

## **#OperaciónAraña: Performance and Feminist Avant-garde**

Paola Cortes Rocca & Cecilia Palmeiro

**Abstract (English):** *#OperaciónAraña* was a performative action conceived by the *Ni Una Menos* collective in Argentina and co-organized with the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion and women from the Subway Workers Trade Union, together with more than seventy feminist groups. The action consisted of a performative occupation of the entire subway network in the city of Buenos Aires on July 31, 2018. Its aim was to visibilize the claim for legal abortion in the immediate context of legislative debates on the legalization of abortion voted (and rejected) in the Senate House on August 8th, 2018. Through a material analysis of the action, this paper will focus on the concepts of artistic and media activism, performance, and feminist avant-garde. The claim for legal, safe, and free abortion in this context is a concept that articulates a macropolitical and legal dimension and a micropolitical dimension that aims to a transformation of the meaning of life for pregnant bodies and affects social reproduction.

**Keywords:** *green tide, feminist avant-garde, performative action, abortion*

**Abstract (Spanish):** *#OperaciónAraña* fue una acción performativa concebida por el colectivo argentino *Ni Una Menos* y co-organizado con la Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito, con *Metrodelegadas*, las trabajadoras de la Asociación Gremial de Trabajadores del Subte y *Premetro*, junto a más de setenta grupos feministas. La acción consistió en la ocupación performativa de la red subterránea entera de la ciudad de Buenos Aires el 31 de julio del 2018. La acción buscó visibilizar la demanda por el aborto legal en el contexto de debates legislativos sobre la legalización del aborto que se sometió a votación (y fue rechazada) en el Senado el 8 de agosto 2018. Mediante un análisis material de la acción, este artículo enfoca los conceptos del activismo artístico y mediático, performance, y vanguardia feminista. La demanda por el aborto legal, seguro y gratuito en este contexto es un concepto que articula las dimensiones macropolíticas, legales, y micropolíticas, que busca transformar el significado de la vida para cuerpos embarazados, con ramificaciones para la reproducción social.

**Palabras claves:** *marea verde, vanguardia feminista, acción performative, aborto*



## The Tide and its Sediments

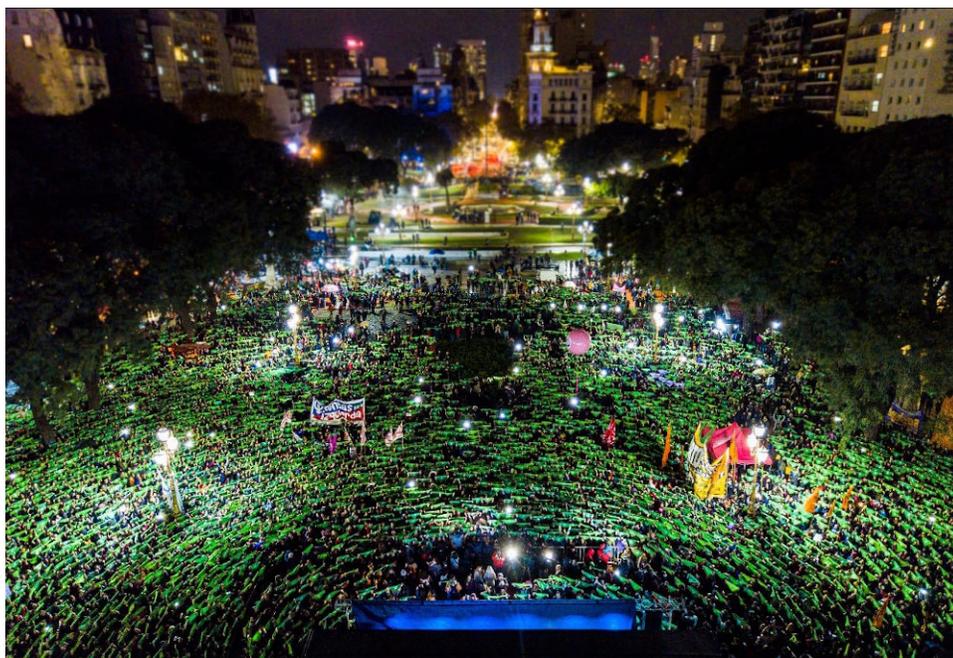
The history of feminism is marked by several crossroads: it is traversed by the struggles of the suffragettes as much as by social and popular economy movements; it is crisscrossed by interferences in patriarchal narratives in everyday life and media, as well as by legal and educational transformations; between bodies and words, it also once again stands at a crossroads that designs other possible worlds in today's context of inequality. In the new millennium, women, lesbians, travesties and trans worldwide are composing a collective body in oceanic manifestations of thousands to millions of sexed bodies. They are transforming the waves of feminism into a tide that swells and overflows worldwide.

The tide is made of horizontality, intersectionality, transversality, political friendship, and unusual alliances. It is woven of a new internationalism coming from the South and from below. The tide enacts a way of speaking, seeing, and activating that takes the form of a sensitive revolution or, as it is called in Gua-

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temala, *acuerpamiento mundial*. We think of *acuerpamiento mundial* as a way of putting our bodies on the line that awakens the collective in the singular. It makes us perceive a sameness (outside of identity) capable of activating sorority and the formation of a collective body, or allied embodiment. It is a process of desire, an activation and liberation of potencies. This activation pulses in micro-political action but is also articulated macro-politically and dyed in green as the sign of abortion.<sup>1</sup>



The image for which the green tide was named is an aerial photo of the *pañuelazo*—the carrying and showing of green scarves and bandanas as a symbol of reproductive freedom. The photo was taken at the 2018 Ni Una Menos march in Buenos Aires. Its slogans included #NiUnaMenosPorAbortoClandestino, #AbortoLegalYa, and #QueSeaLey.<sup>2</sup> Although the image synthesizes the 2018 fight for the legalization of abortion—the most active year of the protests—the

<sup>1</sup> Green is the color of scarves worn on wrists and tied to backpacks, as a symbol of activists' support for the National Campaign for Legal, Safe and Free Abortion, which has now spread throughout the world as a banner of the struggle for reproductive autonomy.

<sup>2</sup> Trans: #NotOneLessforClandestineAbortion, #LegalAbortionNow, and #ItWillBeLaw (Cortes Rocca and Palmeiro).

All the images included here belong to the collaborative coverage of #OperaciónAraña and to the visual archive of the Colectivo Ni Una Menos.

green tide is the name of the mass movement carried out by countless feminist organizations throughout Argentina and many other countries in Latin America and the world. The objective was to make the issue of abortion a matter of public opinion and put it on the political agenda.<sup>3</sup> The green tide made constant appearances in 2018, including *pañuelazos*,<sup>4</sup> Green Tuesdays—occupation of the Congress public square with political, performative, and creative actions such as those carried out by the #poetasporelabortolegal (poets for legal abortion) (2018, 2020)—among many other appearances on days when the bill was discussed by the Congressional commissions. The practice of feminist occupation of public space is what defines the green tide. Moreover, it is one of the most notorious characteristics of the feminist tide, especially given its level of mass mobilization.

It is a tide that deposits sediments of a long genealogy of feminist struggle, whose configuration is part of the task of the movement itself. It dates back, of course, to the anarchist debates of the 19th and 20th centuries for women's right to education, as well as to suffrage and abortion. It continues with the revolutionary struggles of the 1970s and with the interrogation that feminism itself had installed as a question about the performativity of bodies in the 1980s and 1990s. It is a tide that also finds its local sediments in the peculiarity of the extension of the right to vote during Peronism and through the figure of Eva Perón, in the mid-twentieth century; in the popular and peasant feminisms; as well as more recently in the debates around civil rights in the Argentinean post-dictatorship.<sup>5</sup> The tide is interwoven with the struggles of other groups like LGBTQ+ activism and the militancy of human rights organizations in Argentina founded by the Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo, as well as those of the movements of unemployed workers (*piqueteros*), popular assemblies, recovered factories, and other grassroots movements.<sup>6</sup>

The first Ni Una Menos march in 2015 formed the tide as a political subject, which continued to rise and swell in a process of sustained radicalization. If we

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<sup>3</sup> In the 21st century, the project for the voluntary and legal interruption of pregnancy was presented to be dealt with by the Argentine National Congress in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2018 and in December 2019 to be finally approved in 2020. The 2018 presentation of the project marks a threshold in terms of visibility and political transformation due to the enormous mobilization of the International Women's Strike in 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Mobilizations recognizable by the (color of) handkerchiefs worn.

<sup>5</sup> Among them, the divorce law approved during the return to democracy, equal marriage, the Femicide law, the law of Integral Sexual Education, and the law of gender identity during the government of ex-President Cristina Fernandez.

<sup>6</sup> Another important antecedent of the green tide in Argentina is the National Women's Meetings (now called Plurinational Meeting of Women, Lesbians, Trans, Travestis and Non-binaries), since they were the launch pad for the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion, officially established in 2005, after two decades of activism.

consider that, in 2015, we began by questioning and politicizing femicide, by the first National Women's Strike held on October 19, 2016, we questioned not only patriarchy but also neoliberalism, by understanding *machista* violence not as an accident or an excess but as a central feature for capitalist accumulation (Federici 2004). As Verónica Gago and Cecilia Palmeiro write, "this diagnosis became decisive for the relaunching of the strike as a political and conceptual tool for a Feminist International" that was consolidated through the first International Women's Strike in 2017 and the International Feminist Strike in 2018 (38). Relunched every year, the feminist strike is finally a general strike worthy of the name since it reaches all forms of labor, whether remunerated, recognized, or neither.

### The Story Behind the Plan

In this context of transnational effervescence, the green tide emerged in 2018 in Argentina as a result of the transversal political decision to focus on a common demand: legal, safe, and free abortion. From a series of assemblies that involved a joint effort involving different groups and collectives, the struggle for the legalization of abortion radicalized and expanded the collective imagination on the subject. It is a process of creation-conceptualization that resulted in the performative action called #OperaciónAraña (Operation Spider). It is interesting to think of this action not only as a result of this collective process but also as a means of production and as the creation of a new way of conceptualizing the demand for legal abortion (as well as many other aspects of the green tide to date).

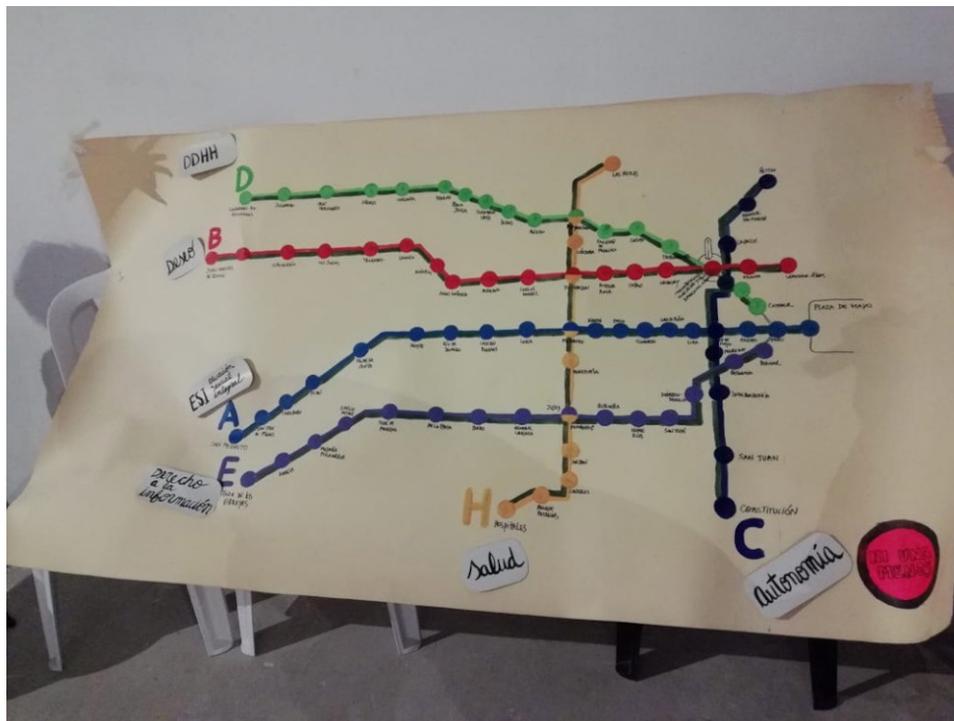
#OperaciónAraña consisted of the occupation of the entire subway network of the city of Buenos Aires with abortion-themed slogans, symbols, colors, accessories, artistic performances (theater, music, poetry, dance), and distribution of information at the same time as the subway network was transformed into a mass assembly. #OperaciónAraña took place in Buenos Aires on July 31, 2018—one week before Argentina's Senate was to vote on the abortion bill, which had already been passed by the House of Deputies. The performative action was organized by the Ni Una Menos collective, the Metrodelegadas (union delegates of the Buenos Aires subway workers), and the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion. This artistic-political action was the result of a months-long assembly process with the participation of 70 groups, political parties, unions, artistic collectives, student centers, and others. Among them were several groups born and named after this action.<sup>7</sup>

In this process, participants decided to take the map of the Buenos Aires subway network and turn it into a cartography that would express the different

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<sup>7</sup> For the complete list of organizations see the post on the Facebook page of Ni Una Menos on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018, also provided in the bibliography of this article.

dimensions of the demands for legal abortion, based on the routes and characteristics of each of the subway lines. The concept included thinking of the lines as forms of urban experience from a feminist perspective. For example, Line A staged the demand for abortion from a *human rights* perspective. Line B emphasized the power of *desire* with slogans such as #LaMaternidadSeráDeseadaONoSerá<sup>8</sup> and #NosMueveElDeseo.<sup>9</sup> Line C focused on the autonomy of our bodies generated through *community ties and collective care* woven by women who in their time and in different territories broke the mandate of being mere reproductive containers to transmit to us forms of collective life. Line D demanded *Educación Sexual Integral* (a comprehensive educational approach to sex and gender issues) to explore, contraceptives to enjoy, and legal abortion to choose. Line E addressed the issue of *information* as a key tool to decide and confront the oppressive disinformation and fake news campaigns with which anti-rights organizations were smearing the terrain of public debate opened by the feminist tide. Finally, Line H exposed the issue of abortion as a matter of *public health* rights.



The action plan was to coordinate our departure from the terminal stations farthest from downtown so that we would arrive together at noon at Plaza de

<sup>8</sup> Trans: motherhood will be desired, or it will not be at all (Cortes Rocca and Palmeiro).

<sup>9</sup> Trans: desire moves us (Cortes Rocca and Palmeiro).

Mayo. There, a massive *pañuelazo* would take place before we marched to Plaza del Congreso for a Green Tuesday. Of course, the idea was not simply to put on a show that would be exhibited to onlooking subway passengers or to the public opinion afterward through different records of the action. Conceived as performance rather than spectacle, the idea was to create an experience that invited anyone who wanted to participate to join in. The challenge was not to disturb the passengers, not to generate tension with the private contractor, Subterráneos de Buenos Aires, so as not to compromise the workers who had already been on strike months before (when our “political friendship” began), to minimize litter on the subway (so as not to generate friction between male and female co-workers). In sum, the challenge was to create a feminist-style convoy of subway cars (body-territory) which would be ephemeral and not generate extra work, while at the same time generating an impact on public opinion, showing our power of action and imagination.

The turnout was ten times higher than expected and the intensity of the energies at play far exceeded our (already high) expectations. This made us improvise and occupy almost all the subway trains at the same time, instead of going one by one, as was the original plan. Before leaving, the destination signs on the trains with the names of the terminal stations were intervened with signs saying “Aborto Legal Ya,”<sup>10</sup> made by a graphic collective. The effect was surprising and comical because, in the montage made on the original destination sign, new phrases were formed such as “**Aborto Legal Ya** Derecho,”<sup>11</sup> where it originally said Facultad de Derecho (Law School) or “Eva Perón **Aborto Legal Ya** Yes”<sup>12</sup> for the destination “Eva Perón Plaza de los Virreyes.



<sup>10</sup> Trans: Legal Abortion Now (Cortes Rocca and Palmeiro).

<sup>11</sup> Trans: Legal Abortion Law Now (Cortes Rocca and Palmeiro).

<sup>12</sup> Trans: Eva Perón Legal Abortion Now Yes (Cortes Rocca and Palmeiro).

At the agreed time, we left with megaphones in hand, chanting on the platforms. When we boarded the subway, we deployed what we call the assembly of bodies-territories: to make the city an extensive and feminist body. Joining us were several musicians, including, among others, Juana Chang from Kumbia Queers, Sudor Marika, Paula Maffia, Miss Bolivia, Karen and her crew (a rapper with a group of breakdancers). Las Comediantes Argentinas (a group formed for the occasion) performed short funny sketches about sex education, dressed as nurses with colorful stuffed vaginas and fetus dolls (parodying the exhibition of fetuses by anti-rights groups); a group of performers dressed as “canillitas,”<sup>13</sup> handing out leaflets declaring the right to information against fake-news); the Coro Abortero sang their repertoire, parodying classics of Argentine popular music, dancing with their sunglass-wearing, stuffed fetuses. The young graphic artists of “Línea peluda” distributed images in which hairiness became another form of rebellion and body humor. The artists’ collective called Las Maldonadas spread their legs, in a parody of manspreading, but with abortion messages written between their legs. Stage props of movable cardboard palm trees accompanied the tropical music of the Kumbia Queers. Juggling, feminist soccer, and breakdancing were some of many artistic expressions that feminism brought to the streets. We hung green ribbons and garlands all over the poles and railings of the subway trains, canvassed stickers and flyers of all kinds, handed out leaflets, and spread enthusiasm.

We all arrived at the agreed time at the Plaza de Mayo subway station, and we left in a tidal wave as if surging from below the ground. All fired up, we chanted, “if there is no legal abortion, what a mess that will be. We will block the roads and burn down the Cathedral”—at that moment we felt that it was not a metaphor or hyperbole. The idea was to organize a *pañuelazo* in the Plaza de Mayo and march down the famous Avenida de Mayo, but the action had turned into a party in its own right. After raising the green scarves for the photographers, a festive and improvised occupation of the Plaza lasted a couple of hours more, until mobilizing the tide to the Congress to participate in the last Green Tuesday.

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<sup>13</sup> Trans: Newspaper vendors (Cortes Rocca and Palmeiro).



In order to give visibility to such an operation, collaborative coverage was organized that also took the form of a network: photographs and chronicles were sent to a sort of hub ready to distribute them on social media. The objective was to take control horizontally, on social and traditional media platforms, of the images and information that the hegemonic media decided to share or silence. We were thus ready in advance to confront their stigmatizing interpretations

and misrepresentations. This self-management of events and their representation clearly illustrates the passage we have been suggesting, from issues such as representation and visibility to action, and also points out the articulation between activism and performance or exhibits contemporary activism as performative. Groups like Emergentes, M.A.F.I.A and thousands of professional photographers mobilize the modes of circulation of the visual and participate in the feminist movement by putting their bodies in the streets and their images on social media. A peculiarity of this feminist visuality is the production of its own archive that yanks beauty, body care, and partying out of the market's clutches.

In terms of visibility and number of people in the organization, as well as in the magnitude of the territory occupied by the movement, #OperaciónAraña was to date the largest performative action carried out by that phase of the feminist tide. The action had such an impact that it was replicated in Madrid (Spain) and in the Argentinean city and province of San Juan, where there is no subway, but where the action was translated into an assembly on the city streets. We don't think it is a coincidence that the term "replica" is used, reminiscent of the successive tremors of a quake.

### Feminist Avant-garde

Of the actions in which we have participated so far, #OperaciónAraña was the richest example of collaborative and reticular creative work organized from the assembly logic. Its title—which focuses on the fabric, the weave, the web of relationships, actions, and signs that are mobilized in solidarity and simultaneously—evokes the last phrase written by the poet Alejandra Pizarnik: "En el centro puntual de la maraña / Dios, la araña" (7).<sup>14</sup> However, it also gives the poetic phrase a twist by dislocating the space and materializing that nebulous and transcendental instance in terms of the collective body: in the tangle—of urban transportation and daily life, of legislation and bodies—*we, the spider*. The subtitle, "La tierra tiembla desde abajo"<sup>15</sup>—which was later divided into two hashtags #LaTierraTiembla and #Desdeabajo—takes up an image that the movement has been using to account for the high vibratory frequency emitted by the tide, shaking up social structures, institutions, and traditional meanings that sustain the patriarchal order. That transformative tremor is literalized in the tremor produced by the subway that becomes one with the tide and at the same time is the magma from which it emerges. #OperaciónAraña constitutes a "seismographic tool" (Bardet 2018) that retraces that tremor that comes from the Global South, as well as from the popular classes and their struggles as the true

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<sup>14</sup> Trans: In the very center of the tangle / God, the spider (Cortes Rocca and Palmeiro).

<sup>15</sup> Trans: the earth trembles from below (Cortes Rocca and Palmeiro)

pulse of the contemporary tide, on a par with the forces of desire as world-builders. Moreover, the ardor that comes from the so-called lower parts of the body makes eroticism a motor, not a counterpart of political action.

The tide opens up a passage from the individual to the collective, a transformation of urban cartography and local traditions. It focuses on producing experiences rather than objects and above all it sweeps away the borders that differentiate classic oppositions such as body and intellect, art and life, everyday life and politics. As a result, the tide gestates a collective subject that reappropriates artistic and political practices, configuring what we can call a feminist avant-garde (Palmeiro 2019). This movement that erupts into the aesthetic sphere to give shape to a new political rationality can be called avant-garde, as a collective reappropriation of creative power. We conceptualize it in its three-fold dimensions: first, the feminist avant-garde entrenches resistance and provides collective shelter; second, it functionally transforms modes of production (in the sense of socialization of media and knowledge); third, it massifies aesthetic procedures, disrupting public opinion, traditional media, and social media in an intelligible way for the multitudes without losing radicality and aesthetic experimentation.<sup>16</sup>

The feminist avant-garde is nourished by humor, critical distance, and above all, the collectivization of intellectual, artistic, and spiritual work: the collective reappropriation of the creative force and one's own vital drive, the fuel of the colonial-capitalist system. That power of creation, Suely Rolnik asserts, expands in the sense not so much of contagion—a medical term relating to the contamination of pathologies—but rather one of “pollination” (which Rolnik thinks of as the proliferation of active politics of desire) and the germination of potential worlds (81). In following (and reappropriating) Rolnik, we can use the term *feminist avant-garde* to name certain experimentations of creative power as

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<sup>16</sup> Many theorists of the Global North, such as Peter Bürger (1984) or Hal Foster (1996) have studied the artistic and political avant-gardes, however our theory of the feminist avant-garde dialogues more intimately with the elaborations of Ricardo Piglia (2016). Piglia observes three fundamental tendencies of avant-gardes, that are also strategies of transgression of the literary, attitudes towards the market and the institution and vectors from which art has left the purely aesthetic sphere to connect with other practices, in particular, politics. A first trend is the denial of the rules of current society. The avant-garde appears here as a counter-society, a denial of the art that came before and of what exists. The second tendency is the one that is oriented towards the functional transformation of the means of production in a socialist sense, a technical avant-garde, as Benjamin proposes in “The Author as Producer”: functional transformation of the productive apparatus, or socialization of mode of artistic production. A third movement is that of the utopia of massification of the avant-garde: it brings the avant-garde's artistic procedures to mass culture and takes its materials from mass culture, without giving up its aesthetic principles. In the feminist avant-garde these three active principles can be observed.

they withdraw from the aesthetic realm. These experimentations are a micropolitical insurrection that leads to subjectivities, through collective action-creation, to experience possible worlds in a larval state and to mobilize a plural unconscious to join the insurrection through the resonances that can be awakened in them.

When we speak of avant-garde, we recover its immediate intervention which Boris Groys proposes as a trait in “On Art Activism.” But we go a step further by pointing out the long-term effect proposed by feminism, inasmuch as it implies something more than a hybridization between art and politics or of the subjectivities at stake—the artist, the activist—and places its bets instead on a radical transformation of art, politics, and the world from which they cannot be separated. When we say feminist avant-garde, we do not say avant-gardism. We move away from that military metaphor that designates the front line of the army and that in its Leninist coinage proposes a sort of revolutionary elitism. The feminist vanguard is, on the contrary, horizontal, and transversal. It originates at the grassroots: it is the force from below of a tide unleashed in “las pibas” as a political subject,<sup>17</sup> that generates radically new concepts, images, and utopias (Palmeiro 2018).

The feminist avant-garde not only makes use of procedures and techniques that it resignifies and reuses in new contexts, but it also rearranges them using a key device which is that of performance. In the 1960s and 1970s, the performative emerged as a device for questioning the rules and values of the art institution—its autonomy, the work as a closed and organic object, the appropriateness of its materials, etc. By the end of the century, it was linked to certain games with hints of imposture that made it possible to escape from the prison of the self—and not to be a woman, a man, or a worker, but to constitute oneself provisionally in the conjunctural performance of that role. Today, it becomes a flexible *techné* (Joselit 85-100). It takes materials, procedures, and content from anywhere—art and handicrafts, digital culture and land cultivation techniques, everyday life and philosophical tradition—and brings together different traditions and temporalities, locating the tide in the here and now of its specific conjuncture and producing echoes and resonances in pursuit of new forms of internationalism.

However, with the swaying of the tide, the performative reveals itself as a dimension that exceeds even this *techné* and becomes a nodal point of the new forms of intervention in the political. The performative implies another conception of language and new subjective modulations. Its iterability does not limit its possibilities to a given repertoire. It is a vanishing point for the invention of the new. The performance tells us that equality is not a natural condition (an already foreseen place to enter through struggle and demands) but a collective construction and effect of performative interventions. As Judith Butler (2015) warns us,

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<sup>17</sup> Trans: the (young) girls (Cortes Rocca and Palmeiro).

the performative tells us that it is about exercising a right (performing it, acting it, putting it into practice) rather than possessing it, having it, etc. Moreover, it implies the exercise of a right that one does not yet have, and that is precisely why it shakes even how this right is conceived and granted.

We argue that the feminist global tide is constituted as the massification of the performativity of the avant-garde that articulates bodies with discourse, in a radically new political language built through a critical and collective use of digital languages and its communicative potentials. It was the encounter between poetry, the force of its transformation into a slogan, and the capacity of social media in the context of this factory of the present that activated the body of the tide from the first formulation of the collective cry “Ni Una Menos” up until writing this now. The tide has produced infinite manifestations and expressions—experiences that can no longer be called “works.” These are artifacts (photos, paintings, images, banners, music, videos, flyers, performance, make-up art, community experiments, and objects of power) that cross the limit of the autonomy of art. They liberate the creative forces of the aesthetic realm, which is itself permeated by the logic of commodity, and apply them to the construction of new possible worlds. They are the artifacts that led us to imagine political actions, to express slogans and new forms of organization. It is precisely their being outside of the world of commodities and of individual authorship—these artifacts are of collective elaboration and often anonymous—that allows these practices to break the bonds of the institution and its canon, its servitude to the logic of the market, to point out utopias, but also to put them into practice. In other words, it is a matter of putting into action creativity that does not propose, represent, or make visible certain issues—the collective, sisterhood, etc.—but allows us to experience them in the very act of creating these artifacts.<sup>18</sup>

The feminist avant-garde not only returns art (sequestered in its institutions) to the terrain of life and vital experimentation, but it also leaves the counter-state itself to gestate—right now, already, in each act—the world we wish to inhabit. Popular and assembly feminism anticipates and trains us in *the collective creation of the commons*, in the utopia of the socialization of the earth, the liberation of bodies, and the means of production. It thus recovers a horizon of radical transformation that affiliates feminism with the revolutionary horizon, distancing it from the identity claim (or its restriction to “gender issues”) and reformism that fixes here and there various situations of inequality. Or to move forward based on these false disjunctions: by taking to the streets and building in assemblies, weaving power in the territories and drafting diagnoses of conjuncture, making progress on the projects of the aesthetic and political avant-gardes to

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<sup>18</sup> The logic of the hashtag, repetition, citation, and appropriation perhaps offers one of the interpretative keys of this avant-garde: it is a citation without a center, without degree zero, without authorship or authority, whose strength comes from collectivization. On translatability and its policies, see Palmeiro 2020.

resituate and mix their programs, subjectivities and effects, feminism “produces a counterpower that is able to win new rights while retaining its focus on a more radical horizon. In short, our movement dismantles the binary between reform and revolution” as well as the temporal disjunction that both concepts impose on action (Gago 241).

### The Earth Trembles

On August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018, a week after #OperaciónAraña, with a vigil of two million people gathered around the National Congress (the largest feminist gathering in Argentinean feminist history), a group of senators rejected our bill. Outside, two million of us awaited the vote. Inside, the representatives of the patriarchal caste voted “no” to legal abortion and denied us our right to autonomy over our bodies and our sovereignty. The fissures of the alleged democracy were cracked wide open. However, although the law was not passed on that day, #OperaciónAraña contributed and functioned as a synthesis of the accumulated struggles and political forces that led to the Law on Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (law 27.610) being passed on December 30, 2020.

And the fact is that, as a feminist avant-garde, the tide does not mobilize a set of identity claims or a reformist zeal. It does not make use of the aesthetic as an input or addition but alters the very disjunction between creative force and political transformation, the horizon of transformation and the present of action. It is an *apparatus of intelligibility*, a *theoretical revolution* activated in a performative way by a collective feminist vanguard from below. Thus, feminism has become a way of reading and reordering—the library and the world—to design a device oriented toward the transformation of experiences, bodies, and languages. In this sense, #OperaciónAraña was not only a lever of activation for the sanction of a law, but it also allowed us through images, performances, music and poetry, and assembly organization—a dimension insistently underlined by the first publications on the subject (Bardet 2018, Méndez 2020)—to capture some of the central discussions that had been taking place throughout 2018 on the subject of abortion, and even to reformulate them. It was less a representation, a visibilization of the demands to pass the law of interruption of pregnancy—the political pressure that it effectively had aside—and more a *laboratory of collective conceptualization* arising from the very practice that brought us together before, during, and after this operation. It allowed us to shift the axis of the discussion: it is not a question of being for or against abortion as a moral and religious issue but rather posing it as a dilemma between clandestine abortion or legal, safe, and free abortion. Placed in the field of public health, the absence of legislation for the termination of pregnancy even redefines the notion of femicide that gave birth to the Ni Una Menos collective. Just as we state in one of the chants: “Safe abortion is health, deaths from clandestine abortion are State femicides.” It thus consolidated and clarified its reinscription in the web of violence which, as the

post published collectively on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018, stated, “affects our lives in a complex and simultaneous manner” and therefore could not be thought of outside a web that permeated domestic, labor, financial and territorial violence.

#OperaciónAraña combined conjunctural analysis with political and aesthetic action in a unique articulation that linked the multiple planes of feminist struggles: abortion not as an individualistic liberal demand, in the style of “my body, my property” (imported from the United States), but in relation to labor conflicts, from the perspective of work, linking reproductive work and productive work, paid and unpaid, issues of access to free public health and comprehensive sexual education, the interweaving of struggles for human rights that include health, education and housing, and the expressions of collective desire as a revolutionary power. It mobilized a rethinking of abortion in relation with the crisis of social reproduction. As Gago and Palmeiro write, abortion was rethought,

not only as a legal demand, but also as a broader political objective: as a central element of fighting for bodily and territorial autonomy. From the perspective of work, legal abortion means resisting the domestic confine of unwanted pregnancies that are converted into unpaid labor. The discretion in the enforcement of the existing law until then (that decriminalizes abortion for three reasons), confronted us with the false alternative of maternity or prison, criminalizing our decision-making capacity and denying us as subjects of desire and right. We have been disregarded as producers of value, transforming us, and the generations to come, into cheap labor. (Gago and Palmeiro, “The final push”)

The struggles for the legalization of abortion encompass much more than “just” the possibility of interrupting an unwanted pregnancy. In this struggle, macro and micro-politics are articulated in a unique way: legal abortion exceeds the framework of the law and the State; it means a collective reorientation of desire that transforms our social role as producers of value, our relationship with the body—no longer as factories, as enslaved labor for social reproduction but as surfaces of pleasure—, and disarms the mandate of “motherhood or prison,” opening the possibilities of exploration of bodies, sexualities, ways of life, and ways of living together. It could even be formulated that legal abortion is a condition for a sexual revolution. And at the same time, because of how this struggle was collectively constructed, it is anti-biological: since it is not only a right for cisgender women, but also for trans men, non-binary women, and all bodies with the capacity to gestate. This way of approaching the struggles for abortion since 2018 made it possible to put into practice a new transversality that blurs the boundaries between feminism and the struggles of sex-gender dissidences.

An image of the operation functions as the argumentative closure of these pages. It is a collective and punctual action, ephemeral and indelible in the universe of digital images, a staging of the demand for the law and a conceptual tool

to redefine the place of abortion in the thought-action of the tide, an effect of planning as much as of chance. It is the image of a banner that sustains the urgency of the present: “Legal abortion now” and that placed on the front of the locomotive of the subway train offers us the image of feminism as a train of history. And when it hits a curve, the tide does not fall off.



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