

***Body (Auto)Biographed in Facial Hair Transplants (1972) and Rape Scene (1973): configurations of meanings for a feminist performative pedagogy***Cláudia Simone Oliveira do Nascimento<sup>1</sup>Marcelo de Andrade Pereira<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>Universidade Federal de Santa Maria – UFSM, Santa Maria/RS, Brazil

**ABSTRACT – *Body (Auto)Biographed in Facial Hair Transplants (1972) and Rape Scene (1973): configurations of meanings for a feminist performative pedagogy*** – This article presents a discussion about gender based on the notions of *performance* and *performativity*, seeking to weave relationships between these terms with art and the educational field. It pursues the idea of a *performative feminist pedagogy*, performed by the *(auto)biographed body*, in artistic performances developed by women, involving the issue of gender, more specifically the performances *Facial Hair Transplants (1972)* and *Rape Scene (1973)*, by the Cuban artist Ana Mendieta. Supported by researchers from multiple areas, this study aims to critically contribute to the area of education, redefining educational practice from an aesthetic and gender principle, offering reflections on the production of difference.

Keywords: **Performance art. Performativity. Gender. Education. Feminism.**

**RÉSUMÉ – *Corps (Auto)Biographié dans Facial Hair Transplants (1972) et Rape Scene (1973): configurations de significations pour une pédagogie performative féministe*** – Cet article présente une discussion sur le genre basée sur les notions de *performance* et de *performativité*, cherchant à tisser des relations entre ces termes avec l'art et le domaine éducatif. Elle poursuit l'idée d'une *pédagogie féministe performative*, interprétée par le corps *(auto)biographique*, dans des performances artistiques développées par des femmes, impliquant la question du genre, plus précisément les performances *Facial Hair Transplants (1972)* et *Rape Scene (1973)*, de l'artiste cubaine Ana Mendieta. Soutenue par des chercheurs de multiples domaines, cette étude vise à apporter une contribution critique au domaine de l'éducation, en redéfinissant la pratique éducative à partir d'un principe esthétique et de genre, en proposant des réflexions sur la production de différence.

Mots-clés: **Art de la performance. Performativité. Genre. Éducation. Féminisme.**

**RESUMO – *Corpo (Auto)Biografado em Facial Hair Transplant (1972) e Rape Scene (1973): configurações de sentidos para uma pedagogia performativa feminista*** – Este artigo apresenta uma discussão sobre gênero a partir das noções de *performance* e *performatividade*, buscando tecer relações desses termos com a arte e o campo educacional. Persegue a ideia de uma *pedagogia feminista performativa*, desempenhada pelo *corpo (auto)biografado*, em performances artísticas desenvolvidas por mulheres, envolvendo a questão de gênero, mais especificamente as performances *Facial Hair Transplante (1972)* e *Rape Scene (1973)*, da artista cubana Ana Mendieta. Apoiado por pesquisadores de múltiplas áreas, este estudo pretende contribuir criticamente com a área da educação, redefinindo a prática educativa desde um princípio estético e de gênero, oferecendo reflexões sobre a produção da diferença.

Palavras-chave: **Performance art. Performatividade. Gênero. Educação. Feminismo.**

As a contemporary artistic language<sup>1</sup>, *performance* is still a fertile field of study and possibilities. Research that unites the fields of *performance*, feminism and education – despite the growing number of publications over the last ten years on Brazilian soil – is still incipient, with many of them in progress<sup>2</sup>, such as this writing<sup>3</sup>, which seeks to think about the possibilities and relationships of a *performative feminist pedagogy* through *performance*, in particular through the works *Facial Hair Transplants* (1972) and *Rape Scene* (1973), by Cuban artist Ana Mendieta. This study is based on the notion of the *(auto)biographed body*, which operates here as a narrative axis of the experiences of being/having a woman's body and of a language based on the singularity to be explored. The notion of the *(auto)biographed body* refers to the idea that a person's body is an expression of their personal history and life experiences. In this context, the body is understood as a text which, through its performance, narrates an experience, a story, carrying with it the marks and experiences of an individual person, but which can also be extended to a collective.

From this perspective, the aim is to critically update knowledge in its *in-between places*, in this case *performance/education/feminism*, which in this article are connected by the terms *performance* and *performativity*, taken as theoretical operators of an incorporated knowledge for thinking about gender. Furthermore, by focusing on feminism<sup>4</sup> as a category of analysis in education, we propose the development of critical research into the *production of differences*, which involves gender identity in association with other social markers such as race and class.

Despite its multiple meanings, *feminism* can be understood fundamentally as a struggle against the supremacy of patriarchy. Here, it is worth pointing out that *patriarchy* is a political, economic, symbolic, practical, linguistic, financial, religious and cultural system of male domination over women. This dimension is reflected in the political sphere, in the sphere of law, in the sphere of justice and in our daily lives, which is the sphere of ethics. For Márcia Tiburi (2018), thinking about feminism is much more than simply letting oneself be carried away by an indignant impulse, a current fad; it needs to be thought about and removed from the theoretical plane and transformed into “responsible ethical-political action” (Tiburi, 2018, p. 09). If it is not thought of in this way, feminism will remain only

in the moral imagination of some individuals, incapable of producing significant changes, becoming in the end a stagnant ideal. Indeed, in her book *Feminismo em comum: para todas, todes e todos* (2018), bell hooks begins her considerations by asking: why are there people who fear feminism? Despite the difficulty in defining the extent of the problem, the author suggests a possible answer to this question.

I tend to hear all about the badness of feminism and the bad feminists: ‘they’ hate men; ‘they’ want to go against nature (and god); \* all ‘they’ are lesbians; ‘they’ are stealing jobs and making life difficult for white men, who don’t stand a chance (hooks, 2018, p. 12).

In the *possible* imaginary dialog between Márcia Tiburi and bell hooks, something emerges that presumably every one of us has witnessed, that is, misogyny directed at women and consequently at feminism. A misogyny that until now has been endorsed by the culture of patriarchy<sup>5</sup>, which for a long time has found no barriers for sustaining itself. This reason can most likely be found in the fact that until recently the issue of feminism has not been a problem to be discussed, at least not categorically, in the formal educational sphere. Currently, the right to education for equality of gender, race and sexual orientation, as well as gender identity, has a legal basis in the Brazilian Constitution (1988), in the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (National Education Guidelines and Bases Law – LDB) (Brazil, 1996), in the *Diretrizes Nacionais de Educação e Diversidade* (National Education and Diversity Guidelines), in the *Diretrizes Curriculares do Ensino Médio* (High School Curriculum Guidelines – art. 16), elaborated by the *Conselho Nacional de Educação* (National Education Council), and in the law Maria da Penha (2006)<sup>6</sup>. As is well known, despite the provisions of the law, these rights have been questioned – especially with regard to the political and educational platform defended by the then government of Jair Bolsonaro<sup>7</sup>, once again restricting their presence in schools.

### **Feminism and education**

Despite the government’s disregard, critical and historical feminist issues have been included in contemporary discussions on education, in reflections on gender. These discussions involve other categories of analysis besides women, preserving the “look at difference”, and have brought new

perspectives to discuss the role of the school in the contemporary reflection of these conflicts. Since the release of Simone de Beauvoir's classic work *The Second Sex* (1949), feminism has involved looking at the *other*, in this case, the woman as *the other* of the man. In time, it is worth to highlight that the condition of being the 'other' of man is seen as such because of a society that defines 'normal' as being male, cisgender<sup>8</sup>, heteronormative<sup>9</sup>, etc. Within this *politics of difference* (of what differs from the "norm"), liberating practices and the inclusion of the so-called minorities (minorities not in numbers, but in decision-making positions), in which gender inequalities are circumscribed, are opened up.

It therefore comes as no surprise that one of the main issues addressed by feminist studies is precisely the "binary order". We call the male/female sexual distinction, extended to sexuality and gender, a binary order. From this perspective, there is a continuous confusion between biology-nature-identity, since the order of patriarchy preaches an instant similarity between the biological anatomy of sex and a person's identity. Furthermore, it is known that this binary model is not consistent with the representations of identity that can be found in the social environment, but which nevertheless supports biological and cultural arguments of inequality. Since her first books, in the incipient scenario of studies on gender and education in Brazil, Professor Guacira Lopes Louro (1997) has argued that this unreflective extension of sex to identities is due to a dichotomous view, which would mean thinking in terms such as: "feminine as opposed to masculine; reason/feeling; theory/practice; public/private, etc." (Louro, 1997, p. 8). In the author's understanding, this view has been constructed under a Manichean order of the world, with masculinity as the reference point, based on a biological argument that masks the social representations of subjects' identities.

It is difficult, therefore, to ignore, as the Argentinian curator of the 7th edition of the Bienal de Artes Visuais do Mercosul (2009), Victoria Noorthoorn, once said on a lecture to mediators, that in the field of art "there are many shades between black and white... and different shades of gray". Contemporary art destroys any possible dichotomy and attests to the fact that nothing is "natural", since everything is the result of a human gaze and/or hand – and can be seen in multiple dimensions, then everything is culture.

When it comes to gender identities, this lesson can be put to good use, since nothing comes ready-made or is “natural”, so you cannot pre-define yourself as this or that. In fact, the decentering of the subject, one of the hallmarks of what has come to be called postmodernity, assumes that identities are not fixed, but constructed and deconstructed. Therefore, defining gender identity from a Manichean key becomes a fantasy that can only be accepted as provisional. Since Beauvoir’s famous maxim, we know that a woman is not born a woman because of an anatomical similarity, given by the biological, which situates her as a female, but rather that this being becomes a woman because of cultural modes that are systematically learned, and that are remade and updated throughout life – the same happens with straight men, gays, trans, and other so-called dissident identities.

It is no wonder that the theme of ‘gender’ is causing so much disagreement, and even fundamentalist and authoritarian moral and political outbreaks. ‘Gender’ is a term used to analyze the ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ roles that have become hegemonic [...]. This means that we are constructed over time and our sexuality is highly plastic, as is our diet, our corporeality, our spirituality, our image, our language, the society in which we live and, for this very reason, it can be modified in many ways (Tiburi, 2018, p. 28).

In other words, you are not born a woman or a man, you learn, through culture, to represent these roles, which are not ready-made, which are culturally contingent, and which are continually constructed and diluted. As Silva and Lara (2023, p. 1) state, to recognize a woman is to recognize the cultural construction that precedes her singularity. Hence our commitment to discussing these identities, problematizing dichotomies and questioning a binary order that insists on crystallizing identities as a form of control. According to Professor Guacira Lopes Louro (1997), we must consider that this dichotomy is too simplistic and pulverizes a series of other analyses that are important and should be considered.

The subjects that make up the dichotomy are not, in fact, just men and women, but men and women from different classes, races, religions, ages, etc., and their solidarity and antagonism can lead to the most diverse arrangements, disturbing the simplistic and reduced notion of the dominant man and the dominated woman (Louro, 1997, p. 4-5).

This means that, when we consider intersectional categories<sup>10</sup>, relationships are much more dynamic than what we might think *a priori*, for

example, only in the relationship of male oppressor, female dominated. From a plural perspective, this relationship can be inverted, for example, when we consider a woman who owns a business and hires a man to work for her, so in some way she has power over him. In other words, it means that there is a dilution of power in society, which does not only occur in the relationship between superior men and subaltern women, since when we introduce other categories of analysis, this arrangement can change. This means that a woman can exercise her power over another man or another woman, depending on their social place. Since Foucault (1979), in fact, we know that power is diluted and is exercised at various angles, that it is diluted in micro-relationships, including in the classroom.

On the other hand, it is important to realize that analyses that pulverize a dichotomous view refer to the observation of who is *different*. And if we consider the participation of the school in the production of these differences, the discussion extends to various *shades* of identity, also bringing in the contribution of Cultural Studies, Black Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies. With regard to gender, a dichotomous view is that the *man* is placed at one pole in opposition to another pole, the *woman*. However, it is important to note that there are many different women, in other words, women of many different colors, ethnicities, social classes and world views, just as there are different men with different ways of being. This implies a view of gender that cannot avoid deconstructing its dichotomous polarization, which is based on what we see here as a *binary order*, and problematize the multiplicity of identities within each pole.

Gender, as a category for analyzing identities, emerges from feminist studies, produced by academic theorists who have reflected on this issue since the effervescence that took place in the streets in the 1960s, when the feminist movement entered the so-called Second Wave. When addressing gender in her book *Gênero, sexualidade e educação*, Professor Guacira Lopes Louro (1997) draws attention to the production of American feminist academic theorists, specially Judith Butler, whose reflections Guacira Louro introduced to the field of education in Brazil.

From feminist studies, *gender* has come to designate *a social role* to which a given *body is subjected*, which is related to sex and sexuality, which in turn are discursively constructed. An important distinction that feminist

theories denounce, and which is highlighted by Judith Butler<sup>11</sup> (2003), is that “sex”, “gender” and some aspects of “sexuality” are cultural constructions, which are resolved on the basis of masculine and heteronormative priorities. For Butler (2003), we have been socially and domestically controlled since we were “gendered”. In her book *Problemas de Gênero*<sup>12</sup>, Butler (2003) introduces another, slightly more complex notion of gender, which refers to the notion of *performativity*. According to the author, *gender is constructed performatively*, through reiterated actions, which is sometimes translated as repeated, generating an interpretative misunderstanding.

Gender is the reiterated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory structure, which crystallizes over time to produce the appearance of a substance, of a natural class of being (Butler, 2003, p. 59).

Butler points out that there is no matrix to be copied, so it is not just a simple repetition. We can see this same relationship when we think, for example, of a *drag queen*. According to the dictionary<sup>13</sup>, *drag queen* refers to a man who dresses in extravagant clothes traditionally associated with women, who imitates a typically feminine voice and manner, performing as an artist in shows, etc. If any of us wants to play this “role”, there is certainly no “model” to be copied, but a “discourse” and a set of gestures, constructed by culture, which it is possible to reiterate, to bring to life *performatively*, in other words, *through the body*, so that these gestures, reiterated/“repeated” or performed, create genders. The same happens with other identity roles and genders, such as the role of mother, son, teacher, lesbian, lawyer, etc.

Gender scholars say that it is not possible to fix a moment that can be taken as the one in which sexual identity and/or gender identity is established, such as at birth, for example. This implies that no sexual identity – even the most normative – is automatic, authentic, easily assumed (Louro, 1997, p. 27). In other words, no sexual identity exists without negotiation or construction. This is because, just as there is no “fixed model” of *drag queen* identity, there is no heterosexual identity out there, fixed, finished, waiting to be assumed, and, likewise, there is no ready-made homosexual identity. Here again, it is worth remembering that we are not born a woman or a man, but that we *become one*, in a continuous process throughout all the events that invariably shape your identity, including sex.

Since the decentering of the subject, as a mark of the transition to post-modernity, identities are always being constituted. In other words, every *identity is an unstable, mutable and volatile construct*, a contradictory and unfinished social relationship and therefore subject to transformation, including sex identity. The very concept of ‘sex’ is problematic ground because, as Butler (2019) states, it is formed by a series of disputes about what should be the decisive criterion for distinguishing between the two sexes. In *Corpos que importam*, from 2019, the philosopher especially reviews the concept of *performativity* and *queer theory*, addressed in *Gender Trouble*, and shows how this construct is formed.

The concept of sex has a history that is covered by the figure of the place or surface of inscription, which takes place in a “materiality”, which is constructed performatively, from a recognized “quotation”, or a “coded” enunciation. When asking whether it is possible to link the materiality of the body to the performativity of gender, Butler (2019) states that the difference between the sexes is invoked as a material difference; differences which are formed by discursive practices. In her understanding, the category “sex” is something of a normative order, since it comes from a “regulatory ideal”. Therefore, sex would go back to a regulatory practice that is produced in the bodies it governs and, also, a norm. This productive power demarcates, circulates and differentiates the bodies it controls. “Materializing” the norm in the body performatively is not a matter of assuming a mask, but of assuming a matrix of gender relations that predates the emergence of the ‘human’, at the same time as it is produced by it, through culture.

This discussion is fundamental to feminist studies, since it is through this cultural construction, produced by language and the *performativity of bodies*, that the *subjectivation of the gender “norm”* is established. The formation of the subject requires identification with the “phantom of sex”. All those who do not fit this norm are considered abnormal, “abject”, designated for “non-livable” zones, in an “uninhabitable” body. And this creates very concrete problems<sup>14</sup> in our society, such as the employability of transgender women and men. However, beyond employability, which generates a dignified life by offering jobs and income, there is a whole cultural barrier that denies these people a place in society. On the other hand, it is through the gender norm that patriarchal discourse marks and controls bodies, exerting its



dominance over women, as well as other identities considered dissident. This is why it is necessary to break with dichotomous approaches that exclude and deny the lives of many people, remembering, as already mentioned, that between black and white there are many shades of gray.

### **Feminism and performance art**

The *feminist movement* and *performance art* emerged from the same cultural broth that put *gays*, Black people and other so-called *minority* social groups in the struggle for civil rights, in the effervescent second half of the 20th century. In the same period, between the 1960s and 1970s, performance art emerged as a new way of making art, strongly anchored in the reality of the lived world (art and life), involving social and political issues. We can see an intrinsic relationship between the historical paths traced by performance art and the feminist movement when we enter these fields of action, particularly in the United States, from the 1970s onwards<sup>15</sup>. Desde então, essa relação tem proporcionado mútuas contribuições para ambos os campos, além de novas perspectivas. Since then, this relationship has provided mutual contributions to both fields, as well as new perspectives. Dee Heddon (2006) states that there is a symbiotic relationship between performance art and the feminist movement, which is sometimes controversial, but does not always receive adequate attention and systematization.

The launch of *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, in 1983, is an evidence of the fruitful dialog between performance artists and feminist academics. Jill Dolan<sup>16</sup>, in the inaugural editorial, presents the publication as a tool that allows *performers* and academics to challenge the isolation of women's voices, removing them from oblivion by *the media*.

The established ways of studying and presenting creative work allow us to continually challenge the way in which we have been taught to look at ourselves and others... [this journal constitutes] a tool... [giving a] louder, more articulate voice [...] in the culture [and witnessing to the] legacy of women's creativity, as shapers of performance, inventors of meaning, creators of culture (Dolan, 1983, p. 3).

This trend quickly infected the *Women and Theatre Program* of the *American Theatre Association*, which began to express more theoretical and feminist concerns, developing a fruitful relationship with *Women & Perfor-*

mance (Blair, 1989). As RoseLee Goldberg (2009) points out, influenced by the writings of Harold Rosenberg, the political reach and transgressive potential, as well as the symbol of resistance associated with the first artistic performances of the 1960s and 1970s, still fascinate people today. At the same time, the continuity of this relationship between performers and feminist theorists, as a *source of resistance to patriarchy*, continues to renew interest in the transformative power of performance (Dolan, 2005; 2007; Fischer-Lichte, 2008).

The current political reach and transgressive potential<sup>17</sup> of these performances from the 1970s can be seen in the *(auto)biographed body* of the Cuban artist Ana Mendieta is one of the most important people for thinking about performance and the feminine in art. She was sent to the United States at the age of 12, in 1961, as part of the Operation *Peter Pan* (Diniz, 2020), promoted by the USA to *save* Cuban children from communism after the revolution promoted by Fidel Castro. Mendieta declared herself a feminist and wanted to use her own body to reflect on issues of gender and multicultural identity. From 1978 onwards, Ana Mendieta joined Artists In Residence Inc., the first gallery for women in the USA, and from then on she made a number of contacts with other *avant-garde* artists from the burgeoning feminist art movement. These same contacts made Mendieta realize and declare that: “American feminism, as it stands, is basically a white middle-class movement”<sup>18</sup>.

In the field of politics, the 1970s was a period in which women, Black people and LGBT people<sup>19</sup> – historically oppressed groups – began to promote major uprisings for equal rights, questioning their *difference from the norm*, in other words, their abjection. Ana Mendieta’s work is permeated and manifests this cultural context in which the artist was inserted. Despite her differences, Mendieta moves away from the status of “muse” – historically assigned to women in *art* –, and places herself as the subject of her works. In contact with the artistic and political effervescence of that time, the University of Iowa, where the artist was studying fine arts, promoted an immersion in a new way of making art that used the body, and also in exploring its limits, the *performance*, which at that time was thought of as an ephemeral experience. In other words, at that time, within a history that questioned art and the art object, moving towards conceptualism, many artists privileged the *event* as an *experience*, to the detriment of the art object

– so that, from the perspective of *Performance Studies* (NYU), what we have accessed of their work is what remained as an *archival* record.

### *Facial Hair Transplants*

In this performance, original *Untitled*, known as *Transplante de pelo facial* (1972), Ana Mendieta puts pieces of a friend's beard on herself<sup>20</sup> and glues them to her face. Consisting of a set of seven photographs, this performance provokes discussion about gender roles. With a materiality generated by her own body, the hair, the artist explores self-transformations, expanding her body to a poetic and political level, configuring a *(self)biographed body*, which promotes a *performative feminist pedagogy* based on the multiple meanings it generates. By activating a cultural conception of the body, the artist highlights the fact that sexual classifications are social conventions which, as previously mentioned by Judith Butler (2003; 2019), frame and overdetermine gender identities, defining their sexuality. When Mendieta staged a mutant sexual identification, in addition to breaking with the normative models of beauty by which society operates, the artist problematized the classifications that differentiate between feminine and masculine. As well as exploring possible identities, she questions and searches for her own identity, among other possible readings, as can be seen in Figures 1 and 2<sup>21</sup>.



Figure 1 – Ana Mendieta, photographic record of the Facial Hair Transplants Series.  
Source: Authors' collection.



Figure 2 – Ana Mendieta, photographic record of the Facial Hair Transplants Series.  
Source: Authors' collection.

### *Rape Scene*

Among Ana Mendieta's feminist-themed works is *Rape Scene* (1973), in which she recreated a scene in which she made herself the imaginary victim of a rape, after learning that a fellow student at the University of Iowa had been raped and killed on the same *campus* Ana studied. For this performance, Ana Mendieta called her colleagues to an exhibition at her home. Before they arrived, she messed things up, simulating a break-in, and left the door open. She took off some of her clothes, poured animal blood<sup>22</sup> over her body, tied her hands and lay down on the table, motionless for an hour.

The performance highlights the violence suffered by the female body since its earliest days. However, unfortunately, it is still very present today<sup>23</sup>, as you can find daily news articles that seek to report daily rates of rape and/or cases that have become a national sensation, such as that of the journalism student at the Federal University of Piauí (UFPI), Janaína da Silva Bezerra, 22, who was raped and killed during a *calourada* (a freshmen party) at the institution, on January 27, 2023<sup>24</sup>. Of course, this violence is much more complex, both globally and in Brazil, as it involves other social factors. Today, for example, there is the shameful Brazilian data that 85% of rapes are still committed against women, with 70% of cases involving children up to 14 years old, or vulnerable<sup>25</sup>, exposing a trend towards pedophilia.

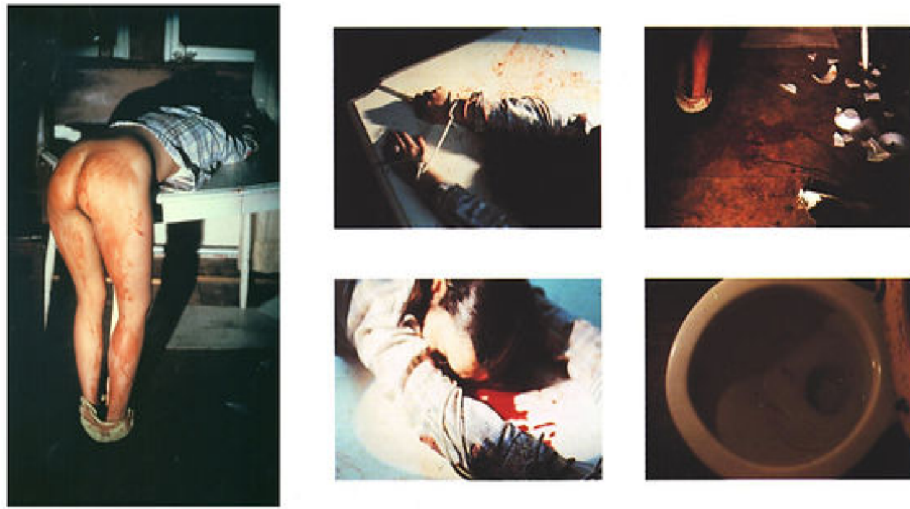


Figure 3 – Ana Mendieta, photographic record of the Rape Scene performance.  
Source: Authors' collection.

In these performances, especially *Rape Scene*<sup>26</sup>, it is not a question of a theatrical representation as mimesis<sup>27</sup>, nor of mere repetition, but of an *embodied action*. Developed by Diana Taylor (2013), the concept of incorporating, in the sense of bringing to the body building a repertoire, is very dear to performance studies. The incorporation<sup>28</sup> highlights the role of the body in the transmission of knowledge, involving spatiality and temporality of events in its analysis, directly influencing performances. This *(auto)biographed body* shows the centrality of the body in the production of discourses, through its symbolic character of poetic/political enunciation, communicated performatively. This implies, in this case, a *performative feminist pedagogy*, producing meanings that allow us to reflect on the logic given by patriarchy.

### Final Considerations

The discussion of gender based on the notions of *performance* and *performativity* is a relevant and complex topic. Performance, as a form of artistic expression, can be understood as an intentional action that involves the body and the presence of the artist, challenging social norms and expectations, as in *Facial Hair Transplants* (1972), in which the artist intentionally modified her body, as well as in the reification of the performance *Rape Scene* (1973), in which Ana Mendieta exposed her body alluding to a violence that we feel and symbolize, but do not usually see. As exposed above,

gender performativity is a concept developed by philosopher Judith Butler (2003), who questions the idea that gender is an innate and fixed characteristic. According to Butler, gender is a social and cultural construction that is repeatedly performed and reinforced through practices and behaviors, under the surveillance and control of patriarchy.

In the logic of the patriarchal structure, there is no equality in relationships, much less in rights, since it is structured as a power of domination of heteronormative men over women and other genders. This means that individuals cannot be completely free, as they are required to behave according to their assigned gender, in an asymmetrical hierarchical relationship, with heteronormative men occupying the position of supremacy. This hierarchy is based on a binary limit – man x woman – condemning any deviation from the norm to abjection, with non-existent status.

The acceptance and reproduction of sexist practices that mark bodies leads to violence practiced against these bodies subjugated by the norm, such as in cases of rape, as the performance *Rape Scene* (1973) enunciates. The performance *Facial Hair Transplants* (1972) highlights what theorist Judith Butler (2019) points out in her book about the success or failure of the performative production of the norm. By exposing the mutability of gender identity, opening gaps to a binary intersection, she demonstrates that “[...] materialization is never complete, that bodies are never complete enough, that bodies never fully comply with the norms by which their materialization is imposed” (Butler, 2019, p. 16).

Through performance art, we can see denunciations of oppression and violence, as an avenue opened up by language (Taylor, 2013), and also transgression of the sexist norm of patriarchal domination, in which the force of regulatory law can turn against itself (Butler, 2019). Under the domination of norms, sexist practices degrade subjects based on the patriarchal hierarchy, with the *male* occupying the top and all other genders subordinate to him. In this sense, through the notions of *performance* and *performativity*, the performances presented allowed us to reflect on the production of difference, offering a critical contribution to the field of education, redefining educational practice from an aesthetic and gender principle, in the configuration of an *(auto)biographed body*. As well as reflecting on these issues, this study sought

to offer a breather and an invitation for us to think: *what kind of feminist interventions could break with the domination of patriarchy?*

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The language of performance art is extremely recent, something like 70 years old. It is so recently contemporary that many of its pioneers are still alive. So, we can think of it as a language that is still in the making. It is important to point out here that performance, as a language, takes place in the field of the arts, as there is no grammatical language in the field of semiotics, although it can be given a performative meaning, but it is still not a language, but a mode of operation of spoken and written language.
- <sup>2</sup> In the research of which this article is an excerpt, some studies are mentioned which, although they do not come directly from education programs, develop their research in the interlocution between performance, education and feminism, albeit with other approaches, such as the research entitled *A docência como uma performance feminista*, (Teaching as a feminist performance) developed by Erika Cecília Soares Oliveira (2020). In her research, Oliveira used subaltern feminisms to analyze the performance of female teachers in the classroom. Also from an anthropological perspective of performance, but incorporating an artistic perspective in dialogue with education, we highlight the doctoral research in progress *Performance é Corpo/ A Crise é do Corpo: Estudos sobre Performance, Educação e Corpo em Pandemia* (Performance is the Body/ The Crisis is of the Body: Studies on Performance, Education and the Body in a Pandemic), developed by Estela Vale Villegas (2019), Graduate Program in Performing Arts at the Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP).
- <sup>3</sup> This is an excerpt from an ongoing doctoral research project that pursues the idea of a *performative feminist pedagogy*, performed by the *(auto)biographed body*.
- <sup>4</sup> We know that feminism is plural, as the authors cited are well aware, and that they use the term in the singular (as we have also chosen to do here) because they are addressing one category: feminism. This does not mean we do not know that internally this category is fundamentally subdivided into: cultural feminism, representative feminism, Black feminism, radical feminism, trans feminism, etc.
- <sup>5</sup> As mentioned above and widely explored by the authors throughout the thesis, in its multiplicity of meanings, here we highlight a “concept” available on the

*politize* search platform, in which Patriarchy designates a social system in which men maintain primary power and predominate in functions of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. In the realm of the family, the father (or father figure) maintains authority over women and children. In patriarchal society, men's relations of power and dominance prevail over women and all other subjects who do not fit the normative standards of race, gender and sexual orientation. Source: <https://www.politize.com.br/patriarcado/>. Accessed on: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.

- <sup>6</sup> This right to education is also provided for in international human rights treaties that have the weight of law, to which Brazil is a signatory: the *International Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), the *Convention Against Discrimination in Education* (1960), the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (1979), the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (1968) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), among others. Available at: [https://acaoeducativa.org.br/wpcontent/uploads/2016/09/folder\\_direitoigualdade/generoescola\\_semmarcas.pdf](https://acaoeducativa.org.br/wpcontent/uploads/2016/09/folder_direitoigualdade/generoescola_semmarcas.pdf). Accessed on: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.
- <sup>7</sup> Under Jair Bolsonaro's government, the discussion of gender was once again extirpated from the curriculum, being replaced by fiscal, disciplinary and *citizenship* education, among other curricular measures, more in line with his political project, which has a conservative and neoliberal foundation – which had already been implemented since the 2016 coup.
- <sup>8</sup> Cisgender is an individual who identifies with the biological sex they were born with. *Dicionário Online de Português*. <https://www.dicio.com.br>. Accessed on: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.
- <sup>9</sup> Refers to heteronormativity, the concept that only relationships between people of opposite sexes or heterosexuals are normal or correct; which sees heterosexuality as the norm in a society. *Dicionário Online de Português*. Available at: <https://www.dicio.com.br>. Accessed on: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.
- <sup>10</sup> Intersectionality deals specifically with how patriarchy, racism, among other social markers, overlap when they are used in a way that disempowers someone. In other words, there is intersectional subordination (gender, ethnicity, class, etc.), which discusses dynamic or active aspects of disempowerment, which deals with the way in which specific actions and policies generate oppressions that flow through these axes together (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 171-188).



- <sup>11</sup> Judith is one of the main references in the discussion of gender and *queer* theory in contemporary times, and the author of several books on the subject. She holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Yale University and is currently Professor of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley, she have been to Brazil in more than one occasion. The last time was in São Paulo, at the launch of her book *Caminhos divergentes: judaicidade e crítica do sionismo* (Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism), published by Boitempo, when, unfortunately, she was attacked once again by people saying, “the family revolution has arrived” (Judith... 2017).
- <sup>12</sup> One of the most important books in feminist theory, gender studies and *queer* theory, it was translated into Portuguese and published in Brazil in 2003. The book was originally published in 1990 under the title *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.
- <sup>13</sup> Available at: <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-pt/>. Accessed on: Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.
- <sup>14</sup> The first problems are psychological, affecting the subjects in formation who escape the norm. Problems to which the author herself seeks answers in the theories of various psychologists, especially Lacan, as well as various philosophers, particularly Derrida, both in this latest book which deals with language and the performativity of language, reflecting on “the limits of gender discursivity”.
- <sup>15</sup> Recently released by Netflix, the documentary *Feminists: What Were They Thinking?*, from 2018, delves into the struggle of women in that period of the 1970s, through photographs that capture the awakening of feminism. Images that speak of moments of difficulty, restriction and confrontation. Judy Chicago is one of those photographed and currently talks a little about herself in that period, as well as the context of political effervescence of that time, from the photographic record. We can also follow Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Michelle Phillips sharing their stories and their involvement with the feminist agenda in this documentary by Johanna Demetrakas.
- <sup>16</sup> Currently dean of Princeton University, Dolan is a specialist in contemporary American Feminist and Queer Theater and Performance. She served for six years as director of Princeton’s Gender and Sexuality Studies Program and is an affiliate faculty member of the American Studies Program.

- <sup>17</sup> As we could see in the exhibition *Mulheres Radicais*, held at the Pinacoteca de São Paulo in 2018, with performances from the 1960s to 1985, in an extensive 10-year research by its curators. Ana Mendieta and the performance *Facial Hair Transplants* (1972), presented here, although perhaps not as transgressive to contemporary eyes as they represented the period, were part of this exhibition, along with other works by the artist.
- <sup>18</sup> According to the blog: <https://citaliarestauro.com/o-que-aconteceu-com-ana-mendieta/>. Accessed on: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.
- <sup>19</sup> Today, this acronym has grown and remains open (+) to new identifications, and is now: LGBTQIAPN+, Representing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, and Neutral. It is worth mentioning that the “L” of lesbians comes first, because these concepts and a way of thinking about gender and its differences emerge from feminist studies. See: <https://orientando.org/o-que-significa-lgbtqiap/>. Accessed on: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.
- <sup>20</sup> At the time, he was one of her teachers on the Master of Arts course.
- <sup>21</sup> Available at: <https://www.artistaslatinas.com.br/artistas-1/ana-mendieta>. Accessed on: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.
- <sup>22</sup> Blood that she had been using in paintings and also in other performance experiments.
- <sup>23</sup> At the beginning of 2023, another aspect of the current war between Russia and Ukraine broke out in the media, in which a Ukrainian combat medic denounced that Russian soldiers were, among other war crimes, raping women – including children – and impregnating some of them, and according to the perpetrators, they were aiming to “expand the Russian empire” (Gryzinski, 2023).
- <sup>24</sup> Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/pi/piaui/noticia/2023/01/30/o-que-se-sabe-sobre-a-morte-da-estudante-de-jornalismo-apos-calourada-na-ufpi.ghtml>. Accessed on: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.
- <sup>25</sup> Data from the *Jornal Humanitas*, of December 17, 2020. Available at: <https://www.ufrgs.br/humanista/2020/12/17/cultura-do-estupro-85-das-vitimas-no-brasil-sao-mulheres-e-70-dos-casos-envolvem-criancas-ou-vulneraveis/>. Accessed on: Dec. 11, 2022.

- <sup>26</sup> Records available at: <https://www.artistaslatinas.com.br/artistas-1/ana-mendieta>. Accessed on: Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022.
- <sup>27</sup> According to Professor Dr. Gilberto Icle, performance artists will “presentify” themselves, based on the materiality of their own bodies, in an attempt not to represent (although there is always a certain remnant of representation, as it is not possible to completely escape the referentiality of representation, so it is present to a certain extent), thus presenting a self-sufficient corporeality. Classroom notes.
- <sup>28</sup> Based on this concept, it is possible to understand Taylor’s critique of the literate culture that, since the Jesuits, has culminated in archival practices. It is at this point that she turns to the concept of “archive and repertoire”, developed in the book with that title, producing a new reading of cultural memory in the Americas.

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Availability of research data: the dataset supporting the results of this study is published in this article.

This original paper, translated by Thuila Farias Ferreira, is also published in Portuguese in this issue of the journal.



*Received on June 15, 2023*  
*Accepted on December 18, 2023*

*Editor in charge: Rossana Perdomini Della Costa Vellozo*

