



Performance pedagogies: Aesthetic-political strategies to rethink the relation masculinity/femicide in the Estado de Mexico's urban periphery

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ABSTRACT: The article analyzes the role that men adopt to tackle violence against women that prevails in Ecatepec, State of Mexico. Thus, the work explores pedagogies that use performance as a tool against femicide. These pedagogies have been carried out among male and female students from *Francisco Villa* 128 High School, located in Ecatepec. Under the theoretical category of "intercorporeality", this work approaches some of these male students' testimonies in order to investigate the articulation between body, knowledge, and masculinity. In this regard, the article aims to understand how these male students, through the interactions that they have with their female classmates during the performance, acknowledge violence against women within their communities and, at the same time, start to think about their male identities. I conclude that these pedagogies represent an aesthetic/political strategy where these students, through the production of embodied knowledge, imagine alternative ways to understand gender relations in the urban periphery.

KEYWORDS: Pedagogía; gender-based violence; femicide.

TRANSLATION
OF SUMMARY

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Pedagogías del *performance*: estrategias estético-políticas para repensar la relación masculinidad/feminicidio en la periferia urbana mexiquense

RESUMEN: El artículo examina la participación de los hombres para enfrentar las predominantes violencias hacia las mujeres en el municipio de Ecatepec, Estado de México. Para ello, se abordan las pedagogías contra el feminicidio, basadas en el *performance*, que se han puesto en marcha entre estudiantes varones y mujeres de la preparatoria Francisco Villa 128, ubicada en la demarcación mexiquense. Bajo el postulado teórico/metodológico de "intercorporización", se analizan testimonios de algunos de estos estudiantes hombres para indagar el nexo masculinidad/conocimiento/cuerpo. Mediante este planteamiento se encontró cómo los hombres, por medio de las interacciones con sus compañeras en los *performance*, son capaces de re-conocer la realidad feminicida que predomina en sus comunidades, al tiempo que reflexionan sus identidades masculinas. Se concluye que dichas pedagogías son estrategias estético/políticas donde estos varones, a través de la producción de saberes corporizados, ensayan otras formas de entender las relaciones de género en la periferia urbana.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Pedagogía; violencia de género; feminicidio.



COPE



HOW TO QUOTE

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Introduction

According to Araiza (2021), Ecatepec is a district located in the urban periphery of Mexico City that grew exponentially during the eighties as a result of the migration of the rural population looking for job opportunities, as well as people excluded from the central zones of the country, affected by economic crisis and cataclysms, such as the 1984 gas plant explosion in San Juan Ixhuatepec, Tlalnepantla and the 1985 earthquake. Before this sudden growth, the Mexican municipality emerged as a site of abandonment where the quality of life was jeopardized, that is stated through unpaved streets, the absence of a public lighting system, schools, health centers, and the not at all encouraging numbers of the National Council of Evaluation of the Policy of Social Development (CONEVAL, for its abbreviation in Spanish), which give account that this demarcation headed the list of the 15 municipalities with a greater number of population in poverty conditions in 2015, with 786 thousand 846 people in that situation (Fernandez, 2018).

Undoubtedly, poverty has strengthened a criminal economy within the Mexican municipality, which alludes to a sector of the Mexican economy that obtains its gains from illegal activities like drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking, among others. It is necessary to note that what gives life to this economy is not the gains it produces, but mostly men subjects who, given the lack of educational and employment opportunities, added to the prevalence of an atmosphere of masculine hyperviolence, join the ranks of organized crime from an early age, as Amador and Domínguez (2012) point out in their ethnographic work on Ecatepec: "from the rooftops young men can be seen watching over the busyness of the city. They are called *halcones* (falcons) and they protect the drug dealing and other businesses that have settled in the zone" (p. 259). Furthermore, for the purposes of this article, it is important to emphasize that Mexico's criminal economy has led to the proliferation of youth gangs or criminal groups, mostly made up of men, that are involved in kidnapping, sexual exploitation, and the murder of women. In relation to this, Connell (2013), when talking about the consistency of feminicidal violence in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, highlights a fundamental element to understand the reproduction of such violence: the majority of these murders are committed by men. Connell's observation is

not exclusive to Ciudad Juárez, as it is a fact that, sadly, is extended throughout the country.

These remarks can help to explain the regularity of the violence that the women in Ecatepec¹ undergo, mostly inflicted by men. Then, a knot can be suggested where masculinity and feminecidial violence are intertwined, shaping the structure of the “market of virility” in Ecatepec, which is governed by a repeated demonstration of violence that is not only instrumental but expressive (Segato, 2013), turning that violent language into a normalized communication system that mutates into a dominant way of socialization among local males, at the same time shaping their desire to “be men.” However, the binomial violence-poverty not only would mark the masculinity of some men of the periphery but would carry with it a distributive power that also affects women, turning them into victims and, in some occasions, transforming them into subjects that practice different types of violence. In that line, it could be stated that the violent atmosphere in Ecatepec has spread, to a lesser extent, in women, which has generated practices of domination and violence in them. This can be confirmed in the ethnographic work of Araiza (2021) on the daily life in the Miguel Hidalgo neighborhood in Ecatepec, where she recovers several stories of violence exercised by women both in the streets and at home. Likewise, the history of Patricia Vernal Martinez can be included, who, along with her husband, Juan Carlos Hernandez Béjar, confessed in 2018 before the Public Ministry of the Prosecutor’s Office of the State of Mexico to have committed at least ten femicides in Ecatepec (González, 2018).

The violence led by men in the mafia that predominates in Ecatepec is not simply a form of instrumental power that ends up producing hundreds of victims subject to a criminal economy but becomes the terrain where the symbolic field of the social life of the communities of that municipality is organized through the prestige that fixes and retains the symbols based on the distribution of power and values within a precarious social

¹ According to the statistics of the National Citizen Observatory of Femicide (OCNF, for its abbreviation in Spanish), it is established that, between 2014 and 2017, 1420 murders of women took place in the State of Mexico and that Ecatepec is the municipality with more crimes (Rojas, 2018).

scenario, which is the product of economic, ethnic and gender inequalities. Therefore, the violence exercised inside and outside the houses against the feminine would emerge as a communicative act that makes possible the reproduction of a gender order that irrigates the daily life of those who live in Ecatepec.

It is important to rescue the previous ideas for the case of the Mexican municipality since it dismantles the assumption of isolated or mentally ill aggressors and, on the contrary, makes us understand the violence against women that is generated there as a product of structural components that have to do with the forms of differential distribution of recognition of bodies based on gender and class.

The context just described frames the emergency of the pedagogies that have been implemented in the last ten years within the General Francisco Villa 128 High School (better known by many of its students and teachers as "Panchito Villa"), located in the municipality of Ecatepec, State of Mexico. These pedagogies have based their objective on stimulating students, through "performance," to recognize the social problems of the context in which they find themselves: poverty, drug trafficking, discrimination, femicide, and teenage pregnancy. Among the implemented initiatives is the "Women, Art, and Politics Workshop," where a series of "performances" have been developed in which the students intervene in the streets of Ecatepec to denounce and talk about the poverty and the feminicidal violence they suffer. The festival "Community in Adventure" can also be considered; it is carried out at each end of the school year, with the purpose of encouraging participation and the circulation of the word in the student community of the 128 High School by organizing debates, exhibitions, and "performance" that enables them, collectively, to address, question and thematize the social, political and economic adversities experienced in their communities. The activities and dynamics the students present at this festival are, in general, the product of qualitative research they do in their streets and neighborhoods.

This set of initiatives is recognized in this article as "performance pedagogies," defining them as collective and dialogic learning practices in an extended period of time that allow students to investigate, understand and question the injustices and inequalities

of their local environments through the creation of languages and images that emerge from the body and its gesture. In that sense, according to Fuentes (2020), from the field of Performance Studies, the term “performance” has been understood as an expansive concept, for this not only refers to artistic, cultural, and/or political events that are separated from daily life because they are framed in a specific time and space, such as a play, a protest or a concert. It is also a method of research and intervention: “is a sort of theater of life in which social actors interact with an explicit or implicit audience, narrowing or subverting social constructs such as gender identity, patriotism, family roles, and race” (Fuentes, 2020, p. 38)².

These pedagogies would allow “to school” from a practice defined by a fluidity between the institution and its environment, that is to say, using “performance” as a tool that provides spaces for imagination to conceive the school as a place that launches possibilities of ethical and social transformation, defending dignity and an idea of community that makes it impossible to equal the lives of women and men in Ecatepec to garbage. Here, “performance” is not only a theoretical category to name a type of pedagogies, but it is used to say and think socially through the materiality of language: its sonority, rhythm, and carnal/visual substance. Thinking and feeling become one and the same thing, and it is in this indistinguishable alloy that one learns, through the body, to create meaning about one’s existence in a given reality.

Although these pedagogies, as it was just described, orient their efforts to build discussions, debates, dynamics, and actions around different topics, the interest of this article focuses on the approach they have made to the issue of femicidal violence in Ecatepec, as it occupies a prominent place in the concerns of the participating students (Figure 1). It could be said that the relevance of this topic is due to an urgency imposed by the context, as well as to greater participation of women in these pedagogies at

² It is necessary to clarify that, following the premise of *performance* as an expansive concept, as it is proposed by Fuentes (2020), the use of this term in this work, both in its singular and plural form, refers to the actions against femicides that have been carried out by the students of Francisco Villa High School in two senses: as precise representations detached from daily life to denounce and to talk about a specific problem (femicidal violence in Ecatepec) and as well, as bodily/analytical tools that allow students to intervene and investigate their own behaviors and the environments where they live.

“Panchito”, since they are the ones who have managed to escape from cars that try to abduct them, others are survivors of trafficking, and some stop going to school and lock themselves in their homes for fear of something happening to them.

Figure 1. Students from “Panchito” taking part in a march against femicides in Ecatepec as part of the “performance pedagogies.”



Photo: Manuel Amador (2018). (Text in picture: Girls are NOT touched, NOT raped, NOT killed)

Some of the activities carried out by the students at “Panchito,” where the topic of feminicidal violence is pivotal, are: “We, women of the periphery, are not disposable”; “Fifteen-year-old girls raped and disappeared in the State of Mexico”; “Shout with the body no more femicides”; “Incarnated to the women of the Revolution and Independence”; “Black butterflies against femicide.” Thus, it could be said that these “performances” build from all their devising, management, and implementation, a series of:

[...] spatio-temporal centers where there is not only an emanation of symbolisms that refer to feminicidal violence in Mexico, but also what happens with each action carried out is that it contributes to the possibility of continuing the struggle, no longer through the state route, but through the path that implies the encounter between bodies, that is, the formation of the world of bonds [...] we see flowers, butterflies, birds, crosses, roses, masks, among others, as object-images that are constantly used in the actions carried out, with the aim of communicating hope and care for the lives of impoverished women; [...] in

each action these objects are subjected to interventions on demand, that is to say, they are used according to the specific needs and circumstances of the moment in which the performance is carried out (Gutiérrez, 2020, pp. 151-153).

On the other hand, it is necessary to highlight that most of the feminicidal violence that occurs in Ecatepec and the rest of the country, as seen above, is committed by men. For this reason, one of the main purposes of this work is to reflect on the role the body plays through the “performance pedagogies,” developing cognitive capacities that enable male students to inquire about their own communities, allowing them to re-experience the feminicidal atmosphere that characterizes the streets of Ecatepec. It is important to underline that, from the performative processes produced by the pedagogies in question, male students also begin to rethink their identities as men from a relational and collective, intercorporeal plane, where movements, feelings, and affections emerge between men and women, as that which encourages a transformation in the understanding of gender relations in the urban periphery. Based on these observations, this paper shows the emergence of a relationship between feminicidal violence and masculinity through the intercorporeal spaces that are created by these “performances.”

The purpose of this article is not so much to define the bodies of the men who participate in the pedagogies mentioned above but rather to examine what it is that traverses them and, in that sense, what their capacities are, what they can do through the bodily variations that the “performances” imply, for as Massumi (2002) mentions, it is necessary to rethink the body, subjectivity and social change in terms of movement, affect, force and violence, rather than through code, text, and signification, since the latter, according to the Canadian theorist, reiterate the law where bodies only signify and where meaning carries a sentence that reduces bodies to a determined identity.

This article’s analytical approach to the masculinity of young men who have been involved in the “performance pedagogies” is the product of a review of the literature relevant to the topics discussed here, as well as of an ethnographic work carried out over the course of 6 years at “Panchito” and in the streets of Ecatepec, which included a series

of qualitative, semi-structured interviews with male students and former students of the 128 High School who have taken part in the pedagogies.

Once the coordinates under which this work is structured have been outlined, it is pertinent to point out the contents of the following sections. The first part proposes a theoretical-methodological perspective, following the approaches of anthropologist Csordas (2008), based on the category “intercorporeality,” to address the link between masculinity, body, and knowledge. This approach will be used to analyze, in the following section, the testimonies that give an account of the participation and experiences of male students in the “performance pedagogies” against feminicidal violence in Ecatepec. Finally, in the last section, a discussion is proposed where these pedagogies are understood as aesthetic-political strategies that establish a relationship between masculinity and feminicidal violence in Ecatepec, which enables male students at “Panchito” to glimpse other ways of understanding gender relations in the urban periphery.

The theoretical-methodological perspective: “intercorporeality,” a category to address the link between masculinity, body, and knowledge

This section aims to build a theoretical-methodological perspective that allows addressing the experiences and impressions that male students of *Francisco Villa* High School have when taking part in the activities of these pedagogies against feminicidal violence, based on an approach that has to do with the centrality of the body in the “performance” and the involvement in its spaces, that is, with fluidity between context and corporeality. The world, the worlds, should not be understood as simple environments that “surround” the bodies, but as a part of their very matter, they represent them in all their surfaces and depths. Following this idea, this work wants to talk about the bodily immediacy that is generated through “performance” between the students’ bodies and their communities, to assess the ways in which this contact and proximity produce in the men who participate in the activities, a re-knowledge about the violence against girls and women in Ecatepec, as well as an entire reflection about their masculine identities. A “knowing of the body” originates, or as Rolnik (2019) mentions, a “knowledge-of-the-living” (p. 47).

Due to this, it is necessary to start from what is called “embodiment” in the tradition of Body Studies, to refer, as Détrez (2018) highlights, to a corporeal intelligence that refers to motor, perceptive, and sensory qualities that allow the body to situate itself in the social world through its movements, postures, and gestures, establishing a link between perception and action. This embodied record of daily experiences, where dimensions of non-conscious experience (memory, empathy, mimicry, affection) are also articulated, becomes “an unavoidable instance in the constitution of our practical/perceptual world, and in the formation of a world with and for others” (Aguiluz, 2021, p. 14). Under this framework, embodiment as a theoretical-methodological approach would make it possible to explore social notions such as culture and a sense of self, which in the case of this study refer to the possibilities opened up by “performance” as an epistemic tool to produce knowledge about the masculine identities of the male participants in tension with the re-knowledge they make of the violence suffered by women and girls in Ecatepec.

When we speak of embodiment in this work, we are not referring to a mere individual experience that privatizes the perception of the world, but rather the embodied experience of subjects, as mentioned by anthropologist Csordas (2008), is always mediated by a continuum of interactions with other human and non-human bodies, that is to say, by an “intercorporeality.” The true *locus* of culture, according to Csordas (2008), can be found in the interactions of specific individuals and in the meanings derived from a subjective record. Thus, we could talk about a dual *locus* of culture where subjective meaning and objective interaction are simultaneously recognized. In a similar vein, Fischer (2003) asserts that culture is not a variable but is relational; it is where meaning is constantly woven and renewed through gaps, silences, and forces beyond the control of individuals.

These arguments provide an anthropological view to understand the interaction between bodies as a component of an intersubjectivity that is not merely abstract, but materializes in ways of immediate intercorporization, that is to say, in modes of collective presence in the world, which allow subjects to embody and give meaning to their reality from mimetic operations through the contact and encounter *between* bodies.

Taking into consideration the previous assumptions, the approach proposed in this article regarding “performance pedagogies” is an analytical position that aims to understand the epistemic function of the body, mainly from its relational dimension, which refers to a form of specialized knowledge that is built from the “performance.” It is necessary to cultivate a closer relationship with epistemic practices that involve the body as a channel through which knowledge is gained or even lost because the body, despite appearing to be something individual, is actually defined by precise historical and social configurations. In this regard, Anzaldúa (2002) points out that “knowledge comes from opening all your senses, consciously inhabiting your body and decoding its symptoms [...] Attention is multileveled and includes your surroundings, bodily sensations and responses (p. 120).

The epistemic function of the body in the “performance pedagogies,” from the relational dimension posed by the approach of intercorporeality, would serve to rethink that sentence by Braidotti (2004), in which, following Simone Beauvoir, she warns that the price paid by men for assuming a universal representation is the loss of the body, the sex/gender specificity by identifying themselves in the abstraction of phallogentric masculinity. As will be seen in the following section, these pedagogies represent, for the men who take part in them, an instrument for constructing an embodied experience based on interactions and contact with their female classmates, which, contrary to Braidotti's approach, would “restore” their bodies. This corporeal “restitution” would trigger, as mentioned before, that they could re-know the femineicidal reality of Ecatepec and, at the same time, establish a relationship between these acts of violence and a questioning of their own masculine identities, allowing them to re-know themselves as subjects that inhabit a sex/gender specificity within a social world. The emergence of this (embodied) knowledge, through “performance,” would counter an epistemic (hermeneutic)³ injustice imposed by a series of androcentric structures (state, family, school) that historically,

³ The epistemic (hermeneutic) injustice refers, according to Fricker (2017), to “a gap in collective interpretive resources, placing someone at an unfair disadvantage in terms of understanding their social experiences” (p. 18).

through their sayings and doings, have prevented men from understanding themselves as particular subjects traversed by gender.

Results: The experiences and participation of men in the “performance pedagogies” against feminicidal violence in Ecatepec

The link established between masculinity and feminicidal violence, from the “performance pedagogies,” is defined in the first place through a conception of the territory itself as a pedagogy. This idea is raised following the arguments of Betasamosake (2014), who argues that the territory is context, but at the same time, is a process intertwined with a bodily, emotional, and spiritual presence where it is known and thought continuously, from an embodied practice; to know in this case is the involvement of a corporeal intelligence in the territory through movement and a lived experience. This would not mean putting the books aside; it would rather point to the need to understand the territory and what happens there through the articulation between the written word and practical, embodied knowledge since epistemic productivity, as mentioned before, is also played in a relational sphere. Under this idea, learning occurs in the bridge between lived experiences and the new information received through an instructional process, resulting in a deeper understanding of the subject in relation to the systemic societal structures where their life is developed.

Referring to the territory as a pedagogy and not simply as the place where a form of learning and knowledge is situated would imply understanding the “performance pedagogies” as a mechanism that enables students to establish a relationship between their bodies and the unwritten and invisible stories of the feminicidal atrocity, poverty, and abandonment in Ecatepec, that is to say, the birth of *corpo*-politics where the territory that is inhabited is re-known, referring to an “I am where I think” (Castillo & Caceido, 2015, p. 112). This way, the urban periphery becomes a center that spawns knowledge through the bodies of the students who take part in said pedagogies. And it would be in those interactions between masculine and feminine bodies where the men find a way to get to

know the femigenocidal reality in Ecatepec and, at the same time, reflect on their masculine identities.

In the in-depth interviews held with the men who have engaged in these activities, it was noted that all of them, before joining the “performances,” were unaware of the systematic nature of the violence suffered by girls and women, even though it is a daily problem in their communities. It is also necessary to mention that it is the men, compared to the women, who almost always show more discomfort with the exercises and topics proposed as part of the pedagogies.

Professor Manuel Amador, who is the manager and promoter of these pedagogies at “Panchito,” says that carrying out this type of pedagogy triggered, at some point, harassment against him in his social networks by two male former students. One of them currently works as a judicial police officer, and the other participates in a neo-Nazi group (Mondragón & Amador, 2020). What has just been stated frames the way in which this work hinders the participation of young men in actions aimed at reducing femicidal violence in Ecatepec since those who become involved in the “performances” do so, mainly, according to their own testimonies, because they want to “help” their classmates, girlfriends, and friends against the violence they suffer, that is to say; they do not assume from the beginning that such violence also affects them, based on the way in which a violent gender order within their communities is structured. This is confirmed by the words of Luis Enrique Delgado Luna, a “Panchito” student who has been involved in some activities:

I haven't been too involved because sometimes I wasn't able to, or I don't even know about it. But some of the activities that I've been in were, the marches and in one “performance,” even outside the school. Also in some discussions. In the activities that I've been in, I was invited by some friends, they explained me what it was about and I went. I helped them with their “performance.” It was an action against the girls that are kidnapped and victims of trafficking. It was like a ball; the girls had their hands tied with chains. And the guys who participated took off the chains and a dirty rag they had on them (Luis Enrique, 17 years old).

For his part, José Macedonio Gómez, a former “Panchito” student, recognizes what it meant to participate in various “performances” to raise awareness about violence against women and girls in Ecatepec. An issue that he was not aware of before:

I didn’t know what a femicide was before joining the “performances.” I learned the word because of that. I didn’t know what machismo and feminicidal violence were. I didn’t know the difference between sex and gender. I was completely unaware. Besides that, we had a project with Mr. Amador. A field research project. I went to my middle school to make surveys about the femicides in Ecatepec. Our purpose was to research the causes of these crimes. We went to a Middle School because at that moment the girls that were being killed the most were in that age range, 13-14-15 years old. These activities made me think and see with other eyes the things I did [...] I didn’t use to reflect on the fact that my female classmates were in such danger. In middle school I didn’t give a damn. I have two cousins, and when we walked in the street I didn’t use to wait for them. I didn’t realize that they were at risk. I feel it changed my way of thinking in that way. All those activities helped me reflect (José, 19 years old).

The testimonies above aim to consider the actions undertaken by the students at “Panchito” as centers of interaction *between* bodies, implying, in the case of José, a reflection on the ideas, sensitivities, affections, and emotions that shape his masculine identity in relation to the violence suffered by women in his community. This last point is also reflected in the testimony of Sebastián Alberto López Vargas, a former student at “Panchito” who took part in several “performances” with his classmates. Sebastián explains that his involvement in the actions allowed him to raise awareness about the violence suffered by women and girls in Ecatepec, but he also began to think about the gender violence suffered by men:

I used to think that things weren’t that bad for women. They’ve always had a right to vote and to speak. From there, I was intrigued as to why they made them feel less [...] they may kill more men, but men kill each other. And women are killed for absurd things, for example, because they didn’t heat the food properly. With these exercises, I also began to realize that men suffer gender-based violence. Men are forced to be powerful, aggressive, closed off, to have no feelings [...] When Mr. Amador organized his activities,

the majority of the participants were women, and the men were only those of us who approached him. The men were few [...] For example, there was the “performance” of “Rapist in your Path,” where only women participated [...] In others where I was there, we made a mural in the classrooms about femicides, and there were about five women and two men. I wrote an essay about that activity, where I reflected on men’s role against femicides. I helped by painting the mural, and when it was presented, the essays were also presented. In the essay, I also talked about men being required to have certain traits, such as aggressiveness, when this is not really the case since there are men who support the fight against femicides. We, men, can also join this revolution. We also have to break these cultural traits that make us believe that we are superior to women (Sebastián, 18 years old).

The stories of José, Luis Enrique, and Sebastián refer directly and indirectly to their female classmates since they are the main promoters of these actions whose objective is a community transformation that leads to the recognition of their lives as non-murderable, non-rapeable, non-harassable, and non-disposable. This assumption draws a parallel with that established by Guttman (2000) in his ethnographic work in a popular neighborhood in Mexico City, where he establishes that the changes in masculine identities and actions that take place in this place are related to the activism undertaken by women in favor of reducing the precarious conditions in which they live. It is very rare, says Guttman (2000), that “social groups that hold power, no matter how constrained, give it up without resistance, even less when it arises from a collective sense of justice” (p. 53). In a similar vein, Jelin (1990) and Massolo (1992) have elaborated studies in which they affirm that in Latin America, women are more involved in survival issues, as well as in actions that catalyze community participation.

With what has just been said, it could be stated that the “performances” carried out at “Panchito,” in spite of being spaces mostly animated by the initiative of the female students, become part of a process of encounters through which men and women transform themselves through imaginative activations that involve the body and modify an idea of gender in their immediate environments. The incursion of men in the actions

carried out, even if it is a minority (numerically) and happens on the fly, is no less significant because their presence in the “performances” builds spaces where the idea of gender is always understood as an interaction, along with women, placing all of them in a common territory that demands an urgent defense of life.

On the other hand, the predominance in the number of women, as well as the issues that define the “performances” (femicidal violence), make female identities become a reference for male participants in the conservation and transformation of the meaning they give to the idea of “being men” within the actions they undertake. This is reinforced in Rolnik’s (2019) words when she speaks about the micropolitical insurrection of subjects as an impulse that announces worlds to come through specific words and actions: “Such announcement tends to mobilize other subconscious through resonances, adding new allies to the insubordinations” (p. 119). In this case, it would be women who, with their initiative within the “performance pedagogies,” announce worlds to come, in turn causing resonances in some men who join the struggles they undertake so that their lives are recognized as valuable within their communities.

However, the above should not be interpreted as a simple adhesion of men to an outside cause (the struggle for the rights of their female classmates) because, as mentioned before, they also begin to scrutinize the gender oppressions they suffer, becoming allies of themselves through the rejection of a violent masculine identity that is not very expressive of affections and emotions. To reject something, Didi-Huberman (2018) tells us, is not only to deny but to create dialectics: to refuse to do what is imposed on us, but at the same time “to decide to exist and *do something else*” (p. 81), as demonstrated in the following passage where Gabriel Serafín Ordoñez, a former “Panchito” student, talks about his experience within the “performance pedagogies” and, at the same time, comments on how that involvement helped him to start questionings about what is socially required of men as acceptable behavior:

Group interaction, especially with my female classmates when we did an activity, opened my eyes to how the violence they suffer is associated with gender oppression that we men also suffer. The patriarchal system is not unique to women; it also oppresses the male. I feel a little envious of women because they are redefining what it means to be a woman,

but men are in the epitome of an ideological desert because the inherited masculinities are not good for us [...] I like to think of myself as a macho in rehabilitation, right? I couldn't cry in front of a man because they called me a homo, but you realize that we are emotional and rational beings. A man, to tell another man, "I love you," says "fucking idiot" or "fuck off" in ways that are like aggression and that point to a meaning of love/affection. But why not just say I love you, and that's it? We are social beings, and we love other people; we can say "I love you", but there are several people who keep it to themselves. Now I say "I love you" to my male friends. For example, when I tell my friend Mario, "Hey dude, I do love you very much," he tells me not to say that and to not be a homo. And I tell him that I genuinely appreciate and trust him (Gabriel, 21 years old).

Discussion: "Performance pedagogies" as aesthetic-political strategies to rethink gender in Ecatepec

Based on the testimonies presented in the previous section, this work proposes an analytical approach to "performance pedagogies" as aesthetic-political strategies that establish a relationship between masculinity and feminicidal violence, as they would strengthen a transformation of a sensitive and practical (ethical) order in the men involved, allowing to think of the body as a pedagogical territory where they would learn, from the creation and imagination of visual and gestural languages, to retrace and question the violent male *habitus* of the periphery. The bodies thus become, within these actions, visual writings where a transformation in the understanding of their stay in the world would reside. The image here would not only become flesh through "performance" but would be transformed into a tactic/gesture for survival and re-existence in a territory, as it announces the echo of an uprising. For as Didi-Huberman (2018) states:

[...] even before being affirmed as acts or as actions, uprisings (disobediences) emerge from the human psyche as gestures: corporeal forms. Undoubtedly, they are forces that lift us up, but they are above all *forms* that anthropologically speaking, make them sensitive, transmit them, orient them and put them into practice (p. 28).

To think of "performance pedagogies" as aesthetic-political strategies, from the processes of intercorporeality that they imply, aim to rethink the meaning of the political

from a “staging of bodies” marked by dissent, which affects the frameworks and models under which men feel and know those elements that make them understand the world. There is an aesthetic-political relationship in the ways of expression and circulation of language that “performance” deploys to produce other scenarios about what is possible, about what is real; for that reason, the importance of “performance” as a cultural device is understood “not so much from the interpretative density of its symbols, but rather from the possibilities of its political continuity” (Vich, 2011, p. 396). This definition resonates with the notion of the political as proposed by Rancière (2007): it is not a circumstance of the State and even less of an economic or ideological system. It is the relationship of intersubjectivation and intercorporeality that defines the seen and the unseen, those who count and those who do not count within a social framework. According to Rancière, “Democracy is neither a form of government nor a social style; it is the mode of subjectivity by which subjects exist in common” (2007, p. 9). Based on the words of Vich and Rancière, we could say that “performance pedagogies” shape aesthetics through the body and certain objects that experimentally bet on a transformation of sensibility and representation in order to rename, perceive, and take ownership of the world in a different way.

On the other hand, the images produced by the male students at “Panchito” along with their female classmates, through “performance pedagogies,” refer in a good number of actions to a “femicidal dramaturgy” in Ecatepec, which is defined in this work as a performance carried out by students of High School 128, organizing themselves from well-defined roles to intervene in the spaces in Ecatepec where the bodies of murdered women and girls have been found (abandoned): The women represent the victims, while the men play the role of aggressors; through makeup, masks, clothes and objects such as chains, knives, among others. The men embody images of violence against the feminine. In this sense, the intention of the students is to talk, from body images, about the reality of femicidal violence in Ecatepec, where most of the perpetrators are men. These scenes emphasize the male cruelty and violence that predominates in their communities, as Luis Enrique mentions:

In the activities that I've been part of, I mostly agree with my classmates on how to go dressed up in costume [...] I remember once a very impressive characterization, which referred to the aggressors of women. He was a rather imposing man, with a wrinkled face, blood stains on his clothes, ripped and with dirt stains (Luis Enrique, 17 years old).

José Macedonio commented something similar:

I was in a "performance" about violence against women. It was at the school. We represented the violent scenario with calm music, and we acted out family violence harassment. I represented family violence, and I got to be the abusive father. Mr. Amador brought up the idea and asked us to think about what kind of violence we were going to represent. Since I am the tallest and sturdiest, they told me I could play the dad because they are the powerful ones. The mother was a classmate who is short (José, 19 years old).

These testimonies should not be thought of as a simplification of roles within the "performances" since in the actions that are undertaken, there is always a "liberating" closure from the violence where students build other body images that refer to hope, equity, and justice. As seen in other testimonies, the involvement of men in these actions against feminicidal violence also refers to mural painting and essay writing, among other things.

Under said considerations, this work puts emphasis not so much on defining who the young men who participate in the "performances" are but how they use the resources of language, history, and culture to become men rather than to be men in Ecatepec. The masculinity of these young men is not understood as a set of attributes that obey a unique pattern of identity and behavior; rather, they are set through embodied knowledge, produced through their participation in the "performance," but also through their daily life in Ecatepec and all that it implies. In a similar vein, Amuchástegui (2006) states that masculinity should be understood on the basis of an understanding of the fluidity of gender subjectivity, that is to say, as a social process that is constructed according to the social, economic, and political

interactions and specifics in which men and women live. In this understanding, masculinity, like femininity, should not be considered as characterizations that correspond “naturally” to men and women, respectively, but as identity and subjective positions that our bodies adopt, regardless of their anatomy, within a changing social scene.

On the other hand, it could be said that the visual/corporeal metaphorization of violence that young people make within these actions contributes to the future emergence of a questioning drive on the image of the “violent” man; metaphors are concepts through which we live our lives: “our conceptual system largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphors” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). For that reason, the images of violence portrayed in the bodies of these young men when impersonating a violent father, a stalker, or a man who commits femicides would be visual and corporeal metaphors that help students decipher the narratives that dominate daily life in Ecatepec, and thus to envision other ways of “being a man.” It is as if the future lurked through the image, making it a kind of threshold between past worlds of violence and death and new worlds to come where equity and life are defended. The meaning of an experience in the present, according to Turner (1982), is always generated in function, simultaneously, of a memory and a look to the future that allows us to establish goals and models for a future experience in which one aspires to avoid the mistakes of past experiences. Thus, the “performance” from the experiences it generates in these men would be a tool that allows them to create knowledge for the future, appealing to a memory for the victims of femicidal violence in Ecatepec and linking it at the same time with goals and models under which these young men aspire to get away from a violent masculine identity.

The images created through “performance,” in this case, more than transmitting, allow the construction of knowledge, providing the body with an inventive potential that positions it in the path of transformation through the suspension of a sequence of gestures and movements that help the subjects to build

awareness about the violence against the feminine that defines daily life in Ecatepec. The *photographic performance* "Freezing violence and damage to the human condition" (Figure 2) that students at "Panchito" carried out in their classrooms in 2016 is illustrative to understand better this point, as in this exercise, students reproduce scenes where the violent gesture against girls and women is suspended (frozen) in a time/space that is recorded by a photograph.

Figure 2. *Photographic performance* "Freezing violence and damage to the human condition," carried out by students at "Panchito."



Photo: Manuel Amador (2016).

The above allows us to think that the images created by the young men with their bodies within this action are constructed through a sensorial repertoire where the transformation of a violent and abusive masculine identity is communicated and thought through bodily variations that are "frozen" in an image: gesticulations, facial expressions,

postures. This is in tune with the hypothesis proposed by Serres (2011) when he expresses that:

[...] the body's metamorphoses and learning's mimetism function as software; gestures bear the same relationship to anatomical assemblies and physiological and biochemical functions as, in a machine, software does to hardware [...] Software transforms the hardware, just as the body is transformed by its gestures and mimickings (pp. 102-104).

The "performances" that take place at "Panchito," following Serres' statement, would be a type of software that, through mimetic and gestural (visual) tactics, is capable of metamorphosing the body and what it knows of its reality.

These body images would be more of an event than a visible structure, as they would help men to regard themselves as coming from the de-identification with a violent masculine image and identity. Disidentification, Muñoz (2011) notes, "has to do with recycling and rethinking a codified meaning [...] it is a strategy that operates with and against the prevailing ideology" (pp. 569, 595). The disidentification that occurs in men regarding a violent masculine image, through "performance," comprises endless variations of a body that struggles in the skin before an identity power⁴ that establishes what it means "to be a man" in a context defined by poverty and by a mafia-rooted hyperviolence.

The way in which such identity power operates concerning what it means "to be a man" in Ecatepec makes it impossible to understand the "performance pedagogies" as mechanisms that produce "redeemed men" totally removed from the assumptions of control, prestige, and force demonstration that characterize dominant masculinity in the periphery. This, in no way, suggests, as already stated above, a questioning of the processes of disidentification that these men make about certain aspects of their masculine identities based on the relationship they establish with their female classmates within the pedagogies. Rather, it is proposed, based on what the students said during the in-depth interviews, that their affective response to their involvement in "performance

⁴ Fricker (2017) calls "identity power" to a power "that depends on people sharing a social identity, a conception alive in the collective social imagination that dominates, for example, what it means to be a man or a woman [...] whenever there is a performance of power that depends to a significant degree on these type of conceptions of shared social identity in the imagination, then, the identity power operates" (p. 37).

pedagogies” is always negotiated and linked to the economic, political, and ethical conditions imposed by the periphery. Affection is something that goes beyond the individual experience. The idea of “being a man” in Ecatepec, that men are building hand in hand with their female classmates through “performance,” cannot be perceived as a redemption that transports them and places them in a terrain where they will automatically get away from any supposition that imposes an identity power around the masculine. After taking part in the actions, they continue to live in a reality where economic and gender inequalities prevail.

Therefore, what this analysis would aim to do is not so much a dichotomization based on the involvement of these young men in the “performances” between redeemed masculinity and masculinity characterized by the mandates of strength demonstration, recklessness, and violence. Both in the actions of the pedagogies the male students at “Panchito” take part in, as well as in the stories where they give an account of these experiences, there is an ethic sustained in the encounter between word and action, which defends life and the feminine as a way of life, but above all supports a desire to be another type of man that often does not match with the biographical trajectories that these young students built and keep building in their daily lives in the midst of a precarious context. And it is in this lack of a match where subjectivity emerges that produces, with tensions and setbacks, ways to re-exist as men in Ecatepec.

The elaboration of body images, the interactions that take place in the activities, the reflective writings about the “performances,” and the debates among students to plan an intervention are a set of pedagogical practices where the hierarchy between masculine and feminine is collectively reconsidered in the midst of meanings that are rallied through social representations and language. These pedagogies would catalyze disidentifying dynamics to hinder and resist socially prescriptive gender models, not to acquire a final/ideal identity, but to inaugurate a becoming that has no point of arrival and that characterizes a mode of existing: instead of thinking of identity, Hall (1990) tells us, “As an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should

think, instead, of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (p. 222).

Final thoughts

The "performance" pedagogies about which this work speaks are learning tools managed from school, which parting from the intercorporeal dynamics established between students at "Panchito" would contribute to take preliminary steps to think about an individual and collective transformation that enables other forms of social relationality, based on gender, in the urban periphery. As observed throughout this article, this transformation is defined by a transfer of embodied knowledge, through "performance," about the social problems that affect people who live in Ecatepec, as is the case of feminicidal violence. This would be knowledge that is not based on archives of objects and data but on repertoires of gestures and spoken words, becoming useful knowledge for the subjects themselves (Taylor, 2003, cited in Prieto & Toriz, 2015). What is emerging from the participation of students within the "performances" they plan and carry out is a repertoire of images, gestures, and movements to be able to produce, collectively, intercorporeal knowledge that allows them to re-exist as men and women in Ecatepec.

The "performance pedagogies" against feminicidal violence, through the intercorporeal dynamics that they imply, would allow the men involved to re-know the violent reality that women live in Ecatepec, and at the same time, would allow them to reconsider their masculine identities through a dramatization that integrates aspects of how they value life and their relationships with others, and the way in which the ideas they imagine for themselves and for others act out.

The value of these pedagogies, in the case of the men who take part in them, would not be so much in the appeal to become a certain type of "ideal" man, but through their relational nature, they aim for a very concrete approach: "becoming a man *with*" (the others). However, it should not be assumed that the purpose of this work is to consider said pedagogies as a model strategy for working with men through "performance." Instead, they are conceived more as a situated educational attempt that highlights a possible way,

among others, for men to conceive their masculine identities always in a close connection with their specific material conditions of life.

It is important to clarify that these types of initiatives, such as the pedagogies implemented in High School 128, must be accompanied by economic and social redistribution policies that help to reduce poverty and inequality. Addressing the issue of education and its role in the prevention of gender-related violence must take into account the extent and limits of educational work in terms of transformation. It is not possible to expect a transformation and, therefore, a prevention of (femicidal) violence, leaving everything at the mercy of the school. It is unreasonable, as Escalante (2015) mentions, to expect the school alone to overcome violence and poverty and to confront all the other institutions and social structures of inequality.

Therefore, an important conclusion of this work lies in understanding that the dismantling of the privileges held by men is not entirely a matter of personal volition. The problem must also consider the role played by a system of capitalist and androcentric domination, which, in the case of Ecatepec, is manifested by the prevalence of a mafia-like and masculine economic order. For this reason, we emphasize the relational and collective (mixed) work implied in the “performance” pedagogies analyzed here since it is understood that the destabilization of such privileges, which sustain inequalities between men and women, does not lie in an individual declaration of faith on the part of men to establish by decree a renunciation of what Connell (2009) has called the “patriarchal dividend,” which refers to the advantages and gains that men obtain (although they criticize the “patriarchal dividend”) from the structural subordination of women. In the “performance” pedagogies, the encounter *between* male and female bodies would arrange an interaction in which men reflect on their own masculine identities always in relation to their fellow female participants and to the context where their daily lives take place, that is to say, there is always an exteriority (feminine and historical) that questions the transformation of their masculine identities. Identity, Phelan (2004) observes, “is perceptible only through a relation to another [...] it is the boundary where the “self” diverges from and merges with the other” (p. 13).

The environment in which these pedagogies take place would allow thinking about gender from the inseparability of men and women within social relations from a perspective that understands their bodies as co-substantial and simultaneous within social life. The men referred to in this work co-construct, together with their female classmates, a series of experiences and knowledge that enable them to think about an idea of gender located in the urban periphery and based on the simultaneity of the masculine and the feminine that define what is social.

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