performance (Presman, 2020).<sup>50</sup>

Another instance of feminist protest turned feminist art-activism and gathering were the so-called *Martes Verdes* [Green Tuesdays]. The *Martes Verdes* were a weekly occurrence started in March 2017 that resembled the biggest manifestations and offered a schedule with renowned artists and speakers. They were organised for the first part of 2017 and resumed the following year, in June 2018, in the wake of the Lower Chamber vote on the draft-proposal of the Green Tide Free, Safe, and Legal Abortion Law. Presman (2020: 9) describes these weekly encounters as "women's festivals with different artistic expressions: poetry, music, dance in feminist tone, and with one theme: Legal Abortion Now." Some have considered these condensed festivals an inheritance of the *Encuentros* (Alcaraz and Paz Frontera, 2018).

The moments of feminist gathering, which I call the feminist timeline, are interlaced with aesthetics and mediatic visibility, including that fostered by the Green Tide itself from

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<sup>50</sup> For more insights and literature on the relationship between journalism, media, showbusiness, politics, and performance in the Green Tide see also Fernández Hasan (2019).

their media platforms. Both the Green Tide aesthetics and moments of gathering can be read as discursive text, whereas they simultaneously speak of investments, urgencies, and placements of attention. I discuss these in the last sub-section, in relation to the *MMDIBV* and the PluriNational *Encuentro*.

### **3.3.4 Adjacent Fields: the *MMDIBV* and the PluriNational *Encuentro***

The Indigenous Women and Diversities Movement for the Good Living traces its origins to a cultural centre in the Qom<sup>51</sup> neighbourhood centre in Rosario, in 2012, where women from different Indigenous communities gathered to discuss problems (Paz Frontera 2019). They decided to call for a First March of *Mujeres Originarias*<sup>52</sup> and, since 2013, to start organising the Movement of Indigenous Women. They coordinated women from the 36 ‘pre-existing nations’ inhabiting the Argentine territory in the March of *Mujeres Originarias* for the Good Living, which was renamed Indigenous Women’s Movement for the Good Living in late 2018. In May 2022, they renamed themselves Indigenous Women and Diversities Movement for the Good Living (*MMDIBV*, n.d.).

The *MMDIBV* understands itself as a “movement to amplify rights” by reclaiming territory and proposing “to recover our historical plurinationality, omitted and denied by the official history” (*MMDIBV*, n.d.). Stating that they “don’t accept ideological tutelage,” they add: “we enunciate ourselves politically from our ancestral identity and our cosmogonies, knowledges and territorial identities [...]. We fight for the self-determination of our bodies, our territories, and our peoples” (*MMDIBV*, n.d.).

The Movement sees the nation-state as its main political counterpart, to which to ask for environmental and land rights, and protection from widespread police violence (*MMDIBV*, n.d.). In 2015, when they organised their First March, they submitted a draft proposal of a “Law for the Good Living.” Among other proposals, they sought to designate institutional figures of connection between the state and each Indigenous community, where female elected counsellors from each community would guarantee state consultation and participation in policy-making decisions. In 2016, at the Second March, they asked the Argentine government for the restitution of sacred spaces, the repeal of the mining code, and to amend the official lists of murdered women, wherein Indigenous women do not

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<sup>51</sup> The Qom or Toba people are one of the largest Indigenous communities of Argentina. They historically inhabited the eastern part of the Pampas and Northern Argentina

<sup>52</sup> In Latin America, instead of literal translations of English’s First Nations, Indigenous Peoples, or Aboriginal People, Indigenous communities are often known as *Pueblos Originarios* [Original Peoples]. Sometimes, they refer to themselves as *Indígenas* [Indigenous] or *Aborígenes* [Aboriginal].

appear. I detail these initiatives to show the long trajectory of the *MMDIBV*, and their ability to raise demands to the state.

In 2018, as the Green Tide confirmed its hold on the public, the *MMDIBV* participated in a plenary assembly for the organisation of the 33<sup>th</sup> National Women's Encounter with the proposal to transform the *ENM* into a PluriNational Encounter. Since *Ni Una Menos*, the *Encuentros* had taken hold among the instances of feminist gathering. Attendees grew from 50,000 in 2015 at the onset of *Ni Una Menos* to 200,000 in 2019 after the internationalisation of the Green Tide (Díaz Lozano, 2020). The *MMDIBV* drafted their PluriNational Campaign earlier that year, during their First Parliament of *Mujeres Originarias*, centred around the hashtag *#NosQueremosPlurinacional*.<sup>53</sup>

The 2018 Encounter was held in the Patagonian province of Chubut, and more specifically in the city of Trelew, home to Mapuche and Tehuelche communities. The organisational committee of the Encounter, however, dismissed *MMDIBV*'s proposal to vote over the name change at the closing plenary. The final assembly had always been the moment where the Encounter's participants would agree on where to hold the following year's meeting, a decision usually based on applause intensity (known as the 'applause-meter'). The PluriNational Campaign was proposed out of the Indigenous Women Workshop at the 2018 Encounter, but their initiative was discussed by the Encounter organisational committee only the following year.

A broad section of organisations participating in the Encounter reacted in solidarity to the PluriNational Campaign. For example, on their Facebook page *Ni Una Menos* shared an official communication from the *MMDIBV* about the discussion and other incidents with the organisational committee, asking the latter to simply declare the Encounter to be known as PluriNational thereon (*Ni Una Menos*, 2018b). Discussions and incidents repeated themselves at the 2019 Encounter, where some actors recognised the plurinationality of the Encounter and others did not.

At one meeting for the preparation of the 2019 Encounter, for instance, a section of the organisational committee presented the upcoming Encounter's workshop list, counting 84 initiatives and vetoing the name change. The PluriNational Campaign denounced that the final list of 84 workshops had erased the proposal of 30 other workshops. Shortly afterwards, signatures were raised to vote the name change at the Encounter's opening

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<sup>53</sup> Recalling *Ni Una Menos*' hashtag/lemma *#NosQueremosVivas*, which can be loosely translated as 'we want to be alive', 'we want ourselves alive', or 'we want each other alive', the plurinational call can be translated as 'we want to be PluriNational.'

plenary. It also seems that, at the meeting, Indigenous women proposed an opening ceremony that involved Indigenous girls and women accessing the stage with flowers. The committee would have accepted only the girls with flower offerings but not the leaders, which to Indigenous representatives restaged the harm caused by family separation and enslavement of Indigenous girls into domestic service (*Ni Una Menos*, 2018b).

After the pandemic interruption, the *Encuentros* started again in 2022. At the first plenary for its preparation, a section of the assembly asked again to officially recognise the Encounter as PluriNational, but another sector resisted the proposal. The group fractioned, with the PluriNational Campaign organising the 35<sup>th</sup> PluriNational Encounter in the province and city of San Lu s in early October 2022, and the others organising the 35<sup>th</sup> Women’s National Encounter in the same city in late October 2022.

Methodologically, I am interested in the name dispute because it highlights power dynamics between a social movement (the Green Tide) who formally declares itself in alliance with another social movement (the *MMDIBV*). More specifically, it contributes to uncovering how claims are constituted as feminist, which are worthy of attention and when, and how does the configuration of spirituality participate in it. These are questions that I ask keeping in mind how, in a colonial legacy of knowledge production, these knowledge formations often respond to colonial trajectories of life and death (Povinelli, 2006).

I deepen some of my discussion of the *MMDIBV* proposals and analyse Green Tide allied reactions to the PluriNational Campaign later in chapter 6. Here I limit myself to introducing the *MMDIBV*’s March Against Terracide [*Marcha Contra el Terricidio*]. Terracide, my choice of translation, is described by the *weichafe* [warrior] Moira Millan as “the synthesis of all the ways the capitalist and patriarchal system constructed to murder life. [...] [It] contains feminicide, *travesticide*, transfeminicide, and ecocide and epistemicide [...]. *Terricidio* is not the same as ecocide, because ecocide allows fragmentation [...] what *terricidio* does is assembling” (Monfort, 2021: para. 8).

Indigenous women called allies to join them in their 1900 kilometres walk, starting from Chubut and arriving in the Capital Buenos Aires. The *MMDIBV* called for this demonstration in 2021, during the heated discussions about the Encounter’s name change. This was also the year after abortion was finally legalised in the country. It therefore represented a fruitful site of analysis, on my end, on how the allied Green Tide responded to the *MMIDBV*’s call for support. And I am referring, for example, to the support that massive mobilisations promoted by the Green Tide would offer vis- -vis the Argentine state.

### 3.3.5 Urgencies and Attention: the Green Tide Timeline

One of the most powerful manifestations of the Green Tide has been its ability to convoke hundreds of thousands to the streets, which has been attributed to both their strategic communication (Presman, 2020; Torres, 2021) and their ability to theoretically and politically articulate gender-based violence with the economic violence of neoliberal governments (Méndez, 2020; Mulinari, 2023). The new modes of communication, the artistic/aesthetic political identity, and their convocation of hundreds of thousands in the streets have prompted many analysts to understand the Green Tide as an occurrence, an event. Fernández Hasan (2019: 56) calls it the appearance of “novelty” and not just “the sum of parts or the aggregation of demands.”

Alongside looking for the knowledge produced around the themes of spirituality, feminism, and anti/coloniality, I reconstructed the Green Tide timeline to look at how the movement called feminists to mobilise around important dates. By timeline, I understand the calendar of Green Tide mobilisation in the street thanks to media calls to gather in protest. Some of these dates were already of international or local significance, while others were progressively instituted as the Green Tide unfolded as a movement.

Examples of the former are the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, usually known as International Women’s Day and renamed International Feminist Strike by the Green Tide in 2018. Another pre-existing day of national importance is the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, the Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice commemorating the victims of Argentina’s 1976-1983 civic-military dictatorship. Among the important feminist dates that were instituted progressively, instead, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, the day of the first *Ni Una Menos* protest in 2015; the Green Tuesdays, or the days in which the legal abortion law proposal was discussed at the lower and higher chambers of the Argentine parliament in 2018 and 2020. Other instances include the Global Day of Action for Women’s Health on May 28<sup>th</sup>, the International Pride Day on June 28<sup>th</sup>, the International Safe Abortion Day on September 28<sup>th</sup>, the Argentine Pride March every first Saturday of November, and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

Tracing the feminist timeline was an important technique to uncover which moments, or claims, were prioritised for public calls to mobilise, and to examine how, if appropriate, knowledge production revolved around, or reacted to, the timeline and its events. In a way, it responds to Puar’s (2017a) attention to the articulation of urgencies, and to Stoler’s (2009) concern with the establishment of what is important at any specific



time, what is worthy of discussion and, in this case, of inviting to massive political mobilisation. Both accounts, and their respective theoretical and methodological approach, again uncover how the emergence of knowledge formations, assemblages, political categories and categories of thought, often accompanied by state action or journalistic accounts, refer to underlying conditions of possibility, or grids of intelligibility that inform trajectories of life and death (Povinelli, 2006).

Stoler (2009) has argued that times of uncertainty bring about new discussions of common sense in a way that requires political investments and discussions, which in turn can be understood as making efforts to reorganise and redistribute attention. Here I understand attention as what is noticed, what becomes readable, seeable, sayable, imaginable, understandable, hence enactable by people and institutions. In other words, what can be epistemically comprehended and placed in what Stoler (2009) calls grids of intelligibility, the epistemic and material translation into the organisation of social worlds (Povinelli, 2002; 2006).

What kind of claims and instances are considered ‘urgencies’, what constitute ‘events’, and when this happens and by whom it is defined relate to different temporalities (Puar, 2017a). Puar refers to temporalities of urgency that foreground and justify state-of-exception discourses and political intervention. I take her suggestion to situate what moments receive and foster attention because of their attributed quality of ‘eventness’, of ‘history-in-the-making’, of how they are considered relevant of public and political attention by ‘Green Tide feminists.

For some events to be able to mobilise thousands in the street against others mobilising a few hundred or dozens can illustrate a different distribution of access to wellbeing and wealth, hence a different sense of urgency. Moreover, examining at what happens during politically significant moments for the Green Tide allowed me to retrieve information on who organised the events, where these were organised, who was invited to speak or give workshops, what kind of themes were discussed: what knowledge was produced and circulated. I analysed these together with the data on referents, authors, oeuvres, etc.

I constructed the Green Tide timeline by looking at their social media, and later I cross-referenced it with the *MMDIBV*’s to look at alliance. The discourse analysis of text gathered in social media therefore functioned in parallel to the tracking of the timeline. To this effect, as I analysed posts one by one, I placed them in a spreadsheet. The document was organised chronologically in columns, one column from each year between 2015 and

2021. Each column was then divided into two more columns, one for *La Campaña*'s account and one for *Ni Una Menos*'. This organisation allowed me to see side-by-side for each month/week of each year, what *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña* published.

As I approached posts one by one, I observed the image and read the text to identify referents (including authors and oeuvres) that I had detected in essays, newspaper articles, and other texts by journalists, scholars, and activists. The selected data was placed in the spreadsheet with an indication of the referents, the main theme of the post, a description of the visuals (also analysed under the referents logic), and the hyperlink to retrieve it. It often happened that the same topic was repeated over multiple posts, for example count-downs to important demonstrations. In these cases, I took note of the dates and amount of posts to convey the sense of density, or investment, around that topic/moment. I accompanied these observations with the mosaic views of the overall accounts as permitted by Instagram thumbnails.

Furthermore, I remained attentive to the referents deployed in relation to *popular* movements and anti-colonial movements, including the referents dear to the *MMDIBV* as manifested, for example, around the Encounter's name. In this way I was able to track and record the distribution of themes, how these themes were discussed in each post, and how they connected to the construction of a feminist protest timeline. I discuss these findings across chapter 5 and 6.

## **Chapter 4. The Witch against Man?**

### **The Political Agency of Feminist Spirituality**

In this chapter I outline the discourse produced by the Green Tide, wherein spirituality is constructed as feminist. To illustrate how spirituality is operationalised by Green Tide knowledge producers, I rely on excerpts from newspaper articles, specialised feminist magazine articles, introductory essays to books published in feminist publishing houses, and the social media accounts of Green Tide feminist organisations *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*, a feminist podcast, and the organisation of academic articles in edited volumes. This data is analysed as discursive statements in a Foucauldian archaeological analysis of knowledge (Foucault, 1972).

The first section of this chapter is dedicated to circumscribing and drawing the contours of Green Tide feminist spirituality's words of power (Stoler, 2009) as they emerge from discursive statements. I explore the chains of meaning in the Green Tide's circuits of feminist knowledge to see how referents are brought together to build connections between feminist politics and a variety of spiritual traditions and activities. Here, by chains of meaning or chains of reference, I point to the succession and transformation of meaning that is possible by associating terms, by drawing close and even overlapping themes and topics together in a way that, outside the discourse I analyse, might not occur, or occur differently. As a result, I argue that it is the word of power 'Witch' that operates the link between spirituality and feminist politics. In other words, spirituality is operationalised by feminist knowledge producers as feminist/political through the constitution of the Witch.

In the second part of this chapter, I describe the discursive strategies that make the word of power 'Witch' possible, as well as which objects are produced as a result. I argue that the figure of the Witch is constructed through a sexual, classed and epistemic difference antithetical to the modern episteme of Man (Wynter, 2003). In this sense, the Witch is organised as a counter-discourse (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977: 209) against the current model of civilisation and humanness or the modern episteme of Man.

My argument is that the Green Tide operation is a critique of the episteme on the axis of Reason/Unreason, and, in this sense, the Witch is produced as anti-Man. This develops discursively through two major strategies *genealogy* and *knowledge*, and in the creation of discursive objects *body* and *desire*. Through this analysis I also identify the second explicit word of power '*popular*', which will be explored in chapter 5. Furthermore,

here I lay the basis for the analysis, in chapter 6, of the third word of power ‘race’ that operates as an unacknowledged underlying epistemic category.

The third section focuses on a final aspect of Foucauldian discourse: the subject positions it allows. In this sense, I argue how the Witch operates as a political spirituality in a very Foucauldian sense, as a re-organisation of the order of truth that makes transformations of the ‘self’ possible and necessary (Foucault, 1994 in McWhorter, 2003: 2). I bring together the analysis of discursive objects, strategies, concepts, and subject positions to show how the word of power Witch produces a subjectivity rooted in counteracting the episteme of Man, allowing the Green Tide to claim a leading subject position in proposing an alternative civilisation model.

#### **4.1 Condensing Feminism and Spirituality: the Witch**

As part of my methodology, I examine how proximities are curated in ways that offer a new association of meanings, themes, and notions forming impressions (Derrida, 1996). To do so, I trace these referents in online articles on Argentine feminist magazines *LatFem*, *Marcha*, and *Revista Anfibia*, on newspapers *Clarín* and *La Nación*, and in the published titles of the publishing houses *hekht* and *Tinta Limón*. As I discuss in the previous chapter, through literature review and preliminary data search, I identified notions (Derrida, 1996) such as ‘healing’, ‘care’, ‘new consciousness’, ‘harmony’, ‘energy’, ‘*curandera*’, ‘*gualicho*’, ‘ancestors’, ‘medicine men and women’, ‘mother earth’, ‘moon’, ‘cycles’, ‘interconnection’, ‘(alternative) knowledge’. These coalesce together around central referents of spirituality, in connection to feminism and/or the Green Tide.

In the paragraphs below I analyse how notions are tied together in the constitution of spirituality as feminist as they appear across different sites and formats of knowledge production. The first text is extrapolated from a 2019 piece on national newspaper *Clarín*. Journalist Clara Gualano (2019) comments a study from the National Research Council<sup>54</sup> from the same year (see Mallimaci et al. 2020) highlighting shifts in the religious faith of Argentines, where 76% of respondents are reported to believe in energy and 33% in astrology.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The CONICET (*Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas*) is the National Scientific and Technical Research Council of Argentina.

<sup>55</sup> The study by Mallimaci et al. (2020) highlights that ‘energy’ is the only type of belief that has increased across Christians and non-Christians, namely Catholics, Evangelicals, and non-affiliated groups. Astrology,

The article addresses the novelty by asking:

[H]ave divisions between good and evil expired? [Has] that binarism, like the gender one, [expired] becoming oppressive in its infernal images, punishments and guilts, due to the presence of social movements and practices that are more in tune with the times (like ‘feminist empowerment’, sexual liberation, and human responsibility over natural resources)? The clerical finger loses its shine when facing the magical wand that makes each person take responsibility and direct themselves and their desires. (Gualano, 2019: para. 1)

This statement is already dense with proximities. An opposition between good and evil is situated in the past (together with the Catholic Church) while the present and arguably the future are associated with the breaking of binarism in a feminist key, mostly as sexual and gender liberation, which in turn become materialised in a self-responsible “magical wand” and “desires.”

Later in the article, astrology is presented in opposition to a Cartesian scientific vision of the universe, characterised as masculine, mechanistic and utilitarian. As text displays an organicist understanding of the cosmos where there is a continuum between human and non-human, astrology is associated with both post-humanism and ‘much older’ pre-Cartesian cosmovisions. Afterwards, in a sub-section titled ‘Witches and Feminism’, Gualano quotes women who use tarot cards and rituals, and who share with the journalist how approaching the spiritual world of esoterism and astrology in a feminist key allowed them to experiment with sex toys and free queer love as tools to foster connection with nature and others. Overall, the news piece discusses a new form of relationality that counteracts utilitarianism.

A similar statement is displayed by political scientist and astrologer Lu Gaitán in an interview with grassroots feminist online magazine *Marcha* (Caggiano, 2020). Gaitán argues that hand in hand with feminism and other social movements, her generation (“millennials and centennials”) are leading the fight against institutional religions while being more open to “the ‘spiritual’” – this is done by recovering “information by ancestral cultures that have been relegated for a long time” to respond to the many crises of these current times (ibid.: para. 2). Facing, among others, the ecological crisis, Gaitán too believes esoteric practices like astrology can provide a model to incorporate a different way of relating to each other: “Astrology and the esoteric show us that we are connected to

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on the other hand, appears most exclusively among those identifying with non-affiliated spiritual or religious groups.

everything, to the sky, the people we connect with, the trees, the animals, the rivers and the mountains” (ibid.: para. 3).

Lu Gaitán (Caggiano, 2020: para. 6-7) understands this interdependency, this form of relationality, a foundational part of what “political” means. As she utters “the personal is political”, Gaitán points out that what one eats, how one dresses, what one’s desires are, are entangled with how life is organised and structured. Gaitán is keen to display how astrology can reconnect us to “the collective” against a neoliberal structuring of the world that promotes “individual problems.” Lu Gaitán (Caggiano, 2020: para. 7) continues: “if astrology and the natal chart give me hints on how to reach a new version of myself, I will be contributing to collective change [...]” Analogously, in a column from feminist magazine *LatFem* titled ‘The Fortune Wheel: Feminist Tarot’, the writer and screenwriter Lu Martínez (2021) offers her readers a route, through the cards, to rethink the social imaginary, to “hack old ideas, reconsider which cis-tem chips we have installed and see if we can invent new rules to reprogram ourselves” (ibid.: para. 2).

As a varied arrangement of notions that recall how the New Age and neoesoteric, neopagan marketplace is organised as a creative bricolage (Greenwood, 2005) spiritual practices read in feminist key are considered spiritual tools of progress through self-knowledge, enjoyment, desire. Spiritual practices are presented and collated together, in the Green Tide, in virtue of their resistance to established capitalist orders, and in a temporal placement that situates them as simultaneously ancient and prefigurative.

Connections between ancestral culture, historical witches, desire, anti-capitalism, interdependency and social change are drawn through a dissident lens also in the 2021 podcast series *When the Tide Comes In* offered by the left-wing Kirchner Cultural Centre (KCC).<sup>56</sup> In it, longstanding feminist activist and intellectual Claudia Korol and feminist journalist Liliana Daunes hosted a Latin-American feminist songbook programme.

Introducing music through brief talks around feminism and Latin-America, in 12 short episodes, they evidence the “feminist and anticolonial history of our continent” (episode 1: para. 1) The second episode is titled “Witches of all times” and discusses historical witches burnt at the stake as well as present-day “spiritual guides, ancestral healers, and women caregivers” (episode 2: para. 2). As the series progresses addressing the themes of labour under late capitalism, resistance, and the possibility of creation of new

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<sup>56</sup> Between my first access to the podcast in late 2022 and the last revision of the manuscript in late October 2024, the Kirchner Cultural Centre has been renamed *Palacio Libertad Domingo F. Sarmiento* [Freedom Palace Domingo F. Sarmiento] by the libertarian administration of Javier Milei (2023-2027).

worlds inhabited in freedom through the body and exploration of desire, they also introduce Indigenous women singers who “keep the secrets of the sun, the moon, the rivers, the forests [...] resisting and re-existing. In their chants, in their tongues, in their cosmic knowledges, are sang the roots of the coming times” (episode 7: para. 2). These Indigenous women are again present in episode 8 (para. 2) as “ancestral healers, midwives, *curanderas* [...], tellers of time, caregivers, spiritual guides [...].”

Lu Gaitán’s (Caggiano, 2020) articulation of spirituality as a practice that fosters post-human interdependency and collective change resonates with how contemporary pagan scholars search for a sense of relationality with the non-human world and broader sense of social justice (Fisk 2017). In Gaitán’s words, the prefigurative imagination of a more ecologically and socially just future is mediated by the recurrence to an ancestral past, which is often imagined as ecologically conscious and counter-cultural to modernity (Fisk 2017). These temporal recurrences, which can also be found in the songbook programme (Daunes & Korol, 2021) and Lu Martínez (2021) feminist tarot, are also usually organised around a mythical gender equality (Zwissler 2018a) and sexual/gender diversity (Morgensen, 2011). These are read by spiritual practitioners as forms of social organisation and understanding of the world that were not informed by the oppressive powers of (modern) heteropatriarchy (ibid.).



Figure 5. From left to right, illustrations by @campabortolegal (2019) (Figure 5.1); @andylandoni (2019)<sup>57</sup> (Figure 5.2); @campabortolegal (2020) (Figure 5.3).

<sup>57</sup> The post was originally accessed in late November 2020. Unfortunately, since then the account has been deleted.

These associations succeed one another across the discursive plane and can be found in a repeatable manner, which for Foucault (1972) is an important mark of the operations of discourse. In figure 5.2, for example, illustrator Andy Landoni convokes to the 2019 March 8<sup>th</sup> Feminist Strike (8M). Figures 5.1 and 5.3 are Instagram posts by *La Campaña*'s official profile, published respectively May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (@campabortolegal, 2019; 2020). These visual references resonate with the excerpts above. The moon cycles printed on the shirt (figure 5.1) and a purple and green fire coming out of the Green Tide handkerchief (figure 5.3) with the Green Tide handkerchief to hide the face of a protester in revolt. The female figure riding a wolf breathing green fire, holding a broom in her hand and with images of the sun, the moon, and mountains in the back (figure 5.2) resonates, for example, with the circles of feminine spirituality, where women participate of “‘she-wolf’ workshops, ‘goddess’ workshops, fertility circles [...]” (Felitti, 2021b: 143). Together, these images reunite invocations of protest and struggle with the natural elements of a spirituality foregrounding a new relational connection with nature and others, and a liberated sense of the sexual self.

When Lu Gaitán is asked what the connection between feminism and astrology as a spirituality is, she answers:

I think that there are many points of contact: we are the [sexual, gender] dissidence, those who are outside the system. It's interesting because feminism and esoterism can be transformed into products, sold on shelves in supermarkets, but this doesn't take away the merit of esoterism and feminism, it rather talks of the incredible ability of the system to take what is dissident and convert it into something profitable. Another point of contact between esoterism and feminism is that they transform the intimate world of people. If we want to be sincere in our search, we need to have a deep questioning that will necessarily change our way of going about the world, including our way of thinking and feeling.  
(Caggiano, 2020: para. 4)

The “system” Gaitán is referring to, or Martínez (2021: para. 2) “cis-tem”, is then arguably a mode of organisation defined by a secular anthropocentrism, capitalism, and cisheteropatriarchy that defines both how we live collectively and how we understand ourselves.

In these excerpts, spirituality and feminism are narrated as a practice that, combined, can recover knowledges of the past in order to intervene individually and collectively in the present, for another way of being in the world. Several elements condense together around this impression of spirituality as feminist, giving a sense of coherence around seemingly disjointed notions and fields of application. Spirituality is connected to feminism



via reference to a politics of time (the past and the future) as genealogy (the descending from almost-lost cultures and in the process of making a different future). There is also a sense of transformation in antagonism to patriarchy, capitalism, Western allopathic medicine, and a generalised Western tradition of Reason, or a broad ‘the West’ as coloniser of minds and bodies.

For scholar of religion Anna Fisk (2017), the argument for relationality and interdependence seeks to break with the modern dualistic rationalism that separates human and non-human in a civilising and colonial discourse of culture versus nature. These excerpts similarly situate spirituality in that prefigurative ancestral past, antithetical to the modern way of being, knowing, and social organising. Feminism and its promised freedoms are situated both at the beginning and end of this timeline, which in turn reveals that spirituality is part of a desirable and prefigurative future inscribed within the feminist field through references to sex, love, desire, sexuality, gender identity, and reproduction.

Within this agglomerating impression, this sense of coming together of referents and meanings, the Witch is the paradigmatic density that well condenses the idea of doing ‘spiritual’ work as a political work, with a somewhat practical directory of activities to become a (feminist) Witch. Discursively, the Witch appears in subheadings and titles among other figures (the yogi, the *curandera*), and is evoked in the brandished broom by the woman riding a fire-breathing wolf (figure 5.2). Among spiritual notions and references, the Witch is centralised as the figure that is both spiritual and feminist in a way that cannot be really differentiated.

A notable example illustrating my point takes place within an academic volume titled ‘Feminist Health. Body Sovereignty, Power, and Organisation’ (Balaña et al., 2019). The volume aims at understanding how a feminist health agenda might look like. Within the volume’s section “Feminist Organisation and Practices in the Health Field”, there is a paper by Karina Felitti (2019a), titled ‘Witches of the New Age. Women’s Health in Spiritual and Feminist Key’. In the paper, Felitti (2019a) reads the spiritual practices of women’s circles as feminist based on their claim for bodily autonomy and their shared demands for rights to the state. I am not interested in discussing Felitti’s argument per se but to put in the spotlight how the field of a feminist health is discursively mediated through the Witch as a spiritual endeavour.

An analogous construction of chains of meaning occurs in another edited volume, ‘Religions and Public Spaces in Latin America’ (de la Torre & Semán, 2021). The volume focuses on how, in Latin America, public space and politics can be understood considering

religious participation. In it, Felitti (2021a) publishes the paper ‘Feminist Witches: Articulations of a Cultural Symbol in the Green Tide Argentina’. Felitti discusses how spiritual objects and practices interact with the non-religious cause of feminism in Argentina, particularly in street demonstrations (Felitti, 2021a: 114). For Felitti, the reclamation of reproductive rights is mediated, at least in part, by reference to the Witch, which, in turn, brings the feminist claims beyond an alternative medical model towards ‘supra-earthly’ forces and personal power (Felitti, 2021a: 562-563).

In the alternation between themes, topics, titles, and subheadings, the ‘spiritual actor’ is here enmeshed with feminists of the Green Tide in and through what the Witch has to offer. This chaining of meanings through referents and arguments is again discernible in a third volume: ‘Religion, Gender, and Sexuality: Between Movements and Institutions’ (Barajas & Delgado-Molina, 2021), where Felitti (2021b) publishes the paper ‘United in a Big Spell: Spirituality and feminisms in Contemporary Argentina’ in the section “Religion, Gender and Sexuality: between Movements and Institutions”. Again, just by play of headings and titles, feminism and spirituality become one under the Witch, evoked through the notion of ‘spell’.

The Witch is surrounded by temporal images of recovery and prefiguration; ideals of just, autonomous, communitarian organisations of living in harmony with nature; and the possibility of an alternative way of knowing tied to what is incommensurate to rationalist science (the ‘supra-earthly’ forces). These are the impression (Derrida, 1996) articulated around the Witch. But none of these referents, notions, fields of spiritual knowledge and practice could be so tightly imbricated with feminism without their condensation around the Witch herself. It is in this sense that She is a density (Stoler, 2009). She keeps together these referents into a chain of meaning. The Witch is therefore the referent discursively operating as bridge between feminism and spirituality.

My analysis of the quote below contributes to deepen both the understanding of how spirituality is constructed as feminist and the role of the Witch in this operation. The excerpt concerns a 2018 essay titled ‘Spirituality as Force for Uprising’, written by the nationally and internationally celebrated feminist scholar and *Ni Una Menos* activist Verónica Gago. I selected this text not only because it was written by a prominent knowledge producer and organiser within the Green Tide, but also because it directly addresses the issue of spirituality as a feminist one, tying it to the political contingency of the movement and hinting to other possibilities beyond it.

Gago (2018) opens ‘Spirituality as Force for Uprising’ with:

Feminism talks about bodies while disputing a political spirituality. It is political precisely because it does not separate the body from the spirit, nor the flesh from fantasies, nor the skin from the ideas. Feminism (as a multiple movement) has a mystique.<sup>58</sup> It works from affects and passions. It opens that thorny field of desire, of loving relationships, of erotic swarms, of ritual and party, and yearnings beyond their allowed borders. Feminism, unlike other politics that call themselves leftist, does not strip bodies of their indetermination, their not-knowing, their enfleshed daydreaming, their obscure power. That is why [feminism] works in the plastic, fragile yet mobilising plane of spirituality.

Feminism does not believe that there is an opium of the people: on the contrary, it believes that spirituality is a force of rebellion. That the act of rebelling is inexplicable and at the same time the only rationality that liberates us. And that it liberates us without turning us into pure, heroic or good subjects.

(Gago, 2018: para. 1-2)

In the following paragraphs, Gago continues:

[...] We can refer once more to Silvia Federici's classic *Caliban and the Witch* to remember why the burning of witches, heretics and healers was the favourite scene to discredit feminine knowledge over bodies and to terrorise [feminine knowledge's] healing effervescence and its strength of technology of friendship among women. [...] Today [with the Green Tide] we see a battle for political spirituality in the streets, in the homes, in the beds and in the schools (which, in its massive movement, dyes everything in green, as a hope-principle).

(Gago, 2018: para. 3-4)

There are several points to follow to make sense of this paragraph.

To begin with, continuing the text above, Gago (2018) explains that spirituality is a relevant field in feminist politics insofar as it is mobilised by religious institutions and social sectors against the legalisation of abortion. Gago here is alluding to the politically active role of conservative religious actors during Argentina's debate in sexual politics – something I mention in the previous chapters – to say that the ways in which spirituality is lived and contextualised are politically relevant. Insofar as there are experiences of religion that are favourable to progressive sexual politics (Vaggione, 2018), the sentence about the “battle for political spirituality” can be read as a call to understand how relevant it is to reclaim a space of favourable spiritual/religious positions for the goal of depenalising abortion and counter-arresting the political power of a conservative Church.

The spirituality Gago describes, however, exceeds the emancipatory goals of displaying sympathetic Christian positions to advance reproductive rights in the country.

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<sup>58</sup> In Argentine Spanish, ‘mystique’ is used primarily in football and party politics. It refers to the collective sentiment of belonging, companionship and investment, rich in symbolism, that can be found among members of the same group or ‘brothers in arms.’ According to Carlos Peucelle (1975), ex-football player in one of Argentina's major clubs and in the national team, *la mística* provides the spiritual strength for fighting.

Gago makes of *bodies* the primary subject of feminism and its “political spirituality” to mark how these have been separated from the spirit or ideas, and how feminism instead works from the bodily field of affects (*desire*) to weave back possibilities of being that are otherwise lost. The recurrence to the Witch (in this case through Federici’s (2004) oeuvre) and Her annexed notions “heretics and healers” as both form of knowledge (“over bodies [and] healing effervescence”) and political organisation (“friendship among women”) situates spirituality in that discursive impression of a prefigurative ancestral past antithetical to the modern one.

Spirituality being ‘ancient’ and ‘prefigurative’ indicates the efforts of producing the feminist spirituality precisely as not-modern. Much like in Gualano’s (2019) article discussing the rise of beliefs in energy and astrology, in Martínez’s (2021) tarot wheel that disrupts the “cis-tem,” and in Lu Gaitán’s (Caggiano, 2020) grounding of spirituality in a different way of going about the world that is rooted in dissidence, for Gago (2018) spirituality is Green Tide feminist because it would allow feminists to break the socially constructed borders that make our world intelligible: sex, gender, and reproduction; the binaries of flesh and spirit, experience and ideas; and neoliberal or capitalist ideologies of individual subjects.

What makes spirituality intrinsically feminist, and therefore the density or word of power (Stoler, 2009) that allows to bridge dispersed notions of the spiritual and feminist fields, is that her non-modernity is paradigmatically insurgent to modernity. This is the Witch’s “force” (Gago, 2018) feeding the movement’s massiveness and struggle for transformation. Such rebellious character seems to be given by a refusal to experience life through normative and hierarchical knowledge categories. The body and desire, through the sexually charged qualities of eroticism and pleasure, appear as the workings that allow feminists to reach beyond such borders and towards alternative possibilities of inhabiting life. That is “the force,” “the mystique” (ibid.) of spirituality as feminist or feminism as spiritual. As a knowledge that goes ‘beyond’, then this spirituality that begins to take shape around the figure of the Witch and its impression, is constructed as a uniquely insurgent knowledge.

I want to emphasise how this excerpt illustrates my argument that spirituality is produced as transcendently feminist, beyond the contingency of abortion rights. In other words, Gago’s (2018) writing suggests that the refusal of sexual and other categories of knowledge would open the possibility of an otherwise that exceeds the specific political moment of the Green Tide mobilisation for reproductive and sexual rights. This otherwise

standing on the other side of the modern, binary sexual self is unknown, hence the references to “indetermination” and “not-knowing” (ibid.) in the excerpt. However, it is the Witch in Her discursive condensing role that pins down how that otherwise might look like when the search is guided by the body and desire in their refusal of dispossessing categories.

The Witch therefore evokes another way of being in the world, tied to ancient cosmovisions, to a post-humanist interdependence with the natural world, and a grassroots feminine corporeal sovereignty, a collective and communitarian one, standing in revolt against the current model of civilisation. I mean here that the reference to the Witch and the discursive impression She is tied to, allows the construction of a sense of re-enchantment and transformation of the world propelled by pleasure and desire. Embodied experience, “feminine knowledge over bodies,” “friendship among women,” rituals, and later the “hope-principle” of the Green Tide itself (consider the recurrence to the green handkerchief or the green colour in figure 5) later helps to concretise what Gago (2018) might mean with “indetermination” and “not-knowing.”

Altogether, an impression emerges wherein spirituality is operationalised by feminist knowledge producers and circulators as a re-incantation of the world. Her insurgent character is the possibility of re-enchantment against the “disenchanted” rationalism of modernity (see Harding, 2021: 45). In my analysis, re-enchantment draws on bodily autonomy for sexual and reproductive health; self-exploration for the free expression of one’s way of being as expression of desire, pleasure, enjoyment; and re-creation of a non-utilitarian relationship with the natural environment to address both medical injustices and the ecological crisis.

Invoking a sense of time and investment that relates both to a dispossessed past as well as the “hope-principle” of prefigured futures, spirituality offers resistance, insurgence, and imagination. Through it, one may reclaim ways of knowing and acting that can counteract patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism, with the purpose of creating an emancipated future. In other words, certain spiritual practices are agglomerated together as feminist, anti-capitalist, even anti-colonial (see, for example, the podcast series), because of their potential to *resist*, *fight*, and *transform* the modern experience of the world.

As the discursive impression of the Witch densifies through her non-modern, prefigurative insurgency, the Witch emerges as the word of power (Stoler, 2009) that permits this assemblage of meanings. In this sense, the Witch discursively authorises the assemblage of referents into a new knowledge formation (Foucault, 1972; Puar, 2017a),

tying up spirituality as feminist and vice-versa. Look again at Gago's (2018) textual invocation of the Witch as she lands what spirituality is, and how it is relevant for the Green Tide's specific conjuncture and feminism in general. The Witch Herself is a new knowledge formation, the building block of knowledge production without which spirituality could not be produced as feminist, nor feminism as utterly spiritual.

Crucially, this is a knowledge formation distinctively produced as non-modern and in rebellion to modernity. In other words, if feminism wants to disrupt the tenets of modernity as anthropocentric, cisheteropatriarchal, and capitalist, then it *needs* (this) spirituality. Hence, exploring the investments at play in making spirituality feminist, and feminism spiritual, requires paying attention to the constitution of the Witch as such a powerfully enabling category of knowledge.

#### **4.2 The Witch as Anti-Man**

The Witch manifests as a series of relations (Foucault, 1972: 59-62) visible in both the senses of vagueness and density she conveys. As a discursive concept, the Witch *is* these proximities between feminism and spirituality. At the same time, the Witch is not lost among notions and referents, insofar she singularly enables spirituality to be legible as feminist. In what follows, I argue that such a unique operative role is possible through the discursive strategies of *genealogy* and *knowledge*, which in turn produce the Witch as a category of sexual/gender, class, and epistemic difference. In other words, the word of power 'Witch' operates the spiritual *as* feminist/feminist *as* spiritual, insofar as she is constructed as feminine, resistant to capitalism, and a keeper of a different way of understanding self and world related to both a politics of time and of knowledge as resistance, insurgency, and transformation. Later, in chapter 6, I explore how these differences and resisting potential are positioned along racial lines and in relation to enduring colonial trajectories of life and death.

I understand *genealogy* as the relationship of ancestry, lineage, legacy, kinship, and sisterhood that is evoked between historical (feminist) witches, feminist(s) (Witches) of today, and the prefigured feminist future; as well as between the Witch and Indigenous healers of 'ancient cosmovisions', eventually extended to all feminine identities in struggle. *Knowledge* points to the specific and situated knowledge that is evoked in reference to those 'ancient cosmovisions': feminine, feminist, oral, embodied, organic, untranslatable but reachable. I introduce the *genealogical* articulation when analysing how spirituality was

appearing in feminist newspapers and magazines, arguing that certain practices like astrology or Indigenous healing are situated as both the inheritors of a lost past and the facilitators of a (feminist) future.

Recalling Harding and Mendoza's (2020) description of Latin American decolonial feminist critiques of science, *knowledge* is something to recover and, at least partially, to reinvent. It is to be retrieved as a method to access old/new ways of relating to the non-human, to our own bodies and selves beyond established knowledge categories, to a yet unknown way of knowing and being for the eventual transformation of the present and how the world is organised. The two strategies are deeply interlaced, insofar as the construction of this *genealogy* implies its *knowledge* and vice-versa.

The *genealogical* constitution of the Witch is exemplified by how She is narrated by feminist activists, journalists, intellectuals, and scholars. For example, the newspaper piece 'Who are the Contemporary Witches?' by journalist Ivana Romero (2019) offers a historical look through Silvia Federici's (2004) 'Caliban and the Witch' and Mona Chollet's (2018) 'Witches: The Undeclared Power of Women'. Through the sub-headings "A Rebel Genealogy" and "Machis and kolliris" (respectively Mapuche and Aymara/Quechua Indigenous power feminine figures with healing abilities), Romero (2019) explores who historical witches were and why their figure is relevant for the Green Tide and feminism in general.

Similarly, on the popular online feminist magazine *LatFem*, scholar Natalia Ortiz Maldonado (2018) presents Isabelle Stengers and Philippe Pignarre's (2011) 'Capitalist Sorcery' Argentine edition (2018) in a piece titled 'Spells and Counter-Spells'. Ortiz Maldonado too connects the history of witches with present-day feminism, anti-capitalist struggles, and First Nations, and argues for Witchcraft as a way of life that can resist and disrupt that of capitalist, heteropatriarchal relations. This is furthermore done through references to *shamans*, *curanderas*, and *gualichos*.

While I return to these texts and the relationship to Indigeneity in chapter 6, my focus here lies with the articulation of who historical witches were to illustrate what the *genealogical* strategy allows for the Green Tide discourse. In this sense, the persecution and killing of historical witches is deployed to make a case for how the Witch is a feminist legacy. Connecting with the sense of insurgency and possibility depicted in Verónica Gago's (2018) essay, historical witches, present-day feminists, and the various figures invoked around them are literally situated within a rebellious lineage. This *genealogy* makes them part of the same family of women as a dissident identity in struggle for a

different future. The following quotes, from Ortiz Maldonado (2018) and Romero (2019), illustrate what I mean by *genealogy* and *knowledge*.

Ortiz Maldonado, for example, addresses Pignarre and Stengers (2011) understanding of capitalism as an infernal sorcery, or spell, and tells the readers that it is a book for “feminists, precarious workers, unemployed, First Nations, ecological activists...” (Ortiz Maldonado, 2018: para. 4). Throughout the text, she describes witches as:

[...] the legionary tradition of affinities who think of themselves as part of the untamed powers of this world, those who know how to establish alliances, protection spells, counters-spells to heal what has been poisoned. [...] it's something more radical and less illuminist. We believe: in reason, in indomitable forces, in market justice, in law or jurisprudence [*derecho*], and also in impotence. (Ortiz Maldonado, 2018: para. 21)

For Ortiz Maldonado (*ibid.*), to continue believing in the inevitability of capitalism, is “to continue with the devastating effects of western enlightenment and expand the violences of its light.”

Later, the scholar adds:

Shamans, witches, alchemists, yogis... An extensive list of diffuse and diverse lineages that share a perception. [...] perhaps it is possible to signal the insistence of these presences, particularly in the shadows of Reason, or in our times, when reason simulates having disintegrated within patterns or plots [*tramas*] of technified common sense. [...] (*ibid.*: para 29)

Witchcraft is an ensemble of practices and knowledges that can configure a spiritual as well as corporeal, aesthetic, political experience. In the same way that capitalism, as a way of life, does not refer to a special type of objects or languages, but it is defined for the way of capturing them (without perceiving its venom), the ‘other witchcrafts’ can be detected by practices that affirm, protect, and intensify life in different territories, in more or less subtle ways. *Modus moriendi* in [capitalism] and *modus vivendi* in [witchcraft] [...]. (*ibid.*: para 38)

In these quotes, the Witch and Witchcraft are situated as one of the branches of a shared lineage dissident identities opposed, primarily, to capitalism and patriarchy, as a “tradition of affinities [...] part of the untamed powers of this world.” (Ortiz Maldonado, 2018: para. 21).

Romero, similarly, understands the Witch in connection to feminism and anti-capitalist struggles, and is more explicit in finding a connection with the Green Tide.

[...] women's mobilisations across the country brought, since Ni Una Menos, a slogan twinned with action: ‘we're the granddaughters of the witches they couldn't burn’ [...] All of that untamed, underground magma seems to have shaken that



branched family tree of which we, women as a dissident identity, are part of. In that moment, it becomes necessary to look at the root again. [...] (Romero, 2019: para. 4)

Romero, citing Silvia Federici (2004), continues:

[...] historians of the transition from capitalism and the articulation of modern proletariat forgot the central role of women and their paradoxical condition: they were the ones who could procreate and thus guarantee the continuity of the system, but their community organisations and the knowledge they brought from the beginning of time challenged the power structures. “This is a phenomenon to which we must return if we want to understand the misogyny that still characterizes institutional practice and relations between men and women,” says the Italian critic. It is appropriate, then, that the youth who goes out to the streets to demand their rights claim to be the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those witches whose behaviour was incompatible with the prevailing discipline. It is also about reversing a pejorative brand and transforming it into a proud sign of identity. (Romero, 2019: para. 8)

Witches, in this excerpt, become an identity to embody in the light of continuing operations of patriarchal capitalism, as a *genealogical* tie is found in centuries-long impositions of discipline, normalisation, and overall oppressive power structures.

As *genealogical* kinship that ties the Witch to feminists, observe how there is once more a recall of another possible world through a common “family tree” of figures (“shamans, alchemists, yogis”) and their way of *knowing* (“a perception [...] an insistence of these presences in the shadows of Reason”). In other words, the *genealogical* strategy is articulated in terms of ancestry, legacy, and lineage: a sisterhood whose kinship is past dispossession and the struggle for possibilities of a (different) life. This lineage of *knowledge*, tied to their specific *genealogy* of dissident identities in struggle, resonates with Gago’s (2018) not-knowing.

In such (un)definition, there is however clarity on the path to take: against capitalism and its utilitarian, heteropatriarchal “Reason,” and towards a “mode of living” that would allow a configuration of the self and its relation to otherness and life differently. If historical witches held a way of knowing and acting that challenged power structures, contemporary feminism can reconnect to that *knowledgeable* hence autonomous Witch as a blueprint to resist and disrupt historical dispossession and prefigure an alternative future. The Witch, then, constructed through *genealogy* and *knowledge*, delineates a common root and a common route.

The analysis of these discursive strategies requires more depth. I return to the reference to Indigenous figures, the search for a local Argentine Witch and Her ties with

the country's history, as well as the qualities of collectivism and sisterhood, later in chapters 5 and 6. In the meantime, I analyse the “necessary” return to the Witch as root/route to inform the political action and direction of Green Tide struggles and political alliances. To understand the investments in producing the Witch as a generative moment for the Green Tide, I examine two examples. The first is another text from Ortiz Maldonado, namely her 2019 introduction to the Argentine edition to Mona Chollet's (2019) ‘Witches’. The second is a 2018 interview between feminist journalist Paula Giménez and feminist historian Fernanda Gil Lozano. Both texts discuss the origin of the Witch and Her relevance for contemporary feminist movements.

In the first instance, Ortiz Maldonado (2019) elaborates again on the Witch as subject of rebellion. Her essay is titled ‘We Are the Granddaughters of the Witches They Could Not Burn’, literally recalling the popular chant sang in the street by hundreds of thousands of feminists holding the green handkerchief of the legal abortion campaign. She divides the text in three sections, the first two called “Mona's Witches” and “Our Witches”. Whereas both sections address historical witches, who are placed as first feminists, ancestresses, and role models of contemporary feminists, the second section discusses Indigenous or local (“our” Witches) counterparts to the European image of the Witch.

At the beginning of her text, Ortiz Maldonado (2019: para. 1) asks “what happens when feminism appropriates the witch lineage, its history, the mark of its genocide? [...] Against neoliberalism, patriarchy, and its depressing worlds, the magic of the coven appears as ineluctable political key.” To find this Witch lineage, Ortiz Maldonado goes back to before the Iron Age, when “the figure of the goddess was worshipped” as a central image in polytheist cults, and when she was the “regent of all vital processes, sexuality, animals, and the infinite cycles of nature” (ibid.: para. 2). The Witch Herself, the scholar narrates, was born when such historical cult of the Goddess, expressed in matriarchal societies, was expelled from Her political and spiritual power by the God.

The advent of the Witch in the dethronement of the Goddess is found in how, progressively since the Iron Age, the polytheistic Goddess cult was left behind in favour of monotheistic God cults centred around the primacy of the phallus over the womb, hence masculinity over femininity and man over woman. These cults, reports the scholar, “produced images for specific political and affective education: Eve, Lilith, sin, the chaos of senses, treason” that positioned evil with ‘woman’ and the colour black (ibid.: para. 4).

In the interview, on the other hand, historian and sociologist Gil Lozano (Giménez, 2018) tells ‘the real history of witches’ and why they are so important for feminist culture.

As can be read below, Gil Lozano situates the Witch centuries later than the patriarchal religious overthrow of the Goddess. The Witch's origin, through the words of the historian, is constructed primarily during the historical witch hunts of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Giménez (2018) tells the reader how witches “were medics, wise women, who would not stay silent and would organise to avoid being persecuted and burnt at the stake” (para. 4). Later, Giménez (2018: para. 9) quotes Gil Lozano: “‘Demonisation and persecution respond to the patriarchal need to stop a sharply feminine empirical knowledge that, moreover, has two transgressive connotations: its opposition to masculine medical knowledge and its knowledge over women’s body’.” While the world described by the historian was already a predominantly Christian world, for the scholar it was not yet a modern one. And this, I argue, is the Witch’s crucial origin.

The conversation between Giménez and Gil Lozano continues:

However, the tortured and burnt witches weren’t any woman: they were peasant and poor women. ‘That was a way through which, from power, high clergy and nobility penetrated the peasant village. The witch synthetised everything that they wanted to persecute.’ And why? ‘Because they were the representatives of pagan cults, the figure of the witch is the incarnation of wise women. In this way they were able to bring forward an independent sexuality because they knew how to get an abortion and when they were not going to get pregnant. And this is not a minor detail. I think they were the last voices of independent women before Modern [Nation-]States. Later marriage arrived, as an institution that imprisoned us in the house.’”

(Giménez, 2018: para. 11)

Here, through the voice of the historian, the Witch retains her transgressive and collective character once again tied to a non-modern form of knowledge and political organisation.

Gil Lozano’s (Giménez, 2018) Witch, like in Ortiz Maldonado’s (2019) narrative, continues to be the Goddess in disguise as the “representative of pagan cults;” but in this quote, the Witch is specifically positioned in a moment prior to disenfranchising Reason and science, capitalist economy, and the modern configuration of gender roles. Ortiz Maldonado’s and Gil Lozano’s temporalities might look dissonant, one being situated in the pre-historical passage from polytheistic to monotheistic cults, and the other in the European countryside transitioning to capitalism between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, both are discursively placed as the same *genealogical* moment of pre-modernity. In other words, it is the discursive moment of pre-modernity in which Green Tide knowledge producers find the Witch’s origin.

The point here is not the accuracy of the historical account, but how both narrations discursively place the Witch in pre-modernity, and how both imbue Her with a way of *arranging truth* that is discursively opposed to the epistemic regime of modernity. Ortiz Maldonado (2019) narrates the advent of monotheism and, specifically, Christianity, as the infant moment of modernity, wherein by separating phallus from womb, man is hierarchically separated from woman, spirit from body, etc., characterising the matriarchal prehistoric past as pre-patriarchal and pre-anthropocentric, hence pre-modern. Gil Lozano (Giménez, 2018) positions the beginning of modernity with the formation of nation-states and the configuration of modern capitalism, characterising the Witch as the moment ‘prior’ to it that needed to be erased. For Gil Lozano, during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, women were persecuted due to their spiritual/political role of pagan and political authorities in autonomous communities, and due to their sexual freedom and knowledge.

The constitutive role of modernity for the discursive production of the Witch as feminist spirituality is furthermore highlighted by the consistent deployment of Silvia Federici’s (2004) ‘Caliban and the Witch’. Consider how Federici’s text is evoked, in Gago’s (2018) essay, to help understand against which forms of violence and for what type of future feminist spirituality stands up for. I am not saying here that Federici’s own writing or framework are directly part of this discourse, nor have I analysed her work to this effect. Rather, I want to point out how ‘Caliban and the Witch’ is deployed by Green Tide knowledge producers as a consistent reference that sheds light on historical witches and their relevance for feminist movements and the Green Tide specifically.

In ‘Caliban and the Witch’, Federici (2004) argues that witch hunts have been instrumental in restructuring gender and family dynamics, thus altering the societal role of women to respond to the demands of emerging capitalism. The aim of these persecutions, Federici (2004) argues, was to capture and extract resources in their form of bodies, labour, land, and to impede resistance. Leaving aside discussions of how the texts I analyse here might or might not represent Federici’s argument appropriately, ‘Caliban and the Witch’ is utilised as a cornerstone of the Green Tide discursive strategies insofar as it presents an established feminist framework in which to place the Witch as antagonist of modernity understood as scientific rationality, capitalism, and the configuration of gender roles into a private and public sphere and respective reproductive and productive labour.

Across the discursive plane, *genealogy* and *knowledge* construct the Witch as rebellious to sexual, gender, reproductive and capitalist norms, persecuted precisely

because of an undisciplined freedom and knowledge inherently *other* to heterosexual, patriarchal, capitalist modernity, and autonomous vis-à-vis the incipient political formation of the state. In this sense, the Witch can only exist by dispossession. And not just any dispossession: an originary one, situated at the onset of modernity and not yet ended.

The Witch therefore exists in Her difference from those modern enforcements of power. First, the Witch is constructed along lines of a sexual and gender difference that makes Her sharply feminine and feminised. The Witch's knowledge, in historian Gil Lozano's (Giménez, 2018: para. 8) words, is a "sharply feminine empirical knowledge" that disrupts both an androcentric medical system and its presumption of *knowing* over feminine bodies. A particularly salient element in this sense is the repeated assertion that historical witches were autonomous and free in their sexual, gender, and reproductive choices – a difference reinforced by how they are portrayed to be knowledgeable specifically over plants and the body relative to utero-centric experiences.

Felitti's (2019a, b) understanding of women's circles as searching and developing an alternative medical model, for example, would fall into this category (as would Gil Lozano's (Giménez, 2018). Scholar of religion Laurel Zwissler (2018a) traces this tradition of feminist relationship with historical witches to the 1960s and the idea that, perhaps, historical witches were engaging in truly alternative practices. The most spiritual version of this vision materialised in how neopagan practitioners developed earth-based, egalitarian religions, with strong sacred feminine figures (ibid.: 12-13). In particular, the Goddess movement (which was articulated around the same time in the 1960s) developed an understanding of witches' alternative knowledge as a feminine, biological, emotional, cognitive, spiritual difference. A secular version, promoted instead by a secular feminist movement, was a focus on a distinct feminine knowledge in the sense of women's skills in healing, midwifery, and agricultural knowledge (ibid.).

The Witch's feminine difference is therefore traceable to the conjunctural reference to the Green Tide's fight for legalisation of abortion, and to the interest in a knowledge centred on reproductive and sexual needs. This feminine difference is both informed by an alternative 'empirical' knowledge of bodily autonomy, menstruation, midwifery, and herbal medicine, and a more 'spiritual' one centred around the sacred feminine, energy, astrology, and earth-based cults. In this sense, the Witch's sexual otherness is a female one, as it seems to be centred around the uterus, its functions, and processes, both differently empirical and spiritual.

In the next section of the chapter, I return to how, through the discursive objects of *body* and *desire*, the Green Tide produces a feminine alterity of *knowledge* that can foster another way of being in the world. While the Witch, in the Global North, traditionally appears as a counter-cultural figure standing against patriarchal Christianity (Zwissler, 2018a), in the Green Tide knowledge production her origin is not Christianity itself but modernity, and her insurgency is not just against patriarchy, but against patriarchy, capitalism (and, as I show in chapters 5 and 6, against colonialism) as forms of violence entangled together by modernity. In the next chapter I analyse the contingencies, in the development of the Green Tide, that were required for the Witch to become a grassroots symbol of ‘the people’ against the neoliberal government of Cambiemos and its precarising policies. Then, in chapter 6, I analyse the role of race and colonialism in the Witch difference from modernity, and how feminine difference is again reinscribed at its subaltern core.

In fact, the references to a capitalist modernity and the re-shaping of gender roles serve to indicate another important difference that constitutes the Witch. The Witch is narrated as peasant and poor, belonging to autonomous-soon-to-be-enclosed communities opposed to the rich clergy and nobility. This is a class and anticapitalist difference that articulates the Witch as a figure standing against a capitalist order that captures and dispossesses everything in its path. If, in Ortiz Maldonado’s (2018: 38) words, capitalism is a “modality of death,” Witchcraft stands for the possibility of a collective thriving of life.

Feminine and anti-capitalist difference are entangled and refer back to a post-human prefiguration, but the classed difference that constitutes the Witch exposes primarily Her anti-capitalist difference: she is *popular*, communitarian, autonomous. For example, historian Gil Lozano (Giménez, 2018: para. 8) explains how nobility was treated by ‘men medics,’ while women and servants in virtue of their lower status could only be treated by ‘women healers’. Witches, as such healers, are immediately represented as the *from below* (feminine) counterpart of powerful exploitative actors.

Here, it is worth noting that, in the political context of a general impoverishment of the population due to the IMF debt and austerity measures of *Cambiemos*, the Green Tide Witch is produced through different temporalities are entangled as one genealogy, where modern dispossessions present themselves renewed: early capitalist-patriarchal enclosures then, neoliberal-patriarchal advancement today. Insofar as the Witch difference is one centred on *genealogy* and *knowledge*, the Witch is moreover constituted by an epistemic

difference. The Witch is not just the female, grassroots other of heteropatriarchal-capitalist modernity, she is also the spiritual, non-secular knowledgeable other of modern Reason.

With ‘non-secular’ I am referring to that reunion of epistemic orders and their spiritual experience, which Harding and Mendoza (2020) call “cosmogonies” or “cosmovisions” in relation to Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. By non-secular, therefore, I intend the refusal, in these communities, of experiencing knowledge and spirituality as separate, as well as the Christian and rationalist legacy of this separation, and the efforts in reconnecting these two orders. I use this term only to convey what I mean when I argue that the Witch is constituted as epistemically different. It is a difference that carries notions of an ‘empirical model (i.e., medical or environmental), but primarily an altogether different onto-epistemology that does not reject the ‘spiritual’ and ‘re-enchants’ the world instead to experience it in a completely different re-arrangement of the episteme.

The excerpts analysed so far illustrate how the *knowledge* incarnated by the Witch is in service of both (female) bodies and communities. A knowledge of the moon cycle, we are told, would have been useful for tracking menstruation and harvest cycles alike. For these reasons, the Witch *knowledge* is constructed as communitarian, autonomous, non-secular as such was the *knowledge* granted only to the “representatives of pagan cults” (Giménez, 2018, para. 11). The discursive strategy of knowledge is tightly connected to the Witch feminine/feminist genealogy, and points to the specific and situated knowledge that is evoked in reference to ancestral cultures and the specific role of the sacred feminine (Zwissler, 2018a) or sexual and gender variation (Morgensen 2011) within them.

In the Green Tide discourse, I argue, the Witch incarnate a non-secular *knowledge* because their ability to work on and with bodies and communities is derived by being in touch with the mysteries of the goddesses. In the discursive production of the Witch, therefore, it is possible to trace how spiritual practices tied to utero-centric experiences appear alongside ecological searches for a new consciousness and collective forms of political engagement. As a feminine alterity based on the materiality of the body and re-enchanting connection with nature, the Witch is relevant for the contemporary Argentine feminist movement insofar as She is discursively constituted by modernity as *genealogical* moment of dispossession. *Knowledge* relates to the *genealogy* of modern repression and struggle insofar as the various figures brought together to make the Witch the trope of feminist spirituality share a non-modern or non-Western knowledge: Indigenous healers, local or folkloric Witch figures, the European-style Witch with broom and pointy hat, but

also yogis, astrologers, tantric practitioners, etc. Witches are then *the* ‘alternative episteme’, others of modernity.

I mentioned earlier how Ortiz Maldonado (2019: para. 2) situates the birth of the Witch when the Goddess was dethroned. A couple of paragraphs later, Ortiz Maldonado continues:

Witches emerge when the God occupies all the political and spiritual scene, when a distance between heavens and earth is produced, and from there the hierarchy between high and low, mind and body, salvation and condemnation. In the field of collective representations, witches appeared as the *embodiment* of the devil (this is, a powerful masculinity), as bodies inhabited by evil; [...]. However, witches persisted at the level of daily life as holders of a knowledge about the continuity between words, plants, animals, minerals, and planets, and as those who could repair bodies and affects through that knowledge. [...]  
(Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 5)

Ortiz Maldonado’s (2018, 2019) texts illustrate the relationship that threads together diverse spiritual practices and discourses of alternative knowledge production.

By invoking the rupturing of divides that characterise modern knowledge categories and epistemology, the Witch is an epistemic other offering a way of being that refuses to be organised through hierarchical knowledge categories that separate what is to be saved and what not, who is worthy and who is not, as well as a division, both Christian and secular, of mind, or spirit, and body, flesh, senses, chaos. The Witch’s *knowledge* is that standing on the side of the body or nature, or all those practices that have been classified as ‘non-scientific’ by modern Western reason. These texts emphatically insist on the historical epistemic dispossession of these forms of knowing, as well as their persistence *despite* heteropatriarchal capitalism, and their prefigurative potential.

I am keen to highlight how, portrayed through a non-modern difference, the Witch is not just a discourse of harmonious post-human interdependency (Fisk, 2017) or challenge to patriarchy (Zwissler, 2018a). Insofar as, discursively, the Witch is born through modern dispossession in its multiple forms, the Witch is subaltern, dissident, and rebellious. She carries disruptive potential because She, too, has been dispossessed by the powers of modernity. Such is the *genealogical* strategy that makes the Witch possible as feminist.

The discursive charge of the Witch epistemic otherness resides mostly in Her transgressive role. She was persecuted specifically because Her way of knowing and being, we are told, was considered dangerous for the incipient order. And in virtue of this root, it is those feminist activists that today continue to challenge established norms that come to



be the ‘Witches of today’. As a discursive strategy, the Witch’s *knowledge* implies a different *epistemic* order and its arrangements of truth and falsity, flesh, and non/human relationality. The two discursive strategies are deeply interlaced, insofar as, it would seem, those who belong to this *genealogy* of dispossession, resistance, and prefiguration can access such *knowledge* of dispossession, resistance, and prefiguration. And vice versa, all those researching or practicing such *knowledge* can be part of this *genealogy*.

The Witch can be conceptualised through Sylvia Wynter’s (2003) argument about how current understandings of humanness respond to an (over)representation of the Western bourgeois Man. I read the Green Tide operation as a critique of the early secular understanding of the human, where the connection between *knowledge* and political articulation seeks to reinstate their dispossessed position within the modern episteme of Man.

The knowledge Witches appear to represent is that derogated by modernity as illegitimate and subordinate because inferior was anything related to the materiality of the body. Here, the axis of Reason/Unreason of the episteme of Man continues to delegitimise the Witch’s and Her feminine epistemic alterity as an expression of political agency. The Witch is discursively posited to incarnate the “space of Otherness” (Wynter, 2003), or all who do not embody the normative ideal of humanness inaugurated with the modern episteme of Man.

The feminist call to a different knowledge as one that is non-secular directly challenges this foundational characteristic of modern secularism. Standing “in the shadows of Reason” (Ortiz Maldonado, 2018: para. 29), the Witch crawls out of the pit of Otherness she was thrown into to break the hierarchical subject-object relationship that created Her. The rebellious Witch, “frightening Reason,” is positioned to take on Man’s overrepresentation and show that the reproduction of the episteme of Man implies the death of Others.

The pre-modern *genealogy* of the Witch addresses both the continued dispossession, across orders of knowledge, of specific types of people as constitutionally less human, and the early secular one that placed defective humanness in the body and its *knowledge*. The Witch, produced via dispossession by the institution of the modern episteme of Man, stands as anti-Man in its configuration Reason/Unreason in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. By placing the Witch’s origin in the dispossession of modernity not on the base of the division of societies and selves in bio-economic terms, but in, and through, the Cartesian

categories of rationality and irrationality, spirit (mind) and flesh (body), etc., the Witch is produced as a possibility of breaking through the episteme of Man.

I am referring to how the Witch reclaims the continuation of the sinful flesh/irrationality (Unreason) (Wynter, 2003) as an enactable epistemic position *knowledge*. It is one that cannot be simply reincorporated within the system that created it. It could, but it is an epistemic position that has the potential of disrupting the rules and categories of intelligibility that constitute the modern episteme of Man, and, as such, it would be counter-acting the organisation of life in cisheteropatriarchal capitalist modernity, thus granting access to a different form of cohabitation and consciousness.

Overall, Green Tide discourse speaks of a desired self-transformation, a deconstruction and re-articulation of the self among others. Green Tide spirituality would then seem to respond to Foucault's own definition of political spirituality<sup>59</sup> as a different relationship to the order of truth that makes transformation of 'the self' possible and necessary (Foucault, 1994 in McWhorter, 2003: 2). Foucault's political spirituality can be understood as the revolutionary effort to undergo a transformative activity where the generation of a new epistemic regime (the modes of separating truth from falsity), happens simultaneously to new ways of governing oneself (the modes of conduct that makes us subjects in the epistemic regime). The Witch, as a discursive formation, claims to recover a pre-modern past to invert the current order of knowledge, and foreground a prefigurative post-modern division of truth from falsity, including what it means to be a subject and how life is organised.

Foucault wrote about political spirituality in 1978 in reference to the Iranian revolution as a different arrangement of truth and conduct that could effect transformation, thus clarifying, in McWhorter's (2003) reading of the argument, that political spirituality is not just engaging in politics based on religious doctrine.<sup>60</sup> In Foucauldian thought, to effect a change in our way of being in the world, transformational efforts need to depart neither from an existing theory, ethical code or ideal to rearrange our subjective conduct; nor from an already practiced lifestyle to develop a new epistemic framework. Rather, it needs to happen at the same time "each by and through the other" (McWhorter, 2003: 4). This is because, crucially, to take existing modes of knowledge/power as a departing point

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<sup>59</sup> Ladelle McWhorter (2003) and Paul Rabinow (2009) have elaborated at length on the central role this elusive concept has in understanding Foucault's investment in transformation. For extensive arguments on the revolutionary character of Foucault's thought see Cornell & Seely (2016), specifically 53-80.

<sup>60</sup> See McWhorter (2003: 13) footnote 4 for a reference to readings of Foucault's political spirituality as a critique of religious discourse.

means to leave them unquestioned as the foundational blocks in our search for alterity. Or, in other words, there cannot be any different way of being 'I' in the world if we reproduce our existing epistemic regime through the tools that should effect our desired transformation. Change might only happen through a constant motion "that creates its own departure points as means of moving beyond itself" (McWhorter, 2003: 2).

Interestingly, Foucault's writings on the Iranian Revolution were taken up by Verónica Gago in 2019 on *Lobo Suelto*, the platform publishing her 2018's 'Spirituality as Force for Uprising'. Gago (2019) offers an analysis of a 1979 Foucault's interview with Farés Sassine to elucidate the relationship between "uprising" (a term already used in the original French translations<sup>61</sup>) and political spirituality, returning, in her last sentence (Gago, 2019: para. 17), to the "feminist gesture that once again puts into action a dramaturgy of the uprising that summons, from the dissidence of the bodies, a new political spirituality." I find relevant how references to Michel Foucault and Silvia Federici among others serve to position the Green Tide as an agent of Foucauldian political spirituality through the figure of the Witch. My point here is not an engagement in a theoretical debate with Gago and other Green Tide scholars, nor with Foucault.

In this publication I see a hint of how Gago's own reading of the Witch and the Green Tide as a political spirituality relates to Foucault's. This is, as efforts to effect epistemic-political transformations of the self among others, not solely as a contingent politically strategic use of religious pluralism to aid the claim for the legalisation of abortion (Vaggione, 2018). To be perfectly clear, I am not arguing that the Green Tide *is* a political spirituality as in McWhorter's (2003) reading of Foucault, or that it *is* non-secular in my conceptualisation of the term through Harding and Mendoza (2020). What I argue, is that Green Tide knowledge production *lays a claim to* a political spirituality in Foucauldian terms. Feminist knowledge producers discursively place the Witch, and the feminist practices of street protest, to be a potential carrier (when not already carrying) such ability to effect radical transformation. Addressing the episteme of Man on the axis of Reason/Unreason, the Witch claims a memory and possible praxis for a different arrangement of truth.

To reiterate, my argument is that, as a political attempt at emancipation from repressive power operations, the Witch serves not just to challenge repressive actors within

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<sup>61</sup> In 2014 Sassine published an inedited French translation of the interview, originally in Arabic, on his personal blog. For a French translation, see Sassine & Foucault (2018).

the established domains of the episteme (as would be the legalisation of abortion), but to break across the episteme of Man itself. The early secularisation of humanism, which Wynter (2003) identifies as what defines humanness today, is the moment ‘untranslatable’, ‘sensible’, ‘spiritual’, ‘Witch’ and ‘ancient cosmovisions’ stand in resistance to. If Unreason, facing the episteme of Man, stands to represent the derogated epistemic authority of the body and all those ‘ungovernable’ (Wynter, 2003), the Witch is a reclamation of Unreason as a possibility to know and live otherwise.

Discursively, appealing to what would be a praxis of being beyond the epistemic rules of the episteme of Man, the Witch functions as anti-Man. In other words, my point is that the Witch is produced as the epitome of the slot of Otherness opposed to the episteme of Man, Modernity, or the Subject of Capitalism through non-secular knowledge as standpoint of alterity. As I discussed in reference to the search for a beyond of sexual categories, ‘not-knowing’ points to worldview that is no longer organised through, and constituted by, the modern episteme of Man<sup>1</sup>, but rather seeks to depart from its outside (Unreason) to construct an alternative future.

I want to emphasise here how the seeming impossibility of an outside of the episteme of Modernity carries nonetheless a sense of feasibility. The Witch’s epistemic difference, in the excerpts I analyse, is constructed as ‘untranslatable’ and ‘subtle’. On conservative newspaper *La Nación*, Laura Marajofski (2019) writes about young, feminist, liberal millennials who approach the Witch paganism to find in it a growing sense of feminist empowerment and ecological consciousness. The journalist (*ibid.*: para. 9) here narrates Witchcraft as a practice that “cannot be explained scientifically.” As the Witch is produced as an “alternative map to transit life [...] with a recognition that what is known in the body and not always can, or want to, be explained with pure reason” (Romero, 2019: para. 1), however, it is also promptly produced as ‘practices’, ‘procedures’, and ‘micropolitical experiences’.

The Witch is neither obliterated by the episteme of Man nor unable to escape its epistemic and political structuring of the world. As anti-Man, the Witch offers “micropolitical” tools to offer new ways of being, feeling, thinking that could eventually make the episteme of Man obsolete. As I analyse in the next section, these sites and modes of disruption are the constituted objects of the Witch discourse, namely *body* and *desire*.

### 4.3. The Witch and Her Modern Limits

*Knowledge* is directly connected not just to an ideal beyond Modernity, but to a disruptive category, a breaking-through that can be enacted, of how to be human without being subjected in/to the episteme of Man. My analysis illustrates how the Witch's episteme is also quickly referred to as a *Witchcraft*, a practice that can concretely disrupt the episteme of Man and its power through spells, rituals, remedies, including micropolitical practices. At one time *unsayable* because currently we do not have the epistemic ability to experience it outside the modern order of truth (Man), the Witch *knowledge* appears nonetheless concrete, transparent, *doable*. In the discursive production of the Witch, this charge of radical alterity as radical possibility is evidenced in how knowledge producers centre on feminised identities, bodies, and their irrational *knowledge*.

The tension between the un-knowing and the praxis requires more reflection. From a methodological perspective, analysing the Witch spirituality as a discourse requires an examination of the production of discursive subject positions. These do not talk about specific individuals but of agential standpoints that can be taken by whoever becomes a subject, a 'self', through such discourse (Foucault, 1972). In other words, the quality of the subject in a discourse is about ways of conducting oneself, ways of acting or relating to the world.

To be a 'self' or an 'I', in the Witch discourse is to be resistant, rebellious, acting at the forefront of social revolution in virtue of 'spirituality' as theory-praxis of (feminist) change. In this sense, to be any individual who takes up a subject position in the Witch discourse is to conduct oneself according to the spiritual political epistemology of the Witch, which in this case means becoming an agent of a transcendent alternative civilisation proposal. With this in mind, the recurring notion of 'untranslatable' and the idea that either historical knowledges or certain contemporary Indigenous knowledges offer an outside or something unattainable to patriarchal-capitalist-secular modernity, evokes what Joseph Massad (2007; 2016) called a "romance of the incommensurate." The Witch is produced as *claim to* a way of disconnecting from the patriarchal-capitalist modern episteme of Man and its organisation of life. The desire of Green Tide feminists to encounter knowledge and practices that are incommensurable with those of the episteme of Man prompts me to ask what that proximity does for us and the Green Tide, who are already subjects within capitalist modernity and its categories of knowledge.

If the subjective position ‘I’ is defined first and foremost by a political spirituality framed in the sense of self-transformation that transmutes how we live together, in turn induced by a different *knowledge*, then how the *Witchcraft* is articulated is of utmost importance. Praxis is a critical element already in Foucault’s political spirituality, as the danger of reproducing the episteme of Man under new figures is implicit in the reference to already existing lifestyles or ideals (McWhorter, 2003). This becomes even more important in the Witch discourse, which is precisely laying claim to bringing about a different way of being in the world.

In the Green Tide spirituality, the untranslatable and the pragmatic co-exist. Because of this translation of the incommensurate into (political) praxis, the underlying conditions of possibility that make the problem of a feminist spirituality possible, and the Witch as emergent knowledge formation, can be investigated by looking precisely at how the ‘untranslatable’ becomes feasible through the discursive objects that constitute the Green Tide’s feminist spirituality. I am referring to how the outside of the episteme of Man, or the incommensurate in Massad’s (2007; 2016) words, is operationalised by Green Tide knowledge producers, across spiritual practices like astrology and natural gynaecology, in *body* and *desire*. These are the constituted discursive objects of the Witch that render the incommensurate intelligible offering a feminist route to challenge the episteme of Man, which, in turn, enables the subject position of anti-Man.

My argument is that Witch as a word of power of radical alterity by virtue of *genealogy* and *knowledge*, produces the *body* and *desire* as the discursive spaces of enactment of Her antithetic role of anti-Man. In Gago’s (2018: para. 9) words, it is on feminised “bodies” and “ways of life” that the struggle between feminism and neoliberal heteropatriarchal politics plays out, and it is from bodies as irrational and ungovernable (‘Unreasonable’) that a different way of life can be envisioned. My analysis illustrates how *body* and *desire* are produced by the discursive strategies of *genealogy* and *knowledge* as the domains wherein the discourse of the Witch can unravel into existence. To clarify, I am not focusing on conceptualisations of the body, nor do I engage in a discussion of the body in terms of its carnality.<sup>62</sup> I rather investigate how *body* and *desire* are produced as the two sites where the Witch discourse can be applied and become anti-Man.

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<sup>62</sup> Povinelli (2006) distinguishes corporeality, where the body is always already part of discourse (as theorised by Butler and Foucault), and carnality as what remains untold and unconceptualised by discourse. In my analysis, body and desire are corporeal: spoken or articulated (i.e., already discursive).

In the introduction to the Argentine edition of Chollet's (2019) 'Witches', Ortiz Maldonado's (2019: para. 3) narrates that in the pre-modern past, pagan practices had a "mode of access to divinity" that "contemplated the body in a direct way", for which "many rituals had a strong sexual and sensual dimension, and lesbian and *travesti* practices were frequent and considered a central aspect to the goddess cult." Goddess "celebration and direct knowledge of the world," Ortiz Maldonado (ibid. para. 4) continues, was relieved by historical witches:

The witch emerged as replacement of dethroned priestesses and, like them, proposes an articulation between the body and the sacred. Prophets, curanderas, and midwives appeared centuries before the Inquisition they were the pagans that resisted primitive Christianity and its doctrine. Knowers of plants, herbs, animals, atmospheric signs, astronomy and medicine, great narrators of myth and poetry, women and lesbians, the witch legion refused (and refuses) the strong distinction between divine and earthly, between sacred and profane, and, specifically, it refuses the condemnation and the desertification of the body.

Mona Chollet proposes that contemporary witches signal the presence of a strength that can be appropriated, and the existence of a set of procedures to do so; they have a micropolitical experience that the official power despises and represses. In witches there is a praxis that frightens especially Reason because they refuse it from practices and not from abstract theorisation; their knowledges and skills or answers [*aciertos*] are at the level of perceptions, of frights and desires, even if they remain silent or are negated again and again. [...].

(Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 6-7)

This example highlights my point on how, in the unmaking of binary modern knowledge categories, the difference of the feminine *body* arises as radical Otherness through *desire* as force of passions also condemned, to be recovered as the pre-Man yet prefigurative way of an interconnected, more just way of life.

Ortiz Maldonado (2019) continues:

The world witches account for, is another one. [It] radically rejects the binary, particularly that distinguishing the political from the erotic and the domestic, the body from the spirit, nature from culture. A micropolitics where every gesture is relevant, [as] it could gestate coven strategies qualitatively different to those that we call 'politics' that always allude to heteronormed institutions: the family, the Church, the state, labour, the economy, science... From witches' point of view, in bodies forces coagulate that can always be intervened, there is no space there for any kind of essence. In the mestizo and hybridising gaze of witches, nature is not a domesticable territory nor one of unbreakable laws, but a non-binary plane that populates us and that we populate, habited also by techniques, desires, non-human beings, [*clinámenes*] and quantic jumps. The witch's knowing is a knowing of effects, a pragmatic, where it isn't possible to sustain an idea of nature in its modern sense, insofar it would mean to send women, lesbians and transvestites back to the

zone of normalisation devices, of motherhood and heterosexuality. The nature of witches is antinatural and disturbing, and in it all compositions are possible. (Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 26)

This excerpt is quite illuminating of the investments underlying the Witch, and the role body and desire play in it.

Ortiz Maldonado again displays the claim of the Witch belonging to and bringing about another world, yet a “pragmatic” of rejecting the binary categories of modern knowledge and their politics. *Desire* and *body*, in Ortiz Maldonado’s text, are identified as the site upon which the episteme of Man seeks to reinscribe its normative power in its heteropatriarchal connotation. In this sense, the spirituality or alternative episteme of the Witch can be read as a conjunctural response to conservative actors and a political action of refusing gender, sexual, and sex binaries, ideas of nature and essence, with the goal of securing gender and sexuality emancipatory rights. However, in that “bodies coagulate forces that can always be intervened” there is a return to how spirituality transcends the Green Tide.

*Body* and *desire* are produced as the agents of sensuality clashing against Reason, a revolutionary Unreason from the slot of Otherness. In the Green Tide discourse, it is from bodies as ungovernable, hence indomitable, that a different way of life is brought to life from the force of desire: the *body* is a *desiring* body that in its inherently unfinished character spontaneously revolts against normalising powers of the episteme of Man. As discursive objects, then, the *body* and its *desires* offer a delimited space of action for the Witch discourse of anti-Man to be enacted. This space is the space of Otherness identified by Wynter (2003) as all those who become othered in, and by, the modern episteme of Man.

As they become proper objects that exist in the world, *body* and *desire*, I argue, concretise the root/route to an alternative civilisation model. In her ethnographic accounts of spiritual practices within Green Tide spaces, Karina Felitti describes one of the dancing performances/rituals taking place at the 2019 PluriNational Encounter, centred around a mythical female folkloric, *popular* figure – a ‘local witch’ called *La Telesita* (ibid.: 2019b: 196-197; 2021a: 552-557). This is the legend of “a young girl from the Argentine province of Santiago del Estero who was burned to death in the 19th century in circumstances that remain unclear. *La Telesita* has been often interpreted by popular tradition as a local [popular] witch” (Felitti, 2019b: 196).

As Felitti danced with the other participants of this *rezabaile* [prayer dance], they thanked “the possibility of movement, being invited to free the body, to sing before the



final closing manifestation [of the Encounter]” and recalls in first person how she “could feel in [her] own body a sensation of ease and cheerfulness [...]. In this collective shaking, incitement, what was offered was a personal connection with oneself and, from that site, with the universe, the lineage, the witches, and other dancers” (Felitti, 2021a: 555). This “collective shaking”, or “prayer-dance” dedicated to *La Telesita*, “inspired more than 200 people to raise their green handkerchiefs in the air to incite the end of patriarchal society and the legalisation of abortion [...]” (Felitti, 2019b: 196).

The “mystique” invoked by Gago (2018: para. 1) to describe spirituality as an insurgent force of feminism refers to this collective sentiment of belonging and investment. The sense of the *embodied knowledge* of the Witch is here narrated by Felitti (2019b; 2021a) in how she (her body) felt by participating of a ritual dance. When the Green Tide gathers in protest, jumping and singing together “we’re the granddaughters of the witches they couldn’t burn,” what they are doing is *hacer cuerpo: embodying* but also *making (the) body* of that history, legacy, and power. By bringing out the efforts of past generations, by remembering as an *embodied* enactment of a past *knowledge*, they can ensure a future without those shared oppressions. The Witch can be *embodied* through performative moments where Her alleged radical *knowing* is deployed (rituals, sensual explorations, chanting, dancing, reading Tarot cards and feminist protesting in mass). In this way, the *genealogy/knowledge* that the Witch stands for can be enfolded/embodied by participants. The radical politics of the Green Tide’s feminist decoloniality is reified in those bodies gathering together at Green Tide events, or through Green Tide claims. In other words, the radical alterity patterned in the Green Tide discourse is that of those bodies coming together in the street of the feminist strikes through the figure of the Witch.

The invocation of the Witch, feminist possession by Her, promises a future change and return to another way of life. The work on the body proposed by many spiritual practitioners is framed as a reconnection with one’s own body as a *body* who *knows*, who can make sense of the repression she is subjected to, and that can *desire* something *else*. It is also a work on the *body* that encourages making that *desire* intelligible and, through it, imagining a different lifestyle. It is an *embodying* that unlocks untranslatable ways of knowing, connecting to the subtle non-human, to the inherent interconnectedness of life. It is quite literally through *body* and *desire* that the alleged encounter with the outside of modernity takes place. The Witch’s praxis of *knowledge*, faithful to its efforts to not separate mind and body, does not remain in the abstract. It is instead accessible for those allowing their ‘rational’ minds to be ‘possessed’ by the Witch through the spiritual

activities that are condensed around Her and mediated through the feminism of the Green Tide.

Such accent on bodily practice is a good reminder that any epistemic change implies a rearrangement of the corporeal self. McWhorter (2003) highlights the importance of bodily practice for Foucault's political spirituality, both because transformation cannot be a speculative endeavour of intellectualism and because self-transformation, as a way of governing oneself, implicates the body in its conduct. A different epistemic regime, therefore, would imply a novel arrangement of corporeality, defined by Povinelli (2006) as the discursive articulation of what 'body' is and feels.

The Witch's *body* and *desire*, as objects of the Green Tide discourse, resonate with how Longman (2018: 13) conceptualises the experience of women's spiritual circles in West Europe: "female embodiment and femininity serve as a politics of location, as a starting point from which to question, experience, and explore in a more creative sense rather than a counterculture based on a fixed sense of identity and gender essentialism." As Zwissler argued (2018a: 21), the Witch "offers a template for feminist alterity" tied, once again, to tropes of women's natural knowledge, and entangled with imaginaries of ecological harmony and human/non-human relationality (Fisk 2017; Cornish 2023). *Body* and *desire* become the constituted objects of the Witch discourse. For Her to be anti-Man, she needs to operate through *body* and *desire* as discursively constituted corporealities of a different way of being in the world.

But in the Witch discourse *body* and *desire* are not epistemically rearranged. The point I want to stress is how the "untranslatable" becomes a political "pragmatic" through the sexually constituted discursive objects *body* and *desire*. The rousing impression of the Witch episteme, from a radical knowing that is intuitively *sensed*, becomes *Witchcraft* because *body* and *desire* are discursively constituted to be the sites of enactment that makes the passage possible. However, this movement does not facilitate a rearrangement of *body* and *desire*. It reinstates them as central categories in the modern discourse of sexuality through a grammar of gender and sexuality (Povinelli, 2006) and the political imaginary of sexual freedom (Sabsay, 2016a, c), finally re-configuring the Witch as a very modern subject of sex (and, as I explore in chapter 6, of a race).

In volume I of the 'History of Sexuality', Foucault (1978) famously shows how the experience of sexuality and its annexed senses of bodily function, pleasure, desire, etc., are a modern system of power, knowledge, and subjectivity. 'Sex,' for Foucault, is the way subjects come to experience themselves within the "apparatus of sexuality," the

interconnection between the discourse of sexuality that developed in a whole range of sciences and the institution, laws, and practices created around that discourse. In other words, from the most intimate experience to our biological understanding of the species, sex and sexuality link different body parts, sensations, biological functions, etc., into our sense of unity as a self and as a collective. In the modern episteme, it is sex that allows for the self to become a coherent being that can act in the world, as without it we would not be able to understand ourselves as coherent subjects. Body, sexuality, reproduction, sex, gender, etc. are all experiences of the self that are constituted in the late modern episteme of Man.

For body and desire to be ‘indomitable’ and ‘unfinished’, in the sense of having qualities that make biopolitical and governmental technologies always imperfect, is not a new argument (see Foucault, 1978). Sabsay (2016b) and Massad (2016) discuss in fact that there are configurations of the self that escape Western liberalism and its Subject; they (ibid.) also agree that within Western liberalism and the modern epistemology, sexuality becomes “something that it can *never* be from the point of view of anti-imperialist translation” (Massad, 2016: para. 4). The point is precisely how, as I illustrated in my analysis, in the Green Tide *body* and *desire* are not escaping Western configuration of the self insofar as the latter is eminently mediated by the discourse of sexuality (Foucault, 1978), and *body* and *desire* are here produced precisely as categories that re-centre sex and sexuality this time not as markers of normalisation but as forces of liberation.

To be spiritual, in the Green Tide discourse, is to be militant; to engage in a level of political transformative action that requires abandoning the ‘rational mind’ to reach the unknown of a new configuration of self and organisation of life together, towards a way of being subject-in-the-world that is radically other to cisheteropatriarchal, capitalist episteme of Man. An articulation of life that would include the situational extension of rights to “women, lesbians, *travestis*, and trans” (Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 23), but also go beyond, in the ‘unknowable’ that is not exhausted into the modern politics of refusing gender essentialism. For how the categories of *desire*, love, passion, sensual and erotic *body* are deployed in these excerpts, the ‘untranslatable’ world is quite envisionable. The blueprint for this new world is the same that makes this old present one possible: the Woman question and her annexed sexual others.

The excerpts I selected in this chapter illustrate how the *body* appears as the sexual self of the modern political imaginary (Sabsay, 2016a, c). The inspirational aura left by imagining how it might feel to step outside modernity is made transparent, translatable, and

direct through astrology, tarot card reading, dancing and other sexy things. These are the activities bringing the Witch self into a sexually liberated being. Reading the *body* as the desiring subject of the modern discourse of sexuality allows the articulation of women in ancestral cosmovisions as important spiritual-political roles (wise, healer, leader) that “had a strong sexual and sensual dimension” (Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 3). And it is the sexual body of the desiring subject that, in turn, permits the genealogical articulation with contemporary feminists as the embodied legacy of the Witch’s power, where a different way of being among others can be reached by bringing desiring bodies together in the International Feminist Strike as a “global and massive orgasm” (*Ni Una Menos*, 2018a).

To reiterate my point, consider the following examples. Romero (2019), after discussing the history of witch hunts through Federici’s (2004) framework and claiming the Witch as a collective dissident identity to return to, falls back on two lifestyle books on astrology, tarot reading, rituals, and modern life. The first, political scientist and astrologist Lu Gaitán’s (2019) book ‘Venus Affairs’, is described as utilising the planet Venus “to explore the unknown and fund new forms of affection,” where “desire is a centre to deconstruct in a time where traditional couple structures are being shaken.” (Romero, 2019: para. 9-11).

The second book, ‘Modern Witch’ by content producer, writer, and self-identified Witch Dalia Walker’s (2018), is quoted to say that “a witch is a wise woman who enjoys her strength, power, and sex. [...] Magic expresses originality but also strength, knowledge, independence. Feminism is behind all this because it is the strength of this movement that brought us here” (Romero, 2019: para. 9-12). *Ni Una Menos* (2018b), in a Instagram post calling to the 8 of March protest in 2018, publishes a video figuring a pink tide, and writes: “We erotise politics and politicise pleasure with a global measure of force and a collective magic pass: #Orgasmaton. Let’s end patriarchy in any way possible. #8M #WeStrike.”

In a similar recentring of sexual freedom, Ortiz Maldonado (2019) writes:

The representations of witches, old and contemporary, talk about a dispositive of power that is simultaneously obsessed and terrified by those bodies. When feminisms deliberately appropriate this lineage, they do so knowing that a battle has been going on for centuries and that witches are the most radical to fight it, and this happens, according to Chollet, because the witch archetype ‘incarnates the woman freed of all dominations, all limitations; it’s an ideal to attend to, she shows the way’.  
(Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 9)

My argument, here, is that *body* and *desire*, even when produced as micropolitical forces of resistance and prefiguration of an otherwise, continue to be organised as coherent entities through a gender and sexuality lens that returns to a feminine difference and that is part of the epistemic configuration of the episteme of Man, not its disruption.

The *knowledge* that is produced as having an epistemic force of rupture is the reproductive, sexual, queer body, the irrational flesh condemned to Unreason in early modernity, yes, but nonetheless the late modern sexed body and sexualised sense of self. Only through categories of sex, the Witch *body* enables to claim for gender and sexual rights, to refuse modern categories of nature and essentialism to avoid sending “women, lesbians and *travestis* back to the zone of normalisation devices” (Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 26), and, in those acts, to reclaim a route that would breach the episteme of Man.

Povinelli (2006) described the operation of reinscribing into the categories of sex, gender, sexuality, pleasure and desire every encounter with something external to them as a grammar of pleasure and desire. Similarly, Sabsay (2016a, b, c) insisted on how the attachment to ‘sexuality’ serves to preserve the realm of liberalism insofar the truth of Western being is always mediated through the ‘sexual’. In this sense, the (sexual) *body* and *desire* fill in the slippage between ‘subtle’ and a new prefigured “micropolitical” knowledge, and so the ‘untranslatable’, becomes both intelligible and pragmatic by being translated into the modern discourse of sexuality.

Insofar as in the Green Tide discourse it is sexuality to give access to the ‘unknowable’, it can be argued that the indecipherable happenings of the flesh and its prefigurative future become again intelligible and imaginable via a discursive operation of sexuality. The hoped-for liberation from the episteme of Man is reinscribed in a sexual subject by elevating (her) sexuality to the realm of a promised re-enchanted salvation from the “desertification of the body” (Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 6). Modern sexuality continues to be the organising order of a future reality insofar as the Witch makes sense as an emancipatory horizon only because, I argue, Her agentic fields of action – *body* and *desire* – are eroticised through modern categories of sex and sexuality, not something else prior to or outsider of it.

In the Green Tide discourse, the incommensurate becomes the rationality of the liberal gender/sexuality category and its political correlate: the feminist movement and its liberal-based claim for women and queer rights as human rights. I am referring to how ‘spirituality’ stands out as a work on the self that happens, transcendently, in moments of feminist collective organisation. As I discuss in chapter 5, the discursive *body* becomes the

bodies of those participating in these performative moments, all while the coordinated body of the Green Tide, via calls to bring “bodies to the street” as a Coven of “witches” conjuring “forces,” becomes the deployment of an *otherwise*.

In other words, in the feminist spirituality of the Green Tide, it is sex/desire that operates the bridge between the spiritual and the feminist. The Green Tide discourse continues to produce ‘I’ as first and foremost in her sex (Foucault, 1978), and sensuality; an enhanced sexual ‘I’ insofar as sexualised irrationality is here not the mark of the irrational beast but that of transcendental relational organisation of human and non-human life. Modern categories of sex and sexuality are reinstated in their operation that makes the self a unified, intelligible experience. This spiritual ‘I’, the Witch, while afforded the agency of epistemic worldmaking revolution, reinstates the universality of the desiring subject *and* the liberal political imaginary of sexual freedom (Sabsay, 2016a, c) with its categories of intelligibility and representation (Povinelli, 2006). The feminist spiritual subject claiming a revolutionary episteme is, again, primarily a modern sexual/desiring subject.

The subtle relational interconnection that is anticipated when the Witch is invoked as ‘everything that needed to be erased’ is steadily made concrete as the political disruption of the Green Tide. When Gago (2018: para. 2) says that feminism thinks of spirituality as a force of uprising, and that “rebellious is inexplicable and at the same time the only rationality that frees us”, she is at once making spirituality the unknowable epistemic alterity from the episteme of Man and rendering it transparent as the resistance/prefiguration offered by the “massive” feminist movement which, Gago continues, “dyes everything in green, as a hope-principle” (ibid.: para. 4).

Here is the most vivid moment in the production of the incommensurate. It is the feminine or feminised body that is the privileged one for this task, ensuing an anti-Man politics that feminist, sensual, *desiring bodies* are best placed to occupy. The Witch is *the* bearer of insurgent potential, *the* agent of a different way of being in the world (that feminist bodies and the collective body of the Green Tide are the best positioned to occupy as discursive subjects of the Witch). ‘Spirituality’ is made intelligible for feminist politics through a grammar of pleasure and desire that reinstates the subject as primarily sexual, and thus resulting in a modern, bio-economic, racialised discourse.

What I mean, here, is that the Green Tide critiques the episteme of Man on the axis of Reason/Unreason by recentralising the universality of the desiring subject (Man2). Whereas their configuration of the subject places the Green Tide knowledge production in

the realm of Man2, where the self is subject of bio-economic race and sex, the Green Tide relies on Reason/Unreason to escape, or break through, the episteme itself. In other words, the primacy of the desiring subject reveals the Witch knowledge formation as an historical formation of the modern episteme, and specifically Man2, even if the Green Tide produces the Witch as anti-Man by privileging the axis of Man1. Relying on Unreason, however, does not account for how Man1 is a racialised organisation of the episteme and the world, and, crucially, not a sexual one. By this, I am pointing at how, by constructing the Witch through an enhanced desiring subject (of Man2), racial difference becomes subsumed to sexuality, and so the problem of the modern episteme becomes resolvable in sexuality and gender politics.

The figure of the Goddess or feminist, queer theologies of liberation that I mentioned in the Introduction might have represented useful tools in challenging Christian-informed arguments against reproductive rights, and, specifically, the legalisation of abortion. At the same time, these would have not offered the same capture in the context of a political feminist action oriented, specifically, at halting neoliberal policy-making and legalising abortion. I am not refusing any experiences of individuals engaging with feminist strikes and spiritual circles. I am rather stressing how the discourse of radically different (Witch) constellations of embodiment are stimulated through modern sexual categories (and thus racial ones) to become intelligible as a collective project of decolonial anti-capitalist feminism from the South. The workings of these racial and classed categories are what I explore in the next chapters.

In conclusion, then, in chapter 5 I address how the Witch as a trope of feminine difference beyond the episteme of Man is also represented as an anti-capitalist, subaltern subject of the Global South. Or, in other words, how the Witch is positioned to be the Southern and decolonial collective embodiment ‘the (Southern) people’ against the Global North powers of Man. I identify here the word of power ‘*popular*’ as the second explicit discursive concept that constitutes the discourse of Green Tide spirituality. Finally, in chapter 6, I take on ‘race’ as the underlying unacknowledged epistemic thread that makes possible the Witch and Her attributes, including the revolutionary role of the Green Tide. I do so by looking, via Spivakian understandings of “representation *as*” and “representation *for*,” at how the Green Tide positions itself and the Witch *as* racially colonised subjects and as the spokesperson *for* clearly racially demarcated colonised groups through sexual categories and politics.

## Chapter 5. The Witch and The People: The Green Tide's Body Politics of Southern Struggles

In the previous chapter, I analyse how spiritual practices, traditions, and notions condense together around the Witch as a word of power operating the link between feminism and spirituality. I then illustrate how the Witch is produced as anti-Man; this is as epistemic and political category imbued with the resistant and prefigurative potential of breaking across the episteme of Man, towards a way of being in the world that is yet unknown. In the back-and-forth between the unknowable and the praxis, I argue that in the Green Tide's discourse, the very modern experience of the sexual subject and its categories are reinstated through the feminine difference of the Witch.

Through the discursive strategies (*genealogy* and *knowledge*) and objects (*body* and *desire*) that produce the Witch, the reproduction of the modern sexual self happens via elevation of the sensual being of Woman, other to the episteme of Man. My argument is that alongside the recentralisation of sexuality that confines Her within the episteme of Man, the Green Tide undertaking of Man on the axis of Reason/Unreason elides our current episteme of Man<sup>2</sup> as a bio-economic codified order of knowledge. It is this issue that I start addressing in this chapter and conclude in the next.

If the previous chapter focuses on 'sex' as one of the Witch's constitutive differences from modernity, this chapter focuses on the Witch's 'class', anti-capitalist, grassroots difference. In the Green Tide referents, this is a *popular* difference that is centred around the notions of debt, precarity, the people, and Southerness. Chapter 6, on the other hand, addresses the Witch's constructed racial difference vis-à-vis the Global North, and how the bio-economic constitution of the episteme is elided in favour of sex while simultaneously portraying the Witch as a racial other of modernity.

The Witch is inserted in a *genealogy* of struggle against Man, which implies a reconfiguration of the self among others and a breach across the epistemic rules that structure the world of Man. Whereas in chapter 4 I look at how the prefigurative Witch 'self' is underpinned by modern categories of sexuality, here I look at the 'among others'. I am not concerned with what world is imagined by feminists of the Green Tide but, again, with the *Witchcraft*, how the Witch 'micropolitics' are enacted as a collective practice so as to be able to propel change against the episteme of Man. To this effect, this chapter is concerned with showing the links between feminine alterity, the Green Tide critique of neoliberal precarisation, and their self-definition as a *popular* movement.



In the first section, I look at the existential character of the struggle between the Witch and Man, and how it is most fruitfully characterised as a struggle against capitalism. Capitalist relations, here, are understood by the Green Tide as a colonial relationship. I analyse how the discursive strategy of *genealogy* extends to Argentine grassroots social movements as a struggle of ‘the people’ for human rights and democracy as an anti-capitalist and anti-colonial endeavour, and how, therefore, the Green Tide claims to be a rupture in the order of otherwise expected events. This is what I call the Green Tide’s and the Witch’s event-ness, which allows me to show how the Witch is discursively produced as a political category of thought and action for collective articulation.

In the second part, I analyse the generative role of Latin American academic knowledge production for the movements they work with. In the Green Tide, this meant that intellectuals producing the Witch discourse also occupied multiple militant spaces as directors of feminist outlets and members of the social movement organisations. The discussion illustrates the importance of feminist academia in making the Witch a discourse of the movement, and allows me to show how the *genealogical* strategy extends from a legacy of grassroots protest into one for epistemic justice as a decolonial practice of resistance. Here I illustrate the entanglement of Green Tide knowledge producers with the movement, and how the Green Tide claim of being an umbrella movement is made possible by deploying a grammar of gender and sexuality. In particular, this happens by adapting the language of precarity, debt, and grassroots ‘the people’ into the *desiring bodies* of the feminist subject.

The third section concludes the chapter by illustrating how the discursive concepts of ‘precarity’ and ‘*popular*’ link the Witch’s feminine difference to a subaltern ‘the people’ fundamentally anchored in uneven economic South-North relations. My argument is that the claim of being a *popular* umbrella movement for alliance against the episteme of Man requires that the Green Tide be legible as a *popular* movement against precarity, and I look at how precarity and ‘the people’ are represented and distributed in the Instagram posting of Green Tide organisations. To do this, I focus on *Ni Una Menos* Instagram publications and secondary data on *La Campaña*’s (Acosta, 2020). I selected some of the accounts’ thumbnails to illustrate which mobilisations were publicised, which carried the generalised meanings of a *popular* struggle for the people and considered the frequency of posting over similar periods of publication.

Analysing this distribution of attention and fostering of mobilisation, I argue how, in Green Tide claims of collective political and analytical common ground, the discourse of precarity, declined as a colonial discourse of South-versus-North, continues to be underpinned by a transformational grammar of gender and sexuality (Povinelli, 2006). The claim to subalternity would not be possible without a claim to being a *popular* movement, but Green Tide claims and a language of *body* and *desire* continue to be centred as the most apt to fight the hegemony of the episteme of Man. As a result, the anti-capitalist struggle becomes subsumed to the centrality of the desiring subject, and political action recentred around Green Tide rallies and its categories of thought and action. Overall, this pattern of the Green Tide's *otherwise* translates into how any 'sectorial' issue was represented in the Green Tide collective 'the people from below'. In other words, by recentralising the Green Tide and the desiring subject meant that the best way to claim, for example, better housing, employment rights, or land rights was to participate of Green Tide rallies and protest in favour of the legalisation of abortion.

### **5.1 "From Hysteric to Historic": the Green Tide Making-of-History**

In chapter 4 I conceptualise the Witch as a counter-discourse of Man, or anti-Man, and I highlight how the Witch lays claim to an epistemic radical alterity which is, nonetheless, underpinned by modern sexual difference. I also illustrate how the Witch, in Her difference from Man, is articulated as inherently anti-capitalist, where the reference to anti-capitalism serves to reinforce the Witch's radical epistemic alterity. As a result, She is constructed as a grassroots subject that rejects individualising norms favouring, instead, collective action, political autonomy, and a different form of relationality based on interdependency. In this section, I illustrate how such difference of the Witch is connected to Green Tide deployments of anti-colonial action. In this exceptional Otherness of the Witch, reiterated in Green Tide's claim that "another world is possible," resides Her event-ness or history-making. In this sense, the Witch implies a framework of political articulation.

In the Green Tide discourse, feminist movements are portrayed to have a central role in the existential struggle against Man. The 'necessary re-enchantment' of the Witch here becomes an ethical and political call for a collective articulation, and the Green Tide the embodiment of such a movement for collective liberation. The existential dimension of the struggle is exemplified in Gualano's (2019: para. 11-13) article on astrology and

feminism, referring to “millenary cosmovisions in conflict” and in Ortiz Maldonado’s (2018: para. 38) essay as she speaks of a struggle between “modes of existence:” life “in witchcraft” and death “in capitalism.” Gualano (2019) refers to an organicist understanding of the universe as opposed to the utilitarian framework of Rational modernity.

Ortiz Maldonado (2018: para. 31), on the other hand, understands “witchcraft” as “that set of techniques, material and spiritual, through which one can get in touch with a flux (animal, vegetal, mineral), intervening simultaneously in that flux and in themselves [*en sí mismo, en sí misma*].” Capitalism, on the other hand, is later (para. 38-39) framed as a way of living that intensifies death. See here the continuity with a resistance to Man1 on the axis of Reason/Unreason, where to refuse capitalist rationality implies a different way of articulating, or even guaranteeing life.

This happens, for example, when Ortiz Maldonado (2019: para. 9) writes that “as feminisms deliberately appropriate [the Witch] lineage” as it is the most radical figure to embody so to fight the battle against Man. To mark how the Witch stands for a different world, Ortiz Maldonado (2019) concludes:

Witch lineages, old and new, [...] offer the invaluable possibility of bringing into existence sensibilities, imaginations, animisms, and wisdoms of continuity and alternance. Worlds that don’t offer excluding Realities, nor beginnings and final goals, but infinite cycles of transformation. If biopolitics, neoliberalism, and heteropatriarchy produce a disenchanted world that regulates and depresses subjective potencies, magic seems to be an ineluctable political key, as Chollet signals: ‘Magic appears as a highly pragmatic resource, a vital leap, a way of anchoring oneself in the world and in one’s own life in a time where everything seems to conspire to precarise and weaken us’.  
(Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 27-28)

The text illustrates how the discursive articulation of the Witch is marked as vital in counteraction to capitalism to the extent of conceptualising the Witch and Her *craft* as an ineluctable “political key” (always mediated by the grammar of gender and sexuality).

Consider this passage together with the excerpt below, authored by gender studies scholar Malena Nijensohn (2019b) as part of an exhibition titled *Of Witches and Covens*. The show was hosted at the Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism,<sup>63</sup> which carries a significance that I address a few paragraphs below. In the online piece that introduces and accompanies the exhibition, Malena Nijensohn draws from Donna Haraway, Judith Butler,

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<sup>63</sup> The *Parque de la Memoria* or Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism is a public space in the city of Buenos Aires. It was built as a place of memory, hosting a monument with the engraved names of those who were forcibly disappeared and murdered by the military state between 1976 and 1983.

and Silvia Federici seeking to reconceptualise the Witch and Her feminist political power in times of advanced capitalism.

Overall, Nijensohn conceptualises the Witch as a political category for both thought and action:

There isn't a single tale about witches and maybe that is the reason for its political power, in that insistence of figurations that ask for new writings and re-writings [...]. In this way, every iteration has the ability of establishing new meanings, disrupting the old, opening new semantic possibilities in the grammar of what has been given. Nowadays – in times of neoliberal governance, as signalled by Michel Foucault – what new inscriptions are applied to the figure of the witch or, we should say, the witches, perhaps the non-binary witches [*lxs brujxs*]? Whether it be the witch-hunt of early capitalism, functional to the establishment of a patriarchal order that establishes the figure of the witch around cis women who are 'savage beings, mentally weak, insatiably lusty, rebellious, insubordinate, incapable of self-control' [Federici, 2004] [...] what connects all these witches is, that in one way or another, they are in the margins of women's expected roles and from there they challenge some aspect of the established order.

(Nijensohn, 2019b: para. 2-3)

In the following paragraph, the scholar continues:

[...] creating a lineage fiction without a single ancestor allows us to be part of a collective history that started before us, creating bonds and social identities. Perhaps this plural ("we are the witches...") refers to the collective as an ethical-political practice of resistance.

(Nijensohn, 2019b: para. 4)

Here, the gendered and sexual connection with the capitalist organisation of the world emerges more clearly. Keeping in mind that in these passages the Witch becomes a "political key," both Nijensohn's and Ortiz Maldonado's excerpts convey a sense of collective articulation as "ethical-political practice of resistance" against the current organisation of the world.

Similarly to how the Witch mediates the plural "we" of the necessary collective organisation of the struggle against the episteme of Man in Nijensohn's text, so the reclamation of a feminised knowledge seated in the materiality of the body again functions as a collective position of marginality. On the basis of 'irrationality' (Unreason), understood here as sensing/being with the non-human world, we find all those (women and queer identities) at the margins. If, as it transpires from these texts, to be at the margins is to share a common condition of struggle – what I called sisterhood/kinship in the discussion of the *genealogical* strategy – then all that marginality and shared uprising potential is

condensed in the Witch as “the most radical” to carry on the fight (Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 9) against the episteme of Man or, as it is framed here, against capitalism in “times of neoliberal governance” (Nijensohn, 2019b: para. 2).

Green Tide knowledge production is not refusing other possibilities of representation, or figurations, of the Witch and of the ‘bodies’ that ‘terrorise’ and ‘obsess’ Man. They nonetheless find in feminism and in feminine, anti-capitalist difference, the one that, in our current times, is the most apt to disrupt the episteme’s structuring of the world. In these excerpts, the Witch’s epistemic alterity is the expression of a radical political agency. Again, is what the Witch *bodies* do acting from their *desiring* self, that would carry us across Man as both an epistemic and a political regime.

The excerpts show even further how the anti-capitalist discourse of the Witch is mediated through a grammar of gender and sexuality, in this case how collective action, articulated as a shared practice of resistance, is a critical aspect of the Witch’s craft. The Coven as this collective force is invoked in Ortiz Maldonado’s (2019: para. 21) text as “the circle where the witches lose their individuality and become legion,” which happens “when autonomy ceases to be the power of an individual body to convert into the libidinal force that courses through the crowd or mob [*marabunta*]<sup>64</sup> and “cannot be thought of without considering last years’ feminisms.”

And again, in Nijensohn’s exhibit description:

Feminist covens have been growing exponentially for a while. Assemblies, mobilizations, spaces of discussion, for mentioning a few, are plural and concerted gatherings, as Judith Butler described. Bodies and diverse subjectivities come together not for producing a Subject of resistance anymore (unique and “ontologically” predestined), but in order to find in the multiplicity a collective practice that could work as political resistance. Women, lesbians, *travestis*, trans, bisexuals, non-binaries, fat ones, indigenous people, afroargentine and black women [*afroargentinas y negras*], the employed and the unemployed, workers of the popular economy, sex workers, migrants compose a list constitutively incomplete and open (one of the virtues of feminism: the capacity of reviewing and transforming itself). Witches and not so much, with or without magic, gather here and now, a one-way political coven that is produced, performatively, on each occasion.  
(Nijensohn, 2019b: para. 5)

Notice here the centrality that the feminism of the Green Tide acquires alongside a reiteration of *desire* as one of the sites and modes of enactment of the Witch discourse,

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<sup>64</sup> Ortiz Maldonado uses the Spanish word *marabunta* for ‘crowd’. *Marabunta* carries the meaning of ‘a mayhem of unruly, rowdy crowd’.

while bringing together a list of dissident identities mediated by their sexuality, gender, economic status, and race.

The discursive strategies of *genealogy* and *knowledge* are again enacted through *body* and *desire*, with an accent on collective articulation against the precarising and desertifying effects of capitalism, and within the spaces of feminist gathering. These examples illustrate how the Witch is produced not only as an individual self, but as a collective agent, as a political way of relating, as an ethic of articulation and organisation that allows feminism to respond to internal demands and movements to constantly represent subalternity as the ‘unruly’ core of resistance. Unruliness, the possibility of always escaping normative regulations of the self and the world even in its capitalist mandate, is eminently mediated by sexualised *desire* and its *bodies*.

As collective articulation and the return to the communitarian or the autonomous is opposed to the individualising effects of late capitalism, the *desiring* force of the Witch and Her *body* – now acquiring a collectivised character in those feminist Covens – discursively becomes *the* alternative political structuring of the world. Simultaneously, the Witch discursively performs as the most effective collective representation of all the marginal others of the episteme of Man. The Witch is therefore allocated a politically performative, disruptive subaltern nature, as is the Green Tide, the various organisations participating in it, and the people attending its rallies, as agglutinant force of the space of Otherness of modernity through politics centred around sex, gender, sexuality, and feminism.

The Witch, therefore, carries not only a sense of ‘self’, but also a framework of political articulation. Proposing the Witch as an “ethical-political practice” (Nijensohn, 2019b) or an “ineluctable political key” (Ortiz Maldonado, 2019) implies that it carries the potential to bring together those ‘Covens’ in a ‘legion’. In other words, the Witch is a category of political thought and action to be deployed in feminist politics. That is, the word of power of the Witch, transposed into the politics of the social movement, can offer a tool to coordinate different groups and claims together under the same umbrella of resistance to neoliberalism or the episteme of Man overall. The Witch functions as a political category of collective resistance to a shared struggle, and an ethical category of and for those collectives, social organisations, and grassroots initiatives.

I am pointing at how the Green Tide was able to claim such a position by reading a variety of social issues, organised collectives, and histories of social movements through the lens of the Witch as anti-Man, and how this in turn served to foster the positioning of the Green Tide as agent able of changing history, all while re-centralising the desiring

subject and a grammar of gender and sexuality. Discursively, this is enabled once again by the *genealogical* strategy, where the Witch is articulated as the legacy of grassroots *popular* social movements against precarising policies and the inheritor of landmark movements for human rights and democracy that shaped Argentine history. The *genealogical* articulation also made it possible, as I show in the second section of the chapter, to deploy the discursive concepts of ‘precarity’ and ‘*popular*’ to link the Witch’s feminine difference to a subaltern ‘the people’. It is in this sense that the Green Tide positions itself into a genealogy of *popular* struggle against Man’s structural inducement of precarity.

The Witch’s possibility of an epistemic difference, and as a political mode of resisting the episteme of Man, is then enunciated as an event, a before-and-after, a possibility of making history. On the one hand, the novelty referred to the surprising outpour of demonstrators protesting feminicide or the criminalisation of abortion, and the Witch’s event-ness is declined as a choosing between political options. On the other, however, the Witch event-ness it’s the renewal of feminist theorisation that She concocts as a figure of anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal (and anti-colonial) struggle or anti-Man.

Consider the following statements of event-ness and historicity, tied to a *genealogical* positioning of the Green Tide as subject of generalised *popular* revolt. “From hysteric to historic” is in fact one of the most common slogans of the movement. Figure 6, for example, shows the *Ni Una Menos* Instagram post thumbnails between June 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018, calling to mobilise in front of the Argentine Lower Chamber on occasion of a parliamentary vote on the legalisation of abortion. The first and last post, bridged by images of a multitudinous crowd recalling ideas of collectivity and *popular* movements, an invitation to share food with *Ni Una Menos* at the protest, and safety advice, literally ask the readers “what side of history do [they] want to be on.”

In figure 6.1, the struggle between different worlds is portrayed aesthetically; the reader is asked to choose between conservative worldviews (we see an anti-abortion activist kissing the doll of a foetus), or joyous, creative, revolution for freedom of bodies and desires (where the colours, the flower crown, and the balaclava refer to the uprising of the Zapatista movement). In figure 6.9, the sense of event-ness and historicity is marked by the massiveness of the Green Tide while implicitly asking the reader if they want to be on the side of such immense *popular* mobilisation.

In terms of discursive associations, the Green Tide’s association with the *popular* can be discerned in massive occupation of the street by ‘the people’ (Moltoni, 2021), by the constant references to assemblies and gatherings as modes of collective articulation (Díaz Lozano, 2020), and by how, for example, Verónica Gago (2022: para. 2) speaks of the Green Tide and the abortion demand as a “feminism from below.” Moreover, the references to the Zapatista struggle in the first thumbnail (figure 6.1) carries here a double resonance. It is both a reference to the *popular* movements associated, as Svampa and Pereyra (2003) illustrated, to land-based Latin American movements and simultaneously, for the same reason, a reference to anti-colonial struggles.



Figure 6. Ni Una Menos Instagram thumbnails, 12/06/2018 to 14/06/2018.

This double resonance (anti-capitalist/anti-colonial; *popular*/anti-colonial) serves to further situate the Green Tide’s self-positioning in a *genealogical* relationship with other



important Argentine social movements. Notably within the struggle for human rights in memory of the victims of state terrorism that developed at the end of the military dictatorship (1976-1983), led by the Mothers of Plaza the Mayo between 1977 and 2006. The green handkerchief that has come to symbolise the movement was explicitly chosen to reference to the Mothers, whose white scarves became the symbol of political memory, democracy and human-rights struggles in Argentina (Elizade, 2018; Felitti & Ramirez Morales, 2020).

The tie with the Mothers is revendicated to the extent that the public day of commemoration for the victims of state terrorism and the 1976 military coup, instituted in 2002, became one of the not-to-be-missed protest days of the Green Tide feminist calendar under the slogan “we march with the green handkerchief for yesterday’s rights and today’s as well.” For Elizade (2018) the creation of feminine, feminist political genealogies allowed the extension of biographical ties to a shared collective lineage constructing memory, agency, and rights as expression of culture, solidarity, and political alliance.

Figure 7 below is extrapolated from Elizade’s (2018: 87) paper on the political genealogies of the young women participating in the Green Tide. While the illustration shows this genealogy articulated at the visual level, with the two handkerchiefs operating the political inheritance, the quote refers to the Witch in a challenge on the axis of Un/Reason. The quoted words are from a member of the national parliament, and were selected by the scholar precisely because of the “condensation of meanings” (Elizade, 2018: 88):

“Me gusta decir que [los argentinos] somos las hijas y los hijos de las Madres y las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, esas viejas locas del pañuelo blanco. Y que hoy somos los padres y las madres de esas pibas locas del pañuelo verde”<sup>4</sup>.



Figure 7. Illustration by Mariana Baizán (2017) in Elizade (2018: 88).

“I like to say that we [Argentines] are the daughters and sons of the Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, those crazy crones with the white handkerchief. And now we are the fathers and mothers of those crazy lasses with the green handkerchief,” says the quotation displayed in the image. See here how while *genealogy* is enunciated as a legacy of spontaneous protest there is also the impression of irrationality as a legitimate site of revolt. The slogan of manifestation under the handkerchief of past and contemporary rights, reiterated, in the image, by the writing “now ... and always,” resonates with the Witch slogan “we’re the granddaughters of the witches they couldn’t burn” with the effect of offering a unified sense of legacy and embodiment of protest. In this way, the demand for legislative and political action for gender and sexual rights (the small *mate* cup resembles the queer rainbow flag) are situated as some of the ‘outstanding debts of democracy’:

pending issues to be addressed in the process of reinstating and securing the country's democratic, human rights-based regime.

In another excerpt from Ortiz Maldonado's (2018) essay, the *genealogical* legacy of the Green Tide extends to the transnational anti-capitalist sphere, whereas "the bodies of women on the street" in the Green Tide's 8<sup>th</sup> of March are offered as the most recent of these revolts:

Paying attention to what reverberates since 1999 in Seattle, 2001 in Argentina, 2010 in London and Rome, 2011 in Spain and Egypt; paying attention to what howls in the bodies of women on the street during each March 8<sup>th</sup>. To comprehend that what some call multitude, uprising, appeal, here we call crying out. To understand the roar, *Another world is possible*, to prolong it. This is not a purely theoretical understanding nor an existing political programme, but to understand to prolong, and prolonging is always a doing again [*rehacer*]. [...]. (Ortiz Maldonado, 2018: para. 10)

The event-ness of the Green Tide asks one to place it within a counter-hegemonic revolutionary history, and as one among other events to which we need to "pay attention," to keep the momentum and believe that "another world is possible." The feminist success, here, their event-ness, is the ability of understanding and prolonging "the roar."

Attention, therefore, needs to remain on this long tradition of fighting and, implicitly, on the Green Tide as its most recent, unexpected, and irruptive actor. Similar to the allusions of going beyond gender categories that I analyse in chapter 4, here the references to the uprising and the cries of the multitude speak of the aim of going beyond capitalism as a mode of organising the world. Keeping in mind that this excerpt evokes a new organisation of the world and ourselves while including the term "witchcraft" both in the Spanish translation of 'Capitalist Sorcery' (Pignarre & Stengers, 2011) and in Ortiz Maldonado's (2018) prologue title 'Spells and Counter-Spells', and in consistently articulating the Witch's feminine difference as anti-Man, here my point is the extent to which the focus of the Witch is on capitalism as much as on patriarchy. And on how quickly, then, capitalism becomes a synonym for colonialism.

Analysts of the Green Tide have in fact emphasised the movement's capacity to respond to the political landscape, transitioning from an undivided attention to femicides in 2015 to a more expansive campaign against the 2015-2020 Argentine government's political economy, which included a widely criticised agreement with the IMF as a financial form of colonialism (Méndez, 2020, and Mulinari, 2023). As I illustrate in chapter 4, the Green Tide elaborated on Silvia Federici's (2004) framework to articulate a public critique

of the interconnectedness of reproductive and sexual issues with economic concerns, which for Méndez (2020) allowed these issues to be bridged as distinct yet related forms of colonial violence against feminine bodies.

The Green Tide attention to economic relations can be situated into the political conjuncture of Argentina in 2015-2019, much like the discussion of a political spirituality was related to the political visibility of religious actors in the abortion debate. I am referring to how Argentine day-to-day economies were palpably under threat due to the neoliberal policies and IMF loan instituted by the government of the political party *Cambiamos*, and the extent to which discontent about executive and legislative action was channelled through Green Tide protest potency. The conjuncture gave effectiveness to the Green Tide's *genealogical* strategy, and the movement became the inheritor not only of the struggles of the Mothers, but also of the grassroot *popular* movements against the neoliberal reforms initiated by the Military Junta that collapsed the country in the 2000s, and the anti-colonial movements against U.S. imperialism.

A useful example from the data is, in this sense, a *Ni Una Menos* (2019a) manifesto titled *Las Guerrilleras son Nuestras Compañeras* [The (female) guerrilla fighters are our companions]. Here, the female guerrilla fighters could be the Zapatistas who uprose in 1994 Mexico, or the Kurdish freedom fighters who captured international attention (including the Green Tide's) in 2017.<sup>65</sup> Published on Facebook, the *Ni Una Menos* manifesto (2019a: para. 5) invites us to believe "other words are possible" by breaking the "racist, colonial, neoliberal logic imposing the obedience of starvation and debt." Notice here how, through notions that refer to the repertoire of (anti-)capitalism, *Ni Una Menos* legitimately articulates a grievance against colonialism and racism.

My argument about the *genealogical* articulation of the Green Tide as anti-capitalist and anti-colonial is supported by Mulinari's (2023:33) analysis of the Green Tide, where she shows how the movement brought together different genealogies of resistance and contemporary struggles, which, for her, situates the Green Tide as a Global South feminist agenda. In Mulinari's reading, the anti-colonial character of the Mothers and the Green Tide stands out as a reaction to the 1975-1983 U.S. imperialism. At the time, the Operation Condor backed-up state coups with the aim of eliminating left-wing governments,

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<sup>65</sup> Kurdish freedom fighters are mentioned time and time again in Green Tide's manifestos. A notable example can be found at Paro Internacional Feminista 8M (2018).

organisations, and activists, and often supporting right-wing dictatorships (McSherry, 2012).

The conflation of anti-capitalism and anti-colonialism as anti-Man is discernable in figure 8, which depicts a *Ni Una Menos* Instagram post from October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The post was published as encouragement to join the PluriNational Encounter held later that month, whereas the image portrays the common pot of the Argentine *popular* imaginary over the text “financial terror as a new colonisation of our bodies-territories, what to do from feminisms?” (*Ni Una Menos*, 2018d).



Figure 8. *Ni Una Menos* Instagram post, 11/10/2018.

The post (*Ni Una Menos*, 2018d) invites participation in the discussion about what action feminist activism can take against precarity, concluding: “because we want to be alive, free, and debt-free, we need to meet with each other and plot or weave [*tramar*] our resistances together.” Colonialism and its resistance are here placed in a supra-national South-North relationship, highlighting the historical submission of Latin America and Argentina for the economic interests of the North, particularly global financial institutions, and U.S. external politics. Simultaneously, the reference to “bodies-territories” places the Green Tide in alliance with Indigenous movements and, specifically Indigenous communitarian feminisms, who are known to have developed the concept (Harding & Mendoza, 2020).

The Green Tide’s event-ness, then, needs to be read along the lines of the *genealogical* discursive strategy. The Green Tide was produced as a cut, a transgression in the otherwise relatively undisturbed order of things not just because of massive participation, but through the fostering of such massiveness as a collective anti-colonial, anti-capitalist (feminine) subject against the episteme of Man. Ortiz Maldonado’s (2018) prologue alludes to this in the way the Green Tide is situated in a history of social movements. My argument about how the Green Tide becomes the motor of articulation among struggles and thereafter the movement to participate in so as to change history, is more explicit in the following excerpt. The quote is from gender studies scholar Virginia Cano’s prologue (2019) to her colleague Malena Nijensohn’s (2019a) monograph, titled ‘The Feminist Reason. Street Politics, Pluralism and Articulation’ published in a preview presentation of the book shared on feminist outlet *LatFem*. In the text, Cano (2019: para. 3) too lays the question of the feminism’s role in articulating a common response to “short-circuit” the episteme of Man as neoliberalism.

In this sense, the excerpt lays the ground for my argument about how the articulation of the Green Tide discourse responded to the need to revitalise the potentialities of feminist theorisation.

Malena reverberates the question of ‘the feminism of the present’, that feminism that has arrived to stay and that asks for the critical analysis of the contemporary times in which one of the most relevant social movements, both in the local and the transnational context, has been constituted and massified. This ‘feminist present’ grows to dimensions that were unimaginable a few years ago, because ‘the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2015 something *happens*. An unexpected occurrence interrupts (and interrupts, somehow) the course of events and inaugurates a different time for feminisms of this country.’ [...] That historic day not only points to the path of



massification that since then marked that enormous and complex diversity that we call contemporary or present feminism but also materialised or embodied [*corporizó*] the prominence and political legitimacy gained in the last years by feminist and socio-sexual movements. [...]  
(Cano, 2019: para. 3. Italics mine.)

Then, at the end of the paragraph, the scholar concludes:

[...] [T]he connection between feminism and anti-neoliberal resistance [is] the theoretical-political strength that motors the conceptual efforts to get close, always tentatively, to a recent phenomenon of which we are part of. Here and now, Malena says to us, the question for the un/timeliness of feminism is translated in the question for its power to interrupt, short-circuit and transform the neoliberal logics that regulate the precarising governmentality of our local present.  
(Cano, 2019: para. 3.).

In this text, the event-ness of the movement as a critical juncture in history is certainly attributed to its sudden massification, which gives political legitimacy in terms of parliamentary politics and public opinion.

However, the question of the Green Tide's event-ness (its "un/timeliness") is more substantially placed in its "theoretical-political" ability to counteract capitalist and heteropatriarchal relations. How significant, in this sense, that the title of Cano's presentation is 'The feminist reason: from *Ni Una Menos* to the present of the radically plural and popular'. The actuality of the struggle against Man, in this case specifically framed as capitalism, is reified in the Green Tide as a movement from below (*popular*) able to be radically plural.

While the demand for legal, safe, and free pregnancy interruption becomes again the claim catalysing such massiveness, it is the investment in the theoretical connection between capitalism and patriarchy that allows the Green Tide to be portrayed as a decisive movement for human rights, democracy, and anti-imperialism. This feminism that "has arrived to stay," that has reached the masses both locally and transnationally – the 'event' or 'occurrence' of the protests that 'barge in', 'invade', 'burst in' and 'interrupt' the normal course of events – marks the inauguration of a new emancipatory potential of feminist theorisation. That is, as a subaltern feminist theory and politics from the South that self-presents at once anti-capitalist and anti-colonial.

Together with the *genealogical* strategy that claims the Green Tide and its knowledge production as a subaltern subject of anti-Man politics, which is where its event-ness as a project of collective articulation is rooted, what I want to stress here is the

generative role of academic production for the politics of the social movements they work with. It is on (theoretical) knowledge production to take on its political role and underpin the movement's activity, claims, and reach towards a broader action over power with the aim of 'interrupting and transforming' its dispossessing effects.

The effort of knowledge producers becomes intelligible as looking to achieve a different asset of knowledge and politics: how can feminist theory remain relevant, disruptive, and generative of alternative possibilities? In the next section, I analyse how efforts to revitalise feminist knowledge production in Argentina are connected to how the "timeliness" of the Green Tide is achieved by operationalising the Witch as a discourse of precarity on behalf of the people, the precarious and subaltern.

## **5.2 A Grassroots, Southern and Decolonial Genealogy of Thought and Action**

The close relationship between knowledge production and the social movement is not a unique element of the Green Tide, nor a claim limited to a small number of researchers with deep connections with the movement. Scholarship concerned with a theoretical investment in political action is in fact a specifically Latin American tradition. In a 2015 qualitative project on publications in Latin American Studies, Mu and Pereyra-Rojas identified that Latin American scholars are more concerned than their U.S./U.K. counterparts with addressing the problems of the Latin American region. Whereas the latter tend to see themselves as experts of the field, Latin American scholars see themselves as active generators of social justice and political reform. This is in part due to access to different types and amounts of funding available and is reflected in each group's research outputs,<sup>66</sup> but it has come to become a scholarship with altogether different dynamics and values in respect to the anglophone-dominated international community.

Latin American scholars consider engagement as a necessary task to develop locally originated knowledge. In other words, these scholars are engaged in producing a specifically Latin American genealogy of knowledge for understanding the region's issues and generating solutions. Mu and Pereyra-Rojas (2015: 217) frame it as a problem of

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<sup>66</sup> Overall, the study found that U.K./U.S. scholars engage more in theoretical knowledge and teaching, whereas Latin American scholars' priority is applied research and community engagement. Mu and Pereyra-Rojas (2015: 232) trace this difference, in part, to monetary access. As anglophone-based researchers have more access to research funding available to pursue personal interests, Latin American scholars must rely more on impact-oriented institutional or private funds dedicated to local development. Similarly, their outputs differ: U.K./U.S. scholars privilege high-impact publishing and career advancement, and Latin Americans favour a variety of mediums that foster diffusion and engagement (Mu and Pereyra-Rojas, 2015: 232-233).



scientific paradigm: Latin American academics are not equally represented in international publications because they do not conform to the paradigm of a “‘international’” scientific community that is not their own.<sup>67</sup>

In Argentina, Dora Barrancos (2015) describes the history of Latin American feminism as a tight relationship between gender and sexuality studies and local and foreign rights-based gender and sexuality social movements. The epistemic and political specificity of Argentine feminist, women, gender, gay and lesbian, queer, trans and *travesti*, sexuality studies reside, Barrancos (ibid.) argues, in its close if not indistinguishable connections with social movements.

Feminist and queer studies in the North also grew out of activist contexts and efforts and are shaped by some devotion to praxis. At the same time, for Barranco (2013) it is the activist character of Latin American feminist intellectual production, as well as a grassroots construction built upon local, open assemblies, and consensus-based decision-making, that distinguishes the social sciences of the Latin American South, and specifically feminist and queer oriented approaches, from the North’s epistemology and knowledge politics. In this sense, Barrancos (2015) claims a Southern distinctiveness in the traditional involvement with communities. She moreover positions engagement with collectivism and praxis as carrying the emancipatory potential of fostering a Latin American genealogy of thought and political practice oriented at keeping local communities organised and autonomous.

What Mu & Pereyra-Rojas (2015) identify as engaged research, and Barrancos (2015) frames as emancipatory potential for thought and action, in the Green Tide is often called ‘theory-praxis’. In what follows I show how, in the Green Tide discourse, the ‘theory-praxis’ becomes anti-colonial, discursively articulated as a disruption of the Reason/Unreason axis of the episteme of Man, and how the Green Tide (and its scholars) are conceptualised. To this effect, I examine a paper by gender studies scholar Luisina Bolla (2019), titled: ‘Undoing the Excision Theory/Praxis. Theoretical and Practical Genealogies in Argentina’. I am not interested in a theoretical debate with Bolla, but just in illustrating how the Green Tide is placed as against the episteme of Man in a multiplicity of fields with results that are productive to the discourse of the Witch. Bolla’s (2019) paper, moreover, is a useful example of how categories such as ‘decolonial’ are deployed in relation to the Green Tide.

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<sup>67</sup> Mu and Pereyra-Rojas do not explicitly discuss this difference as one of unequal power relations, Western dominance, or coloniality. See, instead, Mu and Pereyra-Rojas use of inverted commas in 2015: 232-233 and their discussion of paradigm through Kuhn (1996) and Said (1978) at page 217.

Bolla (2019) conceptualises *Ni Una Menos* and the 8<sup>th</sup> of March International Feminist Strike (“8M”) as events carrying both a political and a theoretical character. Resonating with Cano’s (2019) concern for a theoretical-political force of mobilisation, the theoretical-political event of *Ni Una Menos* and the 8M is to be found, Bolla argues, in how these two instances allowed for questioning the divisions “imposed by the patriarchal coloniality, in particular that which continues to oppose theory and activism, academia and militancy” (Bolla, 2019: 2-3).

Firstly, Bolla (2019: 12-14) reasons that *Ni Una Menos* and 8M acquired an important anti-colonial character because as they became transnationally relevant, they remained anchored to local territories and situations. Discursively, Bolla defines the Green Tide as an anti-colonial movement because it remained anchored to its grassroots origins. Because, in other words, of the Green Tide’s theoretical production’s relationship with political action (theory-praxis), viewed as an anchorage to situated realities and decision-making and, therefore, discursively reinscribed in the word of power ‘*popular*’.

In this sense, Bolla operates the *genealogical* strategy that positions the Green Tide in inheritance and legacy of Southern, anti-imperialist struggles from below through the condensation of referents tied to autonomy, grassroots politics, collectivism placed as constitutive difference from the North. In other words, Green Tide intellectuals discursively place the movement in a North-as-colonial vs. South-as-anti-colonial axis, therefore configuring the movement, its intellectuals, and knowledge produced as Southern and anti-colonial.

The second anti-colonial quality argued by Bolla (2019) is specific to academic institutions and is to be found in the colonial division between subject of knowledge (academia) and its object (social movements). This is again a reference to how local traditions of thought are anchored to social issues and political reform. Bolla here discusses specifically to how the Green Tide prompted academic actors to organise participatory instances oriented at questioning the dynamics of academic institutions from the feminist standpoint of *Ni Una Menos*. I am referring to how Bolla (ibid.) identifies the decolonising moment is the transformation of the subject-object relationship, where the academy becomes the object of its own discourses by applying the feminist lens. The decolonial action, for Bolla, is to be found in how the theory-praxis divide is disrupted by institutional participation of the movement, for example offering workshops on Green Tide-related topics. Specifically, the instances that Bolla deploys to show the decolonial outcome of the

subject-object disruption are the sanction of protocols against gender-based violence at different levels of numerous institutions (Bolla, *ibid.*: 15-16).

The one operated by Bolla (2019), I argue, is an informative conflation of meanings and practices. The constructed opposition to the Reason/Unreason axis of the episteme of Man is often articulated as the unmaking of the separation between body and mind. Consider how a mechanistic understanding of the universe is often associated to a heteropatriarchal masculine-centred knowledge that privileges pure-logic science (as in medicine and physics). The distance Latin American feminist researcher-activists like Bolla (2019) find from the Global North is in the separation of pure research (mind, rational, objective, materialised in academia) from political involvement (body, subjective, interested, materialised in a social movement), and in the privileging of positivist approaches or career advancement according to foreign standards.

Discursively, the refusal of the episteme of Man and its decolonial counteracting is mediated, by Bolla (2019), by a return to the grammar of gender and sexuality. The decolonial act of bridging intellectual production and political involvement as nurturing of a Southern genealogy of knowledge is identified in feminist and queer issues. In her paper, the analysis of feminist academia, for example, pinpoints decoloniality in how institutions had serious discussions about their gender policies. In summary, the legacy of eurocentrism and colonialism is situated in the excision of praxis from theory and decolonial possibilities are identified in how the Green Tide prompted academia to discuss its own gender politics.

Eventually, then, the Southern, anti-colonial character of Latin American feminist theory is enacted through the alleged development of a *genealogy* of knowledge production as political articulation that is constantly actualised in the political practices of the Green Tide. My argument, here, is that the Green Tide's decolonial categories of thought and action are structured by a grammar of gender and sexuality as the underpinning element of disruption and prefiguration. Not just as a lens with the ability to challenge cisheteropatriarchal and anticapitalist structures, but the modern-colonial threading of our current world altogether. Such grammar renders possible the discourse of the Witch as anti-Man and its political operationalisation, making the Green Tide the political actor able to agglomerate all struggles against Man.

My argument, here, is twofold. I want to highlight the specific dynamic, in Latin American knowledge production, that claims to be offering an alternative to Western epistemic injustice by means of producing knowledge for social emancipation and political articulation. This is 'theory-praxis'. And I want to stress how the decolonial possibility is

mediated through the institutional engagement with a social movement, taken in its exemplary manifestation of *Ni Una Menos* and the 8M International Feminist Strike. These two Green Tide instances, in Bolla's (2019) analysis are produced as the novel "theoretical-political" proposals that again reify what an alternative knowledge, and alternative politics might look like.

Just to be clear, I am not dismissing the political relevance or importance of having an academic tradition dedicated to addressing local issues or contributing to social change. I am not critiquing the feminist engagement with praxis. On the contrary, I agree with calls to remain anchored, partially at the very least, to non-academic logics, needs, urgencies; and my own academic work has so far been informed by active involvement with grassroots collectives. The intention of my discussion is to highlight the existence of this relationship in Argentine feminism, its generative role in the production of the discourse of a social movement, and how, in the Green Tide, the relationship itself becomes part of its own discourse of the Witch's political spirituality as a beacon of decolonial political alliance constructed through a grammar of gender and sexuality.

The Green Tide is well inserted in a Latin American intellectual tradition that strongly values research engagement towards social change, and I am not problematising such engagement. What I am keen to bring to the forefront is the extent to which, in the Green Tide discourse, this relationship is productive for the movement's Witch discourse. How, in other words, by stressing how 'theory-praxis' is emancipatory and decolonial, the Witch becomes herself a "theoretical-political category", or a category of thought and action able to bridge theory and praxis.

The decolonial potential of the Witch as a 'theory-praxis' is possible insofar the excision of theory from praxis, hence academia and intellectuals from social movements and activists, responds to the discursive articulation of Man1's division of mind and body as Reason and Unreason. The Witch stands, discursively, as a "theoretical-political" category able to non-secularly reunite mind and body precisely because She is discursively positioned to negate such division in the first place. The concrete correlate of the Witch, in turn, is identified by Bolla (2019) in the feminist instances of the Green Tide, as both an intellectual and political novelty.

As the Witch discourse and the Green Tide are discursively produced as an anti-colonial theory-politics, they are also produced as the theoretical-political agent of political articulation across interests and claims. This is precisely because the Witch's anti-Man position becomes a general framework of oppression, resistance, and prefiguration,

whereas sectorial issues such as housing, healthcare, or resource extractivism risk keeping the struggle fragmented and particularised. The Green Tide, and the Witch, aim at being a shared analytical lens, a threading tool against fragmentation. And yet, at the structuring core of the Witch as decolonising agent, there is again a modern gender and sexuality grammar that recentres feminism as the most adequate political subject to bring people to join a revolution against Man.

My point is that this is possible also in virtue of the tight relationship between academia and social movement in Latin American feminist studies, whereby the theoretical production of intellectuals easily becomes the discourse of the movement; and by how this tradition is incorporated in the Green Tide discourse as part of its self-representation as anti-Man. This argument is furthermore supported by the analysis, below, of two important self-identified feminist publishing houses, *Tinta Limón* and *hekht*. Each publishing house, in creating a purportedly political catalogue, operated a proximity and overlapping of the spiritual as feminist in a grassroots framework. Both illustrate the intertwinement of Green Tide knowledge producers with the movement, and how the Green Tide claim of being an umbrella movement happens via a transformational grammar of gender and sexuality. In particular, I look at how this happens by adapting the language of precarity and grassroots ‘the people’ into the *desiring bodies* of the feminist subject.

*Tinta Limón*, which translates into ‘lemon ink’, refers to the secrecy provided by this form of writing, as well as the sudden appearance of the ink when moving the paper close to a source of heat ([tintalimon.com.ar/editorial](http://tintalimon.com.ar/editorial)). *Tinta Limón* publishers collate texts that intentionally orientate towards a political narrative that brings together Latin American, Anglophone, and European Continental political and philosophical traditions.<sup>68</sup> The editorial also proposes volumes authored by social movements and organised collectives: the Zapatista movement, the Bolivian Indigenous movement, Black Brazilian authors involved in Black liberation struggles, and other texts discussing Chile’s 2019 protests and Argentine feminism. Overall, *Tinta Limón* offers a collection of leftist scholarly and essay texts that look at oppression, struggle, and new forms of liberation and social organisation.

Together with booklets, monographs, and edited volumes, *Tinta Limón* publishes online essays and interviews. Several articles discuss Federici’s texts and theoretical

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<sup>68</sup> To name some: Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière, Silvia Federici, Maurizio Lazzarato, Antonio Negri, Wendy Brown, bell hooks, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Arturo Escobar, Rodolfo Kusch, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.

framework, insisting on (individual and Earthly) healing through (re)connection to the rhythms of the natural world. See for example ‘Eulogy of a dancing body’ (Federici, 2022) and ‘Highlights to the introduction to “Reenchanting the World”’ (Federici, 2020). Here, the body and its movement (dance is a privileged example), is considered essential to recover the capacity of being affected and transformed so to mutate the world, re-enchanting it. The body as an erotic matter to be reappropriated for example through reggaeton and, more recently, twerking (Liska, 2023) is mediated through spirituality both at feminist gatherings through music (Liska, 2019), speeches, spiritual goods and services (Felitti, 2019b) and the discursive production of intellectuals.

A more explicit connection to spirituality as a grassroots act of political revolt is introduced in an interview (Gago et al., 2023) with Brazilian philosopher Denise Ferreira Da Silva. She is asked how she relates the methods of philosophy, poetic experimentation, tarot and astrology in her research and political work. In her reply, she highlights two elements. First, how she organised workshops in spiritual practices for Brazilian Black and Indigenous activists to maintain their “physical, mental, emotional and intellectual wellbeing” (ibid.: para 18) while engaging in exhausting political struggle during Bolsonaro’s government (2019-2022). Second, she mentions *The Sensing Salon*, a studio practice that brings healing arts into the exploration of tarot, astrology, and Reiki as a form of sociality and collective healing ([www.thesensingsalon.org/](http://www.thesensingsalon.org/)).

Again, my concern is not that a diverse range of spiritual traditions and practices are deployed by activists all over the world to deal with the traumas and difficulties of political articulation. Rather, I am attentive to how Green Tide intellectuals once again mediate between feminism and anti-capitalist grassroots movements, social collectives, and, in general, political articulations that stand in resistance from below through the discursive objects of *body* and *desire*. And how the grammar of sexuality and gender becomes the theory-method to re-enchant the world.

I find this discursive operation again in how the other Argentine feminist publishing house, *hekht*, brings spirituality the forefront of feminist political practice of shared resistance. The editorial describes itself, similarly to *Tinta Limón*, as an inspiring way towards something *else*.

Hekht it’s only a way of doing what we haven’t done yet. A bet without a programme. hekht connects and creates as it transits through the different practices where life resists neoliberal machineries. [...]  
hekht, ancient indomitable goddess, is the monster we created to destabilise binaries and their power (woman and man, practice and theory, over and below,

inside and outside, nature and culture...). hekht, the old black frog of the desert, the multiple goddess that the Greek attempted to colonise. She is the monster in which we believe when we affirm the infinite possibilities of this world. It is not, then, about respecting a totem or a ritual but to make present a potency, to expand it. [...]  
(hekht.com.ar/editorial/)

The publisher's self-description reinscribes it among the discursive field that connects spirituality to feminism along the lines of breaching across binaries, neoliberalism, colonialism, or, in other words, the episteme of Man.

Among *hekht*'s publications, its 'Pyra Collection' stands out. They explain that 'pyra' is the stake where historical witches were burnt but also the site where their rituals are celebrated. 'Pyra's' books "transit the *mestizo* zone where old untamed knowledges are re-actualised, both as knowledges and as irreverent. Diverse witches, storytellers, curanderas, god/desses and heretics invade technological, domestic, public or secret landscapes and reenchant the world" (*hekht*, 2022: 3. Italics mine).

'Pyra' collates together a critique of capitalism, lesbo-feminism, chicana feminism, psychoanalysis, the role of historical witches in the modern gendered division of work, and the history of different interpretations of menstruation.<sup>69</sup> Overall, *hekht*'s 'Pyra Collection', connects the search for an anti-capitalist political alternative with bodies, desire, and intimacy in a grammar of gender and sexuality. In the catalogue, is possible to discern the chosen cover for Chollet's (2018) 'Witches' and Pignarre & Stengers (2011) 'Capitalist Sorcery' (figures 9.5 and 9.6), both introduced by Natalia Ortiz Maldonado (2018, 2019).

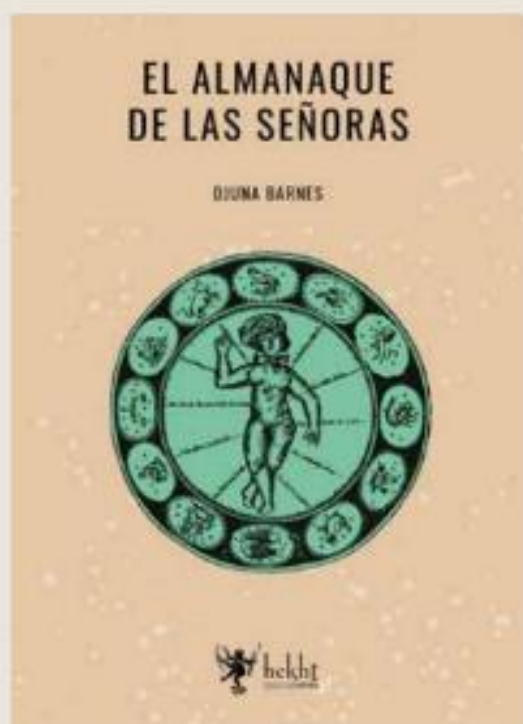
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<sup>69</sup> In order of appearance in figure 9.1, the collection presents: Djuna Barnes' (1992) 'Ladies Almanac', Monique Wittig's (1994) 'The Lesbian Body', Gloria Anzaldúa's (2015) 'Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality (Latin America Otherwise)', Monique Wittig's (1985) 'Les Guérillères'. In figure 9.2: Mona Chollet's (2018) 'Witches: The Undefeated Power of Women', Stengers & Pignarre's (2011) 'Capitalist Sorcery', Élise Thiébaud's (2017) 'This is My Blood', and Victoria Larrosa's (2018) 'Curandería: Escucha Clínica, Performática y Gualichera'. The latter can be loosely translated as: 'Folk medicine: Clinical, Performative, and Bewitched Listening'.

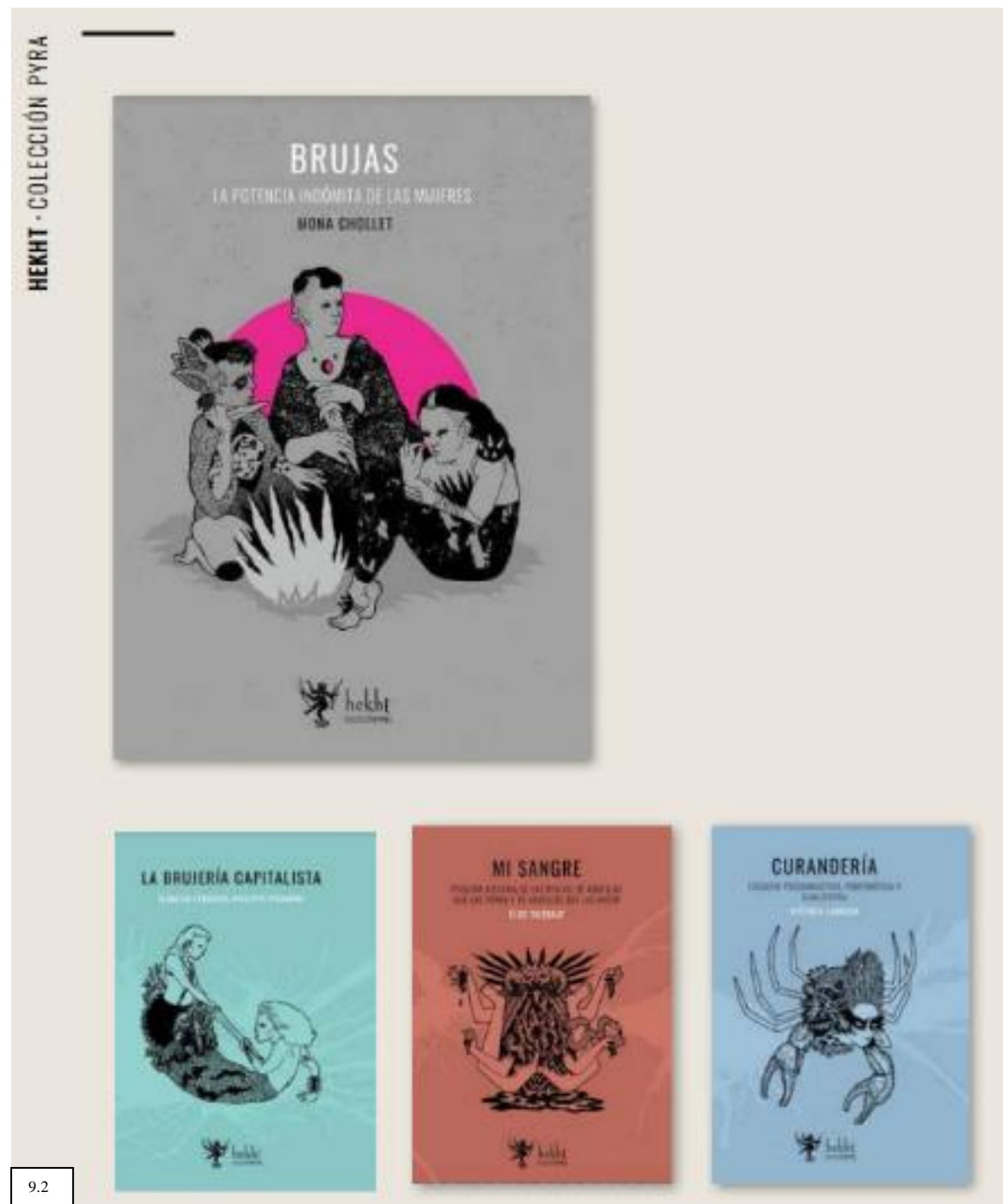


hekht  
COLECCIÓN PYRA

La pyra es la hoguera donde se queman brujas pero también el lugar donde se celebran sus rituales. Los libros de esta colección transitan la zona mestiza donde los viejos saberes indómitos se reactualizan, como saberes y como irreverentes. Brujxs, narradoras, curanderas, diosxs y herejes diversxs invaden los escenarios tecnológicos, domésticos, públicos o secretos y reencantan al mundo.







9.2

Figure 9. hekht's 'Pyra Collection' catalogue, 2022.

The two publishing houses articulate a clear proposal of possibility about other worlds, an idea of resistance and re-articulation that passes through the re-enchantment of the world. While *Tinta Limón* does so within its book reviews and interviews, *hekht* curated an explicit collection looking at sex, pleasure, lesbianism, political economy, folk

medicine, and menstrual blood coming together through a feminist perspective for the transformation of knowledge and of politics.

What my analysis illustrates is that connections include evocative names and images, but also the different spaces that researchers occupy as activists and knowledge producers, and in their effort to work for the social movement. Aside from being the name of *hekht*'s collection, for example, 'Pyra' is also the title of the exhibition on Witches introduced by the words of Malena Nijensohn (2019b). Nijensohn is a post-doctoral philosophy researcher specialised in gender studies at the University of Buenos Aires. She is supervised by Virginia Cano, a philosopher activist, researcher, teacher, and writer. Cano has written together with Nijensohn and Natalia Ortiz Maldonado in *LatFem*. Natalia Ortiz Maldonado is a scholar in social and political sciences at the University of Buenos Aires and, aside from writing in *Revista Anfibia*, she is the founder of the publishing house *hekht*. Verónica Gago, moreover, besides having published in these and other outlets, is a "militant member of *Tinta Limón* and of the *Ni Una Menos* collective" ([tintalimon.com.ar/autorxs/#verónica-gago](http://tintalimon.com.ar/autorxs/#verónica-gago)).

The texts describing the publishing initiatives recall the texts published in *LatFem* or *Revista Anfibia*, where prologues to Federici, Chollet, Pignarre & Stengers, and Wittig's books are written by the same researchers, activists, and cultural producers. By highlighting this, I want to emphasise how spirituality is tied to feminist politics beyond the literalism of the referent into everyday spaces, institutions of knowledge production and political articulation. These bring together folk and Indigenous medicine, queerness, sex and pleasure, spirituality, witchcraft, political economy, and force of mobilisation under a framework of undoing the world and re-enchanting it.

I have traced several sites and dynamics of knowledge production at intersection between the leftist publishing industry, socially committed academia, and feminist politics. This knowledge production is beneficial to the Green Tide movement and its knowledge producers in two ways. First, understanding 'theory-praxis' as a decolonial political action rooted in local realities allows the Green Tide and its intellectuals to self-position as decolonial. Secondly, as the categories of sex and gender are identified as those enacting decolonial change, both gender studies and a social movement centred around sex are placed at the centre of decolonial action.

In conclusion, I argue that in the Green Tide discourse, the relevance of the ties between feminist academia and movement resides in how the Witch becomes the discourse of the movement as opposed to a small group of intellectuals writing about feminist witches.

The language of interruption, timeliness, and massification serve to position the movement as a before-and-after turning point. Here, the genealogical articulation of the Green Tide reveals the need for feminist knowledge production to be timely, relevant, and aid in the unfolding of a (hopefully different) history.

### 5.3 The Green Tide Allocation of Subalternity

So far, I have been concerned with how the Green Tide produces itself as a turning point (its ‘event-ness’) and with the inextricable connections between theoretical production and involvement with social movements. I argue that the Green Tide and its knowledge formation, the Witch, are positioned at the forefront of social change both as a political category of action and a theoretical category for thinking otherwise. As a radical difference, the Witch, the Green Tide, and their scholarship tradition, are positioned by Green Tide intellectuals as Southern and anti-colonial as opposed to a predatory and dispossessing North, Reason, and Capitalism.

In this sense, the feminist claim of embodying a form of thought and action able to disrupt the episteme of Man as a collective shift of thought and action, is only possible by making the Green Tide a movement for all identities in struggle. My argument is this is achieved as both the Witch and the Green Tide become figures of and for a subaltern ‘the people’ through the discursive concepts of ‘precarity’ and ‘popular’. Virginia Cano’s (2019) presentation to Nijensohn’s (2019a) monograph is quite illustrative in this sense. The title of their presentation ‘The feminist reason. from *Ni Una Menos* to the present of the radically plural and popular’ encapsulates the discursive production I am discussing. To be a radical possibility of an otherwise, feminism needs to be *from* precarity, or *popular*, and the Green Tide is precisely embodying these qualities.

Cano (2019) frames it in terms of “plac[ing] the political bet on shared precariousness” as:

A radically plural feminism will make articulation in dissent and shared precariousness the keys to its political operation. [...] The fact that the political stake is common precariousness not only opens the horizon of possible alliances between feminism and other social movements beyond identity politics; it also gives us the key to think action and political alliance beyond the ego-liberal dream of autonomous and sovereign individuals. What reunites us every time again in the street, the assemblies, the squares, and in the spaces of organising; this is, the resistance to precarising and hierarchising politics that throw us in that always disputed public sphere, a political exercise in which we have a long local tradition to which the feminist movement bends. It is this contemporary ability to

put in movement bodies and the meanings or senses [*sentidos*] of politics, to reactivate our memory and collective desires of resistance and transformation, that makes feminism a fertile ground to amplify the ways and horizons of the possible.  
(Cano, 2019: para. 7)

This selection of Cano's (2019) work places the accent on alliance and resistance. More specifically, on how feminism needs to be *popular* and in a relationship of resistance to capitalist precarisation to meet the aim of 'pluralism' and 'alliance' understood as deeper democracy.

To become a common movement for experiences in struggle, therefore a radical movement, Cano (2019: para. 8) argues that "we need to unfold, *articulate*, a *radically plural* and *popular feminism*, able to present itself 'as a form of resistance from precarity, *against* precarity: a counter-hegemonic project as long as this movement proposes to build itself as political actor resisting neoliberalism and for the construction of communities that take constitutive interdependency as their starting point' [Nijensohn, 2019a]." Democracy, in Cano's (2019) words, is to be achieved by keeping active "bodies and meanings of politics" (ibid.: para. 7) and redirecting attention away from the atomised individual and towards the common thread that creates each singular experience of precarisation. The excerpt evokes feminism, proxy of the Green Tide in this context, as having this ability to theorise and redirect attention, bringing activity back into political theorisation and stimulating participation in instances of street and assembly politics as such common ground.

In the quote, moreover, feminism needs to be *popular* because for it to effectively stimulate transformation ("another world is possible"), it needs to be *from* precarity. The *genealogical popular* origin articulated by the Green Tide associates feminine and socioeconomic difference to historical witches, the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, and the anti-socioeconomic exclusion movements of the 1990s and early 2000s. But what makes the Witch a category of thought and action that not only resists but that is prefiguratively generative (able to produce the possibility to imagine and do otherwise), is the category '*popular*' clustered around 'precarised' and 'from below', as a local referent elaborated through the framework offered by the work of Silvia Federici and Judith Butler.

Federici and Butler were each invited at least once between 2015 and 2019 to participate in assemblies and talks in different cities in Argentina; their work was widely discussed in online seminars and other events, as well as in local feminist encounter,

assemblies, and conscientisation initiatives. Furthermore, both have written important texts with prominent Argentine scholars whose work is analysed in this project and collaborated with feminist publishing houses, in conversations and discussions.

In chapter 4, I discuss how Green Tide intellectuals incorporated Federici's (2004) 'Caliban and the Witch' in the production of the discourse of the Witch. It is worth reiterating that 'Caliban and the Witch' served as activist framework to circulate knowledge on the interconnectedness of capitalist exploitation and the hierarchisation of sex and gender norms. The Green Tide interpretation of Federici's framework served to politicise feminine difference not just against the Church and other conservative sectors opposing the legalisation of abortion, but also against the IMF's and *Cambiamos*' socioeconomic structural reforms. In her piece 'Spirituality as a Force of Uprising', Gago (2018: para. 3) refers "once more" to 'Caliban and the Witch' to interlace the sudden socioeconomically precarious present of Argentina with the struggle for abortion and "eventually over the term life itself" as renewed "forms of tutelage" and attempts to "control bodies and feminised spiritualities."

In the Green Tide discourse, bodies and structural precariousness are relevant also through Butlerian's (2015) concepts of precarity, plural performativity, sovereignty, and the 'sustainability of life'. Green Tide feminist knowledge production relies on Butlerian extensions of performativity to the concerted actions of the body, which highlight the important dimensions of corporeal life in suffering, resisting, and mobilising collectively against precarity. In 'Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly', Judith Butler (2015) discusses how massive protest instances around the world share an underlying claim against induced precariousness as the destruction of the interconnectedness of life. Moreover, addressing the question of democracy, Butler places in these instances of collective gathering an in-appropriable quality of 'the people's' sovereignty.

For the Green Tide, Butler's theories from 'Gender Trouble' (1990) to later work on the plural performativity of assemblies (Butler, 2015), are key to shifting feminism away from a static "woman-subject" to centre instead collective action, democracy, and shared common ground.<sup>70</sup> In the excerpts from Cano (2019), for example, Butler's perspective is translated into appreciating feminist instances of collective articulation, particularly those displayed since the eruption of the Green Tide. The Green Tide discourse alludes to having

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<sup>70</sup> I refer to Sabsay & Soley Beltrán (2012) for a reading of Butler's work from the Spanish academic context ten years after 'Gender Trouble (Butler, 1990) was translated into Spanish.

the political and material capacity to bring that *popular* sovereignty back in public spaces to reclaim its political use by, and visibility of, both feminine and socio-economic difference. Here, the subject position of the Green Tide is furthermore strengthened by the massification of the movement and its ability to convoke hundreds of thousands.

The particularity of the Green Tide is that it inserts itself within a genealogy of *popular* local movements, and through the discursive concepts of ‘precarity’ and ‘*popular*’ it self-positions as subaltern. *Popular* subalternity seems to reside uniquely in those bodies gathering in Green Tide encounters, and, in turn, the Green Tide itself represents subaltern sovereignty altogether. In other words, the discursive articulation of the Witch and the Green Tide’s feminine difference needs to be readable in terms of socioeconomic subalternity to function as a massive movement against neoliberal governmentality, and, therefore, as a radically plural movement from below. As a collective act of resistance to a shared condition of structural dispossession, it appears constructed only in those bodies that gather in the street, reifying the Green Tide imaginary of *popular* sovereignty.

My point, here, is that Green Tide feminist knowledge production relies on the categories ‘precarity’ and ‘*popular*’ in order to be intelligible as a subaltern subject. Green Tide knowledge producers deploy subalternity with the effect of becoming an umbrella “collective subject” of subalternity. Furthermore, in these texts, the grassroots experiences and their theoretical frameworks are consistently positioned as anti-imperialist, against Man or the North – the Church, the IMF, neoliberal subjectification, etc. – and because of the geopolitical position of Argentina, this subalternity is also Southern, decolonial. In other words, by articulating its genealogy as subaltern, the Green Tide is discursively intelligible as an anti-colonial Feminism from the South that can inform (and transform) feminist movements transnationally.

In summary, subalternity functions as the condition that makes possible the Green Tide’s geopolitically Southern subject position by making a claim to be a *popular* movement. The texts I selected illustrate how, in the Green Tide discourse, the Green Tide’s *popular legacy* is constituted by the taking of the street, the articulation of different identities in struggle, and the tradition of consensus-based activism against precarisation and debt. The Witch is articulated as a category of thought and action that comes from precarity and becomes a *popular* movement against precarity by taking on structurally induced precariousness as a shared condition of all those marginalised.

At the same time, my point is that through a transformational grammar of gender and sexuality all these claims for and from the people are translated into Green Tide claims

and the bodies attending Green Tide rallies. The Green Tide self-identifies as a political articulation that is “moved by the *desire* of changing everything” (italics mine),<sup>71</sup> and from this position it calls identities in struggle to join the Green Tide. In other words, my analysis of the data highlights how the Green Tide discursively positions itself as the one able to bond together diverse struggles in a unified movement. The Green Tide claims to be a theoretical-political movement able to address the common problem of dispossession we all suffer under the same umbrella, or, rather, under the same handkerchief.

This sense of event-ness and historicity that discursively places the Green Tide as a privileged subject for an alternative civilisation proposal relies on the massive participation at Green Tide events. In fact, some Green Tide rallies summoned by *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña* succeeded to convene hundreds of thousands, a sight Argentina had last seen during the protests of 2001’s financial crisis and that further helped its positioning in a *popular* genealogy. Politically, massive gatherings permitted the Green Tide to apply a strong pressure over state and government representatives, institutions, and public opinion. Theoretically, it permitted to adapt Federici’s (2004) analysis of the entanglement between gender and capitalist relations and Butlerian (2015) theories of plural performativity in the local context and traditions of *popular* to place sovereignty in the (subaltern) people gathering in the feminist events of the Green Tide.

The massification of the movement highlighted how the Green Tide was able to convoke innumerable people, how feminist organisations were able to make people bring their bodies to the street for the cause of reproductive rights and economic sustainability as an exercise of reclaiming *popular* sovereignty. But most importantly, the initially unexpected, and later fostered, pouring of hundreds of thousands in a protest at the call of specific Green Tide sites like *Ni Una Menos* and *La Campaña*, unveils how much from that moment on the Green Tide had taken up the spokesperson role for a (subaltern) ‘the people’ and the *popular* cause.

The Green Tide and its *popular* sovereignty then appear to be determined by the ability to gather up to a million people in protest, making the Green Tide a social force to be reckoned with. However, as the Green Tide portrayed itself as representative of *popular* claims, the massive feminist political body seemed to express its sovereignty only in those Green Tide calendar instances. I ground this point on my analysis of *Ni Una Menos* and *La*

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<sup>71</sup> An English reference of this common slogan can also be found in Gago (2020) ‘Feminist International: How to change Everything.’

*Campaña* Instagram posting, illustrated in figures 10 and 11. Given the Green Tide claim to offer a common ground and shared articulation to collectively address precariousness, I investigated how different claims or struggles were portrayed against this generalised position taken by the Green Tide.

The Green Tide reacted to a context of feminicide violence and economic uncertainty as well as to the need to maintain feminism as epistemically relevant and disruptive by challenging the established political and epistemological categories. To do so, they attempted to (re)organise attention towards occurrences, theoretical and analytical categories, and political practices to offer an alternative (feminist) understanding that would inspire a specific political outcome. The claim to be embodying subalternity from the rawest experiences of precarity is the legitimising operation placing the Green Tide as a subject able to change history, both in political and theoretical terms.

*Ni Una Menos* Instagram publications between December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (figure 10) compared to those between February 27<sup>th</sup> and March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (figure 11), highlight how Green Tide organisations fostered attendance in mass to their rallies and not so much to those dealing with ‘sectorial’ issues such as the betterment of employment conditions, social welfare, access to housing, access to water, or pension wage. My argument, here, is that the massive attendance to Green Tide events cannot just be considered a spontaneous outpour of ‘*popular* sovereignty’, of different groups in a rare show of intersectoral alliance. Rather, through their social media channels, the Green Tide redirected attention and mobilisation towards their own categories of thought and action, including their own rallies. I refer to how the Green Tide deploys groups or issues that could be categorised as *popular* in a way that is productive to their own self-representation as *popular* and subaltern.





Figure 10. Ni Una Menos Instagram thumbnails, 12/12/2018 to 8/01/2019.

Figure 10 depicts 15 publications in 28 days, where 13 of these posts publicise ‘sectorial’ claims: factory workers layoffs (10.2), the search and recovery of the daughter of an important Indigenous leader (10.6), a call to action against an illegal imprisonment in Nicaragua (10.10), a call for an assembly of press workers (10.11), and one for the liberation of the *piquetero* movement leader Milagro Sala (10.13). All these issues, that come to represent the realities and day-to-day difficulties of the working class, are considered *popular* issues. Whereas they might seem to be at the forefront of *Ni Una Menos*’s Instagram, these ‘sectorial’ claims appear particularised against graphics that are already starting to call to the 8<sup>th</sup> of March Feminist Strike. The difference is noticeable when looking at the posts published a few weeks later in figure 11.

Figure 11, below, illustrates more than double the posts covering almost the half of the same time period, most of all dedicated to the 8<sup>th</sup> of March demonstration or International Feminist Strike. In chronological order, figure 11.1 to 11.9 display the early calls to join the general assembly for the organisation of the strike, close to the big “8M 2019” of figure 10.15. Figures 11.1 and 11.4 display references to the Witch in the use of cauldrons, associated to the purple colour of *Ni Una Menos* and the green of the *La Campaña*. But the cauldron is also associated with the *ollas populares*, where the common pot is an instance of collective participation in communal kitchens. This is again discernible in figure 8, where the common pot invites followers to join feminist plots against the IMF colonial “financial terror” (*Ni Una Menos*, 2018d).

These *popular* kitchens have been present in Argentina’s imaginary since the first neoliberal reforms and subsequent impoverishment of the 1980s and are rooted in the survival reality of the post-2001 financial crisis. The text of the cauldron post (figure 11.1) invites followers to join the assembly offering a bonfire, music, workshops, food, and dance. The call to participate in the strike is repeated multiple times and is followed by the pictures of the assembly and more calls to pump up spirits for the upcoming protest. Finally, there are pictures and videos of the street march itself, full of the colours, lemmas, and performances of the people mobilising in the street.





11.30



11.29



11.28



11.27



11.26



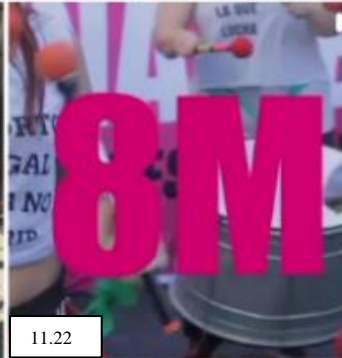
11.25



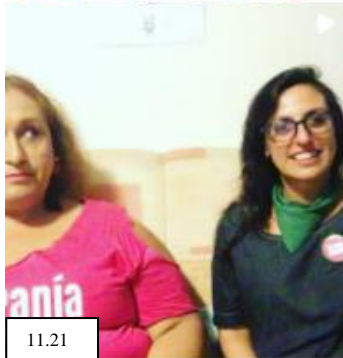
11.24



11.23



11.22



11.21



11.20



11.19



11.18



11.17



11.16





Figure 11. Ni Una Menos Instagram thumbnails, 27/02/2019 to 10/03/2019.

I analyse these posts in the context of claims for event-ness, where participating in a Green Tide mobilisation is framed as taking an active role in *the* revolution. Two *La Campaña* posts respectively from December 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020, spell it as “join us in making history” and “the revolution we need” (*Campaña para el Aborto Legal*, 2020b, c) to gather momentum and critical mass for a parliamentary vote on the legalisation of abortion. Similar to the *Ni Una Menos* posts in figure 6, the dramatism of the moment is emphasised by posts showing big numbers of activists with their green handkerchiefs raised in protest, photos of high-impact performances and lemmas saying, “legal abortion – is urgent” (*Campaña para el Aborto Legal*, 2020d, e)

These visual excerpts demonstrate how the concepts of ‘precarity’ and ‘*popular*’ were effectively deployed by Green Tide organisations (in this case *Ni Una Menos*) to embody the political strength of such genealogy of struggle, and to encourage political participation specifically into those events organised by the Green Tide. Shantytown and neighbourhood associations, Indigenous people, disabled people, queers, sex workers, factory workers and other workers of the *popular* economy<sup>72</sup> all appear represented as subaltern *popular* groups facing precariousness in areas such as housing, healthcare, education, the justice system, policing and access to natural resources.

At the same time, *Ni Una Menos*’s and *La Campaña*’s social media agendas are dominated by the preparation and call to the 8<sup>th</sup> of March strike and other important protest dates of the feminist calendar, virtually one per month across the whole year. Insistently posting calls to participate in the Green Tide events on the basis of their subaltern changing of the world (“what side of history do you want to be on?” (figure 6), the Green Tide operationalises the Witch and the Green Tide as a *popular* movement discursively in images, text, and strategies, and non-discursively in the organisation of events with *popular* characteristics: communal kitchens, *popular* food and crafts stalls, in the music being played and its dancing, and in the presence of different organisations or collectives with their banners.

For example, after a successful Lower Chamber vote on the legalisation of abortion in June 2018, the campaign resumed the weekly Green Tuesday encounters started earlier

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<sup>72</sup> The category was developed by José Luíís Coraggio (2018a, b) to refer to the person involved in labour (including care and reproductive work) outside of a work relationship of employment. The worker of the *popular* economy, independent, stands in contrast to the entrepreneur figure of capital economies. The focus is not on the accumulation of capital but the redirection of the labour force for the reproduction of life of the family unit of the worker: they work to sustain themselves and their families. In this framework, associative experience in unions and cooperatives is valued over other types of ethos.

that year, immediately after the 8<sup>th</sup> of March Feminist Strike. Cumbia, the *popular*, shantytown music genre that was popularized after 2001's economic crisis (Aguiló, 2018), was the most played together with reggaeton and folklore to accompany small fairs with workshops, craft(wo)mans' stands and food stalls of *choripan* [sausage roll] and other *popular* foods.

A web-scraping analysis of *La Campaña*'s Instagram (Acosta, 2020) confirmed in fact that both publication and engagement were higher during the two parliamentary discussions on the legalisation of abortion, in June and August 2018. Torres (2021) similarly illustrates how *La Campaña* posted more in absolute terms in April and August 2018, before and during the parliamentary discussions. Those are also the months with more engagement, with three posts receiving more reactions from its viewers. One of these was the image of hundreds of women raising their green handkerchiefs (Acosta, 2020: 36-38).<sup>73</sup> Acosta, in this sense, argues that *La Campaña* kept its attention mostly on parliamentary events centred on sexual and reproductive issues, and so did the engagement of Instagram users.

What I mean is that local groups or demands that would be inscribed in the category '*popular*' are deployed by the Green Tide in a way that fuelled their own self-representation as *popular* and subaltern, and in a way that channelled such representation into, primarily, Green Tide events: the 8<sup>th</sup> of March Strike or the parliamentary debates for the legalisation of abortion. Take again figures 10 and 11. In the first case, over a longer period of time there are fewer posts addressing a diverse range of topic and sharing, if appropriate, information on meetings or gatherings. These different instances of *popular* dispossession are already inserted within the initial calls to the 8<sup>th</sup> of March international strike, which in figure 11 is predominant, insistent, and the calls to participation and to be part of revolution discursively act as an overarching claim.

Moreover, the social media of the Green Tide stimulates gathering and mobilisation differently according to the type of *popular* struggle that is portrayed in a post. When the publication refers to groups or issues of a specific *popular* sector, whether schooling, unions, housing, etc., *Ni Una Menos* reported encounters as they already happened. If *Ni Una Menos* publicised one of these meetings, it was usually over one post, with logistical information and a short description of the reasons behind it. When posting for the Green

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<sup>73</sup> The other two are the speech of Corrientes senator Ana Claudia Almirón, who during the Senate vote on August 8<sup>th</sup> recognised women's struggle for abortion rights, and a green panel announcing the Senate's vote's counting on the same day (Acosta, 2020: 37).

Tide events, instead, there is an insistent build up for protest through numerous posts about the importance of participating, with dramatic lemmas and a rebellious aesthetic. *La Campaña*, for instance, often posted a countdown (“two days left,” “one day left”) to foster mobilisation to their gatherings, and accompanied these invitations with reminders of all the activities that would take place at the encounter.

I want to highlight that the Green Tide’s social media emphasise how exciting participating in protest would be. The presence of musicians, performance groups, fairs, and other *popular* elements came to characterise Green Tide feminist demonstrations all while giving a sense of collective reclamation of the street, of political sovereignty over the public space. Incitement to participate occurs also through posts that summarise the event, telling the story of a strike or demonstration a few days after it took place. Music (Aguiló, 2018) and food (Pite, 2016) that are part of the classed (and racial history of the country are proposed in feminist encounters organised around the sale of spiritual goods and services (Felitti, 2019b), feminist spiritual music to dance at while shaking the body (2019: 2023) as the sites of protest and *popular* re-making of the world. Through posts displaying smiling girls and women having fun with their painted faces, photos and videos of performances, and aesthetically powerful music, phrases, and colours, the attention was effectively retained on the Green Tide as *the* events in which to participate so to exercise the political pressure of precarised ‘the people’. In this sense, the Green Tide’s social media strategy of mobilisation emphasises their own rallies by giving extended coverage to Green Tide issues, gatherings, and categories of thought and action.

The analysis of Green Tide Instagram posting illustrates how the Green Tide focuses on their own instances of mobilisation, inciting demonstrators to their attendance. Other instances, on the other hand, acquire a rather auxiliary position. ‘Sectorial’ claims discursively serve the making of the Green Tide as a *popular* movement while recentring attention of the feminist subject. This is obtained by posting more often about the event, inviting with more insistence to Green Tide gatherings, as well as emphasising the alluring atmosphere of these protests both before and after they took place through a narrative of *popular* massiveness and historicity. Whereas ‘sectorial’ *popular* struggles have fewer posts over a longer period of time and retain their particularistic quality, Green Tide claims receive broader extension of coverage and intensity of posting.

What I mean, here, is that ‘sectorial’ issues such as housing, factory layoffs, union meetings, access to water and infrastructure, pension income, and many other issues of the ‘below’ are not portrayed as having a unifying disruptive potential unless convoked by the

Green Tide itself under the general slogan opposing precarity, debt, the IMF, and austerity in conjunction with the reproductive and sexual demand. Instead, the streets are continuously occupied, intervened, and repossessed primarily through Green Tide encounters and its discourse of intersectoral, *popular* alliance against the broader struggle against neoliberalism and patriarchy. ‘Sectorial’ issues ‘from below’ appear as particularised instances of the shared experience of precarity. The generalised struggle against precarity, as a common ground able to mobilise these ‘sectorial’ experiences, is allocated into Green Tide events. In turn, the *popular* as a category of ‘the people’ is reclaimed for the Green Tide as a theoretical-political category able to create a common ground for alliance.

In other words, the Green Tide production of a political common ground through massive mobilisation against the neoliberal state and in support of sexual and reproductive rights was possible by discursively collating a variety of experiences of precarisation. While these diverse struggles help position the Green Tide as a *popular* movement, they are ultimately subsumed by how the Green Tide distributes attention towards the generalisation of its own categories of thought and action, arguing that these would lead to massive street participation (‘*popular*’ sovereignty) and transnational impact.

My argument, here, is that the Green Tide discourse displays what I call a differential distribution of attention. The analysis above exposes how the Green Tide relies on the subalternity of *popular* issues and precarious experiences of existence, harnessing it as part of its own politico-theoretical relevance. This uneven allocation of attention places the Green Tide as the umbrella under which subalternity is represented and the basis from which to make claims for it. The theoretical and political innovation of the Green Tide translates in the making of certain *popular* claims as particularised experiences of precarity, while others are elevated as general categories of thought and action. As the Green Tide discourse is centred on the Witch, the legalisation of abortion, which under another framework might have remained a ‘sectorial’ claim, here becomes the thread making intersectoral and transnational alliance possible, hence the Green Tide claim to event-ness. The same emphasis is not given to the claims of other groups, those that, citing Nijensohn, come *from* precarity (2019b). This is what I mean when I argue that the movement’s ability to foster massive gatherings is unevenly distributed towards the Green Tide’s theoretical discourse of collective alliance under (feminised) precarity.



My argument here is that the Green Tide discourse was successful in representing itself as a common subject of subalternity by means of the language of precarity. Through the discourse of the Witch, elevated to a disruptive category of thought and action for both selves and collectives, the Green Tide positioned itself as the bearers of a history of *popular* movements for ‘the people’. They did so by adopting a language of precarity, debt, and austerity as *popular*. And, in turn, subsuming it to a grammar of gender and sexuality that recentralised the desiring subject and the political goals of the Green Tide.

Discursively, the Green Tide needs precarity so as to lay claim to being a subaltern theoretical-political option of collective articulation. Whereas the Green Tide positions itself as the bearer of this *popular* legacy of subalternity, it is only through a transformational grammar of gender and sexuality that it is possible to channel *popular* claims and genealogies into its own political categories and initiatives. It is attending Green Tide events, staged through the Witch discourse, that one was visibly to be fighting against Man. The struggles that, according to their own definition of the *popular*, define the concept—working-class precarised experiences—remain in the background. Feminist investment is instead diverted to those claims that can ensure massive mobilisations and to those that articulate transnationally in a North-South level of analysis, readily codified via reference to colonialism and anti-colonial struggle.

## Chapter 6. Is the Witch ‘Dark’? The Green Tide Racialisation of the Witch

Throughout chapter 4 and chapter 5 I explore how, departing from historical accounts of the witch hunts conflated with mythical political imaginaries of spirituality, the Green Tide discourse of the Witch becomes a theoretical proposal of disruptive and prefigurative modes of subjectivity and political articulation against the hegemony of the episteme of Man. Translated into the politics of articulation and alliance of the movement, the Witch is produced as a Southern *popular* category of political thought and action able to offer *the* most effective common ground for collective organisation and struggle. The Witch therefore emerges as a theoretical production by constructing Her subalternity through a language of precarity, while recentralising the feminine difference of the Witch.

In other words, the Green Tide’s claim to a political common ground via mobilisation against the neoliberal politics of the Argentine state, and for the actualisation of sexual and reproductive rights, is produced through the discursive deployment of a mosaic of precarised experiences (shantytown’s, sex workers’, factory workers’ and Indigenous communities’ struggles, among others). While these contribute to produce the Green Tide as a *popular* struggle, they are subsumed to how feminist attention fomented the generalisation of its own categories of thought and action with the argument that they would ensure massive mobilisation and transnational resonance.

At the same time, the Green Tide ability to mobilise as an umbrella for *popular* struggles is condensed in the fight for the legalisation of abortion and in the Witch as a word of power that threaded together economic violence with gender, sexual, and reproductive violence, as colonial violence. The feminine difference of the Witch is at the forefront of the struggle against the hegemony of the episteme of Man, this time as the most effective category of thought and action to build consensus, common ground, and alliance. An anti-colonial *popular* and ‘the people’, as a trope for a subaltern feminism from the South, become embodied by the Green Tide and its knowledge production through a transforming grammar of gender and sexuality.

The placement of an anti-colonial subaltern ‘the people’ in the Green Tide and its feminist discourse, raises questions of representation as proxy and staging in Spivakian sense: *speaking for* and *speaking as*. In ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ Spivak (1988) argues that to represent oneself *as* or speaking *on behalf of* subalternity in a representational economy such as critical theory ignores the uneven distribution of resources that place some

people outside representation altogether. In other words, Spivak (1988) challenges the existence of subalternity as a concrete, ontological reality that can be directly recognised (hence represented) as the legitimising starting point of critical theory.

Following Spivak (1988), in this chapter I argue that the subalternity constructed in the political spirituality of the Witch, which is represented as feminist subalternity from the South, is possible by eliding the racial and colonial history of Argentina. This elision, in turn, allows to recentre the Witch as category of thought and action for a collective civilisation change. The chapter therefore identifies ‘race’ and ‘colonialism’ as unacknowledged words of power (Stoler, 2009) constituting the knowledge formation of the Witch. Overall, in this chapter I argue that as the Green Tide discourse conflates the representation of the Witch *as* ‘the people’ and *for* ‘the people’, the Green Tide is produced as by *speaking as* and *speaking for* an Argentine subaltern subject, and that this subaltern subject is an autochthonous Southern and racialised ‘the people’ akin to Indigeneity. In a liberal representational economy, the Green Tide discourse needs subalternity to be anti-colonial and Southern while eliding the racial life/death conditions of the modern episteme of Man. Throughout the first two sections of this chapter, I show how the Green Tide’s representation of the Witch as subaltern is an unaccounted exercise of Spivakian (1988) epistemic violence at the two levels of representation, which appear conflated, and at the level of the conditions for life and death. In the last section, I turn to the enduring trajectories of colonial life and death (Povinelli, 2006) to highlight how the Witch discourse is situated along these trajectories.

In ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, Spivak (1988) utilises the example of the Indian figure of the burning widow and Foucault and Deleuze’s use of the category “workers’ struggle” to argue that critical theory seeks to find forms of active resistance to Man or the subject of Modernity. The burning widow enters circuits of representation both as a postcolonial symbol of nationalist resurgence, or as a colonial trope of Western civiliser enterprises. The “workers’ struggle” or ‘the people’ similarly emerge as constitutively against power (of the episteme of Man or Modernity). In Spivak’s (1988) analysis, any hypothetical ‘real’ experience of both figures is erased by representing them as a critical symbol of resistance. For Spivak (1988), subalternity appears less as an empirical lived experience and more as a construction that makes the subaltern’s alleged otherness part of representational economy precisely because it becomes recognisable as such.

These forms of recognition and representation require mediating alterity, making it legible to occupy the place – the representational *as* – of the trope of Otherness opposed to

Man. The subaltern, hence, cannot be *spoken for* or *spoken as* without the mediation implicit in representation. Spivak (1988) considers this constitutional dynamic of representation an epistemic violence that cannot be alleviated, only made explicit. But also, to recognise its epistemic violence is to account for the epistemological site from which, and towards which such rendition happens. To argue that the world is and looks as intellectuals represent it, for Spivak (1988) is to let the inevitable epistemic violence of liberal representation go unnoticed. In turn, the operation risks deepening the differential conditions that allow differential possibilities of life and death. In this sense, investments of attention (Stoler, 2009), urgency (Puar, 2017a) and hope (Povinelli, 2006) respond to the colonial trajectory of life and death for which only certain people and populations, their social worlds and categories of thought and action, are left to thrive (Povinelli, 2006).

In the first section, then, I address the Witch as *speaking as*. Through data derived from the writings of Green Tide knowledge producers, I show how the efforts of depicting a local Argentine Witch, different from Her European ‘pointy hat’ counterpart, materialise through parallelisms with Indigenous female power figures. My argument is that the *genealogical* strategy serves once more to situate the Green Tide Witch as an autochthonous Southern subject in resistance, *akin* to Indigenous figures for their subaltern *knowledge*. Overall, the feminist discourse positions the Witch *as* ‘the people’ while, by privileging the axis of Reason/Unreason, deploying unacknowledged racial/colonial tropes of Indigeneity that ‘darken’ the Witch.

In the second part of the chapter, I turn to the Spivakian exercise of representation as *speaking for*. I refer here to Spivak’s (1988) understanding of representation as that enacted by a substituting proxy in the context of politics, state institutions, or the law. In this section, I analyse a salient characteristic of the Green Tide *genealogical* politics of alliance, which here I characterise as *sororal* politics: the long lists of identities in struggle, or lists of difference, that make their appearance in collective manifestos, speeches, and other Green Tide writings. In particular, I look at the dispute around the proposed name change of the PluriNational Encounter of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Travestis, Bisexuals, Intersexuals and Non-Binary People. In this section I show how representation *for* seems exhausted in listings of difference that are nonetheless reinscribed back into universalising claims against precarisation and, at the end, in the demand for sexual and reproductive rights. Here, the alliance expressed by the Green Tide towards the name change, in support of the *MMDIBV*, reinscribes the Indigenous ‘us’ into a feminist ‘we’.

The third and last section of the chapter addresses the colonial legacies of life and death trajectories (Povinelli, 2006) in relation to the Green Tide discourse of the Witch. Povinelli (2006) argued that recognition within the liberal economy of representation reflects a differential global distribution of life and death. The distribution of violence – who is better equipped to survive, and through which means – is not unrelated to the organisation of recognition and representation, including in the form of hope and investment. I address this issue through accounts of the *MMDIBV* initiatives, and by analysing the Green Tide’s Instagram posts after the legalisation of abortion in December 2020. As a result, I demonstrate how the Green Tide deployed their own categories of thought and action (e.g., the feminist strike) and those born out of the *MMDIBV* (e.g., plurinationality) differentially, redirecting attention and continuing to foster mobilisation to their own instances of mobilisation and claim to the state.

I deploy here the Derridean (1976) and Spivakian (1999) notion of traces, as the impression left around a concept of what it is not, of what it could not be so to acquire its meaning. I relate the notion of trace to how Povinelli (2006) writes about life and death also in the sense of investment and hope in certain social worlds rather than others. This, I argue, is discernible in which categories of thought and action are elevated to the “hope-principle” (Gago, 2018: para. 4) of a new possible world, which categories are taken from where, how categories are they deployed, and how, again, the ability to mobilise in the streets is distributed. I identify the Green Tide’s distribution of insurgent, world-changing subalternity together with traces left by the concepts they use, and how these relate to internal colonial histories of the country. In turn, leaving the national scale for a privileging of the North-South lens (similar to the investment against Man on the axis of Reason/Unreason) makes possible the Witch as anti-Man, as *the* racialised Southern subject of oppression and resistance. As a result, the Green Tide is legible in Argentina and the Global North as a radical feminist movement from the South, whereas internal histories of death appear only as traces.

### **6.1 The Witch as ‘the people’**

Throughout the chapters, I analyse how the political character of the Green Tide feminist spirituality of the Witch resides in her agential quality of resistance and prefiguration. The Witch enters the sphere of the Green Tide feminist theory to place the resistant, disruptive and prefigurative sovereignty of the subaltern ‘people’ in the events, claims and bodies of Argentine feminism. In articulating the Witch and the Green Tide as

a Coven of Witches, as sites of subalternity, feminist knowledge producers represent the subalternity of our current civilisation model *through* the Witch and their feminist theorisation.

Such descriptive articulation of how the world looks and how it functions is what Spivak (1988:70) identifies as “*darstellen*,” the type of representation that functions as ‘re-presentation’. “*Darstellen*” is therefore the operation claiming to be re-presenting reality adequately, as a portrait of reality. In this sense, the Witch is positioned as a discursive concept able to adequately represent the (*popular*) sovereign subalternity of the Southern (feminised) collective subject in revolt for a better world. However, for Spivak ‘reality’ cannot be transparently re-presented or staged, as any instance of *darstellen* is a staging or portrait of reality. Although it might be unacknowledged, then, any claim to truth is an operation of *darstellen*, of claiming the portrait *as* ‘real’.

### **6.1.1 *Becoming Autochthonous***

In the feminist discourse on spirituality and the Witch, the effect that historical knowledge on the European witch hunts is conflated with imaginaries of a mythical Witch, turned feminist identity, and then material description of dissident and prefigurative modes of life and subjectivities, eventually elevated to theoretical production. The discursive strategies of *genealogy* and *knowledge* serve this re-presentative operation. The discourse’s genealogical claims allow the Green Tide to create a bond of lineage and kinship between the Witch and feminists, people burnt at the stake in Europe, folkloric feminine figures of Argentina’s tales, feminists of today, and virtually all women in struggle anywhere at any time.

In turn, this supports the Green Tide’s claims of national and transnational alliance under the umbrella of the subalternity of precarity. But, also, by means of this *genealogical* tie, it is possible to bring *as* transparent – into the bodies of feminist Witches or in the subject of the Green Tide – the pre-modern *knowledge* attributed to the Witch. This *knowledge*, which is also a *knowledge* of collective plural articulation as epistemic subalternity, is pivotal to the disruptive and prefigurative proposal of the Witch as anti-Man, and to Her subsequent elaboration as a theoretical-political category of thought and action. In this section I explore a final form of the Witch’s genealogical strategy, one that uncovers the deployment of racial and colonial tropes.

The first element I look at is the staging of the Witch’s subalternity in the explicit search for a local, Argentine, Latin American Witch different from Her European referent.

A most telling instance is Ortiz Maldonado's introduction to the Argentine edition of 'Witches: The Undeclared Power of Women' (Chollet, 2019). The piece is divided into three sub-headings, the first two called "Mona's witches" and "Our witches", therefore articulating a difference between them. The first section describes and summarises Chollet's (2019) essay. "Our witches", instead, starts with a description of the hidden matriarchal ancestral traditions of the Selk'nam People in Tierra del Fuego (Argentina) and continues with the story of La Malinche, the enslaved Nahua woman espoused to Hernán Cortés, and interpreter and intermediary known to have aided the Spanish conquest (Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 14-19).

Under this collective pronoun, 'our', Ortiz Maldonado articulates:

The witch lineage of Latin America is shaped by the convergence of native or aboriginal witchcrafts [*brujerías originarias*] and those that came on the ships from Europe and Africa. Perhaps for that reason, at the level of our own representations it is not enough to mark the desire for autonomy; it is necessary to mark another element, the fear of the coven. In our common images is not really each single witch, but the fear at its collective advent. When autonomy ceases to be the power of an individual body to convert into the libidinal force that courses through the crowd or mob [*marabunta*], the fear of the coven is what invigorates processes of criminalisation, persecution, and punishment. In our territory, the fear of the circle where the witches lose their individuality and become legion, cannot be thought of without considering last years' feminisms. In this sense, and knowing that any and each body can be the body of a witch (in representations and in practices), Indigenous, lesbians, and transvestites seem to configure a zone of what is deeply feared and persecuted – particularly when they are about a political dispute (which is always ethical and spiritual) [...] There is a whole genealogy to tell from the Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, the 'witches' or 'crazy ones' of the square, which walk tenaciously in circle and were able to transform the individual scream into a collective roar. Many pyres were prepared to burn them, some successful, but their circle expanded, nonetheless. Witches are also Milagro Sala, Moira Millán, Higuí, Pepa Gaitán, Diana Sacayán...<sup>74</sup>  
(Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para: 21)

This excerpt highlights how references to the Witch and her Covens are inserted in the search for a local, Argentine Witch that is akin to a list of dispossessed identities.

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<sup>74</sup> Milagros Sala is an Indigenous leader in northern province of Jujuy, and a leading figure in the *piquetero* Movement. On 16 January 2016, Sala was arrested on charges of fraud and criminal conspiracy. Moira Millán is a Mapuche leader preoccupied with ancestral land recovery. She coordinated the MMDIBV. In 2018, she was charged with 'aggravated coercion' after participating in protests. The Higuí Case refers to the murder incrimination of a woman who was attacked in a lesbophobic group rape and killed one of her assailants in self-defence. Pepa Gaitán was a lesbian woman killed by her girlfriend's stepfather, and in her honour, the 7<sup>th</sup> of March has been instituted as the Day of Lesbian Visibility. Finally, Diana Sacayán was one of the leaders of the *travesti* movement in Argentina; she was assassinated in 2018.

Notice how the collective ‘us’ or ‘our’ of the subheading extensively discusses two instances of Indigeneity, looking for the power role of feminine figures to create a proximity with the Witch. Both narrations refer not to present day experiences, but to accounts mediated by colonialism. The first by the anthropologist that hypothesised the Selk’am’s undercover matrifocal practice, the second by the fact that La Malinche’s existence is mediated by written colonial historical records. Ortiz Maldonado’s writing has the effect of situating Argentine witches within a mythical and past Indigeneity read in a feminist key, to then turn to an enumeration of contemporary struggles and finally place attention back into being a Witch as a common ideal condition for collective uprising. There is here an elision of how accounts mediated by colonialism itself (the anthropologist and the Spanish conquest) are proposed, by Ortiz Maldonado, as a ‘real’ reading of Indigenous matriarchal ancestral realities where to situate the Witch.

The quote also displays how the two Indigenous examples of resistant feminine difference are placed within a context of pre-modern rurality, resonating with the mythical origin of the Witch. At the same time, feminist Witches and Covens are positioned as the protagonists of the present. Once again, through their genealogical tie with the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, the scene shifts to the urban landscape of the square and the street and the *legacy of popular* struggle many times discussed in chapter 5. In this sense, Ortiz Maldonado discursively representing the Witch *as* those Indigenous power figures on the base of a same pre-modern and prefigurative *knowledge* and a same *genealogical* origin of dispossession and struggle. Ortiz Maldonado repeats the operation in the introduction to the *hekht* (2019) edition of ‘Capitalist Sorcery’ (Pignarre & Stengers, 2011), where to discuss Witchcraft at Argentine latitudes she refers to the Mapuche People and their practices as “Mapuche witchcraft” (Ortiz Maldonado, 2019: para. 37).

These operations can be found across the discursive plane, where the search for a Southern difference is actualised in rooting the Witch in representational instances of Indigenous subalternity. What I mean, here, is that the Green Tide discourse presents a sustained recurrence to Indigeneity as a means of anchoring its Southerness and subalternity. Consider, to this effect, the sustained resort to folk tales placed in rural environments and to analogies to Indigenous female power, and how rural and folkloric tropes are often deployed as representations of the subaltern within Modernity’s epistemic frame.

Karina Felitti’s ethnographies are once again an illustrative site to further argue my point. I am particularly interested in *La Telesita*, the folk character that Felitti (2019b,



2021a) discusses to show the embedment between spirituality and feminism, and to allude at the transcendental collective character of those encounters and the collective shaking of the body. The story of *La Telesita* is unclear but is usually narrated as a *popular* folklore woman of the countryside, and often interpreted as a ‘local’ Witch (Felitti, 2021a: 552-556; 2019b: 198). *La Telesita* is famous for her prayer-dance, and by referring to how contemporary re-enactments of Aztec dances use “the choreographies of the past to propose alternatives to the problems of the present” (Felitti, 2021a: 555), Felitti too brings together the rural folk figure of *La Telesita* with the Indigenous. The Aztec dances mentioned by Felitti occupy the place of the ancestral cosmovisions I introduced at the beginning of chapter 4, as the past site of wisdom through which to recover a different civilisation model and the *body* as site and tool of disruption. In this *genealogical* movement, the folk figure of *La Telesita* is mediated through the Indigenous account of Aztec dances and their placement as decolonially ancestral and prefigurative.

The quote below, extrapolated from Felitti’s (2021a) ‘Feminist Witches: Constructions of a Cultural Symbol in the Argentina of the Green Tide’ offers a description of the prayer-dance that illustrates how the woman question, *desire*, and the Green Tide are recentred together with the Witch of the paper’s title:

La Telesita operates as a figure that unites past and present, a continuity in the history of women that have occupied the public space and manifested their desires. She is also the opportunity to recover local traditions where there are no European witches with pointy hats flying on brooms, but rather Indigenous, African Americans, mestizos and migrants. They, with their healing arts and ways of interpreting the world compete with the political, medical and religious structure, and with a system that excludes women from spaces of power.

(Felitti, 2021a: 555-556)

As Indigenous feminine power figures are placed in proximity to ‘local’, ‘Argentine’ Witches, Felitti’s excerpt articulates how folk figures are *akin* to Indigenous feminine power figures in their epistemic revolutionary subalternity.

The conflation between the Witch, Indigeneity and their anti-colonial potential becomes clear in how Felitti (2021a: 556) identifies drums and “folkloric/ancestral dances” as an element that can be read as *mestizo* and decolonial. As I described in the Introduction, at this point Felitti asserts that in some instances the presence of dances and drums can be interpreted instead as cultural appropriation, and after the statement she proceeds to argue how Witches are figures of power for the Green Tide. Felitti (2021a) describes how prayer-

dances are present and highly attended at feminist protests, often bringing the flag of the legalisation of abortion. In this sense, the recentralisation of the Witch and the Green Tide is produced both through the title and in how the problem of abortion reappears at the forefront of political disruption and spirituality.

The excerpt, in combination with Felitti's discursive dealing with possible critiques of her interpretation, contributes to further clarifying how the *genealogical* discursive strategy functions by translating a mythical pre-modern matriarchal past into a present-day statement of feminist alliance. Consider the sustained reference, in this sense, to folk tales placed in rural environments and to analogies to Indigenous female power figures; and, finally, the separation of this rural/folkloric and Indigenous space from an urban one where Argentine Witches seem to operate. These identities in alliance, constructed in their marginalised otherness to the episteme of Man ('the people'), converge under the Witch or the Green Tide and their centralised claims, which occupy the place of combatant collective identity/practice that can effectively take over the episteme of Man as patriarchal capitalism.

I utilise this instance from Felitti's work because it is particularly charged with connotations and instances of representation of the Witch *as*, and is effective in illustrating my argument about the use of racial tropes in the Witch discourse. The equivalence of folklore to ancestry that is operationalised in the textual use of the slash in "folkloric/ancestral dances" (Felitti, 2021a: 556) discursively allows the imaginary of Argentine folklore to resonate with the anti-colonial discourses of racialised identities both in Argentina and abroad. By doing so, the Green Tide discourse produces a representative operation that associates Southernness, decoloniality, folklore *as* embodiments of those 'dark', black and brown, mestizo colonised people other to Man.

Whereas Ortiz Maldonado directly represents the Witch *as* the Indigenous power female figure to then centralise the Green Tide discourse and bodies on the street, Felitti returns to the Green Tide by representing folk tales and imaginaries *as* ancestral Indigenous and *mestizo* traditions, hence mediated *as* a Southern and decolonial reality. In both cases, by passing unmarked through racialised tropes informed by colonialism, the Green Tide re-emerges at the agential subjects at the centre of the discourse. The efforts of situating the Witch as Southern and subaltern are mediated through a mythical pre-modernity of folklore, a prefigurative practice of decoloniality, and the proximity to the racialised Indigenous or *mestizo* figures. This is how re-presentation is turned into a transparent

representation of reality, as if knowledge producers were just ‘seeing’ and ‘talking about’ reality as it is.

Consider, finally, a third example from newspaper *Página12*. The article ‘Who are the Contemporary Witches?’, by journalist Ivana Romero (2019), evidences the recurrent use of the same discursive structure. The author discusses *machis* and *kolliris*, respectively Mapuche and Aymara/Quechua feminine Indigenous power figures. She then switches her attention to ‘urban witches’ and addresses Chollet’s (2019) ‘Witches’, Atwood’s (1985) ‘The Handmaid’ Tale’, and other texts about “the history of witches in Europe, ancestral rites in Latin America that also give rise to esoteric, magical, astrological practices.” (Romero, 2019: para. 9). The journalist situates folk or rural Witch-like figures as locally Argentine, then proceeds to associate them with an Indigenous feminine power and concludes discussing allied struggles of the present day and the centrality of the Argentine Witch as an urban character at the forefront of civilisation change.

Such discursive operation appears not just in Romero’s conclusion. Her article opens with:

The branches of the genealogical tree of those burnt at the stake since the Middle Ages, the plot of their subtle knowledges defiant of the individualist and capitalist logic, extend up to today in ways that are as different as they are powerful. Still persecuted like the *machis* of the Mapuche First Nation or the *kolliri* of the Aymara and Quechua People, the ancestral healers keep finding in the earth the elements to calm pains and in the community the balance between people and nature. In the urban areas too there is those who proudly recognise themselves as witches, finding poetry in the observation of stars or change of seasons, and that use their intuition as alternative map to transit life. All have in common a recognition that what is known in the body not always want nor can be explained by pure reason.

(Romero, 2019: para. 1)

Later (para. 4), Romero asks: “In what ways does ancestral and magical knowledges make its way amid expulsive and violent cities, that lose their communitarian ties? How is this web of subtle knowledge, challenging individual and capitalist logic, woven together?”

This is perhaps one of the most telling examples of how the racial bio-economic formation of our current episteme is elided in the privileging of Man1 (i.e., Reason/Unreason). And how, through this operation, Argentine Witches can become *akin* to the Indigenous female healer while nonetheless maintaining the centrality of the desiring subject. Anchored in *body* and *desire* against Reason, here, the *genealogical* and *knowledge* discursive strategies are deployed in terms of kinship and sisterhood translated into nominal alliance. All the figures that stand against Reason have the same origin of dispossession,

and as its “tree’s branches” they are all “plotting their subtle knowledges” in transgression of the established order. The “subtlety” of their *epistemic* alterity is reiterated in how Indigenous figures heal with ‘natural’ elements and pursue a balance with ‘nature’. The equivalence with Witches is explicit in how they “observe the stars” and “use intuition as an alternative map.”

However, Indigenous figures seem to remain in the rural areas taking care of their communities whereas “contemporary witches” are situated in the cities. Considering the centrality attributed by the massive use of public space, particularly the occupation of the street, Romero’s (2019) division of space recentralises feminist (non-Indigenous) Witches who occupy the cities. The city is, in fact, itself recentralised as the space of struggle just at the end of the quote, and, as such, it is discursively connected to the *popular* word of power and repertoire. In the city, it is the Witch and Her categories of thought and action (including *body* and *desire*) that, at the end, emerge as that common ground able to disenfranchise Reason.

In other words, the role of Indigenous figures in these excerpts is to discursively situate the Witch as *akin* to them: the same origin of dispossession and the same status of resistant and transgressive subjects. However, it is on the streets taken by Witches that attention and investments of prefiguration fall. The Indigenous figures’ role is to characterise the Argentine Witch as Southern, make *akin* by means of discursive parallelism. However, as soon as this role is fulfilled, action and attention fall back on Argentine urban Witches.

The radical otherness of the Witch is found in a ‘before’ of (colonial) modernity, and, in so doing, tropes of a past Indigenous tradition are deployed to pinpoint the Green Tide’s rebellious feminist agency as legitimately Southern. In the Green Tide discourse, Indigeneity serves to make the Witch another autochthonous figure of pre-colonial Argentina, and, in this sense, Indigeneity serves a double function. By being made *akin* to those pre-colonial matriarchal traditions, the Witch can claim a legitimate belonging to their shared (Southern, colonised) *genealogy* of dispossession and ancient/prefigurative *knowledge*, hence becoming as radically different and disruptive as Indigeneity is imagined to be.

First, the Witch can claim, insofar as She has been analogously dispossessed and persecuted, to be legitimately articulating a grievance and standing in rebellion against oppressive powers. She, too, is a truly colonised subject. At the same time, the Witch’s Southernness functions when discursively placed in antagonism to Man1. Green Tide

feminist production recurs to tropes of Indigeneity as opposite, therefore antagonistic, to modernity as the episteme of Man1, to recentre into the Green Tide the political agency of a radical alterity. In other words, the Witch needs 'sameness' with Indigeneity to become a legitimate decolonial actor. Feminist intellectuals recur to Indigeneity as means of anchoring the Witch's Southernness and, discursively, their own claim of legitimate belonging to the territory and to a feminist agency of decolonial potential.

The Witch's *genealogy* of autochthonous sameness with Indigeneity is, however, discursively produced by mobilising a representation mediated by racial and colonial tropes of who inhabits the rural space and the urban space, who inhabited the past and on whom the present is concentrated. The allusions to an Argentine pre-capitalist 'rural' space, for example, apply in fact to the racialised, late 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial folkloric imaginary of a post-independence ruralised space that elides the settler colonial experience of Argentina, not to a pre-modern past.

Between 1810 and 1885, the new-born Republic of Argentina enacted numerous campaigns and initiatives oriented at expanding its frontiers to the southern Patagonia. The last campaign, the Conquest of the Desert (1878-1888), was portrayed by Buenos Aires intellectuals and government elites as an enterprise that would legitimately and explicitly appropriate close to 30 million hectares from Patagonian Indigenous People (Nagy, 2022). The ideology of progress tied to biological and economic racial evolutionary beliefs was deployed by Argentine elites in relation to Indigenous People to establish the Argentine nation (Zimmermann, 1992). For example, 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectuals referred to 'a desert of civilisation' and use of otherwise profitable land, inhabited by 'savage' and 'barbarian' Indigenous groups (Bartolomé 2003). Similarly, the military campaign had the explicit aim of exterminating the 'sterile Indigenous race', counterposed to the fertile, civilised, European, modernised capital and cities (ibid.).

The arguments foregrounding the 19<sup>th</sup> century Conquest of the Desert evidence how this second wave of settler colonisation articulated in evolutionary and economic terms (Man2), and not the Reason/Unreason terms of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century Conquest (Man1). In this sense, the history of Argentine colonisation exemplifies Wynter's theoretical argument of the shift from rational Man1 to bio-economic Man2. During the Spanish Conquest of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century, European monarchies justified the appropriation of land by arguing that Indigenous populations were not completely rational, and therefore needed to be governed as a different kind of human, not properly so (Wynter, 2003; Shelton, 2020). The late colonialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was undertaken in terms of racial betterment of

populations and economic ideals of progress and modernisation, which are the epistemic categories of Man2.

Through ideals of ‘race’, ‘nationhood’, and ‘progress’, then, during the Conquest of the Desert, Indigenous Peoples were violently assassinated or deported to the urban space, separating families, and selling them – especially children – as domestic workers. Around half of the Indigenous people who inhabited the occupied land were killed, and the rest reduced to assimilation and virtual disappearance through an ideal of (white and European) nationality they would never quite fit into (Nagy, 2023). The ‘desert’, savage space, became the tamed, traditional, ‘ruralised’ space dedicated to agricultural production and exportation, complementary opposite of the vibrant, urban metropolis. Nagy (2023) describes it as a process that transformed “territory” into “land” (ibid.: 47-51). Returning to Felitti’s (2021a: 556) understanding of these feminist manifestations of spirituality as “folkloric/ancestral,” it is important to emphasise how the Argentine ‘rural’ is the racialised settler colonial space where ‘folk’ characters like *La Telesita* are distant from some form of a pre-Modern, pre-colonised Indigenous way of life in the ‘territory’ and ‘ancestrality’.

In this sense, the racialised bio-economic order of knowledge that constitutes the episteme of Man2, in the Green Tide’s discourse goes unattended in favour of its previous configuration. And, as a result, its racialised knowledge is reproduced with the effect of situating the Green Tide Witch as the centre of a radical feminist politics of decoloniality. Such elision is the operation that makes possible the claim of representing a collective Southern subject in struggle through *body* and *desire*, in turn re-centring the Green Tide subject.

The deployment of folk, rural, or Indigenous tropes unveils this representative operation that omits the late colonialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its imaginary (Spivak, 1988) by conflating it with the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Conquest. Here I want to make clear that, in these excerpts, an enchanted way of being before the colonial episteme of Man, which serves as the basis for the Witch’s prefigurative re-enchantment, is an operation of staging, *darstellen*, or re-presentation. The Witch is portrayed *as* radical epistemic subalternity, and such claim to truth is what feminist discourse produces. It remains, however, a representative operation, a discursive formation where the subaltern – the folk figure, the Indigenous figure, the Witch – is discursively re-presented along a bio-economic operation of Man2 mediated by colonialism. In turn, it works as a trope for the representation of subalternity precisely because, in the episteme of Man2, subalternity is recognisable as a bio-economic category.

The deployment of racial and colonial tropes therefore informs the confusions about Indigeneity, early settler colonial rural *mestizo* communities, and the political efforts to depict an autochthonous Argentine Witch and her decolonial prefigurative potential. First, the Indigenous Peoples inhabiting the territories that became Argentina seem to be effaced into the post-genocide rural communities and their folk traditions, which then form the Southernness of the ‘local’ Witch. In other words, the Indigenous is translated into settler colonial Argentine folklore through to settler imaginaries that served to construct the historic national imaginary of a white nation or white multiculturalism (Gayles & Muñoz-Muñoz, 2022), then reinscribed into urban witches. Second, through Indigenous or folk figures, Indigeneity appears as an idealised category of a past and future (re)enchanted way of living that needs to be recovered and enacted. As contemporary Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities are indeed carrying out efforts to re-create their cosmogonies (Harding & Mendoza, 2020), the trope of a new consciousness is actualised in the Green Tide’s feminist spirituality and their encounters.

Third, it is the trope of Indigeneity that anchors the Witch in otherwise diffracted references to ‘our’ witches, ‘local’ witches, folk witches, urban and rural witches, etc. In other words, it is Indigeneity that anchors the representation of the Witch as a *Southern* subject of feminine difference against Man. In the non-Indigenous Green Tide search for a Southern *genealogy* of ancient dispossession that would lay the foundations of a prefigurative movement, the difference from a European Witch in an oppositional relationship to modernity is to be found in Indigeneity staged as altogether as non-European and non-modern. In this sense, the subalternity of the Witch as Southern stands to represent a racial and colonial difference.

### **6.1.2 *Becoming Dark***

To illustrate how the elision of settler colonialism works together to articulate tropes of Indigeneity and subalternity for the making of the Green Tide, and the Witch, a decolonial actor from the South, it is worth emphasising that the populations affected by historical colonialism are the same that, in settler societies, are considered the settlers’ racial others (Curiel Pichardo, 2009; Morgensen, 2011). I want to emphasise that feminist knowledge production recognises a difference between the Argentine Witch and the Indigenous feminine power figure, but the Witch stands as *akin* to Indigenous healers and spiritual guides in their colonial dispossession, which is actualised in a racial difference from the North.

Ortiz Maldonado (2019: para. 21) talks of a convergence of “native witchcrafts” and “witchcrafts” that “came down the ships from Europe and Africa.” Similarly, Felitti (2021a: 555-556) writes that in the green tide rallies there are “no European witches with pointy hats flying on brooms, but rather Indigenous, African Americans, mestizos and migrants.” These are all racial categories that can be traced back to the condition of racial difference dependent upon settler colonialism (Morgensen 2011). In the Witch discourse, these categories of racial and colonial otherness remit to the same discursive *genealogical* origin of modern dispossession. Indigeneity functions as a trope of racial and colonial otherness, and it is deployed to bring together historical settlers, enslaved Africans, Indigenous people, migrants, and *mestizos* into one unified discursive feminist agency of dispossession, resistance, and prefiguration.

As dispossessed identities are lined up together, the reference to race (mediated by Indigeneity) as Unreason would legitimise the Argentine (non-Indigenous) recurrence to Southernness as dispossessed difference. By articulating themselves as *genealogically* related to, therefore *akin* to, Indigenous feminine power figures, Green Tide feminists become racialised subaltern figures of the South *as* Indigenous figures are represented to be. Unsurprisingly, then, the Witch always presents an aura of exotic other. Her otherness, not to fear but to become, is based on an Unreasonable, ungovernable way of being, but the racial imaginaries of pre-modern and pre-capitalist, rural way of life centred on a communion between organisation of life and ‘spirit’ reinforce the bio-economic categories of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century episteme of Man.

In other words, the Witch is constructed on the basis of stereotyped modern (Man2) ideas of how the ultimate Other of (white) coloniality appears, feels, behaves, and conjures alternative ways of life. The Witch subject is *the* insurgent other because the attributed core of subalternity or the slot of Otherness is ‘dark’. In a way, represented as a colonised subject of the South, the Witch ‘darkens’. In this sense, my argument is that among all the subaltern qualities that are absorbed by the Witch in her proximity to Indigeneity, a pivotal one is the racialised ‘darkness’ exemplified in Indigeneity trope as a signifier of racial difference. In other words, in the search for an ‘Argentine’ Witch *akin* to Indigenous feminine power figures, the Witch is racialised as ‘dark’ as Indigenous People (or as those) who belong to the subaltern Southern ‘rural’ space appear in folk imaginaries. By operating through racial colonial tropes, the Witch recalls “[...] the reclamation of a racialised, matriarchal past [...]” (Puar, 2012: 56) but as the claim to a radical new political ontology.



To support my argument, I refer to Argentine scholar Ignacio Aguiló (2018) and his work on the cultural production of post-2001 Argentina. Aguiló argues in fact for a general ‘darkening’ of the Argentine national imaginary, otherwise tied to aspirations of white Europeaness, economic development and modernisation. Aguiló contributed to think the “blackening, Africanisation or Latin Americanisation of Argentina” exposing how by “becoming poorer, Argentina also became darker” (Semán, 2020: 1). For Argentines to have changed their self-perception and to have expressed it in cultural production, however, did not mean to question the structuring effects of race in the country. Some groups of Argentines might have become poorer, but they now narrate themselves hence see themselves *as* darker because of underlying racial assumptions tied to modernisation (Aguiló, 2018; Semán, 2020), and therefore to the bio-economic categories of Man2.

Aguiló (2018) shows how Argentine anxieties about becoming poorer were expressed in racial terms through tropes of ‘Africanisation’ or ‘Latin-Americanisation’. For Aguiló, this “symbolic darkening [...] articulated poverty with race, suggesting a correlation between underdevelopment and non-whiteness [...]” (ibid.: 3-4). It is important to note that this analysis was specifically concerned with the cultural production “identified with the dominant white middle-class culture,” for which this ‘darkening’ is to be understood as “exercises in self-reflexivity that gives an idea of how the crisis of national identity and whiteness was lived and addressed by the same social segment that had sustained these narratives in the past” (Aguiló, 2018: 23-24).

One of the types of cultural production Aguiló (2018) analysed focused on the heightened fears against Bolivian, Peruvian and Paraguayan migration in contrast to indifference to other migrants like Chileans or Chinese (Ko, 2016). Aguiló (2018: 14) writes: “a continuum was established in which Paraguay, Bolivia and Peru, countries where indigenous cultures enjoy a robust presence, were identified as the other end of the racial spectrum in relation to Argentina.” Aguiló therefore shows how the racialisation in denigrative terms of the first reiterates the operation that equates poverty with racialisation as non-white, or, more specifically, how fears focused on Indigeneity as conflation of darkness and poverty. The denigratory racial reading of immigrants through bio-economic tropes of Indigeneity is accompanied by the also bio-economic racialisation of shantytowns by the middle-class, as representation of a less civilised and less modern space that is more Latin American in contrast to a more European Buenos Aires (Aguiló, 2018).

In other words, Aguiló (2018) exposed how the middle class, which traditionally bore the structural benefits of wealth, started to rearticulate their self-perception through

racial tropes of economic wellbeing. The representation of Argentina *as* darker because poorer, operating in the middle-class and predominantly white imaginary opened to anti-neoliberal, multicultural images of nationhood (Aguiló, 2018). In turn, Aguiló's analysis unveils the role of the Argentine middle-class in the formation of national imaginaries of Argentinianess. Whereas the understanding of the country's geopolitical and economic position might have helped in constructing a middle class opposed to precarising economic reforms, it did not translate however into a conversation over the racial organisation of the country's (Aguiló, 2018). This is so to the effect that Argentines continue to question 'race' as a category that is meaningful to social relations in the country (ibid.).

In summary, there are two elements I want to highlight from the understanding of Argentina's racial history and construction of a national identity. The first is that a racial knowledge has always been present in Argentine political and economic history and language and has most often run unacknowledged through a vocabulary of 'poverty,' 'underdevelopment,' 'wealth and wellbeing,' and 'progress'. This is a language that concretises Wynter's understanding of the episteme of Man2 in bio-economic terms. The second is how, after the 2001 crisis, the traditionally white and economically stable middle class started to represent their impoverishment (and the nation's) *as* a darkening, in an operation that portrayed the precarised middle class *as* the already racialised shantytown dwellers and Indigenous populations, whether migrants or Argentine.

Something similar happens in the discursive formation of the Witch. The rural space as a racialised non-white space appears opposed to a non-racialised white urbanism, where paradoxically seem to be found feminist Witches par excellence. At the same time, the Witch 'darkens' not just by her proximity to Indigeneity, but also by relying on the *popular*/precarised Southern character of all the groups that in Argentina are considered 'darker' because poorer. This seeming contradiction highlights the unacknowledged racial/colonial histories and epistemic categories that operate within the Green Tide feminist discourse.

The Green Tide discourse might read dispossession on the axis of Reason/Unreason, before bio-economic racial categories; but is through these same categories, which inform our understanding and organisation of the world, that the Green Tide implicitly produces itself as a Southern subject, racialised as not-exactly-white, not-exactly-Western, definitely not Northern. All the colonial allusions to darkness through racial/colonial tropes of resistance and insurgency, subalternity, Southernness, precarity, *popular* and the proximity to Indigeneity, are pivotal to produce the Witch, hence Green Tide feminism, as a legitimate

(anti-colonial) Southern subaltern subject dispossessed by, and insurgent against, the episteme of Man.

My argument is that these characteristics are central in producing the Green Tide as a social movement at the forefront of civilisation change not only at the national level but, importantly, also in a global grid of (decolonial) transnational feminist struggle. The Green Tide discourse is racialised because dependant on Man2 categories of thought, and, in this sense, it is a (self-)racialising discourse. I return here to the question posed by Joseph Massad (2007; 2016), on what does the attachment to the ‘incommensurate’ do for us subjects of Modernity. In the case of the Green Tide, through deployment of categories of ‘precarity’, *popular*, Indigeneity, and Southernness, by eliding the bio-economic formation of the episteme, the feminist discourse ‘the incommensurate’ produces the Witch *as* a racialised, *dark* subject of revolt against Man.

## 6.2 The Green Tide *for* ‘the people’

The Spivakian problem of epistemic violence is not exhausted in failing to recognise the impossibility of transparent representation. Representation as proxy and representation as staging of the world risk being conflated with the effect of informing political conversations and actions. In the Green Tide, this is exemplified in the displacement of resistant and prefigurative capacity that goes from the mythical Witch *as* (racialised, precarious, Southern) Other to the socially embedded Green Tide Witch of the present *for* a list of dispossessed identities in alliance.

The issue is in how racial/colonial epistemic categories that underpin the Witch are translated into the Green Tide politics, whereby the different “branches of the genealogical tree of those burnt at the stake since the Middle Ages” (Romero, 2019: para. 1) result in a listing of marginalised identities who would seem to engage into the sororal politics of the Green Tide and make it radically plural. I am referring to the *genealogical* strategy to show how the Green Tide translates its theoretical position (‘covens, legions of bodies in the street’) into a unified politically allied collective subject. The Witch, come to occupy the trope of the racial/colonial Other of the global North through Indigeneity, becomes sorority in the form of feminist (transnational) solidarity.

### 6.2.1 Listing Difference for Self-Naming

The Witch, as articulated in the data excerpts from chapter 5, becomes a political model of relating based on Butlerian (2015) understandings of shared vulnerability and interconnectedness from the *popular* standpoint, a “plural feminism” or Coven that takes off from *desiring bodies* who recognise difference as shared oppression, hence standing in alliance to build an alternative model. I return to Nijensohn’s (2019b) text for the *Piras* exhibition on *Witches and Covens*, where when talking about feminism as a “multiplicity” and “collective practice” (ibid.: para. 5), the scholar lists several identities in struggle:

Women, lesbians, *travestis*, trans, bisexuals, non-binaries, fat ones, indigenous people, afroargentine and black women [*afroargentinas y negras*], the employed and the unemployed, workers of the popular economy, sex workers, migrants compose a list constitutively incomplete and open (one of the virtues of feminism: the capacity of reviewing and transforming itself). (Nijensohn, 2019b: para. 5)

The excerpt illustrates what I mean by a translation of the Witch *as* into a movement *for* a list of dispossessed identities engaged in sororal politics.

The “subject of resistance” is found in diversity and multiplicity arranged through a framework of political articulation (the feminist Coven). This multiplicity of identities in struggle are represented in an extensive listing. The *genealogical* kinship or sisterhood translates into sorority as mode of representation *for*, marked specifically by the grassroots and *popular* traditions of horizontal open assemblies, consensus-based document production and decision, and autonomy. *Knowledge*, on the other hand, is codified as the ability to articulate such collective practices, the ability to remain anchored to grassroots politics, to consensus-based decision making, and plural representation, or politics. In these identities in struggle, Nijensohn finds the multiplicity at the basis of a collective practice necessary for resistance and disruption to the episteme of Man.

More examples of these listings of difference can be found in many Argentine feminist speeches and documents. It is present, for example, in Felitti’s (2021a: 555) “African Americans, migrants, mestizos”; and Ortiz Maldonado’s (2019: para. 21) “Milagro Sala, Moira Millán, Higui, Pepa Gaitán, Diana Sacayán.” Listing is also a salient characteristic of the new name of the National Women’s Encounter, which has become the PluriNational Encounter of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Travestis, Bisexuals, Intersexuals and Non-Binary People to signal the participation of Indigenous People that do not fit the

category of ‘nation’, and sex, sexual and gender non-conforming persons that do not respond as ‘women’. In the Green Tide, it is the collective articulation of difference that would seem to guarantee the sororal politics of (transnational) solidarity.

Virginia Cano (2019), citing Nijensohn’s (2019s) monograph ‘The Feminist Reason’, writes:

Butler's theses on collective and plural performativity, as well as their articulations around precariousness, provide the conceptual keys to overcome a rigidly identitarian conception of the feminist movement (and its confinement to the politics of representation of the subject ‘women’), placing collective action and the project of expanding democracy that is articulated around shared vulnerability at the center of the scene. Thus, the center of the analysis rests on the work of articulation that has been carried out in the feminist movement, which can be seen in the ‘Plurinational Meetings of Women, Lesbians, Travestis, Trans and Non-Binary people’ or in the assemblies to prepare the ‘International Strike of Women, Lesbians, Travesties and Trans,’ and that [Nijensohn] auscultates in detail from the meticulous analysis of ‘the massive mobilisations of women, lesbian, bisexual, travesti, trans and non-binary people, and the production of documents agreed upon by an open and horizontal assembly in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires,’ which took place from 2015 onwards, and which marked that green tide that overflows with meanings, possibilities, powers, but also risks and challenges. (Cano, 2019: para. 6)

Cano (ibid.) concludes that these feminist “experiences, these ‘politics of the street’ and the counter-hegemonic strategies of organisation and articulation that are linked to them are the untimely irruptions that feminism brings to the present, to the democratisation of today, to the re-invention of more livable and habitable ways of life.”

On the one hand, the excerpt provides more context to my argument on how, to become a collective subject against the episteme of Man, feminism needs to be against neoliberalism from below, in other words *popular*. The quote also illustrates how this carries a sense of collective subjectivity, that of Covens becoming legion, and how this is possible through the *genealogical* and *knowledge* strategies of sororal politics. As a politics of alliance – which knowledge producers recognise can be messy and, of course, not perfect – the emphasis is on the abilities, the techniques of the green tide as a movement able to achieve diversity, pluralism, as a grassroots enactment of a radical democracy, and, in this sense, an exercise of representation *for*.

As such, in my analysis below I show how that representation *for* seems exhausted in listings of difference that are nonetheless reinscribed back into universalising claims that centre the Green Tide and a grammar of gender and sexuality, including the desiring

subject. Here, the relationship with Indigeneity, conflated with ‘race’ and expressed as a darkening of the Witch and the movement, serves to operate this subsuming under the discourse of Other of Modernity. While the scope of this project did not allow for exploration of the internal power dynamics of the movement and its claims of *popular* horizontality, autonomy, and consensus, I focus on the outputs of such articulation: collective documents and arguments in the dispute for the name change of the *Encuentro*.

The collectively redacted documents that display lists of difference and instances of struggle are organised by giving paragraph space to each group, or issue, the order agreed upon in assembly. The reason to list difference and to leave these uncut in the final document is explained during the debate over the Encounter’s name. Lists are a political decision to visibilise “existences invisibilised by an economy of language that voices women and hushes discrimination. And [to those] who propose summarising via LGBTQ+ abbreviation: Don’t cut it up anymore, leave it” (Escales, 2019: para. 6). The lists therefore make explicit how the Green Tide’s mechanism of representation *for* is heavily invested in (self)naming, as the widespread slogan of the PluriNational Encounter Campaign “We are PluriNational,” “What is Not Named, Does Not Exist” illustrates. Recognition of difference by naming is an act of representation *for* that relies on active and direct instances of participation. Self-naming (unshortened) appears then as a representative act of self-convening of the Green Tide as *popular* feminist ‘the people’.

Self-naming is foundational to the two main argumentative lines of the “We are PluriNational” Campaign, launched by the *MMDIBV*. The first one, just discussed, can be summarised as the refusal to shorten names, documents, struggles, etc. Here, the choice of what to shorten the list implies and act of historic invisibilisation (Escales, 2019). In this sense, advocates of the PluriNational Campaign argued that ‘Women’ in the Encounter’s name was invisibilising all the gender non-conforming identities participating in the annual gathering; ‘National’ was similarly invisibilising those who have always been excluded from the project of Argentine nationhood. In other words, the argument for leaving unshortened lists of identities is that abbreviation always implies the enactment of oppression, and that the refusal to economise language would imply the recognition of difference. As such, un-shortening becomes an act of power disruption.

The second argumentative line proposed by the *MMDIBV* and echoed by the Green Tide sector favourable to the name change was “we call ourselves as we have always been.” The *MMDIBV* points to the historical reality that Argentina has always been inhabited by Indigenous People, and that the Encounter has always seen their participation. The

*MMDIBV* initiative is directly aimed at challenging the Argentine ‘myth of origin’ of an inhabited land that came to be productive and modern, or that Indigenous Peoples and enslaved Africans had been seamlessly incorporated into the (white) nation (Nagy, 2022; 2023). In this sense, the call to a plurinationality and to unshortened naming from the standpoint of Indigenous Peoples of the *MMDIBV* is to reclaim their existence (in opposition to tropes of extinction) and autonomy vis-à-vis ideals of national unity and the state. Changing the name of the Encounter would therefore mean to acknowledge the historical nation-building process as based on racism, genocide, enslavement, and erasure, and to recognise the contemporary presence of a distinct group that continues to fit only partially.

In October 2019, *Ni Una Menos* publishes a document declaring themselves in support of the name change. They title it ‘IN THE FACE OF THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL PLUNDER, PLURINATIONALITY OF STRUGGLES’. The document (*Ni Una Menos*, 2019b: para. 1) begins by saying that the PluriNational encounter always meets in October, “always in repudiation to the date that founds colonialism, the Indigenous genocide, the forced mestizaje for mass violations, racism.” *Ni Una Menos*, in relation to the debate about the Encounter’s name change, makes clear that this historic instance of feminist articulation in Argentina functions as

[...] the permanent reminder of a violence that has never stopped, that makes of uteruses a fighting ground and of negation of existences that dissent to white, heterosexual, and Christian hegemonic politics of persecution, criminalisation and extermination that executes patriarchal cruelty every day. In each femicide, in each travesticide, in each extractivist dispossession the violent conquest of territories and the expropriation of collective wealth is actualised. (*Ni Una Menos*, 2019b: para. 1)

*Ni Una Menos* recognises conquest, colonialism, racism, and ongoing extractivism, including the forms of violence these operations require to continue functioning. At the same time, as it can be read in this quote and in the document’s title, feminist attention is once again redirected to the feminine body and to a general category of capitalism as colonialism coming from outside: the “global financial plunder” takes its toll on “uteruses as fighting ground.”

In this sense, colonialism, racism, extractivism and its violence, and the until-then invisibilised history and present of Indigenous People in Argentina, is again subsumed to the claims and bodies of the sexual, desiring subject. It is in this sense that the feminist knowledge production elides the late modern formation of the subject and its categories.

Colonial and racial violence can be recognised and opposed, but the epistemic rules that make them possible are reinstated through the subject position given, discursively, to the sexual self and her *body* and *desire*. A representation *for* is possible through sexual categories and self. The statement of alliance, then, serves also to position the movement as a decolonial and anti-colonial actor that, by naming difference and naming colonialism and racism, becomes radically plural and disruptive by recentring sex and sexuality.

In the document, explaining how the Encounter grew and transformed itself, *Ni Una Menos* continues:

We are not the same [*las mismas*], we are other [*somos otras*]<sup>75</sup> and as we always say, our bodies and our experiences count. We are indigenous, we are black, we are travesti, we are lesbians, we live in the cities and in the countryside, we are migrants, we are racialised, we are fat, we are in the heterogeneity and in the political practice of recognising ourselves as allies and joint forces at the margins, to denounce from there the cogs of machista violence and the institutional violence of the Patriarchal State and of the economic violences.

To call ourselves as we are, is to appropriate the power we're constructing together on top of, over, or about [*sobre*] the colonial wounds with our multiple tongues and colours, with the smells and flavours of the territories we inhabit. This 34<sup>th</sup> Encounter is historic because [...]: we already disobeyed the imposition of a national identity that confines us in colonial borders and that was constructed upon the extermination of pre-existing nations. This 34<sup>th</sup> Encounter [...] it's already PluriNational, of women, travestis, trans, bisexuals, and non-binary people. We name ourselves and, in this way, we hold each other and ally in feminist complicities.

(*Ni Una Menos*, 2019b: para. 2-3)

These examples illustrate the mechanism of representation *for* in the Green Tide feminist discourse.

The naming of difference representing different bodies and experiences of dispossession appears to centralise each of them in their different standpoints and politics. But observe how, once again, the condition that makes possible alliance in heterogeneity is a common condition of marginality that is only brought together by this Green Tide feminism from the South, an anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal (i.e., anti-Man) feminism. The same happens in Nijensohn's text (2019b) as she lists the diversity of identities in struggle that Argentine feminism is apparently able to agglutinate through consensus and pluralism. The difficult task of finding common ground is situated back in

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<sup>75</sup> The sentence plays with the pronouns' gender. It passes from saying 'we are not the same' as female-gendered, to saying 'we are *other*', where 'other' is declined as a non-binary pronoun. For example: 'She is not the same, they are other'.



feminism. In other words, the agential capacity for bringing alliance to those struggles against Man, is placed back in Green Tide politics and instances of gathering, bodies, and categories of gender and sexuality.

Colonialism, as an experience and category of power, is brought back, in the *Ni Una Menos* document, to the sexual codification of the self:

We want ourselves plurinational because we are plurinational in our peasant, indigenous, and urban [social] movements; in our feminist assemblies and in our communitarian nets. We are travestis, trans, lesbians, women, bisexuals and non-binary people because we are tired of colonisation, which also implies that category of woman, singular, modelled by mandatory heterosexuality, sacrifice and motherhood as a destiny.

(*Ni Una Menos*, 2019a: para. 4)

(Self)recognition is tightly tied to (self)naming as a practice of representation, which for the Green Tide responds to the construction of solidarity and alliance in sororal nets.

Here I am struck by the feminist use of a plural ‘us’/‘our’ that fulfils recognition into saying ‘we already know [there was colonialism], we already are [plurinational]’ in connection to addressing the colonial history of the country as a ‘we disobeyed’. In other words, Green Tide feminists reproduce the Indigenous women’s claim ‘we have always been plurinational’ as their own in a manifestation of alliance: ‘we too knew we were plurinational’. The disruptive claim of the Indigenous movement, which, as I discuss in the next section, carries its own demands to the state, and its own categories of thought and action, is reincorporated within the feminist ‘us’. The latter is in turn deployed to redirect feminist attention once again to the sexualised body, its demands, its disruption, and its actors. Eventually, that ‘us’ returns to feminist politics of the Green Tide as *the* privileged medium that allowed such alliance, as *the* category of thought and action that allows one to think and practice politics because of heterogeneity and not despite it. In the quote, the ‘us’ as a category representing *for* a list of difference in alliance reiterates the feminist movement as the agent of alliance, as the movement that provides the categories of thought able to coordinate all identities in a radically plural struggle.

Overall, this mechanism of representation *for* makes itself present in extensive listings of difference, as equable distribution and portrayal of the subaltern ‘the people’, and that it is reinscribed in a Green Tide feminist ‘us’. Importantly, the Green Tide’s speaking *for* functions in conjunction with its speaking *as*. In this sense, the feminism of the Green Tide and their instances of gathering are portrayed as mediums to translate in practice what that feminist ‘us’ means, at the same time that ‘us’ is already portraying non-Indigenous feminists as *akin* to Indigenous figures. In this structure of (self)representation,

to name oneself as ‘us’, with this charge of alliance and revolution from the margins, is to call oneself feminist. And vice versa: to be part of the Green Tide means to immediately appeal at that agglomerating and unruly ability of Covens to conjure up new worlds and resist to the old through tropes of *sameness* with Indigeneity and a racialised ‘darkness’.

### **6.2.2 The Feminist Plural ‘Us’**

The PluriNational Campaign, the debate that followed, and its articulation in 2022 were, without a doubt, important moments in discussing the history of Argentina as one based on colonial land appropriation, genocide, displacement, slavery and racism. In a way, at least among the feminists following and attending the debate, it served to break Argentina’s ‘historiographic silence’ (Delrio, 2010), and, it could be argued, to diversify representation within the Encounter. The 2022 *Encuentro*, for example, offered significantly different thematic workshops when compared to previous years. This was at least in part a response to the *MMDIBV* demand to not ‘folklorise’ Indigenous women by relegating them to their historic ‘Women of the First Nations’ workshop. If in the 2015 Encounter issues of colonialism, racism, plurinationality, Indigenous and/or Black identities appeared only in one workshop of a total of 65 (30 ENM, 2015). Throughout the PluriNational Campaign, these grew to three-five workshops of 87 in 2019 (34 ENM, 2019), and reached twelve-fourteen of 105 in 2022 (35 PluriNational Encounter, 2022). Overall, in those seven years, workshops on these themes increased tenfold.

At the same time, in the excerpts I analyse, it seems that the moment of alliance with the *MMDIBV* in relation to the PluriNational Campaign, against one section of the Encounter’s organisational committee, serves to fulfil the Green Tide desire for a Southern, anti-colonial difference. I am referring to how, for example, the use of the past/present tense (‘we already are’/‘we already disobeyed’), gives the impression that decolonisation of the movement, its demands and claims, is resolved by supporting *MMDIBV*’s PluriNational Campaign, by repudiating the organisational committee faction that was against it and by naming the Green Tide explicitly as an anti-racist and anti-colonial movement. What I mean here is that the possibility to push forward a national and/or feminist internal debate over the ‘colonial wound’ to transform the movement (as their feminist theory elaborates) seems to exhaust itself in its enunciation: ‘we named it, we did it’; anti-colonial politics return to the focus on the predatory financial politics of the Global North and its making a battleground of the uterus.

Here I am cautious in formulating this kind of analysis, at the very least because the dispute around the Encounter's name is recent, beginning to be a matter of feminist discussion in 2018 and not yet completely resolved to early 2024. Nonetheless, the knowledge producers whose work I analysed and other important feminist outlets or activists between 2018 and 2021 wrote about the PluriNational debate in the terms exemplified by *Ni Una Menos*'s document, the same period when other scholars like Cano, Gago, Nijensohn, Ortiz Maldonado and Felitti articulated the Green Tide around the Witch as a Southern, subaltern feminism able to ally in difference.

These confluences, again, are not solely an operation of scholars interested in witches and feminism, but the discourse of a social movement; as an assemblage articulated across the discursive plane, these are the convivial relations that make the Witch possible as an epistemic problem and a feminist solution. To reiterate, my argument is not about ways to better represent the Indigenous claim, or the demands of racially marginalised subjects and populations in Argentina. My concern is not on 'how to represent X better' (Puar, 2017b). My point is on how the conditions that inform the modern episteme are reproduced in and through convivial relations (Puar, 2017a); in this case relations of similarity, sympathy, and alliance. I am pointing to how it is these conditions that make certain problems and solutions possible to think in the first place. In this sense, although the act of discussing the history of Argentina, re-naming the Encounter, and changing its internal representation can be understood as a decolonial act, the narrative that repositions the Green Tide as a representative of 'the people' through the lens of widespread precarity and legal abortion is an operation of representation *for* those historically marginalised by colonisation. The Green Tide emerges as *the* voice for those who endure the impacts of colonial gender norms and imperialist economic systems, and, as a plural subject *as/for*, is represented *as* and *for* those 'dark' subjects and populations of the South in resistance against racism and colonisation.

Between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2022, I attended the first in-person Encounter after the pandemic break. It took place in the city of San Lu s after the organisational committee split into the 35<sup>th</sup> PluriNational Encounter and the 35<sup>th</sup> National Encounter. I share this not as ethnographic data, but as an episode I witnessed that conveys how the racialised discourse of 'darkening' is spread across different fields of enunciation. At the workshop "Recovery of Indigenous Identities", a woman who self-identified as "white" and "totally descendant from European migrants" took the stand to say that, for her, she was Indigenous. Her indigeneity resided, she argued, in the fact that she was born in

Argentina, and that she was politically engaged in against the economic violence suffered by the region. What prompted this woman of settler descent to discuss her political engagement, centred around precarisation, as an Indigenous identity, at a workshop centred around the recovery of historical Indigenous identity attended, mostly, by brown and black faces? That, I argue, is what the Green Tide ‘us’ produces when eliding the racial constitution of the episteme.

Consider the collective Manifesto for 2020’s International Feminist Strike on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, titled ‘The debt is with us, not with the IMF nor the churches’ and accompanied by the main claim of legalisation of abortion (IV International Feminist Strike, 2020). Early in the document (ibid.: para. 4) they enunciate a long list of dissidence: Trans and cis women, *travesti*, lesbians, bisexuals, non-binary people, fat people, intersex people, retirees, old ones, whores, the peasants, people with disability, neurodivergence and functional diversity, the deaf, Indigenous women, Natives, Afro Argentines, Blacks and Afro descendants.

The debt is with us [*nosotras y nosotres*], us [*las y les*] who strike, because we don’t accept that living produces debt nor we accept to live to pay debts. [...] without financial disobedience there is no sovereignty! [...] It is us who suffer the most for the capitalist looting at the cost of our bodies and territories. [...]  
(IV International Feminist Strike, 2020: para. 10-12)

This movement has an ancestral history, and in our memory and struggles all the [female] rebels [*las rebeldes*] that fought before us are alive. This is why we want to remember another type of debt: the debt with indigenous, native, afroargentine, black, *travesti* and trans women. Yesterday’s genocide and slavery towards the afro and the indigenous community continues in the racist violence that persists today. The struggles for the free determination of our territories are historical and anti-colonial: the turbulent Indian [sic] women commanded the great rebellions against the colony [...]  
(IV International Feminist Strike, 2020: para. 14-15)

These paragraphs merge abortion, feminicide, and debt with extractivism to say that the debt is not with the IMF but with the autonomy of their ('our') bodies.

Through the referent and notions that refer to the word of power *popular*, including ‘debt’ and ‘precarity’, the document recovers the *genealogical* discourse to make the 8<sup>th</sup> of March feminist strike explicitly and historically anti-colonial, a quality now inscribed in their own *genealogy* together with ‘the turbulent [female] Indians’ as their ancestresses.

The demands of populations historically affected by colonialism and slavery, their recognition and struggle, is reframed under the established Green Tide rhetoric: debt, precarisation, the IMF and the legalisation of abortion. My point here is that while there is a self-celebratory moment of decolonisation as ‘we did it by naming ourselves’, the rhetoric that recentralises the Green Tide as *popular* ‘the people’ via the universalisation of precarisation and the legalisation of abortion reiterates itself also as a representation *for* the peoples historically marginalised by colonisation. The Green Tide is produced as the spokesperson *for* the darker ones who suffer from colonial gender norms and imperialist economic relations. This is achieved by how the Green Tide self-naming as “PluriNational” effectively uses the proximity to Indigeneity, and, in this case, the active direct participation of female representatives of the 36 Indigenous Nations of Argentina, to reinscribe them in their ‘us’: It articulates representation *for* through the representation of abortion and anti-capitalism *as* decolonisation.

The 2020 8<sup>th</sup> of March manifesto (IV International Feminist Strike, 2020: para. 63) concludes by saying that all these debts require “budget and public policies under control of feminist organisations” as well as “more commitment, more organisation, more strength in the streets.” They continue:

We shout once again and as many as necessary that the debt is with us, neither with the IMF nor with the churches. We arrived at this slogan after a long assembly process, in unity, in the midst of a country devastated by policies of hunger and death, in the midst of a fascist-neoliberal and IMF offensive at the global level. We vindicate the rebellion of the Latin American peoples against the repressive, military and ecclesiastical advance, against the IMF's austerity measures and the extractivist, plundering and colonial policies of the fascist governments. We embrace the Chilean, Bolivian and Colombian people who today live in a critical situation with the armed forces torturing, persecuting and killing. We tell you from these lands that we are your comrades, your struggle is our struggle!

(IV International Feminist Strike, 2020: para. 64)

The political force of change is again with feminism and the Green Tide, and their strength is in their articulation of gender and economic violence as a colonial violence against bodies and territories.

The supranational sphere is their fighting ground, and the movement’s ability to resonate, to be plurally different is similarly extended to the transnational scale, to Latin America. The Green Tide conflates political representation with epistemic representation via a sororal politics that lists the alliance of marginalised identities. In this sense, it results

that in their declared solidarity with Indigenous women and the *Encounter*'s change of name, the 'us' of the Green Tide is definitively 'darker'.

The question that therefore remains unaddressed is not so much who that feminist 'us' is, or how it is represented, but rather who is the Subject that keeps enunciating it. My analysis of how the Green Tide has incorporated the demand to plurinationality and historical recognition into their discourse further highlights how racial/colonial categories are the unaddressed conditions of possibility for the Green Tide's theory of power and resistance. The way plurinationality was discussed and argued for as an Argentine reality – 'we already knew, we already were, we already resisted, hence we proudly name ourselves' – was so seamlessly incorporated into Green Tide knowledge production through the same unacknowledged racialised episteme that produces it as a collective 'us', and that produced the Witch as the racial/colonial kin to Indigenous feminine power figures.

The claim of Indigenous, Black, migrant, brown populations acquire their place in the mosaic of struggles that make the mechanisms of representation *for* of the Green Tide: collective documents and expressions of solidarity across social media. An embodied representation of a racialised (Southern, precarised) 'the people' finds its satisfaction in an exclamation of sexual politics entangled with a critique of global capitalist relations. The relationship with Indigeneity, which is the racialised bio-economic condition that makes possible the Witch as a category of thought and action from the South, serves to deposit the subjective agency of civilisation change in the Green Tide as Feminism from the South. A Southern precarised feminine difference is universalised in a North-South relationship, while effacing the racial/colonial difference of Indigeneity at the national scale.

In other words, the racial character of the episteme is actualised in becoming akin to Indigeneity *as* against the episteme Man, and *for* those dispossessed by the episteme of Man. The racialised quality of the episteme is effaced in the representation *as/for*. What I want to highlight is how, in the case of the Green Tide, the search for a transparent representation of subalternity is identified in a racialised subject of feminism, constituted discursively in a 'darker' Witch. Under the idea that concrete experiences of subalternity can be disclosed through that of the intellectual – the representational realism that does not account for epistemic violence – otherness/subalternity is made transparent by appointing a 'native informant' (Spivak, 1999). If the subaltern is the name of who and what is excluded by the episteme, the native informant is the figure who supposedly translates

alterity from the outside of the episteme, and therefore gives the illusion of the transparency of representation *as* and *for* (ibid.).

The native informant, in other words, is the illusion that the subaltern is speaking (which it can only do through the terms of the episteme, thereby reinscribing its otherness in that existing system of representation). The ‘native informant’ is therefore the (non)presence that is allocated as the placeholder of that mythical Other and that is only legible in Westernised circuits of knowledge by being represented through tropes of Otherness. It is with ‘native informants’ that whatever radical possibility of something different to Man is reinscribed in the circuits of the modern episteme of Man.

A concrete example of such operation can be found in Povinelli’s (2002) account of the inner workings of Australian multiculturalism. Here, instead of demanding that colonised subjects identify with the colonisers, to receive the benefits of multiculturalism, they need to meet impossible standards of traditional ‘authenticity’ (Povinelli, 2002: 5-7). As a result, Povinelli found how Indigenous people must manage existence within many affective difficulties and with poor access to resources. Yet, amidst the political recognition of Indigenous people and their culture, Indigeneity began to function as a signifier to be experienced. Povinelli (2002: 24) reports that in 1996, white Australians criticised the disruption of sacred sites by Olympics development, and the Head of Australia’s Children Television Foundation accused the Olympics of being a new form of cultural colonialism. For Povinelli, this meant to signify a national movement as ‘counter-colonial’ at the expense of erasing existing Indigenous groups in action against ongoing state colonialism.

Povinelli’s account is useful to further think through my Spivakian reading of the Green Tide. The Witch represents Indigeneity by providing a portrait of it, and by acting as a proxy speaking for it. In this latter sense, the Witch acts as a ‘native informant’ about the Indigenous outside to the episteme of Man. While the performance of “authentic difference” brings Australian Aboriginal people to experience hardship, in the Green Tide this performance is necessary for the movement’s (self)representative claims and transnational positioning. What I mean, here, is that the Indigenous tropes upon which the Witch is constructed function as a Spivakian ‘native informant’ for feminism.

Indigeneity appears as a trope for a different civilisation, and these standards of what it means and looks like to be Indigenous serves to ‘inform’ the Witch’s Southernness. Similarly, it ‘informs’ the Green Tide’s conflation of contemporary Indigenous struggles, organisations, and representatives, in a feminist ‘us’. As such rendition happens, the Green Tide becomes legible, vis-à-vis the Global North, as transnational movement of those

Southern, as a 'native informant' in its own right on the transnational scale. The subsuming of racial difference into sexual politics, then permits the Green Tide to be legible in global North circuits as the subaltern Subject of the South speaking for itself: the Green Tide is speaking *for* those native informants that make the Witch a collective category of thought and action.

In constant position against Man, the Global North, or Modernity, the Green Tide risks looking more in tune with Australians protesting the Olympics than with their Indigenous counterparts. The critical issue with the Green Tide case is that the movement navigates legibility explicitly, although deploying racial categories of Man<sup>2</sup> that are unacknowledged and left undisrupted. In their political attention to institutional recognition and transnational solidarity as a position against Man or Modernity, the movement seeks resonance and recognition – an epistemic legibility that operates easily within a modern system of representation organised through the episteme of Man. Because this global grid is sensitive to reading subalternity as essentially and stereotypically marginalised (Spivak, 1988), Otherness risks being deployed in efforts to position oneself – to be recognised and to resonate – as more progressive, more radical, with more potential to reach (collective) freedom. Yet, as Povinelli (2006) demonstrates in her accounts, these are ways of reproducing modes of being that respond to a liberal politics of recognition that by neutralising alterity continues to produce marks of difference that serve to divide persons and people, placing them on differential trajectories of life and death.

### **6.3 The Colonial Legacy of Differential Trajectories of Life and Death**

Both Spivak and Povinelli discuss the trajectories of being outside the system of representation or being marginalised within it. Spivak (1988) has argued that accepting the narrative of representational realism and the subaltern's transparency ignores the uneven distribution of resources that underpin the system. Conflating representation *as/for* effaces the international division of labour that socially reproduces class divisions and access to capital, hence to representation – what Spivak (1988: 67) called the re-establishment of the "legalised subject of socialised capital." This subject is often conflated with the subaltern, their 'concrete experience' disclosed through that of the intellectual with the result of further pushing away the possibility of some type of recognition of irreducibility and the political and epistemic role of representation.



Claims to be representing *as/for* without such recognition, particularly when enunciated by intellectuals (as in Spivak's argument), consolidates differential access to resources (and to representation) by smoothing them away. Povinelli (2006) wrote about this as the differential trajectories of life and death, wellbeing and illness, wealth and poverty, wherein different experiences of survival are inseparable from a system of representation that makes certain modes of life more perceptible to (and capturable by) state and capital formations.

Both Povinelli and Spivak therefore elaborate how systems of recognition, as the condition according to which Otherness is identifiable, visible, and representable are directly implicated colonial histories and presents that relate to life and death as trajectories of in/possibility. Our episteme functions as a mechanism of legibility that, by determining if one enters the grid and which position one occupies in it, it also determines access to education, health, labour etc. How theories and political claims are articulated therefore has a direct relationship to enduring histories of who lives and who dies, who lives better and who does not, who thrives and who just survives.

In the Argentine context, I argued for how the condition of possibility of the Green Tide discourse of anti-Man is the deployment of bio-economic epistemic categories. Analysing this deployment through Spivak's and Povinelli's framework, I am pointing at how through the Green Tide discourse of feminist spirituality from the South, the bio-economic axis of the episteme of Man<sup>2</sup> is not addressed and therefore continues to operate in how trajectories of life and death are socially and politically articulated. Similarly, when different experiences of struggle are elaborated under the North-South lens, internal differences in access to survival and flourishing are not visible. As Green Tide knowledge producers agglutinate racial and colonial difference in their representational *as/for* searching for a signifier all can identify with, they risk leaving unaddressed the racial/colonial structures of their own national constitution, organisation of labour, and access to wellbeing, and effectively contributes to dissolving them into universalised narratives and concepts.

In this sense, the Green Tide's allocation of subalternity works as a form of feminist attention that distributes hope, prefiguration, suffering, as well as the categories of thought and action that frame 'hope', 'suffering', 'debt', 'us', 'bodies', etc., and the ability to gather thousands in the street. This distribution, which functions also through racial categories *as* and *for*, showed a recentring of their own categories of thought and action as those more

able than others to change the world or become an umbrella for different identities in struggle.

Giving preference to the precarity perspective that pushes against a global colonial power always placed in the supra-national sphere, the Green Tide discourse contributes to ignoring the issue of Argentina's own racial and colonial social structure, which has long been affecting some populations more than others, and that today are the racialised people living in peasant or shantytown communities (Nagy, 2022; Briones, 2008). While the Green Tide projects itself towards the transnational sphere as a radical Southern theory-movement of the subaltern and the marginalised, some Argentine populations are once more disproportionately policed as 'internal enemies' that threaten the national project (Briones & Lepe-Carrión, 2024). The process of identifying certain groups as a threat to the nation has a long colonial history, one that can be traced back to the genocidal Conquest of the Desert aimed at eliminating Indigenous populations. These were framed, by the capital liberal elites, as the reason impeding the modern and progressive consolidation of the Argentine nation-state (Zimmerman, 1992).

### **6.3.1 Internal Terrorists**

The point of reiterating the ongoing legacies of colonialism in the construction of internal enemies is to highlight the racial, bio-economic logic behind these operations. The racial stress in the 1990s and mid-2000s on Bolivian, Peruvian, and Paraguayan immigrants that Aguiló (2018) reports was promoted by state actors. The portrayal of the poorest in racial terms, and vice versa, the portrayal of those 'dark' in association with the lowest place in social hierarchies, was used to instil fears about Argentina's cohesiveness. A similar articulation of the internal enemy was found against shantytown dwellers, where specifically the young male *villero* was represented and policed as national public threat (Aguiló, 2018).

More recently, the racialised production of 'internal enemies' has been actualised by Argentine and Chilean governments in Indigenous communities resisting land grabbing or displacement in favour of extractivist enterprises. Claudia Briones and Patricio Lepe-Carrión (2024) illustrate how threats to the nation-state are framed in racialised developmental terms, and how the Mapuche community has been time and time again presented as a 'public threat' due to their resistance against both countries' neo-developmental extractivist model. Resonating with Aguiló's (2018) exposure of denigratory racialisation as a means to defend the (white) nation-state, these authors show

how the production of national threats was possible by increased policing of generic crimes (such as drug and weapon trafficking) as ‘terrorism’. Killings whose responsibility remains unclear, disappearances, and judicial impunity mark the livelihoods of the Indigenous groups resisting the state’s productive model (Briones & Lepe-Carrión, 2024).

These are experiences of near-death that at times emerge only as traces. I am working here with the Derridean (1976) suggestion of ‘trace’, which informs on how a sign is usually defined by what it is not. Trace is therefore a mark of the silent presences that not there, what that sign is not, which also makes it legible what that ‘it’ is. Spivak’s (1988) ‘subaltern’ is precisely a political figuration of this trace. The ‘native informant’ is the one who represents (*as/for*) the trace for the episteme. The transnational interest in the Green Tide sheds light on how differential investments of hope, attention, and, in this case, *popular* sovereignty continue to respond to colonial trajectories of life and death, despite the discourse of allyship or kinship on the basis of the supposedly shared condition of dispossession.

As my research in chapter 5 reveals, the knowledge production of the Green Tide depends upon a tight network of researcher, activists and cultural producers that often occupy simultaneous sites of knowledge production, effectively producing and circulating Green Tide feminist discourse as a discourse of the movement and for the movement. Between 2015 and 2020, the attention of the Green Tide was placed into the construction of categories of thought and action that would amplify its ability to gather thousands in the street, including at the transnational level. Along these lines, Green Tide theories and political articulation have increasingly entered the Global North’s discursive space as radical theoretical and political proposals.

I believe some of the work of Verónica Gago’s to be quite exemplificatory in this sense. Feminist demonstration on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March (8M), for example, became the ‘Feminist Strike’, a category of thought and action that was conceptualised as a form of situated knowledge from the South that would call into question “hegemonic forms of knowing and assumptions about the subject of that knowing, through embodied and embedded processes of investigation and knowledge creation that produce new subjects, new concepts, and new internationalist and plurinational alliances” (Gago & mason-Deese, 2019: 202). The next year, Gago’s (2020) ‘Feminist International: How to Change Everything’ was published with the largest English-based radical publishing house *Verso*. The book was reviewed by Silvia Federici and Judith Butler, among others; it proposes Gago’s look at how “[...] the women’s strike, as both a concept and collective experience, may be transforming the

boundaries of politics as we know it.” Gago’s involvement with the Green Tide as a “radical movement” would allow her to ask, “what another theory of power might look like, one premised on our desire to change everything.” (www.versobooks.com).

It would almost seem that the Green Tide positions itself as the Latin American, Southern feminist (subaltern) ‘native’ informant vis-à-vis Global North’s critical theory and politics. Tropes of Indigeneity inform the Witch, which in turn appears to organise the Green Tide’s theory. This multi-scalar translation, rather than resisting normative grammars that underpin representational economies (Povinelli, 2006), are articulated alongside it. The Green Tide is altogether legible and appears to transparently articulate the voice of the Subaltern in its most successfully allied and disruptive articulation.

My concern here is precisely the allure of transparency, where alternative possibilities become intelligible as possible despite being claimed from an alleged radical difference from Man – the enchanted or untranslatable universe of the Witch. In this sense, investments in the social world, including categories of thought and action of the Green Tide contributed to launching them into the transnational sphere as radical feminism from the South, and the Witch as a radical politics of feminist decoloniality. What I am signalling here is how the movements and its intellectuals are projected in the international sphere in a discursive field that is *already prepared* to read them as referents for radical social change. The grids of intelligibility that organise the episteme and, in this case, the global liberal economy of representation, function as the constitutive possibilities for reading the Green Tide discourse as a radical proposal.

The Green Tide responds to the conservative shift in Argentina as a precarising political economy that affected all Argentines. At the same time, the idea of a collective ‘us’ in alliance with the *MMDIBV* – based on notions of sameness and unity – risks producing an erasure of the ongoing trajectories of death of colonial Argentina. These are the convivial relations (Puar, 2017a) I focus on. Indigenous People and shantytown communities have been subjected, since Macri’s neoliberal government in 2015-2019, to extreme forms of racial profiling, policing, and criminalisation as the country’s new internal terrorists (Briones, 2023). On the one hand, under the narrative of fighting crime, underserved communities are targeted by the police. Here people are usually stopped for controls, threatened with violence, and often physically and verbally insulted by police on the basis of what Argentines call *bearing face* (Bonvillani, 2020). This expression alludes to how certain ‘faces’ more than others are perceived as dangerous. These are the ‘darker’

faces called *negro villeros* (the ‘dark shantytown dwellers’ that inhabit the slums) (Adamovsky, 2012, 2016; Aguiló, 2018).

Scholars have observed how the young male slum dweller has, since the late 1990s, become constructed as a threat to the nation’s safety in terms where their economic impoverishment is tied to racial imaginaries of savageness and the grotesque (Aguiló, 2018; Bonvillani, 2019). It is interesting how the youth participating of the Green Tide, the “glitter generation” (Elizade, 2018) able to take the street to dance at the sound of *cumbia villera*, has a counterpart in the overrepresentation of young, poor, dark males profiled by the police and incarcerated (Heredia and Elorriaga, 2015; Bonvillani, 2020). The policing of these communities, moreover, has often tragic consequences with “trigger-happy” police killings (Bonvillani, 2020).

Interestingly, these impoverished urban populations account for around a half of the descendants of the displaced Indigenous People of the conquest and national constitution periods (Weiss et al., 2013). The racial politics of spatial segregation brought these racial others of colonial Argentina to concentrate in poor urban or semi-urban neighbourhoods (Briones, 2015). Therefore, while nowadays the urban descendants of those communities are institutionally criminalised (Bonvillani, 2019; 2020), their rural counterparts continue to be forced out of their territories in order to make space to new extractivist projects (particularly lithium mining and soy agrobusiness) (Briones & Lepe-Carrión; 2024).

In the case of the latter, I want to turn to the Patagonian Mapuche community and their efforts to recover land. In 1994, the Argentine constitution recognised the ethnic and cultural pre-existence of Indigenous Peoples, guaranteeing their participation in the management of natural resources (Briones et al., 2007). In Patagonia, the lack of compliance from private enterprises and political actors brought the Mapuche to occupy and reclaim these lands, which caused harassment by the military and often their imprisonment (Aranda, 2015).

Facing Mapuche resistance, private and public actors, including the country’s conservative media cluster, collectively asked for a state-level policy in repression of Indigenous communities for the protection of private property (Di Risio et al., 2012). In 2009, the Argentine state, under progressive President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, faced the need to access new oil reserves in the country, namely the oilfield of *Vaca Muerta*

in Mapuche territory through hydrofracking (Pereira Cardoso, 2021).<sup>76</sup> The Argentine national oil company YPF was able to sell oil to Chevron and installed machinery close to the Mapuche community. They, who had not been consulted, occupied the site (Aranda, 2015).

From the media and local governors, the protest was labelled as “environmental terrorism” (Bertinat et al., 2014), building on how previous incidents had brought on Mapuche communities the label of local *FARC* [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] or ETA [*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* or the Basque nationalist armed force organisation] (Pereira Cardoso, 2021). As Pereira Cardoso reports: “in December 2017, the National Ministry of Security (by then under Macri’s government) and the provincial government of Río Negro, Neuquén and Chubut, publicised a report over a supposed ‘violent ethnonationalist movement’ called ‘Mapuche Ancestral Resistance’ [...] ‘RAM’” (ibid.:158). For the government, the groups sought to promote a violent insurrection against the Argentine state and private property. The state report was supposedly confirmed by pamphlets spread in Patagonia and in disruptive actions reported by landowners, but Mapuche communities rejected the accusations (Pereira Cardoso, 2021).

Overall, the ‘RAM’ was part of a campaign of criminalisation and defamation of Mapuche communities, which translated into arbitrary policing and detention, repression, and torture (including of children) (Pereira Cardoso, 2021). The making of Mapuche communities as ‘terrorists’ subversive to national order served the national extractivist model (ibid.) in a parallel with the Conquest campaigns. Indigenous communities were constructed as a threat, external then (Nagy, 2022) and internal now (Pereira Cardoso, 2022).

Moreover, the reference to invented internal enemies and accusations of terrorism cannot be thought in Argentina without reference to the 1976-1983 civic-military dictatorship. Recall that the Green Tide constructed their *genealogy* of oppression and resistance by appealing directly to Argentina’s internationally recognised human rights highlight: the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in their fight against a military dictatorship that forcibly disappeared people after constructing them as internal terrorists. Yet if genealogies are to be constructed with the dictatorship, what place is there for the construction of

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<sup>76</sup> Hydrofracking is a technique involving the fracturing of bedrock by pressurised liquid. It involves injecting water mixed with thickening agents into a borehole so to create cracks in the rock through which natural gas and oil can flow. Ecologically, it is a technique with worse ecological consequences than previously utilised methods of oil extraction (Riffo, 2018).

racialised populations as new internal terrorists to favour extractive enterprises, enforced through structural policing?<sup>77</sup>

These are the sites and the communities constructed as today's internal enemies, threats to the nation and its inhabitants' prosperity, hence subjected to heavy policing. And yet these same landscapes rarely fit the imaginary and discursive articulation of feminist/political spirituality and the Witch. The *popular* imaginary tied to racialisation is constructed in the Green Tide by being associated to impoverished and precarious communities, but, as Aguiló (2018) showed, cultural productions of 'darkening' are produced by predominantly white/settler middle-class actors. The Unreasonable savageness/freedom of the Witch and Her Coven, her *body* and *desire*, is not the same as the contemporary counterparts of the 'savage', 'uncivilised', 'dangerous' spaces of the post-colonial imaginary of the Conquest of the Desert: the rural Indigenous community or the slum.

The Green Tide 'darkens' itself through stereotyped images of what it means to be a racialised population affected by colonialism, particularly in relation to the political emancipatory weight that such 'dark' Southernness carries in the space of the Global (North's) imaginary. In this sense, Puar (2012: 52) reminds us that "that Other is always a Woman of Color [...], who must invariably be shown to be resistant, subversive, or articulating a grievance." The political landscape, throughout *Cambiamos'* government between 2015 and 2019, did see a generalised production of suffering. Nonetheless, what I want to emphasise here is how certain suffering, characterised through the Green Tide categories of precarity, debt to the IMF, and legalisation of abortion, reinscribed the consequences of suffering and possibilities for an otherwise in those Green Tide groups and claims.

In other words, as Man2 is a bio-economically organised episteme that has racialised consequences for the organisation of the world (Wynter, 2003), it translates into where suffering, hope, investment, and attention are placed (Povinelli, 2006). Not only in the sense of which neighbourhoods are best served in terms of education, healthcare, or access to income (Wynter, 2003), but also in the sense of which imaginaries and social

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<sup>77</sup> When I wrote this passage, in late June 2023, severe conflicts erupted in the northern Argentine province of Jujuy. Clashes developed in opposition to a provincial Constitutional reform, which limits rights to protest and seeks to privatise ancestral Indigenous land and the development of their natural resources, particularly lithium. *Página12* reports that immediately after passing the law, a protest of Indigenous communities and teachers was harshly repressed. Protests have been going on for days with numerous calls from national and international human rights organisms denouncing the violent repression and active persecution and detention of activists and organisations' leaders with dictatorship-era techniques.

worlds (Povinelli, 2006) we fall back into during the search for alternatives. It is a reproduction of which worlds ought to be sacrificed for others to survive that also inscribes suffering in certain populations more than others. This differential allocation of suffering and survival, in the episteme, is framed as a bio-economic ‘necessity’.

When Cano (2019) says, “it is *us* who suffer the most” (italics mine), they position the Green Tide and their knowledge production against the conservative, neoliberal, extractive right-wing turn. Yet, the ‘us’ that would seem to put in practice an alliance with the *MMDIBV*, an ‘us’ that discursively needs to invoke sameness or unity, is a production of erasure. It is an allegation of unity against Man, Capitalism, Modernity, etc., but a collated ‘us’ that escapes its internal histories of differential survival and production of the nation. It is a collated ‘us’ that in calling out austerity agreements with the IMF through a grammar of gender and sexuality, recentres the suffering of a specific group of people as the representation *as/for* Indigenous, Decolonial, ‘Southern’, etc., people in struggle.

### **6.3.2 The Green Tide Distribution of Attention**

The blank space left by ‘us’ also effectively helps to harness and deploy otherness. It functions as a cumulative listing to access the liberal economy of representation and succeeds in entering this global grid with a discourse legible as radically critical. One account in particular appears as a trace (Derrida, 1976) of those who exist outside or at the margins of the system of representation. In the Translator’s Preface to *Of Grammatology* (ibid.), Spivak speaks of traces in relation to translation as “the mark of an absence of a presence, an always already present, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience” (1976: xvii). I understand trace as twofold. First, in relation to Spivak’s (1988) work on representation, as how the constitutive outside of an episteme is only ever present within the episteme in its traces. Second, in relation to Povinelli (2006) and Wynter (2003), as how any claim to truth implies trajectories of life, which will be upheld, and trajectories of death or zones of sacrifice relegated to ‘absent presences’: the trace of what has to die for others to live, and for the episteme as social organisation of knowing the world to go on.

In a 2021 interview with national newspaper *Página12* (Monfort, 2021), the leader of the *MMDIBV*, Mapuche *weichafe* Moira Millán discusses the *MMDIBV*’s purpose and recent initiatives. The article concludes with Millán inviting readers to attend the movements mobilisation on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, in front of the National Congress. The demonstration was organised as the final encounter of a 1900 kilometre walk against



Terracide, which I discussed in the Introduction as the *MMDIBV* category for “the synthesis of all the ways the capitalist and patriarchal system constructed to murder life. [...] [It] contains feminicide, *travesticide*, transfeminicide, and ecocide and epistemicide [...]. *Terricidio* is not the same as ecocide, because ecocide allows fragmentation [...] what *terricidio* does is assembling.” (Monfort, 2021: para. 8). A different referent than the Green Tide’s, then to describe the modern life/death division of the episteme of Man and, possibly, a category of alliance and pluralism.

By May 2021, the legalisation of pregnancy interruption in December 2020 had been achieved, and the law had come into effect in late January 2021. It is telling that, concomitantly, Green Tide Instagram posting reduces drastically. In the lowered social media activity that remains after the legalisation of abortion, *La Campaña* continues publishing images of the abortion debate and the following celebration until the end of January 2021, together with expressions of support to the pro-choice parliamentary debate in Mexico and to feminist protests in Poland that were taking place around the same time. Thereafter there are two or three posts in the following months of February, April, and May, calling to protest on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February (one of the Green Tide action days) celebrating pro-choice debates in Ecuador, and offering discussions over the new protocols for pregnancy interruption.

There is no mention, in *La Campaña*’s posting at the time, of the *MMDIBV* 2021 call to demonstrate in front of Congress. Similarly, *Ni Una Menos* does not mention once the Indigenous demonstration or invite their base to mobilise in support. In May 2021, *Ni Una Menos* is preparing for (and inviting to) the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June annual protest, whereas *La Campaña* is celebrating the 28<sup>th</sup> of May as Global Day of Action for Women’s Health and 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organisation

(figure 12). These invitations take place as the debate around plurinationality in the Encounter continues to divide feminists, and as *Ni Una Menos* enunciated themselves in the plural ‘us’, ‘our’.



Figure 12. *La Campaña*’s Instagram banner for the Global Day of Action for Women’s Health on 28/05/2021.



Figure 13. Ni Una Menos Instagram thumbnails, 15/05/2021 to 02/06/2021.





This *Ni Una Menos* post visibilises the mechanism of representation *for* the people and *as* the people, where several *popular* struggles are converged into the Green Tide. Among the ones in figure 13.9 (*Ni Una Menos*, 2021b), it is possible to distinguish the common *popular* kitchen (upper left); calls to stop trans and *travesticides* (upper centre) and for a trans quota in different areas of employment (low centre); calls for food security, use of land, and laws for the protection of the environment (lower right); calls to reform the judiciary, the pension system, and in protection of workers (upper and centre right); and calls for better prison and housing policies together with a picture of the organisation Anti-racist Column (lower left). The big “NI UNA MENOS 2021” in the centre seems to group and catalyse all these struggles in one while the call for solidarity from the organisation who proposed and implemented the PluriNational Campaign remains unattended.

The same dynamic is repeated later in October 2021. The *MMDIBV*, together with other organisations (including the Anti-racist Column), called to massively protest on the significant date of October 12<sup>th</sup> as an exercise of the memory of colonialism, extractivism and racism, and as exercise of resistance against the continued extractivist and racist policies of the Argentine state, provincial governments, and all their police forces and a general culture of repression. These organisations ask for laws guaranteeing land restitution, the halt to evictions and criminalisation of lawful claims to land, and the approval of the draft-law instituting female elected representatives of the Indigenous communities to institutionalise the relationship with the state. For the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, they convoked the First PluriNational Strike in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples.

The discussions for plurinationality (*Ni Una Menos*, 2019a, b) show that the organisation recognises the importance of the month, and the 12<sup>th</sup> October date specifically, for Indigenous people, Black Argentines, and anti-colonial politics in general. In October 2021, however, almost a year after abortion was legalised, *La Campaña* and *Ni Una Menos* promote their making-of-history events. Between September 3<sup>rd</sup> and November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021, *La Campaña* posts:





Figure 14. La Campaña's Instagram thumbnails, 3/09/2021 to 29/11/2021.

In the first line, *La Campaña* connects the fight for pregnancy interruption in Mexico celebrating the country's Supreme Court ruling as unconstitutional the penalisation of abortion nationwide (figures 14.1 and 14.2). The posts then portray the federal plenary meeting of *La Campaña*, and then move to celebrate the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, a day that enters

the feminist calendar of mobilisation as the Global Action Day for the Right to Abortion (figure 14.3). In the three posts of the second line, they call to mobilise for the effective implementation of the recently obtained pregnancy interruption law on September 28<sup>th</sup> (14.4 to 14.6). The following post (14.7) jumps to October 18<sup>th</sup>, announcing that the organisation changed the handkerchiefs adding a reference to the approved abortion law. And then, the last line (14.10 to 14.12) portrays posts in solidarity with Colombian feminists, where the constitutional court was going to vote on the depenalisation of abortion. There is no trace, in this publishing, of the initiatives of the *MMDIBV*, the 12<sup>th</sup> of October as a landmark date, or to the *MMDIBV* call for solidarity against renewed colonial and imperialist attempts in their communities and across the country.

*Ni Una Menos*'s Instagram posting is similar to *La Campaña*'s. Figure 15 below illustrates *Ni Una Menos* posts between September 24<sup>th</sup> and October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Figure 15.1 is a call to march against climate change on 24<sup>th</sup> of September. The following post (figure 15.2) comments: "[...] the potency of a movement that succeeded in pushing the public agenda transformations that change the life of all [...]" In the collective *Ni Una Menos* document called 'All against the IMF', focused on debt, a resonance of what is being proposed in the last International Feminist Strikes of March 8<sup>th</sup>" (*Ni Una Menos*, 2021c). Next (figure 15.3), *Ni Una Menos* calls to mobilise with *La Campaña* on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September for the International Safe Abortion Day to fight for effective implementation of the abortion law. Figure 15.4 then portrays a post celebrating the results of a referendum in Berlin, where housing was expropriated from financial corporations.

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, *Ni Una Menos* post a video of a violent eviction in a shantytown. Another eviction is shown on October 1<sup>st</sup>, third post of the second line (respectively figures 15.5 and 15.6). Then, on October 5<sup>th</sup>, with the lemma "stop profiting off our bodies," *Ni Una Menos* (2021d) shares a banner supporting a law mandating the inclusion of full nutritional values and ingredients in food labels (15.7). The evictions are revisited in the following posts (15.8 and 15.9), this time calling for a gathering against the provincial government. On October 8<sup>th</sup> (15.10), they share the initiative of a women-in-unions gathering. The action then moves to October 13<sup>th</sup> with a post convoking a *Ni Una Menos* protest on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October as a march against one of the due IMF payments (figure 15.11). While there are no posts addressing the Indigenous women's initiatives, that same day, in figure 15.12, *Ni Una Menos* (2021e) also shares the invitation to a *popular* feminist encounter with "commissions, debates, fair, music, workshops, collective articulation."





Figure 15. Ni Una Menos Instagram thumbnails, 24/09/2021 to 26/10/2021.

Shortly after, on October 15<sup>th</sup>, *Ni Una Menos* posts picture (figure 15.13) of the National Assembly of Press Workers, and two days later, on the day they convoked to demonstrate against the IMF, they repeat the invitation (15.14): “The debt is with us.” The final post of the line (figure 15.15), with the hashtag “FeministOctober”, offers an image of the feminist revolt in Chile (*Ni Una Menos*, 2021f). I am going through the description of each Instagram post to illustrate how *Ni Una Menos* published on an extensive number of sectorial issues while embodying the generalisable category of precarity and *popular* while Indigenous initiatives are taking place and explicitly calling to solidarity and alliance. As October becomes the ‘Feminist October’, feminist attention is recentralised on the Green Tide as a popular movement from the South standing against the North.

The differential allocation of attention that is discernible in the Green Tide Instagram posting responds to how categories of thought and action also are subsumed to the Green Tide claim and political demands. On the one hand, the *MMDIBV* makes use of the category of Strike (popularised as a feminist category of thought and action in 2019) for their First PluriNational Strike in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The demonstration, taking place almost a year after abortion is legalised, is not discussed or publicised neither by *Ni Una Menos* nor *La Campaña*, who do not share the *MMDIBV* initiatives, calls to action, and demands to the Argentine state. Whereas the previous year the movement discursively placed themselves as ‘already decolonial’ through the plurinational claim, in the same dates in 2021 Green Tide accounts post on their own initiatives and effectively enact the redirection of attention to their own categories and instances of mobilisation.

On the other hand, the Green Tide makes use of *MMDIBV* categories such as PluriNationality in a way that recentres themselves as catalysts of transnational actors, and as legitimate inheritors of (the racialised, colonised) struggles. In April-June 2021 (figures 13.6 to 13.8), while the *MMDIBV* was calling to their 1900 km march to Buenos Aires, *Ni Una Menos* projects their movement transnationally towards Colombia, with the deployment of the category of PluriNationality (see figure 13.8). It is worth repeating that, in this post, *Ni Una Menos* (2021a) writes: “Plurinational, diverse, and international feminists convoke from Abya Yala to Kurdistan a big action in solidarity with the Colombian people. Because we have no borders! We unite in all territories. [...]”

I am keen to pinpoint how, here, categories of thought and action that were born out of an Indigenous organisation were inglobated by the Green Tide to further their decolonial and Southern subjectivity as an actor able, more than others, to bring different



struggles together under one unified claim. I also want to emphasise the extent to which this was possible through material deployments of differential attention and calls to massive mobilisation, as well as through the use, incorporation, and subsuming of categories of thought and action for the recentring of the Green Tide. The initiatives of the *MMDIBV* remain, effectively, on the margins. When the *MMDIBV* uses the feminist categories to mobilise and to call the state and the public's attention for their own demands, there is little or no feminist engagement. And when the Green Tide deploys Indigenous categories, these are discursively deployed in a way that, once again, diverges attention and mobilisation towards the Green Tide.

Here, the differential placement of feminist attention and mobilisation responds to the same process that allocates certain concepts as more transnationally resonant than others, and certain social worlds and categories of disruption as more radical than others. This is the operation of the episteme a condition of possibility that is already prepared to read certain concepts, demands, and groups, more than others, as radical others of the episteme, as 'native informants' of subalternity. The trajectory of life and death of certain populations, in this sense, responds to the trajectory of social worlds, imaginaries, categories of thought and action, and their deployment. The modern episteme, which informs which concepts and actors are readily legible as 'radical' (or 'decolonial'), is bio-economically constituted, and this precise character is left unaddressed by the Green Tide discourse. This is what I mean when I argue that Green Tide theory-politics are inseparable from the differential conditions of life and death, and that take part in convivial relations to ongoing colonial presents.

My argument can be clarified through the following example. Figure 15.18 (*Ni Una Menos*, 2021g) pictures conservative journalist Jorge Lanata, who in relation to the criminalisation of Mapuche people is repudiated for the "racist way he refers to the Mapuche community. From the monopoly of [conservative media] they insist on constructing the Mapuche community as an internal enemy, while protecting the criminals [of the *Cambiamos* government] who created external debt. [...] We support the historical and just claims of the Mapuche community." The Green Tide here acknowledges that there is a history of colonialism and a present racial politics in the country. The acknowledgement of these histories and their present unfolding is not a point of contention, as I illustrated through the *Ni Una Menos* support of the Encounter's name change. My point is how, by eliding the bio-economic formation of colonialism and its racial and classed inequalities in Argentina, and by placing emphasis on the Witch, or feminist

spirituality, as an otherwise to Reason/Unreason, racial and colonial difference becomes part of the sexual self in turn embodied by the Green Tide.

In other words, by discursively understanding racial and colonial difference through the episteme of Man1, while continuing to deploy the categories of the self (sex) that are unique to Man2, the Green Tide has the effect of producing themselves as a racial subject *through* sex. In this sense, this allows them to both identify themselves as colonised subjects of the South *and* to claim a most radical subjective and political position to fight the episteme itself. The post pictured in figure 15.18 (*Ni Una Menos*, 2021g), while it recognises the criminalisation of the Mapuche people, concludes by recalling the categories of debt and precarity, as well as the feminist ‘us’ of suffering, revolt, and hope.

When I argue that the Green Tide elides the bio-economic formation of the episteme, I am not saying that the movement does *not* discuss race or colonialism. I am rather pointing to *how* it is discussed to highlight that if race and colonialism enter the discussion as a problem of Un/Reason, or as a problem of the 15<sup>th</sup> century colonisation, or as a problem of financial colonisation of the North. It is not discussed, however, as a bio-economic formation that, in the history and ongoing of the present of the country, constitutes Argentine populations as internally different, with some positioned in trajectories of death and others in trajectories of life. In the national project of Argentina, certain populations are bio-economically selected and others Dysselected, and this epistemic condition, in the Green Tide, is elided in favour of the Witch, and feminism itself, as a collective agent of revolt. Consequently, internal trajectories of death, with their own histories, presents, categories of thought and action, and political efforts, risk remaining unaddressed in favour of the feminist subject.

In this sense, the bio-economic racial quality of the episteme of Man2 is reproduced in the construction of the Witch and her discourse decolonial feminism from the South. As enduring presents of colonialism are portrayed as a sectorial issue that the Green Tide as a subject *for* ‘the people’ can represent, the feminist ‘us’ successfully positions itself in the transnational sphere as radical, emancipatory, Southern. The Green Tide elision of the bio-economic character of the episteme produces them as radical subjects of decolonial feminist politics. The racial/colonial Other is effectively incorporated in the Green Tide discourse through the discursive strategies of *genealogy* and *knowledge* by producing likeness, becoming *akin* to tropes of the Indigenous figure, by deploying concepts and referents that originated in these racialised communities, and deploying them for their own

self-representation as Southern and anti-colonial subjects that could teach Global North women to fight threading different struggles together.

In effect, rather than articulating a theoretical-political proposal *from* difference, the Green Tide's is a theory of kinship or likeness on the basis of Unreason. Inserted within a global grid to which they are transparent as revolutionary, they agglutinate identities and modes of struggle into a generalised subaltern precarity. Through this operation they then acquire the trope of difference and claim to represent (*as/for*) the (racialised) Other. However, this feminist 'us', based on sameness, is possible by eliding the bio-economic condition of the episteme. The blank space left by the feminist 'us' and has the effect of reinscribing the desiring subject, and the Green Tide, as modern subjects of knowledge and politics.

To conclude, then, the feminist 'we', capitalised as able to bridge different struggles nationally and transnationally under the same categories of thought and action, is a productive erasure. By subsuming the structural inequalities of class and race that derive from 19<sup>th</sup> century colonialism to the axis of Un/Reason and the late modern subject of sex, the Witch and the Green Tide become a transparent possibility of the otherwise, or anti-Man. The Witch is therefore both a manifestation of the Green Tide discourse and the knowledge category that unveils its operation.

## Chapter 7. Conclusions

I am keen, in the Introduction to this thesis, to circumscribe the contours of an investigation that, by its own design, addresses discursive formations beyond its constituted sites of deployment, assemblages of thought and action in a field of convivial relations. My focus on the Green Tide feminist knowledge production of spirituality therefore implies looking at it through the adjacent fields of women-based spirituality, anti-capitalist, queer, feminist politics, and a renewed attention to race in colonialism in Argentina. The question guiding this project is about the moment of encounter, or assemblage, of these different the fields into a novel knowledge formation, or assemblage: that of the Witch as anti-Man; the Witch as a figure able to address the problem of decoloniality, anti-racism, anti-capitalism, queerness, and feminism, as the problem, in turn, of our modern, colonial episteme and its organisation of the world.

Throughout the thesis, I interrogate the conditions of possibility for these questions and interests to emerge, and for the Witch to be assembled as a solution. My problematisation (Foucault, 1972) is guided by three aspects of the Argentine feminist spirituality: what prompted knowledge producers to invest in the articulation of a feminist spirituality, what was about the Witch that made Her the figure without which feminist spirituality would have not been possible, and how did these investments, interests, efforts relate to the colonial condition of possibility of the episteme. My problematisation is furthermore informed by how the Green Tide is generally read and experienced as a before-and-after in the ordinary occurrence of events, by the movement's attention towards transnational resonance, and by its development alongside Indigenous and Afroargentine movements that question national histories, images, and productive models.

Overall, my analysis shows how the condition of possibility for the Green Tide discourse of a radical, decolonial feminism from the South, is the deployment of unacknowledged bio-economic categories of race and sex. In other words, the Witch as anti-Man is possible only by that same knowledge categories, rules, and grids that constitute modernity. Sex and race as bio-economic categories are elided as constitutive of our possibilities of thinking ourselves and the world, and are reinstated in the vest of an epistemic break. Deploying a differential allocation of attention that privileged their own categories of thought and action, as well as feminist politics centred on transnational alliance, the Green Tide subsumed problems of precarisation and colonialism into a

grammar of gender and sexuality. While claiming a radical alterity, the Green Tide did not shift the global arrangement of knowledge production.

Finally, by deploying racial categories tied to experiences of colonialism, while nonetheless eliding the bio-economic constitution of the episteme, the Green Tide produced the Witch *as* a racialised subject affected by colonialism, and *for* racialised subjects affected by colonialism. This movement was possible by both keeping feminist attention on the supra-national scale and by shifting the movement's self-representation through a 'darkening' of the national imaginary (Aguiló, 2018). These two operations did not turn the anti-Man Witch, nor feminist attention, towards the internal colonial presents of Argentina. Producing the Witch as a racialised and colonised subject in struggle against the North reinstated the sexual subject as the agent of decolonial change, and left unaddressed the bio-economic constitution of the episteme that makes colonial presents such as Argentina's possible in the first place.

## 7.1 The Universalised Sexual Subject

The reproduction of the modern episteme of Man takes place insofar as the Green Tide articulates the Witch's difference to the modern episteme as a problem of Reason. In chapter 4, analysing the discursive strategies of *genealogy* and *knowledge*, I illustrate how the search for the incommensurate and its translation into practice uncovers the constituted areas of enactment of the discourse – *body* and *desire* – as late modern formations of sex. The anti-Man feminist subject, or Witch, comes into being through a sexual discourse that inscribes into the flesh the claims to a different articulation of the self beyond early modern categories of irrationality, which refer to the episteme of Man1 and its organisation on the axis of Un/Reason. However, the disruptive self of the Witch is constitutively formed by late modern categories of gender and sexuality that centre pleasure and desire as forces of liberation. Constructed at once ancestral and prefigurative, it is, nonetheless, a 'self' possible only as sexual, and, in this way, the universality of the desiring subject, the modern subject, is reposed as an agent of resistance, disruption, and freedom.

This point connects to my findings in chapters 5 and 6, where I analyse how the Witch's epistemic difference, her discursive configuration as anti-Man, is deployed as knowledge/power in the space of feminist politics. In chapter 5, I illustrate how the *genealogical* strategy of the Green Tide extends from dispossessed ancestral power figures to historical national and international movements against economic precarisation and

colonialism: the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and the *Piquetero* movement in Argentina, and the struggles against global capitalism worldwide. Reading economic violence as a form of colonial violence in a North-South lens, the Green Tide inserts itself in the legacy of these *popular* movements as a struggle against capitalism.

As a *popular* movement, the Green Tide is also able to display a unique *knowledge*, one where intellectuals work in the service of social change, and where political movements articulate ‘from below’ as expression of *popular* democracy and sovereignty. In the chapter I argue that the Witch needs to be conceptualised as *popular* and as subaltern (the grassroots communitarian counterpart of the capitalist order) as an insurgent representation of ‘the people’ so as to both articulate their resistance to the neoliberal/colonial state and to occupy the subject position of anti-Man. In this sense, the Witch is also produced as a collective subject, as an agent of radically plural alliances. By declining the figure of the Witch as a plural ‘Coven’, the Green Tide positions itself as an umbrella movement able to catalyse different struggles into one unified banner, and, similarly, its categories of thought and action become categories able to agglutinate difference and channel it into a systemic struggle.

The epistemic recentralisation of the sexual subject through categories of Unreason finds its political correlate in the claims, demands, and alliance politics of the Green Tide. Through an analysis of how attention and mobilisation to protest are distributed by the Green Tide discourse, I illustrate how the deployment of subalternity re-centres attention in the Green Tide. Experiences of precarity, from housing to access to clean water, education, health, are channelled into the claims and moments of gathering of the Green Tide. In this sense, Green Tide categories of thought and action are presented to be umbrella categories to think and politically act across difference, whereas Green Tide organisations harness public attention and mobilisation to recentre their initiatives and categories. The auxiliary position given to these local struggles, particularised against the popular sovereignty that the Green Tide came to embody, highlights how necessary their representative performance is for the articulation and subsistence of the Green Tide as a Subaltern Feminism from the South, and for the Witch as a modality of political alliance or plural politics from below.

The production of the Witch discourse is also informed by ongoing discussions regarding the historical imaginaries and narratives of national formation and belonging. These depend on histories of early and late modern colonialism, which carry a legacy of racial knowing and political organisation on the country; the Witch is produced in, and

through, these conversations. In Chapter 6 I explore how ‘race’ and ‘colonialism’ become central words of power in the discursive production of the Witch, together with the economic, or classed, anti-capitalist categories of ‘*popular*’ politics, ‘debt’, and ‘precarity’, and with the sexed categories of feminist difference. To become a radically plural subject of rebellion, or anti-Man, the Witch is then produced in a radical difference that bridges together the oppressions of modernity as colonialism: sex, class, race. The Witch is not exclusively a feminist spirituality, She is produced as an anti-racist, anti-capitalist, queer, feminist spirituality from the South.

Conflating claims of representation *for* and representation *as* in Spivakian terms (1988), the Witch as political theory and practice of the Green Tide acquires her subversive subalternity by ‘darkening’. My argument finds a reference with the recent history of Argentina’s middle-class, white cultural production, who progressively started to see itself as ‘darker’ because poorer (Aguiló, 2018). On the one hand, by addressing Man on the axis of Reason/Unreason, and by parallelism with the Indigenous female power figure, the Green Tide discourse constitutes the Witch (and themselves) as both akin to the Indigenous and the most rebellious to fight the episteme of Man. This is possible because, on the other hand, the Green Tide discourse implicitly relies on Man2 tropes of otherness to Man (e.g., bio-economic deployments of rurality and folklore) to construct the Witch as Southern and prefiguratively disruptive. In this sense, the elision of the bio-economic quality of the episteme is productive for the Green Tide discourse: it allows them to be reinscribed in the space of Otherness through the bio-economic category of sex.

By looking at the representational *speaking for* (Spivak, 1988), I show how in a space of alliance, the Green Tide reincorporates Indigenous referents and categories of knowledge into their own circuits of knowledge production and circulation. This time, when the Green Tide spoke, it enunciated an ‘us’ both *as* the racialised, colonised, subaltern ‘the people’, and *for* those racialised, colonised, subaltern ‘the people’. Once again, through an analysis of how attention is distributed in Green Tide social media in relation to the initiatives and referents of the *MMDIBV*, I illustrate how the Green Tide harnessed referents and claims to re-centre their own claims, categories of thought and action, and themselves as subjects of decolonial change.

Witchcraft then becomes a political ethics whose implementation is to be attempted by contemporary feminists. Or, rather, it is a political ethics that can be more easily accessed by contemporary feminists in virtue of their political claims and knowledge production. My argument, here, is that the privileging of the axis of Man1, instead of

bringing us to the origin of modern dispossession so to undo it, contributes to invisibilise the re-constitution of ‘the sexual’ as the privileged realm to understand the self, which then is the primary subject of the liberal imaginary of representation (Povinelli, 2006; Massad, 2007; Sabsay, 2016c). In this sense, the Witch, although produced as anti-Man, did not constitute an epistemic break, nor its politics a radical decolonial rupture with the colonial organisation of Argentina.

## **7.2 Subalternity and the Differential Distribution of Attention**

The feminist deployment of categories of thought and action in a way that re-centres the sexual subject and its political translation in the Green Tide demands or instances of mobilisation is what I call the Green Tide’s distribution of subalternity as a differential allocation of attention. My understanding of attention, here, points at the connection between the organisation of the episteme and the organisation of the world, where attention is distributed in the forms of categories of thought and action that privilege knowledge formations as well as instances and modes of mobilisation. In this sense, the differential allocation of attention into feminist categories also implies a differential fostering of the movement’s mobilisation abilities. In the Witch discourse, the desiring subject is universalised under a renewed imaginary of sexual freedom, this time imagined as more radical and plural by appealing to entangled critiques of gender and economic violence *as* and *for* racialised and colonised subjects as well.

The differential allocation of attention that follows manifests both in the realm of the precarised realities that constitute the Witch’s subalternity, and in the Green Tide racial ‘darkening’ as cultural consumption, *popular* politics, and impoverishment vis-à-vis a financially predatory Global North. Produced *as* a ‘dark’ autochthonous subject of the South and *as* a collective subject *for* those subjects made ‘dark’ by colonisation, the Witch redirects the possibilities of racialised and decolonial critiques of the episteme into sexuality and its rights as instances of epistemic and political disruption. As I illustrated throughout chapters 5 and 6, this is possible, I the Green tide, by posting more about Green Tide issues, demands, instances of mobilisation, by promoting their own categories of thought and action while representing themselves *as* and *for* the precarised, racialised, and colonised.

I am keen to highlight how the differential allocation of attention serves the reproduction of the modern categories of sex into the ‘incommensurate’, or anti-Man. In



the Green Tide discourse, the unaddressed deployment of bio-economic categories projects the Green Tide in the transnational sphere of radical social movements and critical theories. This is possible in two ways: by placing attention at the supra-national scale, where capitalism and colonialism can be identified in the predatory economic and financial politics of the North, and by ‘darkening’ the Witch and the Green Tide collective body. This racialisation of the Witch responds to the characterisation of the Green Tide as a *popular* movement against the economically predatory Global North. Through bio-economic tropes of economic, cultural, and racial development, the Witch and the Green Tide are produced as legitimate ‘dark’ ‘native informants’ (Spivak, 1999) of the South articulating a radical alternative.

Distributing attention, for example on social media engagement and its correlate in the streets, the Green Tide invest in their own moments of gathering as transparent manifestations of subalternity vis-à-vis the North. In this sense, those struggles derived from consequences of systemic precarisation and colonisation, are subsumed to the claim for the legalisation of abortion and projects of gender, sexual, and reproductive equality. Similarly, in the racial organisation of the Green Tide discourse, the unacknowledged racial difference of the Witch functions for the recentring of the grammar of gender and sexuality. Unsurprisingly, then, Green Tide feminist discourse portrays the radical epistemic-political alterity to the episteme of Man as an explicit entanglement of sexual and anti-capitalist difference as a form of racial and colonial difference on the axis of Man1. In the end, the reclamation of a feminised knowledge seated in the materiality of the body functions as a collective position of racial and colonial marginality. In so doing, the struggle against the episteme of Man and its organisation of the world took the shape of a sea of green bandanas waving and moving as one sole (political) body.

In summary, the rise of the Witch as a subject of Man1 responds to the desire (Massad, 2007) of finding common ground, categories of thought and action that can collectively address the episteme of Man from its space of Otherness (Wynter, 2003). Approaching the problem of colonialism, capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy, and racism as a problem of dividing humans into rational and irrational ones, however, does not account for how our episteme is *currently* organised around bio-economic, racial categories; nor it accounts for how the late modern category of sex, which is already a racial formation, is reconfigured as ‘Unreason’. The elision of the bio-economic constitution of the episteme, necessary for the conflation of Unreason and Sex has the productive effect of subsuming

the space of Otherness into the sexual subject. Here, the alterity of the racial/colonial other is harnessed to be deployed as cosmological alterity of sexual politics.

### **7.3 The Sexual Subject and its Constituted Zones of Sacrifice**

The final point that this project wants to stress is the relationship between the reproduction of the episteme of Man through an allocation of subalternity and attention into the sexual self, and the reproduction of modernity's trajectories of life and death. Throughout the chapters, I illustrate how the elision of late modern categories of race, exemplified in the proximity with Indigeneity (the feminist 'us') produces the elision of the settler colonial legacy of Argentina. This elision takes place insofar as the elevation of sex as epistemic breakthrough enters in convivial relations (Puar, 2017a) with how certain populations more than others are constructed and policed as a treat to the nation, and with how certain categories of thought and action more than others, certain experiences of the world more than others are *not* invested in as radical possibilities.

The Witch emerges not as a mere cultural feminist product but as a central, pivotal theoretical-political category centred around desire and its embodied enactment, channelled in Green Tide protests. At the same time, to embody the 'darker' *popular*, feminised epistemic difference of the Witch as anti-Man on the axis of Un/Reason, means to reinscribe these racial bio-economic categories of otherness into a (racialised) distribution of attention and emancipatory investment into sex, gender, sexuality, pleasure, desire. The elision of the racial bio-economic quality of the episteme, then, operates as a condition of possibility that recentres feminine difference at the Argentine and the transnational scales.

If, with the 15<sup>th</sup> century episteme of Man, the racial conditions of the episteme took the shape of defining humanness and sub-humanness, hence life and death, along definitions of Reason that could only be fulfilled by the aristocratic and intellectual elites that created these categories in the first place, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century these categories are organised around biology and political economy. The spatial imaginary of settler colonial Argentina, with its folk figures, responds to the bio-economic articulation of Man2, not to Man1. However, the Green Tide speaks of decoloniality in reference to the episteme of Man1, as the Spanish Conquest and colonialism on the axis of Reason/Unreason, while eliding the late bio-economic formation of Man2. The Green Tide, by remaining anchored

to an opposition to Man1, cannot produce an effective opposition to the enduring present of colonial power in Argentina, as this is organised around Man2.

In this sense, the discursive articulation of *genealogy* with experiences of precarisation and racialisation does not serve for the challenging of internal racial and colonial inequalities, but for the recentring of the Witch feminist agency as decolonial disruption. I am referring to how these racial others of Argentina continue facing their enduring colonial presents as ‘threats to the nation’ and in deepening inequalities, criminalisation, and erasure at the hand of the state and the rise of extractivist projects.

My concern with race and colonisation in Argentina is not just a matter of settling the question of the Argentine colour, or race, and provide a more apt description of the racial ‘reality’ of Argentina (Alberto & Elena, 2016). As I anticipate in the Introduction, it is not the aim of this thesis to offer ways of representing ‘X’ better (Puar, 2017b). I am not interested in ways of representing the Indigenous movement, shantytown dwellers, the criminalised young men better within the feminist or the institutional discourse. It is not my aim to provide a definition of racial relations in Argentina. My analysis is focused on the underlying conditions of possibility of the Green Tide discourse, and on the globalised grids of intelligibility that are making the Witch a possibility of anti-Man also in the global North. I am interested in the elision of the racial, colonial bio-economic organisation of the episteme; an elision that in the Green Tide discourse is effected by conflating Man1 and Man2, Unreason as a category of racialised sub-humanness into Sex as a category of liberation.

The Green Tide addresses the structural economic precarisation induced by neoliberal policies of the Argentine government and recognised the colonial origin of the Argentine state. At the same time, these were deployed in construction of a *popular* and Southern claim subsumed to the Green Tide grammar of gender and sexuality vis-à-vis the Global North. In this sense, the Green Tide’s lists of difference function as Povinelli’s (2006: 11-13) grammars of concatenation or transformation, whereby issues that would not necessarily be read as ‘gender’, ‘sex’, or ‘sexuality’ enter the circuit of representation by returning to pleasure, desire, and sexual or gender identity. The relationship with Indigeneity, conflated with ‘race’ and expressed into a darkening of the Witch and the movement, serves to operate this subsumption under the discourse of the Green Tide’s event-ness.

I am referring, here, at an enduring present that goes beyond bettering the ways in which Indigenous peoples are represented in the multicultural state (Lublin, 2021; Soria,

2021). When I say that the episteme of Man2, with its bio-economic categories, it is not disrupted by the feminist discourse, I am referring to how ‘plurinationality’, ‘anti-colonialism’ or ‘decoloniality’ did not imply an interpellation of feminist politics themselves, the sexual subject as a subject of modernity, and the contemporary structuring of the Argentine nation-state. Discussing race and colonialism, in the Green Tide discourse, as both a supra-national problem, and a problem of self-identification refers to the convivial relations with the securitarian state, with the extractivist state, as an organisation of nationhood that is still possible through racial and colonial projects of Man2.

The differential allocation of attention here refers to how epistemic habits, attention, knowing and not-knowing unravel in convivial relations with trajectories of life and death in seemingly distant fields (like feminism and a securitarian wave) as well as seemingly adjacent ones (like Green Tide feminism and *MMDIBV*’s reclamation of plurinationality). Attention, as an exercise of the episteme (Stoler, 2009) talks about how we look at the world, how we understand it, what is visible, seeable, sayable, intelligible; it is about how hope is constituted, not just for which populations, but in which categories of thought and action is hope, or suffering, reposit. In other words, how are even hope and suffering intelligible in the first place, and through which bodies, experiences, worldviews. This is what Wynter (2003) addresses when she argues that the episteme requires zones of sacrifice for its survival and reproduction. Investments in what is suffering, what is hope, and how we can enact change talk both of the privileging of certain populations and the reproduction of the episteme.

The liberal framework of representation and recognition informs the Global North’s susceptibility to reading the Green Tide as ‘native’, ‘subaltern’ and ‘radical’. In other words, the persistence of the episteme, and legibility along its grids and categories, is also the condition of possibility that allows the Global North to read the Green Tide as a radical Southern subject of social change. Because of such framework of legibility, the erasure of the racial condition of the episteme of Man2 furthermore risks providing a similar framework of erasure for the West. I am cautiously referring to how, for example, in the U.S. concepts and categories of Indigenous sexual and gender diversity have been deployed by white or settler queers to foreground their own notions of belonging to the land, and as internal dissidents to the oppressive powers of the nation, while, at the same time, reproducing the project of settler colonialism (Morgensen, 2011). The interest, in Global North, Anglophone academia, to the esoteric, magic, and other forms of otherwise is not separate from the emergence, in Argentina, of the Witch discourse. The question that I

invite to keep asking is which is the subject produced by these problems and their solutions, and who continues to be the subject enunciating it.

Representation, recognition, and resonance are an integral part of the epistemic grid of intelligibility, and in its liberal economy, certain categories and subjects more than others will be readily identifiable as Subjects of social change. As my analysis of the Green Tide Witch shows, however, these emergent knowledge formations are not an ‘otherwise’ speaking despite modernity. The allure of transparency allows us to evade the extent to which the Witch speaks *along* the grid of the modern episteme. The ‘new spirituality’ that is more “in tune with times” (Gualano, 2019: para 1), or the University of Exeter master’s degree in Magic and the Occult seeking to explore a different epistemology (Hall, 2023), signals how the Witch and Her spiritual/political character allows a discursive resonance, reference, overlap between spirituality, Indigenous/dark, Southern, feminist, emancipatory progress and decoloniality with prefigurative intentions.

This conflation is possible, in the South as well as in the North, by privileging the episteme of Man1 and by conceptualising its resistance on an axis that elides how we are already constituted as subjects of Man2. We are not subjects of Un/Reason, we are bio-economic subjects of Dys/Selection. In this sense, as the Witch and Her craft, as modalities to breach across Man, produce an enhanced sexual subject where all categories of dispossession can be collated, condensed, and channeled through the sexual insurgency of the Witch, the Witch is not anti-Man but hyper-modern.

It is not the aim of this project to refuse any possibilities of the sacred, nor what Foucault might have envisioned as political spirituality through reconfigurations of the ‘self among others’ (McWhorter, 2003). Similarly, my research is not oriented at reducing the importance of the Green Tide’s sexual and reproductive politics, to deny the dire economic situation severely that affected and continues affecting Argentines, nor the Green Tide’s ability to convoke hundreds of thousands for such claims. At the same time, to do so by claiming a position of racialised subalternity as radical alternative proposal risks to erase racial, colonial experiences of life and death. My intention, therefore, is to attend to the limits of the modern discourse of Man; to continue addressing its traps and how these manifests in emancipatory efforts at representation, translation, imagination, and resonance. Resonance, alliance, and pluralism too can attend to the convivial relations with ongoing colonial trajectories. Witch discourse, articulated as *the* possibility of overcoming of Man2, uncovers itself as one of its limits: the racialised sexual subject.

The trace (Derrida, 1976) left by productions of knowledge such as the Green Tide's, speaks to those colonial histories of death. These are zones of sacrifice that function structurally and epistemically, with less concern for the health and wellbeing of certain environments and populations (Wynter, 2003; Povinelli, 2006). But it is an effacement actualised also in deployments of hope and attention in certain worlds rather than others, in certain histories of suffering rather than others (ibid.). As I show throughout these chapters, this is not a problem of direct causality, of linear endeavours, but a unified discursive field. These are the convivial relations (Puar, 2017a) that continue to inform the organisation of life and death.

I conclude with an account that, as a trace, operates as a reminder of the limits of our modern discourse. In a short section at the end of the interview to Moira Millán (we cannot know how extensively Millán discussed this originally) the *weichafe* narrates to the journalist how new evangelical missions are proliferating within Indigenous communities, denouncing collusion with extractivist enterprises (Monfort, 2021). The latter allegedly fund missions to “neutralise the fight by offering paradise.” Millán furthermore denounces how the specific violence Indigenous women experience in this context is not portrayed within the new Ministry for Women, Genders and Diversity, which was created as a specific response to Green Tide demands by President Alberto Fernández's progressive government (2019-2023), around a year before the legalisation of abortion.

According to Millán, female healers are particularly persecuted as “[...] the community has been instigated to hit and abuse medicine women, and they are accused of being witches [...]” (Monfort, 2021: para. 11). The Green Tide proposes a radical political alternative by configuring a feminist framework with a *popular* democracy, and in alignment with race as *mestizaje* or brownness. But it did so through a conflation of subalternity, indigeneity, non-whiteness, and *popular* democracy – made especially feminist through the Witch as a trope of feminine otherness to patriarchal/capitalist modernity – thereby producing a feminist theory from the South that elides its racial epistemic and material conditions of possibility. The Green Tide discourse produces the allure of transparency with the incommensurate, which allows it to operate within a representational economy that finds its satisfaction in a liberal sexual and reproductive framework. Here, in the difference between calling oneself a Witch and being labelled a ‘witch’ resides the enduring colonial/racial distribution of life and death that is covered over with a radical feminist sexual democracy.

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#SanMartin #Mendoza En San Martín nos sumamos a una Jornada federal y mundial por el Aborto Legal 🍷💚 Paseo de

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¡Luchar con alegría le gusta a usted, le gusta a usted! 🍷💚 Tras una nueva jornada federal, la confirmación.

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