

7

Feminist memes: Digital communities, identity performance and resistance from the shadows

*Shana MacDonald and
Brianna I. Wiens*

Introduction

In the current era of social media activism, feminist memes perform digital resistance against misogyny through an appeal to collective experiences of humour and rage. These memes often employ a visual signifier, or figure, to hold the complex entanglements of affect and critique they advance. Consider for instance the recent influx of memes centring the witch as a symbol of political feminist action. Since the outset of the viral MeToo hashtag in 2017, cries of ‘witch hunts’ against famous men rang out across physical and digital media spaces, with feminists quickly firing back (see, e.g. CBC News, 2019; McLaren, 2017; West, 2017). Here witch hunts morphed from something historically enacted against women to something done to male perpetrators of sexual harassment, and by proxy, to men more broadly. These public discussions centred the experiences of white celebrities and harassers, troublingly overlooking the important work of Black feminist activist Tarana Burke who started the MeToo Movement to

speak out against sexual harassment and assaults of young women of colour in 2006 (North, 2018; West, 2019). Thus, #MeToo was mired in erasures and the rewriting of historical contexts. While erasures and misuses of the term witch hunt are tangential to the larger questions of this chapter, they foreground the slippery nature of signifiers in the digital age and the political and material consequences such slippages cause for those most marginalized by digital cultures.

The witch as a figure of contemporary feminism shows no signs of abating. As hashtags like #HexThePatriarchy and books like *Witches, Sluts, Feminists: Conjuring the Sex Positive* (Sollée, 2017), *The Witches Are Coming* (West, 2019) and *Becoming Dangerous: Witchy Femmes, Queer Conjurors, and Magical Rebels* (West and Elliott, 2019) attest, the resurrection of the witch by feminists (and their misogynistic detractors) is significant. Witches hold the dual signifier of women's 'ferocity' and 'transgression' as well as her persecution (Sollée, 2017: 17–19). As such, the history of witches is a direct look 'into the abyss of fear, sexist violence, and toxic masculinity that dominates feminist discourse today' (Sollée, 2017: 22).

The history of the witch is indeed steeped in resistance and revolt. Under patriarchy, witches were situated in opposition to men, or were charged with having an 'inherent wickedness' that translated into too much power by their detractors (Gasser, 2017; Rowlands, 2013; Sollée, 2017: 32). Those who challenged structures of patriarchy were persecuted, outlawed, put to death or punished through the strategic misrepresentation of their stories, sometimes finding themselves completely erased from history (Gasser, 2017). During the infamous Salem Witch Trials in New England, around 78 per cent of people who were accused of witchcraft and ultimately executed were women. Furthermore, simply through their associations with women found guilty of witchcraft, men and Black people who were enslaved faced their own trials and deaths (Demos, 2004; Karlsen, 1998). This indicates that people found guilty of witchcraft were those who signified opposition to patriarchal and white supremacist rule, pushing the boundaries of imposed gendered and racialized roles. With the contemporary resurgence of 'witch culture', what remains clear is that any resistance to hegemonic conditions is still feared. Feminism has taken up the mantle of the witch as a performance of resistance and the 'prevalence of witch-infused messaging at this historic moment in support of gender equality reaffirmed the witch's continued role in feminist activism' (Sollée, 2017: 62). The figure of the witch currently offers a compelling manifestation of feminist digital performances of identity, providing clear insights into the desires and anxieties of social media users engaged in conversations around gender, equity and misogyny. As a feminist performance, the witch generates contingent, shifting and affectively constituted crowds with differing experiences and perspectives on 'networked misogyny' (Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016) that collectively form a digital community of resistance.

Feminist witch memes are thus complex sociocultural performatives that iteratively circulate and (re)organize forms of cultural knowledge into dynamic flows of discursive resistance and feminist refusal. Memes tied to the occult position our affective experiences of laughter, anger and collective recognition as distinctly feminist tools of resistance. Such appeals to humour and the threat of a rage that can be wielded at one's enemies are employed by digital feminists in order to connect and create resonance with others. The feminist witch memes we consider in this chapter respond to the urgency felt by media users who are surrounded by the tumultuous unfolding of social and political events. These memes offer a space for processing and meaning making. Through the use of affective tropes, the witchy memes articulate desires for resistance that publicize and remix personal feminist positionalities for social and political ends. The emotive force, the bawdy humour and the undercurrent of the violent reprisal of the witch in these memes provide a locus for feminist frustrations and offer a collective catharsis. Strong affects motivate social media users to make, circulate, amplify these memes and turn their sentiments into the grounds of political action.

Theoretical framing

Our intervention into feminist media scholarship frames feminist memes as a repertoire that encourages forms of affective intimacy through their circulation, reception and meaning making. Situating ourselves in the sphere of interdisciplinary studies amid feminist performance studies, feminist media studies and the emerging field of feminist internet critique, we draw on Jac sm Kee's contention that 'online is always located in the materiality of the people who engage in a multiplicity of spaces' and foreground the vital function of feminist 'resilient networks', which are 'both embodied as flesh, and as discursive informational flows' (2018: 85). Exploring 'how users deal with the worlds they are thrown into by designers' (Lialina, 2019: para. 1), we situate feminist witch memes as an example of counter-public world-making (Warner, 2002) and feminist performative assembly (Butler, 2015) that iteratively respond to contemporary political currents.

Our understanding of world-making draws on Judith Butler's premise that bodies assembled in public space function as a performative, collective gesture. In the context of protest culture, such assemblies assert 'the right to appear', eliciting 'a bodily demand for a more livable set of lives' (2015: 25). In their effort to counter dominant forms of institutional power, such assemblies also create the provisional powers to 'bring about a new situation or to set into motion a set of effects' (2015: 28). Butler situates assemblies as performative acts of collective expression. Feminist memes online offer a virtual form of performative assembly: they assert the right of feminist

voices to be heard and validated in their use of meme figures that can be shared widely and remixed into a chorus of collective voices.

Further, as Aimée Morrison argues, digital practices ‘assemble publics’ that ‘are marked not just by their humour but by their bent towards the colloquial, the vernacular, and the anecdotal’ (2019: 24–5). In this way, we see the world-making of the digital witch within their production of vernacular content (de Seta, 2016) tied to ongoing feminist currents. Digital feminist practices are thus important for the ways in which they draw on seemingly ordinary practices – practices that take place under the watchful eye of the internet – with the intent of bringing people together into communities of support. However, community formation as world building has consequences. The ‘forms of knowledge’ that these memetic performances display are ‘produced through the affordances and limitations of their platform’ (Mauro-Flude, 2019: 207), while also transcending them as they gesture towards different discursive and material futures. Feminist memes thus stand as networked media events, particularly when their virality extends beyond their original contexts. This offers key insights into how the digital allows for a particular kind of feminist enactment predicated on emotion and connectivity (Rentschler, 2019). Memes can become events in their own right which echo through the ether and allow social media participants to reframe how they enact their identity and resistance in the virtual but also their lived offline spaces. Situating the performative digital assemblies of memes as media events allows further insight into their role as world-making. In this framework, memes do something, they enact discursive changes and create forms of digital kinship that expand the frames of reference and relationality. Feminist memes thus exhibit ways of ‘doing feminism’ (Rentschler and Thrift, 2015), because through their circulation, they can address diverse feminist audiences in the hopes of fostering (re)new(ed) connections that extend beyond the digital life of the memes themselves.

Calling on affective and material histories of the witch within contemporary digital culture is one iteration of the current feminist movement. As such, it ‘demonstrates the shifting terrain of our movements, and the fluidity of spaces for our political acts of expression, occupation, re-territorialization, solidarity and resistance’ (Kee, 2018: 87). In particular, witchy feminist memes push against the hegemonic status quo, allowing social media participants to engage in a mimetic collapsing of the ‘personal is political’ in order to articulate affectively charged ethos of collectivity and resistance.

From this framework of world-making and performative assembly, in this chapter we suggest that the affects operating at the core of meme culture can open the forms of resistance required to counter the neoliberal misogyny that currently runs rampant in many social media spaces. The paradoxical nature of simultaneous (feminist) creation and (misogynist,

white supremacist) constraint in social media spaces (Wiens and MacDonald, 2020) speaks to Lee Humphreys' work on the everyday life of social media, where 'broader social values and systems ... shape the human condition' (2018: 6). Humphreys reads digital media events as both connective and contextual (2018), which MacDonald (2020) takes up to situate memes as feminist digital media practices that offer a snapshot of ordinary or everyday technologies. Memes are relatable acts of communication that often focus on the emotions that orient our everyday worlds. As such, this chapter focuses directly on the particular emotions that feminist witch memes are producing, namely humour and rage. The range of affective and political responses that the memes evoke are crucial for the further mobilization of the politics such spaces express and encourage.

Our understanding of affect is grounded in Sara Ahmed's writing on affective economies, wherein feelings circulate as a means of creating the surfaces and boundaries that both define and connect us to other people and things (2004: 8–10). To analyse the material effects of circulating affects, we take Ahmed's affective economy alongside Diana Taylor's notion of the repertoire, wherein performances, such as those circulating within and throughout digital media spaces, 'function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated' gestures (2003: 2–3). The affect(s) tied to our social knowledge, memories and identities orient us towards other people, temporalities, spaces and places and in this way set up a performative scene that is 'rehearsed and performed daily in the public sphere' (2003: 3). By reading a media event as a performance scene, we may ask how the performances within this scene offer 'conscious strategies of display' while also indexing the occlusions found within more official discourses (2003: 28–9). One way to expand the conversation around feminist digital practices is to consider the valuable forms of embodied, affective knowledge they transfer and enable (MacDonald, forthcoming). We argue that that one way of approaching the affective and performative assemblies of feminist digital practices is to strive for a more holistic analysis of their sociocultural, political, communicative and material consequences in the world.

Methodology

As memes are multi-platform, visual and textual artifacts that perform intimate forms of world-making, they offer much more than big data inferences on overarching trends and patterns can suggest (Brooker et al., 2018; Housley et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Langlois et al., 2015). Memes, as repositories of visual-cultural articulations, need to be read for the meanings embedded in both their form and their circulation (de Seta, 2016). To do so, we read our focused collection of witch memes in this chapter as

a ‘small genre’ repertoire that feminists are using to ‘continuously interpret, negotiate, and improvise’ (de Seta, 2016: 480–1) white supremacist patriarchal culture. The memes we have chosen to analyse here are artifacts circulated within the social media spaces that we engage in as participant-observer researchers as we ‘virtually dwell’ (Wiens, forthcoming) within digital spaces in order to discover how memes as visual data are formed and gain affection and material traction through their circulation. Drawing on Haraway (2016), Wiens argues that, as a method, ‘dwelling ... is like “staying with the trouble”, it’s about assuming a responsibility and relationship to the present moment to be open to new ideas and knowledges – especially if they contradict or seem antithetical to current power structures’ (forthcoming: 3). In this way, ‘practices of dwelling, although seemingly simple, matter for the ways in which they create opportunities to settle into the data and follow them through to new ends via our affective responses to them’ (forthcoming: 3). This affective data gathering informs the subsequent analyses of the memes, wherein we interrogated the affective economies that propel feminist activism and online solidarity, specifically looking to the ways that memes signify the multiple political, social and technological networks that they belong to. In this way, we use ‘tentacular’ thinking (Haraway 2016) to notice how one artifact can tendril out in many different ways towards different ends.

The memes were collected from the curated news feed of our research account Feminists Do Media (@aesthetic.resistance) on Instagram. We employed a keyword search for hashtags, searching #HexThePatriarchy, #FeministWitch and #WitchesUnite and explored witch-based accounts within our network between 12 September and 12 October 2020, although it should be noted that some of the memes that we encountered during this time were produced before this period. We then shared a set of twenty collected memes in a research folder, settling on memes that clearly called forth for us the affective elements of humour or rage and gave formal attention to how they visually performed the witch repertoire. In order to narrow down the selection of memes for analysis for this chapter, we drew on data ‘glows’ (MacLure, 2013) to focus on the memes that ‘instill[ed] in us a curiosity, a fascination that impels us as researchers to follow where the data may take us’ (MacDonald and Wiens, 2019: 368). Here, we stayed with the glows, following them to see what kinds of networks they came from and which networks they might send us towards. Glowing memes were the digital feminist artifacts that signalled to us that trouble was stirring against patriarchal structures, and that impelled us to see how these memes were taken up among the platforms that they were circulating within.

It is important to underscore that the memes that we have collected through our social media account could not have been found so easily in a larger dataset. This research experience can be lost or glossed over in big data’s aims to determine generalized trends from randomized data. We treat

the memes we have encountered in our traversing and dwelling in feminist spaces of the internet as iterative performances of the ‘glitch witch’ – neither compliant nor silent, but rather bawdy, raucous and operating under the spectre and promise of powerful, collective rage-fuelled responses. As glitch witch artifacts, these memes demand that we dwell in space and pay attention to how the sociocultural, political, communicative and material factors work together to nurture feminist digital identity and community.

Hell hath no fury like a woman’s rage: Feminist remixes of patriarchal bullshit

It is notable, and yet entirely understandable, that the two affective states that are largely embedded within memes that feature witches and witch-related content are humour and rage. Much has already been said about how women’s anger and rage have entered everyday conversation since the 2016 US presidential election (Keller and Ryan, 2018), with the *New Yorker* going so far as to situate women’s anger-informed activism as a ‘recurring figure of American history’ (Cep, 2018: para. 3). Sara Ahmed (2017) has expertly situated this anger via a correlate figure to the witch: the ‘feminist killjoy’ who ‘kills’ patriarchal white supremacist capitalist joy through her cultural critiques. The killjoy, like women’s rage, and the figure of the witch that shadows it, amplifies critiques of sociopolitical crises from a feminist standpoint. The collective rage named by the figures of the killjoy and the witch encourages feminists to carve out digital identities from their different experiences and come together for the greater goal of feminist resistance. In this way, these connected figures offer an example of internet folklore wherein feminist critiques are ‘iteratively modified by each user ... transforming the archive with unparalleled immediacy’; as such this ‘offers us a glimpse at the power of the Internet as a repository and its transcendental pull’ (Mauro-Flude, 2019: 207). Internet folklore helps us understand ‘how computational technologies do not only reveal new insights about post-digital culture but also transform propensities for embodied contemplation’ (Mauro-Flude, 2019: 207). Key here is how ‘the ubiquity of computational media has influenced our desires and fears, concerns and prejudices’ (Mauro-Flude, 2019: 219).

Current witch memes are not the first to imbue the witch in politics. The history of witches is sometimes framed as a history of women’s resistance as outlined here. Most notable in more recent history is W.I.T.C.H., Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, also called Women Inspired to Tell Their Collective History (and a number of different names, changing their name to suit the issue) who in 1968 stormed the streets of New York

and later Chicago to ‘hex the patriarchy’, catcalling men who had made unwanted sexual moves on them, critiquing capitalism and speaking out against marital rape (McGill 2016). W.I.T.C.H employed guerrilla theatre tactics that focused on ‘capitalism and corporations as the engines driving sexism of the day’ (Sollée, 2017: 53). Their message cemented within visual culture the figure of the witch as a form of political dissidence (Sollée, 2017: 52).

For instance, following Trump’s numerous claims that he was the victim of a witch hunt, a collective of ‘resistance witches’ known as The Magic Resistance perform a binding spell on Trump each month so that ‘he may fail utterly/that he may do no harm’ (Burton, 2017: para. 3). Identifying as neo-pagan, committed activists, the resistance witches explore forms of inclusive community-building and activist practices, while performatively channelling a sense of loss and grief under the Trump administration. Because the Magic Resistance has ‘its roots in internet culture’, this mode of protest has encouraged witch-activists to ‘reimagine the binding spell to suit their own needs’ through the online promotion of their practices (Burton, 2017: para. 7). Interestingly, then, both the memes and the monthly binding spell rely on the internet’s remixing abilities (Shifman 2014): the spell remixes ‘elements of different faith traditions and pantheons ... [and] emphasized a pragmatic, personal approach to the occult’ (Burton, 2017: para. 6) that rely on digitally networked collaboration. The collective’s digital performances situate these histories of witch culture within the current political landscape as a form of feminist identity and activist participation (see Figure 7.1).

In this contemporary meme, which offers an iteration of witches as political dissidents we see the theatricality of W.I.T.C.H.’s public interventions reasserted in the digital age. Drawing on an urgency to resist the Trump administration and expressing a collective rage built over centuries of violence against women, the meme exemplifies a form of collective mobilization by calling other witches into the digital coven at a distinct moment in time. The meme’s vernacular invites others to join in the action of binding while visually evoking distinct witch tropes. The meme from 24 February 2017 uses a vintage poster aesthetic with ‘Witches’ and ‘Mass Ritual’ written in a Victorian-era script. The witch in the image is cloaked with a crown and is hunched over the glowing orb she raises up. She casts her eyes askew off to the right of the page as if looking out for detractors or persecutors. The spectre of violence and prohibition haunt her actions. A wise but sceptical owl is peering on, while a series of fantastical ghouls emerge from the shadows behind her: both offering a rich intertextuality of wisdom and danger in equal measure. In less ornate text directly above the witch are the words, ‘We Need You’. In their positioning, they are reminiscent of the iconic poster (and its endless iterations) of Uncle Sam calling American men to join the military and fight for US freedom. All the elements together evoke both the history of witchy iconography and its shadowy existential threat



FIGURE 7.1 *Black and white image of a witch and the witch's ghouls in the background. Image reading: 'Witches, we need you. A spell to bind Donald Trump and all those who abet him. Mass ritual. February 24th, 2017. Midnight, Friday evening'* Designed by Kitty Lemiew, official graphic designer for The Magic Resistance.

to men abusing their positions of power. The image equally remixes earlier abuses of power tied to the nationalist military ethos of the US, shifting the call to arms to the realm of rebellious witches.

The image is theatrical in its evocation of an old playbill and in its staging of a mass ritual, a form of performance itself. In doing so, it indexes the digital binding ritual in 2017 as a performance to be witnessed and a performative act to be engaged in. Even for those not skilled in or convinced of the results of binding spells, this action to ‘bind Donald Trump & all those who abet him’ expresses a widely shared desire to constraint the harm and destruction of his actions. It is an admission and assertion that, as writer Lindy West says in her defiance of Donald Trump, ‘fine, if you insist. This is a witch hunt. We’re witches, and we’re hunting you’ (2019). In this call lies a performance of self-identification and an invitation to community with like-minded feminists. Here then, the rage evoked by Trump’s rise to power is transfigured into an ethos of connected, concentrated rebellion. This is one key possibility offered by the digital performance of the witch at this moment in time.

Hex them with humour: Or, another way into the feminist fray

In tandem with discussions of feminist rage in public discourse, recent feminist media scholarship notes the important phenomena of networked feminist humour (Rentschler and Thrift, 2015), which, unlike the alt-right’s use of *lulz*, ‘endeavours to shed light on sexism … exposing and criticising [it] via satire’ (Ringrose and Lawrence, 2018: 686). This humour offers space for recognition and connection via shared laughter. As Willet and Willet note, this form of ‘humour from below’ is a ‘source of empowerment, a strategy for outrage and truth telling … a means of empathetic and alliance’ (2019: 2). Take, for example, the Soulshine Tarot account on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, run by a self-described ‘tarot-reading astrology-charting whiskey-drinking banjo-picking art-making foul-mouthed witch aunt’. On 19 November 2019, she tweeted: ‘them: every girl is into astrology and witchy shit now. basic. trendy. *eyeroll*. me: maybe it’s basic and trendy. or maybe it’s a global feminist awakening wherein we collectively return to our true nature before we overthrow the patriarchy and devour your very soul, KEVIN’ (see Figure 7.2).

This tweet, which circulated across various social media platforms, addresses several strands of witchy digital performances. It begins by reciting a common critique that current evocations of the witch are a laughable trend in popular culture. The ‘me’ of the tweet, evoking a strong feminist narrator, disputes the critique and asserts the figure of the witch currently



FIGURE 7.2 Tweet by *soulshine_tarot* – Twitter account. Image reading: ‘*them: every girl is into astrology and witchy shit now. basic. trendy. *eyeroll**’. *me: maybe it’s basic and trendy. or maybe it’s a global feminist awakening wherein we collectively return to our true nature before we overthrow the patriarchy and devour your very soul, KEVIN*’.

trending is in fact a response to the patriarchal norms of culture. Within this vignette-as-tweet, the humour of the dialogue indexes an undercurrent of not-so-subtle rage. What the ‘me’ articulates is a global feminist awakening that seeks to overthrow the dominant order and threatens to eat the soul of the generic every-male speaker, here named Kevin. The mix of awakened resistance with the possibility of being a soul eater is where the tweet’s performance pokes fun at the cultural fear of angry and/or powerful women, most likely directly addressing a feminist audience that is already well aware of these tropes. Through the generic language of them and me, the meme invites a form of identification with the theatrical scene wherein the intended feminist audience gestures towards the threat of a collective of killjoys overthrowing the patriarchy by consuming unrepenting misogynist souls with no chance for redemption.

The tweet’s choice to humorously ‘call out’ Kevin incorporates an anti-white supremacist position into its critique. Here, Kevin stands in as a male version of ‘Karen’, a Gen Z and millennial shorthand for someone who symbolizes the dangerous practices of white women exerting their privilege over Black people and other marginalized people by appealing to authorities (store managers, police, government) over perceived threats to their security and comfort. Including Kevin at the end of the tweet, Soulshine Tarot provides a comic beat for the joke and also indicates that feminist resistance necessarily must resist white supremacist practices in everyday life. While the tone is comedic, the tweet’s position of prominence (it is currently pinned at the top of the account’s Twitter profile page) connotes it functions as a digital identity performance. Here this figure of the rebellious

witchy aunt who swears and drinks whiskey and is layered with a political position tied to anti-racist and anti-sexist intentions. The coding of feminist rage via the humorous imagined dialogue mixes intersectional feminist politics with a playful performance of the self, calling others to dispel the haters delegitimizing witchiness as a trend, and join the feminist campaign it contains.

#HexthePatriarchy: A twenty-first-century digital witches brew

What memes offer within the context of the occult are ‘new adhoc feminist publics and ways of knowing’ as well as ‘new forms of communication, community, and consciousness raising’ (Ringrose and Lawrence, 2018: 687–90). This is certainly the case with the feminist move to transform the notion of a witch hunt from pejorative threat to empowered resistance. Humour and rage allow the witch to iteratively move across platforms, memes and hashtags, with each repost asserting and performing the emotional labour of feminist identities within a moment of great change. Affective states are ‘often contagious’ and importantly, ‘carry culturally imbued meanings across porous borders’ (Willet and Willet, 2019: 6). As the examples in this chapter suggest, the witch meme is a way of doing feminisms that is catchy and catching, imbuing many sites within the current cultural moment with a meaningful assertion of frustration, rebelliousness and collective cackling.

Feminist memes offer scholars a historical repertoire of collaborative resistance. As Kee’s (2018) formative work ‘Imagining a Feminist Internet’ suggests, these kinds of community-building practices contribute to the formation of our feminist identities – an identity that spans our on- and offline worlds. As part of the feminist internet, witch memes perform a ‘double ontology’ wherein they are ‘simultaneously operating as artworks ... and, crucially, as concrete interventions that start, below the radar of official culture’ (cited in Mauro-Flude, 2019: 207). Significantly, the material outcomes of memes’ digital communicative, political and cultural interventions offer action-oriented forms of counter-public world-making (Warner, 2002) that are responsive to the current moment.

For instance, in October 2020, in a digital performance of personal identity and community building, the illustrator @crucifix.vi posted a drawing of a coven of witches sending up a hex against all fascists in a simple visual black and white aesthetic (see Figure 7.3). As part of the #inktober challenge on social media that asked social media participants to simply draw a picture in ink for every day of October, the image became widely circulated in feminist and occult circles, prompting @crucifix.vi to sell the print, with all proceeds



FIGURE 7.3 Image posted on Instagram by illustrator @crucifix.vi. Three witches with their arms above their heads casting a spell to 'hex all fascists'.

going to National Bailout, a Black-led, Black-centred abolitionist collective (nationalbailout.org).

Similarly, in the weeks after the brutal murder of George Floyd became a catalyst for another wave of anti-Black racism protests, @thehoodwitch posted this illustration (see Figure 7.4) by @bluecollards who sold prints of it to raise funds for Black-trans youth organizations in her area as an act of allyship. Alongside the illustration, @thehoodwitch wrote: 'Today I felt called to meditate on the justice card. Justice's energy is about sticking to your guns, not being influenced by persuasive talk. Whenever we begin to feel emotional tensions building up inside, I've found that meditating on justice cards scales helps to remind us to regain equilibrium. Know Justice, Know peace' (see Figure 7.5). The illustration on its own is deeply



FIGURE 7.4 Image posted on Instagram on the @thehoodwitch and @bluecollards accounts. A woman of colour's manicured hand with broken chains at the wrist holding two tarot cards: One card on the left says 'No Justice' with an image of scales on a decorative floral and yellow background; the other card on the right says 'No Peace' with a tower broken in two parts, one on top of the other, with flames escaping from the top and the windows on a blue background <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBOqG73JgSp/>.

evocative as it brings together the practice of tarot, with a femme presenting hand that has broken out of chains. In relationship to the accompanying text, a message of intersectional feminism is made clear. In it, the often-times white-dominant aspects of witch culture are decentred while Black women's bodies and reflections on justice and peace are recentred at a key moment within the Black Lives Matter movement. That the cards read 'No Justice', 'No Peace' offer a direct promise that protest and rebellious refusal will continue as it always has until there is justice for those most



FIGURE 7.5 A post from @thehoodwitch account that accompanies the image in Figure 7.4.

marginalized by a white supremacist, capitalist, heteropatriarchal order. We close with these two examples because it brings home a key point of this chapter: while feminist witchy memes may catalyse the creation of digital communities, prompting journeys of feminist self-discovery and coalition building, they can also be used to actively promote anti-racist, ableist, trans and homophobic activism. These are not just illustrations but calls to action that bring witchy discourses into dialogue with activist movements, where perhaps they have actually been all along.

In our work as media scholars, we must recognize and credit online actions that continue to extend particularly intersectional feminist frameworks within digital activism. If performative assemblies truly are oriented towards the demands for more liveable lives, our work needs to amplify when, why and how this occurs within the context of digital performances of self and the

vernacular's that make it possible. Digital feminist memes are an important site for further consideration, both for what feminists can offer as well as the exclusions that can occur under their fourth-wave feminist banner.

Our focus on humour and rage highlights how emotions are not just psychological states, but 'social and cultural practices' that determine 'how we come to be invested in social norms (Ahmed, 2004: 9–12). Within feminist hashtag movements, humour and rage are only two of the dozens of emotions and affects that instigate the performative assembly of digital and physical crowds. The fascination we see right now with all things witchy is not new – it is premised on centuries of revolution and resistance from people who have been marginalized by society. Grappling with the 'why' and 'how' of such large-scale assembly can help to create the blueprints for continued resistance against the white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy and for the courage to bind it, curse it and banish it.

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