CONTESTING THE NATIO(N): THE 2018 ABORTION DEBATES IN ARGENTINA

By Paula Kantor

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Erasmus Mundus Master´s Degree in Women´s and Gender Studies (GEMMA)

Main Supervisor: Elissa Helms (Central European University)

Second Supervisor: Ana Gallego Cuiñas (University of Granada)

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Abstract

In 2018, despite strong social mobilizations, the Argentinian Congress failed to pass a Bill making abortion legalized and more accessible. This thesis wonders about the challenges of having legal abortion and looks for answers in feminist theories of the nation-state and decolonial perspectives. Through feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, this study specifically examines the speeches given by the lawmakers in the 2018 abortion parliamentary debates to unravel the extent in which gendered notions of nation and the state went under resignification, sustaining and contesting hegemonic discourses. I argue here that both positions, supporting and rejecting the Bill, have reinforced and challenged hegemonic gendered depictions of the nation with variations in the extent and content of this resignification. The anti-Bill position has (re)produced heteronormative hegemonic visions of the nation-state while also has disputed Argentinian national authenticity as a reflection of the west. Conversely, the position supporting the Bill, has contested hegemonic heteronormative visions of gender relations and national imaginaries but has left unproblematized traditional colonial Argentinian logics of power. By examining legal abortion with these lenses, this thesis improves the understanding of the mutual affection between matters of sexuality, (non) reproduction, nation, and the state. It also problematizes longstanding expectations that conservatives groups would only reproduce hegemonic national imaginaries, and proves that they have also challenged these imaginaries. Moreover, this study examines feminist demands of legal abortion towards patriarchal and colonial institutions such as the law and the state, showing that, in this process, a new type of feminist? /progressive nationalism have been emerging in Argentina. National configurations have been relevant for both positions, and, as revealed here, they will continue to be significant in the following decades.

Resumen

En 2018, a pesar de las fuertes movilizaciones sociales, el Congreso argentino rechazó el último proyecto de ley para legalizar el aborto seguro y gratuito. En la presente tesis me pregunto sobre los desafíos a la legalización del aborto y busco respuestas en las teorías feministas del Estado-Nación y en las perspectivas decoloniales. A través del Análisis Crítico y Feminista del Discurso, examino detalladamente los discursos pronunciados por les legisladores en los debates parlamentarios sobre el aborto en 2018 en pos de vislumbrar el modo en que las nociones de género y nación han sido resignificadas, sosteniendo y contestando discursos hegemónicos. A partir de este análisis, argumento que, con variaciones en su contenido y extensión, tanto las posturas a favor y en contra del aborto legal han estado reforzando y disputando narrativas nacionales hegemónicas. Por un lado, la posición contraria al proyecto de ley ha estado reproduciendo imaginarios del Estado-Nación heteropatriarcales pero también ha disputado aquellos discursos dominantes en los que la identidad argentina auténtica es reflejo de occidente. El lado demandando la legalización del aborto, por otra parte, ha desafiado ciertas visiones hegemónicas y heteronormativas de las relaciones de género y los imaginarios nacionales, mientras ha continuado reproduciendo lógicas de poder coloniales tradicionales. Al examinar los debates alrededor del aborto legal desde esta óptica, esta tesis permite una mejor comprensión del modo en que la sexualidad, la (no) reproducción y los asuntos del Estado y la nación se co-afectan y articulan. Además, este estudio demuestra que, contrario al esperado, los grupos conservadores no sólo reproducen una visión hegemónica de la nación, sino que también la someten a reconsideración. Incluso las demandas feministas de aborto legal ante instituciones patriarcales como el Estado y la ley, son puestas en discusión en esta tesis probando que un nuevo tipo de nacionalismo ¿feminista? /progresista ha estado emergiendo en Argentina. Las configuraciones nacionales son relevantes para ambas posiciones, y por lo visto, en las próximas décadas, seguirán siendo significativas.

Declaration of original content

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 30,022 words

Entire manuscript: 37,344 words

Signed _____PAULA KANTOR_____

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Virginia Wolff´s demand that women have their own room and money to write never had more sense than when studying this Master. Hence, I would like to start recognizing feminisms and women´s struggles that allowed me to be here, attending academic education and creating active content through writing.

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Finally, my biggest gratitude goes to my 'guardian angels': Papá, Mamá, Dana and Milena. You are my daily driving force and the reason why I can never feel alone.

I dedicate this thesis to my grandmothers, Marta and Dora.

We are building a better world.

Yo no soy un vientre, soy un ser.
Yo no soy un cuerpo que se toma, soy poder que se cuestiona
yo no soy un rol, soy relación para la creación
yo no soy una madre prometida, soy una posibilidad expandida
yo no soy sólo palabras, soy silencio y miedo
yo no soy solo razón, soy deseo y decisión
yo no soy sólo cuerpo, soy polvo de estrellas y arenas del desierto
yo no soy sólo un vientre, soy poesía y canción
yo no soy un rol, soy movimiento y quietud
soy sueños y tormentas
soy lo que quiero ser, soy lo que puedo ser
Yo no soy un vientre, soy vida.

I am not a womb, I am a being.
I am not a body that is taken, I am power that is questioned
I am not a role, I am a relationship for creation
I am not a promised mother, I am an expanded possibility
I am not just words, I am silence and fear
I am not only reason, I am desire and decision
I am not just a body, I am dust of stars and sands of the desert
I am not just a belly, I am poetry and song
I am not a role, I am movement and stillness
I am dreams and storms
I am what I want to be, I am what I can be.
I am not a belly, I am life.

Fragments of the poem *Vientre en Resistencia*
(Womb in Resistance) by Jhoana Patiño

Por una maternidad deseada
Por el deseo

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Introduction

A disquieting feeling behind this thesis

During most of 2018, I was out of my country, Argentina, being a small part of those *viajeras militantes (*militant travels) in Bellucci´s (2014) words, who live abroad from some time and increase their feminist consciousness there. In 2018, for the first time after 1921, the two chambers of the Argentinian Congress debated the legalization of abortion. As has happened in other places, the parliamentary debate was surrounded by huge for and against mobilizations, the representation of the topic in the press and in virtual social networks, and everyday discussions within the family, the workplace and the groups of friends. While leaving outside, I became part of the group of people who track the happenings of their country through a screen without sensing and walking through its streets. The follow-up of the abortion debate was not an exception as I wasn't in Argentina during the more intense moments of activism and deliberations. These high-point moments happened especially during April and May where 700 experts went every week to the Chamber of Deputies to present their arguments, culminating in two days of voting in the 13th and 14th of June when the legalization bill passed. After that, the mobilizations and pressures deepened, in order to influence the vote in the Senate on the 8th of August, where a second vote was needed to finally make abortion legal in Argentina (Alcaraz 2018). Unfortunately, the majority of the senators rejected the bill.

The morning of June 13, the Deputy´s voting day, I was awake with a piece of ice on my face after a wisdom tooth surgery while most of the people in Argentina were still sleeping. The sunny and warm day in Granada looked little like the cold early morning of my country. Thanks to Youtube, from the 26 hours of debate, I only missed the seven hours when I slept. I listened carefully to every speech, feeling very angry with some of them and overwhelmed by others. With my friends in Argentina, I was sharing my impressions. It was disgusting to hear a congresswoman saying: "What happens when our dogs get pregnant? We do not take her to

the vet to abort. We immediately go out to look for someone to give the puppies to (…) If we were a little more animals, we would not kill our offspring, but we would have them anyway." She was considering women who abort on the same level as a female dog.

My level of anxiety was increasing as time passed. With my friend Caro I followed the *poroteo* (a colloquial expression for vote counting), with Anto I shared academic papers to refute the anti-rights comments in the social networks. In addition, Maca was filming the street for me. Although there was a lot of noise, I was able to see the huge amount of people and the dominant role of the green color, the symbol of legal abortion. However, not everyone was as friendly as they were. The showing of my position in Instagram forced me to discuss with people that were important to me and were thinking differently. It was very painful to read a message from someone I really appreciated telling me "if you get pregnant I would support you to have it", ignoring my personal desires of not having babies in the near future. Clearly, the abortion issue mobilized my emotions and made me consider my personal relations and future. It made me remember the moments I suspected I was pregnant and the relief I felt of living in countries where abortion is legal. The parliamentary debate made me gather more information about women´s situation in my country and to pay more attention to the inequalities that we suffer. It also gave me the chance to reaffirm my position and listen carefully to the counter-arguments. Especially, the discussion made me ask about the difficulties and challenges of having legalized and safe abortion in Argentina.

In the last hours of debate, on the morning of June 14th, the vote result remained uncertain. My time moved between listening to the last speeches and checking the tentative results every two minutes. And suddenly, the vote took place. A favorable result. The bill won a preliminary approval and I started to cry. The initial crying of joy was then transformed into the sadness of being abroad and having no one to celebrate with. It was a bittersweet taste of

not being there, in such a historical moment, participating in the huge celebrations of women´s movements.

In a twist of fate, during the following debate in the Senate, the 8th of August, I was in Argentina. This time, I also felt mixed emotions, but due to completely contrary reasons. From the middle of the debate, it was already clear that the result was not going to be favorable and the law was not going to pass, in a Chamber that was much more conservative than the first one. However, despite my anger with the tentative result, I was also feeling happy. The noise inside the bus that was taking me to the city center did not allow me to listen well to the speeches. The conversations with my friend Maca while we were sharing *mate* tea in her house covered the lawmakers´ voice on Youtube and the streets of my city filled with green scarves were saying more than any senator. I was there, within the tide, with my own scarf, a gift from Caro, with my nails painted in green and with my friends. We were thousands, demanding the bill´s approval and sharing that moment in which the number of young and diverse women was impressive. Sometimes, when the internet functioned, the organizers would put the live debate on the big screen. In that mass of feminist majority, there was a collective boo every time we heard statements like "poor women have their children because that is the only way they have to achieve something in life." But also there were stunning applauses every time a senator recognized the feminist struggle and the women´s movements´ efforts to put abortion on the agenda. There were several *pañuelazos* in which we hoisted up the scarf and chanted in one big voice *anticonceptivos para no abortar, aborto legal para no morir* (birth control to not abort, legal abortion to not die). A popular dance and jump was also present with the rhythm "*abajo el patriarcado se va a caer, arriba el feminismo que va a vencer"* (down with patriarchy that will fall, up with the feminism that will win). When the debate finished and the bill didn´t pass, I was with my friends, eating corn polenta and sharing the sadness of the result.

Now, a few months after those moments and many kilometers away from my city, I review again the lawmakers´ speeches. I have an analytical eye and a mind filled with new theories and knowledge. I distance myself from an object of study that generates mixed emotions. I do not reject them, I soften them, and they become part of my analysis too. I revisit my initial question with the aim of understanding what is behind people´s conceptualization of abortion which creates the challenges of legalizing it.

As Morán Faúndes (2013) acknowledges, voluntary abortion strains cultural mandates crossing through the body such as motherhood, the heterosexual family, and the community, and values around freedom, life, and death. The body acts as a contested terrain that exceeds biological reproduction and concerns social and cultural reproduction in societies where "women´s sexuality and reproductive capacity (…) frequently symbolize the nation and its future" (Smyth 2005, 36). Thus, theories of gender and nation help me to understand how much patriarchy is grounded in political configurations, being motherhood, for instance, sacred not only in familial spaces but also in national imaginaries and state structures. However, the articulation between gender and nation is not so simple to outline. In this thesis, while analyzing the appeals of issues of national identity, sovereignty, and state projects made by the Argentinian legislators in 2018, I discover that national matters have been disputed by both positions supporting and rejecting legal abortion. Conservative groups have been reinforcing heteronormative hegemonic notions and challenging the notion of Argentinian identity as a reflection of the west. Feminist stances, on their part, have been shaking heteropatriarchal views of the nation but reproducing dominant colonial logics. The analysis proves that the nation is relevant to both positions and new types of progressive/ 'feminist' nationalism have been emerging.

To acknowledge these conclusions, this research follows the theories of gender and nation combined with feminist critiques of nationalism, the State, Law, and citizenship. All of

them are crisscrossed by decolonial feminist perspectives which I use in the analysis and to describe the building of the Argentinian nation-state in Chapter I. There, I study different periods of Argentinian history in which notions of gender and nation were being articulated. I look at the way women´s citizenship and national belonging rested on hegemonic notions of motherhood and how women´s movements contested and re-signified them. Through this, I arrive at the recent Argentinian political context in which there has been an expansion of reproductive and sexual rights but abortion is still illegal. I scrutinize in particular to the debates´ speeches using feminist Critical Discourse Analysis – a methodology that helps to unpack the constitutive elements of discourses and examine if they reproduce, sustain, or transform relations of domination. My primary sources are the transcripts of the speeches given by more than 200 legislators in 35 hours of debate in June and August 2018.

Before singling out discourses on the nation contested by the lawmakers against and for the Bill on the *Interrupción Voluntaria del Embarazo* (Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy, hereafter the 'Bill'), I outline the common grounds share by the two sides supporting and opposing this Bill as a way to go beyond binary conceptualizations. As is presented in Chapter II, both stances have addressed their arguments calling for the role as representatives of their parties and people´s will. They have positioned themselves as defending human rights, poor people, and an engaged state. In Chapters III and IV, I arrive to the core analysis of this thesis that examines the extent of which gendered ideas of nation, state and citizenship have been undergoing a process of resignification by both anti and pro-legal abortion advocates in Argentina. I concentrate on the arguments put forward by each position, framing them against broader social movements that give support to each position. A conservative heteropatriarchal movement frames the opponents to the Bill whereas the feminist Campaign for legal abortion constitutes the backing of Bill-supporters.

With this research, I expect to fill a gap in the theorization of gender and nation in Latin American contexts. I also hope to contribute to the analysis of anti-abortion arguments within feminist critiques on nationalism. I examine the connections between feminism and nationalism, how feminist movements dispute, re-signify, and re-produce notions of national belonging, and the implications this may generate. This study of the co-articulation between gender and nation-state also broadens the scope of International Relations looking at how these structures are going through processes of transformation while gender is under discussion. Finally, I attempt to contribute to the struggle to make abortion legal, not because I completely trust in state institutions but mostly so that women´s autonomy over their bodies can be recognized in the general narrative of the Argentinian community - an imagined community that affects my personal senses of identity and touches my personal feelings of national belonging as well.

Chapter I: Gender and nation in Argentina

Feminist theories of nationalism and the state

In this thesis, I analyze the way in which the competing arguments over abortion politics in Argentina were nationally framed. I start from the proposition that that issues concerning reproduction and sexuality exceed the sphere of intimacy and personal decisions. Throughout history, they have been articulated, regulated, and contested within discourses of the population, sovereignty, community interest, and national values. I thus frame my investigation through the theoretical lenses of feminist critiques on nationalism which address the way the discourses of nation and the discourses of gender intersect and are co-constructed (Yuval-Davis 2004, 17). In addition, as the struggle to legalize abortion is inscribed in the state legislation and apparatuses, feminist and decolonial theoretical approaches to the state also frame this research. In this chapter, I present all these theoretical lenses and, finally, I point out some considerations regarding reproductive rights as enablers of citizenship expansion and contestation of national discourses.

Feminist perspectives on nationalism have problematized both the theoretical approach to concepts and the production and reproduction of national discourses. Regarding the former, the nation is defined as an imagined, limited and sovereign, political community (Anderson 1983, 15). As a distinctive imaginary that joins together personal and collective identities, nations mobilize emotional powers. Following this idea, Calhoun (2002, 6) identifies three dimensions of nationalism: as a project of certain national self-government; as an evaluation, or ethical imperative of superior moral values; and as a discourse which produces common rhetoric of national identity. The national rhetoric revolves around special topics. On one hand, it addresses temporal axes of past, present, and future, related to a common origin and culture, continuity/tradition, and future generations. On the other hand, the national rhetoric has spatial axes in its connection to boundaries of territory and population. Last, it implicates political

axes referred to sovereignty, unity, legitimacy, and membership (Calhoun 2002, 4,5; Wodak, Hirsch, and Mitten 2005, 28). In opposition to the discursive production of an 'essential and eternal' national identity, discourses of the nation are the result of a complex effect of competing discourses over time that are narratively constructed according to particular interests, audiences, spaces, and socio-historical contexts. Furthermore, the inner construction of the national identity implies an operation of power that marks the inclusion/exclusion process of who and what counts as national and who and what as foreign (Billig 2010, 27; Smyth 2005, 35). Consequently, the (re) production process of the nation has specific racial, class, and gender dimensions, and a theory of gender power is then crucial for a comprehensive analysis.

Theorists of the nation agree that the nation was imagined as a 'natural' extension of the familial and kinship relations, extrapolating both the human bonding and the relations of authority to the macro level. Even the term nation comes from the word 'natio': to be born (McClintock 1993, 63). However, feminist critiques had called attention to the gendered implications of this imaginary. The naturalization of women´s and children´s subordination to the male-adult allows the justification of hegemonic national projects and the legitimization of other hierarchical forms of domination (McClintock 1993, 64). Moreover, nations as families are conceived in heterosexist terms, reinforcing the heteronormative binary man/woman that denies sexual diversity (Peterson 2000, 41). The traditional and 'natural' feature of the family, which is heterosexual, patriarchal and reproductive, is conceived as the original cell of the nation. Thereafter, women are ambiguously included/excluded into the nation, mainly through their relation to men (McClintock 1993, 65). Their role in the nation is usually symbolic, reproductive and supportive, emphasizing that womanhood is inherently identified with motherhood.

The national heterosexual family imaginary assigns different places for women and men in the nationalist enterprise related to hegemonic notions of femininity and masculinity. And, although in some analysts gender is presented as a separate category, it is never an isolated factor but is intersected with sexuality, race, and class in the hierarchical assignation of national places. Nira Yuval-Davis (2004) elucidates three dimensions in which gender (connected with the other categories) and nation work particularly together. Firstly, the genealogical dimension, concerned with the 'myth of common origin' and the 'purity of the race', pays special attention to biological reproduction. Women, because of their reproductive capacity, are key to nationalist concerns about the quality and quantity of the population. Yuval-Davis recognizes three discourses that dominate national discourses of population control: 'people as power' in which demographical growth is crucial for the development of the nation; eugenic discourse worried about the race/class/gender quality of the population; and Malthusian discourse which is concerned about overpopulation (Yuval-Davis 1996, 18–22). Secondly, the cultural dimension considers women as the cultural reproducers and the cultural signifiers of the collectivity. Women are not only assigned to transmit the 'authentic' folk but also to embody the essence and honor of the nation (Yuval-Davis 2004, 70–100). Thirdly, the civil dimension refers to state citizenship in relation to the national membership. The author points out that nation and state are complexly intertwined but it is still possible to define the state as a "body of institutions which are centrally organised around the intentionality of control with a given apparatus of enforcement at its command and basis" (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989, 5). In this sense, state membership and citizenship are also a matter of power relations, connected to gender dynamics.

Western modern societies founded their states´ elemental structures based on liberal theories of the social contract. They shaped an imagined narration in which, in an original moment, individuals agreed to give up part of their individual freedom to the achievement of

civil freedom and security. However, the original contract theory is equally constituted by a sexual contract, and freedom is interrelated with the subjugation of women (Pateman 2009, 1). Certain men entered into contracts and became 'individuals' capable of agreeing. While they agreed to form a fraternal society, they also agreed on the access to women´s bodies. Civil society was divided into two spheres in which only one was politically and socially relevant. The other, the domestic one, was constructed as an intimate and private sphere and the proper place for women (Pateman 2009, 10). Moreover, as Peterson (2013) describes, the western early state-making "involved 'normalizing' foundational dichotomies" such as mind/body, culture/nature, civilized/barbarian, public/private, masculine/feminine which were codified and taken for granted in the modern nationalist and colonial enterprises (Peterson 2013, 60). The heteropatriarchal family/household was instituted as the core socio-economic unit to assure and control property transmission, citizenship, and socio-biological reproduction (Peterson 2013, 57). The (hetero)sexual contract was crucial in (re)producing structural inequalities that went beyond sex/gender and involved nationality, class, and race.

Decolonial theories add new dimensions to Pateman´s and Peterson´s conceptualization and emphasize also the modern colonial matrix of power that has operated globally since America´s conquest. According to this matrix, social relations are structured in a capitalist, racist, Eurocentric, heterosexist and patriarchal way (Espinosa Miñoso et al. 2014). The scholar Aníbal Quijano (2000, 202) explains that coloniality of power refers to the establishment of race as the basic form of social classification that naturalizes a human division between dominant/superior Europeans and dominated/inferior non-Europeans. In addition, modernity and eurocentrism involve the discrimination and silencing of the products and knowledges of non-European bodies (Mignolo 2018). Decolonial feminists like María Lugones (2016) incorporate the importance of gender as an analytical category central to the coloniality of power matrix where all the gender relations were transformed after the conquest. According to

Rita Segato (2016), in the colonial process, the sexual contract was introduced, strengthening the binary and hierarchical gender division, and extrapolating this logic to other power relations. The public sphere was captured by a particular type of subject that became the pattern of the universal. It is the masculine, son of the colonial conquest, white or bleached, owner, educated and 'pater familias' (Segato 2016, 94). The state, its institutions, and laws are products of and produce patriarchal and colonial relations of power that legitimatize and assure structural violence.

While most of feminist critiques on nationalism and state examine the power of the nation-state and its institutions to disempower women and non-hegemonic subjects, other scholars study also the implications of women´s movements making demands upon the state. The state, as an institution with considerable power to regulate gender and sexual relations, it has also been at the focus of feminist and women´s movements (Smyth 2005, 75). Thus, as Georgina Waylen (1998, 7) asserts, the state and its structures should be considered as sites of political struggle where actors can impact in changing those structures. Women seeking political power in formal institutions must reassess their traditional self-perceptions as well as dispute and rearrange social and political orders within the community (Kaufman and Williams 2007, 16). Part of these rearrangements consist on shaping contested national identities, myths of common origin and destiny, and demarcation between insiders and outsiders. At the same time, as Ranchod-Nilsson (2000) says, women´s political activism involves changes to both in gender relations within households and in the understanding of what the state and the community should do and be.

Feminist movements´ entering and disputing formal political spheres, especially claiming sexual and reproductive rights as in the case analyzed in this thesis, affects the traditional scope of politics. In the first place, women demand being considered as legitimate actors in the public sphere whose personal issues matter on a collective scale. The demand for

sexual and reproductive rights breaks the public/private boundary highlighting that the public sphere regulates intimate issues, demanding to politically reconsider these regulations (Brown 2008). In the second place, women´s political activism challenges traditional understandings of state citizenship. Yuval Davis (2011) defines state citizenship as "´full membership in the community' which encompasses civil, political, and social rights and responsibilities" and the recognition of the "degree of autonomy" of individuals and collectivities" (Yuval-Davis 2011, 24,91). Hence, the claim for sexual and reproductive rights addresses that individuals and collectives´ citizenship will not be full until the state recognizes their autonomy to decide on their bodies and identities. Moreover, community membership will not be complete unless individuals´ subjectivity counts on its own and not as a mean for something else. Part of this, demands that women be seen as socially relevant less due to their reproductive capacities and more because of their own self and personhood (Brown 2014).

Finally, women entering the political sphere challenges the traditional scope of politics where it is not just changing the content of the laws but also the way in which decisions are taken. In the worlds of Rita Segato (2016) just as intimate issues permeate political spaces, the public sphere should incorporate domestic and feminine-associated ways of collective organization where traditional politics are only one part of it. According to this author, the struggles for sexual and reproductive rights make sense as part of a more general project to change unjust power relations within and outside the state´s apparatuses. The case of legal abortion, especifically points out that the lack of the state´s recognition of people´s autonomy to decide on their pregnancies force them to put their lives at risk (Bellucci 2014). Moreover, Rita Segato (2016) also considers the legal discourse as the 'master narrative' in which imagined ideas of the nation are subscribed. Therefore, the fight for legal abortion should be framed as a struggle to obtain affiliation in this grand national narrative and contest it. The

claim for legal abortion is a claim for women´s recognition inside the national discourse as autonomous and fully individuals among other people.

Hegemonic imaginaries of Gender and Nation in Argentina

The theories of gender and nation-state reviewed above have been applied to the study of different contexts and places. Regarding legal abortion, scholars have analyzed the reciprocal impact of abortion debates on national identities and gender relations. For instance, Kozlowska et. al. (2016) examine four Catholic states to show that opponents of abortion support their restrictive reproductive politics appealing to the embedment of national identity with religion. Specifically about the Ireland context, Martin (1999) studies the way debates around abortion set bodies´ performativity in the symbolic equation between Irish women with the nation. For her part, Smyth (2005) shows how Irish advocates opposed to legal abortion as a way to retain a national distinctiveness in a context signed by liberal globalization, and that had negatively affected women´s citizenship. Baird (2006) and Millar (2015) pay attention to the Australian situation in which the fear of white women practicing abortion has racial and nationalist connotations. Finally, Whittaker (2001) studies how discussions around abortion complicates the depiction of Thai women as the ideal national citizen as those who abort are seen as criminals and disobedient. Here, I expand the literature articulating abortion and nation by analyzing not only the gendered implications of nationalist conservative arguments but also the re-framing of national imaginaries by feminist movements demanding legal abortion.

In Argentina, the issue of reproductive and sexual rights has been studied from different disciplines and perspectives but not from feminist theories of nationalism. While historical studies frame abortion within women´s struggles for rights´ expansion and feminist activism and resistance (Sutton and Borland 2013; Zurbriggen and Anzorena 2013; Bellucci 2014; Burton 2017b; Alcaraz 2018), legal studies put the focus on ethical concepts and constitutional discussions (Brown 2008; Zicavo, Astorino, and Saporosi 2015; Maffía 2018; Bergallo 2019).

Moreover, some scholars examine the activism against legalized abortion and its strategies of intervention (Peñas Defago and Morán Faúndes 2014; Bessone 2017; Carbonelli, Mosqueira, and Felitti 2011). However, as I show in this thesis, national elements traverse the abortion debate in Argentina, especially those reinforcing motherhood as a national responsibility. Therefore, in this thesis, I broaden the Argentinian research on sexual and non-reproductive rights through the lens of gendered nationalism.

In addition, I expand the application of these theories to Latin-American contexts where the scholarship is still relatively modest. The journal *Íconos* from FLACSO Ecuador (2007) published a special dossier regarding gender and nation in Latin America and, particularly about Argentina, Diana Taylor (2005) and Donna Guy (1995) have framed their investigations using these theories. In her book, Diana Taylor considers the Argentinian last dictatorship in Argentina and the public performances about it conceiving the Argentinian nation as a battle between men over a feminine body where women (symbolically and factually) are represented as an absence in the communal imaginary. Donna Guy, for her part, focuses on XX Century Argentinian prostitution through hegemonic gendered national constructions where no-normative identities – as prostitutes- were portrayed as attacking the nation. Finally, Masson (2017) also evokes these theories at the moment of analyzing the national relevance of the Armed Forces in Argentina. These studies are relevant but no enough to have a further comprehension on the importance that the nation had in the current Argentinian abortion debates, as this thesis pursues. These scholars consider different historical periods of analysis and lack a deeper articulation between nation, motherhood, politics of reproduction and gender re-configurations, as I do.

In this present section I examine first the changing narratives around gender and nation in Argentinian history and the way they have been articulated with political, economic, and social interests in different periods of time. As the literature specialized on it is not wide, I write

this section combining scholarship regarding the development of Argentina as a nation-state (Segato 2007; García 2010) and the history of women and women´s movements in the country (Barrancos 2007; Di Marco 2010). In addition, I look at those public issues concerning sexuality, reproduction, and women´s bodies as relevant for political purposes to analyze the articulation between motherhood and the nation-state. The works of Nari (2004) and Felitti (2009) study the political regulation of childbearing and motherhood through different Argentinian historical periods and help me to develop the way reproduction has figured into concepts of the nation and the contestation and resignification towards it, carried on mainly by women´s movements. In the following paragraphs, I outline the gendered articulation between nation, motherhood, sexuality, and reproduction in Argentina in four periods from the War of Independence until the return to democracy in 1983. The recent contemporary context and its impact on sexual and non-reproductive rights is considered in the subsequent section.

The first period under examination refers to the construction of the Argentinian nation-state during the first century after the war of independence in 1816. As said previously, in the formation of the 'independent' Latin American states, the coloniality of power survived establishing a double process of racialization. On one side, the nation-states in the region were globally marked as non-white and inferior; and on the other side, each nation formed its particular mechanisms of exclusion of its alterity. In this first stage, the dominant elite symbolically and materially constructed the Argentinian nation as a homogeneous, civilized and Eurocentric one. In addition, the binary 'Civilization/Barbarism' developed by the writer and second Argentinian president, Domingo Sarmiento, had two related connotations (Sarmiento 1874). On the one hand was the separation between Buenos Aires, the 'head' of the country, urban and developed, and the savage and illiterate interior 'body' (Briones 2005, 23). In terms of population, the division was between the accepted *criollos,* children of European immigrants, and the non-accepted *mestizos,* indigenous, *gauchos* and people of African-

descent. A homogenizing project of "ethnic terror" was ensured through institutional and cultural mechanisms which spread forms of surveillance and violence to suppress diversity (Segato 2007, 30).

The process of building a uniform ethnic model was concerned with the quality and quantity of the population and was summarized in the motto used by the architects of the nation: 'Educate, populate, and sanitize' (Segato 2007, 57). To sanitize was referred to cure the sick 'others' within the territory who were immigrants or natives and must be healed to belong to the nation, mainly through education. As Stoler (1989) explains about European colonies in southeast Asia, the Argentinian elite divided the community in asymmetries of sex, class and race according to European models of supremacy. Sanitization and education were emphasized as ways to incorporate those 'unwanted' in the society, yet keeping hierarchical divisions untouched. Besides, to populate was related to the elite´s concern with emptiness and extension of the territory which should increase its population to be a sustainable country. As McClintock (1993) points out, the uses of 'empty land' is related to the notion of a 'virgin land' waiting for male-insemination and territorial appropriation. In fact, during 1878-85 the Argentinian state organized military campaigns to annihilate the indigenous populations and extract their lands and relegate them to the margins (García 2010, 5-6, 12-13). More than a virgin woman, Argentine land was posited as one whose children were killed so that she could then breed new exceptional ones. Both symbolically and actually, the emptiness of the land served as an excuse and desire for the elite to promote and force a certain type of European immigration and white reproduction (Nari 2004, 17).

The education and the population projects had women as key players, crossed by a set of epistemologies and measures that were circulating in that moment of history. On one hand, republican concepts of the family as the anchor of the society and the 'natural' separation of private/public spheres were crystallized in the legal codes, relegating women to a domestic and

subordinate place. On the other hand, the consolidation of medicine as a science, and hygienist and social racial theories were combined to monopolize control over women´s bodies and promote a certain type of human reproduction (Barrancos 2007, 90). Matters of poverty, promiscuity, and criminality were associated with miscegenation and improper children´s raising, leaving white upper-class women in charge of racial and cultural reproduction (Stoler 1989, 643). In Argentina, nationalists and racialists rejected the idea of a 'common pure origin' related to indigenous populations and waves of migration and used the state to build a superior future authentic race (Nari 2004, 38). Following the conceptualization of Yuval-Davis (1996), Argentinian women´s function in the nation was associated to their reproductive role as cultural and biological reproducers of a particular neutral and white ethnicity, civilized and healthy enough to populate the country.

The motherhood duty and the relevance of the traditional family were constantly part of the state´s rhetoric and measures at least until the return to democracy in 1983 (Felitti 2011, 115). They were supported both by the continuous threat of an empty place and by the Catholic Church doctrine which established the eminently reproductive function of heterosexual marriage (Felitti 2009, 69). In this first period until the Second World War, the concern over emptiness and the future pure race resulted in a set of medical, political, and educative practices and discourses to create the adequate 'mother', with an internalized maternal instinct, and homogeneous ways of raising children (Nari 2004). However, as continued to occur in the other stages, the birth rates were not increased as desired, proving that women maintained control over their reproduction, especially with abortion practices in this first period. Moreover, the initial women´s movements of that time used the duty of devoted and loving motherhood as a citizenship pledge. In particular, since the beginning of the XIX century, socialist feminists demanded civil and political rights in compensation for the fundamental social mission they

were carrying out as mothers (Felitti 2009, 33). The right to vote was finally achieved in 1947 under the role of the Peronist government which I address in a second stage of analysis.

This second period covers the first two Peronist governments from 1946 to 1955 in the post Second World War context. According to "the 20 Peronist truths", Peronism is a political movement that works for the motherland and the common good, promotes social justice, economic sovereignty, and national unity, and has its basis in Christianity and humanism. In addition, its core values are work for the protection of human dignity and childhood, seen as crucial for the making of national future and grandeur. "To invigorate the family is to strengthen the nation since it is its own cell", said Juan Perón himself in 1944 (Álvarez Rodríguez 2006, 123). Thus, he established the proper central place of women in the nation: physical and moral reproductive mothers of Peronist or 'justicialist' values, considered as Argentinian values. However, during this time, middle-class women in Argentina entered massively to universities and working places, expanding the hegemonic ideal of women-mother (Borrescio 2015, 110). At that time, the modern woman had to work and participate in the economic and public sphere as an extension of their maternal duties, without losing them at all. The tolerable activities for women were cooking, sewing and community service, among others. Evita, the first Peron´s wife represents the iconic figure of this period, where she proclaimed herself the mother of all the Argentinians and styled herself as a devoted mother caring for the poor, always in a subordinate position dedicated to her husband (Luna 2000, 192). As Diana Taylor (2005) also addresses, Evita rhetoric of 'mother' of her people was used to justify her public roles exceeding hegemonic gender norms and not being a mother she herself.

During the 60s and 70s, after the demographic explosion, the western 'developed' countries started to worry about the increased levels of population and launched measures to combat it in the 'underdeveloped' countries. The reaction to this and the birth policies carried

out by the dictatorship governments constitute the third period of analysis. The stigma of being an empty country was resumed once again, now as a degree of national development and sovereignty against external imperialist forces (Felitti 2009, 24). Conservative governments rejected family planning policies on the grounds that they were attacking both the state´s sovereignty and Argentinian family moral values. Even more, they justified their punitive and anti-democratic measures as a path to save the Christian family and fight against the 'corrupted' leftist way of life. The dictatorship governments of the 50s, 60s, and 70s defended a national identity based on a monogamous, heterosexual, procreative and large family, educated in the values of Christianity.

All throughout the three periods, the Catholic Church was an important political actor and worked to impose its values as constitutive pillars of the national identity (Di Marco 2010, 56). Therefore, in this third stage, everything against Christian morality was considered an "attack on the moral and the good habits" embodied in the figures of the foreign communist ideology (Felitti 2009, 86). Despite this, Argentinian society was developing new ways of organizing the family, using contraceptive methods and contesting hegemonic impositions. Feminist movements and homosexual activist groups emerged in small numbers during the first years of the 1970s demanding legal rights, recognition, divorce, and abortion (Bellucci 2014, 149).

However, despite the increased politicization of sexual and reproductive rights, a restrictive and violent climate was established by the third Peronist government and the last civic-military dictatorship. The government of Isabel de Perón (1974-1976) completely criminalized abortion and totally banned the contraceptive pill because these were said to be an 'attack' on the Argentine family. The subsequent authoritarian government left those measures untouched and reinforced the central role of the military state in "eradicating the diseased cells of the social fabric" (Zarco 2011, 235). The government consolidated an

authoritarian, patriarchal and murderous state through terror, tortures, forced disappearance of persons, and the theft of babies. Symbolically, the 'correct' women were relegated once more to their domestic and maternal duties, and pushed to 'remedy' their 'deviant' children and re-populate the emptiness left by the needed 'dirty war' (all of them euphemisms used to mask crimes against humanity). The leadership of the Catholic hierarchy was complicit in these crimes, covering up what was happening and even positioning the fight against abortion as the only fight for human rights in Argentina (Felitti 2011, 100).

Nevertheless, it was a group of women called the Madres y Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, hereafter "Madres") who led the protest against the murder and disappearance of their children and human rights´ violations (Zarco 2011). This human rights movement gained social legitimacy, as Lynn Morgan (2015) writes, by strengthening "the subject position that gave meaning to courageous mothers willing to sacrifice everything for their children. Those children, in turn, came to represent both the terrible past and the resilient future of the nation" (Morgan 2015, n.p.). Mother´s insistence on them being the mothers of all the Argentinian affected by the dictatorship, challenged the notion of mothering as something private and individualistic. At the same time, this rhetoric symbolically put them as the mothers of the new Argentinian imagined community emphasized by the space they represent. Plaza de Mayo (May Square) is the space where most Argentinian crucial historical events took place and the main foundational site of Buenos Aires. By appropriating this mythical space, as Rosenberg (1992) analyses, Madres consolidated their position and desire of being the founders of a different collective life. Madres´ political action based on traditionally feminine roles of love, caring and self-sacrifice strengthen new ways of activism in the region and impacted the development of future movements.

Recent political context: 30 years of democracy

With the return to democracy in 1983, a new chapter in the Argentinian history was inaugurated. The new context opened the achievement of some sexual and reproductive rights, and the proliferation of social movements and new crucial political actors which enabled the questioning of hegemonic gender roles and national identities. During the second half of the 80s, women´s movements reemerged in a collective scenario characterized by the expansion of social mobilizations for political causes. Indeed, all the public organizations were impregnated with the language and demands of human rights that led to the judicial trial of the members of the military government in 1985 (Burton 2017b, 5). Traditional pillars of Argentinian nation such us the importance of the armed forces and the Catholic Church were significantly discredited by their roles in human rights abuses during the dictatorship(s), enabling the development of new significant actors in the public arena. In Buenos Aires, the *Multisectorial de la Mujer* (Multisectoral for the woman) was formed and gathered women from different political parties, unions, and civil organizations to attain legal reforms regarding issues important to women. Their work led to laws arranging shared parenting (1985) and legalizing divorce (1987), and the ratification of the CEDAW convention (1985).[1] Although there was a climate of criticizing the involvement of the Church in the civic-military government and its conservative views on society, divorce and shared parenting were discursively legitimized as a way to protect the sacred value of the family (Felitti 2009, 125).

[1] The 1978 law of divorce incorporated it in Civil Code as a cause of marriage dissolution and allowed divorced spouses to remarry under the same legislation. Information available: https://uk.practicallaw.thomsonreuters.com/9-566-4107?transitionType=Default&contextData=(sc.Default)&firstPage=true&comp=pluk&bhcp=1#co_anchor_a299342. Last accessed: 23/04/2019
The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is seen as an international bill of rights for women. It gives a definition of what constitutes discrimination against women and provides a platform to take action against it. Information available: https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm. Last accessed: 23/04/2019.

At the same time, new spaces for women´s studies were created and feminist organizations expanded their presence and connections to other Latin American groups.

During the 90s, the international agenda interested in women´s issues ambiguously permeated Argentinian politics. On one side, women started to be incorporated into the state institutions thanks to the first election Quota Law in the world (1991).[2] However, the neoliberal government of Menem (1989-1999) endorsed the reduction of the state social responsibilities, the strengthening of the exclusive concentration of wealth, and the increase of social and economic inequalities (ciriza 2013, 72). In this context, feminist organizations went through a process of institutionalization both by the state and by international cooperation agencies, that was criticized by autonomous feminist groups (Masson 2007). On the other hand, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) legitimized the consideration of reproductive rights as human rights in Argentina. Nevertheless, in Argentina, these rights were related to reproductive health and responsible parenthood and dissociated from non-reproduction (like abortion) and non-binary sexual identities (Burton 2017b, 7). That is why, in the next chapters, I follow scholars like Bellucci (2014, 288); Brown (2008) when conceptualizing the demand for legal abortion as (non) reproductive and sexual rights in order to separate it from compulsory motherhood and coital penetration.

In Argentina, the millennium started with an increased economic, social and political crisis that ended in a social rebellion demanding the government's resignation in December 2001. In an environment of economic adjustment, unemployment, thousands of people below the poverty line and distrust in the political system, new types of social arrangements emerged (Burton 2017b, 9). Urban lower and middle-class citizens organized themselves into the

[2] "The Argentine law requires women to constitute at least 30% of candidates and stipulates that at least one woman be placed in every third spot on the electoral list" (Baldez 2004, 232).

Asambleas Populares Barriales (Popular Neighborhood Assemblies) to discuss and solve common problems. Women played key roles in these local assemblies, leading and actively participating as *piqueteras*[3] in the street demonstrations, picking up the tradition of protest forged by the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo (Sutton and Borland 2013, 201). In addition, the Encuentros Nacionales de Mujeres (National Women´s Meeting) which annually gather women from all over the country, started to become more popular and to include thousands of women from different socio-economic backgrounds. In the past two decades, these Meetings have constituted a fundamental political space for the claiming of sexual and reproductive rights and the legalization of abortion, as will be examined in Chapter IV.

The unstable socio-political situation became more reliable after 2003 with the election of Néstor Kirchner as president. Coming from a Peronist tradition, Kirchner and his wife Cristina Fernandez, who was then the first Argentinian women elected as president, built their government around nationalist and populist rhetoric. According to Lida Miranda (2015), the *Kirchnerist* movement consolidated an anti-imperialist nationalism evoking common Latin American conditions and rejecting liberal measures. In this sense, the new government criticized U.S interference in the region and strengthened the relationship with other South American countries. The nationalist and populist discourse called for a union of the Argentinian majoritarian 'people' against the minority oligarchic elite of businessman, landholders, owners of the corporate media monopoly, members of the Catholic Church hierarchy, and military men. Moreover, Kirchnerism sustained a nationalist logic demanding sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands and rejecting the 'vulture funds' in international forums. In a positive economic atmosphere, and applying contradictory neoliberal policies, the government took the

[3] *Piquete* refers to the standing or walking demonstration of protest in a significant spot. It started in Argentina during the 90s and became massive in the social rebellion of 2001-2002 that includes the uses of pans, burning tires, and highways blockades, among other things.

path of reindustrialization of the country, reduction of unemployment and expansion of human rights.

Thanks to the feminist and LGBT movements, new crucial laws were achieved such as Law for Reproductive Health (2003), National Program of Integral Sexual Education (2006), Law for Equal Marriage (2010), Law of full protection for the prevention, sanction and eradication of violence against women (2010), and a Gender Identity Act (2012). With this last law, sanctioned during Fernandez´s presidency (2007-2015), Argentina became the first country in Latin America to legalize same-sex marriage in 2010 and the country with the world´s most progressive gender identity legislation in 2012 (Morgan 2015). The law understands gender identity as "the internal and individual way in which gender is perceived by persons, that can correspond or not to the gender assigned at birth" (Law 26.743 2012, art. 2). All persons can request changes in their civil registry without needing to prove any surgical, hormonal or psychological procedure. In any case, the law guarantees individuals´ with the right to free access to any desired medical treatment. Despite being very progressive, these laws are still thought of in a binary discourse in which, for example, the legal registration of a transgender person´s identity should be either female or male (Alcaraz 2018, 199). Even more, monogamous marriage is still the normative way of organizing the family. Finally, according to the Argentinian legal code where regular abortion is criminalized, sexuality is still associated with procreation and not with desire and pleasure.

Nevertheless, there have been important cultural transformations in the last years that politicize heteronormative gendered relations of power in different social spaces and go beyond legal arrangements. One of the main expressions of these shifts is the collective mobilization that the feminist movements and the #NiUnaMenos (Not one [woman] less) platform have articulated. Since 2015, the platform of Argentinian female artists, journalists and academics has launched campaigns against gender-based violence which organized large demonstrations

throughout the country. Moreover, the demand against 'femicides', a term that defines the intentional murder of women because they are women, also touched on other topics like sexual harassment, equal pay, sex worker and transgender rights, and the legality of abortion. The huge mobilizations came to be called the *marea feminista* (feminist tide) which, in a recent round table in Argentina, Judith Butler (2019) described as something that comes and recedes and comes again with another tide and produces a different constellation. For her, *marea* is not a set of stages, it is an ongoing dynamic where the future of it is not fully known. In a neoliberal, globalized, and capitalist context in which the current Argentinian government has not been able to reduce the high poverty and inflation rates and insists on economic and social adjustment, feminisms come to consolidate collective responses to all of them. At the same time, conservative groups react in an opposite direction, against the advancement of feminist transformations and sexual and non-reproductive rights. The characteristics of both forces are examined in depth in Chapters III and IV.

In 2018, it was the first time in the recent history of Argentina that the two Chambers of the Argentinian Parliament discussed and voted on a bill to legalize abortion. After many years of demanding this, it finally entered the national legislature thanks to feminist activism, especially the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion as will be described in Chapter IV. In order to make abortion legal, the bill had to be approved in the two Chambers of the Argentinian parliament. As we have seen, the Bill was approved in the Chamber of Deputies in June, but it was rejected in the Senate during the voting day in August. Despite having very progressive laws, abortion is still not legal in Argentina. As mentioned in the introduction, in this thesis I wonder why it is so difficult to achieve this, I thus focus on the lawmaker´s discourses that go beyond issues of biology, religion and legality to address matters of national belonging and state configuration.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Primary Sources

In this thesis, I analyze the speeches given by the lawmakers in both Chambers of the Argentinian Congress during the voting days of the Bill to legalize abortion using a feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. In the Chamber of Deputies, the debate and voting were held on June 13th and 14th, it lasted 23 hours and had 184 speakers. In the Senate, the debate and voting were held on August 8th and 9th, it lasted 12 hours and had 60 speakers. My primary sources are the official transcripts of these speeches, available on the official web pages of the Chambers. I focus my analysis on the parliamentary context because it is the public institution par excellence purported to represent the 'people' and to create or change laws. Consequently, there is a central discursive presence of the collective imagined community which they represent and work for, which connects with my particular object of study. In order to insert these speeches in their context and connect them with the permanence and contestation of collective imaginaries, I read them through critical academic scholarship regarding gender, history, nation-state formation, social movements, and religion in Argentina.

Methodology

The feminist critical discourse analysis elaborated by Michelle Lazar (2007) works on and problematizes the Critical Discourse Analysis approach. CDA groups a "cluster of approaches" from different authors with similar theoretical backgrounds and concerns (Meyer 2001, 23). Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk and Michael Meyer among others, develop their particular critical methods of study mainly from the works of Foucault, the Frankfurt School and Critical Linguistics. As the authors acknowledge, CDA is concerned with social problems and seeks to uncover critically the way discourse and language produce, reproduce, legitimize and contest social inequalities and power abuses (Wodak 2001, 2; van

Dijk 2001, 96). According to Fairclough, CDA is an "analysis of the dialectical relationships between discourse (…) and other elements of social practices" (2003, 205). Particularly, it focuses on those social practices that are primarily discursive and figure as ways of acting, ways of representing and ways of being. Thus, CDA deals with the way an "order of discourse" articulates with different genres, discourses, and styles (Fairclough 2003, 206). Feminist CDA points out that these social practices are not neutral but are gendered, such that the analysis should criticize, too, the work of discourse in sustaining patriarchal and hierarchical gendered orders (Lazar 2007, 141,145). It also recognizes the way those discourses are resisted, contested and transformed by individual subjects and collectivities. The aim, therefore, is contributing to a change in existing unequal (gendered) relations.

Feminist CDA shares its main characteristics with CDA. First, as discourses are conceived as socio-historical, the understanding of the context is crucial. Thus, the analysis is interdisciplinary and combines a linguistic approach with other social, political, cultural, historical and psychological perspectives (Meyer 2001, 15). Second, feminist CDA involves a hermeneutic process of attentive study of the discourse´s meanings and its subtle ideological assumptions. In this connection, this method demands the reflexivity of the researcher in order to critically examine the analysis and practices and their (non) reproduction of hierarchical relations of power (Lazar 2007, 151,152). Third, CDA constitutes an open-ended approach where the text analysis is never complete and definitive (Fairclough 2003, 14). The production of knowledge is partial, situated and not neutral. Finally, and in line with everything above, as CDA is problem-oriented, each study should incorporate the theoretical and methodological tools that allow a closer approach to that problem and to the questions that guide the research (Wodak 2001, 67).

With the aim to follow the questions that guide this research, I use feminist CDA analysis to pay attention to the gendered construction of national belongings through competing

discourses. Thus, the analysis is developed through an interdisciplinary focus which articulates linguistic, historical, socio-political and feminist perspectives. The CDA approach developed by Norman Fairclough (2003) provides a general basis and methods for discourse analysis. Then, the work of Wodak et al. (2005) contributes to the analysis of the discursive construction of national identity. Lastly, apart from the feminist perspective of CDA, I rely on the works of Cameron (1997) and DeFrancisco (1997) to examine deeper the articulation between gender and discourse.

Fairclough´s method starts by focusing attention on a social problem that has a semiotic aspect and then examining the dialectical relationship between this aspect and the other social elements in which it is inserted (Fairclough 2003, 218). The core of the method stays in the analysis of the discourse itself, which involves both structural and textual analysis. The structural analysis focuses on the orders of discourse as those networks of social practices that are mainly linguistic in their character. They are formed by the articulation of genres as ways of acting, discourses as ways of representing, and styles as ways of being (Fairclough 2003, 26–28). These features may be studied separately but are dialectically related: discourses (representations) are enacted in genres (actions) and inculcated in styles (identifications). The external approach to text analysis pays less attention to the particular genre of a specific text and more attention to the *genre chains* present in it.

Although there is a primacy of a certain genre, discourses tend to be formed by different genres being linked in a particular way. In this relation, a central category of analysis is *intertextuality* which looks at how the internal relations of the text are connected with other 'external' texts and how other voices and sources are incorporated and re-contextualized there (Fairclough 2003, 36). *Assumptions*, as a type of implicitness, is another key category. They represent shared meanings taken for granted which can take the form of existential, propositional or value assumptions (Fairclough 2003, 55–57). Opposite to intertextuality,

assumptions hidden dialogicality and the presence of others´ voices in texts under notions of universality and common sense. According to Fairclough, hegemonic discourses are those which produce and legitimize common sense sustaining relations of domination (2003, 207).

The analysis of the internal relations of the text attends to the structure of the arguments, the semantic and grammatical relations, and the rhetoric strategies which provides legitimization to the argumentation. Every text structures its argumentation by the establishment of certain *grounds* or basic premises, through *warrants* that persuade and support the final *claim.* The warrants give the justification and logical argument from the grounds to the claim, and the *backing* gives support to the warrants per se (Fairclough 2003, 81). Some of the main rhetoric strategies are authorization, rationalization, mythopoesis and moral evaluation (Fairclough 2003, 98). As this research deals with parliamentary discussions over two polarized positions the analysis of the linguistic and rhetorical tactics for legitimization is crucial. The different vocabulary, semantic relations and grammatical features combined with certain assumptions and intertextuality, generate specific discourses. According to Fairclough, discourses are ways of representing aspects of the world from a particular perspective (Fairclough 2003, 129). The ideological work is present in every discourse as these representations of the world "contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination, and exploitation" (Fairclough 2003, 9). The point is to identify the ideological power of the discourses and how they reinforce or contest hegemony.

With the purpose to identify competing configurations of national belonging in the debate over abortion, the work of Wodak et. al. (2005) provides some methodological tools. At the macro-level of discourse, they identify various rhetorical strategies "use[d] to impose certain political beliefs, values, and goals" and to hide the imagined character of the nation (Wodak et. al. 2005, 9). They are constructive, preservative or justificatory, transformative, or destructive strategies of national identities (Wodak 2001, 70). On a linguistic level, the authors

pay attention to specific lexical units and syntactic devices that relate to the (re)production of sameness and difference on which national identity is based. Particularly, they examine the tropes of metonymy, synecdoche, personification, and the use of the deictic 'we' which can help to see, for example, the substitution of countries for persons, over-generalization and anthropomorphization (Wodak et. al. 2005, 43,44). However, in the work of Wodak et. al. there is a lack of acknowledgment of the way the whole construction of national identities and narratives are gendered. Thus, an articulation of this CDA approach to the national identity formation with a feminist CDA approach is needed.

Regarding the articulation between gender and discourse, Cameron (1997) proposes to pay critical attention to the discursive production of male and female sex differences. Gender relations produce women and men not only discursively but also the inner performance of linguistic is gendered. Moreover, sex difference is interrelated with other forms of oppression and social divisions to sustain unequal relations of power (Cameron 1997, 33). Thus, the purpose is to examine how discourses operate to secure and reproduce groups' domination and the essentialization of differences. In the same direction, DeFrancisco (1997) suggests to put power at the center of analysis and go beyond the female-male division. The category of power should be used to consider oppressive relations but also resistance and contestation to them. In the following chapters, I examine the speeches given by the lawmakers in the Argentinian parliamentary abortion debates in June and August 2018 using this feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. This approach helps to unravel the role play by discourses in sustaining hegemonic gendered imaginaries of Argentinian national identity and the space they leave to contestation and transformation.

Chapter II: General Framework and Common Grounds

As mentioned in the previous sections, the aim of this thesis is to unravel the contested gender and national discourses produced and reproduced by legislators advocating for and against legal abortion in the Argentinian Congress debates of 2018. To do so, the primary source of analysis are the transcripts of the MPs´ speeches given in the two sessions of parliament debates. Before analyzing the constitutive elements of both separate positions in the next two chapters, I first outline here the general framework and examine common grounds that were present in both positions. As an overall framework, I first present the current Argentinian legal order regarding abortion and the content of the 2018-Bill under discussion. Then, I explain the functioning of the Argentinian legislative power and legal mechanisms followed by the Bill until it was rejected in the Senate House. To analyze common grounds, I explain the particular genre of parliamentary debates and explore the shared allusions to poverty, the framework of human rights, the claim of representativeness and the demand for an engaged state.

General Framework

Argentinian legal order with respect to abortion and the new Bill

Since 1921, the Argentinian Criminal Code punishes abortion within a model of partial decriminalization based on causal factors (Verón 2018, 2). The 85th and 86th articles categorize abortion as a crime against the law and establish only two cases where abortion is not punishable: in cases of risk to the life or health of the mother, and in cases of the rape of a feeble-minded or demented woman (Burton 2017b, 2). In 2012, because of disputed interpretations regarding the articles, the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation stated in the F.A.L. case the scope of not punishable abortions. The court decision pointed out the legality of abortion at any case of rape and that there was no need for a judicial report in the allowed

situations (Bergallo 2019, n.p.). It also urged for adequate implementation of the health and institutional mechanisms in those cases of legal abortion. In 2015, the National Ministry of Health published a Protocol for comprehensive attention to the persons with the right to legal interruption of pregnancy. It reinforced the right of education, personal autonomy, and information, and considered health within a comprehensive approach. Following the World Health Organization, the protocol defines health involving not just the absence of illnesses but complete physical, mental, and social well-being (Burton 2017b, 2). Despite the court decision and the health protocol, the majority of the Argentinian jurisdictions have not to date accomplished mechanisms of integral attention for allowed abortions. Even in these cases, women who are allowed to abort have suffered unnecessary criminal and police report, bureaucratic obstacles, and social condemnation (Belli 2017, n.p.).

In 2018, the Argentinian Congress debated a new bill based on a mixed regime of decriminalization of abortion which included both the consideration of casual factors and a system of deadlines (Verón 2018, 3). On one hand, The Bill on the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (the "Bill") proposed a period of 14 weeks in which abortion should be provided by the health system without needing to prove any reason for the decision other than the person´s consent.[4] On the other hand, after that period, abortion would still be legal under certain circumstances: risk to the health and life of the *persona gestante* (expectant person), rape, and diagnosis of fetal malformation incompatible with life. Following the claim of the Argentinian LGBTT movements, the Bill included as holders of rights non-binary identified people who can get pregnant and called them as *personas gestantes* (expectant people).[5] From the first

[4] To summarize the Bill, I follow the one discussed in the Senate titled *Proyecto de Ley en revision sobre Regimen De Interrupcion Voluntaria Del Embarazo* (Bill under revision on the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy Regime), expedient number 22/18, from the Chamber of Deputies. Available online: http://www.senado.gov.ar/parlamentario/comisiones/verExp/22.18/CD/PL. Last accessed: 07/02/2019.

[5] Lacking the exact world in English, I decided to translate *personas gestantes* as expectant people. In this thesis, I follow the law and LGBTT advocates' position and recognize legal abortion as a right of women and persons who can get pregnant including transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people. In this thesis, in general, I use the term 'women' as it was the dominant category of the debates and as a way to reduce the awkwardness that the term expectant people may generate.

article, the Bill recognized the right to decide on the termination of pregnancy as a human right. In addition, the Bill stipulated the creation of services of counseling which should provide adequate pre- and post-procedure attention, and the provision of birth control information. In Articles 13 to 15, the draft law stipulated there be access to safe abortion in the public health institutions and regulated conscientious objection, rejecting the right of institutional objection. Lastly, it urged for the correct implementation and achievement of Integral Sex Education and the further training of health professionals in gender perspective education.

Argentinian Legal System and the path to legal abortion in 2018

In accordance with the National Constitution of Argentina, sanctioned in 1853 and reformed in 1994, Argentina adopted a republican, representative, and federal form of government (Arg. Const. art. 1). In addition, the political regime is democratic, the government system is presidential, and the vote is universal, secret and mandatory ('Nuestro País: Organización' n.d.). As a federal state, Argentina is divided into 23 provinces and an autonomous city, which retain their autonomy and choose their own representatives. As part of a Republican state, the legislative, executive and judicial powers are separated and have mechanisms of reciprocal control. The Legislative Power in Argentina is placed in two Chambers: the Deputy Chamber which represents the Argentinian nation, and the Senate which represents the provinces and the autonomous capital city of Buenos Aires. In the first chamber, the deputies are chosen through a proportional system that considers the population separated into constituencies. Each political party proposes a list of candidates according to the number of seats of each district. The number of the Argentinian population determines the number of deputies, which is now 257. On the other hand, the Senate is formed by 72 senators where there are three senators for each province and three for the city of Buenos Aires. Two senators represent the elected majoritarian party and one the first minority. While the senators´ mandate

lasts six years and the Senate is renewed by thirds every two years, deputies serve for four years and half of the Chamber is replaced every two years.

After the election of 2017, the Congress majority has been led by *Cambiemos* -the ruling party- and the first minority has been represented by a coalition of different parties aligned with the Justicialist Party. Throughout history, Argentinian politics has oscillated between dictatorship regimes and governments led by the two main parties: the Radical Civic Union, from a social-democracy ideology, and the Justicialist Party which emerged from the leadership of Juan Perón. These parties are not completely opposite ideologically and their affiliates move from one party to another. They even cannot be defined as leftist or right-wing as some of their mandates have been both left oriented or right oriented. In the last three decades, Argentina moved from a bi-party system to a multi-party system with two or three strong alliances and other smaller parties that have seats in Congress. From 2003 to 2015 the country was ruled by Kirchnerism, a left-nationalist wing of the Justicialist party which was defeated in the last general elections of 2015. After that, the national government has been under *Cambiemos*, a center-right coalition formed by the Radical Civic Union and a new liberal-conservative party called Republican Proposal. In Argentina, the separation between right and left concerns the type of national programs implemented and their relation towards international organs and US hegemony. Moreover, the wounds of the military regime still polarize the society between those who supported the regime and those who were the victims of it. In general, the center-right is associated with conservative civil and political laws and neoliberal economic programs. In contrast, the center-left is related to progressive and social-welfare laws and protectionist economic programs. In the extremes, the country has traditional communist, Trotskyite, and socialist parties and a few extremely right-wing ones.

Regarding the Argentinian legislative power, the president, the members of both chambers, and the citizens are allowed to present a bill to the Congress. As explained in the

Argentinian Congress´ website, to elaborate or modify a law, the bill has to follow a series of steps (‘Congreso de La Nación Argentina’ n.d.). First, it has to be submitted to one of the Chambers. If a bill is presented in the Chamber of Deputy, it becomes the chamber of origin and the Senate comes to be the review chamber. If the opposite situation occurs, the Senate becomes the chamber of origin. Once in the chamber of origin, the bill goes through one or more House Committees which make a judgment. Thereafter, the bill is debated separately in both chambers. The bill can be approved in both chambers, or rejected or changed in the review chamber. When the latter situation happens, the bill goes back to the chamber of origin which has to accept the changes for it to become law. Instead, if the bill is rejected in the review chamber, it cannot be discussed again in the parliamentary sessions of that year. In addition, once both chambers sanction a bill, it goes to the President of the Nation who can approve and enact a new law or veto it. If it is a partial veto which does not affect the bill´s spirit, it can also be made law. Even with a total veto, the chambers can still sanction a bill if it is approved by a two-thirds majority of the votes.

In 2018 and after seven attempts from 2007, it was the first time that a Bill on the voluntary interruption of pregnancy reached debate in the Congress. As is explained in the Chapter IV of this thesis, the 2018 Bill was finally discussed and voted on in the chambers thanks to the activism of the National Campaign for Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion and women´s mobilizations. On the 6th of March, the Bill was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies with the support of members from different political parties and the core signing of four female leaders, united in a multiparty coalition, who responded to a presidential invitation to discuss the il-legality of abortion (Bergallo 2019, n.p.). Then, the Bill circulated in the House Committees of Family, Women, Childhood and Youth, Social Action and Public Health, and Criminal Legislation. The Heads of those committees negotiated the rules of informational hearings which were carried out in the next two months and received the presence of more than

700 speakers from the whole social spectrum. Scientists, artists, doctors, lawyers, religious leaders, and social activists gave their arguments for or against legal abortion in their 7-minute speeches, making references to constitutional, medical, empirical and moral aspects. After the hearings, the Chamber´s favorable majority opinion supporting the Bill led to the voting day between the 13th and 14th of June. 184 Deputies gave their speeches in a 23-hour session in which the Bill was finally passed by 129 to 125 votes, and 1 absence.[6] Thereafter, the Bill entered the Senate which started its own hearing process with 150 expert and citizen presentations spread over three weeks. In the committees, the senators were unable to agree on changes to some articles of the Bill and, in the voting day of the 8th of August, the Bill was rejected with 38 votes against, 31 for, 2 abstentions and 1 absence.

What happened during Bill voting was exceptional in the sense that most of the parties were internally divided in their votes and new cross-party coalitions were formed (Martínez 2018; Tarricone 2018). Especially in the Chamber of Deputies, a leading party coalition was formed, which worked hand in hand trying to gain broader support, convince their co-party members and carry the green esthetic of legal abortion in all the building (Alcaraz 2018, 237). In the Senate, the supporters of legalized abortion were not able to articulate the same job and their lobby and performances faced a shield from the Chair of the Chamber who didn't allow any external presence or symbolism in the house (Alcaraz 2018, 263). The almost symmetrical division inside the Parliament reflected the situation of Argentinian society who actively followed the debates with the same commitment displayed during Argentinian matches in the 2018 World Cup.[7] The National Campaign for Legal, Safe and Free abortion organized the

[6] All the information regarding the Bill in the Chamber of Deputies is summarized in the website of the Chamber, in the section about the Bill. Available online: https://www.diputados.gov.ar/prensa/noticias/2018/despenalizacion-aborto/noticias_0594.html. Last accessed:10/04/2019

[7] Football represents one of the Argentinian national elements of pride and devotion which reinforces the myth of unity, hegemonic masculinity, and homosocial bonding (Taylor 2005, 112–15). The abortion debate and voting was portrayed in the media as a football match with two polarized sides (Alcaraz 2018). Curiously, this portrayal opened the space to criticize women´s discrimination in football leagues and demand equal rights. For a further

demonstrations in the provincial capital cities to collectively wait for the voting results. In the city of Buenos Aires, they prepared three big gatherings with huge screens and tents with workshops throughout the day. Millions of people were present in the streets for both debate sessions. On the other position, the marchers against the Bill also took the streets, although with fewer participants. The supporters of the Bill used music, shows, dances, drums, and glitter within a green aesthetic, the color of the scarf worn to show support for legal abortion. In a more formal way, the opponents´ march used the light blue color and Argentinian national symbols, as will be addressed in the next chapter.

The Genre of Parliamentary Debates

Following the Critical Discourse Analysis methodology described in the previous chapter, before analyzing the speeches in detail, it is important to consider the particular discursive genre of parliamentary debates. According to Van Dijk (2004), the parliamentary debate genre is defined mainly by its context, gaining its relevance because of shared meanings around the Parliament institution. In this context, the debates are affected by the fact that the participants are Members of the Parliament (MPs) who assume their activity as 'doing politics' in a crucial political institution (van Dijk 2004, 339). In the speeches given in the 2018 abortion debate analyzed here, for instance, Deputy Fernando Espinoza in favor of the Bill declared: "In the great democracies, the national deputies (…) ultimately what they do is to represent their peoples, represent their citizens, represent their place in the world." [8] In the same sense, Deputy Victoria Rosso, against the Bill, considered: "We are in the house where all voices are

research it would be interesting to examine the co-articulated resignification of national and football sentiments after women´s increasingly involvement among them.

[8] Quotes from the debates are cited by the name of the speakers. The full list of contributions can be found in the 'References' section. As mentioned in the methodological part, the quotes are extracted from the transcript of the 2018 debate sessions available on the official webpages of the two Argentinian Congress Chambers. The transcripts of the Chamber of Deputies are not page numbered like the Senate ones, so only the senator´s quotes are numbered in this thesis. The translations are mine.

presented. That is why I urged to work for the general welfare, for a more just and inclusive society, and to ensure the future of our Nation." In general, MPs´ speeches take into account their participation in an institution that represents a collectivity, with attributed global and political important functions affecting a great number of people.

The context of the Congress and the political role of the legislators also affect the speeches´ setting of space and time (van Dijk 2004, 351). In the parliament debate on abortion in Argentina analyzed here, there were constant references to the relevance of the placement which considered the Congress both as the material building and its symbolic configuration. The Congress was referred to as *recinto* (enclosure, room), *casa* (home), *el lugar de todos* (the place of everyone) and a democratic institution. It was even described as a place where the type of desired society is shaped and the role of the State and law are discussed. The temporal setting went beyond the mentioning of those days´ dates to call for past historical times and future moments where the MPs´ decision would be implemented. As a common expression, legislators against and for legal abortion stressed the decisiveness of the current debate and its historical implications. However, the reasons for the debate´s importance were different regarding each position. In favor of the Bill, Senator Magdalena Odarda addressed: "This is a historical debate Madam President (…) Today we have the great opportunity, the great opportunity, to enable the most important public health policy" (p. 176). On the other hand, Deputy Leonor Martínez Villada acknowledged that "today is a historical day in the National Chamber of Deputies because a fundamental value is at stake: the human life." The positions in favor of legal abortion placed the debate as a hinge to change a conservative law and achieve more rights. In a way to gain broader support and captivate the audience, some pro-Bill speeches even posited legal abortion as a miraculous solution to all women´s problems and the parameter of modern society, as will be seen in Chapter IV. In response, the anti-legal speeches,

positioned the prominence of the debate as an opportunity to discuss core social values, and structural flaws of the state, as shown in Chapter III.

Other general elements that define the parliamentary debate genre characterized the Argentinian one too. Among them, van Dijk (2000) identifies the presence of clear rules of behavior, strict time management, and the fact that the debates are formally opened and closed, and are typically argumentative. Indeed, the organization of the debate´s sessions in both Argentinian Chambers was already stipulated, with the list of speakers and the amount of time allocated for each MP. In both Houses, the rotating Chairs were leading the order, the informant members of the committees started giving their speeches with more time available, then the individual orators continued, and finally, the closing speeches were given by the block chiefs. In general, the lawmakers started their speeches formally greeting the Chair and the other members of the chamber. Some of them recognized the work done by the commissions in the months before the debates. Senator Dalmacio Mera started his speech being thankful to "all the commissions´ teamwork who had made a long and important job, ordering a complex and hard debate with a lot of speakers, carried in an absolutely fair way" (p. 21). On the contrary, other lawmakers from both positions used their introductory time to express their concern and rejection to the affronts received before the debate like Deputy Mario Arce who said:

> Madam President: I planned to start my presentation in a different way, but in view of the events that occurred the last few days, I will make a small allusion to the pressure that many Members have suffered when expressing our position on such a sensitive issue [the Bill].

As mentioned in the previous section, the voting was very polarized in Congress and millions of people took to the streets to express their position. Moreover, there were intense campaigns of lobbying and pressure from organizations outside the Congress and among the legislators. The lawmakers also received harassment in their social media network through emails and instant messages (Alcaraz 2018, 265). Talking about the accusations, Deputy Pedro

Miranda expressed: “they called me Nazi, murderer, genocidal, and they cursed my whole family until the fourth generation.” Those were common grievances used against the people in favor of legal abortion which also circulated in the social virtual networks of regular citizens. In contrast, as Mariana Morales stated when saying “they have accused me of not voting in favor of women´s rights”, anti-Bill positions were blamed for being conservative, dogmatic, and against social progress. The mutual accusations were related to the arguments and reasons for each position which will be outlined in the next chapters. Nevertheless, I will now summarize generally the two stances in order to understand the common grounds and values present in the 2018 debate. I then analyze separately those common grounds according to some recurrent topics: poverty, human rights, representation, people´s will, and the state´s role.

Common Grounds

Allusions to poverty

Succinctly, the Argentinian legislators against the legalization of abortion argued that the Bill violates the National and Provincial Constitutions attacking the consecrated right to life from fertilization. They referred to scientific arguments to prove that human life starts at pregnancy and therefore the unborn should have the same rights as a born person. In the opposite direction, the stance for legal abortion claimed that criminalization of abortion has not prevented women and expectant people to stop their pregnancies. Instead, the punishment had led them to abort in unsafe conditions, risking their health and life. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Health report they used, there have been 47,000 hospital admissions for unsafe abortions per year and around 3,030 women have died because of it since 1983. In addition, for these positions, legal abortion involves an institutional recognition of women´s autonomy to decide over their bodies and motherhood, which is a central right that does not go against the Constitution or International Treaties. Particularly addressing the Argentinian

situation, the groups for the Bill attested that illegal abortion especially affects low-classes women who cannot afford to pay for a safe and healthy practice and mostly die because of it. Quoting the direct words of Dr. René Favaloro, an emblematic Argentinian cardiac surgeon, Deputies Brenda Austin and Pedro Miranda said:

> The rich people defend illegal abortion to keep it secret and not to have shame. I am sick and tired of poor girls dying so that the rich can abort in secret. They die in our arms in the slums and in private clinics they make fortunes by removing the shame from the belly of the rich.

The author Mabel Bellucci (2014), in her book, explains that the argument aligning poverty and health difficulties emerged during the 1980s to gain broader support for legal abortion. At that moment, the freedom to decide over one´s body and sexual pleasure were not openly spoken and easy-to-support arguments so women´s movements resorted to matters of suffering and tragedy (Bellucci 2014, 282). The tragedy of poor women dying because of illegal abortion, a fact that can be avoided, was still one of the main arguments of the 2018 pro-Bill legislators. In this direction, Senator Gustavino, talking about women who practice abortion addressed that "even worse, there are those who, faced with desperation and lack of resources, turn to a healer, to acquaintances´ advice and end up seriously injured, if not killed. They are in the last circle of hell for our criminal law: criminals and poor" (p. 16). In response, the speeches against the Bill dismissed this argument by casting doubt over the data´s veracity and stating that poor women´s inner values prevent them from abort. Describing the talk given by Mother Theresa Varela in the commissions´ hearings, Deputy Javier Pretto mentioned that "she is a nun who helps humble and poor people of Cruz del Eje, a town in Córdoba, and she believes that is not true that poor mothers are the ones who abort the most. In a poor family, pregnancy is the announcement of life, a reason for joy and something to celebrate. In many cases, it is the only thing that dignifies it [the life]." More attention will be paid in the following chapter to the allusion of poor people´s values as the authentic and correct values of the Argentinian society.

The framework of Human Rights

Both postures opposing and supporting legal abortion built their arguments evoking the human rights´ framework. When she visited Argentina in 2011, the scholar Lynn Morgan (2015) proposed to local feminist leaders to frame non-reproductive rights as 'reproductive justice' instead of using the 'human rights' discourse. For her, reproductive justice is more holistic, intersectional, and goes beyond the language of rights that is also used by conservative advocates. However, Argentinian feminists explained that, because of Argentinian history and the government policies of that time, framing legal abortion as a human right was very powerful politically. As seen in the previous chapter, the return to democracy after 1983 created a space for the judgment against human rights violations and the sanctioning of new rights. Sexual and non-reproductive rights were achieved within this framework, especially during the Kirchnerist governments. In the last decades, the language of human rights has been used as a signifier of morality, non-violent times, and democracy´s main purpose. In this respect, pro-Bill legislators considered abortion as a human right and their political duty to assure it, like Senator Humberto Schiavoni who called legal abortion as "one of democracy´s biggest debt" (p. 66) and Deputy Martín Doñate who demanded the State ensure a "commitment with Argentinian women´s health and human rights." Instead, lawmakers against legal abortion framed it as a crime and referred to the absolute right of the fetus to life as a human right. For this position, Deputy Mariana Morales maintained that "human rights emerge from the right to life because if there is no life, there are no more rights." In sum, for both sides human rights were taken as a given and an indisputable good.

In the same direction, both stances appealed to the expression of *Nunca Más* (Never Again) which was the title of the 1984 CONADEP report on the crimes committed during the dictatorship. The motto implies a political and social responsibility to justice, truth, and no future repetition of the atrocities. As scholar Pablo Bessone (2012) explains, by using *Nunca*

más both positions try to mobilize support based on opposition to the repetition of the traumatic experiences of the past. Indeed, anti-Bill advocates located abortion as a new form of torture and murder related to those of the state terrorism. For example, Deputy Horacio Goicochea declared that *Nunca Más* "signifies never again grievances against our humankind." On the side supporting the Bill, Deputy Daniel Lipovetzky claimed that "behind every dead woman victim of a clandestine abortion there is a life story. Today we have the opportunity to say 'Never again' to death for a clandestine abortion." With this speech, he was equating the clandestine situation of abortion to the deaths and tortures in underground conditions under the dictatorship. The framework of human rights and the uses of *Nunca Más* constitute a way to emotionally touch society and make the government and politicians accountable.

Speaking in the name of their parties and the people´s will

When setting the speaker´s voice, the lawmakers´ speeches are affected by the context of being in the Parliament institution (van Dijk 2004, 360). As representatives of diverse collectivities, they merge their personal 'I' with a different general 'we'. In the Argentinian case, sometimes the legislators spoke in the name of Congress as an institution or general imaginaries such as the people, the nation, and the motherland. At other times, the MPs talked as representatives of their parties, the constituencies which elected them, or the social categories they represent. As in the debate over legal abortion most of the parties were internally divided in their votes, both stances positioned themselves and their arguments as aligned with their parties´ values and history. While the anti-Bill legislators mentioned the background of their parties in defense of life, the pro-Bill advocates pointed out their party´s path in the fight for human rights. The case of the Justicialist Party constitutes a salient example of the uses of the same Peronist principles and the famous figure of Evita in two different directions. Against legal abortion, Deputy Walberto Allende addressed that he "was always an admirer of Evita, a bright progressive woman who fought for life. Today, she would fight to

eliminate the causes of poverty, which are those that lead to abortion, as she did in her life, and would not vote to eliminate the poor in the bellies of vulnerable mothers." From the legal abortion position, Deputy Mayra Mendoza begged:

> Please, remember Evita, think deeply. We are the ones who represent the humblest of our country and the humblest women are those who die by unsafe methods and horrible practices to interrupt their pregnancies. Eva Perón stated that where there is a need, there is a right. Today there is a need to end the avoidable deaths of women who abort clandestinely. There is a right to legal abortion.

Both deputies talked about poverty, Evita, and the values of the Justicialist party to justify their position, call for broader support, and gain legitimacy. Both described extreme images and appealed to tragedy, affection, and feelings of disgust. In addition, both representatives used the figure of Evita, an authoritative voice, to bolster their positions. The path of Evita which promoted women´s and workers´ rights within a nationalist and heteronormative family, allows the paradoxical uses of her in both argumentations. Evita´s personal story is also ambiguous as she was symbolically the spiritual mother of the nation, the Argentinian people, and the poor, while she herself didn't have children and died of uterine cancer. Therefore, both positions appealing to Evita are problematic and more will be advanced in Chapter IV.

Apart from speaking in the name of their parties, the Argentinian legislators considered themselves as representatives of the people´s will. They justified their arguments not just as elected by their constituencies, but also as agents of the majoritarian people´s position. In a reciprocal direction, as van Dijk (2000) suggests, the MPs also directed their speeches to a larger audience than the one present in Congress. Especially in this case, the speakers were conscious that the abortion debates were filmed live and heard online by millions of people and their words would have an impact on the population´s expectations in the next elections.[9] Also,

[9] In a future deeper level of analysis, it would also be needed to examine the video recordings of those speeches and attend to the sound structures and nonverbal interaction between the MPs, as Van Dijk (2004) suggests.

they knew about the number of people that were outside the Congress demonstrating and therefore legislators of both positions assumed the representativeness of these mobilizations. Against the Bill, Senator Marta Varela said that she felt she was part of and represented "a broad sector of our people who defend life at large, of men and women, from conception to death" (p. 121). On the other side and for the Bill, Senator Norma Durango asserted: "Those women who came here and we don´t feel because we are inside this room, but who are in the street in the rain, with a green scarf, they are asking the legislators to legislate for them, for their reality, because they want legal abortion not to die" (p. 27). Because of the function that the MPs represent, it was not enough for them to have valid personal arguments but they also needed to demonstrate that they were accomplishing their role as national lawmakers who ensure common welfare.

The role of an engaged state

The last common ground addressed by the Argentinian legislators for and against the Bill on legal abortion refers to a similar assigned role to the state. As the contested ideas of the state´s role emerging from each position are part of the core analysis of this thesis, much of this topic will be explored in the next chapters. However, I point out here that both positions defended the need for an engaged state which cares for its citizens and provides high-quality public health and education. Indeed, in the 2018 debate, there was a general acknowledgment of the importance of the proper compliance with the integral sex education law. The majority of the lawmakers called for mechanisms to prevent unwanted motherhood and teenage pregnancies. Nevertheless, the difference between the positions against and for the Bill lied in the portrayal of the people to whom the state should attend. While the anti-Bill speeches advocated for a state that accompanies, cares for and protects mothers and their unborn beings, the pro-Bill demanded a state that accompanies and respects women who decide to abort. Within this latter position, Deputy Samanta Acerenza suggested that "abortion is a personal

decision and it is the state´s responsibility to guarantee, through the health system, all possible mechanisms so that the woman, regardless of her socioeconomic status, can exercise her right to decide without restrictions and extortions." From the anti-legal-abortion stance, Senator Silvia Elías de Pérez pointed out:

> A woman who faces an unwanted pregnancy what she needs is to be supported, supported in her anguish, being assisted with all the available and possible alternatives which don't put her life and her child´s life at risk. To be understood. To be helped with concrete and real options. She needs an engaged state (p.199).

In the speeches against legal abortion, it was implicitly stated that all women want their pregnancies and those who abort are moved by extreme conditions of vulnerability and precariousness. In this respect, for them, the state should work on those extreme conditions to avoid abortion and assure satisfied motherhood. In the opposite direction, according to the pro-Bill MPs, women abort because of different reasons and the risk comes from the underground condition of illegal abortion. Therefore, the state should assure healthy and safe abortion for those who, after different mechanisms of prevention and information, still want to end their pregnancies.

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, I have presented the common grounds shared by the Argentinian legislators in the speeches given in the debates on legalized abortion. In spite of important differences between discourses of MPs against and for the Bill that are outlined in the next chapters, both positions referred to some similar general values, topics, and argumentative strategies. Some of these had to do with the particular discursive genre of the parliamentary debates in which Congress institution and the role assigned to the MPs affect the uses of representativeness, people´s will, and the evocation of past and future events. Besides, other common grounds related to the multi-party coalitions formed in these 2018 debates and the appeal of the same parties´ ideology and background by both positions. Issues regarding

Argentinian recent history were also addressed by the lawmakers, calling upon emotions in relation to traumatic events of the past, especially those of the last dictatorship´s crimes and the subsequent demand for human rights. Finally, poverty was used with different purposes by both stances´ lawmakers. On one side, for the pro-legal-abortion position, poverty was presented as a factual situation that complicates, even more, the clandestine condition of illegal abortion. On the other side, anti-bill speeches considered poverty as a metaphor of morally correct values and Argentinian national distinctiveness. After pointing out these common bases, the next two chapters analyze separately the constitutive elements of the anti and pro-legal-abortion discourses.

Chapter III: The heteronormative natio(n)-state of the anti-legalization positions

The present chapter seeks to understand the gendered construction of the nation, state and citizenship effected in the discourses of anti-legal abortion lawmakers. My aim is to examine which issues of national belonging were being displayed, at what point they were gendered, and how this affected both their rejection of the Bill and their notion of community membership. In order to frame the lawmakers´ arguments, I first trace them as part of a wide social movement against sexual and non-reproductive rights. I use the concept of Morán Faúndes (2015) to define this social movement as 'heteropatriarchal activism' and describe its complex conformation, main arguments, and strategies of action. In a second level, I focus the analysis directly in the legislators´ speeches and the arguments they used to reject abortion in articulation to three interconnected themes: sovereignty, national values, and gender roles in the State. As I show in the conclusion, the particular articulation of these themes reinforces a binary division of the sexes, based on essentialist conceptions in which women´s primary role in the nation is motherhood and reproduction. Indeed, a particular type of woman and values are celebrated as authentic, those related to poverty and poor people, affecting community membership.

The heteropatriarchal activism

In Argentina, since the 1983 return to democracy, important sexual and reproductive rights have been incorporated into the legal system such as the same-sex marriage law (2010) and the Gender Identity Act (2012) described before in Chapter I. From these decades, feminist and sexual diversity movements were instrumental in achieving those rights and gaining broader social support for more demands. As it also happened in a global scale, in Argentina, the advances of (non) reproductive and sexual rights was accompanied by the consolidation of an opposite movement which developed a "reactive politicization" in their defense of the

natural family seen as under attack by feminisms, sexual minorities, modernization, and globalization (Vaggione 2005, 234,238). Every time that there were new advances and demands in the matter, this opposition movement reorganized itself as a way to stop future conquests like legal abortion (Peñas Defago and Campana 2011, 29). The Argentinian movement against SnRR is not monolithic and involves a multiplicity of actors, although it is rooted in Catholic religious institutions and arguments. The religious agencies expand their traditional spheres of activity to political and civic spaces in contact with diverse social actors to become a legitimate actor in the public arena. Thus, now, these movements involve not only Catholic and evangelical affiliates but also other sectors such as parliamentary members, civil associations and Christian secular groups (Faúndes 2015, 408).

Morán Faúndes (2015) defines these movements as 'heteropatriarchal activism' because their activities aim to sustain –an even deepen- a conservative sexual morality. In multiple ways, conservative activism pushes for the preservation of traditional gender and sexual norms based on unequal power relations and on a masculine and heterosexual domination (Morán Faúndes et al. 2011, 134). Moreover, it argues in favor of marriage, heterosexuality, monogamy, and reproduction relying on vague but powerful notions like 'nature' and tradition.

The main actors opposed to the advancement of SnRR can be divided into four groups: those belonging to the State and its powers, those related to the biomedical fields, those that are part of the conservative churches´ hierarchies, and those within the civil society arena (Morán Faúndes et al. 2011, 133–39). Those civil associations congregate under the banner of 'Pro-life' and represent the most relevant activism. The process of NGO-ization which has 'softened' Latin-American feminist movements, positively affected the conservative groups that found new spaces and strategies to sustain an unequal power system (Carbonelli et. al. 2011, 30). The first self-identified 'Pro-life' NGOs emerged in Argentina in the 1980s with

similar logics to those created in the United States in reaction to the Roe vs. Wade case ruling.[10] However, in Latin America where abortion was (and is) illegal, they were driven in a preventive way, to promote cultural and assistance actions opposed to abortion and its legalization. In the beginning, these NGOs were openly and mainly Catholic but since the mid-1990s, in reaction to the politicization of SnRR on the local and transnational level, their identities changed and they developed new strategies for political intervention.

In Argentina, the numeric explosion of the conservative NGOs has been taking place since 2010 after the legalization of same-sex marriage (Faúndes 2015). By the present time, they constitute more than 150 organizations grouped under the *Unidad Provida* platform and have a strong presence throughout the Argentinian territory as well as transnational support ('Unidad Provida' n.d.). The platform covers groups from exclusively Catholic and evangelical organizations such as *Portal de Belén* (Bethlehem Portal) and ACIERA to those without a particular religious affiliation such as *Médicos por la Vida* (Doctors for Life). In addition, there are those organizations with an 'internalized religiosity' in which their leaders and members are affiliated with a specific religion but not their institutional identity (Faúndes 2015, 423). Religion and secularity are articulated here in a complex way, where these opposition movements turn to "strategic secularity" to gain support and legitimacy (Vaggione 2005, 243,244). By minimizing their denominational character and assuming a secular position, they seek to occupy political spaces usually difficult to permeate with discourses of faith and dogmas. In addition, these conservative groups are related to the Vatican and its aligned movements and intellectuals who reject what they call a 'gender ideology' appealing to cultural arguments (Case 2019). According to the Argentinian Episcopal Conference and the Vatican,

[10] The U.S. Roe vs Wade case held in 1973 paved the way to legalized abortion by stipulating the unconstitutionality of the laws criminalizing voluntary interruption of pregnancy. At the same time, the case generated the development of a conservative reaction gathered under 'Pro-Life' groups.

gender ideology denies nature and promotes a culture of death based on non-reproductive practices, which is a "selfish concept of freedom" (Vaggione 2017, 303).

The heteropatriarchal activism, especially related to the opposition to legalizing abortion, has managed to articulate legal and scientific discourses in its favor as part of its strategic secularity. Its main argument maintains a condition of personhood from fertilization, which entails, in general terms, the consideration of the fetus as a subject of law and abortion as a homicide (Belgrano Rawson 2012, 4). For them, the stance of life as an absolute value is underpinned by a scientific discourse which suggests that the human genome exists from fertilization and abortion involves psychological consequences for the woman. Moreover, the self-identified "Pro-life" groups appeal to the restrictive legal interpretations of the San José de Costa Rica Pact, the Convention on the Rights to the Child, the National Constitution and the Law for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents to consider abortion as a violation of stipulated rights (Morán Faúndes et al. 2011, 139–49). With the support of legal and medical arguments, the mid-XIX century Catholic position in which biological life from fertilization is a sacred and inviolable gift is seen as neutral, objective, and valid (Morán Faúndes 2013, 46). Other non-majoritarian but relevant arguments related to the gendered construction of the nation-state are also enforced and constitute the focus of the next section.

Not only the intervening actors and arguments are not uniform, neither are their practices and spaces of action. To reinforce their incidence, the conservative NGOs resort to the propagation of their speeches in education environments, political lobbying, legal and judicial advice, presentation of legal cases, media exhibitions, and citizen mobilization (Faúndes 2011). As a way to be visible in public spaces, they also perform mass events on specific dates of the year. Every 25th of March they commemorate the Day of the Child to be Born, once a month they carry out the *Marcha de los Escarpiñes* (March of the booties), and before and during the parliamentary debates, they summon specific mobilizations. Pablo

Bessone (2017) explains that in these meetings the NGOs try to reinforce the image of abortion as a crime in the collective conscience. Hence, they expose huge pictures of bloodied fetuses and bodies mutilated in abortion procedures. Moreover, there is an affective appeal looking to generate empathetic and protective bonds towards the embryo (Vacarezza 2012, 47). In the mass meetings, it is usual to see big images and dolls of fetuses in an advanced stage similar to full-term babies in total disconnection with the uterus that carries them. Big posters and speeches emphasize the 'defense of the defenseless child' and the 'voice of those who have no voice' granting a personification to the fetus and depriving the pregnant woman of autonomy (Sgró Ruata 2011). For their part, pregnant women are publicly exalted and blessed. Finally, in these public marches, religious masses are carried on and stamps of virgins are distributed, reinforcing the presence of catholic elements (Bessone 2017, 51). In addition, the national anthem is sung and white and blue baby booties are shared, in allusion to the national flag colors and therefore Argentinian babies, merging their demands with national values and the 'common good' (Sgró Ruata 2011, 179). Conservative activists, thus, not only reject abortion but also emphasize reproduction as a national concern as will be seen in the next sections.

Speeches opposing legal abortion in relation to the natio(n)-state

In Argentina, the broad heteropatriarchal activism constitutes an important political sector whose arguments and performances tend to emotionally and morally mobilize a great amount of people (Vacarezza 2012). Following feminist CDA, I argue that the anti-rights group´s discourse goes beyond the mere rejection of abortion to sustain unequal (gendered) power relations. In the 2018 abortion debate analyzed in this thesis, the speeches of the legislators opposed to the Bill on the voluntary interruption of pregnancy were aligned with the demands of the heteropatriarchal activism. Although the majority of these MPs are not affiliated with the self-identified 'Pro-Life' NGOs, their main argument is also that there is life from fertilization and, therefore, the fetus is as much a human being as the mother and deserves

the same rights and protection. In addition, they appeal to the same legal, medical, and religious arguments. Nevertheless, in the debate, these arguments are articulated with others that have much less to do with abortion and more with the re-production of a certain type of nation, state, society and gender relations within it. Here, I examine these latter arguments of the anti-Bill lawmakers in three interconnected thematic axes: the idea of a sovereign nation, the values of the motherland Patria, and gendered state citizenship.

A populated nation

The first thematic axis refers to the idea of population as a parameter of national power and the need to distinguish Argentina from 'developed' countries. In the first place, some lawmakers have considered legalization of abortion as a means by which imperialism and international corporations can dominate the country. As mentioned in the first chapter, this strong argument was used during the 60s and 70s by rightist and leftist movements to stimulate reproduction and to reject western politics worried about overpopulation (Felitti 2009, 12). According to this view, population plays a key role in defining the power of the nation-state and the legalization of abortion is seen as something that will decrease it and leave society at the mercy of external domination. In this respect, ex-president and Senator Carlos Menem from the Justicialist Party of La Rioja pointed out Peron´s demographic conception saying:

> To avoid being dominated by the imperialisms of the North, the South must not only unite but also be populated. (…) Alberdi and Perón identified very well one of our most serious problems, which we have not yet been able to solve: depopulation. Today we can paraphrase Alberdi´s sentence saying: sovereignty is population (p. 255).

The senator was seeking legitimization by the authorization strategy quoting Alberdi and Perón, two important figures in Argentinian history, and aligning his position with theirs. This stance is one in which Argentina is once more re-imagined as an 'empty' country and a desert to be populated (Nari 2004). The senator repeated the dominant nationalist discourse of

the Argentinian first century in which indigenous bodies didn't count as the desired national population. This discourse was characteristic of settler societies like Argentina where the indigenous population was symbolically and physically dismantled, and the territory was opened for new settlements. As McClintock (1993) explains, in these cases, the land resembles a woman ready to be inseminated who, as Peterson (2000, 49) adds, is "(heterosexually) fertile and as an object to be raped." Her/its power is measured by her capability to reproduce, and therefore, the senator´s discourse responds to what Yuval-Davis (1996, 18) defines as "people as power", where emptiness is associated with weakness and lack of sovereignty. However, as Stoler (1989) explains this type of discourse also responds to a eugenic stance which portrays which births are valuable and which not with racial and class implications.

The second argument related to this thematic axis refers to the need of keeping distance from others who 'attack' the nation/woman´s fecundity with a morality which does not promote reproduction (like legal abortion). In order to counter the pro-Bill argument which showed the improvement of women´s conditions in countries that legalized abortion, anti-Bill legislators criticized those places´ culture and statistics. For example, Deputy Juan Brugge from the Democratic Christian Party said that in countries like England, Germany and Russia not only "far from lowering abortion rates have they increased them", but also 'selective abortions' have grown. Following him, Deputy Beatriz Ávila member of the Justicialist Party of Tucumán asked "what happens to kids with Down Syndrome? There are countries which they no longer exist, and in the First World nations they are becoming less." For these legislators, their anti-Bill position represents the defense of the right of Down syndrome to live, distancing from hegemonic Argentinian national discourses where the population should be healthy and of a superior race. By appealing to threats, emotions and kind values, these speeches try to gain broader support and put themselves in a moral superior level. If for pro-Bill MPs 'developed' countries constitute the model to follow as will be seen in Chapter IV, for the anti-Bill

lawmakers they represent ‘brutal capitalism’ and a ‘culture of disposal’. Senator Fiore Viñuales from a conservative faction stipulated that “every five minutes a teenage girl aborts in Europe: ‘the’ example countries. I hold the position that they are still [in] brutal capitalism, where the person barely matters” (p. 187). In the same sense, the liberal-conservative Deputy Martín Medina, member of *Cambiemos*, declared:

> Let´s be innovative, and don’t copy the Nordic countries´ models which eliminate the future and diversity by choosing the simplest thing that is ending the life of the weakest. We have the obligation to honor our history with effort and work.

While Deputy Medina considered abortion as ending the life of the weakest, others mentioned it as a shortcut in line with the ‘culture of disposal’. The author Vaggione (2017) explains that the ‘culture of disposal’ operates as a vague construct which interconnects reproductive rights with social, economic and environments concerns. In the speeches quoted, abortion was attached to economic exploitation and loss of diversity, and diversity was not only human diversity but also “the loss of any biological diversity, whether plant or animal” as Deputy Schmidt Liermann claimed referring to global warming consequences. Here, in a mechanism that Laclau (2015) defines as ‘chains of equivalence’, abortion was associated with larger problems and therefore its legalization would bring more dangerous consequences. Moreover, according to the anti-Bill lawmakers, abortion was a shortcut in two interconnected levels. First, it was considered as an easy path contrary to the hard effort that the legislators and the society should work for: combating the causes that lead to abortion and unwanted pregnancies. Second, women who abort were implicitly referred as irresponsible and morally incorrect because they finish their pregnancies instead of looking for other options. However, in the anti-Bill discourse, women who abort were less portrayed as desiring or deciding this path and more as victims of structural flaws, as is explained in the next sections.

Last, it is possible to identify in these speeches a paradoxical relation to the ‘developed’ countries in the act of keeping distance from them. As shown in Chapter I, dominant notions

of Argentinian national identity promote it as a reflection of civilized, western and white societies. In addition, the coloniality of power logic operates in Latin America to conceive the 'west' and Europe as a parameter of progress, modernity, and superiority, and to reject other cosmologies, marking non-western societies as the inferior alterity (Quijano 2007; Segato 2007). In the speeches of the MPs opposed to legal abortion, Argentina was positively marked as this alterity as different from the 'first' world. However, it was not a claim to recognize indigenous perspectives but to reinforce an inner Argentinian morality associated with a conservative vision of social relations where the nation is symbolized as a woman and the nation´s power is attached to women´s fertility as Yuval-Davis (2004) suggests.

The true values of the *Patria*

Concurring with the main argument of the self-identified 'Pro-life' advocates, the majority of the anti-Bill legislators argued against abortion by stating that the unborn is a human life and by defending the absolute value of this life. For them, the absolute right of life has been not only ensured in the Argentinian legal system but also represents the values consecrated in the National Constitution by the founding fathers. Furthermore, the value of life denotes morally superior Argentinian values which are related to 'authentic' ethics of the interior of the country. Regarding the National Constitution, the MPs opposed to the Bill defended their stance quoting the article 75 subparagraph 23 which urges for the legislation of a social security system that protects helpless children from pregnancy. Because of this ambiguous article that does not reject abortion but neither allows it, anti-legal abortion MPs claimed that their position is stated in the National Constitution. Nevertheless, according to them, it was not just a matter of legality and constitutionality but more a matter of following the dictates of this Constitution to assure the good quality of the society. In this sense, Senator Olga Brizuela asserted:

> I am convinced, convinced that we have a destiny of grandeur as a Nation; and this destiny of grandeur will only be achieved if we follow that clear and concrete roadmap that is the National Constitution, which orders us and challenges us to work in defense of the two lives (p. 33).

In this speech, the Senator not only considered abortion as unconstitutional and the Constitution the path to follow, but also assured that Argentina´s better future would only arrive by following the path aligned with her position. As seen Chapter I, the Argentinian nation was portrayed as less rooted in a common past and more oriented towards the future. Without a timeless past and culture, the National Constitution figured as the original contract that established the state and crystallized the desiring national values and identity for the time to come. In addition, according to anti-Bill legislators, the value of life was consecrated by the founding fathers of the Nation, who signed the Constitution and settled the bases for the future. In the same direction, Deputy Beatriz Ávila started describing how her province Tucumán, the place of national independence declaration, defends the value of life. Then, she asserted that "208 years ago a handful of courageous and revolutionary Argentinian began the path of independence in order to build a great *Patria. Patria* means paternity, it is the legacy of our parents, of our heroes. We have to honor those heroes and legacy." The Spanish word *Patria* cannot easily be translated as motherland or fatherland because it has an ambiguous gendered connotation in it. As Diane Taylor suggests, Patria "signals the image of motherland as envisioned by patriarchy" (1997, 184). It turns the country into a symbolic feminine image founded and led by fathers. For Deputy Ávila, those fathers created the nation and metaphorically envisioned a great Argentina whose path to greatness is assured by the defense of life from conception.

Instead of focusing on Constitutional principles, other lawmakers stressed what they call the 'true' values of the Argentinian idiosyncrasy. For the anti-Bill position, if the developed countries have been oriented to disposability, Argentinian ethics have been related to life, effort, and community. In this respect, Deputy Sapag from the Neuquén *neoperonist* party

wondered which of society´s social values should prevail: "inclusion or exclusion? Marginalization or integration? A culture of individualism or solidarity?" In an imagined conversation, other legislators answered that social values that should reign are those present in the interior of the country. As explained in Chapter I, the Argentinian national identity was built upon the separation between the port elite imagined as civilized and settled in the city of Buenos Aires and the rest of the country depicted as backward, poor, illiterate and a reflection of the indigenous populations. During the 1820s, the dispute over the political organization of the country caused civil wars between unionists and federals which ended with a federal type of government. However, in practice, Argentina has characteristics of a unitarian country, where the power and important resources are concentrated in Buenos Aires. Also in a symbolical level and despite urban cities, the interior is still considered to be backward, less developed and rural, and the capital city to be progressive and advanced. Those depictions and divisions became part of the 2018 abortion debate as the interior provinces turned out to be the poorest, with highest levels of teenage pregnancy and unsafe abortions in the statistics used. [11] In response, legislators from these provinces who were against legal abortion positioned the values of the interior as morally superior and in line with life, humility, and authenticity. For instance, Deputy José Ramon from a social democrat background declared:

> The issue of the right to life, as it is understood in our interior, has crucial importance, which does not happen because a woman has a problem or a dislike in her sexuality and wants to abort. No Argentinian wants to practice abortion. Is it conceived here in the Capital? Yes, and they talk about it, but in Argentina, the concept does not lie in the Catholic Church, it is about the importance that life has.

In the above quote, Deputy Ramón used the syntactic device of synecdoche to equate the interior with all of Argentina, minimize the importance of Buenos Aires and to render it

[11] Statistics and data about reproductive health in Argentina can be found in the document presented by REDAAS, ELA and CEDES available online: http://www.redaas.org.ar/archivos-actividades/111-Datos%20por%20provincia.pdf. Last accessed: 15/04/2019.

inauthentic. Moreover, the Deputy posited the value of life as broader than a religious thing in order to gain more legitimacy. The main salient value that the anti-Bill legislators used to distinguish the interior was its assumed conception of family. They appealed to their personal experiences as part of large and poor families, born from young hardworking parents, but surrounded by love and joy. For example, the Tucumán Kirchnerist Deputy Fernando Orellana told his story of living in a humble home and claimed that "if because of poverty my mother would decide to abort, it would have been two deaths, because we were born twins. But I was blessed to be born in a home which lacked many things, except for love and education for the good of our peers." For these lawmakers, the family is the essence of society and poor families are examples of good families because they fight for life. Fighting for life is not only looking for ways to survive exclusionary conditions but having a lot of children and not aborting. Deputy Alfredo Olmedo stated:

> The humble people have values and do not abort, they do not need clandestine conditions because they place value in their child, because their child is a hope to get out of poverty.

The argumentative uses of poverty and poor women for both for and against postures on the Bill were already explained in the previous chapter. However, it is important to point out that poverty comes here to signify the 'authentic' values and the 'adequate' way of being a family, with a lack of critical engagement to class inequalities. The authentic values promoted are love, effort, and sacrifice, and are especially related to poor women as will be shown below. This noble, dignified figure of poverty is distinct from that of the racialized urban delinquent typical employed by conservatives as justification for the criminalization of poverty on the grounds of security (Korol and Svampa 2009). Rather, an ideal type of the 'authentic poor' is construed as humble defenders of a victimized society uncorrupted by decadent wealth and corruption. Thus, poverty is re-constituted in abstract, as a morally authentic and dignified condition which both denies and reinforces the neoliberal and capitalist socio-economic

organization in a society characterized by a great amount levels of poverty, extreme living conditions, higher rates of hunger, and unemployment. The traditional poor family is both the problem of society and its solution, its dual social functions reified in discourses of security and crime on the one hand and in the defense of traditional values on the other.

In addition, for the anti-legal-abortion lawmakers like Senator Claudio Poggi, the "family is the central core of a society" (p. 134). Nevertheless, only those families which are heterosexual, reproductive and numerous are understood as composing this core social unit. This conceptualization leads to naturalizing other hierarchical relations of power present in society. It also serves for the justification of hegemonic national projects as they are meant to unify national insiders as part of the same 'big family' (McClintock 1993). Last, it reproduces the gendered separation of roles at a macro level, affecting the configuration of the State and the national membership, as will be seen below.

The gendered construction of citizenship: vulnerable women and personalized fetuses

In the anti-legalized abortion discourse, there is a binary division between women´s and men´s roles in which women are destined to motherhood. For this discourse, abortion goes against that 'destiny' and is therefore an unpleasant situation that should be avoided, in a denial of data which affirms that women who abort tend to be married and have children already. In the anti-Bill speeches, women who abort or want to abort, especially poor women, are presented as vulnerable and victims in a similar situation of that assigned to the fetus.[12] The basic premise of this discourse consists on the consideration of women having an inner natural essence oriented to reproduction and motherhood. Deputy Graciela Caselles from the Kirchnerist party of San Juan maintained that "being a woman implies having the ability to

[12] The depiction of women who abort as victims is in contradiction with the depiction made by 'Pro-Life' groups of other contexts where these women have been demonized and called murderers and selfish.

give birth and, above all, protect another´s life. (…) I understand the woman as that sacred and blessed human being who has the possibility to conceive a baby." According to this stance, motherhood is not only a natural function and mandate but also a pleasant situation and therefore, abortion is seen as a painful practice. "No woman wants to abort. Abortion is against her own nature, against her deepest instincts" stated Senator Belén Tapia from *Cambiemos*, who continued saying that "the post-abortion syndrome, although it is denied or hidden, has to do with the instinctive response to the pain caused by the death of that child" (p. 81). As other lawmakers did, abortion is depicted in her speech as something that put women at risk because of the psychological traumas involved in going against 'nature´s mandates'.

In a second but interrelated line of argument, women who abort were presented at risk not because they personally decided to end their pregnancies but because of external factors that led to an abortion. Thus, when anti-Bill MPs defined abortion as a crime, they generally avoided naming women as murderers or criminals. The fault of what they called a 'tragic situation' was put on the society, the state, or even in the lawmakers themselves that failed to promote comprehensive policies over women. For instance, socialist Deputy Luis Contigiani asserted that "the real problem of Argentina is poverty, injustice, exploitation, frustration, fatigue, apathy, and structural corruption. (…) Well, what does that have to do with the woman at risk and the life to be born bearing the brunt?" As shown in the previous chapter, this recognition of socio-economic structural flaws as the causes of abortion, led these lawmakers to call for working against poverty and low-quality education. However, in a paradoxical way, as seen before, they also emphasized the superior morality of poor people. Especially the poor women who, according to Deputy Caselles "are very rich in human values [and] makes pregnancy a cult to the values of humanity. They are an example of love towards the other." In an ambiguous way, on one hand, the opponents to the Bill are defending the values of poverty and on the other, they are demanding policies to combat poverty. In the end, what is implicitly

relevant for them is that the morality of poor women, represented as having a lot of children and caring and loving them, is superior, correct and should prevail in the society. Poor women-mothers have to conform what Peterson calls "idealized models of behavior" because they come to symbolize Argentinian cultural authenticity and honor (2013, 62).

In the discourse against the Bill, the depiction of women who abort as victims, vulnerable and lacking agency was in line with the image assigned to the fetus. As the author Sgró Ruata (2011) explains, the 'Pro-Life' discourses and performances seek to personify the fetus as an autonomous being separate from the womb of the mother. Moreover, it is portrayed directly as a child, not an embryo or a fetus, who is defenseless and innocent. For Deputy Carmen Polledo of *Cambiemos*, "the embryo is not an organ of the mother" but a "child that grows in the belly" who is innocent, voiceless and vulnerable and has the right of expression and of "the freedom to live." To reinforce the appeal to empathy towards the fetus, other lawmakers described the fetuses as the future of the Argentinian nation. Even Senator Margarita González (2018, 54) called them "the new dreamers of this great Argentine *Patria."* As seen in the section about sovereignty, for some anti-Bill lawmakers, legal abortion threatens the reproduction of the Argentinian population which women have the duty to ensure. Indeed, as Lisa Smyth suggests, in hegemonic imaginaries like this, women´s role in the nation becomes secondary where the masculinized construction of national citizens depends on "women´s subordination through enforced maternity" (2005, 66).

However, for this stance, a certain type of subject is imagined as the prototype of those 'new dreamers'. In the anti-Bill speeches, the baby as a grown person was depicted as white, masculine, professional and wealthy. For example, for Senator Alfredo De Angeli women who decided to have their children were happy years later as some of them became "[male] lawyers, doctors of humble people, teachers…" (p. 84). Moreover, Deputy Martín Hernández retold the story of Javier Walter who spoke in the 2018 preliminary hearings in the Chamber of Deputies

as a testimony of one whose biological mother gave him up for adoption instead of aborting. He "was born, lived, was given up for adoption, grow up, studied, became an engineer and formed a family." In the anti-legal-abortion discourse, the fetus was not only promoted as an independent human being separated from the mother who carries it, but also as a person with certain characteristics. The characterization of it as a white, rich family man reinforces heteronormative classist asymmetries in line with those promoted in hegemonic national imaginaries of the past century in which Argentinian women should be devoted mothers in charge of raising a proper male citizen for the nation.

A paternalistic state

The depiction of women who abort and the unborn as vulnerable has had its correlation in the portrayal of a paternalist State. For the anti-Bill stance, as abortion is considered a social failure, there is a need for an active state that is present and in charge of weak populations like pregnant women, children, poor people, and poor women. The scholar Marion Young (2003) explains that a traditional logic of masculinist protection is behind a paternalist state. In this logic, the state takes over its people especially those considered vulnerable, which end in "a subordinated position of dependence and obedience" (Young 2003, 2). According to Deputy Rosa Muñoz, it should be the state´s "responsibility to take care of the mother and the unborn child." Moreover, if a woman who aborts faces a 'desperate situation', the "state should support her to be a happy mother" as Senator De Angeli asserted (p. 83). The anti-Bill discourse called for an engaged and protective state in line with a traditional view of the man´s role in family and society where he is the main provider and actor. This perpetuates the traditional separation between domestic and public spheres and locates women in the former one, related to nature and lesser in social significance (Pateman 2009, 10). Here, women´s role in society is worth less because of her inner subjectivity and more because of her ability to reproduce. In

conservative discourses like this, Einsestein (2000) explains that women became valued for the metaphor they represent rather for what they are.

The citizenship level becomes a reflection of the women´s lack of full agency as desirous persons and decision makers. On one hand, women are not completely autonomous to decide an abortion not just because the fetus is considered a person but mainly because women´s natural essence is that of procreation and motherhood. In the same direction, women as mothers and mothers-to-be are defined collectively in a position of vulnerability and victimhood resulting in an ambiguous relation towards membership. It is never a complete membership as an equal because women are valued according to their natural function and not as autonomous and whole political subjects (Yuval-Davis 2004; Brown 2014). Women as vulnerable, victims, and passive has been correlated with the figure of a protective, aggressive, strong, and active man. The similar attributes that were deposited to the state in the lawmaker's speeches reinforce, once more, the heteronormative and conservative structure of the society.

Conclusions

> A horizon of greatness is not built by foregoing the fundamental role of the family, and I want to make this special emphasis; nor is it ignoring the essential position of women in the construction of a Nation (Senator García Larraburu, p.129).

In the same direction promoted by the heteropatriarchal activists, the legislators´ discourse re-produced a heteronormative vision of social arrangements anchored in what they considered a ‘natural’ and ‘essential’ binary division of the sexes. Following feminist CDA, this type of discourse reinforces hegemony and social relations based on domination and hierarchical arrangements. In the anti-Bill stance, heterosexist imaginaries dominated the portrayal of the nation, state and citizenship in correspondence with what traditional theories of gender and nation had pointed out. Responding to hegemonic past notions, the Argentinian nation was symbolized as an empty woman whose value was attached to her ability to

reproduce and populate the country. Legal abortion was considered an 'external' invasion which goes against national fecundity and morality. The authentic Argentinian values were depicted as those who assure reproduction such as abnegation, love, care and hard work which should be embodied by women as cultural reproducers. In this particular case, poor Argentinian women of the interior were made into the emblematic of national authenticity who implicitly accomplish their central goal of bringing more children to the patria.

In this sense, some counter national hegemonic visions were raised in this anti-Bill stance in its reification of poverty´s morality and rejection of 'develop' societies´ values. In opposition to what was hegemonically depicted as Argentinian national identity as 'civilized' and bleached like Europe, these lawmakers were defending the interior and the poor as the national ideal. Moreover, in their call for a community which includes Down syndrome children and defend the life of all, they were keeping distance for XX Century´s eugenic nationalist discourses which advocated for a 'healthy' population. However, at the moment of being represented, the desired children for the nation had gender, class and race configurations. Elite white men were seen as the main characters of the nation, those who founded and led the patria, and assures its future. In this heterosexist nation, men were put as having the main role as autonomous, rational subjects who count on their own whereas women were valued because of what they metaphorically represent. The state envisioned in this discourse was in line with this heretosexist matrix, whose laws and apparatuses should assure women´s vulnerability and reproduction. A paternalist state guarantees this, by reigning over its citizens and caring for the vulnerable ones.

Through the same lenses used in this chapter and aiming to examine the maintenance and challenge of hegemonic gendered imaginaries of the Argentinian nation-state, the next chapter analyzes the discourses produced by the lawmakers supporting legal abortion. As shown in this chapter, the position against the Bill defended a heterosexist nation-state

sustained by a national authenticity held up in the interior and by the poor. The following chapter describes the way the pro-Bill discourses challenged these notions assigning new gendered components to the nation, and defending the values of 'developed' societies which in the end reinforce colonial relations of power.

Chapter IV: Gender and natio(n)-state under challenge by the supporters of legal abortion

The present chapter seeks to examine how hegemonic imaginaries of gender, nation and state have been contested and resignified by the lawmakers that voted in favor of the Bill on legal abortion. As I did in the previous chapter, I frame those speeches and arguments in broader context in which social actors fight for the approval of the Bill and have massive support. In particular, I examine the development of the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion which brings together multiple organizations and leads the struggle over legal abortion. I argue that the Campaign´s feminist proposals have been present in the pro-Bill lawmakers´ discourse challenging not only hierarchical gender divisions but also affecting conceptions of nation and the state. Thus, I examine speeches incorporating women´s movements in the national narrative within temporal axes and matters of belonging. I then consider the portrayal of a desired society aligned with Argentinian progressive values in opposition to conservative and authoritative ones. I show that, although some hegemonic Argentinian imaginaries have been challenged, others have remained untouched reproducing colonial and heterosexist logics of power.

The feminist activism of the Campaign for legal abortion

"No to motherhood, yes to pleasure," said the banner that María Elena Oddone was carrying in the first 8th of March demonstration after the fall of the military government in 1984 (Bellucci 2014, 271). She was a lonely voice, viewed as an extremist, in a context where women´s demands revolved around political participation, reproductive health, divorce, and shared parenting. Although motherhood as a heteronormative mandate was discussed during the 70s, it was in the late 80s that the abortion issue became visible in feminist circles. In 1987, the Argentine branch of Catholics for Choice was founded, and in 1988 the Comisión por el Derecho al Aborto (Commission for the Right to Abortion) was formed when the founders met

at the third Women´s National Meeting (Bellucci 2014, 305–20). Nonetheless, their demand for cultural and legal recognition of abortion was dismissed by the mainstream institutionalized feminism who pragmatically demanded things that carried higher social acceptance, like the provision of contraceptives. In contrast, women of the Commission considered contraception and abortion as aligned and that became their main slogan, taken from Italian activists. Furthermore, they argued for the importance of legalizing abortion and not just decriminalize it, as a way to remove social condemnation from the practice of abortion (Burton 2017b, 5).

The year 1994 was another key date, the moment in which abortion was discussed by the political class for the first time. The issue gained attention after the petition of Rodolfo Barra – the Minister of Justice at that time- calling for the imposition of a clause defending the absolute right of life from conception in the Constitutional Convention of 1994. The multisectoral Front MADEL, formed mainly by women from different political parties, unions, and local organizations, managed to stop this clause that would have blocked any chance for legal abortion (Sutton and Borland 2013, 200). However, that did not prevent president Menem from years later, in 1998, declaring March 25 the Day of the Unborn Child, in an attempt to satisfy the Church´s demands. During the next years of the 1990s, the Commission for Abortion´s claims were not central to the broader feminist agenda until they were brought again to the Women´s National Meeting by middle and lower-class women from the popular assemblies formed during the 2001-02 crisis. Every year, in these self-managed and autonomous meetings, organized and independent women from different backgrounds shared horizontal, pluralist and democratic theme-based discussions to deliberate their daily life issues in a collective way within a supportive network.[13] In the 2003 Meeting held in Rosario, there was a specific workshop regarding abortion. There, the green scarves were first used, and an

[13]Information available in the Women´s National Meeting´s website: http://encuentrodemujeres.com.ar/. Last accessed: 17/04/2019.

action plan to achieve the legalization of abortion was designed. This plan included the formation of a national campaign which was finally launched in May 2002 with the name of Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal Seguro y Gratuito (National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion, hereafter the Campaign).

The National Campaign can be defined as a broad, complex and diverse federal alliance whose main objective is the decriminalization and legalization of abortion in Argentina (Zurbriggen and Anzorena 2013, 23). As described on their webpage, it has the support of 305 groups, organizations and important public figures from the fields of human rights, academia, health, social and cultural movements, peasant and farmer's networks, and students groups.[14] Collectively, they put together a bill to legalize abortion that was launched in 2006, entitled Proyecto de Interrupción Voluntaria del Embarazo (voluntary termination of pregnancy project). As seen in Chapter II, the project was presented several times in the Argentinian Congress until it was finally discussed in 2018. The main slogan, also printed on the movement´s green scarves, states "sexual education to decide, birth control to not abort, and legal abortion to not die." It maintains that the recognition of reproductive and sexual rights needs universal access to public education and health services that sustain those rights. From being a minority inside the women´s movement in the 2000s, the slogan became the main feature of the 2018 mobilizations. In all the public demonstrations held that year, the scarves became part of a predominant aesthetic that included green make-up, glitter, and the uses of the scarf as an accessory in different parts of the body among its adherents (Alcaraz 2018, 106). Even more, the scarves were raised up for the *pañuelazo´s* moment in which the Campaign´s main slogan was shouted collectively and the massive use of the scarf led to the characterization of the Argentinian feminist movement as a *marea verde* (green tide). Even in the parliamentary

[14]Information available in the website of the National Campaign for the Right to Legal Safe and Free Abortion. http://www.abortolegal.com.ar/about/. Last accessed: 17/04/2019.

debates sessions, a great part of the pro-Bill legislators used the green symbols and ended their speeches reciting the slogan: “sexual education to decide…”

To achieve this public mobilization, the Campaign developed different strategies and worked hard in cooperation with other organizations. In the first place, they managed to communicate and discuss their message in the Meetings in spaces disputed by the women of Catholic activism who organized counter-movements, some of them violent ones (Sutton and Borland 2013, 201). In addition, the encounter with women from diverse backgrounds in the Meetings introduced nuance into the radical claims but also led to broader support. The campaigners worked hand in hand with the #Niunamenos movement who added to its central demand against femicides the calls for legal abortion in 2018. In the second place, the Campaign worked with health professional networks who have been demanding abortion education in universities and safe and healthy attention towards women and expectant parents. At the same time, they collaborated with *Socorristas en Red* (Aid Network), the group of women who, since 2009, has been providing information and support to other women who abort (Burton 2017a, 92). Both entities give information about data and experiences that the national indexes lack as they cannot make visible a practice considered illegal. In the third place, the calls for legalizing abortion deeply touched the young generation, affected by the social and legal changes of the recent Argentinian context mentioned in the first chapter (Alcaraz 2018). This generation organized themselves in student unions, led mainly by women, and especially focused their concern around sex education. During the month of June, they organized strikes in the secondary schools demanding the passage of the Bill and the adequate implementation of the Integral Sexual Education Law. In the last place, the Campaign gained public visibility in the mass media and virtual social networks, where TV shows debated legal abortion in 2018. In addition, the Argentinian Actors group played a significant role in reducing abortion´s social condemnation and winning legislators´ support. All of these strategies and

performances made a strong impact on Argentinian society and mobilized millions of people in the big demonstrations before and during the debates in both Chambers.

In order to have more support and achieve the goal of legal abortion, the Campaign not only had to work hand in hand with different organizations but also had to articulate the feminists´ demands with other equally important arguments such us pragmatism, public health, socio-economic justice, and legality. The founders of the Commission for Abortion in the late 80s took the claims of the global north radical feminism of the 70s and adapted to the local context. The main feminist arguments state that sexuality should be separated from compulsory parenthood, reproduction, heterosexuality, and monogamous family. Sexuality should be related to pleasure, freedom, desire, and sovereignty over the body; and at the same time, abortion must lose its hegemonic association with guilt, sin, loneliness and suffering (Burton 2017a, 104,105). When adapting those claims to the local context the members of the Commission decided to frame their demand as part of a collective issue, interrelated with matters of class and sexuality. In that sense, for example, they translated the demand for the right to *choose* to the right to *decide* in order to get distance from the rational choice paradigm in which the highest value is put in the individual fulfillment (Bellucci 2014, 284). Moreover, as is explained below, low class conditions increase the risk to die for unsafe and clandestine abortion. The demand for legal abortion also touches non-heteronormative gender identities, disputing mandates of heterosexual monogamy and family.

As mentioned, the feminist radical demands were attenuated, leaving space for other arguments to became salient, especially those of pragmatism and public health (ciriza 2013, 77). The pragmatic argument uses statistics and testimonies to demonstrate that the criminalization of abortion does not prevent women from practicing it. Indeed, members of the Campaign primarily quote a 2009 Ministry of Health report which states that between 370,000 and 552,000 abortions per year were performed in Argentina (CELS n.d., 3). In the same

direction, the public health argument points out that illegal abortion had severe health risks for women, being the main cause of maternal mortality in more than half of the Argentinian provinces (CELS and INROADS n.d.). Nevertheless, as shown in Chapter II, campaigners emphasize the unequal impact that clandestine abortion has where women from the lower classes and poorer provinces cannot afford to pay private clinics and are exposed to dangerous sanitary conditions. In that sense, illegality contributes to the development of a clandestine and profitable business that reinforces social inequalities (Sutton and Borland 2013, 217). The last arguments invoked by the Campaign members are directed at opposing those put forth by the conservative movements. Regarding the life of the fetus, the campaigners contend that the absolute moral value of the mother is more important than the potential moral value of the embryo which is not an autonomous being yet (Maffía 1998, 18). In addition, they sustain their arguments referring to legal documents that support or are not against legal abortion such us the FAL Court ruling, the National Constitutions, the American Convention of Human Rights, the recommendations of the World Health Organization and International Treaties arrangements (CELS n.d.).

The Campaign strategies, performances, and arguments represent a non-traditional way of doing politics. In cooperation with the Women´s National Meetings and the #Niunamenos platform, they work in horizontal, plural, and federal spaces. Even more, they work along with different organizations and take decisions in a democratic way. Last, the activity developed by *Socorristas en Red* consolidate a resistance to the patriarchal institutions of law, state, and medical system. By demanding legal abortion, these practices challenge dominant positions in formal politics and institutions; the purpose of the following section is to unravel how.

Pro-legal abortion´s speeches in relation to the Natio(n)-State

The widespread Argentinian women´s movement, feminisms, and the Campaign constitute the broader background against which pro-legal abortion legislators framed their

speeches and arguments. As described, the campaign mobilized the support of millions of people, public figures and organizations, and managed to install abortion in the public agenda. By focusing the analysis on the lawmakers´ speeches I aim at two interconnected objectives. On one side, I analyze whether and to what extent feminist ideas and contributions are present in these speeches. Thus, by following Peterson´s (1992) theorization of the feminist critiques and contributions to epistemology, I argue that it is possible to see the presence of a feminist discourse in some of the pro-legal-abortion speeches. This type of discourse, according to feminist CDA presented in Chapter I, helps to resist and transform hierarchical gendered relations of power (Lazar 2007). On the other side, I examine the way the pro-Bill speeches maintain and re-signify gendered notions of nation, state, and citizenship. Therefore, attention is paid to the discursive construction of a common past and a shared destiny, insiders and outsiders, the type of State promoted and the particular society to be defended. The feminist discourse affects the traditional notion of state paternalism and women as symbolic reproducers of the nation, giving women an active role in the collectivity. However, from a decolonial feminist perspective, I argue that the Argentinian nation imagined by these lawmakers is associated with developed countries, reproducing colonial logics of power.

The presence of a feminist discourse

Despite differences among feminisms, the general feminist tactic of deconstruction implies the understanding of hierarchical binaries presented as natural, as socially constructed and therefore changeable. The gendered binary separates human beings into two opposed, complementary, and hierarchical sexes and assigns different roles and capacities to them. Through a patriarchal system, men were assigned the most important ability to produce valid knowledge as rational and full subjects (Peterson 1992, 13), whereas the woman and the feminine were portrayed as an irrational and passive object of male activity. As Peterson (1992) asserts, feminist discourse challenges this dichotomous separation and stands also for the

consideration of empirical experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge, anchored in personal experiences and non-normative ways of being and doing (Peterson 1992, 11). Moreover, most feminists increasingly propose to move beyond essentialized gender identities and denounce interlocking chains of domination such as patriarchy, capitalism, racism, colonialism. As mentioned before, feminists seek to deconstruct different forms of domination commonly understood as natural and rooted in the primary naturalization of women´s subordination. Especially the feminist CDA used here, contributes to the understanding of the contestation towards those discourses that support relations of domination.

A feminist stance has been present in some of the speeches given by the pro-legal-abortion lawmakers in the Argentinian parliament. For example, regarding the importance of the empirical experiences, Deputy Alejandra Ródenas from Santa Fe dedicated her whole speech to telling the story of Julia, a 16 year old girl who died after having a clandestine abortion in 2010. Other lawmakers mentioned similar local cases that occurred to women like Belén, Ana Maria Acevedo and Liliana Herrera who died, were imprisoned or were forced to give birth. Even some lawmakers both men and women, told personal stories related to abortion, like Senator Pino Solanas from Buenos Aires whose partner almost died because of an infection after an abortion. The anti-bill advocates also evoked personal stories to support their position, however, the difference here, is that the pro-Bill legislators emphasized that the 'personal' should count politically. Thus, they bring forth the feminist claim that 'the personal is political' and demand a political account on empirical issues. They request the legalization of abortion not because of rationality, religiosity, symbolic or moral consideration, but because it is related to women´s inner experiences. Deputy Brenda Austin from the Radical Civic Union expressed this saying "public policy should be guided by evidence and not by beliefs." In her view, the role of the legislators, the state and politics, in general, is to govern over facts, empirics, and reality, and in this case, the reality is women´s experiences around abortion.

As well as the incorporation of the intimate sphere into the public debate, a feminist critique of essentialized gender roles and identities has also been present in the lawmakers´ speeches. In the first place, they recognized the historical roots of patriarchy in which women have occupied an inferior and subordinate position. Some referred to unfair previous laws regarding voting, divorce, and political participation, and other like Kirchnerist Deputy Nilda Garré emphasized the continued existence of a "male chauvinist and unequal society, in a society that harasses, abuses and even kills women", in a clear reference to what the #Niunamenos movement has denounced. For these lawmakers, the criminalization of abortion is rooted in this patriarchal society where women´s primary role is procreation with the consequent impossibility of having a complete autonomous life. Deputy Analía Rach Quiroga from Chaco´s Kirchnerist party quoted Soledad Deza, a lawyer specialized in gender studies and member of Catholics for the Right to Decide saying:

> Abortion is counter-cultural. A woman – no matter her age – who decides to end her pregnancy subverts the order that mechanically associates motherhood with the feminine. A woman who decides to abort demonstrate that sexuality and reproduction are not a necessary binary. (…) A woman who aborts puts heterosexuality as a social rule in check. A woman who decides to have an abortion, with her only existence, challenges a cultural, religious, and moral mandate which naturally identifies us in a patriarchal order that uses reproduction and domestic work to function.

In a contra-hegemonic direction, MPs like Rach Quiroga deconstruct heteronormative visions of gender roles. At the same time, these pro-legal abortion representatives construct other notions of gender relations and identities. The main emphasis is put on the recognition of women´s capacity and freedom to decide about their bodies, their future, and sexuality. Moreover, the speeches highlight the contemplation of maternity as desire and not as destiny or obligation. In this direction, Chubut Peronist Senator Alfredo Luenzo referring to the anti-legal position asked "what do we intend? To transform the woman into an object? To say that the woman is only a womb, a reproductive organ, an incubator?" (p. 149). Seeming to answer these questions, Deputy Facundo Suarez Lastra from the Radical Civic Union reinforced that

"there is no possibility of motherhood without the desire of the mother. There is no motherhood outside the womb and what constitutes someone as a mother is the desire to be one." The dispute over women´s assigned position also led to the problematization of men social roles. Particularly male legislators recognized that they as men should not interfere in women´s decisions and as privileged subjects should retreat in their privileges, as is analyzed below. Even more, some of them like Deputy Walter Correa decided to quote women´s words in their speeches so as to leave space for their voices.

The reconsideration of essentialized gender roles opened the space for the visibility of diverse gender identities and the critique of their subordinate social position too. Acknowledging the terms used in the Bill, some pro-legal abortion legislators mentioned not only women but also *expectant people* in their speeches.[15] Deputy Silvia Horne called for integral sex education so that people can value and respect the other´s self-perceived identity in a clear reference to what the Gender Identity Act (2012) stipulated. Moreover, lawmakers like Gabriela Cerruti, Marcos Cleri, and Gabriela Estévez used inclusive language, appealing to the word '*todes*' (all) and '*les pibes*' (the youngs) to refer to a new Spanish version of the third person of the plural that includes men, women, trans and gender non-conforming people. Deputy Gabriela Estévez from Córdoba synthesized these positions exclaiming that "as deputies, we have the responsibility to guarantee all these women, trans men, and people with the ability to be pregnant the right to access a safe practice." Indeed, Deputy María Masin demanded the full recognition of the rights of trans people and collectivities.

Other legislators, especially those from the socialist parties denounced other chains of oppression embedded with patriarchy, such as the exploitation of workers, poverty, and misery under neoliberalism and financial capitalism. Deputy Romina Del Plá from a Trotskyite

[15] As mentioned in Chapter II, expectant persons refers to those identities who does not identify themselves as women and have the ability to give birth.

orientation said that "to go in depth in the rights of women we have to delve deeper in the fight for the rights of the workers and the exploited and for the emancipation of all forms of exploitation." Bringing back Peterson´s (1992) proposal and through a feminist CDA, on the pro-legal-abortion speeches, it is possible to identify components of a feminist epistemology. These legislators criticize essentialized gender identities and the consequent equation of womanhood with motherhood. In addition, some of them recognize non-binary gender identities and denounce chains of oppression under capitalism.

A common past and a common destiny

The nation, as an imagined political community, constitutes a terrain of disputing discourses which gain some primacy over time. The speeches of the pro-legal abortion representatives are part of a dispute over the senses of the nation, State, and collectivity as they incorporate rhetoric around collective temporal axes, matters of belonging and citizenship that Wodak et. al. (2005) identify in the discursive construction of national identities. Regarding the temporal axes, the lawmakers included the struggle for legal abortion in a broader storyline of crucial events in Argentina. In particular, the pro-Bill speeches situated the contemporary women´s movement as a legacy from the past Argentinian feminist and women´s movements and important women figures. In particular, members of different parties emphasized facts related to their political ideology. While the socialists recognized the suffragists of the beginning of the 20th Century and the *piqueteras* workers of the 2001 crisis, members of the Radical Party mentioned the achievement of women´s rights under the Alfonsín radical government.[16] Some members like Deputy Josefina Mendoza also connected the demand for legal abortion with the University Reform of 1918 and related the student revolution of that era

[16] As mentioned in Chapter I, the *piqueteras* played a key role in the 2001 Argentinian protests against poverty, economic adjustment and poor living conditions. Alfonsin´s government, the first democratic government after the 1976-1983 dictatorship was a reference to the advancement in human rights and within them some women´s rights such as the right of shared parenthood and divorce were sanctioned.

with the feminist revolution of this time. On the other hand, the Peronist representatives especially venerated the figure of Evita, her fight for women´s rights, social justice, and the end of double-standards. Deputy Nilda Garré asserted that she "want[s] to evoke the struggle of the suffragettes of the early 20th Century (…) which had the final impulse with that incomparable fighter who was Eva Perón, who if alive would be accompanying us in this new chapter." As analyzed in Chapter II, both stances, for and against the Bill, ambiguously appealed to Evita´s authority to gain legitimacy. Especially to this pro-legal abortion position the use of Evita is quite controversial as, although she worked for some women´s rights and new positions, she promoted the ideal of a nationalist woman devoted to motherhood and caring of the house, husband and community (Luna 2000, 191).

Even if in particular different party members considered diverse women´s movements, in general, they all connected the fight for legal abortion with the Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo´s movement, with also some ambiguous connotations. Talking about the role of women in the Argentinian history, Peronist Senator Alfredo Luenzo considered that "it is women who *ponen el cuerpo* [put their bodies on the line], as the Madres de Plaza de Mayo did. Women, in a clandestine and invisible condition, were those who *pusieron el cuerpo* to get their children back (…). They gave us an example" (p. 150). The scholar Barbara Sutton (2007) explains that the expression *poner el cuerpo* is part of the vocabulary of women´s resistance in Argentina and means to "put the whole embodied being into action, to be committed to a social cause and assume the bodily risks, work and demands of such commitment" (Sutton 2007, 130). Moreover, the expression centered on bodily issues refers not only to the content of the demands (tortures, domestic violence, health care) but also to the activist practices which involve non-normative forms of feminine embodiment. According to Senator Luenzo, like the Madres, women´s activism demanding legal abortion joins the concept of *poner el cuerpo* in an embodiment compromise to reclaim something that traverses the body.

Madres de Plaza de Mayo resemble the ideal of goodness and fair struggles for freedom, justice, and human rights. By appealing to their history and support, the lawmakers reinforced the idea of legalization of abortion not only as a valuable and just law but also as something morally correct. In fact, Kirchnerist Deputy Horacio Pietragalla Cotri, himself a baby stolen during the dictatorship and whose identity was restored through the efforts of the Abuelas, regarding the presence in the Congress stage of Nora Cortiñas, the co-founder of Madres de Plaza, expressed: "Here there is a mother supporting us: 'Norita' Cortiñas. If this mother supports us and we look at our sides and she is there we are in the right place." Along with the figure of Evita, the uses of the Madres and Abuelas in the pro-legal-abortion discourse implies some contradictions. As explained in Chapter II, the Madres and Abuelas organized themselves to resist the dictatorship government and demand information about their 'disappeared' children by appealing to their maternal duties. As scholar Debora D´Antonio (2007, 3) asserts, Madres symbolically mutated from individual mothers to collective mothers of the new Argentinian democracy. Yet problematically, the pro-Bill legislators venerated the Madres and Abuelas less because of their maternal symbolism and more as human rights advocates against conservative forces. In fact, the Campaigners for legal abortion consciously chose the *pañuelo* (scarf) as their symbol as an echo of the white one used by Madres and Abuelas. According to these lawmakers, the history and the legacy of the Madres, Abuelas, and the women´s movements in general led to the consolidation of the current feminist movement. The present movement is constructed as formed mainly by young girls who, on a massive and strong scale, demand freedom and equality. Deputy Gabriela Cerruti from a center-left position interconnected past and present as follows:

> Not so long ago we were told that Argentinians were the sons and daughters of the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. I like to say that we are the daughters and the sons of those 'viejas locas' del pañuelo blanco, and today we are the fathers and mothers of those 'pibas locas' del pañuelo verde. The two scarves, united and interwoven in an intergenerational dialogue, are building the

> history of the conquest of rights and freedom in the country´s community, undoubtedly giving lessons to the world.

In this speech, the Argentinian community is being imagined as a family in which the Madres – with their history of struggle and value – appropriately raised the children whose daughters are continuing their struggle. The Madres and Abuelas were called *viejas locas* (crazy old ladies) alluding to how the military hierarchy first called them. Then, the Deputy defined the young feminist generation as *pibas locas*, *pibas* being a colloquial Argentinian expression used to refer to young, teenage, spirited girls.[17] Others lawmakers called the current movement the '*pibas´* revolution' or 'daughters´ revolution' in a sense that refers to the young and active component of it but also to the idea of future embedded in it. They represent the present and the future of the community that will keep fighting for more rights and inclusion. By linking women´s mobilizations of the present with the past and the future, these lawmakers are incorporating them into the narrative of the nation. As Racioppi and O Sullivan (2000, 25) point out, the notion of a national collective identity needs a shared sense of continuity with crucial events of the past oriented to a common destiny of the unit. With their discourse, the pro-legal-abortion legislators are re-defining hegemonic "myths of common blood and belonging" to incorporate an active presence of women in them (Racioppi and O Sullivan 2000, 18). Here, women are not only metaphorically assigned a symbolic, reproductive and supportive role in the nation as older critiques of gendered nationalism acknowledges. Women are also being considered as active members of the community, who contribute to its improvement and vividly embody its future, as new scholars like Waylen (1998); Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault (2000), and Kaufman and Williams (2007) examine.

[17] The word *pibas* originally come from the lower class slang and cumbia songs with an erotic component. Now it refers to young girls who are mostly urban, independent, and spirited.

The national home and shared membership

The lawmakers´ redefinition of the Argentinian collective common origins impacts their demarcation of the imagined borders of insiders and outsiders. Indeed, according to Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault (2000, 12), as the nation is defined as a home, its inhabitants are believed to be related to one another sharing a common past and membership in the collective. If in the anti-legal-abortion discourse the definition of the national 'we' with certain values was clear, the pro-legal-abortion speeches portrayed a more manifest 'them'. The outsiders of the home-nation were constructed as opposed not only to the legalization of abortion but also to the achievement of other rights and laws. The 'them' was represented in a continuum that involves the Catholic Church, conservative sectors, militaries, and supporters of the dictatorship governments. Senator Pino Solanas portrayed this 'them', criticizing the homily given by Archbishop Poli at the time of the parliamentary debate in which he stated that pro-legal abortion senators were not legislating for the common good. Senator Solanas from UNEN, social-liberal from the social-democrat alliance, said:

> Who are against this? Who is against? The most reactionary and ultraconservative sectors. The usual ones. Because in all the struggles for the expansion of women´s rights and for human and social rights, they were the same forces who were against. (…) Unfortunate words of the bishop, because they take us back to other stories in which the Church was part of. Truthfully, the Church blessed the flights of death. The Church knew that pregnant women were tortured! The Church knew that the children of these women were given away! (p. 175).

In mentioning the death flights and tortures the senator referred to the last Argentinian military government and denounced the complicity of the Catholic Church with it.[18] In the same direction, in other speeches, the conservative, Catholic, and military outsiders were accused of having double standards in their present defense of life while they helped to hid the

[18] During the 1976-1983 dictatorship, the military forces killed an estimated 4,000 people in the 'death flights'. This extrajudicial practice consisted on the drugging and then dropping of victims from airplanes or helicopters into the Atlantic Ocean of the River Plate (Cué 2017).

dictatorship´s crimes in the past. Even more, conservatives were accused of double standard in their current demand of contraceptives and sex education when they rejected those measures before. By putting the opposition to these rights on the same level with the commission of crimes against humanity, the pro-abortion lawmakers are morally dismissing the counter-argument. As a matter of fact, they build the collective 'we' as progressive promoters of human rights, opponents to authoritarianism and fighters for good, just, and equal causes. Some legislators, such as Pedro Gustavino and Victoria Donda Perez also denoted their personal stories of victims under the military repression using the speaker-inclusive 'we' as disappeared and tortured persons. Especifically, Kirchnerist Deputy Donda Perez from the City of Buenos Aires made the connection between illegal abortions and the dictatorship violence, emphasizing the clandestine conditions of both. In her speech, the Deputy implicitly mentioned her abduction as a baby during the dictatorship and stated: "If someone wants to talk about clandestine abortion, I can tell you what a clandestine situation is. Underground touches your body, you feel alone." In the pro-legal-abortion speeches, the clandestine situation becomes part of that continuous 'other' of conservatives/dictators/church, and legal abortion, human rights, and freedom resemble the 'we' who share the same related values as part of the national home.

The gendered nation-state under resignification

The particular representation of national insiders and outsiders have implications in the proposed state configurations. If according to the pro-Bill defendants the national 'we' involved women as active agents and a rejection of the Catholic Church, the state structure should reflect this. In this sense, they proposed, first, a State that takes account of women´s situation and supports them in their personal decisions. Second, the lawmakers defended a secular state in accordance with their idea of modern and progressive society. The gendered and political implications of both proposals are analyzed here. In the first place, in the same

direction argued by the National Campaign, the pro-Bill representatives portrayed women who abort in the current situation of illegality as alone, insecure and at-risk. Like the anti-Bill MPs, they demanded the presence of a paternalist and welfare State. However, here, the state is the one responsible for ending the situation of clandestine abortions and supporting women who decide to abort with adequate health and informative conditions. Thus, Deputy Facundo Suarez Lastra from the Radicalist Party declared:

> We are discussing what kind of state we want, if we want a very strong and present state to prevent unwanted pregnancies, to educate, and to assist, and help the person who made the decision with a state that supports her.

This Deputy was calling for a welfare state which provides basic services and a paternalist state that cares for its citizens and, at the same time, recognizes and respects the agency of women who decide to abort. The position of the State as a companion to women´s autonomy, respectful of their decisions and protective, is the same as that demanded by the legislators in relation to men´s roles. Especially male legislators acknowledged their privileged position in their speeches and identified their proper role in the abortion issue as being respectful of women´s autonomy. Deputy Horacio Pietragalla Corti addressed to men and suggested: "Guy: accompany, hug, support her because the decision is hers and she is the one who 'puts the body on the line'" (*poner el cuerpo*). Although the roles described here for men and for the state are still related to masculine ideas of protection, strength, and security, attitudes related to different sex/affective relationships also arose such as equal partnerships and respect of others´ autonomy and desires. An incipient reconfiguration of hegemonic gendered functions associated to men and the state went under discussion.

In these pro-Bill speeches, hegemonic national conceptions of women and motherland were also under revision. In the 2018 context where the official government was in negotiations with the IMF, some lawmakers used the demand for legal abortion to defend their political programs and ideologies. For instance, Deputy Marcelo Wechsler from the ruling liberal-

conservative party associated individual freedoms to choose abortion with Argentinian economic freedoms to sign commercial agreements with the European Union. From an opposing party, Kirchnerist Deputy Adrián Grana criticized the agreement with the IMF and considered it Argentina´s "loss of sovereignty of economic decisions, [where] tens of thousands of compatriots of this and the next generation will be condemned." Seconds before, the deputy mentioned in his speech that under the current patriarchal law punishing abortion, "the woman cannot decide about her future and about the place she wants to occupy in society and how she wants to do it." In this discourse, there is an equation between women´s decisions and those of the nation. The latter was referred to by the Deputy as *patria* and Argentinians as *compatriotas* with an emphasis on the next generations. From the Kirchnerist party, rooted in nationalist and populist ideologies, the Deputy is locating Argentina in its particular geography and history of being under the influence of the United States and international organs. His conception of nation is one independent of external domination, which can take its own economic decisions just as women´s must decide autonomously over their bodies, pregnancies and abortions. The traditional imaginary of the nation as a woman´s body under protection analyzed by McClintock (1993) and Stoler (1989) gives space to conceive an independent nation/woman, sovereign, free of external coercion and self-determining.

Regarding the relation between the Church and the State, pro-legal abortion advocates criticized the historically strong presence of the Catholic Church in Argentinian political matters, such as in education, the past requirement that the president be Catholic, the church´s involvement in military governments, its opposition to same-sex marriage and the state´s legal obligation to (economically) support Catholicism. Indeed, in their attempt to portray religious institutions as national outsiders, some lawmakers like social-democrat Senator Oscar Castillo pointed out that "the story of our Law, the story of our freedoms in the Argentinian Republic, is the story of secularization" (p. 160). He then described crucial moments of Argentinian

history where some rights which the Church was against were achieved, casting these as signs of modernity, freedom, and advancement. All these notions appeared as well at the moment of describing the type of society defended in the pro-Bill discourses. The speeches put the legalization of abortion as a symbol of progress for an improved, civilized, and modern society. As justicialist Senator Miguel Pichetto from Río Negro, referring to the abortion debate stated:

> This is a structural debate that has to do with modern Argentina or with a backward Argentina. (…) Religion cannot impose on the whole country and the state the religious thought and vision on civil nature´s norms that are part of the secular state. (…) I want to tell you that I am convinced that Argentina, when we can vote on this issue, will definitely enter into modernity, into a process of justice and equity, broader than the present one (p. 193,194,198).

The Senator´s vision can be included into a positivist colonial paradigm in which human history is linear, progressive and societies are divided according the 'stage' of development in which they are (Quijano 2000). According to Senator Pichetto´s vision, modernity, synonym of secularization, equity, justice and achievement of women´s rights, resembles the higher level of human progression. For other pro-bill lawmakers, modernity has also been directly associated with developed countries and they presented examples to show that the 'developed' countries are those which had legalized abortion and expanded rights to women. Moreover, for them, Argentina should have legal abortion because its idiosyncrasy is similar to these 'advanced' places. For instance, centre-right Senator Humberto Schiavoni proposed to copy Spain and Italy because, in general, "from there we descend in our country*"* (p. 67) and Senator Oscar Castillo called to follow Ireland, Italy, and Spain, "countries with idiosyncrasies not very different from ours" (p. 157). In addition, Peronist Deputy Fernando Espinoza argued in favor of legal abortion so that "Argentina will be at the forefront of Latin America – next to Uruguay– of what happens in the great democracies of the world, where it was already voted affirmatively long time ago." With their speeches, the pro-Bill legislators are reproducing colonialist hegemonic notions of Argentinian national identity. The scholar Rita Segato (2007), in her analysis of the configuration of the Argentinian nation, explains the process of whitening and

Europeanization carried on by the ruling elite of the late 19th Century. As mentioned in Chapter I, there was a huge and violent project to produce national identity as modern, advanced, literate, and white in resemblance to Europe and superior to the rest of Latin America. In the pro-Bill discourse encouraging development and modernity, the lawmakers are reinforcing a racialized domination which rejects indigenous cosmologies and societies. Even more, they are losing track of the particular oppressions experienced in Latin America.

Analyzing the contemporary context of Europe, scholar Sarah Farris (2017) develops the theory of femonationalism to explain how women´s rights are invoked to call for a particular national exceptionalism. According to her, in the cases of Netherlands, France and Italy, there is a deployment of feminist and gender equality agendas within xenophobic and anti-Islam campaigns (Farris 2017, 7). In postcolonial societies, the uses of women´s rights for different purposes is not new. In one way, the 'west' tends to appeal to women´s subordinate position in the non-west to justify and sustain their domination there. In another interrelated way, non-western elites like those in Argentina, use women´s rights to reinforce and posit western gender relations as more civilized and superior. Moreover, with speeches like the above, some pro-Bill MPs appeal to Argentina´s exceptionalism in women´s rights to cast the Argentinian nation as western and more advanced than the rest of Latin America. The invocation of this within a progressive and modern society reflecting Europe collides with non-emancipatory forces reproducing colonial matrixes of power. Different from femonationalism which uses feminism as a marker of Europe against the 'other' brown men, for Argentinian elites, women´s rights represent national superiority in comparison to backward interior and Latin American societies.

Conclusions

> As legislators, our only obligation is to be capable of representing the subject who best expresses the greatest point of the collective consciousness of the community in one moment. That greater point of the collective consciousness of the Argentinian community is today reflected in that subject with a green scarf who is out there, in the streets, who is feminist and young. Let´s not stay out of this story! (Deputy Gabriela Cerruti).

The National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion as part of a broader feminist and women´s movement, has developed feminist and nonhegemonic practices to take decisions, share spaces, and transmit their demands. The speeches given by the pro-legal-abortion legislators in the 2018 debates incorporated those demands and feminist epistemologies deconstructing gender essentialist identities and hegemonic roles assigned to them. While challenging gender roles, contested imaginaries of nation and the state emerged. In the pro-Bill discourse, the Argentinian nation was still symbolized as a woman figure who should be sovereign and free-decision maker against external forces at the present. These external forces were seen as either the Church and its allies or imperial forces and international organs. Here, independent women who fight for their rights came to represent the authentic Argentinian culture. Indeed, women´s expected behavior was not related with biological motherhood but with cultural reproduction. As did the Madres de Plaza de Mayo who metaphorically gave birth to the new Argentinian nation, new generations of women should keep working in rights´ expansion. Moreover, women´s rights became the markers of Argentinian exceptionalism in Latin America, a signifier of a secular, progressive, modern and developed society. In this discourse, these characteristics were associated with Europe and western countries, reproducing hegemonic national notions in which Argentina has been portrayed as white and western, leaving unproblematized global unequal relations of power regarding capitalism and colonialism. Finally, the structure of the state defended was one who keeps paternalist configurations yet here with laws and institutions that recognize women´s autonomy which come to be the new national authenticity.

Conclusions

In 1993, Anne McClintock, one of the leading scholars in feminist critiques on nationalism, explained the way the familial tropes figured in national imaginaries and sustained women´s subordination into the nation. In her conclusion, she wondered if under progressive nationalism this iconography would still figure as national unity or radical figures would be developed. At the beginning of this research process, I aimed to understand the difficulties of making abortion legal. Based on longstanding feminist theories of the nation and common sense knowledge, my expectations were that the conservative discourses would line up with heteropatriarchal national imaginaries. However, after a feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of the speeches given by the lawmakers in the 2018 parliamentary debates in Argentina, I came to the conclusion that the current articulation between gender and nation is more complex than expected and the difficulties of legal abortion are not so easy to outline. Conservative movements and anti-legal abortion legislators are not entirely upholding hegemonic national configurations nor are feminists and Bill´s supporters entirely challenging 'the nation'. In fact, the nation is important for both positions showing that feminists need to set matters of national belonging to inscribe their demands. These settings challenge some national narratives but the nation component is present, and it even figures with familiar iconography where women are still its main symbolic cultural reproducers. In the case analyzed here, a different version of (feminist?) nationalism emerges, one in which the type of woman promoted has recognized national agency and her autonomy figures as a marker of national authenticity. However, this marker is invoked as a reflection of 'developed' cultures, sustaining colonial logics of power and missing the challenging of global hierarchies that McClintock (1993) was expecting.

The nation under constant resignification opens a space for new questionings regarding the articulation between feminism and nationalism, feminist inscriptions in nation-state projects (should we still call them feminists?) and the effects and costs of achieving rights for

women. These questions are here to stay, in a region where debates around legal abortion debates and the invocation of the nation within them are still going on. At the moment of finishing this thesis, a new version of the Bill was presented in the Chamber of Deputies, with more articles reinforcing the implementation of comprehensive sexual education, implicitly defending it against the attack of the conservative advocates and their "don't mess with my kids" campaign. In addition, in proximity to new presidential and legislative elections, some parties have framed their programs as feminist, as when Cristina Fernandez´s explained in a speech that Peronism should be now populist, nationalist, democratic, and feminist. For centuries in Argentina, motherhood has been enshrined and grounded in national imaginaries, in link with religion and patriarchy. The goal of making abortion legal and, thus, legally stipulating disobedience against mandatory motherhood, have produced a situation in which both conservatives and feminists use national appeals in their campaigns. National sentiments are predominant in the configuration of social relations, politics of sexuality and reproduction, and gender arrangements, and they deserve a particular consideration, as I have given them in this thesis.

By acknowledging the relevance of matters of national identity in this kind of debates, I analyzed the extent to which gendered ideas of nation, state, and citizenship have been undergoing a process of resignification by both anti and pro-legal abortion legislators in Argentina. By applying feminist theories of nationalism, decolonial perspectives, and following feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, I conclude that both discourses were at some point sustaining and contesting hegemonic gendered depictions of the nation, with variations in the extent and content of this resignification. On the one hand, the legislators opposed to the Bill on the voluntary interruption of pregnancy (re)produced heteronormative hegemonic visions of the nation-state but disputed the hegemonic conception that Argentinian national authenticity reflects Europe and the west. The nation envisioned in this anti-Bill discourse was

one at the mercy of external forces that want to dominate it and enforce their foreign values. The external forces were represented as the west or 'developed' countries wanting Argentina to stop its demographic growth with a culture of 'death' and 'disposability'. Conversely, the interior of the country and poor families were held up as the symbolic core of national morality and representing Argentinian 'authentic' values of life, reproduction, and hard work. This anti-Bill stance, thus, challenged traditional Argentinian imaginaries which tried to portray national identity as advanced and a copy of Europe and tried to divide the backward interior and the civilized Buenos Aires.

However, heteronormative gendered notions of the nation were endorsed by the discourse opposing legalized abortion. In the lawmakers´ portrayal of the nation´s land as in need of population, they symbolically associated it with a woman´s body, fertile and able to be inseminated. Moreover, with the emphasis on women´s psychological traumas after abortion and women´s essence of motherhood, the anti-Bill discourse reinforced the prevailing view of women's proper role in the nation as biological reproducers. In contrast, they also assigned the proper place for men in the nation as active creators of it, by the personification of the fetuses as upper classes white men embodying the Argentinian future and by the consideration of the *Patria* as a creation of founding fathers. Even the state imagined in this position was paternalistic and followed a logic of masculinist protection, in charge of its most vulnerable citizens, exemplified in women who have no other option rather than to abort. This anti-Bill conservative discourse, in spite of problematizing certain national senses (at least discursively), reinforced an overlapping of womanhood with motherhood assured by patriarchal heteronormative structures. In addition, with the central importance they gave to women in reproducing the nation they made legal abortion to figure as anti-nature and anti-national, or against the nation´s essences and values.

On the other hand, the discourse developed by the legislators supporting legal abortion contested hegemonic heteronormative visions of gender relations and national imaginaries but left unproblematized traditional colonial Argentinian logics of power. The pro-Bill discourse recognized the grounds of patriarchy in the consolidation of social relations and tried to deconstruct gendered divisions anchored in essentialist views. Thus, they proposed to understand gender as the self-perceived identity, dissociate womanhood with motherhood, and consider abortion as an autonomous practice over one´s body. In an articulated connection, the problematization of patriarchal structures resignified gendered imaginaries of the nation-state too. The discourse in favor of abortion envisioned a nation which is independent and free to take its own decisions and a welfare state that is supportive of women´s decisions. Yet, here, the nation-state was still represented through gendered heterosexist imaginaries where the nation was portrayed as having those attitudes demanded for women, and the state was charged with displaying a re-defined masculinity respectful of their partner´s autonomy. Moreover, although women were not seen as the biological reproducers of the nation as in the anti-Bill position, for the pro-Bill advocates, women came to signify the symbolic cultural reproducers of national authenticity. The Madres of Plaza de Mayo metaphorically gave birth to a new generation of Argentinians, embodied now in the young feminist advocates who encapsulate the national 'we' as fighters for human rights, freedom, and equality. In an opposing direction, the conservative, military men, and members of the Catholic Church were portrayed as the outsiders of the nation. Matters of national belonging were evoked in this position, reframing national values, national history, and national actors, and giving women a different function within them.

Nevertheless, the imagined nation promoted by the supporters of the Bill reproduced prevailing visions of Argentinian national identity as a reflection of 'developed' western countries and as superior to the rest of South America. According to this discourse, Argentina

should make abortion legal as ‘developed’ countries did because its idiosyncrasy is as ‘civilized’ as them. As happened in other contexts, women´s rights became the markers of development and modernity, the motivation to adopt western colonial logics of power and dismiss other cosmologies and ways of being like those of local indigenous populations. Abortion can be legal according to this discourse not just because women´s autonomy is valued but because it is a desired part of these resignified national configurations. However, these reconfigurations still reproduce colonial matrixes of power which divide the world into western and non-western and assign a superior value to the former, perpetuating hierarchical social relations.

Based on what has been analyzed, some considerations can be acknowledged. The nation, as a discursive imagined community, is a site where differing and contentious discourses struggle for dominance. As seen, the disputed national imaginaries are not neutral but have implications of gender and power relations. The parliamentary debates of 2018 constitute a space in which gendered national discourses can be contested, reproducing or challenging hegemonic visions associated with them, able to be examined through Critical Discourse Analysis. Especially, in abortion debates, the co-articulation and co-production among gender, nation, and state become more visible in the highlighting of traditional ideas of ‘people as power’, the representation of the national land as a woman´s body, or women being symbolized as the biological and cultural reproducers of the nation. However, as seen, not only conservative lawmakers reinforce these hegemonic imaginaries in their opposition to legal abortion but also pro-Bill legislators rely on and re-imagine them. Abortion may not be legal because of conservative nationalist discourses but the nation is being under resignification by both stances supporting and rejecting the Bill, complicating the panorama and making studies like this one so important.

Finally, I have one more point to address related to feminist activism and personal career concerns. The demand for legal abortion potentially challenges national imaginaries and state institutions and opens the question of the extent to which it is possible to chip away at these patriarchal, colonial, racist, and heterosexist structures. Perhaps one of the ways to achieve this should be keeping active alternative forms of doing politics instead of addressing all feminist struggles towards transforming formal political structures, as Rita Segato (2016) suggests. In a dialectical game, these alternative forms of community care and against violent exclusion may generate changes in cultural and social structures which eventually transform formal structures as well. In fact, the demand for legal abortion is part of this reciprocal articulation that aims at the state, nation, society, and families to recognize women´s autonomy over their bodies, not because we don't have that autonomy but so that we don't die or suffer health risks when exercising that autonomy. In Argentina, feminist movements are succeeding in stopping the cultural association of abortion with crime and instead relate motherhood to desire. With that, they are disrupting essentialized patriarchal views of gender which challenge also other unequal structures of power sustained by it, like those of the nation-state. The question of how to transform patriarchal arrangements remains for me, but I am more certain that the fight for a more just, inclusive, affective responsible, and mutually supportive world is making inroads and will ultimately transform traditional politics, defying dominant structures – from the inside and the outside.

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Translations are mine.