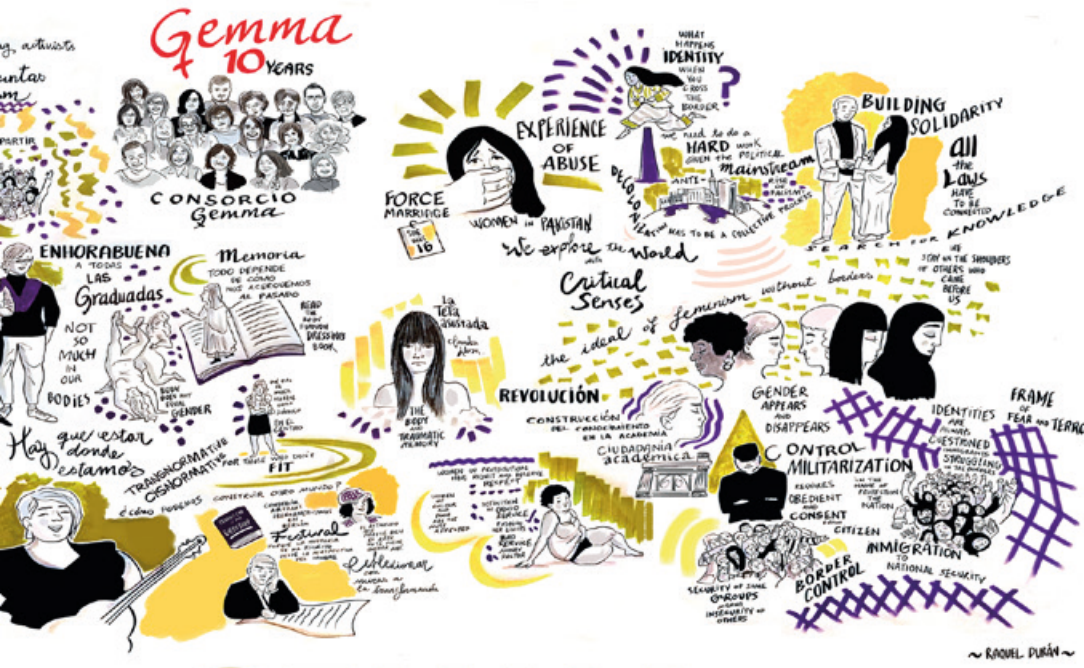

GEMMA

Researching with GEMMA **1**

María Adelina Sánchez-Espinosa /
Dresda E. Méndez de la Brena (eds.)

Feminist Research Alliances: Affective Convergences

PETER LANG

GEMMA

Researching with GEMMA 1

Feminist Research Alliances: Affective Convergences is the first volume of the "Researching with GEMMA" series whose main purpose is to present innovative, in-depth, and culturally provocative research on critical issues in Gender and Women's Studies produced within the GEMMA Erasmus Mundus community. By turning to the feminist alliances and the transformative feminist research convergences constructed throughout 15 years together, scholars, collaborators, and alumni reflect on social and political transformations; the decolonisation of academic practices and curricula; the conception of research as involved in a process that calls for self-reflexive and participatory approaches; the necessary involvement of, and claim for, emotions and affects in our research practices; and an emphasis on qualitative and creative research methods and pedagogies.

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FEMINIST RESEARCH ALLIANCES: AFFECTIVE CONVERGENCES

RESEARCHING WITH GEMMA

Vol. 1

PETER LANG
Bern • Berlin • Bruxelles • New York • Oxford • Wien

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Dedications

To Khadija Boudal, Marine Moullet, Ana María Medeiros da Fonseca, Aurora Morcillo Gómez, Clara Tovar Casado and Nawal El Saadawi. You are not gone. You rest in power.

To Patrick Zaki. No walls can hold back the power of your voice. No walls can stop ours. Patrick free now!!

Preface

The GEMMA Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies is a pioneer joint postgraduate programme and a transnational consortium of universities that brings together international and multicultural activist backgrounds and intersectional and interdisciplinary academic curricula. GEMMA is supported by the European Commission, which has selected it as Erasmus Mundus project four consecutive times since 2006 and has distinguished it as the "project and model in the field of Women's Studies and Gender Studies in a European and global perspective".

The volumes included in the "Researching with GEMMA" series trace the development of the feminist alliances constructed throughout the past 15 years of teaching and researching within GEMMA. The discussions included in this series intend to weave the personal and the professional, the empirical and the theoretical, the affective and the political. Together, GEMMA scholars, collaborators, and alumni reflect on the backstage of being young feminist researchers and on the frontstage of being senior scholars in Gender Studies. These volumes aim, in short, at troubling fundamental questions on the meanings of being feminist researchers nowadays and on where we want to go from here.

The title of the first volume within this series refers to our common goal of speculating collectively about how our alliances and affective converges can help us construct more desirable futures.

Acknowledgements

Our deepest appreciation to the European Commission for supporting the Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies (GEMMA) project over 15 years. To the GEMMA Consortium for your commitment, passion and dedication to consolidating and strengthening feminist and gender studies inside and outside academia. To our associate partners for your invaluable collaboration in weaving together an international feminist community. To our entire faculty and administrative staff, students and alumni for making GEMMA much more than an academic project: an alliance of affects and a global feminist community.

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Adelina Sánchez-Espinosa and Dresda E. Méndez de la Brena

Introduction: Feminist Research Alliances: Affective Convergences. Searching for Directions in Times of Trouble

We started this introduction many months ago. We conclude it now. About to say at the "post-pandemics" but is it really already post-pandemics? We do not know. All we know is that these are still times of uncertainties and of cautions. These are the times of something we have learned to call "social distance", a concept we had never heard of just some months ago. Indeed, new concepts such as "distancing", "prevention", "virus", "isolation", "lock down", "vaccination" keep invading our physical and mental spaces as we, the coordinators of this volume, try to return to the project we left unfinished when COVID-19 made its unexpected visit and decided to overstay its "unwelcome".

Hence, let us start by insisting that the volume we present here is not about distancing but about connections. It does not fear the contagion of a virus but contends it by claiming the need for the contamination with each other's imaginations. This is a result of GEMMA and GEMMA is about close hugging of each other, about friendships forged through touching, about affect and solidarity, about sharing. Thus, this volume is pertinent at this time not only because it summarises what we have been constructing day after day for the last 15 years but, mostly, because it states very clearly what we want to be as a feminist community which honours its name "COMMUNity" at times when unexpected pandemics persists in its teaching that we can only survive by looking for our communalities, for our joint search for the common-wealth, for the shared responsibility of "staying with the trouble", as Donna Haraway (2016) would put it, while responding together.

Indeed, our main assets in GEMMA are the feminist alliances we have constructed throughout 15 years of working together in order to make the project of an Erasmus Mundus master's degree succeed. Many have been the challenges that a joint degree taught simultaneously at

seven universities in six different countries has had to face throughout all these years. Brexit forced us to change partners from Hull to York and the ultra-right politics of the Hungarian government forced Central European University in Budapest to stop being our partner until they reestablished themselves as Central European University in Vienna, just to name two of the most threatening events in all these years. Before all these challenges we always stuck together, cherishing the extra strength and added value of our convergence. Together, and with the indispensable help of the European Union through its EACEA unit, our strength is much greater than the sum total of seven partners.

The writing of this introduction has also been cut apart by two tragic events. Aurora Morcillo, part of our GEMMA community and collaborator to this volume, left us without previous warning in March 2020. As Florida International University Coordinator and associate partner representative she was one of the instigators of this project. Always there, from the very beginning. A most beloved teacher in GEMMA and an extraordinary colleague. *Sit tibis terra levis*.

The second one is still ongoing. On 7th of February 2020 one of our GEMMA students, Patrick Zaky, was illegally detained by the Egyptian regime because of his work in defence of human rights in Egypt. Eighteen months later he is still in jail, waiting for his case to be taken to court. Throughout all this time the GEMMA community has been keeping his cause alive by urging people to raise their voices on his defence. Many have been the claims for his liberation coming from institutions such as the European Parliament, national and regional governments, rectors of all consortium universities or city halls. Together with these, GEMMA friends have fed an artivist social network forum called "Voices for Patrick". We hope this volume works as yet another voice for Patrick's immediate liberation.

When we started planning this introduction we were wondering about the questions which might best represent the contents of this volume intended to be a summary of the research generated by GEMMA in all these years. Many have been the master theses produced by the students within the programme and the research projects put together by the GEMMA faculty through research alliances with each other. We wondered: what makes our research feminist? What makes us feminist researchers? What does feminism signify in our troubled world? What does it mean to be a feminist of colour scholar in white academia? How should we apply our

feminist practices into our research? How can we reconcile our theoretical knowledge with our daily life decision-making? What is the best way to queer our methodologies? How, in short, did we end up choosing this path? These questions are part of the academic journey we, feminist and queer scholars and researchers in GEMMA, have gone through when we chose to orientate ourselves towards feminism. Because as researchers the issue of why we have chosen that type of research rather than any other does matter, indeed. How feminism has found us also matters. And so does the why we have let feminism encounter us and become such a significant part of our lives. Or rather: the why and how we have come to pursue, live and perform feminist lives.

As feminist scholars, students and researchers, we realise that gender dynamics are embedded thoroughly in our institutions, our research, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires. One of our most successful responses to this situation is to orientate our engagement with the form of teaching, researching and theorising gender and its relation to race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability and age in both the personal and professional spheres. We are reminded by Sara Ahmed (2006: 56) that orientations "are about the directions we take that put some things and not others in our reach," which suggests that these directions are not simply randomly chosen. If we follow Ahmed's line of thought, we can argue that, as feminist researchers, we are orientated by stories of oppression and the structures that sustain them, by our backgrounds, past experiences and emotional ups and downs. This is why we orientate ourselves towards research into some things and not into others. Our stories orientate us and lead us to different theoretical places and different objects of study. As such, as feminist researchers, we have an "embodied orientation" which is a key part of "how (…) we come to find our way in a world that acquires new shapes, depending on which way we turn" (ibid.: 1).

But then, we orientate ourselves towards something because we feel disorientated in the first place. As Ahmed suggests, as feminists we feel disorientated and this might be the moment when our orientation starts existing to the extent that we start questioning the comfort we had formerly assumed to be the norm. In other words, we disorientate ourselves towards something because we have agreed to exist without being comfortable. In our own specific ways, each of us relates to a world that swings on hinges, a world that is frustrating, exhausting and shattering. We are disorientated feminist scholars and "killjoys, misfits, trouble-makers; willful wanderers

and woeful warriors: we fight for room to be as we wish; we wish for room in which we did not have to fight to be" (Ahmed, 2020).

We, at GEMMA, disorientate ourselves because we believe new perspectives could become also available to critically reorientate the world. Academic orientation, therefore, is something that is both embodied and embedded, and includes the power/knowledge of the disorientated subject. In this volume we attempt to present how GEMMA feminist researchers and scholars choose to dis/orientate. For the authors collaborating in this volume, GEMMA has meant a feminist compass, a starting point for dis/orientation. GEMMA has de-guided us and helped us find our way in life. As such, GEMMA is a personal, embodied, situated experience that has meant something different to each and every one of the people who have taken part in this project. And, still, as personal as GEMMA is, we are all connected by shared readings and experiences, by artistic works and political activism, by disciplinary miss-understandings and transgressive methodologies. Overall, this volume is about feminist embodied orientations, embodied feminist politics, vulnerable feminist writings and politics of dis/orientation which become productive within the context of the new feminist alliances we have constructed, through the convergences of our lives both at a personal and research level.

Considering the international and multicultural background of the GEMMA community, this volume reflects on and weaves the personal and the professional, the empirical and the theoretical, the political and the affective. In this sense, intersectionality and interdisciplinarity are the most defining features of GEMMA as a collaborative project. And within this diversity, the articles gathered in this volume trace the development of the fundamental traits of GEMMA's feminist and gender research: the goal of social and political transformation; the decolonisation of academic practices and curricula; the conception of research as involved in a process that calls for self-reflexive and participatory approaches; the rejection of absolute notions of objectivity; the necessary involvement of, and claim for, emotions and affects in our research practices; and an emphasis on qualitative and creative research methods and pedagogies. This volume aims to show how our feminist academic master programme has moved to positioning itself beyond the pedagogical comfort of an unrisked academic environment and towards a dis-orientated and trouble-making one. And this endeavour, we insist, is not a single effort but the result of collective and collaborative activism. It is a turn we have come to refer to as GEMMAnism.

We want to thank the GEMMA community which has accepted the invitation to reflect on our teaching, research and theorisation of gender, sexuality and queerness and on how we aim to challenge stagnant forms of scientific discourse by placing ourselves at the intersections between gender/queer perspectives and methodological considerations in humanities and social science research. We are proud to say that the GEMMA programme has contributed to disseminating multifarious feminisms, methodologies, theories and practices globally, since GEMMAnism is spread widely across the world after 15 years of hosting students coming from so many different countries. They have brought a myriad of new perspectives to GEMMA, enabling us to look deeper into what a feminist gaze might consist of, and into how immediate personal and academic disorientations can connect to and intersect with the wider world, hence helping to attain a different, and better worlding.

How to read this volume

This volume inaugurates the "Researching with GEMMA" series. Under the title of *Feminist Research Alliances: Affective Convergences* it aims to provide an in-depth and wide-ranging consideration of what we think characterises feminist research within GEMMA. All the contributions selected to be part of this volume belong to the GEMMA community either as scholars, collaborators or alumni. Each article is a reflection on the backstage of being a young feminist researcher and/or the front staging of being senior scholars. The volume is divided into three parts dealing with theories, methodologies and reflections on pedagogical experiences. All the issues and insights within these are articulated around "weaving" as a fitting metaphor for our networking and cultivation of affective alliances and convergences which bridge our academic and personal spheres.

The opening chapter, "Feminist Friendships, Solidarities and a Dream Come True" by Adelina Sánchez-Espinosa and Orianna Calderón-Sandoval, is the shared conversations of a group of participants in the GEMMA community. Consortium representatives, members of the executive and advisory boards, project officers, students and alumni who gathered for the third graduation ceremony and Voices of GEMMA conference in

Granada, in December 2018, reflect on the meaning of GEMMAnism: on the way GEMMA has shaped their lives and on how they have become different people from their contaminations with each other. This is followed by the warm words of some of the people whose friendship we have made throughout these 15 years. To all of them we want to say thank you for their input. Our programme would not be what it is were it not for their generous collaborations.

The first part *Weaving the Personal and the Professional* explores the personal and professional boundaries and challenges faced throughout GEMMA. This part is divided into two sections: Section 1. *Movements in Academia* is introduced by Ana María González Ramos (Pablo de Olavide University) who reflects on Beatriz Revelles Benavente's and Wilmarie Rosado Pérez's articles. In "Processual Movements in Academia: Being a GEMMA student or how to become a feminist researcher", Revelles Benavente engages from a new materialist approach with topics of feminist research practices. By exploring how different movements create professional and personal paths that matter, Revelles appeals for new forms of academic practices and collaborations "otherwise", entangling theoretical reflections, personal experiences and praxis in search of more just and solidary ways to navigate academia. Wilmarie Rosado's contribution "Feminism across Academia: Questioning the Interdisciplinary Quality of Women's and Gender Studies" explores the challenges of interdisciplinary practices within higher education institutions. By reflecting on intesectionality, Rosado brings to light the many difficulties concerning the legitimation of WGS as a field of study and how, in order to overcome these constraints, it demands partnerships and cooperation among specialists working from different universities and diverse fields of knowledge. Ana María González's reading of these two contributions makes them dialogue as examples of how young feminist researchers build their own paths driven by their desires and chances within a most challenging neoliberal academia. González Ramos proposes that senior feminist scholars need to support young academics to navigate and find their own way in this often unfriendly and elitist scientific community. *Movements in academia* should be, as Ramos puts it, a "sense of response-ability" and an invitation of GEMMA young scholars for building intersectional and transnational practices of solidarity within academia.

Section 2: *Embodied Subjectivities,* introduced by Cristina Gamberi (University of Bologna) captures the contemporary political imaginaries

of feminist academia and feminist movements over recent decades, identified as the fourth wave of feminism. Gamberi reflects on Rocío Palomeque Recio's and Alice Sabbatini's essays so as to provide a general overview of the potential of the fourth-wave perspectives when studying issues of bodies and sexuality, intersectionality and affects. Palomeque Recio's article, entitled "Women asking questions: embodied subjectivity as a valid epistemology" takes on the question of the legitimate subject(s) of knowledge and the forms of knowledge that can be legitimately elaborated in current neoliberal times. She eloquently explores "how to create an embodied research that uses one's ontology as standpoint" by connecting sex work to the neoliberal dynamics affecting university education in the United Kingdom.

Following the same discussion, Alice Sabbatini, investigates the pervasiveness of the sexual imperative that permeates many of our current social movements. In her "Reflections on Two Years of Research on Asexuality and the Lack of Sexual Attraction", Sabbatini explores asexuality as a resistant and non-conforming category that even shakes the foundations of women's and queer movements. "If sex is political", she questions, "what is the place for a-sexuality in contemporary activism?". By blurring the private and the public both essays presented in this section invite us to revitalise what is overlooked and unexplored within feminist criticism and gender studies. As Cristina Gamberi mentions, "these essays invite the reader to interrogate knowledge-producing practices and to de-familiarise the terrain of knowledge in order to adopt a new, fresh look at what is presented as natural and unquestionable".

The second part *Weaving Nomadic Knowledges and Affective Methodologies* explores the role played by affect in the construction of the feminist knowledges of the GEMMA community. Suzanne Clisby opens section three by reflecting on how the nomadic experience of the GEMMA students is an added value to the knowledges generated. GEMMA, she states, "encourages us to become cosmopolitan subjects" since "through our international feminist networks of care and gender politics we have created an embodied infrastructure of support, connections, and threads of feminist power that stretch far beyond the borders of Europe". The two authors included in this section, Damiana Ballerini and Pranjali Das, deal with the frictions produced by such movements. Ballerini accounts for her research on Brazilian migrants in Italy and how their construction of their new identity in the hosting country is attained by constantly navigating

the pressures of stereotypes representing Brazilian women as extremely sexualised women. Das, on her behalf, focuses on the discomfort produced on extra communitarian students, particularly on those coming from Asia, when having to cope with European structures at all levels, "bridging gaps between their South Asian centric situated knowledge to the Eurocentric education system, challenging colonial stereotypes, and addressing issues arising out of regional conflicts within the academic space". Ultimately, she maintains, GEMMA, as a programme, makes it possible to build communities and networks that challenge "these restrictive physical border policies and encourage feminist solidarity on issues across the globe" As Clisby highlights, GEMMA exemplifies a most positive form of alternative cosmopolitanism: "the sort that connects subjects across the world in a greater sense of each other in the context of the places surrounding them […] broadens their understandings of ways of seeing and ways of being".

Section 4 focuses on the role of affect as a methodology to approach feminist knowledges. Socorro Suárez introduces this section by interpelating her own feminist life in the context of the tales narrated by the three authors included in this section. When in the company of other feminist researchers from all over Europe participating in the ATHENA network, Suárez started questioning her own sense of belonging to a certain cultural background and this was further troubled by the GEMMA experience immediately afterwards since the teaching in multicultural classrooms was a second eye-opener which placed her as a nomadic subject in the construction of affects with so many other feminists, all of them finding new knowledges in the relational possibilities with each other. The two articles in this section, "Hegemonies of Power vs. Affective Relational Anarchy" by Ana García López and Ángela Harris and "Researching with the Trouble: A Journey of Emotions and Affective Challenges", deal with the way disciplinary knowledges can change when affect is applied to them. García and Harris explore how two disciplines such as Artherapy for social inclusion and Social Work can be transformed after deconstructing the power dynamics which often rule the intrapersonal relations and practices within these fields. They end up by offering a Spanish located (yet portable) feminist toolbox "with tips and examples for more solidary and thoroughly inclusive practices which may rekindle our dwindled enthusiasm and compromise as feminist practitioners in our fields". Méndez de la Brena, in her turn, aims also at adopting subversive research methodologies which may contribute to changing academic disciplines. Her choice "researching with

the trouble" is an anti-solutionist feminist methodology that differs from the normative and traditional approaches of doing research. Rather than avoiding troublesome feelings, the author proposes a better understanding of how we came to accept ourselves as "troublesome" researchers and how this can help us to create innovative methodologies in the present.

Finally, the third and last part of this volume, *Weaving the Personal and the Professional* tackles the pedagogical practices within GEMMA. The authors included in this section illustrate how these different feminist knowledges are being incorporated not only into the ways we research and theorise differently but also into our alternative ways of teaching. As Agata Ignaciuk, introducing this part, reflects upon, teaching in GEMMA is about the "singular exchange processes" of a community of students and lecturers which subverts the traditional hierarchical top-down dynamics of academia by creating classroom spaces in which students and lecturers are situated in a sharing community. Hence, in "Sharing 'Other' Knowledges" Carmen Gregorio Gil and Ana Alcázar Campos deal with their reflections on the experience of teaching feminist ethnography in the GEMMA classroom claiming for "the importance of writing when we focus on our own life and subjectivities and we bridge the gap between subject and object using our own constructions of gender, class, race, age, ethnicity and sexuality". Ana Muñoz-Muñoz's chapter "Challenges and Problems for Research in Library and Information Science from a Gender Perspective" also touches on this need for rethinking disciplines from a gender perspective claiming that the discipline of Library and Information Studies will benefit enormously by recognising the enormous contribution of gender scholars within the field, hence counteracting the heteropatriarchal production of knowledge which has formerly dominated the field, often, as Ignaciuk notes, elevating "productivity" as a criterion of excellence which finally resulted in more inequalities between productive male and not so productive female researchers in the field. Finally Victoria Robles Sanjuán closes this volume with her "Women's Movements Around the World: Some Reflections on Feminist Pedagogy and Its Role in the Feminist Teachings of This Course" which presents her reflections as tutor of the *Women's movements around the world* module. She focuses on the autobiographical projects produced by students throughout all these years and interprets the connections between problems of exclusion and gender subordinations that students consider to be essential in their lives.

We close this volume by staying briefly with Orianna Calderón, Cristina Gamberi, Beatriz Revelles and Agata Ignaciuk because of their unique double position as GEMMA alumni from the first generation and tutors and teachers in some of the GEMMA courses at present. They are our embodied testimony that GEMMAnism can change our worlds for the better, fostering new types of feminist convergences which contest hierarchical, tight-up Academia making our research and teaching spaces more liveable and enjoyable. All in all this volume presents only a tiny fraction of the multifarious and diverse research conducted within the GEMMA communities throughout so many years. It inaugurates our series and it triggers it off for, hopefully, many more contributions to follow in the future. Long life to our *Researching with GEMMA* series.

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Adelina Sánchez-Espinosa and Orianna Calderón-Sandoval

Feminist Friendships, Solidarities and a Dream Come True: Shared Conversations About GEMMA

On December 10th and 11th, 2018, the GEMMA Third Graduation Ceremony and the "Voices of GEMMA" Intercultural Forum[1] *took place at the University of Granada. Taking advantage of the occasion, GEMMA celebrated its 10th anniversary of being the first and only joint Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies in Europe. The event brought together the coordinators of the partner universities involved in the programme and hence provided a unique opportunity to gather their insights looking back on their shared paths.*

We carried out a series of video interviews with professors Jasmina Lukic (Central European University), Vita Fortunati and Rita Monticelli (University of Bologna), Suzanne Clisby (University of Hull), Rachel Alsop (University of York), Isabel Carrera and Emilia Durán (University of Oviedo), Rosemarie Buikema (Utrecht University), Aleksandra Rozalska (University of Lodz), Adelina Sánchez, Ana Muñoz and Victoria Robles (University of Granada).[2] *We also talked to "Voices of GEMMA" keynote speaker and member of the Board of Expert Advisors, professor Chandra Mohanty (Syracuse University); to the GEMMA consortium technical coordinator, Omayra Herrero; and to some students who had completed their master's degrees: Dresda Méndez from Mexico; Roghayeh Rezaei from Iran; and Angela Harris, Rebeca García, and María Sánchez from Spain. In this chapter, we bring together their interventions on the main issues concerning the GEMMA experience. We have constructed a round table where participants dialogue by reading their ideas through one another.*

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1 The third "Voices of GEMMA" Intercultural Forum was an international meeting that brought together graduates of the GEMMA master's degree. Its main aim was to give graduates the opportunity to share their academic and professional experiences in the field of Women's and Gender Studies.

2 The final version of the video is available on GEMMA's website: https://masteres.ugr.es/gemma/

***Adelina Sánchez and Orianna Calderón**: We might start by brainstorming about what GEMMA means to all of us.*

Suzanne Clisby: I think GEMMA is possibly, in my opinion, the most powerful transnational feminist network in the world emerging from Europe; and that's just amazing to be able to be part of that.

Jasmina Lukic: Yes. GEMMA is not just, let's say, a project we have and then do. It's a kind of living organism. It is being made by us and done by us but it's always giving back and we are kind of working with it all together all the time.

Adelina Sánchez: GEMMA is a collective experience, it is a dream dreamt by many people for a long, long time. We decided to come together and collect all the work we had been doing for so many years, thinking of how we could have a joint European programme in Women's and Gender Studies. The European Commission's funding provided us with the opportunity to make that shared dream come true.

It is 8 universities from seven European countries and 47 more associate institutions within Europe and beyond. Such a large group can only work so well, and for so long, if there is total trust with each other. And I think that this is one of the most valuable assets of the GEMMA community... from the consortium coordination dynamics. Then there is, of course, the other part to GEMMA, the students and alumni. Without them, without those people who are constructing/have constructed their future taking GEMMA as their starting point, GEMMA would simply not be.

Orianna Calderón: GEMMA is also the communities built within the countries in which we lived during the master's, our communities of origin and the actual crossing of cultural, intellectual and personal boundaries, which helped us forge new identities throughout relationality with the others.

Dresda Méndez: I agree. Placing myself from the position of the GEMMA student I was, I would say that it is not merely a curriculum leading to a double degree. It is much more than that. It is what we build during the GEMMA experience which is always remembered by alumni as a very precious memory: the experience of two different cities in two different

countries and often two or three different languages, the building of a community which will last many years after finishing the master and receiving our two degrees.

María Sánchez: True. GEMMA has been a life-transforming experience. I have made many friends not only here but also at the mobility institution and, actually, all over the world. Through "Voices of GEMMA" I have also met alumni from previous GEMMA generations. The word that comes to my mind to summarise all that the programme means to me is "sorority" and mutual support. It has given me the push to do further research and I am now convinced that I want to take a PhD in Gender Studies. I want to keep changing the world...or, at least, I want to keep trying my best to change the world.

Rebeca García: I would define the GEMMA community as friends, companions and people who are there whenever you need a helping hand. It is full of happiness and joy. GEMMA has made me deconstruct myself thoroughly: the way I relate to my family, the way I have become critical of the places I occupy, the way I have reformulated affect and love and can now see myself as a much better person.

Ángela Harris: I really enjoyed the GEMMA experience because it helped me position myself differently and understand that I need to interact from my own vulnerability and affects.

Orianna Calderón: *The first edition of GEMMA started in 2007. This date was not only a point of departure but also an arrival point, after decades of previous collective work in networks such as ATHENA.*[3] *What are your memories of this journey from ATHENA to GEMMA?*

Jasmina Lukic: I think most of us got involved in the same way: we were part of the ATHENA Network. I met you, Adelina, as the coordinator there

3 ATHENA stands for "Advanced Thematic Network in Women's Studies", a Socrates TN financed by the European Commission and created by Rosi Braidotti in 1996, who chaired it until 2005, when Berteke Waaldjik took over. It run until 2009 and was formed by over 100 Gender Research Centres in Europe. Both Rosi and Berteke are GEMMA faculty at Utrecht.

and we had been discussing the possibilities of trying to do something together, make or join projects together, join degrees together.[4] And I have to say that from the beginning your extraordinary energy and abilities to conceptualise this whole project drew us together and moved us together. An important point was that we really took the time to work together and think through the project and find the best way to cooperate. From the beginning, in that sense, it was the cooperation, scholarly but also collegial, which turned out to be a cooperation of friendship, feminist friendship in the best possible sense of the term.

Vita Fortunati: In my case I had met Rosi Braidotti at Utrecht back in the 1980s. It was Rosi that actually introduced me into European projects in Gender Studies and asked me to participate in ATHENA. And then, many years later, out of the blue came a telephone call from Adelina. She wanted me to be part of a new European project called GEMMA and I immediately said "yes". Because I was convinced that it was a unique opportunity for the Università di Bologna to become much more involved in European programmes in Women's and Gender Studies. I accepted the invitation and we started working with the rest in perfect synchrony.

Victoria Robles: I was not involved in the European networks but I can speak for our own setting in Granada and at the Women's Studies Centre, which is the space where GEMMA is coordinated from and to which both Adelina and myself belong. GEMMA was born because there was a woman with a vision. This woman also had the experience, the ideas and the knowledge of European networks to dare think that the project was possible. It is you, Adelina, my friend and colleague and the soul of GEMMA from the very beginning. You chose the right time and the right people. At the time you already had a lot of experience in International Relations and then you were capable of spotting the women who would really believe in the project, understand what it all was about and be ready to commit themselves fully. It was not an easy task. Coordinating such a large consortium, with all the administrative systems involved at eight

4 One of the working groups in ATHENA had been working since 2002 on the creation of a European joint degree in Gender Studies. The initial conclusions of this working group were incorporated in the design of the GEMMA curriculum.

different universities in seven different countries, within a Europe which is in constant change is anything but simple.

Adelina Sánchez: I am very grateful for your comments and it is true, Victoria, that I was convinced at the time that GEMMA was the thing to do and that nothing would stop me. And the problems were many since we were creating something completely new, after no pre-existing model. But we would never have been able to do so without the work done in ATHENA and without Rosi Braidotti, who materialised it. Rosi was the visionary who managed to gather over a 100 Gender research centres from all over Europe and urged us to think about the possibility of a European joint degree. It was ATHENA that brought us together, and it was our participation in one of its working groups "from a core curriculum to a core European degree", coordinated by Rosi, that set us brainstorming about how to design a joint master's in Women's and Gender Studies. As a result, when we finally decided to design the master's, because there was a specific call from the European Commission called "Erasmus Mundus", let us not forget that either... part of the discussion was done and there was no discussion on what the contents of such degree should be. A different issue was the structure, the managing, the financing, the organisation of teaching at each partner university which needed a bit more joint thinking and quite a few meetings of the GEMMA steering group...but the actual core contents of the curriculum were already there from the very beginning since we had discussed that for years in ATHENA. And then, after sharing trouble and strife for over 15 years we have become dear friends. We work so well because we are such good friends.

***Adelina Sánchez and Orianna Calderón**: Indeed, feminist friendship is an important milestone looking back at the twelve years of the GEMMA programme, and perhaps it is worth further reflection.*

Jasmina Lukic: Certainly, looking back at milestones, looking back at significant points is not an easy task, because it is a very rich history when it comes to things we have been doing together. There is one clear straight line which always makes me happy when I look back. And that is, that this group of scholars and group of students, which is making GEMMA, have always been working in that spirit of feminist friendship. And intentionally I didn't say women, it's always both women and men. So, there is this clear

line of mutual support. When I look back, for me GEMMAnism is in the first place this ability of all of us to work together in this spirit of collegiality, which is feminist friendship.

Omayra Herrero: In fact, a salient aspect about the GEMMA community is that it is backed at by very hardworking women coordinating the programme from various universities. Every GEMMA consortium meeting proves how well they work together, how they always come up with solutions to the most complicated issues.

Suzanne Clisby: I think the milestones, in that sense, are that we have always worked really well together and managed to produce a really successful programme.

Adelina Sánchez: Yes. Only friendship can help us meet the many challenges of GEMMA. And, perhaps, what I would highlight as one of my best GEMMA experiences is the way we share responsibilities and help each other find solutions to those challenges. We trust each other. And, of course, as I say above, this would not have been possible either without the support from the European Commission which allowed us to meet and get to know each other with their financing of ATHENA and then meet more and get to know each other even better and then become real friends with GEMMA.

***Orianna Calderón**: This brings us to our next issue: another milestone that has had a significant impact on the course that GEMMA has taken is the support of the European Commission.*

Suzanne Clisby: Well, obviously being recognised as a master of excellence and being provided with the subsequent accreditation that has allowed the continuation of the programme for such a long time is a significant milestone. I think, well, as far as I know, GEMMA is one of the very, very few Erasmus Mundus programmes that have actually received multiple accreditations and scholarships over such a long period of time. In fact, we have just been rated ninety out-of-a-hundred again by the European Commission for excellence, which may be the highest score that the Commission has given to any project.

Jasmina Lukic: When I look back, on the other hand, milestones definitely have been these points at which we had to get the first accreditations, the first support of the European Commission, to get the Erasmus Mundus label and get recognised as really a programme of quality. And then we definitely had these formal milestones, which were the first edition and then the second and then the third edition, because it always required for us to come together and to rethink what we are doing, to look back and think "Ok this is what we did well, what can we do better?" There were also important milestones in bringing new partners or bringing new associate partners, in thinking together how this consortium has to develop. Moving towards EDGES[5] and then later moving towards GRACE[6] was also one of such milestones. So, in a number of ways, if I'm looking back what the milestones would be I would always say that it's the way in which GEMMA has been living and developing.

Adelina Sánchez and Orianna Calderón: *Funding from the European Commission has made it possible to offer scholarships for students within Europe but also from other parts of the world. It has also been crucial for inviting external professors. The interest of students and teachers in becoming part of GEMMA is yet another milestone.*

Victoria Robles: Throughout the 11 years and 11 editions we have already left behind, I can actually highlight several milestones which help me know it better today. Perhaps the first one is its immediate popularity among students who came from all over the world.... from so many different countries!!! I think this is a good starting point to sit down, reflect and contemplate my own university (Granada). Certainly it takes a lot of administrative caring to make the project work, but at the end of the

5 EDGES: European Doctoral Degree in Gender Studies, a Lifelong Learning Programme Project aiming to shape and develop a model for a European PhD in Women's and Gender Studies. It was coordinated by Lilla Crisafulli from Bologna University.

6 GRACE: Gender and Cultures of Equality in Europe was a joint research project organised by the GEMMA and EDGES Consortia, and funded under the H2020 Marie S. Curie European Commission ITN programme. The aim of GRACE was to systematically investigate the cultural production of gender equalities within Europe, and in order to do so it was divided into four work packages with 15 early stage researchers working on different areas but with the same goal. It ran from 2015 to 2019.

day it is all worth it. What matters is the human contact and the multiple knowledges it generates.

Another milestone would be the support from the Gender faculty both in Spain and abroad. Without that GEMMA would not have been possible.

Emilia Durán: I think the support of the European Commission via scholarships for students has enriched the programme enormously, since our student body is much larger and much more diverse than that of any other master's programme. Besides, having been able to bring visiting professors from outside Europe has meant a real change to everything we had done before. It has enhanced the internationalisation of the programme and has added new perspectives which, in turn, had transformed into new teaching methodologies in the classroom.

Adelina Sánchez: *What about the impact that GEMMA has had on our teaching and research methodologies? I think this is also an important issue to consider here.*

Aleksandra Rozalska: Teaching has changed because in our classes there is a constant dialogue, when you teach within GEMMA you can't just lecture. It's a never-ending seminar, dialogue, discussions. Sometimes, we argue a lot, we hardly ever leave the classroom on time. We mutually learn from each other, I think. So that's really unique.

Victoria Robles: GEMMA has changed my understanding of teaching and has brought to the surface the fact that there is no way you can teach without counting on everyone's feminist knowledges. It has made me rethink how we take ideas for granted when, in fact, they should be questioned and interpelated.

We, GEMMA people, are constantly deconstructing ourselves and our knowledges. I, myself, have deconstructed the history of women's movements, feminist movements (though they were not always recognised as such), in order to make history less Eurocentric and more representative of historical experience elsewhere. I have tried to make it more inclusive and participative. I still have a long way to go in order to change my methodology but I will keep on it.

Emilia Durán: Teaching in GEMMA is a bit different from the way we teach in Spain. There is much more interaction with students and students actually enrich our teaching practices. A GEMMA lesson is more about teachers and students sharing experiences than about lecturing. And we are all conscious of this need.

Dresda Méndez: Until I landed in GEMMA, all my learning experiences have been under very patriarchal, lineal and phallocentric methodological structures. GEMMA has helped me deconstruct that thoroughly. For a start, because it has taught me that there is no way you can approach methodology without self-reflection and starting from yourself, from your embodied knowledges. And so, I would say that my methodology nowadays is nothing but political since it aims at having an impact on other people. It must lead to transformation and be conceived from the perspective of feminism and gender.

Jasmina Lukic: GEMMA taught me that this feminist knowledge production, this whole epistemology behind what we are doing and this feminist pedagogy is really a collaborative process at all levels. GEMMA for me is really this collaboration which then, in all these years we have been working together, is coming back to me as something I can see and feel how rich and productive it is and how at any point it is worth putting energy both practically and emotionally. I think that is what, in that sense, GEMMA confirmed to all of us. I don't want to say taught us, because in various ways we were aware of that, but definitely confirmed to all of us that engagement with feminism and feminist theory and feminist knowledge production is personal work. It's another way to say that the personal is political, because you cannot do that mechanically, as something which is outside of you, you have to be engaged and that comes back in the best possible way.

Rosemarie Buikema: The presence of students from a lot of different backgrounds in the classroom is asking for a permanent flexibility of your teaching methodologies but also your citation policy, the important questions to study, the directions feminist research should take in the context of today. I think one of the things which I learned very much from my Gender Studies students is what epistemic violence means, how many different guises epistemic violence can take and how we, as feminist scholars,

also have to be prepared to think about ways of being genuinely inclusive and also ways of thinking about the impact of our own situatedness.

What, for example, students from non-European countries taught me in the classroom is the significance of indigenous knowledges and how these indigenous knowledges have been disregarded in scholarly knowledge. I supervise very interesting theses on this matter. So, the dialogical nature of the development of the programme also has an impact on the way in which we teach and the way in which we think about what it means to develop a feminist pedagogy and what kind of conversations you need to practise what you preach. I mean, we are very strong in thinking about the effects of inclusion and exclusion, but to practise what you preach is also asking for sensitivity, accountability for where you are coming from and the blind spots you always embody and take with you. So I think that GEMMA is a programme which is a constant interaction between the person who teaches, who produces knowledge and those who are teaching the teacher how to do that.

Rachel Alsop: I think in the GEMMA programme we learn so much from our students. Our students are just a fantastic body of scholars and activists, and being able to teach GEMMA students and to teach students from around the world with lots of different backgrounds, lots of different skills, so much energy and enthusiasm really helps develop our skills as lecturers, as scholars, as ourselves.

Chandra Mohanty: A strength is the core curriculum that you have created and which is a curriculum in common that you have; on the other hand, if that curriculum doesn't evolve and doesn't change, then you have a problem, you canonise. The challenge of oppositional, alternative knowledges and how to actually create a space for them to be studied at something that is central to GEMMA, not just on the periphery. I think that's a challenge.

Adelina Sánchez: I agree with all the above. In a GEMMA classroom you may have 15 students, and each one is from a different nationality. So the first thing we learn as teachers when we face a GEMMA group is to be humble about the knowledge we want to communicate. Thinking that we have the answers is a big mistake. We don't. And we realise the moment we step into a GEMMA classroom. We have the questions and this is what

we must share with the students. We must change our methodologies in order to coordinate everyone's experiences. We must be open to taking on board those other knowledges brought into the classroom from contexts which we did not know much about before and which were not taken into account when designing the methodologies, theoretical frames and contents of the curriculum. I am not the same teacher I was before the GEMMA experience since what I am now is a product of everything I have learnt from my students during this decade.

Now, I totally agree with what Chandra spots as the main challenge. And I think we are all conscious of the need to change the GEMMA curriculum at the same pace as knowledges evolve...which is pretty fast. But then we encounter the administrative and legal constraints. We can only teach GEMMA if we are officially recognised in each of the countries involved in the consortium. And recognition takes years. Thanks to the quality stamp and validation from the European Commission, we have managed to introduce provisions in Spanish legislation for faster recognition of joint Erasmus Mundus degrees, since otherwise it would be absolutely impossible to run GEMMA. Our next challenge is the European approach to joint accreditation, but Europe is just beginning to move in this direction and implementation will take years, I think. So, all in all, though we are all convinced of the need to update curricula agilely, we are still a long way from being able to do so. Never a dull moment in the managing of GEMMA!

***Orianna Calderón and Adelina Sánchez**: Indeed, you have all mentioned the transnational and interdisciplinary character of GEMMA as one of the programme's most important features.*

Rita Monticelli: Since GEMMA brings together students from all over the world and from many different cultural and academic backgrounds, interdisciplinarity is a must. And to me interdisciplinarity is a central element within the development of the disciplines, of the new human sciences and for the advancement of critical thinking.

As for transnationality, it is the reason why we have become much more open to difference, and it has taught us to search for solidarity among women and men, in this order. This has been one of the most exciting challenges in the development of the master's and also one of its most

enriching assets. Diversity has become the main source for our GEMMA knowledges.

Rosemarie Buikema: The fact that we are six different countries and seven partners in the programme in itself is already an exercise in transdisciplinary and transnational cooperation. Although we are all European partners, that doesn't mean that one of the countries works from the same educational system. So, what we learned very much, I think, as consortium partners in this project, is from which different corners we approach feminist theory and feminist practice and with all the different national legislations and infrastructures and ways of being in a classroom.

So what I learned from this cooperation, the nice moments were, for example, when I was invited to teach in one of the partners' programme. I opened the academic year, a few years ago in Budapest, and I was impressed to see the totally different student population from those who were in Utrecht, much more people from the East also; not only Eastern Europe but Eastern part of the world (….) I also was in Granada to guest a lecture and see how students from Southern America, the Spanish-speaking population, were present around the table and influenced the discussion with specific questions to feminist theory. So, the transnationality and the transdisciplinarity is inherent in the set-up of this programme, in the partners who are part of the consortium and also part of the different ways in which the classrooms are populated. And I do see that there are specific choices, specific geographical sort of concentrations in the different programmes and that is very interesting.

Vita Fortunati: GEMMA is what I can call a global gaze on Europe and, in my opinion, a window not only on America in general but particularly on Central and South America… Mexico, Bolivia, Colombia. To me this is most important because it has put the emphasis on transnational academic exchanges not only within Europe but also between Europe and the Americas. This is fundamental in order to talk about the plurality of feminism, feminisms and the decolonising of feminist methodologies.

Chandra Mohanty: What was always attractive to me about GEMMA was the fact that this was a cross border coalition among feminist scholars in different universities in Europe. So, this was the opportunity to create a radical feminist curriculum for a number of people who came from the

Global South, a number of people from the Global North, but people who came from different countries, and where we could create a common feminist curriculum that would and could have some real impact on people who came from different places, and came with their own genealogies, their own histories and their own questions. So, what, to me, is the most powerful thing about this project is the ability to create those really sustained dialogues among people who come from various places and for whom those dialogues (including European people) would not happen without that kind of collaboration and those kinds of funding possibilities, fellowships. So those I think are in a way some of the most important things and I deeply believe in collaboration as political praxis, and I think that GEMMA and courses and your creating of a community makes that possible and that's amazing, because usually universities do not sustain collaborations; they work against, in fact, certain kinds of activist scholarly collaborations, while this can actually make this possible.

So that's the potential. There are challenges. So, I think the challenges are about how to create a space where people who have different levels of confidence, different histories in terms of feminist education and different experience in terms of social movements from different parts of the world, where there are clear inequities between the Global South and the North. How to create spaces where everyone can tell their stories and can feel listened to and can feel that they can actually sit around the table and interact in spaces which are created on a very clear democratic ground? I think that's not only the struggle for GEMMA, it's for all of us and I think for GEMMA especially, because in fact, the strength of it, which is to bring people from all these different places, is also what can lead to a space where too quickly notions of sisterhood and solidarity are assumed, and a common project is assumed, when people may not have experiences in common. So to me, a key aspect of feminist praxis is paying attention to differences in connection with division and power, not only differences as descriptions of people's backgrounds.

Ana Muñoz: Yes. The wealth of Women's and Gender Studies has always been its interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. As for transnational feminism, it has to do with producing academic knowledge but also, and mostly in my opinion, with the adoption of a definite political compromise. Transnational feminism, like the one we practice in GEMMA, means joining forces and putting local fights together in order to create a joint

global fight. It establishes networks and serves to disseminate the local among a much larger public.

***Adelina Sánchez and Orianna Calderón**: We may end up this conversation by exchanging our views about the political importance of having a programme like GEMMA and the way we envision our future.*

Vita Fortunati: Honestly, I think the main problem of feminist studies is ethics. It is a question of finding ethics of solidarity within this neo-liberal world and within the violence of capitalism. In fact, this is the stance from which I contemplate the meaning of transnationalism. It has actually meant going against nationalisms, against xenophobia, against homophobia (…) but this neoliberalism and this, let's call it, wild capitalism and globalism has brought also a totally distorted image of feminism. So, I would like to say that I think the future of this programme is to reaffirm the importance and the origin of feminism. The value of the future of GEMMA is to help consolidate all the conquests of feminism throughout so many years. The future of GEMMA is to consolidate the values which are today at risk.

Victoria Robles: I envision a very interesting future. Complex and also pioneer. First because we enjoy the privilege of being a part of the university but this gives us the opportunity to fight privilege and try to make the University much more inclusive and social from the inside. It is a very powerful environment for reflection, I insist on this idea. From the perspective of feminist experiences and the experiences of women, LGTBI people and men. This is why we are pioneers in putting the finger on the burning issues of today, and that's the way I see it.

And yes, of course, we need to introduce civil activism in our curriculum. We need to let the street come into our university classrooms and vice versa. GEMMA must go on as a banner for peaceful living together and an instrument against these "new" totalitarianisms... I do believe they are not new at all but they are re-emerging nowadays. And GEMMA as part of the current world and of the present democratic emergency must be part of the global contestation.

Rita Monticelli: For me GEMMA is part of the present utopia. I am all for the utopic dream of global solidarity and equality against any type of

discrimination. This is what, in my opinion, is the foundation of GEMMA and I hope this is also its future.

Jasmina Lukic: Women can lose their rights. Minorities can lose their rights. Vulnerable people can remain vulnerable, if we are not very, very careful and if we don't use what we can do with the knowledge we are producing for the benefit of those that really need that knowledge. And I hope we can do at least a little bit to oppose forces which are not gender friendly and seem to be too strong at the moment.

Isabel Carrera: I don't think we could ever have anticipated the prosecution that Gender Studies is experiencing in countries that were until very recently at the forefront of feminist advances. Unfortunately, there are political parties in Spain whose main discourse is antifeminist and anti all the advances on women's and LGTB+ rights. But simultaneously there is also a much larger conviction among young people, particularly young women that we should all be feminists. And Gender programmes in Spain, and in the rest of the world, are in high demand. Not so long ago women thought that we were already there, that we had achieved total equality and that feminism was no longer needed. Now we know that that was not true. And that's why women have reactivated themselves. There has always been antifeminism but we had never seen such shameless opposition, to be honest.

Aleksandra Rozalska: At our university, in the geopolitical situation that we are now having in Poland, we can have Gender Studies only through GEMMA. It's the only way we can actually keep Gender Studies in the Polish mainstream academia.

Adelina Sánchez: Yes, that's the Polish situation but look at Hungary. The Gender Studies degree, which is part of GEMMA, has just disappeared. The government has literally erased it (also from the list of official masters' in Hungary) since they think it threatens the traditional concept of "family" as a hetero-patriarchal unit. And GEMMA, as a European consortium that has the support of the European Commission, has played a fundamental role in the movement of Central European University from Hungary to Austria and the continuation of the degree, which will now

be taught from Vienna. Our supranational strength and joined resistance, plus of course the EC support, is the only thing that makes these fascist governments think twice before eliminating Gender programmes.

Union makes strength and so many people and so many experiences from so many countries put together is the only way to stop the attack. The GEMMA consortium of universities is a sort of microcosm where we live through what is happening in the world. It is not only the Hungarian situation. After the Brexit referendum we had to move from Hull University to York University, which managed to find solutions in order to continue being part of a European consortium. Then there is also the Polish position. Lodz has been able to keep Gender Studies only because of GEMMA and the European Commission support. But GEMMA is the only master's in Gender Studies in Poland left. Therefore, our collective action is fundamental now. We must keep fighting because our freedom and jointly achieved milestones are seriously at risk.

Patriarchal powers hate Gender Studies because they teach people to say enough to oppressions and they give them the tools to fight peacefully. And peaceful opposition is something aggressive and belligerent, imperialistic big masculine powers will never understand. In this terrible fake news, Trumpist, Bolsonarist, post-Brexit world we teach our students to be critical, to doubt and question, to rebel against collective lies. And here our transnational programme in a discipline like ours is also essential for the European Union, which is why we keep being selected and the reason for their support since 2006.

So I want to close this on a positive note. We have trained almost 1000 people already. We have changed the lives of many of our students and they have changed our lives in turn. They are all around the world and the communities we have built up are strong. We are all together and we can say that we all support each other and we are ready to fight whenever is needed. We know how to do it peacefully and in solidarity. Therefore, GEMMA needs to be here for many, many years.

Roghayeh Rezaei: As a GEMMA student, I can attest to everything you say. I have been a feminist for the last 15 years, but being a more sensitive feminist towards the different discriminations and different power intersections was really important for me and that's why I decided to come to GEMMA.

Dresda Méndez: I do believe that feminism is a social and political movement that some people are afraid of. And I think we can see that clearly now. I think some patriarchal structures may look at feminism and at the GEMMA programme in fear since we produce Gender experts, and this may be uncomfortable to the privileges of patriarchal powers. And I myself worry that they may try to put a stop to us, as they have done in Hungary or Poland. But when I look around me and see the GEMMA community, the students who have participated in the "Voices of GEMMA" forum, for instance, I feel strong. I see so many people in many parts of the world having their individual and collective conflicts. I know this program is not going to stop because there is a force behind us which is very important. I think many people looking at us now or people who know about our program find resonances with what we do and the GEMMA project.

Roghayeh Rezaei: Being united will help us fight against all these anti-feminist and misogynist approaches all around the world. I have made great friends, great feminist friends, and I'm sure we are going to do something in the future. We are going to smash patriarchy.

Dresda Méndez: A project like this that opens up the opportunity to expand feminism all around the world and that supports many women. I cannot see any way they can stop us.

Words from GEMMA's Friends: Building Partnerships and Consolidating Transnational Solidarities

In 2009, when I took part in the GEMMA programme as a visiting scholar, I was carrying a research study on Brazilian female migrants in Spain. After some years studying the trajectories of these migrants in this country's sex industry, I was interested in comparing their experiences with those of Brazilian migrants of the same social classes engaged in other labour segments, mainly in the care sector and in domestic services. At the same time, I was interested in the production of knowledge about sex trafficking and in feminist theories.

The 3 months I spent in the GEMMA programme in Granada were amazingly productive in terms of these interests. The programme offered excellent research conditions, allowing me to conduct a rich fieldwork in the Andalusian region. The theoretical discussions with my colleagues and with a wonderful group of international students contributed in my reflections about feminist perspectives on sex work, the sex industry and on policies directed toward prostitution and sex trafficking. This feedback fed the production of a book substantially marked by my experiences in the GEMMA programme that I concluded a year later, *Trânsitos, brasileiras nos mercados transnacionais do sexo*, published in 2013 by UERJ, Rio de Janeiro.

In parallel, the feminist networks that I was able to contact, connecting feminist activists and academics from different parts of the world, including countries of the "Global South," contributed to expanding my knowledge about feminist theories. These contributions marked my research studies and reflections during the following years, feeding my studies about Black Brazilian Feminist Thought and Latin American Decolonial Feminist Perspectives. Yet, one the most remarkable effects of my integration in the GEMMA programme was how its feminist pedagogy influenced my teaching, supervising and counselling practices in the Center for Gender Studies PAGU, at the State University of Campinas, in São Paulo. I'm referring myself to the profound respect for differences and

to the feminist solidarity that permeated those experiences and that I later reproduced in my classes and study groups. This spirit made an enormous difference in the learning processes. And I must observe that it has been amazing to perceive how my former students, who at the present time are my colleagues, have reproduced this spirit in their own teaching practices.

Finally, it is important to say that the circulation of scholars and students promoted by the GEMMA programme has broadened feminist academic networks in diverse directions, both in Europe and in the Global South. These circulations have also indirectly consolidated Latin American feminist networks. I would synthesise this array of positive effects saying that this programme has worked on broadening and strengthening threads of knowledge, affect and solidarity.

Adrianna Piscitelli
Universidade Estadual de Campinas,
Núcleo de Estudos de Gênero Pagu

A nuestras amigas del Máster GEMMA:

Christine de Pizan, Mary Wollstonecraft, Concepción Arenal o Virginia Woolf, del lado de Europa; Harriet Taubman, Kate Millet, las hermanas Miraval, Rigoberta Menchú o Esperanza Brito de Martí, en el lado de América, así como también Mariama Bâ, Wangari Maathai, o Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti en el continente africano fueron sólo algunas de todas esas mujeres abocadas a permanecer en pie de lucha con sus plumas de escritura, sus pinceles o su palabra, para hacer frente a la tortura y el asedio del sistema patriarcal; para resistir con todo su ahínco, aún a riesgo de muerte, y conseguir así que, alrededor del mundo, cada mujer tuviese *poder sobre sí misma*.

Siglos de lucha aún no han sido suficientes para llegar a un punto final, pues se trata de estrategias de acción perfectibles y aún vigentes en la evolución de la historia. Se trata, sobre todo, de visibilizar los esfuerzos por *escribir otras historias posibles.*

Para escribir otras historias posibles, desde distintos ámbitos, instituciones y colectivos seguimos trabajando por mejorar las condiciones de vida de las mujeres, las que son y las que serán.

Desde la Asociación Solidaria Andaluza de Desarrollo (ASAD), que fundamos en 2005, hemos llevado adelante acciones en la promoción y

fortalecimiento de los derechos humanos y los derechos de las mujeres, no sólo en España, sino también en otros lugares del mundo. Esos esfuerzos, nos han llevado a querer actuar contra las causas estructurales de la pobreza que afecta especialmente a las mujeres y las niñas y a promover estrategias para el fortalecimiento de la democracia y la justicia social con perspectiva de género.

En ese camino, hace algunos años, encontramos a las compañeras del Máster GEMMA, conocimos su trabajo y con ellas establecimos puentes de apoyo que perduran hoy en día. De su parte, hemos recibido toda la colaboración para el desarrollo y difusión de ideas y proyectos que han buscado visibilizar a distintos colectivos de mujeres en su trabajo por la promoción de sus derechos.

A lo largo de estos años, el puente hecho desde ASAD con Adelina Sánchez, Dresda Méndez, María Espinosa y otras muchas personas colaboradoras, nos ha permitido llegar con más fuerza a donde hemos querido, para denunciar las violencias machistas en los espacios públicos, o reconocer el trabajo de cuidados de las mujeres trabajadoras del hogar.

Queremos aprovechar su 12º cumpleaños para expresarle al equipo GEMMA todo nuestro agradecimiento por su trabajo y por su apoyo a nuestro trabajo. Esperamos que haya aún muchas más oportunidades de seguir trabajando en equipo y nos sentimos bien respaldadas al contar con el apoyo de mujeres con tantísima potencia. El GEMMA es uno de los más importantes semilleros con los que cuentan los Estudios de las Mujeres para seguir escribiendo historias posibles.

Gracias por vuestro esfuerzo en estos años. Queremos seguir acompañándolas para contar muchos años más.

Asociación Solidaria Andaluza de Desarrollo

GEMMA–FIU Cooperation: A bridge of solidarity and knowledge

Our collaboration from Florida International University with the GEMMA master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies dates back to 2007 when we signed a formal cooperation agreement which included:

- Exchange of students of the GEMMA master's in some of our courses at the postgraduate level
- Exchange of students of the GEMMA master's for short research stays
- Collaboration in the supervision of final master's projects
- GEMMA teacher exchange for research and teaching
- Establishment of common research programmes among institutions
- Association with the GEMMA consortium and our university
- Publication of results of our research and teaching

Indeed, this collaboration was fertile and enriching for both institutions. Many of the objectives have been fulfilled beautifully with our international bridging to enhance and diversify interdisciplinary research.

While being an associate director at the Women's Studies Center-FIU in 2008–2011, I was able to secure not only the collaboration with the eight European universities part of the GEMMA programme, but we also signed an agreement to connect scholars in an effort to build a Solidarity and Cooperative model in gender studies.

One of the most important pieces was facilitating exchange among selected Women's Studies centers across cultures in Latin America and Africa. FIU had established a Consortium with several universities[1] in addition to GEMMA, making Miami a point of encounter.

Numerous scholars and students from both sides of the Atlantic have visited Miami and the different Universities part of GEMMA in Europe.

In 2017, we renewed our collaboration agreement from the Spanish and Mediterranean Studies Center I directed. Congratulations are in order for a groundbreaking Gender Studies program turned into a global model for intellectual growth and cooperation for solidarity and peace.

Aurora Morcillo Gómez
Professor of History
Florida International University

1 The universities part of the consortium included: Escuela de Estudios de Género Universidad Nacional de Colombia; Women's and Gender Studies Program Western Cape University, South Africa; Center for Studies and Research On Women (C.S.A.R.O.W.) and ISIS Center For Women and Development (I.C.W.A.D.) at the Université Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Fez, Morocco.

Transnational feminist conversations

It is a great honour to write some words about the GEMMA academic programme in the Universidad de Granada for its anniversary. Its pioneering and forward-looking origin as an interdisciplinary Women's and Gender Studies center for graduate studies has developed cross-cultural and transnational ties with a myriad of universities and colleges in Europe, the United States and Latin America. This global outreach in my view speaks to GEMMA's unique ability to gather internationally known scholars alongside MA and PhD students whose work engages gender and sexualities in profound and significant ways across disciplines, continents and national borders.

I had the pleasure of meeting Adelina Sánchez Espinosa, GEMMA founder, through a common friend from Granada who knew about my film and feminist activism. Meeting Adelina was a highlight of my stay in the city and key to my knowledge of Women's and Gender Studies at the Universidad de Granada. Her contagious energy and welcoming warmth of Women's Studies faculty from across the globe represents a great example of how women can connect with each other to make things happen locally and internationally. When I got the chance to visit GEMMA, I was utterly impressed with the students, the director and coordinator and the faculty that attended my documentary screening. The director, Ana Muñoz, graciously introduced me and my film *El árbol de la vida (la reina, la hija y las mujeres)* on May 10, 2019. After the screening, Dresda Méndez de la Brena (PhD student in Women's Studies and technical assistant in the GEMMA office in Granada) and Orianna Calderón-Sandoval (GRACE, Gender and Cultures of Equality in Europe Researcher) were discussants and posed a series of thoughtful questions and issues around the use of affects and the structure of the film. I was very impressed with the depth and nuance of the comments and analysis. I am grateful for this opportunity and the chance to meet and interact with GEMMA students and faculty during and after the screening. It was a truly wonderful experience. The support and collegiality that feminist researchers, scholars and artists can find in GEMMA speaks to its mission and the caliber of its members in Granada who have been able to establish lasting global networks and a passion for transnational conversations.

Bernardita Llanos
Brooklyn College, CUNY

En octubre del 2017 llegué a Granada para participar como profesora invitada en el Máster GEMMA Erasmus Mundus. Antes de eso habían ocurrido algunas situaciones que fueron determinantes para que yo llegara a GEMMA: la consolidación de una línea de investigación sobre mujeres escritoras indígenas y afrodescendientes en América Latina y el surgimiento de un potente movimiento feminista entre las estudiantes de universidades públicas en Chile, que impactó sensiblemente en mi trabajo académico. En estas andanzas fue que llegué a La Habana, Cuba, para participar en un coloquio sobre estudios de la mujer que se realiza cada año. Fue allí que, en febrero de 2017, conocí a Adelina Sánchez, Jasmina Lukic, Vita Fortunati y Orianna Calderón, y supe de GEMMA, un proyecto trasnacional único en el ámbito de los estudios de género y feministas. No sólo escuché las iluminadoras intervenciones de ellas, también lograron transmitir a la audiencia su esfuerzo, pasión y compromiso colectivo con este proyecto. Además, el coloquio era organizado por Luisa Campuzano en Casa de las Américas, quien también había sido profesora invitada de GEMMA. Ellas fueron el principal motivo por el cual me embarqué en esta aventura.

La estadía en Granada fue intensa: por el clima político de aquellos días, por la fuerza que adquiría la lucha feminista (estaba álgido el caso de Juana Rivas), por la interacción con las estudiantes, de distinta procedencia nacional y disciplinaria y también por la propia reacción que me producía el privilegio de transitar día a día por esas calles milenarias. Compartí con las estudiantes durante dos semanas, no sólo enseñanzas sino también experiencias como mujeres que habitamos distintos continentes y universidades. Leímos lo que escribían mujeres afrodescendientes e indígenas de distintos países de América Latina, reparamos en sus críticas al patriarcado, al racismo y a los resabios coloniales y pusimos en tensión el genérico "mujer" con el apoyo de estas propuestas. Algunos meses después de mi paso por Granada pude compartir esta experiencia con mis estudiantes de la Universidad de Chile y concebimos en conjunto un seminario basado en el trabajo con las estudiantes de GEMMA. También obtuve financiamiento del Gobierno de Chile para un proyecto de investigación sobre la misma temática.

Todo este recorrido tiene como propósito fundamentar la apreciación de que mi paso por GEMMA no es un antecedente más en el currículo, sino una experiencia de esas que te marcan, te forman y te proyectan. No me queda más que agradecer a quienes han hecho posible la existencia de este

proyecto, que tiene la singularidad de hacer coincidir calidad académica con calidad humana: a sus estudiantes, personal de colaboración y personal académico, especialmente a Adelina y al grupo maravilloso que conocí en El Caribe, esa frontera imperial que nos recuerda la diferencia de poder que existe entre nuestros continentes, pero también la voluntad humana –y feminista- por tender puentes.
Saludos a GEMMA en sus 12 años. Un abrazo desde el sur!

Claudia Zapata Silva
Profesora asociada
Centro de Estudios Culturales Latinoamericanos
Universidad de Chile
Santiago de Chile, 9 de julio de 2019.

GEMMA and the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees

Since more than 15 years, the European Commission is awarding university consortia with funding for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees – EMJMDs. Overall, about 30,000 students from all over the world received an EMJMD scholarship to study in at least two different European countries. The EMJMD action is one of the flagship programs of the European Union. It supports the concept of joint programs as one of the main components in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). EMJMDs are programs of excellence aiming at increasing worldwide the attractiveness of European Higher Education so as to allow universities to attract the best international postgraduate students to their programs.

GEMMA is one of more than 400 EMJMDs that have been selected for funding. The master's course was selected for the first time in 2006, and it enabled more than 200 students to graduate as gender experts. These experts will be able to contribute to greater equality between men and women, taking into account the intersections of ethnicity, race, class and sexuality. Therefore, GEMMA is contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through its diverse network of associated organisations that spans all over the world, students and scholars benefit from an interdisciplinary program of high quality education. This network

maintains a good relationship with the alumni in order to enrich the curriculum and improve employment opportunities. Students can choose to study at two out of seven available European universities that participate in the Consortium. In their first semester, they all gain the same basic knowledge of Feminist History, Feminist Theory and Feminist Methodology. In the following three semesters, they attend a variety of elective courses in which they can specialise and prepare their master's thesis. Depending on the mobility combination, the graduates receive a double or a joint degree.

The master's course not only aims at getting graduates into jobs, but rather preparing them for an economic and social landscape in which innovation, intercultural skills, creativity and team work are assets. Through monitoring of several generations of projects, we have seen that the experience of studying in an EMJMD like GEMMA changes the perceptions of people and their self-confidence. Through this very special time abroad far away from family and friends, students become more resilient. By experiencing collaboration with people coming from different countries all over the world, students acquire a toolkit consisting of a wide mix of intercultural competencies. Languages, self-confidence, cultural sensitivity, independence and empathy are only a few of highly valued skills GEMMA alumni acquire.

The Executive Agency congratulates all GEMMA graduates and wishes all the best for the current intake. Furthermore, we would like to pass on all our good wishes for the twelfth anniversary of GEMMA and we hope that the programme will continue to thrive.

Emanuel Gerth
Project Officer
Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency – EACEA,
European Commission

Cuando hice el Doctorado de Estudios de la Mujer (así se llamaba entonces) a principios de los 2000, compañeros y compañeras de la facultad que estudiaban otras especialidades se maravillaban de que, después de cuatro o cinco horas de clase, todo el grupo fuéramos a tomar unas cañas al bar cercano a seguir debatiendo sobre los temas que habíamos tratado en el aula. Era difícil, desde fuera, entender la avidez con la que devorábamos toda esa información, nueva para nosotrxs, que recibíamos de las profesoras, de las lecturas y de lo que compartían las personas

heterogéneas que conformábamos el grupo de alumnado de ese programa de doctorado. Eramos un grupo raro porque éramos multidisciplinares e intergeneracionales y porque estábamos en ese curso por convencimiento personal y político. El Doctorado de Estudios de la Mujer no era sólo un título académico, suponía un cambio vital.

Más de diez años después me veo al otro lado, en la tarima de lo que ahora es el Máster Erasmus Mundus GEMMA, ante un grupo muchísimo más diverso de lo que éramos nosotrxs, pero me emociona comprobar que el espíritu de sororidad, rebeldía, diálogo respetuoso y deseo de aprender sigue igual o más vivo aún de lo que estaba cuando era yo quien me sentaba en los bancos como alumna. Es un privilegio formar parte de la línea cronológica de una genealogía de maestras y aprendizas del feminismo académico que, no sólo resiste contra viento y marea todos los envites del patriarcado, sino que se expande y crece de forma imparable. Sabernos muchas y sabernos sostenidas por el suelo firme de las que vinieron antes, nos hace muy fuertes.

Pero hay algo más que destacar: la alegría y el disfrute. Sin duda uno de los momentos más memorables de mi trayectoria como profesora fue la sesión sobre música y feminismo con la promoción de "las marcelinas". Las recuerdo siempre y con muchas sigo en contacto (benditas redes sociales) y son el ejemplo vivo de la razón que me hace seguir en esta senda feminista: el saber que la llama no se apaga y que la energía que creamos en este GEMMA no sólo no se destruye, sino que se multiplica, por mucho que las leyes de la física digan otra cosa.
Un abrazo,

Laura Viñuela
Directora Gerente de ESPORA Consultoría de Género

Recordar del latín *RE-CORDIS,* volver a pasar por el corazón.

La memoria de la Delegación de Igualdad de la Diputación de Granada está llena de doce años de recuerdos. De recuerdos, de todas aquellas personas pertenecientes a varias generaciones del Máster GEMMA que han pasado por esta Organismo para realizar sus prácticas.

De recuerdos de sonrisas tímidas, por su parte, al comienzo de las prácticas. De recuerdos de sonrisas emocionadas, por ambas partes, en

la despedida. De recuerdos de amplias y orgullosas sonrisas, por nuestra parte, cuando con el paso del tiempo nos llegan noticias de sus vidas, de sus logros.

Son ya muchas las jóvenes del GEMMA que han pasado por este Delegación regalándonos su vitalidad, su alegría, su frescura, sus saberes y sus conocimientos adquiridos en el Máster, a cambio de la experiencia práctica del trabajo desde lo Provincial a lo Local en materia de igualdad de género

Sirvan estas palabras también para recordar la larga amistad que une a la Delegación de Igualdad de la Diputación de Granada, con el Máster GEMMA de la Universidad de Granada. La Academia pilar imprescindible, apoyo y "puntal" en nuestro importante cometido de implementar las políticas de igualdad de género en los pueblos de nuestra provincia.

El Máster GEMMA forma parte de nuestra historia, tanto, como pensamos que esta Institución forma parte de la suya.

Leonor Vílchez Fernández
Jefa de Servicio de Igualdad y Juventud
Delegación Igualdad y Juventud
Excma. Diputación Provincial de Granada

El Máster Erasmus Mundus en Estudios de las Mujeres y de Género, GEMMA, en su décimo segundo aniversario de existencia tiene muchos y poderosos motivos para su celebración: es el primer y único máster conjunto Erasmus Mundus en Estudios de las Mujeres y de Género en Europa; cuenta con numerosos reconocimientos a nivel internacional y es considerado como el mejor máster de su ámbito en España.

GEMMA, surgió como resultado de un largo proceso de trabajo, impulsado por el Instituto de Investigación de Estudios de las Mujeres y de Género de la Universidad de Granada, que con su dilatada experiencia y trayectoria en investigación, docencia y publicaciones, lo hizo posible. La colaboración y cooperación entre el Ayuntamiento de Granada y el Instituto, desde sus inicios en 1988 como Seminario de Estudios de la Mujer, ha sido muy amplia y fructífera y ha repercutido en la vida local mediante la formación del personal técnico municipal, agentes para la igualdad principalmente, y numerosas mujeres de asociaciones feministas , destacando el Doctorado Interuniversitario Andaluz en Estudios de la

Mujer, los cursos de verano del Centro Mediterráneo de la UGR, los cursos del Programa EQUAL y el Experta en Género e Igualdad de Oportunidades impartido desde el año 2000 al curso 205–2006, Instituto Universitario de Investigación de Estudios de las Mujeres y de Género de la UGR ha sido reconocido con el Premio Mariana Pineda a la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres 2019 en su modalidad colectiva.

Así en 2007 surge el Máster GEMMA para armonizar la diversidad educativa de las universidades en seis países de Europa con diferentes tradiciones y culturas: Las universidades socias son la Universidad de Bolonia, la Universidad Central Europea de Budapest, la Universidad de Hull, la Universidad de Lodz, la Universidad de Oviedo y la Universidad de Utrecht y la Universidad de Granada. Su principal objetivo es formar a especialistas en el ámbito de la igualdad, contribuyendo a la construcción de una ciudadanía solidaria y responsable. Recoge el trabajo docente e investigador en Estudios de las Mujeres y de Género en los campos de humanidades y ciencias sociales de las universidades participantes y se trata de un programa con amplia oferta y combinación de opciones impartido por profesorado de reconocido prestigio

La UGR es la institución coordinadora del Consorcio, bajo la dirección de la profesora e investigadora Adelina Sánchez Espinosa, quien además es miembro del Instituto Universitario de Investigación de Estudios de las Mujeres y de Género, a la que quiero felicitar por su magnífico trabajo y desearle larga vida al GEMMA, cuya aportación es fundamental para crear cultura de la igualdad desde lo local a la realidad Europea.

Milagros Mantilla de los Ríos Manzanares
Jefa de Servicio de Igualdad de Oportunidades
Concejalía Delegada de Presidencia, Empleo,
Igualdad y Transparencia
Ayuntamiento de Granada

Part I Weaving the Personal and Professional. *A Critical Thinking Conversation About the Personal and Professional Challenges Faced Throughout GEMMA*

Section 1 Movements in Academia

Ana M. González Ramos

Introduction: Being on the Backstage of Young Feminist Researchers

Care in knowledge making has something of a "labour of love"

María Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012.

Scene I. A public place

I would like to reckon that I am not directly involved in GEMMA. I did not study or teach there, but I strongly declare myself a person benefitted by the program. It comes to my mind, how many people I have met through the GEMMA program and how these people have made the difference. Master students, doctoral candidates and teachers have changed Women's and Gender Studies in Europe and Latin America. The syllabus, created with a background in feminism and scientific knowledge, has built an expertise community composed of graduates and teachers. I feel confident about the future of Gender Studies because the program is nurturing future associates and lecturers in the present time. GEMMA cares about feminism and feminists, encounters androcentrism in academia and ensures scientific feasibility in this area. I am grateful for being part of this family.

Scene II. A room in the house of academia

The edition of the book *Teaching Gender: Feminist Pedagogy and Responsibility in Times of Political Crisis* (Revelles-Benavente and González

Ramos 2017) aims at engaging scientific knowledge and society, involving the work of people at civil grassroots and academia, an inter-generational talk across different countries, cultures and disciplines to "become response-able (Haraway 2008, Barad 2010) through a politics of care for each other" (ibid.: 2). It was not just a buzz word for us; we were involved in response-able projects for a long time, building strong bonds with other researchers and practising feminist politics with our colleagues. We also meet the conflict and the hardness. As Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) and hooks (2000) have pointed out, work on care and attachment is not incompatible with conflict. In this long journey, we have experienced both success and pain.

Response-ability is an affirmative concept that proves the strength of sorority networks, a purpose for a global movement looking for common well-being. It concerns people's vulnerability, earth crisis, poor and social inequalities – problems persisting since the dawn of the world. As the inhabitants of planet Earth, some voices are claiming a different pattern where "women style" is a challenge. Although how "women" make a difference is a persistent doubt (Keller 1985, Harding 1991, Schiebinger 2001), we, feminists, engender some hope of making a positive change if we perform on this theatrical stage (academic and personal one) with a profound sense of feminist ethics and caring with and for others.

In academia, response-ability concerns the support of young people, a generational engagement of researchers with each other. This is also a tough task for senior researchers because academia is involved in neoliberal practices and we all are situated in times of crisis and vulnerability. Women leadership still lacks legitimacy and, although the accelerated academia increases obstacles to deal with affirmative responses from older researchers toward younger ones, feminist senior researchers await vigilant at the backstage of young researchers' theatrical (academic) performances, supporting them by action and checking on their own in/voluntary omissions. When I fully realised the impact of my actions and omissions, I set the pace of thinking carefully, making decisions and conducting collective projects strategically. That is hard labour because of the careful calculation and foreseeing that it implies and because there are many unexpected reactions that affect each one of your movements. It is harder than a game of chess! Uncertainty is a current player in these liquid times (Bauman 2007).

It is no longer us, the professors, who lead our students along a secure path. We are treading on slippery grounds where gender is a troublesome issue. In this risky context, competition is a daily experience – colleagues researching in a team and performing individualist practices at the same time as colleagues working together as adversary counterparts. A while ago, I supported a leadership group in its work to elaborate a feminist and ethical code for engaging the members of the team. They aimed to figure out good practices involving its team members and were committed to creating leadership opportunities and respectful practices for young researchers. They are currently working in this direction and I wish them success in their goal. Meanwhile, we all deal with a huge quantity of excitement and pleasure as well as a pinch of contradiction and a great number of doubts (Barbara Malknecht 2017).

Scene III. Wilmarie and Beatriz's chambers

Readers go along with Wilmarie Rosado and Beatriz Revelles-Benavente across countries, institutions and knowledge realms in their chapters' narrative. Crossing disciplines, institutions located in different cities and personal/professional networks make up the experience of young researchers by both feminism and globalisation streams. In the first place, feminism has generated new questions and methodologies involving the introduction of contents in the curriculum and pedagogy models in the act of teaching (González García 2019). The women's standpoint emerges from specialists in Gender Studies and overflows the scientific community and flagship organisations as a relevant, necessary and innovative issue. We are situated at a critical point to take advantage of this concern, and we definitely desire to change the androcentrism of social institutions. Longtime exposure and the visibility of these advantages should affect people to embrace new equality and care cultures. Thus, being feminists means crossing boundaries as a consequence of the performance of theoretical and practical practices always in critical construction and the results of the promotion of a total change over the "Herstory" concept.

In the second place, globalisation creates new opportunities for women but also new challenges on managing professional and personal

aims (Sassen 2007, González Ramos and Vergés 2013, González Ramos and Torrado Martín-Palomino 2015). As frequent travellers, researchers are used to shifting across cultures, places and work performances. They are the makers of the cartography of contemporary human cultures. This challenging standpoint engenders both learning and stressful matters (Conesa and González Ramos 2018, Vayreda at al. 2019). I imagine Wilmarie's and Beatriz's living experiences as pages of their private diaries, inter/disciplined and ir/responsible[1] feminist researchers who nurture their own path in between crossroads patterned by desires and opportunities. They face a range of new situations while performing on their academic stages but their senior researcher mentors are on the backstage, prompting when they are needed to.

The front stage chambers inhabited by Wilmarie and Beatriz are gradually developing into those other backstage chambers as they slowly but surely become the people in charge of scientific communities. We need to celebrate this because we are enlarging the network and the troupe of actors playing in the Gender and Women studies arena. I personally feel happy when I find people with strong gender convictions and feminist response-ability practices, whether or not I agree or disagree with them on controversial topics. The same applies when I meet people who pursuit social justice even if they do not declare themselves feminist.

Diversity and criticism become part of the situated and comfortless feminist standpoint and current times appear to lead towards the crash of dualism and welcome confusion and conflict. Our former rigid frameworks on identities are giving way under the pressure of identity multiplicities. I sincerely believe this in-depth attention to boundaries and processes will advance feminism for the next generations since we are already embedded in knowledge patterns that help construct the new era. Feminism is the navigation system (GPS) of tomorrow's culture and these young women are driving the spaceship.

Meanwhile, we feminists need to act under the rules of fair-play as well as be vigilant of possible situations in which injustice permeates the structure of socio-cultural discourses on the stage performances we are spectators of on a daily basis. I would like to envision a response-able

1 Further clarification on the concept of "ir/responsible" can be found in Revelles-Benavente's chapter "Processual Movements in Academia: Being a GEMMA Student or How to Become a Feminist Researcher" included in this volume.

feminism able to permeate social inequalities and create new norms that bring care for ourselves and for each other.

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Beatriz Revelles Benavente

Processual Movements in Academia: Being a GEMMA Student or How to Become a Feminist Researcher

Abstract The objective of this chapter is to illustrate how important the different roads and choices that made at a particular time in our lives are in order to become a feminist new materialist researcher. To be able to transverse in between personal and professional choices, I use a narrative perspective (Tamboukou 2015) in order to unveil two specific sub-objectives coming from the main one described above. On the one hand, I want to reveal the importance of a network based upon a feminist solidarity (González 2018) that relates professors and students. On the other hand, I want to draw the new materialist genealogy (van der Tuin 2015) that permeates my lines of research at present. The results of this reflection illustrate how this perspective also affects the way teaching is conceived as going towards a feminist pedagogy. I attempt to visibilise how different movements create professional and personal paths that matter. Current times, at which universities and the knowledge created inside and outside them are seriously threatened by neoliberalism, require imaginative situations and speculative turns (Stengers 2011). I argue that highlighting the intra-action between individual women who mentor each other and what you learn through a certain period of time strengthens a feminist political practice.

Keywords: Feminist new materialist researcher, feminist solidarity, new materialist genealogy, feminist pedagogy

Introduction

Starting GEMMA in 2008 opened a few important windows in my personal and professional career that have produced *differences that matter* (Barad 2003) not only in the way I conceive my professional career but also in how I position myself to be able to respond (Haraway 2008) to certain sociological phenomena. My personal movements during GEMMA included the Universities of Granada, Rutgers and Utrecht, all of them

teaching very different lessons on how to be a feminist researcher and all of them building what I would consider afterwards "my dear academic background." Currently, I am a junior lecturer at the University of Granada, teaching both in the Department of English and German Philologies and the Master Program in which everything began. These two positions give me the opportunity to put into practice courses such as Affective Pedagogies, as well as continuing my own research on gender issues from a new materialist lens.

Now, more than 10 years later, I look to the past and the future of my career, that is to say, to the entanglement between past, present and future in order to see how this career is becoming more and more an expansion of the present (Coleman 2018). Current times, the precarisation of the university (Butler and Athanasiou 2013) and the risks of being a killjoy feminist researcher (Ahmed 2017) situate the corporeal configuration of the feminist junior scholar as an ir/responsible researcher[1] (Cielemecka and Revelles-Benavente 2017). Ir/response-ability requires us to approach the scientific canon through affirmation rather than negation, situating our own backyard in an instability that makes us move from within our neoliberal academia.

As an ir/responsible feminist researcher, we need to begin with our genealogical practices (van der Tuin 2015) in order to look for differing routes that allow an opening of possibilities to structural inequalities. Echoing Grosz (2005), I propose to look at processes instead of results in order to configure dynamic methodologies able to construct futures in feminism while looping into the past. That is why, using my own story, my genealogies and a critical reflection of what it means to "grow up" inside a feminist community of academic practices, as the GEMMA program in its second edition was, I attempt at configuring the metaphor of the feminist junior scholar in current times. The objective of this chapter is to illustrate how important the different roads and choices that we make at a particular time in our lives are in order to configure what I consider a feminist new materialist researcher. To be able to transverse in between personal and professional choices, I use a narrative perspective (Tamboukou

1 "Ir/responsibility" refers to the possibility to move between distance and closeness in order to open up possibilities (Cielemecka and Revelles-Benavente 2017: 36). It is the physical displacement from traditional scientific canons, as well as traditional pedagogical assumptions, to reclaim spaces of collaboration.

2015) in order to unveil two specific sub-objectives coming from the main one described above. On the one hand, I want to reveal the importance of a network based upon a feminist solidarity (González 2018) that relates professors and students. On the other hand, I want to draw the new materialist genealogy (van der Tuin 2015) that permeates my lines of research at present. The results of this reflection illustrate that this perspective also affects the way teaching is conceived going towards a feminist pedagogy. I attempt to visibilise how different movements create professional and personal paths that matter.

Current times, at which universities and the knowledge created inside and outside them are threatened by neo-liberalist regimes, require imaginative situations and speculative turns (Stengers 2011). I argue that highlighting the intra-action between individual women who mentor each other and what you learn through a certain period of time strengthens a feminist political practice. Besides, I intend to present new materialism as a transversal paradigm that offers solutions to intervene in politics before the results have already been materialised (Grosz 2005). This is a processual perspective for becoming a never-ending learner of how to become a feminist researcher.

Genealogical approaches: The importance of Gender Studies or becoming a feminist new materialist researcher

Institutionalising Gender Studies has not been an easy task in Spain. While Women's Studies has been a department on its own at Rutgers University from more than 50 years now, the GEMMA program is just a little older than 13 years, being the first and only Erasmus Mundus program and, back in its beginning, the only Gender Studies program that gave students the possibility of becoming gender experts from two European universities. In my concrete case this led to a fully funded doctorate in 2012, the year in which the economic crisis was at its peak in Spain. Being part of the second GEMMA generation with an expertise in gender in Spain opened a door for me at a private university with a 3 years' fully funded PhD fellowship in a Gender and ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) research group.

Producing genealogical approaches implies a reiteration of specific affective spatiotemporal moments without (re)producing *classifixations* of feminist knowledges (van der Tuin 2015). Van der Tuin (2015) defines these classifixations as rigid categories that divide our knowledge into fixed compartments implying for feminist theory, the recall of feminist history, via the differing waves. I strongly believe in the need to start from our own situatedness in order to divert from hegemonic constructions of knowledge creation and circulation. That is why instead of accounting for how different theories helped the construction of my purple glasses, I account for how different women helped me to produce the relations that have mattered in my configuration as a feminist researcher. This has a twofold objective. On the one hand, I strongly believe in the need to build alliances based upon recognition with our feminist colleagues, our personal and professional networks and the need to account for relationality instead of individuality. On the other hand, I want to produce a dynamic scientific canon inspired in contemporary feminist researchers who are transforming my research and the way feminism is understood on a daily basis. That is to say, these women are part of my cartographical approach to politics because the material bonds that we have created have produced differences in me that have mattered at different stages of my academic career.

Going back to the future: Or reiterating the past

My academic background in Gender Studies has always allowed me to have a bibliographical corpus that might be composed very well of 75 % of female scientists and feminist theorists. Therefore, I have never felt as if I was (re)producing specific hegemonisations of the scientific canon (Haraway 1988). Nevertheless, this is a very common pattern even in feminist scientific articles. Who is included in the bibliographies of these articles? What are the citation practices we use? How important is all this? Citation practices are important because they are "a technology of resistance that demonstrates engagement with those authors and voices we want to carry forward" (Mott and Cockayne 2017: 954). These engagements are, consequently, part of our own relationality as researchers and, therefore, also

part of our own feminist subjectivity. Thus, in order to account for how movement and/or affective displacements have been part of my career, I would like to critically reflect on the concept of genealogies.

Van der Tuin (2015) describes genealogical processes as a way to divert from classificatory practices and to produce differences that matter by entangling past, present and future. Besides, etymologically speaking, genealogies are also the embodiment of a specific family tree. I argue that in becoming a processual feminist researcher, everyone needs to perform ethical gestures that situate their works within their "feminist family." In my case, my career could only start with the GEMMA program and, for me, GEMMA meant two women in particular who would become key for my academic career (as a postgraduate and a doctoral student). These two women are Adelina Sánchez and Iris van der Tuin, and, of course, their universities of Granada and Utrecht, respectively.

My GEMMA itinerary was Granada and Utrecht, and I won a research stay at the University of Rutgers. Utrecht 2009 was a year in which a fascinating school of thought, new materialisms, was beginning to be born and I got access to that. Contemporary Cultural Theory was a seminar course with Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn that allowed us to start thinking beyond dichotomies of matter and discourse, one and other, categorical approaches to thinking or the constructed and agential cuts of Karen Barad's work. From that moment on, I decided that diffractions, intra-actions, affects, processes, material-discursive practices and entanglements between matter and meaning were destined to become part of my analysis of English language and literature.

Later on, I became a member of the management committee of a COST Action: IS1307 Networking European New Materialisms. I also dealt with the scientific organisation of the project kick-off conference and its last training school. Processually speaking, the GEMMA program opened the doors of my professional European networking under two umbrellas of brilliant and hard-working women: Adelina Sánchez (in the area of Gender Studies) and Iris van der Tuin (in the area of New Materialisms). Thus, I was introduced to a new order of things in which "phenomena that seem mutually exclusive [were] the opposite sides of one and the same coin" (van der Tuin 2009: 18). I became a material intra-action between student and colleague of my feminist professors and started to embed my own scientific canon with the scientists who were opening the doors to my academic career.

In the progression of our career in academia, at times, women tend to hide what kind of connections brought them there and, instead, we perform a discourse in which all that happened was a matter of luck (González 2018). Nevertheless, in reflecting upon my practices, and the differing movements that have taken me where I am right now, I hope to visualise the importance of recognition of our feminist colleagues in a bi-directional way. That is, not only bottom-up but also top-down up-to-bottom. Feminist professional networks need to be implemented as an ethical gesture towards sorority. That is, I argue for enabling close readings (Lukic and Sanchez 2011) of the different moments that bring the career of a feminist researcher in precarious positions of instability in contemporary academia. Focusing on how I became a feminist researcher, I want to shed light on the different moments that help to construct bridges for junior scholars, a practice that needs to be enhanced in a feminist context. Additionally, my experience in the GEMMA program has been the performative materialisation of a strong female professional network and the (re)configuration of a feminist scientific canon alive through my teachers, colleagues and friends.

Expanding the present, or the ir/responsible feminist researcher

In talking about the Like Economy (referring to platforms such as Netflix or Facebook), Rebecca Coleman (2018: 604) defines the temporality of digital media "as both on-going and open-ended […] and 'live' and immediate […] the multiplicity of the present [and] the vibrancy of the now." This is what she defines as the suspension or expansion of the present time in these kinds of virtual platforms. Nevertheless, if we were to completely decontextualise this quote and refer to it in terms of neoliberal academia, the sentence would continue to make perfect sense. The current (junior) scholar lives in a permanent on-going and open-ended race that conflates geographical spaces and chronological times via internet connections and digital platforms. The present day of an academic connecting with other colleagues from different regions of the world never ends since they can be reached via a simple email.

Additionally, when we look at female careers in certain scientific areas, it has been proven that they can even concatenate postdoctoral contracts without reaching an upper level in their careers (González 2018). The present becomes expanded in academia, without a clear path towards a future that progresses the career itself intra-relating with multiplicity as an urgent pattern in academia. Multiplicity here materialises in the form of international careers (multiple research stays) and intermediate positions at the university (lecturing part time while working in jobs completely unrelated to their research). Multiplicity also implies opportunities (multiple collaborations with colleagues from all over the world) and, consequently, a very difficult organisation for managing time effectively. When the present is an open-ended practice, knowing where and how to stop seems to be beyond the horizon of the academic.

Nevertheless, knowing when to say no as a junior scholar is also particularly important. According to Barad's agential realism (Barad 2007), agency performs and materialises in the relation between the researcher and the research, that is, in the exteriority within the methodological apparatus. That is to say, agential cuts, even if beyond the scope of the junior scholar, are those in charge of materialising a performative agency that opens up the possibility of social transformation. Thus, knowing how these connections are produced becomes of paramount importance for the junior scholar if she wants to know how to direct her professional career to a future not yet present. Agential cuts are above our power to produce decision-making, but this does not mean that we cannot move towards them. Indeed, knowing how and when these relations materialise themselves is extremely important in order to be able to move forward in this suspended present.

This constitutes one of the objectives of this chapter, which is reflecting critically upon how and when these decisions were being made in my academic career and how they have contributed to my becoming a very specific type of feminist researcher. One of the most common slogans in academia is knowing how to play the game and whether you decide to play it or not. This "game" shares the features of the European concept of excellence. They are both self-referenced concepts that basically mean everything and nothing at the same time. Thus, how do you play a game you do not know the rules of?

Sarah Ahmed has started a new project entitled "On Complaint." She tries to account for the many different abuses (especially sexual harassment)

that take place in academia. She uses anonymous interviews and her own privileged position as an academic outsider since she resigned her university post due to political principles. According to her the moment you describe or define a problem you become part of such problem.[2] Thus, as a junior scholar you have to face many situations that compromise your subjectivity as a scholar and even your values as a feminist researcher. Power relations are a fact in academia and, often, feminist academia is not an exception. Everyone knows someone who has experienced power abuse in academia and, often, that someone is actually you. But you do not tell, you do not want to be a complainer, you do not want to be a problem.

This is where having a strong sorority network is important, let alone when you are performing your research from the margins of a discipline such as Gender Studies in Spain. And it is here that the third decisive woman in my academic career appears: Ana M. González Ramos. She has been a colleague and a dearest friend since I met her 10 years ago on starting my doctoral program and she continues to be an important pillar in my research since we are closely collaborating nowadays. Establishing my feminist genealogical tree helps me to understand how these women have served as a catalyst in my academic career, in many different scenarios, at different stages in my life. A feminist professional network is different from the professional networks that are established in the "Old Men's Club" because men know the rules of the game they are playing while we do not know them. And sharing this knowledge is how power can start to circulate. This is why I want to recognise the importance of my network both at the professional and personal levels. When wanting to navigate, or helping others navigate "the game," an ir/responsible feminist researcher finds herself in-between the inside and the outside of academia. Individuality or DIY is not the answer because that is how you start feeling that you are the problem. My present is the women with whom I am relating in the entanglement between past-present-future. If almost 100 years ago Virginia Woolf instigated women to have a room of their own, nowadays I encourage feminist junior scholars to have a feminist scientific canon of their own with significant women in their lives.

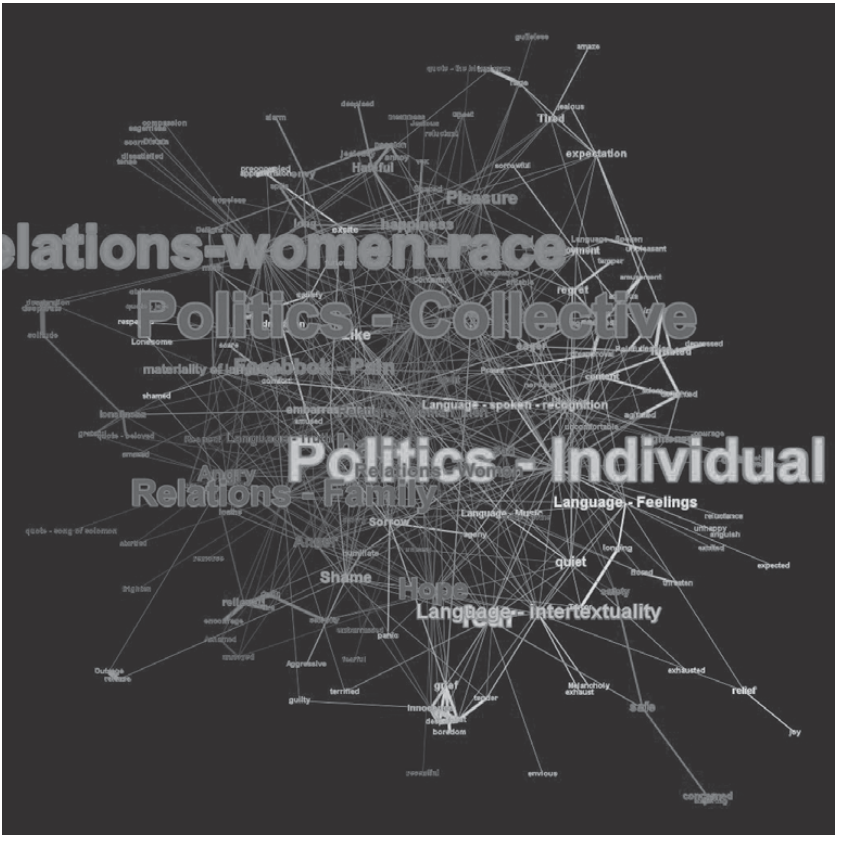
2 Feministkilljoys: https://feministkilljoys.com/about/ (Last accessed 15/11/2020).

Iterating the feminist scientific canon

Embodying personally and politically your feminist scientific canon becomes an act of resistance in order to disrupt the circulation of hegemonic powers. These women taught me so many different things that at present it becomes really difficult to distinguish when my subjectivity as a researcher begins and theirs stop. Constructing an embodied personal and political scientific canon alters the figuration of the purple glasses into purple eye contact lenses. Feminist mentors become part of your own subjectivity and relationality, and it becomes extremely difficult to speak without having them permeating your own discourse.

In 2009 I wanted to understand the material implications of language beyond the representationalist nature of the metaphors that it represents. Embracing an onto-epistemological and methodological framework of the new materialisms opened up the multiple possibilities to pursue a feminist ethics in the context of political speeches. Iris van der Tuin taught me that new materialisms could break through what a political speech could be representing and what was actually being materialised. Thinking diffractively opened up the concept of communication towards a dynamic conceptualisation inspired in quantum physics through the work of Karen Barad. Thus, in thinking through the ontological paradox that light represents, being both a wave and a particle at the same time, I realised that certain things that had been ontologically assumed as totally different from each other were, in fact, two sides of the same coin (van der Tuin 2009). Thus, representationalism (Barad 2003), as the ontological break between matter and the discourse it represents, disappeared from the linguistic analysis that I was producing. With the representationalist rupture, I was attempting to stop categorisations of the subjects who were the focus of these political speeches as individuals. Rather, the pursuit was to find the affinities among them, the constellations of alliances. Later on, during my doctorate, Adelina Sánchez guided my diffracted readings into close readings (Lukic and Sánchez 2011). Nevertheless, being in an interdisciplinary institute also implied the need to find bridges between qualitative and quantitative approaches that enabled me to speak a multiple language that could transverse across disciplines. Precisely this is what van der Tuin refers to as the surprise of the future that we find in the past (van der Tuin 2015). At that time, I did not know that I was entering a whole

Fig. 1: Transversal Affects in Toni Morrison's Novels and Official Facebook Page (Revelles-Benavente 2014).



new disciplinary area which, at this moment, is a whole new COST Action CA1604. At that time, I was experimenting with electronic software (atlas.ti and gephi) and visual maps in order to quantify the traditional literary method of close reading. The results that I obtained were of very poor quality:

Thus, pursuing to become an interdisciplinary researcher I entered a discipline that was being established at that moment: distant reading (Moretti 2005). The efforts in trying to produce dialogues between sociology and literature quantified how determined affects were transversal in the empirical data that I had gathered. That is to say, I was able to

implement affects as radical empirical units (Clough 2009) via visual maps which quantified the themes and topics happening simultaneously in novels and social networking sites. Had it not been for my feminist network, I would have thought of the difficulties as closing instead of opening doors to explore innovative and experimental methodologies.

Expanding my present

Tracing my genealogical feminist tree necessarily entails a further loop into what constitutes my present. Currently, I am teaching with Adelina in the GEMMA program; collaborating with different research projects with Ana and co-editing the *Matter* journal with Iris (among many other dearest colleagues). Additionally, I am a member of the department at which I started my undergraduate degree after having passed through the universities of Santa Cruz (California), RMIT (Australia), UOC and UB (Spain), Utrecht, Rutgers and MMU (United Kingdom). I won a visiting researcher position with the Spanish "José Castillejos" programme, which allowed me 3 full months of research/break in my "Juan de la Cierva" fellowship. Once the doctorate is over and we start the new phase in our career, it does not mean that all of a sudden a feminist researcher stops needing their genealogical tree. It is precisely at this moment that it becomes more urgent than ever.

As I was saying before, becoming an ir/responsible feminist researcher might entail a tree with infinite branches that need to be incorporated within a network of sorority and self-care and care for others. It is the moment at which the "the personal is political" slogan becomes most evident. It is the moment at which you need your mentors, you need to become a feminist mentor for someone, your research needs to become politically significant and your actions need to be respond-able as well. These are just a few of the lessons that Ana M. González taught me during the last 10 years, day by day.

Thinking through an auto-biographical narrative, we tend to pursue lineal structures that allow such narrative to become a positive outcome of what has been our lives. However, at this point, I believe it important to account also for those periods when even having a feminist network

of sorority was not enough. Being a feminist researcher implies that you believe in the projects that you commit to and that, no matter what is happening in your personal life, you continue to develop these projects which happen to pursue social justice, something that everyone should be volunteering for. The GENERA project (led by Ana M. González) came precisely after completing the PhD program within the 3 required years, having co-edited one special issue, and organised an international conference (among several other milestones). Nevertheless, that was not enough to prevent me from going through the uncertainty of unemployment for 4 months and working in a store for another 5 months. It is ironic that precisely at that time I was given the task of gathering data about the challenges faced by women scientists along their career paths (González 2018). Fortunately, my professional and personal network was there to support me again, to give me strength and a breath when I most needed it, which, eventually, also implied a contract to work in this and other projects and progress onto the lecturing job at UGR that I hold at the present.

Conclusions: GEMMA, the multiplicity of possibilities

All in all, why is all this genealogical tree important? Breaking through personal and professional lives? Thinking with relevant stops? I am only a junior scholar who is beginning her career. I finished my PhD 6 years ago, and precarity is part of the backpack that I need to carry every day. My career has not yet been consolidated and it has been way too short to start reflecting upon it. Nevertheless, in relating my personal experience with GEMMA I wanted to accomplish three different objectives. The first one has to do with recognition, with the need to account for how different people help us get where we are and how we actually arrive where we arrive through relations and not individually. The second one is focused on younger feminist researchers (starting with their masters or PhDs, not younger in age) and the need to tell them different stories. Individual success does not come just with a room of your own, basically because that room is never only yours. Lots of other women, including Virginia Woolf herself, have actually helped you to get that room. You need to work with other people, create relations and become part of professional networks

always based upon the feminist values of care, solidarity and ethics. The third one is the program itself, GEMMA, and the need to maintain its essence.

Acknowledging the people who have been around in academia is not so easy. At times, we try to publish with them or give a paper on their work. All of this is important as well because we need to recognise each other's work. This is how we construct our embodied feminist canon. However, at times, these *herstories* remain invisible. Being part of a sorority network, I believe it is extremely important to leave a physical trace of these particular women who have helped me to meet so many other important women in my life. It is fundamental to ponder on how our stories become part of each other and how a particular conversation at some point in our lives makes all the difference. At different stages in my life they have all been my mentors in various ways, inspiring me to create a mentoring subjectivity for my own students now.

This directly relates to the response-ability (Haraway 2008) that we need to extend to younger generations. I once heard someone saying: "It is important to press the button of coming back down in an elevator once we have used it to reach the upper level." Sometimes, after all the difficulties that we have had to overcome in order to arrive where we are, we forget the previous long and winding road and we may even think that it needs to be just as hard for everyone who chooses to follow our steps. I think that this is keeping the elevator at the upper level and it is definitely not a feminist gesture. An ir/responsible feminist researcher creates personal and professional bonds with her colleagues, her students and even with her research. Politics of care implies a relationality in which individualities are discarded in favour of affinities. Respond-able acts imply that we do not divide ourselves into ones and others but try to work in a way that can favour us all. I believe that explaining different stages in my career can help other younger researchers to better understand the game.

All in all, being part of the second generation of the GEMMA program has allowed me precisely all of this. It has helped me construct a professional and personal network of brilliant women who have become an embedded part of my research, not only within citation practices but also part of my working practices and my ethical respond-abilities. The GEMMA program taught me that Gender Studies is not only a field of research, it is a way of living and caring for other people from the beginning with my students and friends, and dearest colleagues I work with now such as some of them

dearest colleagues that I work with now as Verònica Gisbert. It offered an initial network that expanded into a European project (COST IS1307), a funded PhD at UOC, a Juan de la Cierva postgraduate fellowship and now a position at the Department of English and German Philologies at the University of Granada. Recognising the importance of the network is not only a recognition with a program that turns 13 years old this year but also a feminist ethical gesture.

Being a new materialist feminist researcher is an ir/responsible act with the discipline and with your colleagues. It is breaking through dichotomies, it is sharing material agential relationalities, it is pursuing social justice above all and it is, overall, fighting for sorority and for feminist values in our daily lives as much as in our research. It implies taking slow moves in order to arrive faster. It implies dialogue and processual approaches. It is a materialisation of "the personal is political." It is the embodiment of a dynamic contemporary feminist scientific canon. It is being part of a community and abandoning your individuality in order to look for affinities which will help you reach feminist goals interdisciplinarily and across generations.

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Wilmarie Rosado Pérez

Feminism across Academia: Questioning the Interdisciplinary Quality of Women's and Gender Studies

Abstract Interdisciplinarity has been a key concept in Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) and a concept that has given rise to extensive debate since its appearance as an area of scholarly study. The term has been used to refer to WGS's attempt to challenge disciplinary boundaries in the name of feminism while opening up spaces for continuous intellectual exchange between different academic branches. Concurrently, interdisciplinary practices, strategies, approaches and work processes offer unique opportunities for the dissemination of feminist knowledge on plural platforms, encompassing specific and sometimes confining academic fields. In this way, interdisciplinarity has contributed to the increasing circulation of feminist critical thinking founded on an ethics of collaboration between scholars and institutions. However, defining the field as interdisciplinary or following interdisciplinary practices can potentially bring up different difficulties, from bureaucratic obstacles to issues concerning the legitimation of WGS as a field of study. Given that not all higher education institutions, even those with WGS departments, are open to the synergetic dynamics that the term promotes, problems easily arise. Building on a theoretical analysis of the term "interdisciplinarity" in WGS, and talking from my experience as a PhD candidate and Early Stage Researcher within an interdisciplinary European Project in which a diverse network of feminist scholars and institutions collaborate, I plan to share some of the major debates that have accompanied the discussion of WGS' interdisciplinary quality.

Keywords: Interdisciplinarity, Women's and Gender Studies, GEMMA, collaborative academic practices, knowledge production

Introduction

Interdisciplinarity has accompanied Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) since its very beginning. The conjunction between interdisciplinarity and

WGS[1] is the result of feminism, stepping into the institutional spaces of academia with the obvious intention of transforming it. In many ways, its revolutionary presence, at least at the beginning, came to create disorder. It interrogated the foundations of traditional and well-established disciplines, and interfered with the gendered hierarchical dynamics of exclusion that have dominated universities as consolidated spaces dedicated to the production of knowledge.

The term "interdisciplinarity" has driven endless discussions regarding the pros and cons of continuing to embrace it in WGS. There is no consensus on whether defining itself as interdisciplinary is beneficial to the field or if WGS must coherently distinguish themselves and move towards becoming a single and independent discipline. As we will see in this article, some scholars also propose for WGS, to pursue the acquisition of the status of a "legitimate discipline," still privileging the use of interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological frameworks, along with promoting practices of collaboration in which several disciplines could intersect (McCallum et al. 2015: 194). Indeed, the long life of the term continues to create interesting debates among feminist scholars, putting at the forefront discussions, among other issues, such as, the institutionalisation of feminist knowledge, the political aims of WGS' inside academia, the future of scholars holding a WGS degree and the benefits and disadvantages of working from and within different disciplines.

Some researchers believe that the creation of WGS as an organised field of knowledge, together with the development of strong critiques that aimed to disclose the influence of androcentrism within academia, were part of the central achievements of the feminist movement in the twentieth century (Allen 1993: 1, Wiegman 2005: 43). Indeed, it is not accidental that the women's liberation movement coincided with the advent of Women's Studies in the universities of the USA to the point that, for an extended period afterwards, WGS was considered "the academic arm of the women's movement" (Hassel and Launius 2015: 16). The Feminist political agenda

1 Hemmings points out that the proper name of the field has also been a matter of debate. The name Gender Studies has been referred to as a way of strategically infusing some "neutrality" to the field, although it appears to make it less political and less about women and more broadly about "gender relations" (Hemmings 2006: 22). In this chapter I used WGS because it has been the name I often find in the academic circles I have participated in as a student and researcher.

of WGS expanded through a wide range of disciplines. Academics and students who took part in the movement started to challenge the significant aspects of the higher education system, such as the content of curricula, the teaching methods and the people who were appointed as professors or in administrative positions (Hassel and Launius 2015: 16). In this manner, WGS, from its very first steps in academia, has been as anti-disciplinary or *undisciplined* as the feminist movement itself, in its capacity of destabilising the tenets of how knowledge is institutionalised and disseminated.

Certainly, feminist engagement with social justice was what impelled the blossoming of Women's Studies first in the USA, then in the UK and afterwards in other European countries (Braidotti and Griffin 2002: 3, Parker and Samantrai 2010: 7).[2] In the context of the USA, it coincided in the late 1960s and early 1970s with revolutionary turmoil in which "civil rights, anti-imperialist, antiracist, and women's movements burgeoned on campuses and beyond, riding upon as much as interrogating enlightenment thinking and dominant universalist assumptions that held it in to place" (Katz 2001: 519). For Cindi Katz, this period provided a particularly fertile scenario for the development of "alternative academic programs" such as WGS (2001: 519). Currently, WGS has taken a myriad of forms in its involvement within higher education institutions, from independent and optional courses, certificates, masters, minors, to doctoral programs, fellowships and research projects, among others.

As Diane Lichtenstein says, the people who saw and participated in the early development of WGS were engaged in the mission of changing the way academic institutions were ideologically built, that is in altering how knowledge was transmitted, and in providing new methodological and theoretical pedagogical approaches (2012: 35). At the beginning, the contents of WGS were greatly articulated on the interest of professors and students – from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds – to understand the connections within individual academic curriculum, between gender and

2 According to Braidotti and Griffin, there is evidence since 1989 from a study funded by the European Commission of the establishment of WGS in Europe. They mention that during those years the interest in the field resulted in "the first European data bank of courses". They highlight that in northern countries such as the United Kingdom and Finland, WGS in both undergraduate and graduate level were well-established by 1995 (2002: 3).

race, national origin, religion, sexuality, class, among other axes of social difference. The main focus was to explain and eradicate social inequalities that included "sexism, racism, classism and homophobia" (Pryse 2000: 105–106).

However, significantly, through the years, feminism has also influenced a wide range of disciplines (Pryse 1998: 4). For example, its immersion into Literary Studies has dramatically changed text analysis. It has disclosed the discipline's numerous biases and has even altered the literary canon by recovering the work of women writers who had been arbitrarily excluded from it (Plain and Seller 2007: 1). Feminist Literary Criticism has been one of the earliest means through which feminism entered the study of literature. Before its intervention, there were limited courses dedicated to women-authored works and there was no academic critique of the patriarchal dynamics that prevailed in this field of study (Lanser 1991: 3). In this context of Literary Studies, interdisciplinarity played a meaningful role in progressively incrementing the number of members of the originally small groups of literary scholars working on feminist themes through alliances with other departments (Rooney 2006: 78). Thus, interdisciplinarity might be seen as a legacy of the feminist movement, a WGS "commitment to challenge the limits of a disciplinary production and to expose the blind spots and structure of exclusion within the higher education system" (Finger and Rosner 2001: 499).

"Interdisciplinarity" was apparently first used in research at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the Social Science Research Council in New York City. It was used to describe a "research that crossed more than one of the Council's divisions" (Thompson Klein 2005: 2).[3]

Moreover, as mentioned by Lichtenstein, in a very popular essay authored by Newell and Green, titled *Defining and Teaching Interdisciplinary Studies* (1982), the term "interdisciplinary studies" refers to "inquiries which critically draw from upon two or more disciplines and which lead to an integration of disciplinary insights" (2012: 36). In another essay written by the same authors quoted by Lichtenstein, the term "interdisciplinary studies" is described as a "process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with

3 Thompson Klein (2005) mentions other origin stories, such as the "rise of American studies in the 1930's and 1940's," and others to alternative educational programs in the 1960s and 1970s.

adequately by a single discipline or profession" (Klein and Newell 1998: 3, Lichtenstein 2012: 36). As we can see, these authors specify that "interdisciplinary study is not a simple supplement but is complementary to and corrective of the disciplines." They also indicate as one successful example of "interdisciplinary studies" what was already called in the USA "women's studies program" (Klein and Newell 1998: 3, Lichtenstein 2012: 36).

With the implementation of interdisciplinarity in WGS, the field has tried to challenge academia from within, as have other studies aiming at social justice, the "disciplinary regime" which often reproduces and reinforces inequalities (Parker and Samantrai 2010: 179). As a central feature of WGS, interdisciplinarity has represented the necessary instrument for keeping the feminist movement alive within academia and a positive term within the intellectual and activist project of WGS (Lichtenstein 2012: 35). Interdisciplinarity resonates with the diverse forms that the feminist movement has taken along the years as a movement that trespasses geographical borders and strategically assumes different perspectives. However, the term "interdisciplinary" comes from "discipline" and undeniably, an interdisciplinary approach or practice cannot exist without the presence of a plurality of disciplines and without institutional spaces in which these diverse disciplines can coexist (Aldrich 2014: 1). In fact, a good number of scholars working in interdisciplinary feminist programmes deal with a mainstream discipline, although they use multiple critical perspectives (Stanford Friedman 1998: 301).

However, while the feminist movement invades the structures that have the power of producing and circulating knowledge, it has not become a "full-fledged partner" in Joan Scott's words, since it continues to work from the peripheries and without the same recognition of other mainstream knowledges (2008: 3). Robyn Wiegman has mentioned that WGS, as other "identity-based knowledges" resulting from social movements which have coined and employed interdisciplinarity, continues to struggle to remain strong among other distinguished and recognised disciplines (2001: 516). In this regard, Vivian M. May highlights that there are divided opinions among feminist scholars, as at the core of WGS there is the dilemma of whether to acquire the same status as other disciplines or continue to be an instrument of change even as outsiders and within the borders of a structure that often rejects feminist critiques (May 2005: 187).

Respecting the paradoxes that have been part of feminism, and that are consequently also present in WGS, Joan Scott has denoted that these

presumed contradictions inside the movement do not necessarily diminish its capacity of contributing to social change. Scott states,

> Feminists have not only wielded critique (against patriarchy, the nation-state, capitalism, socialism, republicanism, science, canons of literature, all the major disciplines) in the name of ending discrimination against women; they have also interrogated the premises of their own beliefs, the foundation of their own movement. This impulse of self-critique has been present from the inception of feminism as a social-political movement (2008: 7).

Clare Hemmings, for her part, has addressed what she names the "autonomy/integration debate" in which two prevalent ideas are faced. These are whether feminism in academia should remain isolated to a certain degree, as a separate discipline that works within an interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological framework or if it ought to work from different and varied disciplines (2006: 15). On one side, she believes that the complete separation of WGS from other disciplines would work against the feminists' aim of transforming academia and could, instead, turn WGS into a hegemonic field of study in which the same dynamics of exclusion that we criticise in other disciplines would take place. On the other hand, some academics who are in favour of WGS becoming a separate discipline think that their working as an autonomous field along with employing collaborative practices with other disciplines will definitely improve its institutional legitimacy and will enrich the field intellectually (Hemmings 2006: 16).

As has been frequently pointed out, WGS desire to reconcile numerous "methods, constituencies, identities, geographies, and activisms" could be described as "impossible" and a "problem with excess" (May 2005: 185). In regard to this constant preoccupation with WGS' capacity of crossing disciplinary boundaries and borrowing from a variety of branches of knowledge, it has been indicated that interdisciplinary knowledge and practices could help to uncover some forced connections that otherwise would be impossible to be carried out (McCallum et al. 2015: 187). Rather than emphasise the potentiality of the field intersectional and multiple aspirations, some people have perceived this aspect of WGS as a lack of coherence and, consequently, a failure of the field.

Vivian May follows Robyn Wiegman's views and supports the interdisciplinary character of WGS "as an area of inquiry and knowledge production that resists closure, invites conversation and promotes a reflexive

capacity" (May 2005: 187). Hence, May is in favour of embracing the field paradoxes and accepting the chaotic intersections and crossings of disciplines. Through interdisciplinary practices WGS could continue to challenge the places it inhabits and provide a critical viewpoint in which it does not stop questioning its own privileges inside the academic space (May 2005: 188).

Interdisciplinarity has been a term often interchanged with the variety of versions that the word discipline can take, such as pluri-, multi-, trans-, anti-, sub- and cross-disciplinarity (McCallum et al. 2015: 190). Still today, the word "interdisciplinarity," and its related terms, can be found in almost all the descriptions of programs, individual courses, stand-alone major and minor, events and curricula dedicated to the field of WGS (Vasterling, et al. 2006: 8, Hark 2007: 10, McCallum et al. 2015: 188). Yet, while interdisciplinary knowledge and practices continue to attract the attention of scholars, maintaining interdisciplinary alliances has not been a simple task. University and national policies, faculties' specific requirements and rules, together with the refusal of some scholars to work with knowledge that dealing with transdisciplinary concepts such as gender and sexuality, complicate even more WGS's interdisciplinary projects.[4] Unfortunately, interdisciplinarity does not prevent the existence of hierarchical relationships inside and between institutions, departments and branches of knowledge. Moreover, interdisciplinarity does not necessarily preclude the isolation of feminist knowledge. A great part of the conversations that took place in academic settings is between feminist scholars, students and professors. Even while working from different disciplines, these people do not get through to those who are not inside feminist circles.

The rigid separation "between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity" does not always represent the reality within the functionality of disciplines. As pointed out by several scholars, disciplines do not work innocently as homogenous and inalterable corpuses (Post 2009: 751). They frequently work across the boundaries of their own presumed expertise, and the knowledge which they have produced has been influenced by theories and methodologies coming from other disciplines (Holm and Liinason

4 It is important to denote that various terms coming from WGS have become transdisciplinary. This is the case for gender and sexuality. These terms together with other intersectional analytical concepts such as race and class have been decisive in expanding feminist knowledge into other disciplines.

2006: 117). In short, disciplines are not as unitary and coherent as some believe them to be. Disciplines are also the result of historical circumstances and relations of power, which is why they contain distinct, and sometimes incongruent, elements, such as "methods of analysis, scholars, students, journals, and grants" (Liinason 2009: 51, McCallum et al. 2015: 188). Certainly, there is no discipline that could stand alone without taking from or collaborating with others. Academics cannot survive without either alliances with colleagues in other departments or networking with other institutions or organisations within or outside academia. Moreover, even when one is explicitly working methodologically, theoretically, and so forth, under an interdisciplinary framework, it is perhaps necessary to understand which border on the traditional disciplines we are intersecting. In other words, to be an interdisciplinary practitioner requires getting to know the disciplines we are trespassing (Blee 2002: 79). Nina Lykke goes further and considers Feminist Studies to be a "postdiscipline" since it can play a double role. It can be considered formally as a discipline able to "claim academic authority" but it can also "maintain a transversal openness and a dialogical approach toward all existing disciplines" (2011: 138). Like Lykke, various feminist scholars propose to view WGS as a discipline that shares collaborative practices in which it works across disciplines, taking advantage of a diversity of methodological and theoretical spectrums (McCallum et al. 2015: 188).

For some scholars, not considering WGS as a discipline in its own right contributes to its marginalisation, and the institutionalisation of WGS has provided legitimation to feminist thoughts that, outside academia were often underestimated. However, the decision to institutionalise feminist knowledge has been a crucial factor in both national and institutional polices. Thus, in countries such as Italy and France, where disciplinarity continues to be dominant, integration with other disciplines has been the most effective approach to follow for sustaining WGS courses (Hemmings 2006: 18).[5]

Nevertheless, it is usually less complicated to provide interdisciplinary opportunities for the exchange of knowledge, such as special events, journal editions, projects, etc. The real challenge is to operate from

5 Hemmings goes further and declares that the success of the institutionalisation or not of WGS "is a question of markets." It depends on the opportunities offered by the changeable academic markets (Hemmings 2006:19).

an interdisciplinary framework in which a variety of disciplines come together and are integrated theoretically, thematically and methodologically (Katz 2001: 524). In a practical sense, being interdisciplinary could allow a more active and effective exchange between feminist scholars working in different fields. It also provides opportunities for the development of new research themes and interesting interactions between academics, which could produce new feminist scholarships. Moreover another incentive of privileging interdisciplinary collaborations in WGS is that programs and research opportunities in the field have been facilitated by external funding opportunities, such as international, European and national grants (Hemmings 2006:19).

Dealing with interdisciplinarity

As an early stage scholar in WGS, interdisciplinarity has been a crucial element in my professional development in the field. To start, the possibility of accessing a postgraduate education in this area of study was partly made possible by GEMMA's openness to receiving students from an amalgam of disciplines. The only formal requirement of the master's degree in terms of academic background is a bachelor's degree or its equivalent from a higher education institution. Of course, other experiences and academic achievements of the applicants influence significantly in the process of admission, but strictly speaking there is no restriction in terms of the disciplines you could bring to the program. The education I received drew from central topics such as feminisms, sexuality, sex, race, diversity, among others, that have been ignored or neglected by mainstream scholarships. Departing from these and other themes that prompt interesting theoretical discussions, students coming from different geographical locations and backgrounds transform classrooms into spaces for multileveled critical conversations.

As an interdisciplinary degree, teaching among eight universities across Europe,[6] GEMMA offers a broad spectrum of approaches inside

6 University of Granada (Spain, coordinator), University of Bologna (Italy), Central European University (Hungary/Austria), University of Hull (England), University of Lodz (Poland), University of Oviedo (Spain), Utrecht University (The Netherlands) and University of York (UK).

mandatory courses such as Feminist Theories, Feminist Methodologies and Feminist History, along with elective courses that are selected by the students according to their own interests. Yet, the whole master's course is configured through the interconnections among established disciplines within the academic institutions that are part of the consortium.

But while this feminist project seems to accomplish almost all its aims, the reality is that GEMMA struggles with "institutional differences in degree requirements and academic cultures, the limited funding available for students, and the sheer challenges of coordination across national and linguistic borders" (Stanford Friedman 2018: 425). The EDGES doctorate in WGS,[7] along with GRACE – an H2020 MSCA European Research Project in Gender and Cultures of Equality, struggle as well with the same issues.

GEMMA, EDGES and GRACE have received people coming from a broad spectrum of disciplines and have operated from the same academic network of universities and organisations in the public and private sectors. Even though it has been admitted that interdisciplinary research projects have the difficulty of reuniting a coherent scientific community able to work together from a diversity of perspectives and expertise, the GEMMA network has more than a decade of experience doing so.

EDGES, for its part, is a joint doctorate in WGS, developed by the University of Bologna together with the universities that are part of the consortium, along with Associazione Orlando, which is also based in Bologna. The majority of the academic institutions that collaborate with EDGES have their own doctorate programs in WGS, though EDGES is the only WGS doctorate in Italy. EDGES students can benefit from the *cotutelle* partnered universities' doctoral courses, seminars, events and academic resources during their period of mobility or as part of their home university academic offer (Stanford Friedman 2018). As Stanford Friedman has stated regarding GRACE and its related projects, "[t]he goals included enhancing gender equality and diversity, offering an interdisciplinary and intercultural degree program, supporting the future employability of its students, and encouraging a synergy between academic institutions and

7 EDGES. European PhD in Gender and Women's Studies. Further information at: https://lingue.unibo.it/it/ricerca/progetti-di-ricerca/progetti-europei/edges-european-phd-in-women-s-and-gender-studies. GRACE. H2020 MSCA European Research Project in Gender and Cultures of Equality. Further information at: http://graceproject.eu/

the wider public and private sectors" (2018: 425). To add to these intellectual exchanges, the requirement of a period of mobility to a second university exposes students to diverse academic scenarios and provides the opportunity for them to also take part in cultural events in locations where feminist, gender and LGBTQ activism has a big presence.

Every university that is part of the consortium works in its distinctive manner, under national and institutional regulations. Not all institutions in the network have a department of WGS. Some universities have a centre, such as the *Instituto Universitario de Investigación de Estudios de las Mujeres y de Género* at the University of Granada. Others work with or from a partner's departments. Some share spaces with colleagues working in other disciplines, etc. Nevertheless, after so many years working together, from diverse national contexts and settings, the GEMMA network continues to subsist as a postgraduate degree, and it is in its fourth edition as a European program. The scholars and institutions that composed this consortium have expanded its horizons by supporting the creation of other interdisciplinary projects in the field, such as EDGES and GRACE.

In the case of GRACE, each university and non-academic institution involved in the program offered to the selected researcher one of five work packages: Mediated Cultures of Gender Equality, Urban Cultures of Gender Equality, Intellectual and Activist Cultures of Gender Equality, Textual and Artistic Cultures of Gender Equality, Employing Cultures of Gender Equality.

All researchers focused their projects on answering the project core questions to allow creative and innovative perspectives for the production of cultures of gender equality. As part of the training experience, every ESR was required to participate in four different schools during the 3 years of the program. The host university in charge of the training school organizes the content and the activities of those schools, privileging the expertise of their own scholars, although experts coming from abroad also have participated in the schools.

As an EDGES' doctoral student, the University of Bologna (UNIBO) is my home university. In UNIBO, EDGES is administratively situated inside a traditional department dedicated to modern languages, literatures and cultures, although from a teaching point of view it brings together, also, other non-linguistic disciplines.[8] EDGES is part of a semiautonomous

8 Lillec, Centro Interuniversitario per lo Studio del Romanticism (CISR).

curriculum which works in partnership with a Doctoral Degree in European Literatures and Comparative Literatures, which is also a joint doctorate, LILEC. The professors working in these programs can also be said to teach interdisciplinarity, because all of them come from established fields such as literary studies, politics, philosophy, law, etc. Also, many professors from outside the program collaborate with students in their research projects.

I must point out that although GEMMA, EDGES and GRACE are multilingual projects, English has always been privileged as the main language for intellectual and informal communication. In my opinion, this linguistic aspect continues to be an element that necessitates being addressed and changed in a near future. Privileging one language over others – even if it is employed as lingua franca – might seem as an obstacle for more heterogeneous perspectives in the field.

As regards the job market possibilities after a PhD in WGS, Stanford Friedman, in 1998, expressed her concerns about the absence of academic positions in the regular disciplines in university departments for people holding a degree in WGS. Being trained in feminism is not necessarily viewed as a form of enriching other disciplines, but as an incomplete education. Often students find themselves without a clear idea of the professional possibilities that are waiting for them after completing their postgraduate degree in WGS (Stanford Friedman 1998: 304). EDGES doctorate tries to address the issue of employability by providing students with an internship experience with one of the project stakeholders, which is usually a public organization or an institution within the private sector. The internship is intended to expand and translate feminist knowledge outside the university.

Also, concerning this aspect of employability, some scholars assert that the experience of doing a PhD in WGS provides practical experiences in dealing with the disciplinary policies of the university and in communicating the value of the knowledge acquired during those years to different recipients within and outside academia. Overall, it has been pointed out that "feminist interdisciplinary training" offers unique skills in forging connections that might have seemed impossible and to pursue "critical projects" (May 2005: 190). In the current scenario in which job opportunities are scarce and we need to reinvent ourselves daily, WGS students have acquired the ability to work in such diverse activities and landscapes,

suitable for expanding the range of possible careers they could perform, within and outside academia.

Conclusions

As a non-European postgraduate student having an educational background in both Europe and institutions that formed part of the US academic system, I must admit that although I have been crossing disciplines and geographical locations for an extended period, this is the first time I have tried to address the meaning of interdisciplinarity in WGS. We have seen throughout this chapter that the interplay among different disciplines, knowledges, practices, theories and perspectives has been noteworthy in the field. The interdisciplinary attribute of WGS continues to be a strategic response to the rigid boundaries that surround different branches of knowledge, to policies that work against feminist knowledges and to the necessity of circulating feminist knowledges across a broad spectrum of disciplines. Bringing feminism to the university was not carried out without complications. For this reason, maintaining feminism within academia requires a strong political commitment and transnational alliances across institutions often based in different countries.

Feminism has never been coherent as it has always moulded itself according to the circumstances and necessities of each geopolitical context. Part of the main characteristics that distinguish WGS is precisely the capacity of pursuing an institutional path while questioning its own foundations. The feminist movement recognises the power of institutions of higher education while trying to change them from the inside-out. Hopefully, a WGS academic background will personally transform a diverse group of people who will eventually perform different types of roles using knowledges in which they have integrated critical perspectives, having participated in horizontal relations between professionals.

From what I have experienced, I think that WGS continues to be a challenging field and to be able to manage the demands of partnerships and cooperation among specialists working from different universities, we

must feel the need to continue privileging interdisciplinary practices. Even though not all universities offer programs that have acquired a status equal to those offered by other "traditional disciplines," many have found ways to work in line with other programs already integrated into the university. The conundrum in the WGS academic programs is between acquiring a coherent corpus of courses or continuing to be flexible in changing and transforming itself, embracing new theories and practices. What the best form of doing feminism from academia is may remain an unanswered question, but it will always be a necessity to continue questioning how feminist knowledge is shaped and influenced by the constant exchange it has with other disciplines.

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Section 2 Embodied Subjectivities

Cristina Gamberi

Introduction: Narrating Feminist Subjectivation

The two chapters included in this section are evidence of what may be identified as the fourth wave of feminism. Like previous "waves," this fourth wave has emerged in response to changing socio political conditions, while consolidating and extending some of the most productive currents in academic research and social movements over recent decades.

Broadly characterised by the rise of feminist activism on social media, fourth-wave feminism has become visible thanks to the transnational fight against the feminicides, gender-based violence and everyday sexism that saturate our world and also through a surge of affect (Lagarde [1990] 2006, Berlant 2000, Ahmed 2004 Butler 2006, Segato 2017). Contemporary feminism has also engaged and further developed three primary areas that have emerged within political thought and academic work: the focus on the body, which has been most extensively advanced in feminist theory since the second wave; the exploration of emotions and sexuality, which was investigated most tellingly within queer theory; and intersectionality, a concept produced and developed by such third-wave black feminists and feminists of colour as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, and Gloria Anzaldúa and which has proven such an essential starting point for tracking the ways in which power operates (Anzaldúa 1987, hooks 1987, Mohanty 1988, Butler 1990, 1993, Braidotti 1994, Lorde 1994, Grosz 1994).

The innovative chapters included in this section offer a series of examples to demonstrate the potential of the fourth-wave perspective when studying issues of body and sexuality, intersectionality, and affects. Indeed, sexuality and sexual identities have emerged as a central dimension for historical and analytical investigation. Alice Sabbatini, for example, investigates the pervasiveness of the sexual imperative that permeates our society, especially the conceptualisation of sexuality that draws on a line of thought running from Michel Foucault back to Sigmund Freud and Richard von Kraft Ebbing. In an attempt to make sense of the bodies that suffered from social marginalisation and pathologisation based on an absence of sexual attraction, a-sexuality is

interrogated not only in order to cast new light on resistant and non-conforming sexual identities but also to question the very premises of women's and queer movements: if sex is political, what is the place for a-sexuality in contemporary activism?

Sexuality as a (virtual) site of complexity is also explored by Rocío Palomeque Recio who connects sex work to neoliberal academia, higher education, and the sharp rise in student indebtedness. "Sugar dating" websites are under scrutiny, accused not only of encouraging prostitution and exploiting the financial insecurity of young women but, more interestingly, for the way in which they have been impacted by the neoliberal dynamics affecting university education in the United Kingdom. Advertised "as a real and effective way to alleviate the stress of student debt," "Sugar dating" sites reveal the link between rising tuition fees and a growing influx of educated young women turning to online dating in pursuit of financial backing from sources alternative to the labour market.

Another way of reflecting on the rich cartography that these chapters sketch out is to think about temporality and the need for feminism to maintain the simultaneity of the past, present, and future. By drawing attention to past feminist waves as a crucial inheritance, younger generations of scholars demonstrate that feminist genealogies still matter. Understood as a critical and analytical method, the feminist project has used genealogy to recover lost voices and experiences, particularly those of women and minority groups, but also to uncover what Foucault called "subjugated knowledges," namely non-conceptual or insufficiently elaborated knowledges that have been disqualified, neglected, and marginalised by mainstream history and narratives (Foucault 2003). Perhaps most importantly, feminist genealogies have been a crucial means to destabilise the present in order to enhance our critical agency and our powers of resistance (Scott 2011).

One of the central challenges that these chapters pose is to reclaim "the politics of location" as a "struggle for accountability" in one's own research (Rich 1984). By drawing attention to the situated as opposed to the universal both chapters self-reflect on the positioning of the researcher in doing her own research. As women, as white women, as white women from a younger generation who were born in Western countries, with an individual history shaped by longer and multiple historical trajectories, the

two authors recognise that the subject who is researching, writes, and is at work is no longer a universal, neutral, and genderless subject but is, on the contrary, a subject who knows where she has been located. This analytical recognition suggests new political possibilities, casting light on one's multiple locations and allowing new forms of self-reflexivity and the recognition of the multiple differences that exist among women.

By asking who the legitimate subject(s) of knowledge are, these chapters invite the reader to interrogate knowledge-producing practices and to de-familiarize the terrain of knowledge in order to adopt a new, fresh look at what is presented as natural and unquestionable. They illuminate, in other words, the power of situated knowledges, the "partial perspective" advocated by Donna Haraway that enables both scholars to enter uncharted territory, producing innovative research and unveiling that the production of knowledge is still a political act (Haraway 1988). This blurring of the private and the public has thus enabled both Sabbatini and Recio legitimately to move usually private experiences into the public sphere. In this way, both scholars reclaim the second-wave feminist motto "the personal is political."

Finally, having identified the problematic question of precisely which subjects are entitled to knowledge and which forms of knowledge can legitimately be elaborated in our current neoliberal times, a further step becomes possible: these essays can be viewed as evidence of the feminist apprenticeship that has taken shape, thanks to the GEMMA program. By reading these theoretical accounts carefully, the process of feminist subjectivation that lies at the heart of the two transformative years of the Master's program is finally disclosed. They are coming-of-age, or rather, consciousness-raising narratives – a feminist account, an account for oneself with and through others, that narrates the struggles, challenges, and accomplishments that have been possible during the GEMMA Master.

By capturing contemporary political imaginaries and reshaping past feminist inheritance, these chapters follow Sara Ahmed's words, when she reminds us that "feminism is happening in the very places that have historically been bracketed as not political: in domestic arrangements, at home, [...] as well as on the street, in parliament, at the university. Feminism is wherever feminism needs to be. Feminism needs to be everywhere" (Ahmed 2017).

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Rocío Palomeque

Women Asking Questions: Embodied Subjectivity as a Valid Epistemology

Abstract The purpose of this work is to show how, using my own dissertation as a case study, stagnant forms of scientific discourses and methodologies can be challenged using feminist theory and methodology. Feminist methodology that places the body of the researcher and its material reality as the nucleus from when the knowledge is produced, such as Lorde and Rich's works, has been crucial in developing a methodology for my master's thesis. Departing from my own standpoint to produce valid knowledge meant critically examining my own surroundings, which eventually led me to ask pertinent questions regarding my dissertation topic, *sugar dating*. Additionally, being aware of others' material reality in order to conduct vulnerable research means creating a more ethical, embodied work. The critical examination of what constitutes valuable knowledge was also extended to *how* the knowledge is produced. Thus, this chapter presents the methodology of my dissertation as an example of how to create an embodied research that uses one's ontology as standpoint, therefore confronting the notion of "disembodied objectivity".

Keywords: Methodology, feminism, feminist epistemology, embodiment, objectivity, Eurocentrism, women's studies, standpoint theory

We are not "the woman question" asked by somebody else;
We are the women who ask the questions

Adrienne Rich

Introduction

Feminist methodologies are not an extremely recent phenomenon. Donna Haraway published her brilliant piece on feminist methodology, "Situated Knowledges", 30 years ago, in 1988 (see Haraway 1988). Adrienne Rich wrote her essay on the "politics of location" in 1984 (see Rich 1984), reclaiming

the female body and its material conditions as a place to start questioning and embracing the many identities that configure our socially constructed bodies: white, black, female, male, etc. Even before them, in 1983, Audre Lorde had published her influential piece about being a black, female and lesbian poet and activist, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (see Lorde 1983). Both Rich and Haraway develop in their work the idea of having a fragmented self, a self that cannot belong wholly to a category, whether women, black, middle class, man, bisexual, etc. Both question the idea of objectivity and present an epistemology that values the notion of "speaking from somewhere". Probably the paradigmatic text about fragmented identities is Haraway's critically acclaimed "Cyborg Manifesto" (1991), which deals with the problem of objectivity in science and in the production of scientific knowledge. Sandra Harding exposes in "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemologies" how our social situation shapes our very understanding of the world (Harding 1993a) and therefore being oblivious to how this affects our research is falling into the trap of disembodied objectivity, trying to maintain the fiction that the researcher is a blank page that comes with no ontology, no history that will permeate her research.

After becoming familiar with these theories during the first year of my master's degree, I decided to use them to begin constructing my own methodology. I wanted to confront hegemonic scientific discourses not only with the content of my dissertation but also with the form. I believe it's mostly up to us, feminist social researchers, to expand the limits of not only what scientific knowledge is but also of how this knowledge is produced. Therefore, in my methodology chapter I introduced a section about how I had come up with the idea of my research, because it resonated with me being a young woman. Both Lorde and Rich – and, to a lesser degree, Haraway and Harding – write about producing work *as women* – and as lesbian and black, but those characteristics do not apply to me. As a feminist researcher familiar with the criticism that those accused of being essentialist usually have to face (Heilmann 2011: 79) I had to navigate the tension between a politics of location and using some universalising categories such as "woman" in order to refer to a social group that share some common features.

I resolved to keep using the word "women" in my dissertation. Far from trying to allude to an "essence" in the female experience, I believe that there is value in using "woman" as a political category, to use it as an

umbrella term that represents a large group of population upon which the "female condition" has been imposed. In addition, regarding my investigation for the master's thesis, it has proven to be a very useful approach as the subjects have identified either as male or female to enrol in the *sugar dating* website that I have analysed. I, therefore, think that gender is a social construction and not a chosen identity, and I use "woman" as a political category. After all, "[t]he womanhood or 'womanness' emerging from the position as woman is a real feature of women, whether they wish it or not" (Heilmann 2011: 80).

I have drawn from the cited feminist methodology to create an embodied research that considered myself, as well as the prospective participants, human, with an attached body and material reality. I explain how my personal – embodied – circumstances have led me to ask questions to research *sugar dating*, as well why it is important to become familiarised with the notion of "vulnerable subjects" if one wants to interview a group that can fall into this category.

"Sugar dating" as an area of interest

To explain how my life has affected the decision of studying the phenomenon of "sugar dating", the reader must be familiarised with the context. "Sugar dating" is how, in the English-speaking world, relationships are constructed around the notion of a "mutually beneficial relationship"[1] between an older, affluent male – called Sugar Daddy – and a younger, usually financially disempowered female – Sugar Babies or Babes, as known. The practice of "sugar dating" is generally done through websites[2] that mimic the functioning of the "traditional" – those that do not include

1 That is the definition provided by one of the main UK sugar dating sites, SeekingArrangement.com.

2 The British "sugar dating" websites with more users are: Sugar Daddies UK http://www.sugardaddiesuk.co.uk/, "Sugar Daddy Meet" https://www.sugardaddymeet.com/, "Sugar Daddy for Me" http://www.sugardaddyforme.com/, "Sugar Daddie" https://www.sugardaddie.com, and SeekingArrangement https://www.seekingarrangement.com, in no particular order.

a previous accord about one part receiving goods or money – online dating websites (Palomeque Recio 2018: 7). One of the biggest websites in the United Kingdom is SeekingArrangement (hereafter, also known as SA) (Sugar Daddy Site 2018), which has 10 million members worldwide. Of those, around eight out of ten are Sugar Babes and the rest are Sugar Daddies (Katanna 2018), which suggests a power imbalance in terms of economic capital between older males and younger females. Theoretically, this still active[3] website offers both young men[4] and women the possibility of adopting the role of the "Sugar Baby". Additionally, both men and women can be "Sugar Daddies" or "Sugar Mommas" – the female equivalent of the Sugar Daddy (Palomeque Recio 2018: 8). However, SA is constructed around heterosexual relationships, as can be perceived just contemplating its layout, images and publicity. The aim of these *"sugar dating"* sites, therefore, is mainly to match young *women*, Sugar Babies, who offer their company and are seeking some kind of financial relief, with affluent, older *men* that provide them with needed financial security, usually with a monthly allowance, and/or with a superior lifestyle.

For the purpose of completing my master's dissertation, I focused on analysing the SA website, choosing this one among others for several reasons, including the fact that in 2010 they launched their "Sugar Baby University" programme, whose unique features are explained further down the line. Brandon Wade in the United States founded this site in 2006, offering immediate access to Internet users in the United Kingdom, which is where I have geographically contextualised my work, since I was, at that moment, residing in the United Kingdom and doing my master's degree at a British higher education institution (the University of Hull). The reality behind "sugar dating" is that SA can be interpreted as a site situated in the blurred lines that separate prostitution and dating, because women keep constituting the vast majority of those who seek financial relief in exchange for their company and/or services (Palomeque Recio 2018: 8). Although sex is not explicitly included in the agreements, or at

3 At least at the moment of writing (August 2018).

4 I understand "men" and "women" not as essentialist categories to define a biologically male or biologically female body but rather as a political category. Therefore, under the label "woman" fits every person who is understood by society as a *woman* regardless of their gender identity. Thus, transwomen should feel included in this category if they have altered their material conditions and are read by society as women.

least it is not advertised as part of the "mutually beneficial relationship's offered by SeekingArrangement.com, in reality it is not unusual that an exchange of sex for money occurs" (Palomeque Recio 2018: 43). "Sugar dating" may pose some of the harms associated with prostitution for the women involved, such as sexual, physical and psychological violence (Coyet al. 2011: 445), as there is enough evidence to suggest similarities which can be traced between the dynamic of "sugar dating" and prostitution (Palomeque Recio 2018: 26). However, there can be also differences between "sugar dating" and the services offered by a sex worker, as a kind of durable "relationship" in which the Sugar Baby is regularly paid, whether with goods or with money, can be established between a Sugar Daddy and a Sugar Baby. In this kind of relationship, sex could be considered just an intrinsic part of "dating". Both Sugar Daddies and Sugar Babies tend to highlight in their testimonies that in order to find a suitable "partner", some "chemistry" between them is imperative (Nayar 2017: 335). This suggests an invocation of discourses based on a romantic notion of love and not only a pure economic transaction (Nayar 2017: 335).

I first became interested in the topic of "sugar dating" in 2017, during the first year of the GEMMA programme. I read some news in the British newspaper *The Guardian* explaining that a "sugar dating" website had posted an ad describing this phenomenon as a way of aiding students in a Belgian university in their search to reach a superior lifestyle by engaging in a relationship with an affluent male (Boffey 2017). The website was facing legal charges in this country, accused of encouraging prostitution and exploiting the financial insecurity of young women (Boffey 2017). At the time I was not familiar with the "sugar dating" dynamics, but the news caught my attention enough to keep me seeking more information about it. However, the academic sources of knowledge about the topic were practically non-existent, especially in the British context, as some academic papers could be found about "sugar dating" in the United States (see Nayar 2017), and I had to resort to British tabloids of dubious quality. I was utterly shocked at the lack of research in a field that looked, presumably, like a glamorised type of prostitution. I then learned that, as I have already stated, in 2010 SA had launched its "Sugar Baby University" programme in the United Kingdom (SeekingArrangement 2018), which, following the lead of its Belgian equivalent, directly targeted university students by offering them premium membership in their website if they registered with the email account provided by their higher education

institution. SA advertised itself by offering relief from the skyrocketing debt levels that students are increasingly having to face when finishing their university education in the United Kingdom (Roberts 2018: 30): "[i]n 2017, 100,000 U.K. students registered on SeekingArrangement, which represented a 72 percent increase from the previous year, in order to find some relief from tuition, student loan debt, and other college-related costs" (SeekingArrangement 2018).

Interestingly, the link between the rise of tuition fees and an increase in the willingness of young women to participate in "sugar dating" dynamics seemed (and continues to seem) to be pretty straightforward (Palomeque Recio 2018: 35). Brandon Wade, the CEO of SA, declared in 2014, a few years after launching the Sugar Baby University programme, that: "[y]our [British] new tuition fees have been great for business, we had a huge influx of beautiful, highly educated young women" (Moss 2014). The great influx of participants has been constituted by *young women*, which suggests that a gendered dynamic that places women in a weak financial position, pushing them to seek relief from alternative sources to the labour market, could be functioning behind "sugar dating" and that young males are pursuing financial relief in other areas or are not facing the same dire economic situation.

After reading more articles on online British newspapers about the "sugar dating" dynamic, I became fascinated enough to resolve that I wanted to research this topic for my master's thesis. In addition, the field was, and still is, pretty much unexplored, which meant both a challenge, because of the lack of bibliography available, and an opportunity to do something truly original, if only because I was entering uncharted territory. However, it took some inner reflection to understand why I, particularly, was so interested in researching this topic among the immense availability of gendered dynamics worthy of research going on worldwide.

Embodied lived experiences as research standpoint

As a Spanish white woman, I am attached to that group that cannot afford to forget the relevance of her body (Haraway 1988: 576). I am never allowed to forget that I am a "woman", because my material reality has

been shaped by this socially constructed gender that was imposed on my body since before I was born. Therefore, if my very own ontology has been affected by my gender, it seemed futile to affirm that my research was not going to be. I have consciously chosen, then, to depart from my material reality as "woman" to conduct this research.

The economic class I belong to also impacts my very understanding of the world; as a middle class woman, I do not possess the privileges that accompany belonging to an upper-middle class, since I place myself in – economically, but not culturally – low-middle class. I was a student, thanks to national scholarships and maintenance grants, supported by a series of low-paid, part-time jobs. I can continue my doctoral studies as a result of having been awarded a full bursary by Nottingham Trent University, otherwise I could never have paid for it myself. I have never lived a life that saved me the preoccupations of day-to-day life, such as being oblivious to the price of rent, food or utilities, which I believe kept me down to earth even in the nuttiest years of adolescence.

However, I am also aware that, thanks to what is known as the welfare state, and a considerable family effort, I could attend university in a city different from my hometown, even coming from low-middle class. I could also study a master's degree that eventually led to a PhD, therefore I am socially considered to be "highly educated". Thus, I admit I am furnished with a cultural and social capital that grants me a series of privileges, although in my case there is no perfect correspondence between economic and cultural capital, as is sometimes the case (Lin 1999: 29). My unique situation means enjoying some privileges that I would not deny, such as having had the opportunity to study in a foreign country – the United Kingdom – thanks to the GEMMA master's degree, which allows its students to pay their home fees instead of the foreign ones, which in the United Kingdom would more than double the Spanish ones.

In addition, I am Caucasian, which grants me endless privileges in the post-Brexit era, and in an increasingly racist world. Oppressions and privileges often cohabit in the complex lived experiences of individuals, and in my case it is no different. In Haraway's words, "There is no way to 'be' simultaneously in all, or wholly in any, of the privileged [i.e. subjugated] positions structured by gender, race, nation and class" (Qtd. in Hinton 2014: 104). All the features that define me as a person and as a political subject – a woman, Spanish, white, young, low-middle class, holding a higher education degree – have converged to create a unique point of view. It's this point of view that I use as my standpoint.

Thus, in order to find a topic to search for my master's thesis, I have departed from my lived experience to ask the questions that have ultimately led me to research the "sugar dating" dynamic: why are young women engaging in "mutually beneficial" agreements with older, affluent men? How have their particular economic circumstances affected their decisions? Does the fact that the United Kingdom has no maintenance grants impacted their lives, somehow? Is crisis economy to blame or was *sugar dating* also booming before the financial crisis of 2008? As a student who survived, thanks to the Spanish general scholarship and low-paid jobs – mainly tutoring – I wondered, what would have happened to me if I had been unable to access state financial support? If, as the information provided by the SA website suggests, so many university students are opting for sugar dating "as a real and effective way to alleviate the stress of student debt" (SeekingArrangement 2018), I assume that student debt is playing a role in the "sugar world". I, who thankfully studied my degrees in a country where student loans are not prevalent, started wondering if I, too, would have considered sugar dating a viable option to fund my studies had I been born in the United Kingdom, a country where maintenance grants were eliminated years ago and tuition fees have skyrocketed since 2010 (Sanders and Hardy 2015: 748). I cannot know for certain if I would have considered sugar dating, or if I would have resorted to low-paid jobs or have asked for a student loan, because fortunately I did not have to face these circumstances. But I can ask these kinds of questions because I can compare my own situation with theirs. My own standpoint as a low-middle class woman has encouraged me to critically look at a situation worth further investigation, because I can relate to them. This does not mean that in order to investigate a topic one must be somehow touched by it, just that it is easier for a person to come up with questions regarding inequality – whether it is gender-based, racial, economical or sexuality-based – if that person has suffered from it.

Objective knowledge: Deconstructing the fiction

To immerse oneself in the inscrutable ways of the production of knowledge, especially if one uses gender as an analysis tool, is to clash with

the dominant discourse of the so-called objectivity of science. Scientific discourses that are not located – the question of *from where* the researcher is speaking is not addressed – need to be scrutinised in the light of feminism (Hinton 2014). Forgetting that research is always done by a person or a group of people, each coming from a different background and furnished with a different ontology, means a fatal error if one wants to critically examine the production of knowledge. A politics of location that challenges the partial perspective of any research is imperative in order to perform a feminist praxis. If we follow Haraway's dissection and criticism of "disembodied scientific objectivity" (Haraway 1988: 576), which proved that "objective" research is virtually impossible, it appears to be futile to keep maintaining the fiction that the production of scientific knowledge is not intertwined with the researcher's material conditions. The best solution to this dilemma, thus, would be letting the reader know where the researcher comes from – a politics of location (Hinton 2014: 100) – and what the circumstances that have shaped her very understanding of the world are.

A politics of location can be understood as a feminist praxis because women – just like any other oppressed subject – can be the ones who define their own lived reality:

> [b]y insisting on the primary locus of the body as the site from which one's partial perspective can be *enunciated*, a politics of location clears a space from women to speak of their experiences on their own terms (Hinton 2014: 101)

Therefore, I believe that explaining where I, as the researcher in charge of my dissertation, come from does not only not threaten the "objectivity" of my research but, on the contrary, it does give the reader a sense of my material reality, and therefore my (possible) "bias" – just like any other researcher's ontology can also be "biased". According to Haraway, by locating our production of knowledge we are avoiding the irresponsibility – or the "lack of accountability" (Haraway, qtd. in Hinton 2014: 101) – which characterises those "un-located" works.

Those who pretend to be "objective" and have not critically examined their surroundings may fall into the trap of producing Eurocentric and male-biased work, since those are the two main characteristics of our Western societies (Harding 1993b: 59). Additionally, the very fact that our hegemonic notion of knowledge sees only as "valuable content" those arguments that are constricted in the regulated form of a paper that can

be assessed, peer reviewed and stored proves that there is an Eurocentric bias towards what constitutes "valid knowledge" (Aikenhead 2008: 582). If hegemonic paradigms tend to reproduce themselves through every means available (Simon 1985: 37), thus scientific knowledge should not be considered to be any different just because it is presented as "a-hegemonic", since intellectuals are as guilty of reproducing ideology as any other societal group (Simon 1985: 93). Following Harding, I strongly support the idea that

> one's social situation enables and set limits on what one can know; some social situations – critically unexamined dominant ones – are more limiting than others in this respect, and what makes these situations more limiting is their inability to generate the most critical questions about received belief (Harding 1993a: 55)

Those departing from dominant situations – in the case of our Western, capitalist societies, upper and upper-middle class, white men – seem to hinder the possibilities to critically question one's social situation, if only because coming from a more privileged background furnishes the subject with a relative blindness towards contingent social inequalities. According to Harding, an underprivileged experience opens the limits of the thinkable (Harding 1993a: 55), allowing the subject to criticise the circumstances that have led to the lack of privilege, whether race, class, gender or sexual orientation. It is not that the standpoint of the oppressed is innocent, but rather "in principle they are least likely to allow denial of the critical and interpretive core of all knowledge" (Haraway, qtd. in Hinton, 103). Questioning our reality, then, is a useful manner to start gestating our research.

Researching vulnerable groups

However, when we intend to conduct research that involves interviewing participants, as mine did, at the beginning, we have to keep in mind that they are embodied subjects too, with their own material reality. When I was designing my dissertation plan, I resolved that I wanted to include Sugar Babies' voices in it. It was important f or me to try and elucidate the reality behind *sugar dating* and not only what I could see about it on the website. Sugar Daddies and Sugar Babies were the only ones who could really tell

me what happens behind the scenes and both as a matter of practicality. Since it would have been really hard to get permission from my university ethical committee to interview Sugar Daddies, and for my desire to use the point of view of the oppressed, I decided to try to contact Sugar Babies and organize semi-structured interviews.

However, this would have been my first experience with fieldwork, which meant that I really wanted to prepare myself and do my best. I decided to use what is known as the "snowball method": once a willing participant is found, this person suggests another possible suitable candidate to the investigator, which leads the researcher to another person, etc. This method seemed especially useful since it is commonly used when researching vulnerable subjects and participants who are, for whatever reason, hard to reach (Baltar and Brunet 2012: 58).

Sugar Babies could be considered a vulnerable group, since vulnerable people are defined by Liamputtong as those that experience "diminished autonomy due to physiological/psychological factors or status inequalities" (Liamputtong 2007: 7). Women in prostitution are usually included in the vulnerable group due to the possibility of suffering from stigma as well as being socially considered "outcasts" (Liamputtong 2007: 7). As I have argued, "sugar dating" may share common features with prostitution and therefore can place "Sugar Babies" in a vulnerable position to suffer from status inequalities. I could not possibly know, before conducting the interviews, if those women involved in *sugar dating* were going to consider themselves as sex workers, or prostitutes. Nor do all the "Sugar Babies" have to share the same opinion regarding this matter either. However, out of precaution, I resolved to learn how to navigate sensitive topics that may cause them some discomfort. I acknowledge that the research I intended to conduct could be understood as "sensitive", since it required a "disclosure of behaviours or attitudes which would normally be kept private and personal, which might result in offence or led to social censure or disapproval, and/or which might cause the respondent discomfort to express" (Liamputtong 2007: 5). After all, I wanted them to share parts of their intimate lives to discern what social and gender patterns were involved in these kinds of agreements. Being aware of our own body, as well as our material reality, also includes being aware of others' and of how our research may impact their emotional well-being. Therefore, I believe a feminist, embodied methodology has to be extended not only to the first steps towards gestating a piece of research but also towards the possible participants.

Conclusion

Entering the school system – beginning with kindergarten and finishing doctoral studies – means being submerged in a standardised process of learning since our infancy. We are, at first, presented with truths that – at least in Spain – you are not supposed to refute. However, as one progresses through the school system, critical thinking is – or should be – encouraged. If our education has been of quality, by the time we reach the last stages we will have learned to challenge the very idea of truth and the social construction of what constitutes thinkable knowledge and which thoughts are possible and necessary (Flax 1987). We will be able to try and elucidate the hidden powers that define what is valuable content, deserving of being absorbed by pupils, to challenge the concept of counter-knowledge (Cegarra-Navarro et al. 2014: 165) and to investigate who may profit from keeping citizens in a semi-status of permanent disinformation, in some sort of addicted-to-Huxley's-soma state. Perhaps the real value of "learning" is nothing more than acquiring the necessary tools to critically examine everything that surrounds us, including the very notion of knowledge.

Being familiar with feminist methodology has been vital to me in order to challenge hegemonic notions of what constitutes valuable knowledge, as well as valid forms of producing knowledge. I can say with certainty that I leave the GEMMA programme with a different perspective towards knowledge(s) from when I entered it. Studying this master's degree has provided me with the skills to, at least, start suspecting that what I had previously studied was gender, race and class-biased. Therefore, I started questioning the knowledge that I had acquired throughout the years, realising that my university curricula were overwhelmingly male-centred, as well as Eurocentric, and, in terms of lying-by-omission, extremely (neo-)colonial. I had studied Translation Studies (BA) and Humanities (BA) at the Pablo de Olavide University (Seville) where not one single course on postcolonial theory, for example, was taught. Never was the notion that "contemporary literature" meant studying European and North American literatures challenged, nor was it ever discussed that "Medieval History" simply meant "Western European Medieval History".

In the GEMMA programme I became familiarised with the notion of "herstory" (originally coined in 1970 by anthropologist Robin Morgan. See

also Waterman 1993) as well as with standpoint epistemologies (Harding 1993a: 49), Haraway's "situated knowledges" (Haraway 1988: 575) and the "politics of location" (Hinton 2014: 99). These new ways of thinking provided me with the grounds to let both curiosity and a sense of historical responsibility lead the seeking of different methodologies: a feminist, post colonial and embodied methodology that allowed me to connect my personal experiences with the production of academic knowledge, confronting the fiction of disembodied objectivity.

The writing of my MA dissertation has provided me with the perfect opportunity to challenge the stagnant, hegemonic forms of scientific discourse, using a feminist methodology according to my own values, and departing from my own lived experiences to research the reality behind the concept of "sugar dating". Additionally, extending the notion of "embodiment" to our possible participants can create a more ethical and considered research, where both researchers and interviewees are comfortable acknowledging the reality of their bodies. I hope that by having explained where I come from and how my origins have impacted my academic work I have contributed to the growing body of feminist epistemologies and methodologies. I also hope to inspire future students to enter the GEMMA programme and benefit from it as much as I have done.

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Alice Sabbatini

Reflections on Two Years of Research on Asexuality and the Lack of Sexual Attraction

Abstract The 2 years of the master's degree of GEMMA led me to acknowledge and advocate for the opportunity intrinsic in asexuality: the deconstruction of the seriousness with which we are called to interrogate our sexuality and then present it to the world as an unambiguous and definitive orientation. Investigating asexuality also brought me to research a feminist and queer approach that could make sense of the social marginalisation and pathologisation of bodies based on the lack of sexual attraction. Indeed, in the last two centuries many subjects have been affected by its narrative in the process of naturalisation of desire, especially the female: to some it has been described as part of their nature, in others as a dysfunction to be fixed, and to others more prescribed as the right way to be. This chapter is a story about how the private, public, and academic intertwine not to reach a peace, not to reprogram a new (female) being finally free and independent, but to realise that if sex and sexuality, in constant and fluid change, are essential in the ways love and happiness are organised in our society, they are not so for a law of nature.

Keywords : Asexuality, sexuality, sexual attraction, private, identity, feminism, queer, society, orientation, asexual spectrum, history, maturity

Introduction

Starting the Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies, GEMMA, in September 2015. I was armed with simple and innocuous explanations of what at that time I knew about gender studies and asexuality, as well as with the desire to enter a world that I had until then looked at only from afar. A world that I imagined made of organised activism and opinions expressed out loud confidently in university classrooms, and from which I was going to re-emerge with the tools to really, and finally, become myself. Instead, what happened in the 2 years of the master's degree was falling in love with Bologna, despite a long-standing desire

to live abroad; falling in love with a classmate immediately after coming to terms with the fact that romantic relationships were not for me; and questioning and critiquing those same explanations and definitions I was initially so proud of. Now, a year from the end of my experience in the GEMMA program, I find myself asking two questions: Is there a space for me and my subject of study within gender studies and feminism? And does my sexual identity have any kind of value or impact on the contemporary European society, especially being in a heterosexual relationship?

Through a reflection on the interconnection of personal and professional relationships, of the private and the academic, of the doubts about my own sense of self and the Italian society around me, I am going to explore the pervasiveness of the sexual imperative. In doing so, I will trace the steps that brought me to research a feminist and queer approach that could make sense of the social marginalisation and pathologisation of bodies based on the lack of sexual attraction. This is a story about how the private, public and academic intertwine not to reach a peace, not to reprogram a new (female) being finally free and independent, but to realise that if sex and sexuality, in constant and fluid change, are indeed essential in the ways love and happiness are organised in our society, they are not so for a law of nature.

How sexuality came to be

In *The White Album*, Joan Didion writes

> we select what we see, select the most workable of the multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the 'ideas' with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience. Or at least we do for a while. (Didion 1979: 11)

Didion is here talking about her writing, but also about the traumatic end of the 1960s and of all that meant for the United States. Reading this, I cannot but recognise in her words a thought that I had tried to formulate for quite some time about the way I used to understand sex and sexuality. I have never been given "the speech," nor have I ever attended a sex education class in 13 years of public school. Yet, I ended up formulating well-defined

ideas about those topics, selecting those narratives and conceptualisations that would make of me an educated and cultured person. At the base of the resulting belief system there was the knowledge that sex is natural, and that being attracted by someone is part of our shared human nature.

It is probably telling of the environment around me (or perhaps only of my own character) that never being attracted to someone was not enough to make me question this certain knowledge. I must have been the wrong one, the damaged one. I needed the accidental discovery of the term "asexual spectrum"[1] to begin to doubt the premises underlying those ideas in which I firmly believed, and of which I was so proud of. This exciting discovery coincided with the admission to the master's degree of GEMMA. I could finally study topics that I had read about and lived in almost complete isolation, and I could meet people who would understand and support my path of discovery of asexuality.

Commonly understood as the orientation of the person who does not experience sexual attraction toward any gender, asexuality is becoming more and more known in the academic world and within queer activism. The last 20 years have witnessed the birth and growth of an asexual community, mostly active online through blogs, forums and websites, of which the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) seems to be the point of reference. This community offers a sense of belonging and a source of information for those who previously did not have suitable terms and places to talk about their sexual orientation, and it campaigns to gain attention from the media and general public, as well as a legitime place in the LGBTQ+ acronym.

I quickly realised that studying asexuality, even in a feminist and gender studies environment, is not an easy task. After all, we have been told that to be sexually inclined toward other people, especially the opposite sex, is part of our human nature, if not its first and primal instinct. It is, however, important to realise that the way in which the West looks at sex and sexuality has not always been the same. And I say West because asexuality is a product developed over time and with characteristics peculiar of Western cultures.

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1 The term is based on the idea that sexuality is a spectrum whose intensity varies from person to person. Asexual spectrum refers to a sexuality range so low in intensity to be close to asexuality. Common identities in the asexual spectrum are gray-sexuality and demi-sexuality.

There is a theory shared among many historical scholars (Chauncey 1982, Davidson 1987, Philips and Reay 2011) that the last two centuries have been crucial in giving importance to individual sexual expression and in setting categories of sexual orientation. What has happened is the consolidation in the second half of the nineteenth century of a medical model over the previous moral and religious one (Chauncey 1982). This change can be clearly seen in the consequent emergence of new fields of study, such as psychoanalysis, sexology, and sexual therapy. Therefore, sex is now depicted as the most hidden and natural expression of the self, and we are all invited to investigate and name our sexuality to better understand who we really are. This is what Davidson (1987) calls the psychiatric style of reasoning, which links the sexual identity to the impulses, the desires, and the pleasures of the individual. However, it would be simplistic to argue that science single-handedly revolutionised the sexual talk or invented it altogether. More likely, it both helped and was influenced by the historical process already underway. For example, Chauncey identifies as one of its engines the challenges posed to the Victorian system of sex and gender: the women's movement, the growing visibility of gay male urban subcultures, and the entry of women into the working world.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the scientific narrative was integrated with a new one, that of the need for a free sex, required to be truly free and politically conscious individuals. This reading has been famously criticised by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1976), who rejected the repressive theory, according to which sexuality has been for centuries repressed following the consolidation of the bourgeoisie, a sexuality that can now be finally free, thanks to the recent Western fights for emancipation. Through his critical reading of the history of sex, Foucault instead highlighted that if on the surface talking about sex and engaging in sexual acts seem to us liberating practices, the discourses built around sexuality and constantly produced are above all tools for the control and moderation of bodies: Sex is part of the apparatus with which an institute, such as a state, monitors its population. Concerns of the falling of the birth and fertility rates of the white citizens in many Western countries demonstrate this trend.

In feminism and gender studies, it has also been emphasised that the social constructs of sexuality then interact with the most diverse aspects of an individual's personality, creating unique experiences, feelings, and

understandings. If anything is clear it is that sexuality is first and foremost a social construct that interacts with categories such as gender, class, race, age, disability, just to name a few.

Immature in a sexual world

According to my imagination, studying in Bologna, a city extremely more heterogeneous and lively than my tiny hometown, would have led me to encounter an activism I had never witnessed before and an opportunity to enter the LGBTQ+ community of which I did not feel worthy of, despite my identification within the asexual spectrum, although I had no doubts about the legitimacy of the asexual orientation.

A few days after my move to Bologna, a historical LGBT collective[2] was evicted from its headquarters of 17 years by order of the mayor. Many felt this as an attack on the queer community by an administration that often performs pink- and rainbow-washing in its tourism marketing. And so, on a cold and gray October afternoon, I marched with the collective and its supporters through the streets of the city centre. That evening I walked back to my apartment, divided between the bitterness of the situation, the enthusiasm to see so many people involved in the protest, and a strong discomfort, due only in part to the rain that did not give us rest throughout the march. The same uneasiness that I would feel again and again in some circles of feminist and queer activism do not perceive asexuality as legitimate.

Indeed, current feminism often seems to proclaim the need to practice a sex transgressive of patriarchal society's expectations. In such a context, says Milk (2014), an asexual suffers, by definition, from a stunted growth. If sexuality is seen as fundamental to the development of a mature personhood, and as personal maturity equals political maturity and agency, asexuals are necessarily not-humans and not-yet-liberated. Indeed, in current mainstream feminism and queer theory, it does sound crucial to

2 To read more about the collective: https://atlantideresiste.noblogs.org/.

understand which sex is political, which are the more transgressive and free practices, and which are the repressed and repressive ones (Glick 2000). In doing so, however, they often do not celebrate human plurality but create a new binarism: resistant and nonconforming identities on one side and conservative and hegemonic ones on the other. Serano (2007) and Puar (2007) identify among the victims of this new binarism the transsexual that after the transition adopts a straight and gender-normative identity, and the gay and lesbian Muslim in the West, perceived as not queer enough and still unliberated and oppressed by the norms of their religion, respectively. I would add: What is there more conservative that not having sex?[3] These and other critics not only expose the new opposition but also the problematic narrative of both personal and political sexual maturity that an individual must reach to be free.

Przybylo (2012) goes further in claiming that sex is constructed as a real imperative that works on the following four axes: (1). sex is privileged over other activities, often referred to as foreplay; (2). the discovery process of one's inner life coincided with the discovery of one's sexual orientation; (3). sex is always healthy and pleasurable, and its absence must be fixed; and (4). sex is essential in a romantic relationship, especially if heterosexual and monogamous. The imperative makes asexuality difficult, if not impossible, to imagine and formulate. At the same time, though, asexuality has an impact on the sexual imperative since it exposes how the absence is pathologised in the process of naturalisation of desire.

However, it would be naïve to embrace asexuality as inherently transgressive, a force destructive of the sexual society. Its limits can be seen in the same definition I used, the most common one being: Asexuality is the orientation of the person who lacks sexual attraction toward any gender. Not only does this fail to acknowledge the multiplicity of the asexual experiences, but it tends to build a wall between asexuality and the sexual world, the latter then presented as an oppressive force. For Przybylo, this narrative is dangerously simplistic: It is impossible to create a space of resistance outside the sex world because such a world and its society are composed and supported by the actions of all their inhabitants. Ours is

3 I would like to stress that not all asexuals do not have sex. A sexual orientation is identified by the feelings, desires, and attractions (or lack thereof), rather than by the acts the individual does or does not perform.

ultimately a sexusociety, fluid and constantly transforming, in which the actors copy each other but never in a perfect way, thus creating endless variations of the same acts and institutions. Similar to what Judith Butler described (1990), the variations give the impression of the existence of a coherent, monolithic system, which is on the contrary a series of inaccurate repetitions. Some of these end up being preferred over others based on the accumulation of most social actors' actions. One of the main practices through which the repetitions continue is confession, described by Foucault (1976) as the source of truth production. In the case of asexuals, it is about confessing the absence of sex.

Paradoxical as it may sound, despite the noninterest in sexual practices, the main determinant of an asexual remains sex (or its absence), and understanding asexuality as merely the lack of any kind of attraction or intimacy during someone's life may not be helpful in reformulating questions about what sex is, when it is too little or too much, and the centrality of sexuality as the main form of pleasure and satisfaction. For most feminist and queer critics, sexusociety favours heterosexual and heteronormative sex, within a monogamous couple and with reproduction and/or male orgasm as the goal, but it can be said that it is in the first place based on the compulsory reproduction of sex and sexuality.

Ultimately, being different from the norm does not necessarily mean that such difference can lead to the deconstruction of normativity. On the contrary, Przybylo (2014) notes that while explaining their own identity, many asexuals tend to reassure the listener that they are not disgusted or opposed to sex; they are just indifferent to it. Indeed, only a minority of the asexual community adopts a sex-negative position (Milks 2014), understood as a recovery of the radical feminism that claims the subversive power of not participating in sexual activities. Not many are also those who talk about sex-neutrality, a term that expresses respect for sexual diversity, but does not assume that sexual desire and encounters are always positive. Most asexual activists and writers remain connected to the sex-positive movement, supporting the idea that no sexuality is more valid or free than the others. Through this latter approach, they emphasise that their intention is not to question sexusociety, but to be accepted and legitimated by it: For this reason, Przybylo (2011) wrote that most of the members of the asexual community participate in sexusociety rather than deconstructing its norms.

A brief history of the lack

The enthusiasm for the discovery of the asexual spectrum has soon turned into the search for a history of the lack of sexual attraction that could allow me to study how bodies and identities have been pathologised and marginalised because of the lack of sexual attraction, be it real or imagined. Indeed, sexual disorders and dysfunctions have been conceptualised to regulate sexualities by a medical practice that helped the commercialisation of sex as essential for one's identity and happiness, and that tried to quantify desire, as to when it is too much and when it is too little (Irvine 1993).

Investigating asexuality means first of all acknowledging that if this is considered a "new orientation," there is a history of the lack of sexual attraction that can be traced, and its narrative affected several subjects in very different ways, especially the female. Cryle and Moore (2001) claim that the lack of sexual desire in women has always been a historical and medical problem, even sometimes considered part of the female nature (as told by the myth of the Victorian women's aversion to everything sexual), while other times depicted as an anomaly to be fixed (as shown by the conceptualisation of frigidity). That happened mostly because women have always been compared to men, whose sexuality is still the given standard. Indeed, the existence of erectile disorder, how male frigidity is regarded today, has never led to doubts about the nature of all men as it has been for all women.

The rise of frigidity as an exclusive female problem is of particular interest, but analysing frigidity is a much more complex process than one might expect, especially because it means different problematics in different times: sterility, abstinence, post-rape trauma, incapacity of penetration, and disinterest in sexual acts. According to Cryle and Moore's reconstruction, the term has been used exclusively for women since the passage between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as a disorder to cure alongside male impotence or sterility, and/or a perversion like nymphomania and lesbianism. In that period, studies and theorisations began to get published on the topic, especially following the birth of psychoanalysis. Psychiatrists such as Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, and Richard von Kraft Ebbing wrote about inadequate female sexuality. It is interesting to

notice how for Ebbing, for example, frigidity was related to homosexual tendencies: It was indeed not so much a lack of sexual attraction, rather a lack of proper sexual attraction (meaning for the other gender).

In the interwar period, the importance of female sexual maturity became increasingly widespread in medical and intellectual circles. In the anxious European minds, preoccupied with reconstruction, the frigid woman was not so much as asexual, but rather a warrior against the male social power that refused penetration and therefore procreation. Such a union of sexuality and gender (where heterosexuality meant being a real woman) was then used by anti-feminist commentators after World War II.

Since the mid-1950s, however, a contradictory trend also began to develop, that of sexologists such as Alfred Kinsey and the duo Masters and Johnson, who rejected the ancient pathologisation of the clitoris, built their theories on the observation of women, and thought a new female sexuality no longer based on vagina and reproduction but on pleasurable practices (Irvine 1993). Those theories then converged in the 1960's spirit of sexual freedom that crossed the whole West. The sexual revolutionists of the second half of the century vouched to release sex from the rhetorical boundaries of marriage and infused it with values such as authenticity, empowerment, and personal freedom.

In general, the second half of the twentieth century has been characterised by a growing enthusiasm for all that concerned sex. So much so that today frigidity sounds just like an obsolete term. However, normative ideas about orgasm, female anatomy, and perversion are still alive. Looking at the history of the lack of sexual attraction in depth will show how the evolution of the theories about female sexuality is the history of the regulation of bodies and of the monitoring of the quantity and quality of sexuality they are supposed to act.

Frigidity has gradually disappeared from both popular culture and science. However, sex has been increasingly represented as the act from which one must obtain pleasure, and it has become crucial to fix or cure its absence. Indeed, the lack of sexual desire in women continues to be a topic of conversation. This trend can be seen in the American Psychiatric Association's decision to coin the term "Female Sexual Dysfunction" (FSD) in 1998, after the successful launch of the Viagra. From then on, the pharmaceutical industry has focused on creating a market for FSD and on selling new chemical treatments (Angel 2010). Today, FSD attracts criticism

and controversy from many sides, especially because it is a product of capitalist impulses, and because it once again legitimises social norms about appropriate sexual expressions (Tiefer 2001, 2010, Moynihan 2003, 2005). But ultimately, it shows that frigidity has not disappeared: It has changed its name and methods of control over the body, now better suited for the capitalist impulses of the current Western society.

A feminist and queer project

Asexuality and the lack of sexual attraction have become subjects of study only recently, particularly after the birth and growth of an asexual community in the last 20 years. The study of asexuality with a feminist and queer approach is even more at its beginning. Indeed, the volume edited by Cerankowski and Milks (2014) is the first example of a literature interested in exploring the intersections and plurality of asexuality. This prospective is fundamental since the sexual imperative does not happen in a vacuum: Every person carries with them their gender, sex, age, race, social class, etc. All these factors and others affect the way in which the sexual imperative is or is not repeated, as well as the individual negotiation of the meanings that the society assigns to the various identities.

The idea that there are people who do not experience sexual attraction or who are not interested in having intimate relationships is certainly not new. What is new is the theorisation of an asexual identity based on the belief that asexuality is a viable way of living. And if this is the case, then queer and feminist environments should commit themselves in re-evaluating what is so radical about having sex in the first place (Cerankowski and Milks 2014, Chu 2014). However, feminism is often overwhelmingly white, middle-class, cis-gender, and ableist. At the same time, LGBTQ+ spaces are often focused on issues related to gay men and women (especially if white and economically advantaged) over others, as proved by the popularity of the same-sex marriages campaign or the opening of the army to LGBTQ+ people. Without denying the importance of equal rights, Cerankowski and Milks argue that these specific rights mostly reaffirm the primacy of the traditional family over other forms of partnership, as well

as the need to be reabsorbed into the broader, respectable society, instead of calling for the dismantling of the systematic oppression and discrimination of LGBTQ+ people.

Studying asexuality could be the occasion to question not only the parameters of heteronormativity, but also of homonormativity, to fight essentialist notions of sex and sexuality, and to create spaces for plural asexual identities. A feminist and queer project around asexuality has the power not only to revitalise feminist and queer criticism and to question the sexual imperative, reformulating discourses on sex, sexuality, and physical intimacy, but also to understand how and why bodies have been marginalised and pathologised in the last two centuries based on the lack of sexual attraction.

It is more than understandable that asexuality has only recently become a topic of analysis. Not only has the term taken on the meaning that we give it today quite recently, but it is difficult to see the lack of something as relevant. On the one hand, the fact that this is a new study that is attracting more and more attention is quite exciting. Writing my final master's thesis allowed me to bring my own contribution, even if that was my first research. On the other hand, however, it also feels limiting. The limit is not the little literature available, but rather the need to constantly claim the legitimacy and validity of my research topic, as well as the feeling of being stuck in what is only the introduction of understandings and developments that I would instead like to analyse in depth.

My research has just scratched the surface of a narrative that has touched many people, and that still does. Indeed, normative ideas about human beings' desires and pleasures, and in particular women's, have followed one another, responding to specific social and political needs and causing the medicalisation and moderation of bodies.

Surely, not all those I met inside and outside the university were receptive to my arguments. Yet, it remains difficult to move in an activism in which being transgressive and radical equals being free and aware individuals. As it is difficult, or even impossible, to move in an academia like the Italian one, which is still struggling to accept gender studies and studies of sexuality as legitimate research topics. After 2 years of master's degree and a year after finishing my dissertation, I am still here, trying to justify the existence of the asexual spectrum and the lack of sexual attraction as valid, and stressing the need for a queer and feminist project about them.

Conclusion: Making sense of a negative identity

Asexuality is more than a mere lack of sexual attraction. It is a challenge to the ways in which sex and relationships are conceived and a plea to realise that our current understandings of sexuality and gender are social constructions, not laws of nature (Chu 2014). A fundamental step to seeing this is to build a positive asexual identity, based on what asexuals feel, experience, and value, rather than on what they lack, because focusing on the lack means making of asexuality an inherently negative identity.

Negative here has no morale attribute nor does it necessarily represent the society's negative responses to it. With negative identity I mean the one characterised by indifference or aversion toward something that is considered fundamental in a given culture and historical era: The atheist does not believe in God or in a superior force; the agender does not adhere to a binary male–female system; the child-less has no interest in having children, not even in the future; the asexual does not experience sexual attraction. Members of a negative identity are often targeted by hostility and discrimination (Leong 2014), for several reasons. First of all, it is easier to talk about a value or an experience rather than its absence. Absence also confuses the inclusion in social groups and in the categorisation of individuals, since humans tend to join ingroups based on personal experiences or interests. Such ingroups are also useful in giving meanings to the people around us. Therefore, an asexual, especially if open to others about their orientation, often remains on the margins of those groups and inspires an infinite set of questions by people who consider sex an essential component of their own personality. Indeed, anecdotes shared online by asexuals reveal that their identity is generally perceived as fluid and therefore transitory: Many have been known to quote that the "right person" will eventually awaken their passion. Such argument is repeated to other negative identities: For example, atheists often hear that it is possible for them to find faith.

It is perhaps presumptuous of me to assume that someone will care about this. And perhaps this chapter has not been about asexuality at all, but rather about making sense of my own negative identity.

I was told the same, endless variations of those comments about "the right man" and "human beings are sexual beings" and "just relax, take it easy." And the right person has arrived, I have changed and grown in a

thousand different ways, thanks to and with him, but some part of me is still the same. I have been in a stable, loving, heterosexual and heteroromantic relationship for more than 2 years now, and I remained graysexual throughout it. The attraction for a person with whom I developed a deep friendship for months within the GEMMA program, a person who shares my passions and principles, does not mean that I am now more easily attracted to other people, or that those people must necessarily be men; that having developed an intimacy that works for me and for my partner, in which I feel completely comfortable and loved, makes me more interested in having intimate encounters in the future; nor that within my relationship I do not any longer need that strong intellectual connection that was necessary in the beginning.

Lately I have been wondering about what value my asexuality has. Indeed, this part of my identity continues to be invisible, perhaps even more so since I have a partner. I am 26 years old, and I am childless, an atheist, a vegetarian, and a non-drinker. So many parts of my life are determined by the lack of something, that something being an offspring, religious faith, or meat and alcohol, and most of these negative identifications have tangible effects in my everyday life. However, I rarely talk about my asexuality, and usually only in academic terms, as if the subject did not really touch me. On the one hand, it almost feels like a betrayal of some of my beliefs, such as being an ally for the LBGTQ+ community, or the fight for better reproductive rights, or the need for a more comprehensive sexual education. On the other, I found myself thinking "does this really matter?" I now understand the sense of being "wrong" I experienced for most of my life, and I have (mostly) come to terms with it. I am in no danger for my asexuality, the society around me does not care for it, and maybe even the academia does not care for it. So, does this really matter?

Asexuals own a subversive potential, which is the capacity of complicating sexual categories. Indeed, not engaging in sexual relationships does not mean that many asexuals do not seek companionship, kisses, caresses, and cuddles, ultimately redefining which acts should count for each individual person. Furthermore, distinguishing between sexual and romantic attraction questions the ways in which sexual orientations are described along with the compulsion to couple so prominent in the current Western society. Studying asexuality with a feminist and queer approach means focusing not on what the orientation is and what it does not do, but rather what it does: redefining which acts should count as intimate or

pleasurable for each person, distinguishing sexual and romantic attraction, deconstructing the compulsion to prioritise sex over other relationships, and recognising the multiplicity of individual asexual identities.

At the moment, I certainly do not know if the academia is interested in the lack of sexual attraction as a legitimate field of study, nor if feminist and queer activism will adapt to further include asexuality. And probably my sexual identification is not going to affect my daily life in visible ways. However, the sexual imperative has an impact on anybody, and studying it through asexuality can be an opportunity to revitalise feminist criticism and gender studies.

I am at the end of this chapter and I do not have real answers. GEMMA has not been a tool to reprogram myself, as I imagined it would be, to discover who I really am underneath society's lessons and expectations. On the contrary, if I must name one thing that I truly learned during the 2 years of the master's degree is that it is fine. There is no one single truth to look for, nor is my personal truth permanent and unchangeable. My first paper started with an enthusiastic research on the various terms used to describe asexuality throughout history, happy to prove that it was not something that my generation invented to feel special, as many articles and internet posts I read suggested. Now, I am advocating for the potential of a study about the lack of sexual attraction, and I am using it to talk about the sexual imperative and to show how negative identities are constructed, and yes, to better understand how to move in the sexusociety. However, I no longer claim ineluctability, and I am no longer waiting to become myself. "What I have made of myself is personal," says Didion, "but is not exactly peace" (1979: 208).

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Part II Weaving Nomadic Knowledges and Affective Methodologies. A Conversation About the Displacement of Knowledge

Section 3 Nomadic Knowledges

Suzanne Clisby

Introduction: Nomadic Knowledges, Cosmopolitan Subjects, and the Power of Embodied Infrastructures

In this brief space I draw on over two decades of personal experience of creating and working within gender studies and the GEMMA programme based at a British academic institution. There are many challenges in nurturing and defending feminist space "in the chinks of the world machine" (LeFanu 1988: 1), involving pleasures, sacrifices and no small amount of emotional labour. Being a feminist academic and fighting the corner of women's and gender studies in a hostile institutional environment requires resilience and a commitment to and passion for the young scholars who find their way to us. Teaching gender studies is often a life-changing journey for both those who teach and for the students who work alongside us. Bearing witness to and being part of that process is a privilege. However, doing so in the face of direct and indirect sexism and discrimination takes its toll. The collection of narratives in this volume tells a story of why we should keep building and defending feminist academic spaces and the challenges that we might face in attempting to do so. My own experiences of sexism and discrimination at one institution are by no means unique. My story could be the story of many, largely female, scholars who are committed to feminist academic engagement and gender justice at hundreds of academic institutions the world over. As young academics ourselves, all those years ago, if we wanted to attain promotion, status, and recognition within the male-stream academic paradigm, we might have been well advised to back away from such marginalised and politicised spaces. But we stayed and we built those feminist "chinks in the [male] machine" because it was necessary then and continues to be necessary now.

So, I have had the privilege to have been a member of the team of dedicated feminist scholars who created and nurtured the GEMMA programme from its small but ambitious beginnings over a decade ago to the flagship internationally acclaimed programme it has become today. Being

a witness to the growth and development of GEMMA since its inception has enabled me to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of the intricate tapestry of international and trans-European connections that GEMMA weaves around those who find their way to us. Beyond the unrivalled scholarly training and expertise in women's and gender studies that we bring together across six nations, GEMMA offers far more, but equally powerful, opportunities, and here I want to briefly explore some of these perhaps less immediately tangible effects. First, I suggest that GEMMA facilitates the experiencing and garnering of nomadic knowledges; second, it encourages us to become cosmopolitan subjects; and third, through our international feminist networks of care and gender politics, we have created an embodied infrastructure of support, connections, and threads of feminist power that stretch far beyond the borders of Europe.

As Daminana Ballerini and Pranjali Das both clearly articulate in this volume, becoming an international scholar and traveller, spending 2 years immersed in two European cultures, and meeting other feminist scholars from across the world through the GEMMA framework facilitates ways of seeing and being that enhance and expand our understandings of the world. We become feminist nomads, for a short time at least in our lives, and this enriches our knowledge. Indeed, a real joy for me of teaching GEMMA has been the diversity of people I have benefitted from getting to know and learn from. Travelling to us from all over the world, our women's and gender studies students carry with them and share valuable experiences, expertise, and different ways of seeing and understanding our intersectional lives, and this has enriched my own life and knowledge immensely. As a result of these encounters, these friendships, I have learned so much through my vicariously gained nomadic knowledge and cosmopolitan subjectivity. When I refer to nomadic knowledges, I am of course referencing – and no doubt doing serious injustice to – Rosi Braidotti's (1994, 2011) nomadic theory through which she articulates contemporary knowledges as materially embodied, mobile, fluid, and perpetually shifting. As she states – and here I shamefully condense a far more complex narrative for purposes of brevity:

> thinking today is structurally nomadic […] conceptually, politically, and contextually […] Conceptually, nomadic thought stresses the idea of embodiment and the embodied and embedded material structure of what we commonly call thinking […] Politically, nomadic thought is the expression of a nonunitary vision of the subject, defined by motion in a complex manner that is densely material. It invites us to

> rethink the structures and boundaries of the self by tackling the deeper conceptual roots of issues of identity. [Conceptually] nomadic critical theory is the production of pragmatic and localized tools of analysis for the power relations at work in society at large and more specifically within its own practice (Braidotti 2011: 1–6) (2011: 1).

The experience of nomadism as theorised by Braidotti is at the core of the GEMMA framework in the sense that our students have to become mobile subjects, embodied political thinkers, and feminist travellers. However, as nomads – and indeed as gendered racialised and sexualised beings – we are simultaneously marked as "other", not of place, and this inevitably brings significant challenges and resistances. While the feminist circle of the GEMMA classroom should provide an inclusive safe space to explore gender, sexualities, identities, power, and politics through interdisciplinary prisms, we cannot ultimately control what students experience beyond our walls. Racism, sexism, and homophobia are our constant stalkers. Through the years, some of my GEMMA students – marked as other by the populous beyond my classroom – have been subjected to direct and vicious sexual assault and harassment as women, racist attack as non-white bodies, and homophobic abuse as non-heterosexual and non-hegemonic beings. Aside from my own experiences of gender-based violence growing up as a girl and young woman in a patriarchal social world, I have also been subjected to institutional harassment and bullying in the workplace for many years for being a feminist gender studies scholar. Here are two tangible examples of sexism and bullying – apart from the persistent under-resourcing, unrealistic workload, refusal of career progression, and being paid less than male colleagues for work of equal, if not higher, value of course: On one occasion, some hilarious male academics circulated an email to colleagues detailing the new "Girly Studies Curriculum" which included the amusing module "How to get closer to the white goods: training women in kitchen skills". But of course this is merely male banter, just a laugh, and we all know that feminists have no sense of humour. On another occasion, I was bullied and ridiculed by male academics and then threatened with disciplinary action by the (male) Dean for "bringing the university into disrepute" because I wrote a column for a leading European "women's" magazine. Their point was that women's magazines are trivial and my connection to one was demeaning to the academic institution, whereas I saw it as a way of reaching a large audience of predominantly young women and taking them seriously. Would the reaction have been the same if I were male and the magazine in question was targeted at a male readership? I suspect not.

Thus, teaching gender studies, or more specifically, men's reactions to me as a gender studies scholar, has had direct impacts on my own well-being, and indeed my academic career. I chose to coordinate a gender studies unit within a sexist university institution, but even I, perhaps naively, was unprepared for the discrimination, ridicule, and even hatred that I would face. But my story pales in the face of the experiences of racism, gender-based violence, and homophobia experienced by several of my students across the years. Being a feminist scholar, a student of women's and gender studies, and a cosmopolitan nomad demands resilience in the face of attack. This we know but must never underestimate.

What do I mean when I suggest that our GEMMA students are encouraged to become cosmopolitan subjects? Although the concept of cosmopolitanism is by no means unproblematic, and can be difficult to define, I mean this in a positive sense. Szerszynski and Urry (2006: 113) have argued that "humans increasingly inhabit their world only at a distance". This view from afar, they claim, is an intrinsic sociocultural condition of cosmopolitanism. Beck and Sznaider (2006) usefully distinguish between normative cosmopolitanism, that is a cultural ideal of one sort or another, and cosmopolitanism as a way of sociologically describing and thinking about the significance of social processes that exceed both the real and imagined boundaries of the nation state. Szerszynski and Urry's argument is that increased mobility and expanding visual cultures create a sense of detachment from place and locality and generate normative cosmopolitan perspectives characterised by a "greater sense of both global diversity and global interconnectedness and belonging" (2006: 122). What is needed, they contend, is an alternative form of cosmopolitanism: one that engenders not only greater global awareness and sensibilities but also genuine engagements with place and surroundings. It is this latter aim that I aspire to when I make a claim for GEMMA as enhancing cosmopolitan subjectivity in positive ways. Through their travel and mobility as part of their programme, we hope that our students are able to engender greater awareness but also genuine engagements with different people and places in ways that broaden their understanding of ways of seeing and ways of being.

However, we must be mindful, as critics of cosmopolitanism have alerted us to (Escobar 1999, Ingold 2000, Friedman 2002), that

detachment reflects the situation of a relatively elite minority. It fails to describe the majority of people who not only identify themselves in terms of particular places but who are also variously constrained by real material circumstances and struggles within particular localities. Not everyone has the privilege of mobility through choice, and the relative minority deemed to belong to specifically located tropes of historically socio-cultural and political dominance find travelling across borders far easier than the global majority. This is a point well made by many GEMMA students, who travel to us from beyond Europe and who face racist, obstructive bureaucracy and barriers as they attempt to navigate their border crossings and "negotiate discomforts", as Pranjali Das describes in this volume. We must be ever mindful of the impacts of these forms of violence enacted against our international students and acknowledge their bravery in the face of racist borders.

A final point I want to make briefly here concerns the significance of GEMMA in creating embodied infrastructures of support, friendships, alliances, and a feminist community that sends threads of political engagement and solidarity across the globe. As I have argued elsewhere in the context of feminist networks and specifically those of women's services

> women's bodies [and equally all the bodies of our GEMMA colleagues and students] and material actions themselves become the vehicles, the catalysts, the embodied infrastructure, facilitating access to services and enabling change and support through women's networks. This infrastructure is created through a range of encounters, from those women who act as mentors to other women within their working lives, to the services and formal and informal networks women have established that serve to provide a framework, an infrastructure of support for women. As Luce Irigaray has said: 'Women's bodies through their use, consumption, and circulation provide for the condition making social life and culture possible, although they remain an unknown infrastructure of the elaboration of that social life and culture' (Irigaray 1977: 171, Clisby and Holdsworth 2016: 7)

In similar ways as I have argued that women's networks become embodied infrastructures, so too I argue that the bodies that have connected through GEMMA have become an embodied infrastructure, creating powerful networks of support and political engagement on a global scale. I am proud and privileged to be part of this international communitas.

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Damiana Ballerini

Brazilian National Identity and the Migratory Processes of Brazilian Women in Italy

Abstract From a feminist perspective, my work aims to analyze, through qualitative interviews, the trajectories of Brazilian migrant women in Bologna, Italy. The interviewees, as subjects, are in a situation of displacement, considering that both their locations and their identities are juxtaposed between different cultural worlds such as Brazil and Italy. Therefore, from a qualitative research, with in-depth interviews, I analyze how these women are building their identities as subjects, from their country of origin to the country of settlement. Based on the premise that identities are not fixed and stable, but changing, it is essential to analyze how the women interviewed need to negotiate their identities, from the international imaginary influenced by stereotypes which represent them as highly sexualised women.

Keywords : National identity, international migration, education, Brazilian women, stereotypes, Brazil, body, gender, media

Introduction

This chapter is the fruit of my research in the dissertation *Verso l'Italia: the migratory processes of Brazilian women*, written during my GEMMA master's period (2009–2011) when I studied at the Universities of Bologna and Granada. I discuss the issue of Brazilian national identity in the context of International Migration and Education from a gender perspective. In this way, the research is carried out through a journey toward feminist theoretical studies based on migrations and questions of identity. As a corpus of the analysis, interviews were conducted with Brazilian women living in Bologna, in the region of Emilia-Romagna, in Northeast Italy.

Adopting a feminist perspective is a propitious choice to analyze a reality as complex as the one presented. It does not mean that there is a

single feminist, homogeneous method, since there is no consensus among the feminists themselves (Harding 2002). The research is carried out with a qualitative methodology based on in-depth interviews. The interviews intend to foster a collaborative dialogue between the people involved in conversation. The aim is, therefore, to establish a respectful relationship among the participants, since the interviewees are understood as active protagonists of their migratory process (Valles 2007).

In the context of the country of immigration in the city of Bologna, fourteen Brazilian women were interviewed. They were from different cities and provinces of Brazil, especially from the Northeast, South, Southeast and Center-West regions. The period of migration of these women ranges from 1985 to 2010. Their ages vary from 19 years to 52 years, and several generations of women were present. Almost half of them already had Italian nationality, and the other half obtained it on arrival, either by recognition of Italian descent or by marriage to a native Italian. This nationality is pointed out as one of the reasons for the migratory trip, since it helps in plans to study or as a change of scenery.

In relation to schooling, most of the interviewees already had finished university studies, going to Italy to continue their studies in a postgraduate degree or with the prospect of taking a university degree. Their labour occupations differ substantially before and during the migration process: from people who were already government employees in Brazil to those who worked in the area of education or were still studying. They say they belong to the middle class. On arriving in Italy, some of them continued to work in the same area of activity. Despite their high level of schooling, most of them work in temporary jobs such as baby-sitting, translation, sales, or freelancing. They often consider these jobs precarious or falling short of their previous occupations or of their expectations. Of those interviewed, only one of them mentioned having worked in the domestic sector, at the beginning of their migration process, for lack of opportunities. Due to its similarity with Portuguese the Italian language, was not an initial barrier, but rather a resistance on the part of some native people to perceive a certain accent in their speech.

In an investigation from a feminist perspective, it is fundamental to clarify the place from where I speak. Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo (2008: 80) highlights situated knowledge, in accordance with Donna Haraway, which considers the position from where we talk and observe a given reality fundamental because "feminist objectivity deals with limited

localization and located knowledge, not the transcendence and unfolding of subject and object" (Haraway 1995: 327). That is why in this work I am involved as a Brazilian migrant woman, interested in observing how the discourses circulating in Italian society mark identities and build stereotypes about this group of women to which I belong. Throughout the text, some excerpts from the interviews will be presented as a way to dialogue with authors relevant to the topic in question.

The issue of national identities

When talking about Brazilian women, it is important to observe how national identity is constructed and involved in gender relations. Brazilian nationality is, therefore, conceived as a metaphor for the imagined community called Brazil (I will return to this topic later). In this sense, with the creation of nation-states, the aim is to unify the peoples and cultures who share the same territory in order to acquire a common language and tradition, a common identification.

Identity can be understood in a relational way, because it is constructed based on the difference (Hall 2002). As a result, the subjects inserted in identification processes assume the features they recognise as their own and deny those they do not. This type of relationship makes it possible to differentiate I/We from the other. Before my/our features the other presents different ones which I deny.

According to Roberto DaMatta (2001), we can consider that identity is the result of our experiences as historical, social, and self-aware beings and that, therefore, we construct our identities as something unique. For that reason, the concept of identity is complex, presenting many nuances depending on the perspective from which it is seen and it can be used in order to assert who I am while denying the other through my own individual perception.

Taking into account the argument of Tomaz Tadeu da Silva (2000a), identity is understood as changing, since it is evoked as in constant transformation. Identity is seen as something installable and fragmented, linked to "systems of representation." While referring to contemporary societies, María-Milagros Rivera Garretas (1996: 24) states that "... belonging to

a race or a minority ethnic group other than the one holding power is usually, for women, an additional factor of subordination." Likewise, for women, this subordination is understood as something more latent due to the power structures from which they are historically removed.

In this ambiguous context, national identity is understood as cultural identity, since it represents the possibility of encompassing the diverse identities that constitute us and that we continuously transform. In this cycle, the identity of a nation needs to deny other (national) identities in order to be reaffirmed as different or authentic. Thus, the above mentioned idea of interrelation is retaken.

Historically, nations have created mechanisms to generate an identification among their citizens based on elements that distinguish them from other nationalities and can also serve as an element of cohesion. In the twentieth century, we witnessed how some nations referred biology as this element of cohesion. The concept of race served to justify various manifestations and still exists in some societies, despite holding no scientific validity to distinguish human beings now.

In this line, globalisation, associated with the development of information technologies, provides a fertile ground where the old bases on which nations built their identities are being ruined (Sassen 2007). In environments where a supposed cultural plurality is identified, it is curious to see small emerging groups which seek to emphatically affirm their cohesion under paradigms such as ethnicity. The global city, a term coined by Saskia Sassen, is the space of coexistence and contact between differences. However, these differences strive to link with their peers.

Following Anthony D. Smith (1997), we can understand that we assume multiple identities-roles throughout our lives, including national identity, which is used by the nation to inculcate in the citizens and natives a sense of belonging to a certain community. The intention, therefore, is to create a unique social bond among its inhabitants through symbols that represent the nation. Since this bond is something constructed, mechanisms of socialisation are created, especially through education,[1] as a way of seeking a rootedness of individuals to the historical territories,

1 It is important to highlight that "every education system is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, with the knowledge and powers that these bring with them" (Foucault 2000: 44).

customs, values, and symbols that strengthen group feeling. There lies the power of national identities.

It can be said that Stuart Hall sees national identity as one of the interfaces of cultural identity, similar to Anthony Smith. Hall, influenced by Michel Foucault, conceives national culture as a discourse within a system of cultural representation,[2] which attributes meaning to our construction as subjects. "[...] National identities are not things that we are born with, but they are formed and transformed within the representation" (Hall 2002: 48).

Migratory processes in the context of contemporary globalisation

Globalisation is a process through which the very notions of space and time change. Societies and cultures change simultaneously since they are integrated into the same process. With the development of information technologies, means of transportation, and the current economic-capitalist stage, communication can be easily accessed, allowing for greater integration both nationally and transnationally.

It is important to emphasise the double dimension of globalisation dynamics. On the one hand, it occurs globally, in the macro space and, on the other, at the local level, assuming specific characteristics. In this sense, Saskia Sassen (2007) highlights the need to propose a study of this dynamics from three illustrative instances: The first is related to the relevance of the local factor and tries to perceive the importance of specific places, subnational territories, and studies the performance of actors at this level; the second instance is linked to the information technologies that enable the connection of these places with others so that people can be linked to geographically distant realities; finally, the third illustrative instance highlights the denationalisation of the realities considered particularities of the local level. In this sense, the concept of global city

2 In a cultural analysis, representation is used in the sense that Tomaz Tadeu da Silva takes "[…] to the textual and visual forms through which the different cultural groups and their characteristics are described" (2000b: 97).

is illustrative, because it highlights the existing connection between the global and the local, while highlighting the key position of information networks for the integration of spaces.

In addressing this issue, the question about the role of nation-states as promoters of integration with other nations becomes more intelligible. The issue is, in fact, ambiguous: On the one hand, the states are the promoters of such integration, and, on the other, there are processes that escape state control, such as the global capital market or new information technologies. An example of the latter is the flow of information exchanges that occur in networks such as the public Internet or, in particular, private information networks and electronic data exchanges. We have seen the strengths and flaws on this subject from some countries in the context of the situation generated by the information disclosed by the WikiLeaks website.[3]

In the current stage of development of capitalism, the mobility of people occupies a central role. Sandro Mezzadra (2006), investigating the relations between capitalism and migration, stresses that there is no capitalism without migrations (understood here as labour mobility). In this confusing scenario, it is imperative that research highlights migration "from below"[4] (from the perspective of migrant individuals) and takes into consideration the complexity that this analysis entails.

The global economy generates the need for legal and administrative instruments that cannot be created without government action. This engenders new configurations with which nation-states participate in global markets. Multinational or transnational companies are constantly generating unusual situations before which new responses will be created. Legal professionals, for example, end up acquiring a culture of international law so that they can respond to these situations. Technological nuclei, such as Silicon Valley, are implanted providing companies with an appropriate infrastructure for the use and development of new technologies (Sassen 2007).

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3 *WikiLeaks* is a worldwide nonprofit organisation dedicated to the publication of data of public interest. Its founder Julian Assange has been a refugee at the Ecuadorian Embassy in England since 2012.

4 Term used by Mezzadra within the context of globalisation dal basso, from below, "from the point of view, that is, from the specific issues of citizenship carried by migrants" (2006: 62).

According to Saskia Sassen (2007), cities are the spaces par excellence where integration takes place in the processes of globalisation. The mobility of workers and other immigrants are phenomena that closely accompany such integration. Cities demand complex specialised and manual jobs, well and poorly paid, that make possible the integration of migrants and people who are looking for opportunities. Most of these poorly paid manual jobs are performed by women and immigrants.

In this direction, the Brazilian immigrant Joana is frustrated professionally because she cannot work autonomously in her profession. Despite having finished her degree in Italy; she still needs an additional document to be able to practice her profession. Joana comments on the situation in Bologna of many migrants holding university degrees: "There are many people who come here with a university degree and can not work in their profession" (Joana, 44 years old).

In addition, access to information and resources enables new configurations to be created between gender relations. Women who are historically in a hierarchy below men or women from countries with patriarchal traits strongly rooted in tradition can gain ground. Cities, as a space of diversity, present a fertile ground for the emergence of new identities and for the questioning of traditional structures or relationships.

Following the question of the inequalities present in the migratory processes, it is necessary to make an approach toward the migrant subject through instruments which contemplate the complexity of their situation. According to Mezzadra (2006), one cannot fall into reductionist perspectives that treat subjects simply as victims or as heroes. Closed concepts such as "the third world" cannot reflect the complex and diverse reality that takes place in different spaces. Transnational spaces are formed by communication networks that force theorists to resize the geographic scope of interpersonal connections.

For Sassen (2007), immigration is not a recent phenomenon, so the challenge is to find out its particularities in the current stage of globalisation. The traditional response that identifies immigration as a flight from impoverished places to enriched ones is insufficient. It is important to note that there are many impoverished places that have no migratory tradition and, in those where it exists, the migration rate is low. Therefore, the road is in highlighting the question: What are the conditions that, associated with poverty, lead to migrations?

One of the findings, by the same author, is that the migratory movement can be understood as one of the spectrums from the old relationship between empire and colony. Immigrants from colonised countries in the past are directed to the former colonising countries. The organised exportation of labour is another evidence to be considered, whether this export is legal or not. The intensification of human trafficking for sex industry and slavery is part of this migratory movement and implies the existence of an already established network of contacts. Likewise, the growing integration between countries through economic or military means works as a driving force for the flow of people. The campaigns carried out by the United States during the Cold War and the consequent efforts to display technological and military power will also work as an attraction for people willing to migrate in search of better conditions. Associated to this, we still have the so-called brain drain, highly qualified professionals who address and/or receive proposals from institutions installed in locations that develop border technologies or with a high volume of research investment.

From this problematic Sassen (2007) highlights the possibility to identify new classes in this globalised context. The first class is constituted by the employees of the multinationals who hold management positions or by the executives of large companies, which establish a network of beneficial relations for them. The second consists of specialised civil servants who form transnational networks of information and cooperation that help in the adaptation of their activities in this integrated scenario. The third class includes disadvantaged immigrants, low-paid workers, activists and the networks that connect such people.

Migrations, body and gender

In a complex scenario, such as that of international migrations, it is important to problematise the place occupied by the body, especially that of women. The gender category provides an important support for migratory studies.

Verena Stolcke (2004) makes a historical analysis of the concept of gender through discussions that permeate feminist theory, evidencing how

it is still in crisis of theoretical definition. Due to its ambiguous nature, this concept is in constant reconstruction and redefinition. That is why it is difficult to define it in a closed and limited way, as well as to define "sex," something in permanent mutation.

It is equally hard to try to define the differences between women and men as purely physical characteristics, because they are also cultural constructions, since we learn to be of a certain sex as we socialise (Stolcke 2000).

In standard discourse, the sexes are named on a "natural" basis. One is born man or woman, there is no other configuration. The normative heterosexuality from birth is reinforced by gender performativity and ends up receiving the status of natural. The heterosexual normativity of the bodies becomes a source of identification for the subjects, and their identities follow, or will be forced to follow, one of the two options. In reality, bodies are unstable and with open possibilities of rematerialisations, but normative discourses are resistant to changes.

Therefore, we can emphasise that gender identities (such as feminine and masculine) should not be understood as closed in themselves, since they are in constant resignification. Or also, as Judith Butler (2001a) recalls, sex should not be understood in a static, closed manner. The materialisation of body is accompanied by a normative discursive reiteration to which the bodies never completely conform. In addition, this reiteration is reinforced by the "performativity" of gender, the practice contextualised and culturally ratified.

Discourses on gender, based on this supposed naturalness of the sexes, fail to incorporate alternative sexualities. Heteronormativity, as identified in standard discourse, generates ontology in binary moulds and rejects people whose appearance does not correspond to any of the models. As a consequence of this thought, we have the possibility of thinking in several genders, escaping from the masculine–feminine duality (Butler 2001b). In fact, the queer movement envisions a more plural democracy, which goes beyond dichotomous discourses. It is not only women who lack power but also gays, transsexuals, transgenders, etc. These people find the support of their speeches based on this critique. Thinking about these many categories of bodies is important to analyze how people are involved with them. Through discourses or the habits of a society it is possible to identify which paradigms and beliefs are evoked to give legitimacy to the traditions produced.

The social history of sexed bodies went through several changes throughout the 20th century and female bodies are evidence of such changes. According to Anne-Marie Sohn, at the beginning of the twentieth century the swimsuit allowed women, on the beach, to expose their legs. In the years after the First Great War, to the indignation of people, women reduced their underwear. In the 1930s and 1940s, shorts and Bermuda shorts for women appear, followed by bikinis. The popularisation of cinema and medical discourses on sexuality, the pill, and the so-called emancipation movements lead to the current stage in which we are inserted (Sohn 2006).

The evidence of changes is even more pronounced when referring to the female body, where the act of showing parts or the whole body breaks paradigms. In any case, the greatest surveillance is, above all, on women. Something also condemnable for women was their taking of the floor in public, understood as an act of undressing, because women were supposed to stay silent. It can be said that when a woman speaks, it is her body that speaks (Rivera Garretas 1996).

The exposure that the female body has in discourses throughout history gives an idea of how a woman should behave. According to the canons of heteronormativity, being a woman implies acting according to the gender that is normally assigned to her, that is, the feminine and, of course, the heterosexual. To continue along this line, mechanisms were created to legitimise the power imposed on women's bodies, stating what they should be like. From there, a stereotype is created that seeks an ideal for women. Acting on the margins can cause discomfort in the power structures rooted in patriarchy.

The construction of stereotypes

The term "stereotype" has its origin in the eighteenth century in the context of typography, a process where a fixed mould was made in order to reproduce copies. From this the term comes to refer also to the resulting object of this process (Cano Gestoso 1993).

Walter Lippmann's classic essay *La opinión pública* (Public Opinion 1922) gives us an insightful view of what can be considered as stereotypes, since

> […] they constitute an orderly and more or less coherent image of the world, to which our habits, tastes, abilities, consolations and hopes have adapted themselves. They may not form a complete image, but they are the image of a possible world to which we have adapted. In it, people and things occupy an unequivocal place and their behavior responds to what we expect from them. (2003: 93)

Following the same line, one could say that, according to Henri Tajfel (1984), stereotypes project a mental image charged with meanings that attribute values to things, places, people, etc., that is, defining a group or a person before having a closer contact with it. It is a form of prejudice, because there is a preconception of what a certain person or thing is believed to be. This way, the homogenisation of a group of people is reached, since the person does not stop at individual identities but tends toward a homogenous, unique, essentialist image of a collective. In this context, media are important due to their action on subjectivities that promote stereotypes, such as gender, which deal with the roles assigned to the feminine and the masculine (Bruel dos Santos 2010).

Rosana Bignami Viana de Sá (2002) problematises the construction of the image of Brazil in tourism. This exported image has strong links both with the image built internally and with that arriving from the outside, which is related to the stereotype of it being the country of the carnival. In this sense, it is important to emphasise the stereotyped image of Brazilian women in Italy:

> The Brazilian woman here, for me, is actually stereotyped. She really is an easy woman. But... not easy. The term is not easy. I do not know if just Brazilian, or if all South American. [Pause] I see this, when it comes to Brazilian women.... (Ana, 34 years old).

Ana's perception reveals that not only women but also Brazil appear in discourses in a way that does not correspond to the reality she has lived through. The homogenisation present in the imaginary elaborates a society where one can experience the extremes, both pleasure and violence, in a paradisiacal place. The association between the images of the women-show in Italian media and the ideas about the Brazilian "woman" produces mirages so strong that the real flesh and blood women disappear.

There is no denying that mass media play an important role in the creation of a national image like this one. However, the external image of Brazil is not due exclusively, so to speak, to the journalistic discourses present in these media, since they lead and transmit the discourses circulating

in society. It is actually a set of factors that come together to create a stereotyped image.

In the opinion of Viana de Sá (2002), there are three historical periods that were fundamental for the creation and consolidation of the image of Brazil. These three periods range from voyages of discovery and stories of foreign travellers (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), going through the period of greatest urbanisation in the country (nineteenth and twentieth centuries), and, later, until the formation of the Estado Novo (mid twentieth century), which has as its summit the construction of the current capital Brasília, a period in which Brazil looks for a greater identification with the United States and Europe. Through Brazilian literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which seeks the origins of the formation of the Brazilian people, we can speak of a process of identification with the mythical races mix. This identification gives meaning to the national identity formed by the European, African and indigenous elements.

In general, there is a certain pessimism in relation to the character of the Brazilian people, since it is seen as little addicted to work, daring and reckless due to its Iberian heritage, especially Portuguese – a line of thought according to Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (Viana de Sá 2002). Consequently, these stereotyped images can possibly be found in the imagination about Brazilian people of other nations, in addition to the already known "latent sexuality." In many cases we think in a stereotyped way and name this "other," homogenising all foreign people as if they all acted the same.

The issue of Brazilian national identity

In the process of identity formation, the subjects are placed in front of others and in this relation the differentiation arises. The materiality with which this "other" is positioned represents in society the first access to their individuality and marks their own limit, their corporeality. In front of an increasingly complex society, it is essential to contemplate the multiplicity of identities through their belongings. Racisms as forms of discrimination negatively mark the identities of individuals due to their stereotyped character. In this section, the identities of individuals in the context of nationalism that mark their bodies through racism and immigration are studied,

with special emphasis on the case of the constitution of the Brazilian national identity.

In the Brazilian context, Sérgio Costa (2001) discusses the processes of "ethnicisation" suffered by society in its democratic conjuncture. Starting with Homi Bhabha, he sees contemporary nations as imagined communities,[5] as something constructed and narrated. In this sense, the pedagogical action and the performative action would give corpus to the construction and constitution of the nations. The Brazilian nation was seen, from the 1930s to the 1970s of the twentieth century, from an "ideology of miscegenation," where the unity of the nation was sought based on a *mestizo* unitary identity. That ideology was marked and thought from the intellectual (Gilberto Freyre) and political (Getúlio Vargas) planes. The idea of a culture based on miscegenation had consequences in relation to European immigrants and their descendants, already present in Brazil from the previous century, since there was strong pressure from the government for an "abrasileiramento," their assimilation in the national culture. "Brazilianness" had as its objective to erase cultural differences and their specificities, based on the myth of racial democracy, which would constitute Brazil (Costa 2001).

The issue of the assimilation of different ethnic groups as politics of *mestizaje* is also a theme proposed by Giralda Seyferth (1998), since it was believed that in the Brazilian territory there would not be minority groups. However, throughout the Estado Novo (governed by Getúlio Vargas) there was a strong mobilisation by the government for the nationalisation of immigrants present in Brazil since the nineteenth century. Because of their different ethnic identities, the immigrants located in regions considered more developed in the country intended to preserve their cultures through national belongings that did not coincide with those propagated by Brazilian nationalism (Seyferth 1998).

Paradoxically, it was also believed that Brazil was a mestizo society, this being interpreted as synonymous with backwardness. That is why the arrival of European immigrants could contribute, from the Western capitalist idea, to occupy "empty" lands, solving economic problems with progressive Westernisation. This could also contribute to the "whitening" of the *mestizo* population and to the genocide of indigenous groups. Despite

5 "Imagined communities" is also a term used by Benedict Anderson (1989), as will be seen later.

the thought of creating a homogenous identity based on miscegenation by "bleaching" through the mass migration of Europeans, this was not the direction that many immigrants took. Seyferth relates that, as a way to maintain traditions and their own language, many immigrants and their descendants created institutions (schools and associations) that would strengthen the bonds between them. The author highlights once again the constitution of different identities, among many possible ones, such as the case of German and Italian immigrants who claimed a German/Italian-Brazilian identity. Despite the minority character of these groups, they claimed a pluralism of belongings: *jus soli* (Brazilian) and *jus sanguinis* (German/Italian descent).

In this sense, it is important to note that Brazil and Italy have maintained strong ties since the nineteenth century, when migratory flows began between the two countries, and the former receives a large number of Italians in its territory. Already in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many Brazilians emigrated to Italy. Some of them were descendants of immigrants of the past centuries.

Despite these links, many Italian-Brazilian women, such as those interviewed, feel as extra-community citizens in the Italian migratory context. Nádia said that when she arrived in Italy, for economic and educational reasons, every time she went for some bureaucratic procedure, she needed to state that she had dual nationality (Brazilian and Italian). Then she received the answer that this was not possible, since she had to choose which nationality she wanted to appear in her documentation, as, for example, in her health service card. Despite having Italian nationality, she felt as an extra-community citizen, because people interpreted, by her accent, that she was not an "Italian":

> A word when I assimilated it gave me much displeasure. Because it was a word I could not imagine anymore, because an Italian in Brazil is not extracommunity (Nádia, 46 years old).

Final considerations

In general, the sexualised and "racialised" image of Brazilian women causes a certain discomfort in most of the interviewees, since they recognise the

existence of this image of a sexual object. Some of them report feeling harassed by men for the simple fact of being a woman. Those who have Italian nationality say they feel more Brazilian abroad; nevertheless, the Italian nationality helps them in the bureaucratic procedures. Also, some professional frustration can be perceived in the stories due to the lack of opportunities in the labour field related to their high educational level or their expectations, which were very different from what they found.

Some reflections presented in this study can be taken up and deepened with other approaches, such as the themes related to the construction of national identities and the influence of stereotypes on individuals, also those themes related to corporality and how it is affected by the discourses that circulate in the media from the country of origin to the country of immigration, and likewise, the way in which national identity is represented in different discourses and how it is influenced by stereotypes, which foment various forms of discrimination based on ethnicity, class, and gender.

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Pranjali Das

Negotiating Discomfort: The Experiences of South Asian GEMMA Students in Europe

Abstract This chapter aims to capture the negotiation of discomfort as experienced in the academic space by South Asian students who access Europe through the GEMMA program. Navigating through the challenges of strict immigration policies, unfamiliar university setups, and Eurocentric academic curriculums, this chapter articulates how South Asian students, a minority in the GEMMA program, use this space to not only assert their identities (as nationals, South Asians, etc.) but constructively invest in building transnational communities of friendship and solidarity that involve constant negotiation of discomfort at multiple levels. Some of these discomforts constitute the constraints of being a non-EU migrant, bridging gaps between their South Asian–centric situated knowledge to the Eurocentric education system, challenging colonial stereotypes, and addressing issues arising out of regional conflicts within the academic space. This chapter analyses how this negotiation impacts the approach of these students toward the GEMMA program, shapes their feminist community building and collective activism, and how their experiences invite a dialogue on the precarious position of non-EU education migrants.

Keywords : Discomfort, migration, South Asia, friendship, solidarity

Introduction

This chapter attempts to capture the negotiations of discomfort in the academic space experienced by South Asian students who enter Europe through the GEMMA program. Navigating through the challenges of strict immigration policies, unfamiliar university setups, and Eurocentric academic curriculums, this chapter articulates how South Asian students, a minority in the GEMMA program, use this space not only to assert their identities (as nationals, South Asians, etc.) but constructively invest in building transnational communities of friendship and solidarity that involve constant negotiation of discomfort at multiple levels. Some of

these discomforts constitute the constraints of being a non-EU migrant, bridging gaps between their South Asian–centric situated knowledge to the Eurocentric education system, challenging colonial stereotypes, and addressing issues arising out of regional conflicts within the academic space. This chapter does not limit itself in just highlighting the concerns of the South Asian contingent but also emphasises how GEMMA as a program invites and facilitates building communities and networks that go beyond restrictive physical border policies and encourage feminist solidarity on issues across the globe. Since the history of South Asia is interlaced with political and religious conflicts, some of which are still ongoing, between different nation states, this chapter also seeks to highlight how the program format of GEMMA has been constitutive in forging friendships between students hailing from the countries which are in conflict with each other, thereby facilitating an ambience that chooses to focus on narratives of kinship over regional politics.

For this chapter, I interviewed three students from South Asia of whom one recently graduated from the program and the remaining two are on their mobility. Being a South Asian GEMMA student myself, I cannot claim to hold an objective view or positionality. Therefore, with the testimonies of my interviewees, I intertwined my experiences too. Sharing similar encounters as my interviewees allowed me to understand and empathise with them at several levels. However, I have tried not to impose my biases or assumptions while analysing their interviews and strived not to frame my questions in ways that reflected the same. Initially, I had planned to interview at least seven students from South Asia who have been a part of the program in the last 3 years and represented voices from at least four consortium universities to highlight the diversity in university life. However, I could only reach out to five GEMMAs, of whom three could be interviewed. Due to reasons of confidentiality I was unable to access the official database of former GEMMA students. Therefore, I had to use my personal networks to access the contacts of both present and former GEMMA students. I could only interview one of the GEMMAs in person, so the other two interviews were conducted over emails since none of us were in the same institutions home or mobility.

This chapter is broadly divided into three sections. The first discusses the South Asian identity shared by all the participants of this study. The second section explores the negotiation of discomfort within the academic space, which is partly experienced because of their identity, and

the role of GEMMA in alleviating them. Finally, the chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for GEMMA to help students from non-EU contingents to be integrated into the academic space better. It must be noted that this chapter is not representative of every South Asian student's experience of the GEMMA program, rather it attempts to provide a picture of how a section of the present South Asian contingent experiences the program.

Shared and sharing identities

My interviewees T, N, and A (names protected for concerns of privacy) are nationals of India, Pakistan, and the Philippines, respectively. Though the Philippines is geographically not located in South East Asia, the experiences of A coming from a non-EU country as an education migrant resonated with that of the South Asian interviewees, including mine. Instead of following constricting regional demarcations and nomenclatures, for this chapter, A's testimonies will be categorised under the South Asian experience. This should not be considered as an attempt to subvert the distinctness of South East Asian identities, rather this is to highlight the similarities in experiences shared by bodies who as natives do not inhibit the Euro space. While taking consent from A regarding this clubbing of identities, A said, "I do not have any problem being called a South Asian or a South East Asian, just that there is no generic Asia/Asian or South Asia/South Asian." A, in this interview, was questioning the universally accepted neat categorisation of people under certain identities. A mentioned that South Asia or South East Asia is very diverse regions within itself. The countries inhabiting these regions have similar yet significantly different cultural practices that are governed by religion or other cultural institutions, and identities are continuously evolving within these fixed physical spaces too. Therefore, a "Asian/South Asian/South East Asian" identity cannot be uniform for all. There is fallacy too in the argument that these identities are formed out of geographical–regional boundaries and convenience because South Asia and South East Asia are both part of the Asian continent yet only certain countries like China, Korea, and Japan are attributed with the "Asian" identity.

A's conceptualisation of identity resonates with Stuart Hall's theorisation of cultural identity. In his essay "The Question of Cultural Identity" (1996) Hall described three conceptions of identities – the enlightenment subject, the sociological subject, and the postmodern subject. The conceptualisation of these identities, particularly the latter two, reflects in the lived experiences of the GEMMAs. Hall writes

> The notion of the sociological subject reflected the growing complexity of the modern world and the awareness that this inner core of the subject was not autonomous and self-sufficient, but was formed in relation to "significant others," who mediated to the subject the values, meanings, and symbols - the culture - of the worlds he/she inhabited. (1996: 597)

For Hall, the identity of the subject does not exist autonomously, but is created in relation to "significant others" that define the experiences of these subjects, attributing meanings, status, and position to the world these subjects inhabit. He states that the identity of this subject is formed in "interaction" between itself and the society. Hall writes, "The subject still has an inner core or essence that is 'the real me,' but this is formed and modified in a continuous dialogue with the cultural worlds 'outside' and the identities which they offer" (597). In this context, to quote T

> For me, I never felt the weight of my identity until I moved abroad. When I stayed in India, I did not feel the weight of my identity. When you move abroad, the scenario makes you feel the identity you belong from. My thoughts of being a South Asian is more of being brown.

T's first brush with identifying as a South Asian happened when she stepped out of her country and interacted with the "significant other." Her primary encounter has been in terms of racial differences, being pointed out as the "other" who does not belong to the space she moved in. She narrated

> In Hull, the United Kingdom I was made to feel worse about where I came from. I was pointed out that I do not speak like them – the locals. It was a very subtle way of pointing out that you do not belong here. A friend of mine was abused and told to go back to India. She was from Nepal though.

T and her friend's identities overlap as soon as they step out of their country. They are brown, nationals of their respective countries, South Asians, and most importantly they are foreigners to the land they were living in – they were unwelcomed there. They have become Hall's sociological subjects. Quoting Hall,

> The subject previously experienced as having a unified and stable identity, is becoming fragmented; composed, not of a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities. Correspondingly, the identities which composed the social landscapes "out there," and which ensured our subjective conformity with the objective "needs" of the culture, are breaking up as a result of structural and institutional change. (1996: 597)

T and her friend's overlapping identities were now clashing and becoming fragmented. These fragmentations came as a consequence of stepping into a space that questioned their autonomy and existence. These encounters link to Hall's theorization of the postmodern subject that experiences a continuous change in position:

> Hall theorizes the postmodern subject's identity as something that becomes "a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways you are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround you. It is historically, not biologically, defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self.' Within us are contradictory identities pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about." (1996: 598)

The postmodern subject identity is a continuum of the sociological one. Forming identities of the self when in interaction with the society does not give way to a strong unified identity, but it continuously changes keeping up with the social systems that surround one. T's experiences reflect those of the postmodern subject too. The postmodern subject's identity is not biological but historical. India with it regional borders is a product of British colonisation of over 200 years. The rise of a unified Indian identity was first witnessed during the pre-independence era, which has changed over the decades answering to the times and needs of the society. The contempt shown by those who asked T's friend to return to her country and made T uncomfortable every time she stepped outside her university campus is also a product of their identities being historically defined as belonging to a country that was colonised by Britain for purposes of "civilisation." In tandem, N narrates

> I am very proud of my identity as [a] South Asian and as [a] Pakistani. On a large spectrum, I belong to South Asian and if I narrow down it I belong to Pakistan and Punjab. I love the regional boundary and national boundary.

N's assertion of her identity reflects her acceptance of the historically defined boundaries. She acknowledges how these boundaries contributed to the building of her own identity here in Europe and in her country too.

As GEMMA students here in Europe, each of us identify as both nationals of our countries and as South Asians. We are faced to confront these identities once we step out of our comfort zone, of our countries.

Negotiating discomfort in the academic space

To step into the academic space in Europe, one must first cross borders and boundaries, which comes with its set of restrictive policies. Being brown and applying to study in Europe, albeit on full scholarship, did not make it easy or convenient for any of us. Imagine the paperwork developing country nationals must produce to enter the developed/first world space. The visa application to the Schengen zone was uncomfortable, and the delay in approval of the visas led to three of us (A, N, and me) miss our first weeks at our respective universities. Students attending Utrecht University did receive assistance from the International Office of Humanities at the university for the application of visa. This was primarily because the Immigration and Naturalisation Department of the Netherlands does not accept individual and independent applications. Other than tourist visas, all other visa applications depending on their nature (study/work/meeting relative) must be filed by institutions/sponsors/individuals based in the Netherlands. Whatever may have been the bureaucratic reason, this move is a certain way to moderate and monitor bodies that enter their space. I realised this was a way employed to validate a person's worth in entering the country. Since it was mandatory for institutions in the Netherlands to apply for visa on behalf of their candidates, the hassle I encountered were comparatively less than that encountered by my interviewees, who did not receive any institutional help for their applications.

Overcoming the first hurdle of securing visas, the second was passing through immigration. Both T and I were picked out for random explosive checks at our transfer airports. T recalled multiple instances when she was picked out for security checks, and her luggage was heavily scrutinised. A recalls an incident when she was traveling to Vienna with two of her friends. All three of them were non-whites but one of A's friends had a name which identified her as a Muslim. While A and her other friend were let off with a simple check of their travel documents, her friend's possessions

were searched before she was let into Austria. Our experiences in navigating immigration to arrive in Europe display the barriers constructed to allow only the "right" kind of bodies to access this space. It is interesting to observe the hierarchy attributed by these "significant other" institutions that categorises non-white bodies and scrutinises accordingly. With A's example we saw how, despite all being identifiably non-white, only the one with a Muslim name was treated with suspicion.

The experiences of discomfort are very different from one another's. All the GEMMAs interviewed here have experienced discomfort in the academic space primarily for two reasons – their identities and their prior geopolitical positionality. A expressed that she finds it disrespectful and frustrating if somebody is given more space in the classroom to talk not because of their experience or knowledge in the subject but because they happen to represent a particular nationality and had the advantage of being a native English speaker. The advantage of being a native English speaker is a privilege that people often fail to recognise. A mentioned that she is glad to have a good command over English, which has prevented her from being spoken over in class. She cited a few incidents where some students were spoken over in class due to their English-speaking skills. For T, her experiences off campus caused discomfort that reflected in her classroom engagement. Taking up part-time jobs outside campus exposed her to a worldview that constantly othered her, saw her as one of those people who have stepped in the continent to take away the jobs of the white Britons. She expressed her frustration at not being able to stand up for herself in certain spaces. I have experienced that state of discomfort too but have not been able to act upon it. The constant fear of residence permit being revoked for trespassing some laws unknowingly dreads most of us. Right before the submission of term papers for the first semester, non-EU/EEA students received an email from the Immigration and Naturalization Department (IND) informing us that our study permits will be revoked if we failed to maintain satisfactory grades. The following is the letter that was sent:

> Dear Pranjali Das,
>
> You hold a residence permit for study purposes that is valid for the (nominal) duration of your studies. Part of the requirements for your residence permit is that you maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress towards your degree for each year in which you are enrolled. This policy applies to all non-EU/EEA students who have a residence permit for study purposes.

Clicking on the link embedded to the Satisfactory Academic Progress, I found this:

> Satisfactory Academic Progress Students: who have a residence permit for study purposes through Utrecht University are required to maintain satisfactory academic progress toward their degree requirements for each year in which they are enrolled, and to be in good standing (i.e. pay tuition on time and meet other University requirements). This policy applies to all non-EU/EEA students who have a residence permit for study purposes Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), as described below, is evaluated once a year, after the second semester. Failure to maintain satisfactory progress may result in cancellation of the residence permit.

Typed in small letters at the end of the document was

> Note: cancellation of the Residence Permit cannot be appealed with the University Board, as this is a decision made by the IND.

This email was deeply disturbing and severely frustrating. As a non-white migrant in the Netherlands, not only was I consistently made aware of my status as an outsider, but I am repeatedly reminded to maintain a set of standards to be "accepted" to live and navigate in the country. What was more disheartening was the line in fine print that stated that the university cannot help in this matter at all.

The other discomfort I experienced was the inability to bridge the gap between my South Asia–centered situated knowledges and the Euro-US-centric curriculum followed in the universities. All three of my interviewees agree with me on this. A noted that many students come from non-European countries to study in these institutions, yet the curriculum is not as diverse as its student base. In fact, I observed that if something is discussed outside the non-Euro-US space, the scholars studied are either European or US scholars writing about those locations or scholars with origins from those countries but are based in the Euro-US space. Rarely do we find scholars situated in countries outside the Euro-US space being taught in class. Apart from this, as students we tend to question the validity of the knowledge we come with since the engagement here is mostly with a location we are unfamiliar with. This makes our experiences uncomfortable and difficult at the same time. The obvious counterpoint to this concern could be how do we expect an institution based in Europe to not have a Eurocentric curriculum. A responded to this by stating that every year large cohorts of international students are coming to study different

programs in these institutions, which is a reason good enough to create a curriculum more inclusive in terms of the diversity taught and consider it an opportunity to increase the knowledge base. Adding to her points, I feel curriculum wise Gender Studies is a very progressive discipline. Resisting tokenism and incorporating diversity with intentions to build better knowledge systems should be an objective to look forward to. This move would also make students coming from non-Euro-US background feel included and welcome. The knowledge they come with from their geopolitical positions would receive external validation too.

Amidst all these discomforts, GEMMA has facilitated strong bonds of kinship among the South Asians themselves. All four of us agreed that stepping to a foreign place, there is always an affinity to seek friendship with those who come from the same geopolitical region. With the chance to move across different universities, the program allows the students who are in minority due to their identities to forge friendships and invest in community building across different locations and spaces. A mentioned that in her first year of the program, she was unable to build strong friendship because of academic pressure. But she is grateful to have an opportunity to start afresh in her mobility institution. She is determined to invest more time in feminist activities and in developing friendships. T mentions that she has made some good friends through this program who will always hold a special place in her life. She mentions how these friends from different national backgrounds made her stay bearable in the UK when she was struggling with racist attacks. Having friends who were also from non-EU countries made it easier to share each other's problems. T acknowledges that she derived her mental strength from these friends she made, and they constitute her pillars of strength. I had similar experiences in Utrecht too. It is interesting to note that students on the GEMMA program with scholarships were the only bunch who added "diversity" to the class, that is, they were from non-EU countries. In a class of 30, if the 5 GEMMA Erasmus Mundus scholarship holders were taken out, out of 25, there were only 2 other students who represented diversity in the classroom. Before we began our academic year in Utrecht, I got in touch with the other GEMMA Utrecht scholarship holders on email and we would keep each other updated about our visa procedures and housing situations. Since housing is very difficult to secure in the Netherlands as owners particularly look out for native (white) Dutch speakers, we looked out for each other's housing needs and created a strong sense of community even

before we arrived in the Netherlands. My experience in the Netherlands would have been much more difficult if I did not have this group of friends to fall back on.

For me, GEMMA has provided the opportunity to look beyond the communal and political tensions that are rife in South Asia. Before coming to Europe through GEMMA, I never had the opportunity to meet or interact with anybody from Pakistan. Political disharmony between India and Pakistan goes way back in history. From time to time, at least the ruling political parties forming the central government would generate hateful narratives about Pakistan which the media would be feeding the people. In fact, it is very difficult to secure a Pakistani visa for an Indian and vice versa due to strained relations between the countries. In fact, nationals of both the countries are ineligible to apply for tourist visas for each other. They can apply for visitors' visa if they have extended families living in the other country and seek government clearance for application (Ashok 2018). For this study, I got the wonderful opportunity to reach out to N, who agreed to be part of my study. The warmth and support I received from N in helping me with this chapter is incredible. Though I have never subscribed to the hateful views circulated in my country against Pakistan, receiving such warmth from people from our neighbouring states inspires faith in peace-building and humanity. I agreed with N when she iterated that regional politics only builds bitterness. T agrees with N's comments too. Through her exposure through GEMMA, she started a small project with a few other women she met from countries in conflict with each other in South Asia. The project is known as United for Peace. Whenever T attends any conferences or moves to any international forum, she tries to meet people from countries India has conflict with. Apart from initiating dialogues and building community feelings, she puts up photographs on her social media with #UnitedforPeace emphasising the need for peace when our governments are invested in creating further divisions.

To conclude, GEMMA as a program has been effective in going beyond just academic deliberations. It has actively created a space for students across the world to access two different institutions and engage in feminist activism and solidarity in their own ways. The generous Erasmus Mundus scholarship offered by the GEMMA program has allowed many students to access a kind of academic environment that is different from their universities back home. To strengthen the program's initiatives as part of this study, two recommendations are made. These recommendations

came out of the interviews conducted with the student. The first is to offer official peer/buddy support. The concept of peer or buddy support is to identify certain individuals preferably among returning students of those institutions who would help new incoming GEMMA students, particularly those who arrive late due to bureaucratic hurdles, to help navigate within the institution in the first few days. These "buddies" could be the first point of contact among students who can welcome them into the institutions. At a program level, GEMMA can suggest the universities to introduce this system to keep up with the inclusive approach of the program. The second recommendation is to diversify the curricula by including works of authors outside the Euro-US space. Definitely not an easy task to accomplish but one can still be hopeful for having this recommendation implemented. Needless to say, GEMMA is more than just a master's degree, it is a beautiful journey that walks us through the different paths of life encompassing within and outside the academia.

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Section 4 Affective Methodologies

M.S. Suárez Lafuente

Introduction: Coming of (Nomadic) Age in GEMMA

When I read the chapters by Méndez de la Brena and García López/Harris Sánchez, I realised how arduous the journey to feminism is and how tortuous the process of unlearning, even nowadays, for the younger generations is. The authors see their goal in the horizon and have the critical tools at hand in order to proceed towards it. Nevertheless, these chapters make it clear that becoming a feminist is still a social transgression and, therefore, a hard personal subversion, full of painful choices and decisions insofar one has to accommodate a whole life of private affects and cultural education to the exigencies of an ethical position that is intent on sisterhood, conviviality and planetarism.

Affects are human and, as such, they, one way or another, affect everybody. The difference lies in what we consider love, hate, fear, etc., according to our cultural and social circumstances (time and place). So, in order to tackle our personal approach to defining how we feel and what we want, we need to face our *chronotope*, which is not an easy task, especially (as the chapters mentioned show) when you first awake to feminism: "Developing critical feminist self-awareness is not easy. It comes with emotional ruptures and internal healing" (Méndez de la Brena: 206). We define ourselves within society, through contact with other beings, experimenting where our boundaries become "liquid" and fuse with (or refuse) those of the others. But we also need to become aware of the process, to the point of realising where and how we want or need to combine with the world around. As Méndez de la Brena put it, "Context is a long and often difficult process by which someone or something changes and develops throughout life" (196).

In order to situate personal experiences within the GEMMA collective, García López and Harris Sánchez (185) quote the following words by Spanish sociologist Teresa del Valle, about the need to design "processes to situate the experiences in the present". What events and corresponding

affects have made me a feminist? As our GEMMA students explain, the answer is not easy; it demands self-criticism and a good dose of awareness of what practices one should or should not reproduce. The two chapters mentioned here give us a good, detailed account of the doubts and pains their authors underwent in order to shed many of the preconceptions and practices of exclusion they had previously acquired and of the difficulties of coping, as a feminist, with personal situations derived from social problems that encompass a wide range of patriarchal attitudes.

While reading about their critically explained experience, I thought of my own process in ATHENA. Meeting with feminist women from different countries in Europe and sharing experiences with them was a superb school for the teaching of gender studies. But even more so was the fact that I was nominally representing "the" Spanish feminist scholar – and in the process of coping with that impossibility I learnt a lot about myself-in-the-world. When it was decided in one of the meetings to have partial discussions according to our cultural background, I found myself confronted with my own position. Obviously, it was clear I was neither northern, eastern nor central European, but I did not feel Mediterranean either, to everybody's surprise. Is not Spain a Mediterranean country in European eyes? Maybe part of Spain, but I am Asturian, Atlantic and closer to the Castillian centre as affects go. That was an eye-opener and helped me to reach a first step up the ladder to becoming a nomadic subject.

Then, the GEMMA project came about, and my life-long teaching experience underwent a significant change. It was no longer a matter of opening students' minds to gender, feminism, postcolonialism, minorised groups and diversity – now I had diversity in the classroom. The experience was priceless; I became conscious of how easy it had been to talk to white, Christian students that shared my cultural background – now it was time to find the various ways to "real worlding". García López and Harris Sánchez express that complexity when pointing out that the relation with embodiment (I paraphrase) becomes tangible when bodies approach in the same context and space, so we start to wonder about a different future for our professions and our affects, broadening our world to fit in the planet.

Both chapters end with a realistic view of the never-ending feminist task; even if we find some personal stability, there will always be subaltern and troublesome emotions implied in that fact. But both chapters

are intrinsically optimistic, as they are written from the present, after a good part of the path towards effective/affective feminism has been run. In reading them we can find answers to some of our doubts and acquire some knowledge on how to tackle with "the trouble" and "different relational possibilities".

Ana María García López and Ángela Harris-Sánchez

Hegemonies of Power versus Affective Relational Anarchy in Social Inclusion Disciplines: Two Case Studies and a Feminist Toolbox

Abstract This chapter starts by exploring the power dynamics existing inside two disciplines connected with social inclusion processes: Social Work and Art Therapy for social inclusion. We briefly describe our perception of the hegemonies of power, which often direct and determine intra-personal relations in the practices within the fields. Although coming from two different disciplines whose common denominators are eradication of social exclusion and paying attention to particularly vulnerable collectives, GEMMA has given us the opportunity to set in dialogue our critical reflection on what we could describe as "dynamics of normativisation," which end up reproducing hierarchies and, hence, paradoxically generating unwanted exclusions within discourses and practices intended to promote social inclusion. Adopting the feminist methodologies learned throughout our GEMMA trajectories, we take our own Spanish-situated experiences as texts and conduct autoethnography (del Valle 1999, Esteban 2004, Gregorio 2014) so as to interpellate our past practices. We then explore alternative ways of engaging and compromising with politics of inclusion by proposing fresh relational models based on affect approaches (Ahmed 2014) together with our reappropriation of the concept of "relationship anarchy" (Nordgren 2012). In essence, this chapter ultimately represents our commitment to the need to change hegemonic practices in academia. Hence, we conclude by devising a Spanish-located (yet exportable) feminist toolbox with tips and examples for more solidary and thoroughly inclusive practices which may rekindle our dwindled enthusiasm and compromise as feminist practitioners in our fields.

Keywords : Social Work and Art Therapy, dynamics of normativisation, politics of inclusion, relationship anarchy

Introduction

This chapter starts by exploring the power dynamics existing inside two disciplines connected with social inclusion processes: Social Work and

Art Therapy for social inclusion. We briefly describe our perception of the hegemonies of power, which often direct and determine intrapersonal relations in the practices within the fields. Although coming from two different disciplines whose common denominators are eradication of social exclusion and paying attention to particularly vulnerable collectives, we have both coincided in our critical reflection on what we could describe as "dynamics of normativisation," which end up reproducing hierarchies and, hence, paradoxically generating unwanted exclusions within discourses and practices intended to promote social inclusion. Adopting a feminist methodology, we take our own Spanish-situated experiences and conduct a self-ethnographic approach (del Valle 1999, Esteban 2004) so that we dialogue critically with our past practices. We then explore alternative ways of engaging and compromising with politics of inclusion by proposing fresh relational models based on affect approaches (Lagarde 1998, Lear 2008, Berlant, 2011, Ahmed 2014), together with non-normative, radical, feminist, and queer ways of caring, loving, and communicating. In essence, this chapter ultimately represents our commitment to the need to change hegemonic practices in, and consequently outside, academia. Hence, we conclude by devising a Spanish-located (yet exportable) feminist toolbox with tips and examples for more solidary and thoroughly inclusive practices which may rekindle our dwindled enthusiasm and compromise as feminist practitioners in our fields.

We would like to highlight that this research was born out of our participation in the *In/equalities: Narrative & Critique, Resistance & Solidarity* Graduate Conference at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. As students from the Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies (GEMMA), we presented a paper titled "Hegemonies of Power vs. Affective Relational Anarchy in Social Inclusion Disciplines: Two Case Studies and a Feminist Toolbox." Therefore, the ideas expressed in this chapter are a result of that first experience as conference speakers. However, this work began forming itself several months before, when we did not even know about our participation in the conference. This leads us to say that every idea has a story and a context, and that is the point from where we are going to start this presentation. We are Angie Harris Sánchez and Ana María García López, and this chapter has been possible due to two specific contexts that, thanks to the GEMMA program, converged in the same space: the context of production, which was in the Netherlands, and the context of provenance, which was in Spain.

Let's start by explaining the context of production: the idea of this research started to take shape the first day we met in Utrecht when both of us were students of the GEMMA master's degree. Even though, this chapter did not start within the walls of Academia, but during the in-between breathing spaces that we could create[1]. In an attempt of learning from Marcela Lagarde (1998: 21–37), in those breathes we started to practice how to not just be for the others (which here also applies "for the Academy" or "for the feminist cause") but also learn how to "be for ourselves" (Lagarde 1998) by practicing mutual self-care. Therefore, it has to be stressed that this chapter has also been a result of the blooming of those spaces.

Hence, our approach is self-ethnographic, a reflexive process about our embodied memories in our past practices, which has been very much informed by what Teresa Del Valle calls "memorias encarnadas" (1999), which can be translated as embodied memories in *Procesos de la memoria: cronotopos genéricos.* Here, she explains that those memories are more than just a reconstruction of the past from data created by other people:

> La memoria de la que hablo va más allá de lo que sería la mera reconstrucción del pasado por medio de los datos que aportan las personas o de los datos que podemos recoger e interpretar (1990: 8)

Instead, as she argues, they are personal memories that might allow us to identify symbols as well as to keep distance and re-experience different emotions attached to them, such as love, fear, or vulnerability:

> I am rather referring to a memory (...) that can symbolize and experience the density of different emotions: love, hate, fear, vulnerability, distress, rejection, to mention some of them; and of designing processes to situate the experiences in the present in a particular moment (Del Valle 1999: 8). [Own translation]

"Memorias encarnadas" can be exercised in many different ways, and in our case, we did it together: sharing our corporal experiences and personal internalisations of past memories within two disciplines: Social Work in Ana's case and Art Therapy in Angie's case, while doing our

1 The capital A for Academia is intended in tune with our proposal to deconstruct the abuse of hegemony which often takes place within these walls.

internships. From here, we could reflect on different emotional processes (Del Valle 1999). The merging of embodiment and critical analysis is also framed by Mari Luz Esteban in *Antropología encarnada. Antropología desde una misma* (2004), where there is a specific focus upon how from disciplines such as anthropology (or in our case, social intervention) we tend to divide between "us, subjects and the others, as victims," adding that the worrying thing is that we are all included in that "rest," even though the points of departure and life situations are very different:

> [I] am concerned about how from anthropology we are still dividing humanity between us, anthropologists, intellectuals or feminists, on the one hand, and the rest, on the other. Between us, subjects, and others, victims. I am concerned about this because we are all included in that "rest", even though the points of departure and life situations are very different. And this is where I find a necessary critical perspective, also from a self-reflective point of view. For example, it would be interesting to analyze the importance of appearance, of the seen body, in the academic and scientific life: which are the physical profiles that are promoted, how is the regulation of bodies and images shaped in our contexts, how the normal and irregular is constituted, and what has this to do with other requirements of belonging to groups, of social self-legitimating (Esteban 2004: 15) [Own translation]

The idea of embodiment and memory, from and for a self-ethnographical analysis, is directly related to the affect theory. The relation with embodiment was tangible when our bodies approached in the same context and space and started to wonder about a different future for our professions, leading to what Sara Ahmed would call "the radicalization of our relation to the past, which [was] transformed into that which lives and breathes in the present" (2014: 180). Through the feeling of wonder, we could bring back emotions that shaped and orientated us "towards objects and others, which shape[d] individual as well as collective bodies" (Ahmed 2014: 15) in our past practices. From the feeling of fear, we realised how emotions are directly entangled with our professional interventions. For example, under the fear of losing our jobs, we maintain a culture that hampers autonomy. Under the fear of not having government financial support, social inclusion institutions adapt their projects to the demands of the ruling politics. Under the fear of losing our jobs, we do not take time for self-care, neither speak out against the system. Emotions such as fear have been shaped by an institutional system of hegemonies of power which are inevitably intersectional and relational.

Whenever we brainstormed together about what we were (re)producing within our practices, we came up with a lot of self-criticism, but we found it difficult to point our finger at the reasons sustaining why. Speaking about affect and attachment, following Laurent Berlant's theories and her concept of "Cruel optimism,"

> Whatever the experience of optimism is in particular, then, the affective structure of an optimistic attachment involves a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that this time, nearness to this thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way. (2011: 2)

we began to understand how we are located in a very specific system that keeps us absorbed inside its normative existence. We situate ourselves on, and side with, the specificity that Berlant highlights when she talks about the presentness of contexts. However, we do not refuse future temporalities (as Jose Esteban Muñoz 1999 would put it), which can be loaded with transgressive potential. This is our first step to recognition.

Going back to our memories, we started to reflect around how our interventions were rooted in a specific neoliberalist homogeneous narrative under an inclusion/exclusion logic. We realised how the construction of different affects was related to a concrete social inclusion discourse, giving rise to institutional practices that were maintaining close relationships with the systemic ideals. Those relationships lead to the creation of power dispositives that kept reproducing a neoliberal culture that promotes inclusion/exclusion dynamics. This implied, from our position as feminists and workers in the field of inclusion, taking responsibility and starting work, practically and theoretically, for changes within social inclusion disciplines. Hence, from here, we reflexively approach our positions and rethink what it means to practice social inclusion in the Spanish context in Madrid.

In Ana's case, she did her Social Work internship back in 2016, in an NGO from Madrid. During her internship, she had two main responsibilities: The first one was inside the migration area, working with immigrant women. And the second one was based in the educational area, for which she went to public high schools to teach gender equality courses to students between the ages of 13 and 18. For now, we focus on the migration area. The general purpose of this area was full integration of immigrant women in all levels of Western life through their personal empowerment and autonomy. Ana was working one day per week in group sessions with

immigrant women from the so-called global south, women who were considered to be in a highly vulnerable situation. Mainly, her labour as a social worker was to accompany and support those women in their process of finding a job. For doing this, Ana was responsible in helping them learn how to use the computer and the Internet. During the group time, the women's "tasks" were mainly focused on finding a job: searching for job applications through the Internet and learning how to send emails with their curriculum vitae attached. Some of them had to start by learning how to use the computer's mouse, and some of them perfectly knew how the Internet and the computer worked. The differences between them were immense, and the only thing that they had, if we may say so, in common was that they were all immigrants from the "global south" trying to survive in Spain by themselves. Also, many of them were the only economic and caring support of their families, as single mothers. From Ana's perspective, it is in this group area that she started to discover that the idea of feminist autonomy (Lagarde 1998: 5) was becoming blurred and confused with a neoliberal notion. It can be said that the idea of autonomy that followed the "Job=Autonomy" formula was being promoted, enhanced by social inclusion strategies that were mainly focused on economy. Therefore, the homogeneous category of group of "immigrant women in a highly vulnerable situation" was looking for equality by losing what Marcela Lagarde calls "una autonomía específica," a specific autonomy:

> Each social subject requires, if it is proposed and raised, a specific autonomy. The autonomy of different social groups, organizations, institutions or movements can't be the same. These are all different layers from which we have to think about autonomy (Lagarde 1998: 5) [Own translation]

In Angie's case, she was working as an art therapist in three different programs based in Spain that supported people in risk of social exclusion. These three associations were Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), RAIS, and Arte Prosocial Ventillarte. In FSG, whose aim is to help for the development of the Spanish and European gypsy community, Angie specifically worked with children between 6 and 12 years; in RAIS, an entity that works with homeless people, Angie worked with people with functional and mental diversity; and in Arte Prosocial Ventillarte, she was in charge of providing educational support for Spanish kids with immigrant parents. Even though the contexts can seem radically different, the interventions did not have any specific preparation from the University. It was the art

therapists, the ones in charge of applying in each group a specific intervention practice, who ignored the diversity among the groups, creating fixed and monistic identities rooted in the precariousness as the ruling trace of their identity. Hence, these examples bring us back to the idea of equality through homogenisation.

From here, we realised that the construction of social inclusion spaces deals with the aspirations of people for their eventual social insertion, the reason why the idea of hope in social inclusion comes to mind. Throughout these examples and the study of affect and relational theories (Lagarde 1998; Ahmed 2014), we have started exploring which possible resistances can be applied to our practices and, also, how these resistances can function. This, in turn, has made us become very sceptical about concepts we have often come across in the exercise of our practices, such as "vulnerability," "autonomy," "crisis," or "inclusion."

We want to highlight the importance of the conceptual construction of "crisis" in the current Spanish context, gradually reinforced since 2008. This discourse has had a direct impact on the funding allocated for social inclusion programs so that public and social services have been drastically cut, the reason why our positions as social inclusion workers have been very much influenced by what was sold to us as an economic crisis situation.

Also, it is in their friction that both concepts, inclusion and exclusion, take shape as specific actions. These actions, following the tenets of Berlant's cruel optimism,

> [turn] toward thinking about the ordinary as an impasse shaped by crisis in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on (2011: 8).

Crisis is then not an exceptional state but, as Laurent Berlant says, "a process embedded in the ordinary that unfolds in stories about navigating what's overwhelming" (2011: 10). Rather than transforming the situation, the actions intended to palliate the crisis become part of the neoliberal narrative of exception.

During the crisis, job insecurity, unemployment, and precariousness have given rise to a specific nationalist narrative where the "ordinary subject" has been constituted as, following Ahmed, "the real victim" (2014: 44), and as she says, threatened by "the imagined others whose proximity becomes a crime" (Ahmed 2014: 44) against this "national

ordinary belonging subject." From our Spanish location and through our disciplines, we could see how the crisis specially affected migrants and second generations, reinforcing racist and nationalist discourses among white Spanish people. The crisis has placed some bodies (mainly racialised bodies) as unusual for the system and as the causes for tension and the ultimate culprit of the crisis. As Sara Ahmed (2014) points out

> Once someone or something is agreed to be the cause of tension, then shared feelings are directed toward that cause. Something "out there" which is sensed and real, but also intangible, is made tangible. In "finding" cause, feelings can become even more forceful. Political discourse is powerful as it can turn intangible feelings into tangible things that you can do things with. If we feel nervous, we can do something by eliminating what is agreed to be making us nervous. (227)

The actions of "including" and being "included" reinforce what we could refer to as the *impasse of normativity* and a model of production that commodifies subjects who, intoxicated by the conception of social hope, "smoke'em if they've got them," meaning the desire of inclusion also comes from the possibility of being included. Who includes and who is being included, indeed, speaks about a conception of impasse, of passivity, where the absent sense of agency is directly proportional to the inaction of the subject. And this, once again, relates to a system of capitalist production.

From the idea of inclusion, we questioned how autonomy is being promoted through social inclusion practices. For Marcela Lagarde (1998), autonomy should be constituted by both the "procesos vitales económicos," translated as vital economic processes (8), and the "procesos vitales culturales," translated as vital cultural processes (9). Therefore, even if we did have economic autonomy, in order for this autonomy to be transformative, we should also transform culture:

> The approach of autonomy (...) is a transformative approach of culture and, thus, the constitution of autonomy in vital, economic, psychological and ideological processes. Autonomy is a transformative element of culture, since there can't be economic autonomy without cultural autonomy (Lagarde 1998: 10) [Own translation]

Going back to Ana's example, we could identify how an identical idea of autonomy was being created for the whole group of women, an idea of autonomy that was just based on finding a job. Hence, in this specific case, the way of being an autonomous woman followed the next formula: Job=

Autonomy. We want to point out that, in practice, it is true that, as Lagarde (1998) remarks, "autonomy takes place in the concrete society we live in" (8), and in this case, within the Spanish society, "[there are] required minimal economic conditions so that this autonomy can occur, without it there can be a great autonomic discourse, but there is no real possibility for autonomy to become an experienced fact" (Lagarde 1998: 8). But, we wonder, is it possible to have just one formula to achieve feminist autonomy?

Thereupon, we question the "Job=Autonomy" formula. As we mentioned in the context of our analysis, people need minimum economic conditions in order to start creating their own autonomy, but we want to go further and pose the idea of feminist autonomy as transformative. With transformative we mean to start asking ourselves if, from social inclusion disciplines, we are repeating the culture or, instead, we are transforming it (Lagarde 1998: 9). And, as Lagarde asserts, for doing this, we need to start by questioning the notion of autonomy with which we are working.

We want to expose that being feminist does not necessarily mean that we are working "for" and "from" different feminist perspectives (Alcázar 2014: 29). Maintaining the lack of promotion of cultural autonomy in social inclusion directly excludes feminist perspectives. Inclusion/exclusion dynamics creates the impossibility of breaking with the networks of power relations (Foucault 1977: 26), which keep reproducing the same culture that excludes some bodies.

Therefore, we could say that social inclusion agents are configuring an idea of autonomy based on economics. Hence, from here, we want to critically propose a new transformative feminist perspective of autonomy, one that could be constructed within our practices and would also question the network of relations (Foucault 1977: 26) that sustains power hegemonies.

Perhaps, we should start our conclusions by saying that this is a paradox. Because, on the one hand, critical social intervention can only be effective when isolated from any connections within institutions inserted in the neoliberal system. However, on the other hand, as we are conscious of it, it is impossible to completely break these relations from the inside, so they can just be damaged. We want to propose, therefore, that rather than aiming at a utopian total general transformation of the system, we could simply put together a more humble critical, situated, and contextualised feminist toolbox that could provide fresh new models based on affect approaches.

On this theoretical basis, we will be exploring other forms of hope, becoming particularly involved with what Jonathan Lear calls "Radical hope":

> What makes this hope radical is that it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is. Radical hope anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it. (2008: 103)

This concept is radical because, following Laurent Berlant's theory of transgression (2011), it is related to a situated understanding of hope. One that rather than disrupting the material conditions of its contexts exceeds them, maintaining the consciousness of its own location, as Lear puts it:

> The commitment is not to the idea that history has a beneficial direction, nor to the idea that its current order has divine sanction (….) Rather, the commitment is only to the bare possibility that, from this disaster, something good will emerge (….) Why that will be or how that will be is left open. The hope is held in the face of the recognition that, given the abyss, one cannot really know what survival means. (Lear 2008: 97)

Drawn from this understanding and application of "Radical hope" to our own analysis, we have found in located micro(en)actions (of power) resistances that give shape and inform relational toolboxes of strategic moments of practice. As Madina Tlostanova pointed out in the *In/equalities: Narrative & Critique, Resistance & Solidarity* Graduate Conference's as keynote lecturer, referencing to Enrique Dussel's analysis of the Zapatista movement, power needs to be decolonised and explored from new perspectives that do not necessarily imply their equations with domination.

Exploration of new power perspectives is what we are trying to imagine and shape (or we would rather say sketch) when we talk about plural toolboxes. Toolboxes that can be seen as key tools for social inclusion disciplines such as Art Therapy or Social Work. These toolboxes should be relational since they are created at specific moments of practice. They should also be located since they are meant to give response to specific contexts where the singularity of those meet the multiple identities that come together in assemblage and assemblies (depending on a different idea of agency).

To end this chapter, we want to point out that the horizontalisation of relations in a performative understanding of strategic and located

micro(en)actions of power also links to fresh models based on affective approaches such as relational anarchy, radical tenderness, BDSM or polyamory, which we want to keep exploring from here in our future researches. By taking into account non-normative radical, feminist, and queer ways of caring, loving, and communicating, we intend to propose affective models as DIY-located guides, guides that will help us learn techniques on how to start breaking with relational patriarchal hierarchies. These affective-relational tools can, thus, be extrapolated from sex and romance to other areas such as social inclusion disciplines. Therefore, when we talk about relational anarchy and structures of affect that go beyond monogamy, we refer to a way of engaging and creating relational interactions that break with a neoliberal and capitalistic system of exchange based in an individualistic, isolated, and binary direction.

Finally, remaining critical and aware of our still early stage of this research in its regard and involvement with critical disability studies and critical approaches to different relational possibilities, we want to specify that the idea of using other relational-affective approaches such as relational anarchy follows the location of micro-(en)actions that we want to apply to specific moments of practices, not expecting or trying to impose this form of relationality to the people we engage with, but rather enforcing it on ourselves so these moments can be performed in ways that demonise power by enacting it from other locations that do not imply a sense of domination and oppression.

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Dresda E. Méndez de la Brena

"Researching with the Trouble": A Journey of Emotions and Affective Challenges in Doing Feminist Research

Abstract Emotions, embodiment, and affects are important drivers in the experience of doing feminist research. Researchers are embedded in emotional embodied entanglements in which historical/personal contexts and biographies shape the ways emotions are experienced and how research is felt, produced, transmitted, and negotiated. "Researching with the Trouble" invites us to rethink the way we think and the things we make with our "troublesome" feelings while doing research. In this chapter, echoing Donna Haraway's "staying with the trouble" (2016), I would like to further explore how personal feelings modify our research and invite us to reconsider all the steps in our feminist research practice. Moreover, this chapter suggests that "negative feelings" motivate opportunities to create no methodological templates but affective "troublesome" methodologies in doing research practices that transgress the individualistic and patriarchal-oriented academia from the troubled inside.

Keywords : Troublesome feelings, feeling methodologies, staying with the trouble, feminist research practices, emotions, embodiment and affects

Introduction: On troublesome contexts

All texts are the result of an intellectual journey. All texts start with the displacement of words, affects, bodies, and theories from one place to another. When the journey ends and the words, affects, bodies, and theories stop moving, they take shape as the context that forms the setting for our statements or ideas that, eventually, will be understood by others. Context is the surroundings, circumstances, and backgrounds that help to clarify the meaning of an event or other occurrences in our lives. Hence, context is how we come to be intelligible for and by others. In literary terms, context is also a long and often difficult process by which someone

or something changes and develops throughout life. Texts and contexts seem to share an embodied quality: both are the entanglement of the material and discursive ways we experience, produce, transmit and negotiate our actions in the world while the world acts on us.

Inspired by the use of the noun "world" as a verb in different academic fields (humanities, science, and cultural studies in particular), con/texts are the starting point of *worlding*. In *When Species Meet*, Haraway (2008) engages with the material and the semiotic ways species attend to and interact with the world. For Haraway, "worlding" provides a generative embodied and enacted process to rethink our encounters with particular settings, circumstances, events, or places. These human and non-human encounters are part of a process of *becoming with* a world in which "natures, cultures, subjects and objects do not pre-exist their intertwined worldings" (2016: 13). For Haraway, the notion of "worlding" blends the material and the semiotic affording to tell stories that matter. As such, telling fiction stories, speculative stories, and horror stories are "a risky game of worlding and storying; it is staying with the trouble" (Haraway 2016: 13).

Following this thread of thought, con/texts are not simply inanimate objects or surroundings that exist within the world but agents that operate to partially make it (Haraway 2013). Con/texts tell worlding stories. Con/texts tell stories about the cooperative and conflictive ways in which words, affects, bodies, and theories find their way, via its agential capacity, to be willful players in "trouble-world-making." Hence, con/texts are both generative and troublesome. Con/texts make troubles, but as Sara Ahmed argues, making troubles "can be the ground for a new kind of feminist work. We learn from being in trouble. We stay in trouble. We aim to stay in" (2015: 183). In this sense, researching with the trouble invites us to rethink the ways we think and the possible generative things we make with our "troublesome" feelings and con/texts while doing feminist research.

By taking up Donna Haraway's concept of "staying with the trouble" (2016), I am picking up a lean on emotions and affects as important drivers in the experience of doing feminist research. I would like to further explore my critical biographical moments and contexts in feeling/producing empirical explorations, prior, during, and after GEMMA, as material and ethical practices that are non-innocent. I will acknowledge how "troublesome" feelings modify our research methodologies and invite us to reconsider some of the steps in our feminist research practices in order to take

the leap into the affective realms and to fully embrace affective relationality with the empirical. Finally, I would like to raise the broader question of how "troublesome" feelings can help us transgress the individualistic and patriarchal-oriented academia from our troubled inside.

On troublesome feelings

I start this text reflecting on my own intellectual journey as a feminist scholar and on how my context is an important driver in my experience of doing feminist research. My feminist life started 12 years ago when feminism found me. I remember the class where feminism spoke to me: "Gender and International Relations" (an optional course in the BA in International Relations at college). I also remember the texts that paradigmatically changed the way I used to analyse the social and political contexts: "The Personal is International; The International is Personal" in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (1990) and "Introduction: Being Curious about Our Lack of Feminist Curiosity" in *The Curious Feminist* (2004), both texts produced by feminist writer and theorist Cynthia Enloe. These texts provoked my "troublesome" feelings for the first time: they made me mad, they made me angry, but they also made me curious, they made me willful. Since that day on, "troublesome" feelings never left me. And at that moment I discovered that living a feminist life (Ahmed 2017) was never going to be easy. And I can now say, with all certainty that it will never be.

After graduating, I worked in community foundations and feminist and women-oriented organizations. For 6 years I worked in collaboration with other feminists and LGTBQ+ activists to help women living in poverty conditions, women who suffered domestic violence, and LGTBQ+ communities that suffered discrimination. During this time, feelings of rage, hatred, happiness, shame, unhappiness, frustration, love, surprise, and disappointment were constant companions in my life. I loved my job, but after facing violence and injustice every day for six years, I came to notice that my daily life was not driven by the "right feelings" anymore. I was not feeling joyful or happy. I was feeling hopeless and shattered. I was depressed. I was living with "troublesome" feelings.

It is difficult to describe what is hard to understand. It is hard to understand what is difficult to deal with. This is why it took me years and one Rihanna's song to realise that it is possible to find something good in a hopeless place. That it is also possible not to fully inhabit one's own happiness and to be okay with that. That "being in trouble" (Ahmed 2015) and "staying with the trouble" (Haraway 2016) are not wrong states of being. That it is possible to live with troublesome feelings as part of our feminist research and personal journeys and still do something with them. However, while Rihanna's wise lyrics came to my life and postgraduate studies at GEMMA introduced me to Sara Ahmed's, Donna Haraway's, and Ann Cvetkovich's works (among others), I found it hard to understand how to work with "troublesome" feelings and how these feelings, which can be seen so debilitating and shameful (Cvetkovich 2002), are able to help rethink new ways of doing feminist research.

If we take "troublesome" as our starting point, we would be thinking on definitions and meanings around the words "trouble" and "problem" and how this distinction implies a relation to how troublesome feelings affect and how we are affected by them (Massumi 2002, Brennan 2004, Gregg and Seigworth 2010). "Problem" traditionally refers to things that do not go as expected but work out eventually, unlike the word "trouble," which is not usually connected to a solution as it is more connected to things that remain unsolved. This is why *being in trouble* is different than *having problems.* The latter is more connected with the word "solution" while the former is more connected to negative feelings dwelling inside us when bad things happen. To say I live with "troublesome" feelings is then, as Ahmed argues, to address "a material and an embodied phenomenon" (Ahmed 2017: 163). It is also to acknowledge how "troublesome" feelings show the fragility of our own materiality. In other words, it is to understand how "troublesome" feelings make us vulnerable all the way to the bone. This is why the idea of "staying with the trouble" (Haraway 2016) causes annoyance in the first place. It forces us to learn how to live, negotiate, and endure with the irresolvable, with the ambiguous, and with the most opaque and fragile parts of our self.

As a matter of fact, we are emotional beings with affective repertoires. Our repertoires accompany us every day and we perform them as they perform us repetitively. Our repertoires transform our encounters with other human beings, environments, animals, technologies, cultures, ideas, and social/political events, influencing and challenging our understanding

of embodiment. Affect studies scholars (Massumi 2002, Ahmed 2004, Brennan 2004, Clough 2007; Thrift 2008; Gregg and Seigworth 2010, Leys 2011, Blackman 2012; Wetherell 2012) argue that paying attention to our affective repertoires is to attend to dynamic affective encounters and bodily responses that affect our presence in the world. A way to explain "troublesome" feelings as part of these affective encounters and bodily responses is by imaging the presence of "troublesome" feelings as goosebumps. I have always been particularly attracted by this word and its derivatives, goose pimples or gooseflesh.

Goosebumps is a bodily reaction on the surface of the skin. Goosebumps are triggered by both external material conditions such as cold or hearing nails scratch on a chalkboard or by experiencing strong emotions such as fear, anger, or pain. As Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey argue, the skin as a surface is the starting point for a wider conversation on different ways of thinking about the relation between bodies and world. The authors mention, "Skin opens our bodies to other bodies: through touch, the separation of self and other is undermined in the very intimacy or proximity of the encounter" (Ahmed and Stacey 2011: 6). "Troublesome" feelings mean to stay with permanent goosebumps. "Troublesome" feelings are then the gooseflesh that creates a sort of intimacy which connects the affective realms with the surface, with the world and, therefore, with the empirical. In other words, "troublesome" feelings allow us to stay in a permanent mode of intimacy with the world.

In this sense, to "research with the trouble" is to be open to intimacy as troublesome. Paraphrasing Donna Haraway, "research with the trouble" is a troublesome way of doing research, the aim of which is not to solve or go out of our "troublesome" feelings, but to stay with the feelings that bother us like permanent goosebumps. Researching with the trouble is a way to be truly connected with ourselves and to the world in order to respond to social, cultural, and political issues with an affective intimacy. As feminist researchers, we unfold affective intimacy when we take our emotions and bodily affects as part of our academic and methodological practices. Learning how to stay and research with troublesome feelings is to pay attention to our bodily responses and emotional resonances as part of our knowledge production while simultaneously offering other modes of doing research that respond to the messy worlds we inhabit every day.

Researching with the trouble takes its point of departure in situated relations and intimate contexts. I call this point of departure a

"troublesome feminist journey" or *a* troublesome *path of conocimiento* in Gloria Anzaldúa's terms. As the author claims

> Tu camino del conocimiento requires that you encounter your shadow side and confront what you've programmed yourself (and have been programmed by your cultures) to avoid (desconocer), to confront the traits and habits distorting how you see reality and inhabiting the full use of your facultades. (2002: 540)

In my case, my *path of conocimiento* started when I applied to GEMMA in December 2013 and got accepted in June 2014. Since that day, to ask myself what GEMMA has meant to me is doing an exercise of re-revisioning and re-remembering all the ups and downs and the intimate cracks that have made me accept the most opaque and fragile versions of myself. It is to tell the story of how my troublesome feelings travelled with me and through my personal, professional, and theoretical path, changing the most isolated part of me. It is to tell the journey of emotions and affective challenges I have navigated throughout my GEMMA experience. It is to tell the story of my "troublesome feelings," and how I have learnt to stay with them, and how they have had an influence on my feminist research and personal practices. It is to tell my own troublesome feminist journey.

On troublesome feminist journeys

As any storyteller would say, a decent story always starts with a good personal anecdote or breakthrough. This is mine: I applied to GEMMA to escape from my "troublesome" feelings. But, as willful companions they are, "troublesome" feelings traveled with me in my intellectual feminist journey. I feel ashamed to recognise that I did not apply to GEMMA for rather more noble reasons. But, to give a value to my own con/text, it is important to add to my story that my selfish reasons were actually motivated by noble motives. I wanted to escape from domestic violence, from insecurity, from feeling stuck, and, overall, from my own persona. At that moment of my life, I felt shattered, and I wanted to escape to find my own ways of constructing my own knowledge, identity, and reality.

Doing the master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies, GEMMA, has signified, among other things, my personal and theoretical "arrebato, rupture, fragmentation, an ending, a beginning" (Anzaldúa 2002: 540). It has meant feeling rage, shame, jealousy, happiness, love, heartbreaks, deceits, joy, displacement, gratitude, and hope. My "troublesome feelings" were (and still are) my personal companions and my theoretical teachers that help me understand the urgency of legitimating that what we experience "awakens la facultad, the ability to shift attention and see through the surface of the things and situations" (Anzaldúa 2002: 546). GEMMA has been my constant goosebumps, and, as a troublesome feminist journey, GEMMA has taught me how to stay with the trouble and make something with it.

What follows now is a brief exposure of some of my troublesome feelings and how they have been a step toward my own *conocimiento.* Hence, I introduce three emotional, embodied, and personally experienced "troublesome" feelings: *rage, fear, and internal rupture*, which have emerged in the context of my GEMMA experience (*friendship, displacement, and feminist self-awareness*). These three "troublesome" feelings have evolved in different shapes and in different emotions creating different political/theoretical geographies of discomfort and uncomfortable intimacy in my methodologies. Here, I am introducing myself as a vulnerable feminist researcher who has decided to stay with her "troublesome" feelings in her writings.

However, I need to clarify that I am writing my troublesome feelings down, not to fulfil any narcissistic need to write about myself. I am writing about my troublesome feelings with the modest aim of sharing and legitimating my own journey. I am writing with the aim of making a "critical and joyful intellectual fuss" (Haraway 2016: 31) of my experience. More importantly, writing about my troublesome feelings is to write in the company of friends, colleagues, professors, lovers, and family members, but also in company of those who I have lost on the way. If theories and texts are "spaces of encounter" (Ahmed 2017), I hope this chapter can be an affective space to maintain an intimate connection with them, a way to stay together. Lastly, I am writing about my troublesome feelings because I believe they can be both horrifying and pleasant frames of mind, leading to a collective sensing/thinking, and, with this, a possible generative path to transgress the individualistic and patriarchal-oriented academia.

On troublesome displacements

Displacement is literally the movement "between the initial position of bodies and any later position" across geographic places (Merriam-Webster 2019). However, displacement is more than the simple action of physically moving oneself from one place to another. Displacement is also about situating our emotions in different temporal and spatial contexts. Displacement is to move bodies and emotions to new geographies. I find it relevant to incorporate here the concept of emotional geographies. Following recent feminist studies focused on establishing connections between geography, emotional meaning-making and everyday experiences, emotional geographies "are the connection of the emotional aspects of embodied displacement experiences in material and temporal settings" (Smith and Bondi 2009). This approach helps me to situate emotions as "vital (living) aspects of who we are and of our situational engagement within the world; they compose, decompose, and recompose the geographies of our lives" (Smith and Bondi 2009: 10). In this sense, displacing affects and emotions is part of our "troublesome" feelings, because displaced affects create trouble that modifies the material conditions and embodied experiences under which our bodies are located.

Location and displacement are more than simple and innocent positionalities. As Probyn indicates, to locate and displace ourselves, to situate and displace the body, and to situate and displace the self are the basis for any individual to understand "how we come to know" (Probyn 1990: 178) about the world we live in, about our relationship with it and with others and, thus, about one's sense of identity and of belonging to a particular place. This is why Adrianne Rich (1987) called for a "politics of location" and Rossi Braidotti (1994) called for a "nomadic subject" identity to highlight how the position of the subject and the act of situating the self are how we make sense of our "identity, historical location, and agency" (Grosz 2004: 2). Drawing on Braidotti's nomadic subject work, I have come to realise how much GEMMA has meant to me for the creation of my own nomad identity.

Paraphrasing Braidotti, the nomad's identity is the map that shows where we have already been and how we can always reconstruct our identity a posteriori. The nomad's identity is perceived as a step in an itinerary toward the constitution of our subjectivity (Braidotti 1994: 14). The nomad's identity invites us to think of subjectivity as multiple, fluid, and constantly

changing instead of understanding subjectivity with a relinquished nostalgia for a fix and whole self. The nomadic subject illustrates subjectivity always in the process of moving between and across the traditional boundaries associated with categories such as gender and class as well as of disrupting traditional understandings of women. The nomadic subject also illustrates subjectivity as wounded.

A wound is either a type of injury in which skin is torn, cut, or punctured or a mental or emotional hurt or blow. Both definitions, "a wound" and "to be wounded," reveal a displacement of the body and of the self in our emotional cartographies. Body displacements leave wounds and scars, making visible where our bodies have been. The nomadic identity as wounded is then a journey of troublesome displacements. Identity as wounded is what Gloria Anzaldúa refers to as *una herida abierta* (an open wound), the mark, the border, the dividing line, and the "vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (Anzaldúa 1989: 3). Or what author Petra Kuppers refers as a scar, "a meeting place between inside and outside, a locus of memory, of bodily change. Like skin, a scar mediates between the outside and the inside, but it also materially produces, changes, and overwrites its site" (2007:1) The nomadic identity is then the wound and the scar that makes us vulnerable (let's not forget that vulnerability comes from early seventeenth century *vulnerabilis*, from Latin *vulnerare*, "to wound," from *vulnus*, "wound" [Merriam-Webster 2019]). The nomadic identity is hence the connective tissue between our subjective experience and our political feminist frames.

In my experience, my nomadic identity is the story of the relationship between the wounds and scars of my body and the power along the axis of fear in spatial and temporal contexts. Fear has been my troublesome feeling companion during my feminist journey in GEMMA. To me, my nomadic identity has meant the fear of returning home knowing that I see the world differently. It has meant the fear of displacing relationships, leaving behind family, friends, and community. Not having roots, really; but rather, keeping all my life and memories in two suitcases. It has meant to constantly carry a bridge on my back, speaking in tongues that are not mine, sharing my life views in new contexts, hostile academic spaces, and white-predominated classrooms. My journey through GEMMA has left me with wounds and scars, but also it is because of GEMMA that my approach to fear is also a proposal for healing and transformation.

The performativity of fear is just like a scar:

> If skin renews itself constantly, producing the same in repetition, the scar is the place of the changed script: mountains are thrown up, the copy isn't quite right, crooked lines sneak over smooth surfaces. You can feel your scars itching, or pulsing, or, after a time, you can experience the sensation of touching yourself but feeling the touch as strange— nerves might not knit into "appropriate" lines. (Kuppers 2007:1)

When fear starts to repeat itself, it becomes a familiar place. And just then, there is a location to knowledge and new paths of *conocimiento*. My troublesome displacements have meant to create new communities, networks, and ties of affection. They have meant embracing nomadism both as a lifestyle and a political identity. My troublesome displacements have meant that in a sea of constant change and fear, the only anchoring is the feminist and gender perspective as a tool through which to look at the world. This is why staying with the trouble could be also the wound that can perform healing and transformation.

On troublesome friendships

As a feminist journey, GEMMA has meant converging with friends and forging deep bonds with other women, with whom I could build projects, conversations, and networks of affection. Friends who have accompanied me through heartbreaks and defeats, through joy and anger. Friends who have provided me with unconditional love even in times when I was not strong enough to love myself. However, as Janice G. Raymond (2001) writes in her book *Passion for Friends*, there are many impediments to women's bonding. She writes, "The most blatant obstacle to female friendship is the prevailing patriarchal adage that 'women are each other's worst enemies'" (Raymond 2001: 151). In this sense, women's rivalry has been one of the most effective arguments in patriarchal societies. Patriarchy is nourished by the "women-hating-women" tale (Raymond 2001: 151) and benefits from women's disconnection from the world, their bodies, and from other women, making women constantly focus on men. Sadly, patriarchy got the best of me in this journey.

During GEMMA I lost a friend. My partner at that moment developed feelings for one of my closest friends. I did not say anything to her because no one teaches us how to deal with feelings of rage, jealousy,

sadness, and deceit while still loving your partner and loving your friend. I manage my "troublesome" feelings in any way I could: in silence, hoping my anger would eventually disappear. Sadly, emotions are not always just and, therefore, "troublesome" feelings acquire a sense of ontological injustice sometimes. As such, I did the last thing I could have done. I made out of my rage a site of truth, "as if it is always clear or self-evident that our anger is right" (Ahmed 2017: para. 18).

My feelings of friendship were displaced by those of anger. As Ahmed argues, "When anger becomes righteous it can be oppressive; to assume anger makes us right can be a wrong" (Ahmed 2017: para. 18). And those feelings of anger made me cut my friend out of my life. The troublesome idea that I was right to be angry at my friend by a self-proclaimed right of being right oppressed me and led me to oppress the last person I wanted to hurt, my friend. My relationship ended a year after this event. I do not miss my ex-partner at all, but surely I miss my friend. Now, my feminist journey is marked by the sadness of losing a great friend. Most importantly, my feminist journey is marked by the feeling of anger with myself for not having been a good feminist friend.

I have struggled since then to assimilate the failure of my feminist friendship. At some point, it got it into my head that I was not a good feminist friend, that I was a "flawed" friend and feminist. In *Bad Feminist*, author Roxane Gay (2014a) wrote about her experience of failing as a feminist. For her, to accept that choosing a feminist journey is full of contradictions was to accept the many ways in which she was doing feminism wrong, at least according to the mainstream perceptions of how feminism should be. In this era of call-outs and take-downs, I have found that idealising feminism and particularly feminist friendships reinforces a more old-fashioned concept: perfection. I have come to realise, as Gay did, that I cannot freely and totally accept the feminist label since it would not be fair to all the good feminists and good self-proclaimed feminist friends out there (2014a). However, what I can accept now is that I am a flawed feminist friend full of contradictions.

I totally agree on the potentialities of abandoning the "cultural myth that all female friendships must be bitchy, toxic or competitive" (Gay 2014b: para. 1). Every day I try really hard to build my connections through freedom, self-care, and care toward others; however, sometimes my feminist friendship efforts do not overcome this patriarchal imposition. Dealing with feelings of rage while still loving my partner and loving

my friend were not easy for me to overcome. I tried to manage my anger with the feminist emotional toolbox I had back then, but sadly, patriarchy tools were more efficient, and I failed as a friend. Nevertheless, I have now learnt to deal with my troublesome feelings, and I have come to embrace rage and failure as tools for self-critique.

My troublesome feelings have taught me that relationships do evolve, that they have a pace, and that, in order to create caring and affective networks, we sometimes have to step back, reconsider and, if we are lucky, perhaps our paths will cross again. Staying with the "troublesome" feelings in friendships reminds me that sisterhood (*la sororidad*) is not granted and that, though it can be troublesome, it still is a strong thread which unites us in both agreements and disagreements, a thread which weaves and unweaves us. In short, feminist friendship failures can also have a place within feminist friendships, if we accept failures as a way of learning how to live a feminist life. I have not spoken to my friend since then. Perhaps, we will speak again, perhaps we will not. For now, what remains is to stay with the trouble. And this is feminist too.

On troublesome self-awareness

Developing critical feminist self-awareness is not easy. It comes with emotional ruptures and internal healing. Part of my troublesome self-awareness throughout GEMMA has been to recognize myself as violent, patriarchal, and contradictory at some moments of life. As mentioned before, GEMMA has allowed me to stay with these troublesome feelings and make the best out of them. GEMMA has allowed me to experience the best of love and heartbreak: diverse love, which has taught me different meanings and possibilities of sharing, from different positions and identities and powerful love, which has been, and still is, my loving scar that brings back the most beautiful flashbacks when touched[1]. Nevertheless, powerful love comes with power structures, and GEMMA has given me the tools to leave in the prospect of patriarchal love, to identify power relations, emotional violence and to set boundaries. GEMMA has taught me

1 For Chilean author Lucía Guerra, fleshbacks represent the materialisation of the memory felt in the flesh. See Guerra, Lucía (2008). *Mujer y escritura: Fundamentos teóricos de la crítica feminista*. Santiago: Editorial Cuarto Propio.

the harsh lesson of recognising myself loving in a patriarchal way: from insecurity, from fear. But above all, GEMMA has taught me that the scar of love is as painful as healing, and even in the darkest times, I can look at my scars and smile.

GEMMA has also allowed me to experience the best of ambiguity and opacity. It is to use ambiguity against the heteronormative imposition of self-denominations. It is to know myself as a lesbian, bisexual, transgender, asexual or all, or none, at the same time. It is to acknowledge myself as complex, mean, irreverent, a kill-joy, and to know that these are political ways of being. It is to reclaim my "right to opacity" (Glissant 2012). As Édouard Glissant argues

> To acclaim the right to opacity […] is nonetheless to renounce reducing the truth of the expanse down to the measure of one sole transparency, which would be mine, which I would impose. It is to establish that the inextricable, planted in the obscure, also drives clarities that are not imperative (2012: 77).

To reclaim our lack of transparency is to see into the opaque possibilities of an indefinable alterity.

GEMMA has also meant facing and dealing with privilege. As I learnt during my first days of GEMMA from my classmates' wisdom, privileges are inalienable, and so is GEMMA. This is why GEMMA is an unrenounceable feminist responsibility, an unavoidable genealogical debt. A debt with those who were not granted a scholarship or other means to be able to study, with those who were not selected into the program. It is to honour those who fight every day, transforming feminist practice and resistance into theory inside our classrooms.

GEMMA has also meant dealing with privilege within white feminist academia. As Gloria Wekker (2016) has taught us, there is a white privilege that denies racism, classism, ostracism, and elitism. In academia, white privilege reinforces student-professor hegemonies of power, intellectual exclusion, and language segregation, all of these practices disguised by innocent acts which safeguard high academic standards. Speaking of privilege within academia is to recognise how there is still an academic reticence to see beyond whiteness. It is to recognise the academic denial of the hierarchical relations in and out of classrooms. It is to avoid talking about bad feminist practices among feminist colleagues for the sake of institutional appearances. It is to avoid recognising that, wanting it or not, whiteness easily stains, because we – the rest, the others, *las no blancas* – want to

temporarily bleach the memories of trauma, discrimination, violence, and dispossession that our coloured skin draws on us.

Developing critical feminist awareness is not easy; it is to stay with the trouble of painful self-awareness, but as Ahmed reminds us, "Feminist emotions are mediated and opaque; they are sites of struggle, and we must persist in struggling with them" (2010: para. 18). As previously mentioned, part of the troublesome self-awareness throughout GEMMA is recognising that as students, professors, activists, friends, and lovers, we make daily compromises with the patriarchal system. But, most importantly, it is developing critical feminist awareness by being kind and generous with ourselves. It is forgiving ourselves and paradoxically, staying with the trouble in order to, eventually, be able to move on.

Researching with the trouble

So far, I have exposed how "troublesome" feelings are entangled with our feminist personal/theoretical journey. If the motto "the personal is political" forms our sense of political action, "staying with the trouble" can became part of our personal/political feminist pedagogies. As I have shown, to learn how to stay with the trouble means not to give up when we are not the most coherent version of ourselves. It means trying to stay in a place of ambiguity and opacity as a political self-reaffirmation. Staying with the trouble means staying with our uncertainties, fears, anger, deceits, and failures. And it is at these points that our feminist defences might go up.

In this sense, I argue that researching with the trouble is a troublesome methodology. Researching with the trouble is an anti-solutionist feminist methodology that differs from the normative and traditional approach of doing research. Researching with the trouble is a feminist approach to academia that necessarily interweaves the situated, personal, and political role of the subject while doing research. By researching, thinking, and writing with the trouble, rather than avoiding troublesome feelings, our aims are to better understand the conflicts and responsibilities regarding our approach to feminism, to better realise which was our turning or tipping point in our academic path, and to understand how we came to accept

ourselves as "troublesome" researchers and how this can help us to create innovative methodologies in the future.

In my experience, I came to researching with "troublesome" feelings interweaving three feminist methodological practices that unfold the self-reflective, feminist curiosity and collaborative sharing of trouble as a method of doing research[2]. The first practice is the willful practice of *Staying with the Wrong*. As researchers, it is common to use our writings as an excuse to not think/feel when we are hurt, sad, worried, or heartbroken. We commonly say: "I need to keep my head busy" in the presence of troublesome feelings, and we avoid them precisely because we are too busy or too afraid to enter the emotional fray. We do not want to stay with what is/feels wrong because it allow us to "re-member, to com-memorate" and, by this virtue, to "actively to reprise, revive, retake, recuperate" (Haraway 2016: 25) the feelings that make our writing process uncomfortable. But if we want to change anything in academia, we cannot afford avoiding troublesome feelings.

We cannot allow throwing our hands up and dropping out our feelings in benefit of pursuing academic excellence. We need to find ways to incorporate our whispers and moans; our breathing sounds and grumbles; our combat breathings (Perera and Pugliese 2011) and agitations (Chen 2018); and our pain and grief as part of our research, writings, and methodological aims. "Threading, felting, tangling tracking, and sorting" (Haraway 2016: 31) our wrong feelings are affective ways of composting new fields for researching. Staying with the wrong requires inheriting wrongness, mistaken thoughts, and feelings; valuing the "subaltern" knowledge (Medina 2014); and troubling our readers with our troublesome feelings. Staying with the wrong requires exposing ourselves as vulnerable writers more often.

The second practice, *being a curious affective researcher,* is an invitation to go beyond our own positionality, by listening with curiosity to

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2 Researching with "troublesome" feelings as an anti-solutionist feminist methodology was inspired by the powerful PhD dissertation by Marie Louise Juul Søndergaard (2018), entitled *Staying with the Trouble through Design. Critical-Feminist Designs of Intimate Technology.* This dissertation explores staying with the trouble through design, as a design theory of intimacy and intimate technology. I am paraphrasing, using some excerpts and narrative structures from this paragraph. I completely acknowledge the author's words, and I hope that my use of hers can bring about more meaning to and comprehension of troublesome feminist methodologies.

stories of discomfort and pain and visiting ongoing past feelings (Juul 2018). Commonly, being curious is perceived in a wrong sense. Curiosity is often seen as a negative attribute since a curious person eagerly tries to find secrets by looking and working in "improper" ways. However, in its etymological origins (from Old French *curiosete* "curiosity, avidity, choosiness" (Modern French *curiosité*), from Latin *curiositatem* (nominative *curiositas*) "desire of knowledge, inquisitiveness," from *curiosus* "careful, diligent; inquiring eagerly, meddlesome," akin to *cura* "care" (Online Etymology Dictionary 2019), curiosity is more than its negative feature.

Curiosity is also a loving practice. We are curious because we are concerned, because we care about others. In this sense, being a curious affective researcher is both looking in improper ways to find what is not evident, what is hidden, and what is intentionally forgotten and working with our findings in caring ways in order to perform affective methodologies. Affective methodologies invite us to ask ourselves: How can we claim curiosity as our "feminist point of view" in doing research? How can we claim it if we refuse to acknowledge or are unprepared to deal with the dark side of others – not to mention our own? (Juul 2018) Are we willing to displace ourselves into not proper, not strictly belonging, not correct and totally erroneous methodological grounds? How can think about these questions meaningfully without reproducing a universalising Western episteme?

If we reclaim curiosity as a troublesome feminist perspective, we need to acknowledge that fear, anger, sadness, love, passion, hope, and desire are troublesome feelings disruptively real in life and they are irreducible themes of our curious affective research and feminist political frames. Shouldn't they hold a place in our research and, above all, in our feminist methodological tools? Shouldn't we feel free to share them in our research? Shouldn't we feel curious to fail, to enrage, to love, to heal, and to learn, without feeling flawed researchers? Shouldn't we feel like flawed feminists without expecting to be judged by other feminists? Shouldn't we, as curious feminist researchers, need to explore our archive of feelings and repertories of emotions and write about them more often instead of writing fancy conceptual frameworks?

Last but not least, the third practice, *collective and sharing troublesome feelings***,** highlights how by proposing sharing troublesome feelings we can change the ways we respond to our and other people's trouble and struggle. Then, the question is how do we learn to be collectively in trouble? Donna

Haraway has cleared it up for us: We are "mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings" (2016: 1); therefore, trouble happens in any context, in the collective, in relation to others, and with the help of many. If trouble is an affective companion that modifies how we experience the world, we must insist on working, writing, thinking, and researching with trouble collectively.

We create trouble by mashing stuff up, "failing" in feeling, making mistakes, and by screwing things up; and we build on troublesome feelings as a way of relating and connecting with the world. Embracing the chaotic path of researching with the trouble is researching while being in pain, in loneliness, heartbroken, and in fear, knowing that these troublesome feelings connect us in intimacy with others. As affective researchers, perhaps we need to ask ourselves what perspectives and modes of doing research otherwise produce affective disturbances and challenges to rigid academia as usual? What is the creative effect of trouble upon academic life on the other side of the white innocent academic divide?

Maybe we need to think creatively about ways of forming effective gatherings, emotional writing circles, emotional peer-reviews, and organising trouble-led sessions of methodological despair as part of the academia curricula. At its finest, researching with the trouble, I argue, is an intimate and generative feminist methodological contribution to respond actively, affectively, and collectively to current critical social and personal "troubling and turbid times" (Haraway 2016: 1) through the potential of sharing troublesome feelings.

Conclusions: On new troublesome contexts

Emotions, embodiment, and affects are important drivers in the experience of doing feminist research. As I have shown, researching while in trouble invites us to reconsider the way we think and the things we make with our "troublesome" feelings while doing research. In this chapter, echoing Donna Haraway's "staying with the trouble" (Haraway 2016), I have explored my own journey of troublesome emotions and affective challenges faced throughout GEMMA. Throughout this chapter, I have introduced three emotional, embodied, and personally experienced "troublesome"

feelings: *rage, fear*, and *internal rupture*, which have emerged in the context of my GEMMA journey (*friendship, displacement*, and *feminist self-awareness*). These three troublesome feelings have evolved in different contexts, creating different political/theoretical geographies of discomfort in my methodologies. I have developed three feminist methodological practices: self-reflection, feminist curiosity and collaborative sharing of trouble. In other words, staying with the wrong, being curious affective researchers and the collectivisation of troublesome feelings should be part of our feminist research toolbox.

These are not, in any way, methodological solutions. On the contrary, they are troublesome methodological continuums that can create new troublesome contexts. As such, "researching with the trouble" motivates opportunities of researching with feelings in order to come up with troublesome methodologies instead of methodological templates and comfortable writings. Researching with the trouble is writing in tears, in sadness, in happiness, in love and letting our troublesome feelings affect our writings. In this way, maybe we will be able to heal ourselves while reaching out to others. Maybe, by crafting troublesome worlding-making affective methodologies, we will be able to transgress the individualistic and patriarchal-oriented academia.

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Part III Weaving Feminist Pedagogies. A Conversation About Teaching, Researching and How to Do Feminist Pedagogies Otherwise

Section 5 Weaving Feminist Pedagogies

Agata Ignaciuk

Introduction: Researching and Teaching Feminism: Pedagogies of the GEMMA Classroom

This section focuses on experiences of teaching and learning feminism in and beyond the GEMMA classrooms. Since 2007, these classrooms have brought together students who identify as female, male and non-binary from the global North and South, with diverse activist experiences and academic trajectories grounded in a number of disciplines, including legal studies, translation, sociology, political studies, anthropology, history, psychology, public health and literary studies, to mention only a few. The chapters in this section explore the opportunities and challenges of the GEMMA classroom as an "intense feminist classroom" (Gregorio Gil and Alcázar-Campos, quoting Maria do Mar Pereira).

The authors of these chapters, most with links to the GEMMA programme since its foundation, examine their teaching methodologies and epistemologies within the programme's exceptional pedagogic environment. They reflect upon the knowledge-generation and dissemination practices enabled by singular exchange processes, in which students and lecturers are situated in a sharing community, rather than a hierarchical top-down dynamic. In the GEMMA classroom, as Carmen Gregorio Gil and Ana Alcázar-Campos relate, "leadership is disputed and disrupted". The resulting exchange, as described by Victoria Robles Sanjuán, is one of "the essential aims of teaching in feminist ideological spheres", a teaching which promotes constant reflection on theory, methodology and practice.

In conjunction, the chapters in this section explore new forms of academic and activist reading and writing, particularly the key role of self-reflective narratives, both as products of GEMMA teaching and as a prelude to its evolution (Robles Sanjuán, Gregorio Gil and Alcázar-Campos). The authors situate their pedagogies at the challenging intersections of women's and gender studies with other disciplines (library and information studies in the case of Ana M. Muñoz-Muñoz, cultural anthropology for Carmen Gregorio Gil and Ana Alcázar-Campos, and education and history for

Victoria Robles Sanjuán). These positionings have become increasingly problematic in a historical moment in which gender studies as a discipline is being targeted by a number of governments and transnational organisations, as well as religious institutions. As Weronika Grzebalska, Eszter Kováts and Andrea Petö (2017) have argued, the concept of gender itself, caricatured as "gender ideology", has become a "symbolic glue" that amalgamates and amplifies the anxieties of a number of social sectors in countries such as Poland, Hungary, Brazil and beyond.

Ana M. Muñoz-Muñoz's chapter focuses specifically on the challenges to interdisciplinary researching and teaching across women's and gender studies and library and information studies. Although locally and transnationally contested, the former has retained strong institutional support from a number of governments and supranational organisms, such as the EU, the latter, with the ongoing formidable elevation of bibliometrics as an "objective" tool for the evaluation of scientific "productivity", has become a true field of power, often instrumentalised in the processes of design and implementation of scientific policies. Muñoz-Muñoz's research has focused on identifying inequalities in scientific "productivity" between female and male researchers in Spain and how ways of measuring this "productivity" have gendered access to economic and professional recognition in Spanish academic institutions, as well as determining which topics and ideas – and indeed disciplines – are worthy of funding and support. Muñoz-Muñoz explores these mechanisms through the underrepresentation of (feminised) arts and humanities in bibliographic databases. She also reflects on the persisting challenges to mainstreaming gender studies and library and information studies in Spanish higher education. As a potential encouragement for institutional change, Muñoz-Muñoz proposes the recognition of women's and gender studies as a field within UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education and the inclusion of mandatory training in gender studies for all lecturers and degree students in Spain.

The chapters by Victoria Robles Sanjuán, and Carmen Gregorio Gil and Ana Alcázar-Campos narrate their experiences in teaching – and learning – with GEMMA students. Both make these experiences palpable by merging student narratives produced during their respective courses with their own reflections. Robles Sanjuán examines the transformations of her feminist pedagogy through the mandatory GEMMA course on Women's Movements around the World, which she has coordinated since

2007, and discusses a particular teaching tool – student autobiographies – utilised in this course since 2008. The objective of encouraging students to write autobiographies, theoretically grounded in Teresa del Valle's scholarship, is twofold. First, Robles Sanjuán suggests they are a form of self-reflective practice for the course participants, "a discursive tool and an exercise of embodied memory". In the graduate course on Women's Movements, this exercise is a significant step towards linking personal experience and historical and contemporary activist practices in and beyond the West. Second, these autobiographies have guided the process of decolonising the course syllabus, which initially chronologised the Western three-wave model of women's activism but has matured to include various "epistemologies of the South", comprehensively exploring these movements in contexts such as China, Latin America and the Sahara. In its most recent transformation, Robles Sanjuán has begun to focus on "the signs of feminism in the history of men".

Carmen Gregorio Gil and Ana Alcázar-Campos' chapter explores the challenges of teaching feminist ethnography in the GEMMA programme. They ground their discussion in experiences from two courses: the ethnography module of the core first-year course, Feminist Methodologies, and an optional course on Feminist Perspectives in Social Anthropology. In the former, students are encouraged to engage with feminist ethnography through critical reading of scholarship; in the latter, they are given the opportunity to put their insights into practice. Both courses provide time and space to meditate on cultural construction of the scientific method and promote a new, more egalitarian relationship between lecturer(s) and student(s), boosted by a mutual recognition that this encounter is always produced in "the patchwork of power relationships". In their ethnographies, students sketch these patchworks and reflect on broader questions in feminist ethnography, such as feminist ethics, further blurring the lines between research subjects and objects. Gregorio Gil and Alcázar-Campos also reflect on their own position as lecturers, moving beyond the supervisor/mentor–student dynamic and ways of creating a comfortable and non-hierarchical teaching space in a GEMMA classroom.

Reading the chapters in this section has inspired me to reflect on my own experiences as both a GEMMA student and lecturer. I enrolled in 2007 – the first edition of the programme – and in 2015 began to participate as an invited lecturer for the optional course on Gender, Women and the Body in Western History, a course I had chosen back in 2008,

coordinated by Teresa Ortiz-Gómez, my supervisor and mentor. During the past dozen years, as I started to develop my own research in the transnational history of reproductive health and rights, I witnessed GEMMA expand and develop, an ongoing project, as Robles Sanjuán emphasises, that has transformed academic teaching in Spain as well as other countries, including my own birthplace, Poland. I identified with Muñoz-Muñoz's description of the pleasures and pains of interdisciplinarity and recalled my journey from student to researcher: a journey through securities and insecurities, from a sense of knowing to a sense of ignorance, and return to a degree of situated confidence. I identified GEMMA as the privileged space in which to discuss the results of my recently concluded and ongoing research projects on the history of contraception and abortion: a petri dish to test the meaningfulness of my questions, conclusions and interpretations with a vibrant, heterogeneous and challenging group each year, an ongoing exercise in spelling out and confronting my own situatedness, its privileges and prejudices. I began to learn to manage – and enjoy – unpredictability and fragility as roads to empowerment.

The underlying collective reflection of these chapters – on ways of producing and managing feminist knowledge through the student-lecturer-researcher relationship – prompted me to reflect on my own pedagogy. Since the beginning of my journey as a lecturer, I have attempted to craft my teaching around the concept of authority, inspired by the work of Teresa Ortiz-Gómez and Monsterrat Cabré, co-guest lecturer on the aforementioned GEMMA course. In their classic essay on the construction of female medical authority in Late Medieval France, Cabré and Fernando Salmón, guided by the theocratisations of the Diotima philosophical community and Women's Library in Milan, defined authority as a "relationship that recognises the diversity of competences, desires and necessities, without necessarily becoming a source for inequality among them" (1999: 58). Authority, therefore, thrives on mutual agreement: it is reciprocal and contractual. A place where authority is constructed "is where a woman (a person) recognizes her(them)self(ves) and recognises the other" (Ortiz Gómez 2006: 70). In opposition to power, imposed and unquestionable, mutual recognition of authority reconciles disparities, without these becoming a source of dominance for one party over another. As a feminist knowledge generation and sharing practice, authority is linked to the recognition and promotion of female and feminist genealogies of knowledge, another essential feature of feminist teaching. It is this teaching that

I aspire to promote in my GEMMA classroom, informed by gratitude to my students and my exceptionally generous and inspiring mentor. I am also grateful to my colleagues, authors of the chapters in this section, for raising fundamental feminist pedagogical questions and proffering equally fundamental strategies in response.

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Carmen Gregorio Gil and Ana Alcázar-Campos

Sharing "Other" Knowledges: Thoughts on Teaching Feminist Ethnography in the GEMMA Master's Degree*

Abstract Based on our own shared experience teaching Feminist Ethnography, we intend to reflect on the methodological strategies used to introduce this method to the students who are not familiar with it and come from a wide variety of disciplines (Law, Politics, Literature, Communication, Psychology, History, etc.). These strategies are suggested based not only on the epistemological foundations of this method but also on what we like to call our "feminist practice" of teaching. After exposing our methodologies and teaching practices, we would like to share some thoughts on the impact ethnographic view and writing have on the students, from our point of view. Particularly, the importance of writing when we focus on our own life and subjectivities and we bridge the gap between subject and object using our own constructions of gender, class, race, age, ethnicity, and sexuality.

Keywords : Feminist Ethnography, feminist practice of teaching, epistemological foundations, ethnographic view and writing

Introduction

In this text, we propose to set our thoughts on our shared experience in teaching Feminist Ethnography as part of GEMMA, the Erasmus Mundus master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies. The teaching takes place in a mandatory course called "Feminist Methodologies", of which half the credits come from ethnographic methodology. The teaching also

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* We would like to dedicate this text to the entire student bodies of the 11 GEMMA generations which have studied at the University of Granada. They brought us to this place. Without a doubt, their questions and their passion for feminist knowledge and practice have been a challenge and a source of stimulus for rethinking our teaching practices.

takes place in an optional course called "Feminist Perspectives in Social Anthropology: Looking and Writing from the Perspective of Feminist Ethnography/Ethnographies". Both courses were launched by Professor Carmen Gregorio Gil in the first edition of GEMMA, in the 2007–2008 course, with Professor Ana Alcázar Campos, joining in the 2012–2013 course. That led to the establishment of a very rich space for reflection on our teaching practices, something that is unfortunately uncommon in our universities, which are increasingly given over to individualist practices and which are focused more on results than on processes of the collective construction of knowledge.

The first difficulty that this course faces, one that is also its great richness, is the greatly heterogeneous nature of the group at which our classes are aimed, which involves constant questioning as well as being a challenge. The GEMMA student body is drawn from the most varied disciplines of Social Sciences (Sociology, Political Science, Geography, Education, Social Work, Communication Science, Anthropology, etc.); Economic Sciences; Legal Sciences; and the Humanities (History, Literature, Philosophy, Linguistics, etc.), including Health Sciences like Psychology. It means that, in general, the student body has little or no familiarity with ethnographic method (except for those who are trained in Social Anthropology), and even fewer are familiar with feminist ethnography. As a consequence of the foregoing, the knowledge that we can offer of ethnographic methodology in the mandatory course is very limited. Obviously, it is not the case that in just 50 hours of course time, we convert the students into potential ethnographers. Rather, it is the case that they familiarise themselves with a feminist methodological approach (amongst several other possible ones) that they are offered by the various courses of the GEMMA programme. That is why the course is organised so that we can approach the epistemological bases of that methodology, from a point of view based on the feminist perspective. We try to reach that objective by sharing our theoretical knowledge on the method based on our own ethnographic research and through the reading of two ethnographies to be chosen from a list that we offer the students, a list that is open and that we enrich each year. We feel that there is no better way of approaching the method than by reading ethnographies and by practising ethnography. However, "practising ethnography" is something that we reserve for the optional course: "Feminist Perspectives in Social Anthropology: Looking and Writing from the Perspective of Feminist Ethnography/Ethnographies".

The objectives of the mandatory course are set out as they appear in the programme,[1] as follows:

1) approach the epistemological fundamentals of the ethnographic method;
2) approach the instruments and procedures applicable to ethnographic methodology;
3) acknowledge the contribution of various ethnographic works to the study of cultural difference and diversity and of gender relationships in particular;
4) know some of the feminist critiques of ethnography;
5) formulate questions from an ethnographic focus.

If we had to conclude what it has meant for the various classes to approach that method, we would say, without giving rise to doubt, that it has been an exercise in deconstructing the students' preconceived notions of Science. As feminists, we are struck by how the positivist method is still so rooted in all areas of knowledge and in all the geographical locations from which our students originate.[2] As a consequence, ethnographic methodology is presented to them as a very different form of practising Science, a form that we could describe as revolutionary. Students move from surprise ("How can I write in the first person and from my subjectivity?") and even incredulity ("How can it be that we do not have seek objectivity, seek truth?") to a certain anxiety ("Please give us time to assimilate it; you are undoing everything that we have believed until now to be scientific"), to the prudent acceptance of the method by some and its passionate acceptance by others; that leads them to take the optional course that we have mentioned. In some way, they identify the ethnographic methodology as a feminist practice through their questioning of false positivist dualisms (reason/emotion, objective/subjective, etc.); through their dense, detailed, complex, and contextual focus on their concern for showing the variety of

1 http://masteres.ugr.es/gemma-es/pages/programa.

2 In addition to the heterogeneous nature to which we have referred in relation to the students' degree studies, it is also the case in relation to their national origin. Our students come mostly from Latin American countries (Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Brazil) and in lesser numbers from some European (Italy, Poland, France, Germany, Austria, UK, and Albania) and North American (USA and Canada) countries.

points of view in the patchwork of power relationships, of arriving at subordinate voices (Gregorio Gil 2006); and through their commitment to the egalitarian and reciprocal relationship between the expert and the object of knowledge that is promulgated (Stacey 1988).

The foundations are laid in the initial mandatory course. In the optional course, we work with ethnographic methodology from a practical point of view and along two axes: looking and writing. The course objectives are set out in the programme,[3] as follows:

1) train one's gaze using one's notions of gender and sexuality;
2) approach knowledge of some of the theoretical and epistemological debates raised from the perspective of feminist anthropology on how to write up research results;
3) get to know various methodological keys to access the study of memory.

Our methodology consists of positioning them from the perspective of the challenge of carrying out an initial exercise in ethnography. The work that they will have to carry out, together with reading on observation and writing in ethnography, would consist of choosing a situation or place and observe how, in that context, gender differences are (re)produced[4] (in conjunction with other differences), then write about their experience. We lay great emphasis on that, on experience more than on results, on carrying out a reflexivity exercise on what is experienced by training the gaze. In this course, we are supported by Professor Teresa del Valle, who gives them various methodological keys to access memory and recall (Del Valle Murga 1995, 2005); thus, with Professor del Valle, they also have the option to choose a situation experienced in the past.

As we have said, in the mandatory course, we witness the process of deconstructing Science that is hegemonic, androcentric, white, and Western. On this occasion, we witness the value that comes from their experience, their bodies as subjects of knowledge – bodies that feel that experience emotions, and that often have to deal with ethical contradictions

3 http://masteres.ugr.es/gemma-es/pages/programa.

4 Our starting point is that gender is performed variously in each context, so they will have to pay attention to the discourses and practices that produce it (Gregorio Gil 2011), as well as considering intersubjectivity in building other categories like race, ethnicity, social class, and age (Alcázar-Campos 2014, Gregorio Gil and Alcázar-Campos 2014).

arising from their involvement with the people who are part of their own processes (Gregorio Gil 2014). We cannot find a better way of explaining the process experienced by the students than by sharing some of their written texts.[5]

As is shown in her text, the assumption of certain determined postulates allows Elena Verdegay Mañas to incorporate the personal and the emotional and, in that way, choose as object of observation "emotional resistance strategies" and play out her indignation with a very close person, "a great friend", as she describes her:

> The epistemological position supported by this work involves the production of scientific knowledge from situated knowledge or embodied objectivities (Haraway 1995), and from reflexivity in the research process (Gregorio 2006). Those research strategies enable me to incorporate the personal and the emotional in the research, it being the case that not only is the personal political, but the personal is also theoretical (Gregorio 2006).

It will be that epistemological choice, which brings into play intimacy, confidentiality, and subjectivities, will lead Elena to wonder about the questions relating to the authorship of her text, her legitimacy in speaking about the "other"; as the author says very lucidly, she takes responsibility for "her own partiality":

> Due to the closeness to the protagonist of the research, a great friend of mine, and to the characteristics of the research subject (emotional-resistance strategies), I believe it is necessary to formulate the question of authorship at ethical level. On the basis of what has been previously described, I have wished to suggest a collaborative-writing formula, exploring various forms for that purpose. In the end, we chose a form of co-authorship that takes the form of a type of writing wherein I, as researcher, draft a text that the protagonist is able to modify, a text that is formulated as a space wherein she has absolute legitimacy to intervene. In other words, she deletes that which she does not wish to have appeared, or that which she feels does not correspond to the

5 Given space limitations, we cannot include the full text, just some parts that seem to us to be significant in exemplifying that which, in our judgement, holds more interest for the purpose of this work. Of course, we have the authorisation of students whose work we have chosen. We should once again like to again acknowledge their dedication and commitment and thank them for allowing us to use their work. We apologise to students whose texts we have not included, although they will recognise their fellow students' work, since we have tried to include all the GEMMA master's degree years, who took the optional course.

> description of herself, and intervenes, in political questioning of the authorship, to make a problem of the perspective of the researcher who holds a higher position of power.
>
> Recreation/representation/reconstruction/fiction – in a word, interpretation of a woman's emotions, feelings, and subjectivities requires an account to be given of the scope and responsibility of the written text, so as to, in the end, find consolation or excuse in the fact of making myself responsible for my own partiality.

Ana Fernández will also explore new forms of writing in an exercise on questioning scientific authority expressed in the canonical forms of writing. The quotation from Nancy Scheper Hughes, with which she begins her text: "As always, I shall begin with narratives […] because telling stories, something intrinsic to ethnographic art, offers the possibility of a personal interpretation yet respectfully distant from 'once upon a time' or 'a long time ago in a far distant place' ", will give her cause to locate herself in that "respectfully distant" place that entails recognising our subjectivity. However, in addition, giving legitimacy to the "stories" and "tales", as she titles her first section "A Tale that is Proud to be One" against "academic discourses", from the position of humility that is expressed by the title of her narrative, "Learning to tell stories", and honesty, when she recognises the importance of "value for error" in our ethnographic approaches:

> **"A Tale that is Proud to be One"**
>
> "As always, I shall begin with narratives…" that positioning, apparently so simple, has made me think a lot lately. Giving legitimacy to stories, to multiple narratives, to tales against academic discourses, seems to me to be a way of questioning the people to whom we grant authority and reflecting on other ways of creating knowledge and of experimenting. In the end, all knowledge is a narrative.
>
> Questioning the boundaries between the journal and the scientific text through a chronological narrative will enable me to highlight the process of "looking" and demonstrate the contradictions experiences through that initial approach to the field. In addition, it will lead me to reflect and to wonder about how to write, why, and for whom. In that regard, I shall explore the possibility of playing with formats to sometimes distinguish between the journal and subsequent reflections, and sometimes blur the boundaries between looking and writing. My purpose is to find a balance cast between a multifaceted "once upon a time" and a critical analysis of constructing gender and power relationships in the context of the Casablanca dance hall for elders, respecting the journal as a framework, a primeval tale, around which to put together and roll out new ramified tales.
>
> *3/06/2016*

- ***Dreams and Doubts***

  To discover in the Methodologies class that doing what truly always moved me and seemed to me to be important to do was legitimate, and not just legitimate but necessary, was the most important thing that I learnt in the Master's course. It is as though all my concerns had found a place to rest. Feelings, empathy, tender stories, and the tenderness that I felt at village stories were, in the end, what had drawn me into studying history. To know that there was an academic space where they were acknowledged gave sense to all my anonymous heroes and to a part of me that I thought was destined to remain in the drawer, also denied in some way, of literary matters.

  The practice of the Field Journal seemed to me to be a way of exploring in depth the potential of the spectacles that we still had and from which there was no way of freeing oneself. Training them in words and in critical thinking was converted into a form of resisting in the face of all the impotence that the patriarchy caused in us. Thus, with all that whirling around in my head and in a constant process of rethinking myself and that which surrounded me, I decided, like an apprentice witch getting to know her powers, to look at a time that was slower, deliberate, a more beautiful instrument, like a violin bow. Able to draw out each note separately, thus not losing control in daunting symphonies.

- ***From the Habit of Taking a Look to the Technique of Looking: Finding the Object of My Study***

  Two Sundays ago, we were walking together by the river when we heard cheesy music from within a religious state school. I do not remember the name of the school or all the details.

  That feeling of strolling and glancing is something that we have all experienced for a long time. The need to find a situation to observe has done no more than give a purpose to an ability that was already in place, obliging us to move from a habit to a technique and involving ourselves with the methodology.

  What is certain is that now that I am getting closer to putting into words an intersubjective experience, I am concerned about the act of being mistaken in the narrative, even if it is only a field diary. This methodology, in terms of the responsibility that it involves for others and for oneself as an exercise in honesty, is a little daunting and imposing. However, I imagine that in spite of it, the methodology is precisely the only thing that enables me to find a space of value for error.

In another order of things, experiencing our differences and privileges as well as questioning our own categories and prejudices, although they cause discomfort, constituted the exercise of deep reflexivity that Tania Aguirre Solorio shared with us in her text:

My journey was from Granada to Madrid. I was not thinking of carrying out ethnography; the situation opened up a good ethnographic opportunity for me. I should like to orient myself to make my place explicit; orienting myself is a narration about myself. To carry out the narration, I shall prioritise a series of events or characteristics in line with the storyline of who I am, to give sense and meaning to my identity at this time. My name is Tania, I am Mexican, and I am 32 years old. I migrated by my own choice to Spain to study for a Master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies. Much of my time was given over to being a friend, daughter, sister, partner, student, therapist, and woman.

As with everything, most of my privileges are contextual. They come into play in various scenarios; moreover (as happens with privileges), I find it difficult to see them. I can name some that are present in my daily life: being a white-skinned woman, educated, professional, with the cultural capital that I have acquired through the few journeys that I have done, and currently receiving a grant from my government that provides me with financial support. I speak Spanish as my native language, as well as English, which is the language of global hegemony, that is as far as I can see for now.

It would be impossible to describe the events of my "observation in total", so I shall once again prioritise certain events to tell a story, one that seems to be more relevant for being closer to what resounds in my heart.

I boarded the bus to start the journey; going from seat to seat in the hope that I should have the luck to travel with a free seat beside me, I walked down the aisle until the end. Travelling by bus has always struck me as being a very curious situation: possibly sharing an intensely intimate space with someone completely unknown, (your legs brush against one another, there is a friendly tussle for control of the armrest, friendly smiles, voluntary containment of all bodily gases and secretions, etc.).

My seat was in the last row, as I was clearly informed in a loud voice by my seat companion, who pointed out to me the stamps showing the number. As I thanked her with a friendly look, I had thoughts in my head that were far from friendly; rather, they were rude, racist, stereotyped: "She's a Latin American woman, I don't know from where, but she has the look", "Oh, no doubt she will chat during the whole journey", "Such confidence to ask things of everyone" (in a reproachful tone), "And on top of everything else, she sat in my seat, not in hers", etc. After announcing my verdict as a Confidence-Ridden Chatty Latin-American Woman, I took up the strategy of using the earphones when I sat down, to avoid any possible conversation during the journey. I asked her to return to her seat, put in the earphones, and put on the most serious face that I could.

After a while, I began to ask myself what I had thought of all those "horrible" things, why I felt less of a Latin American woman than her or a "more appropriate" Latin American woman, why I felt ashamed of wanting to speak to people, what made me

> feel that I had to "put her in her place" using my silence and my rejection of "her ways". Whilst thinking of all that, I neglected myself, I let the earphones drop, and, like a bow that has had its string pulled for an hour, she shot her arrow, words upon words asking questions. Whilst I answered, saying where I came from, how I was, what I was doing in Granada, why I was going to Madrid, etc., it occurred to me that ethnography had just found me, because, when that idea appeared, I stopped feeling uncomfortable and, rather, I felt curious; I was surprised by my own rejection, my own racism. I felt my Mexican identity and my relationship with others to be exotic, I was surprised by the bus and the intimacy and the questions that Carmen asked me. I was surprised by being myself… and, at the same time, not…./

Ethical conflicts and questions were very present in the work of Dresda Emma Méndez de la Brena and Claudia Morini, who chose to jointly face up to the exaltation of masculinity that is present in the streets of Granada during stag parties. Both knew "how annoying those groups are, or the simple challenge of going to Coviran Supermarket in Elvira Street without being intercepted by any of those groups" (Dresda). The rejection of those practices and those who spearhead them brought them up against ethical duty, as Claudia expresses in her narrative:

> In spite of our a posteriori interpretation of those cultural facts, Dresda and I want to give a testimony that is as true as possible to their own words. We always asked if they wanted to be recorded and/or photographed, and said that the purpose of our interest was to write a small essay on hen/stag parties as cultural phenomena for a course in anthropology at the university – which, as we know, is a half-truth, since we did not mention gender (which I felt would often not be understood), a little to protect ourselves and little so that they would not prevent research from being carried out.
>
> That allowed us to raise concerns, which were then interestingly raised in class when we were with other colleagues, regarding what would be the most legitimate and respectful way of approaching the subject of study.

For its part, the title and beginning of Paula Kantor's narrative leave no doubt as to the reflectivity and confrontation exercise in relation to her body image that she will delve into with her experience of participant observation. What appeared to present itself as something distant (observing other people) and apparently simple, due to the familiarity of the place to which she goes assiduously (her gymnasium), will mutate into an exercise that embodies deep reflexivity and feminist politicisation of bodies, genders, sexualities, and subjectivities. An honest and painful exercise that is also liberating and collective:

The image in the mirror, the reflection that calls me

I feel strange, a mix of frustration, curiosity, and surprise. And I feel it all at once. I am frustrated by and curious about this exercise, which presented itself as something relatively simple, looking carefully at a context and writing about it, has wound up with me facing up to my own inner questions that I have avoided resolving for a long time.

Can it be that one cannot observe the construction of gender in others without also questioning oneself? Can it be that although we try to challenge unequal power relationships that we see externally, we must also accept that we have them internally?

During these few days of observation, it is impressive to see the number of things that can be extracted in relation to how gender charges spaces and interactions. I can analyse clothing, the type of exercise that they do, the machines that they use, traffic through the areas, body language, gestures, sounds, silences, and the content of conversations.

However, there is something missing from the narrative, because the mirror also shows me another image. One that looks me in the face, that calls me, and that touches the deepest part of me. It is the image of me using the running machine. The image of me in group classes, using my arms to make boxing movements. My reflection doing abdominal crunches. My reflection stretched out on an exercise ball.

…./

I did not want to do something self-referential, I did not want to remove some things, but there they are. Because it is inevitable for me to do an exercise of looking in depth without looking at myself, and because I cannot conceive this type of writing without it coming with honesty and exposition.

Another exercise on the politicisation of experience is the one carried out by Valentina Sorrentino, but in her case, she does it from the perspective of the evocation of memory (Del Valle Murga 1995, 2005). Taking her silences as a key to feminist analysis, she would write the narrative entitled "Flight attendant in the mirror. Reflections through time", in which her analysis is accompanied by sensorial textures that are unleashed by her memories and that embody her narrative: "My skin remembers and can relive the touches on the back, the face, the stomach, the waist":

"It has been almost ten years since I worked as a flight attendant, as that girl, always well dressed and made-up, who is usually placed at events to increase the volume of sales of a given consumer good or to use forced, calming smiles to add pleasure to the guests' presence. When I look at that period, I seem to be observing that "I" from outside, feeling that she is so far away from my current "I". The work that I propose

> to do on myself has wound up being a work of observation that enables me to have a perspective that is quite different from the one held by the flight attendant. At that time, that "I" did not have any feminist perspective, and she had no awareness of the gender dynamics that her work involved and reiterated. In fact, it strikes me as being an excellent subject for study, since it enables me to analyse the importance that is given by having feminist tools when occupying one's space. Becoming aware from a feminist perspective has been a fundamental event in my life, one of those milestones[6] that define a before and an after and that set out the manner in which the "I" of after looks at the "I" of before. The "I" that we shall analyse now exists in that temporal before, and is placed in my memory. However, although the events that occurred have not changed intrinsically, that change has affected the way in which "I" look at them and give them meaning. Previously, I had not given much importance to events and to daily experience during those nights of work but, in some way, I felt that they had marked me. It is an effort of memory to return to those days; I realise that the place where I must begin that recovery is my body. My skin remembers and can relive the touches on the back, the face, the stomach, the waist… and from there, I go on recovering the sensations that it has given me, that arise once again when I think about them. The events that my memory has chosen to remember are not many, perhaps because the naturalisation that has accompanied them has not enabled me to give the right importance in good time, or perhaps because the situations that have most made me feel uncomfortable have been silenced from within myself and have been placed in oblivion. In fact, through that retrospective reflection, I shall touch on the topic of silence, since I shall have the opportunity to go in depth into the relationship that the latter has with the naturalisation of the sexual objectification of women and with the topic of shame. Hence, this narrative shall be told from the perspective of an experience that I have had, thanks to the resource of memory; in addition, it will promote a collective, thus feminist, project. With that, I should like to express that the "I" who has lived her experience in an individual manner is already within a framework that allows her to see herself, not as an individual any more, but as part of a woman's collective, and, in this case, with women who have experienced the events defined by the sexualised features of this work."

Also using the evocation of memory, Zumaia Arizabaleta Alcalde shares with us her text entitled "HOUSKEEPERS. The back door of luxury", on her experience of working at the Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh. As she points out in her text, although she initially chose to observe something distant from her biography, she ended by taking the auto-ethnographic perspective, because "I realised that I needed to speak about 'it' ". Quoting Teresa del Valle, she brings the definition that anthropological science "is science and it is art", thus authorising herself to carry out a "creative process" that,

6 In the sense that Teresa del Valle explained to us during the classes taught as part of the course, also in Del Valle Murga (1995).

for Zumaia, "involves oneself, and you do a small piece of patchwork that brings together memories, sensations, sounds, smells, etc." The narrative of her experience, in which she shares photographs, memories, and this or that document with us, is chilling. It is an exercise in denouncing capitalism, sexism, xenophobia, and racism, using her narrative written in the first person:

> The day would begin with a performative ritual. I transformed myself into Zumaia, into a "maid with a minge", as I was so accurately described by a work colleague and friend. My uniform was a black knee-length dress with a white collar and a gilt Rocco Forte Hotels[7] pin on the right, a white apron at the waist, see-through stockings (which each of us had to bring from home, and considering the times without number that we had to kneel each day, they did not even waste a full day's work), subtle make-up, and hair tied back. Without a doubt, the ideal outfit for kneeling to clean toilets, and nothing to do with what my colleagues of male gender had to wear: trousers, shirt, and black shoes - not the acme of comfort, but which does not compare with having to hitch up your skirts to clean…/
>
> Although I was at the Balmoral for a short time, it made me feel the most brutal alienation in my own flesh. I remember going to sleep without being able to acknowledge to myself that I had to return to that inferno the next day, put on my uniform, put on my make-up, and flash fake smiles at bosses and customers. My days turned into a meaningless haze, I lived to work, and at the end of the working day (usually hours later than I should have finished), I returned home almost zombified. I could not hold a coherent conversation. My head was full of nothing but credits, beds, bathrooms, products, and frustration, and my whole body suffered the effect of the pressure I was under. I developed tendinitis, my knees ached, and I was stiff every day.

Of course, Zumaia's narrative did not leave us indifferent when it was shared in class. Zumaia, that student to whom we had not listened to much, and of course never from a position of authority, enabled us to reconsider the positions of decolonial enunciation of some students, which, by using the categories "race" and "West" in a too rigid and essentialist manner, were ignoring the "other or subordinate" due to her status as "white" and "Western".

Our experience with the various groups of the student body allows us to state that both sets of course content open up a range of possibilities for members of the student body to continue thinking about their feminist research methodologies. However, we cannot isolate the content from our

7 Rocco Forte Hotels is the hotel chain that includes the Balmoral.

manner of understanding teaching. For that reason, and because we feel that it is no less important, we shall end the text by explaining some of our methodological premises. We feel that it is important because our feminist action is always in a constant search for consistency between our teaching practices and our theories. We understand the teaching space as a space of "methodological appropriation", so we try to incorporate into our teaching practices fundamental tools in the practice of ethnographic methodology. For example, we, as ethnographers, feel that it would be difficult for us to explain listening or observation in ethnographic methodology if we do not show that skill in the classroom; or if we are not sensitive to power relationships in the classroom, that would call into question our credibility as feminists.

In our teaching methodologies, we try to question the unidirectionality of traditional teaching methods (from teaching staff to student body, from those who have knowledge to those who do not) to understand the classroom as a space for constructing collective knowledge, a space for (co)creation, a space to which we all have something to contribute, highlighting all experience and acknowledging subjectivities and diversities. For that reason, for example, in this course, we feel that it is important that they select the topic areas, scenarios, or events that they will observe and on which they will write based on their experiences.

That break with unidirectionality involves an exercise in humility on our part, an exercise in which we try to locate our knowledge as just one more, and in which we reinforce the value of questions as opportunities to (re)think in common. That exercise even goes beyond the classroom, when we recognise the contributions of the student body in our publications.[8]

However, it is also important to work on the feeling of joint responsibility in creating a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom, an atmosphere that allows us to express ourselves confidently and freely, without the fear of being censured. To that end, we feel that listening, respect for differences, and mutual acknowledgement are fundamental. If that is not achieved, it would be difficult for us to feel comfortable sharing our experiential processes of observation and writing, because in many cases we refer

8 For example, see the text by Alcázar-Campos (2014) who acknowledges the student body of the 2013–2014 course for having challenged the author with arguments she had not previously considered.

to intimate, personal experiences that we find difficult to reveal, because they cause us pain or shame.[9]

Finally, we also understand the classroom as a space for experiencing power relationships and for managing the diversity used to train our feminist gaze. As we are reminded by Maria do Mar Pereira (2012) when speaking of how power relationships are negotiated in classrooms, specifically in university teaching on gender and/or feminism, "feminist classrooms can be intense spaces" (2012: 18). Of course, that is what they are in many circumstances that bring emotions into play and in which leadership is disputed. Tensions are also related to the break with traditional forms of teaching and learning, as bell hooks (1994) asserts "…shifting paradigms or sharing knowledge in new ways challenges; it takes time for students to experience that challenge as positive. The urge to experiment with pedagogical practices may not be welcomed by students who often expect us to teach in the manner they are accustomed to" (1994: 142).

We believe, and we do not feel it to be less important, that the relationship that we have established between ourselves is also one that speaks, since it questions the hierarchical relationship between thesis supervisor and ex-doctoral student, or, if preferred, between mentor and disciple. Horizontality and ties in dealings, listening, and mutual respect between ourselves are passed on when we act together in the classroom; that is how our relationship has been built inside and outside the classroom, that is in the presentation of the programme and when their narratives are read out in class. In the presentation, we take care to ensure that we each have our own place, which we work on in advance and in pooling their narratives. We adopt a listening attitude and we try to be one more also in relation to the rest of our colleagues, without neglecting our greater responsibility when the time comes to give feedback on their narratives. Furthermore, that feedback is not an exercise in correcting what is supposedly correct or wrong, but one of sharing that which calls us and emotionally moves so many feminist ethnographers.[10] That is why we focus on their own

9 Concerning shame, the classes taught by Elena Casado, a professor invited to our course, have been very revelatory for they set that feeling in a gender (power) relationship. Concerning pain, the classes taught by María Espinosa helped them work on the approach to that feeling in research processes.

10 That same attitude has underpinned the work of Professor Teresa del Valle and María Espinosa, who also teach in this course.

styles of writing; on the value of the issues chosen to think about power relationships; on the details captured, which are sometimes very sensorial; on experiences to the extent that they are shared by many of us; and on the questions and ethical dilemmas that are placed before them, to search for how to respond amongst all of us.

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Ana M. Muñoz-Muñoz

Challenges and Problems for Research in Library and Information Science from a Gender Perspective

Abstract This chapter presents a personal account of the evolution and scope of research in the field of Library and Information Science from the perspective of Women's and Gender Studies drawn from an interdisciplinary academic career combining both areas. The first section deals with the challenges and problems researchers face in the field of Library and Information Science, taking into account the proportion of women (female university lecturers), their scientific output (published papers) and the impact of their studies (citations). The second section focuses on the challenges and problems in higher education and analyses the impact of feminist and gender awareness in university teaching in the degree of Library and Information Science.

Keywords : Library and Information Science, heteropatriarchal production of knowledge, challenges and problems in higher education, women's scientific output

Introduction

These pages are intended as a reflection on some issues I have confronted over 20 years devoted to the academic career as both a teacher and researcher bringing a gender perspective to bear on the field of Library and Information Sciences (L&IS). I have also had extensive experience as a member of the Instituto Universitario de Investigación de Estudios de las Mujeres y de Género (Women's and Gender Studies Institute) of the University of Granada since 1989, first as assistant and postgraduate student and then as researcher. I am ex-Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Institute and have been a lecturer in the Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies, GEMMA, since its inception.

My academic career at the University of Granada combines a double specialisation in Women's and Gender Studies and in L&IS, both of them interdisciplinary and even transdisciplinary. This combination has made me meet challenges and face difficulties in order to develop L&IS from a gender perspective. In Spanish universities, both areas emerged parallelly. Women's Studies began in the 1980s against the backdrop of the feminist movement and demands during Spain's political transition to democracy. The university degree in L&IS was first offered during the same decade. My academic work has been oriented to integrate a gender approach into Information Studies, a particularly difficult task at the beginning since this methodology was not accepted in scientific research in the field at the time. Progressively and fostered by feminist activity within the academic arena, new research policies were implemented in Europe recognising the contribution of a gender perspective to interdisciplinary study and thinking.

Personal challenges

The first challenge in my academic career was writing my PhD dissertation. I studied the presence and scientific output of the female lecturers at the University of Granada since the democratic transition using a bibliometric methodology. I did my viva voce at the Department of Information and communication in 2002,[1] the same year when I became a mother. This thesis was the first in the area of bibliometrics to apply gender indicators and received a unanimous Summa cum laude from the panel. Despite the scepticism of some colleagues who questioned the importance of my

1 Muñoz, Ana María. *Producción científica de las profesoras en la Universidad de Granada durante los años 1975–1990*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Granada. Department of Library and Information Sciences. PhD viva, 13 September 2002. Doctorate programme: Estudios de las Mujeres. Director: Dr. Isabel de Torres Ramírez. Published in the *Feminae* book series as Muñoz Muñoz, Ana M. 2006, *Presencia y producción científica de las profesoras en la Universidad de Granada (1975–1990)*. Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada. ISBN: 84-338-3945-4.

research, in 2005, an article derived from my dissertation[2] was accepted for publication in *Scientometric* (Springer, The Netherlands), one of the top international journals in bibliometrics placed in the first quartile in the Journal Citation Report. Since then all my research has focused on L&IS from a gender perspective.

Becoming a permanent lecturer was a fresh challenge. With a research project incorporating a feminist perspective to documentation methodology, I argued that Information Studies can also reveal inequalities and promote the acquisition of knowledge to improve the quality of life and contribute to economic and social progress.

Gradually I met other usual challenges in the academic career. I obtained recognition for three 6-year research periods (1999–2005/2006–2011/2012–2017), from the National Commission for the Evaluation of Research Activity (CNEAI), each of them with five publications in Information Science with a gender perspective. Such recognition, both academic and economic, entitles university lecturers to become permanent staff and apply for professorships, both requirements to supervise doctoral dissertations and teach in doctorate and top-quality master's programmes. In practice, 6-year research periods are used to rank university lecturers according to merit-based research and for academic promotion. Spanish legislation has introduced the concept of "sexenio vivo" (active 6-year research period) by which a lecturer whose most recent 6-year research period was recognised can apply for a reduction of teaching dedication hours. As a result, this indicator assesses and also promotes research by reducing the number of courses taught.

The positive evaluation of 6-year periods can be an adequate method to verify the presence of women in the group of top researchers if we look at the proportion of women with a particular number of 6-year periods. A clear tendency is observed: the more the 6-year periods, the fewer the women in the category. Forty percent of university lecturers with one recognised 6-year research period are women. That proportion is reduced to 5 per cent in the group of professors with six 6-year research periods. It is relevant to say that the group of lecturers who have never submitted a 6-year period for evaluation is evenly distributed between men and women.

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2 Muñoz Muñoz, Ana M. 2005, The Scholarly Transition of Female Academics at the University of Granada (1975–1990). *Scientometrics*, 64(3): 225–250. ISSN: 0138-9130 (Paper) 1588–2861 (Online). DOI: 10.1007/s11192-005-0254-7.

Analysed by fields of knowledge, female lecturers never represent over 50 per cent of the researchers in any group, with the exception of lecturers with one and three 6-year research periods in L&IS, 58 per cent of whom are women (Torres-Salinas et al. 2011).

The next challenge was to obtain a positive evaluation to be appointed chair professor following the same research line. In Spain, only 20 in every 100 chair professors are women, and one of the requirements is having three 6-year research periods.

Doing research: Challenges and problems

Research done in universities from a gender perspective aims at revealing the causes of inequality, its consequences and possible ways to combat it. This implies questioning heteropatriarchal ways in the production of knowledge and the associated academic practices to carry out inquiries from different feminist epistemological approaches. Academic feminism has grown at universities as a result of the confluence of two experiences: that of female lecturers who participated in the feminist movement and then pushed forward Women's Studies in universities and that of higher education teachers and researchers who had not taken part in the feminist movement but were convinced of the potential of feminist theory and ideals and incorporated them to their academic activities.

Spain follows the European Union (EU) model in equality policies in general, but some specific guiding principles and regulations have been developed for women in science:

– Adding a gender perspective to the priority lines of action in the Estrategia de Innovación de Andalucía 2020 (RIS3) (Andalusian Innovation Strategy) and to the Plan Andaluz de Investigación, Desarrollo e Innovación (PAIDI 2020) (Andalusian Plan for Research, Development and Innovation (PAIDI)). The PAIDI specifies as part of its goals that "the regulatory implementation of Actions included in the current PAIDI 2020 will push forward the integration of a gender perspective, implementing measures to increase the presence and leadership of women in R&D projects and groups (…) facilitating

gender-related research, and ensuring that the evaluation processes of scientific research are sensitive to gender issues".

- Incorporating Spain to an international line of research which is producing fresh insights in both Gender and Information Studies. This complies with national and international recommendations to incorporate a gender perspective as part of the goals of the Estrategia Española de Ciencia y Tecnología y el Horizonte 2020 (Spain's Strategy of Action in Science and Technology and the 2020 Horizon) and follows EU recommendations to prioritise Gender Studies.
- The Science, Technology and Innovation Act 14/ 1 June 2011 includes among its general objectives "promoting the integration of a gender perspective as a multidisciplinary approach to science, technology and innovation" (art. 2, k) and makes an additional provision (No 13) for the implementation of a gender perspective stating that, "Spain's Strategy of Action in Science and Technology will promote the integration of a gender perspective as a transversal category in research and technology (…) and will also promote Women's and Gender studies, and specific measures to foster and give recognition to the presence of women in research teams".

However, a modification is needed of art. 12.4 of the Royal Decree 1393/29 October 2007, regulating the organisation and planning of official university education in order to add a new field of knowledge, that is "Women's and Gender Studies". This modification is necessary so that specialisation in this area is made possible in Bachelor's degree courses and postgraduate courses. The inclusion of Women's and Gender Studies in UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) would also be advisable since this classification is used for research projects and doctoral dissertations.

In the Spanish higher education system, L&IS is integrated into the Social Sciences. We can analyse the specific situation of women's academics in this field of knowledge considering their proportion (number of female university lecturers), their scientific output (number of published papers) and the impact of their work (citations).

According to the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE), the overall proportion of male and female teachers and researchers in the area of Social and Legal Sciences is evenly distributed. In the university departments of L&IS and Psychology, the proportion of female lecturers is above 50 per cent (Torres-Salinas et al. 2011).

Nevertheless, if gender indicators are established to measure the scientific production of women's academics, an unequal access to resources is detected requiring measures to ensure equality of opportunity in research. Bibliometric analysis including gender indicators show key aspects of inequalities and can be used to make recommendations and provide guidance with regard to research plans and policies. As pointed out by Schiebinger (1993), Prpic (1996), Valian (1999), Kaplan et al. (1996) and Tower et al. (2007), women publish fewer scientific articles than men. This reduced output is due to sociocultural factors, including their share of family responsibilities (Kyvik and Teigen 1996, Xie and Shauman 1999, Rothausen-Vange et al. 2005), and also due to factors derived from the academic environment, among which Webster (2001) mentions that women are more dedicated to teaching than men. But establishing determining factors for these gender differences in scientific production is still a puzzle to be solved (Cole and Zuckerman 1984).

The inequality in research output will not be balanced simply with more publications since the number of citations of articles by women scholars is smaller as compared to their male counterparts. The scientific production of female researchers in L&IS is smaller than that of men, although their rate of citation is higher. These figures are in line with previous analysis, and some studies prove that work published by female researchers gets more citations than that of their male colleagues (Zuckerman 1987, Sonnert and Holton 1996, Nilsson 1997, Schiebinger 1999, Feller 2004, Tower et al. 2007, Prpic et al. 2009) and indicate that a lower rate of publication can be associated to a higher quality in the output (Long 1992).

Generally, in Spain, women are underrepresented among scientific elites, considering both number of publications and citations, and the proportion of women with the highest number of 6-year research periods, because only 20 per cent of women academics have three or more. This can be partly explained because women start their university career later than men, while indicators such as number of publications, citations and especially 6-year periods are dependent on the duration of academic life. Women gained a considerably greater access to higher education after Spain's transition to democracy in 1975. So with shorter academic careers than men, women simply have not had the time to reach the top positions in research rankings or a significant number of 6-year research periods.

Gender roles also produce inequality of opportunity in publishing since an insufficient representation in positions of power and leadership makes it harder for women to publish and get citations from their colleagues. Thus, a vicious circle is kept in motion affecting the prestige and visibility of female researchers.

The main shortcomings detected in studies of L&IS from a gender perspective are the following:

- Author profiling due to a lack of standardisation in some national and international databases
- Identification of the home institution of scholars, different names for the same institution and spelling and order mistakes
- Authority control, since it is often the case that the first surname appears in second or third place in the name

As a result, many research studies can only take into account short populations (universities, institutions and research centres) to identify the university staff working in a field of knowledge.

In order to overcome the said shortcoming, it is advisable to cite identifying authors by name and surname, both in in-text citations and bibliographic references. A citation style that identifies the gender of the author allows proper recognition and recompense in science (Merton 1968) and will contribute to the reduction of gender inequality in science. It will prevent the misleading prejudice that the author is male, inhibiting the so-called Matilda effect (Rossiter 1993), which identifies the situation in which the work by women academics receives less credit and recognition than it would deserve if it was evaluated objectively and also pays tribute to female pioneers.

It is therefore essential that the appropriate body in every country should create a standardised database with first name and surname of researchers in a gender-disaggregated format. Citation styles elaborated by editorial boards of journals and associations should also be modified to allow full first names instead of initials.

In addition, the studies of scientific production do not reflect the reality of publication in the field of Arts and Humanities, Legal Sciences and partly of Social Sciences, including the area of L&IS, since their usual means to disseminate the results of research are books and book chapters,

while the databases employed to conduct studies on scientific output contain mostly journal articles.

Most bibliographic databases were designed to retrieve information and bibliographic search of articles in scientific journals. Web of Science and Scopus are exceptional in that they were created to find author citations and developed tools to facilitate bibliometric studies. The international coverage and the range of fields of knowledge included in both databases give a fairly accurate representation of the areas of Science and Technology, but in comparison Arts and Humanities are underrepresented due to the existence of a smaller number of journals in the field derived from the extended practice of publishing books or book chapters.

All these factors constrain the studies of scientific production and lead to bias and underrepresentation of women researchers. Even more, if one takes into account that the proportion of female academics in the areas of Humanities and Social Sciences (L&IS is between the two) is higher than in the areas of Science and Technology.

Higher education: Challenges and problems

The L&IS curriculum does not include any gender education subjects, but some postgraduate programmes in Women's Studies, such as the GEMMA Erasmus Mundus Master Degree, include gender-related courses.

A small-scale study of the degree in L&IS at the University of Granada (Muñoz-Muñoz 2015) and an examination of course contents shows the impact of the lecturers' knowledge about feminism and gender on the teaching practice. Results indicate a low permeability of Women's and Gender Studies into L&IS teaching and scarce attention to gender-related issues. Undergraduates seem interested in inequality and discrimination mainly because of media debates about equality policies rather than knowledge about research studies. Despite the students' unawareness of the causes of inequalities and feminist theories, they show interest in learning about them, and a high proportion of undergraduates would welcome courses with a gender perspective. At the same time, students tend to deny the existence of inequality between men and women. For a majority of them, gender equality has been achieved and their ideas of feminism

are based on stereotypes confronting feminism and male chauvinism, ignoring particular stances on equality and difference. All this shows that students lack an informed understanding of relevant issues about feminism and form their own opinions based on beliefs, prejudices and value judgements.

A similar lack of knowledge is found among lecturers regarding the contributions of Feminism and Women's and Gender Studies to L&IS based on the bibliographic references of their teaching programmes. Women's empowerment and gender-related topics are hardly acknowledged, and the contributions within the area of L&IS rely on the personal interest of lecturers in interdisciplinarity, as is my case. For most lecturers, including a gender analysis in undergraduate courses in L&IS seems to be a matter of conscience and awareness but alien to science. At best, some academics accept such analysis as critical knowledge but do not acknowledge its scientific value. It is considered as an opinion-based approach so that building awareness and understanding is enough.

Knowledge produced by research in gender perspective in L&IS tends to be considered non-scientific according to a view of science as objective knowledge based on value-neutrality. Instead, it is regarded as something ideological, subjective and personal. Due to the media coverage of cases of sexual harassment and gender violence, students often demand that such topics be dealt with during lessons, and interdisciplinary debates arise. As a result, lecturers are in favour of introducing such content, but a majority consider that no previous training is required, and in any case this is a secondary issue since we are very close to real equality in Western countries. The need to offer courses on gender equality is largely a demand of lecturers with proper training in feminist studies and theories. But overall, lecturers resist change and generally think that the basis for these studies is ideological rather than scientific.

In consequence, I consider it necessary to correct misconceptions and prejudices related to women's empowerment, gender, and equality and advocate their status as a scientific approach which has produced valuable knowledge for diverse areas of study. The difficulties to solve these problems effectively are numerous and complex, but action needs to be taken to modify deeply held beliefs about science and to overcome resistance to change and innovation. Such difficulties call for measures such as the ones put forward here so that public institutions legitimise the knowledge produced by Feminist, Gender and Women's Studies: the recognition

of a new field in UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education, updated gender training for lecturers in their areas of expertise and an offer of obligatory courses in gender analysis in all degrees. The lack of training of lecturers in this area hampers its acceptance as scientific knowledge and the inclusion of elective courses in the new curricula does not favour the general recognition of its significance because its impact is reduced to lecturers and students who show an interest.

Any Scientific output which creates and perpetuates a biased androcentric view, ignoring gender inequalities, maintains discrimination and establishes a resistance derived from a lack of training among academics. Then teaching disseminates such view among future professionals. Lecturers involved in gender education should have the appropriate training and here the universities' equal opportunities units have a key role.

All in all, many challenges and problems still stand in the way. Thus it is necessary to adopt research policies, plan actions and design mechanisms to cope with the problems that feminist researchers in L&IS currently face.

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Victoria Robles Sanjuán

Women's Movements Around the World: Some Reflections on Feminist Pedagogy and Its Role in the Feminist Teachings of This Course

Abstract The pedagogical relationships established since the beginning of GEMMA have led to an awakening of "Other" awarenesses in our views of the historical contexts of feminism and their current references. The feminist pedagogies upon which we base the educational relationship in this academic space – particularly in the required course entitled *Feminist History: Women's Movements Worldwide*, which is openly transformative in its aim – have given rise to specific interests and expectations in our students. These interests and expectations have been addressed as part of a dynamic and transformative process. To explain the nature of this process, the first part of the chapter presents the links between feminism and the teaching practices used in this introductory-level course. My point of departure is the idea that the academic space of teaching and research is in fact a space in which diverse learning experiences between students and professors take place, with shared wisdom generated by an ongoing review of the subject area's theoretical and methodological foundations. The second part of the chapter outlines the process by which the subject area has been configured based on the proposal initially made by the professors who teach it and the autobiographical reflections expressed by the students. The intersections between the students' experiences in feminism and their need to explain their lives and recurring phenomena in their biographies have generated a dialogue that has enabled us to review our own attitudes and reflections.

Keywords : Women's movements around the world, feminist pedagogies, autobiographical reflections

Introduction and aims

The relationship between gender, education and teaching practices in the Erasmus Mundus master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies, GEMMA has been, since the very beginning, an ongoing project. This is because

the programme has facilitated, because of its very nature, a much-needed encounter among the different cultures and interpretive frameworks of those of us who started gathering in the classrooms when GEMMA began. While feminist theory in Latin America was already starting to recognize the importance of intersectional gazes from perspectives such as class, race, age, ethnic group, sexualities, bodies, geography, religious and political culture – an approach that here in Spain was only minimally present in our academic teaching at the time – it turned out that our teaching practices and our constant review of them brought this perspective to the forefront of our work.

The same specific structures of power and privilege experienced in our very different geographical and cultural places of origin, the multiplicity of forms of activism, and the lessons in sisterhood that each of us had accumulated over time while working with feminist collectives contributed to a fluid and harmonious coexistence in which our lives intertwined with the ideas, collective learning and critical approaches needed in a world that was clearly global in its many oppressions.

The pedagogical relationships established since the beginning of this master's degree have led to an awakening of "Other" awarenesses in our views of historical contexts of feminism and their current references. The early relationships had an impact on many of us, who at the time were undergoing emancipatory processes. We noticed that these feminist processes were anchored, depending on our origins, in concepts such as equal rights, the relationship with territory, freedom in our sexualities or the explanation of different forms of violence (to mention just a few of the most common ones). All fell under the umbrella of a diverse intellectual canon of feminist wisdom, which allowed this educational relationship to build more insightful and precise knowledge about the world in which we lived.

The feminist pedagogies[1] upon which we have based the educational relationship in this academic space, in terms of both its training and research components and also its theoretical foundation, gave rise to

1 Here I introduce the term "feminist pedagogies", which is discussed in the first part of the chapter. The concept has to do with the organisation of the entire educational context to bring about transformation in the relationships between people and their oppressions, starting with the central historical oppression: that of sex and gender, without forgetting the others that affect every life.

specific interests and expectations in our students.[2] These expectations and interests have been channelled in a dynamic and transformative manner, focusing either on their subsequent impact on our activism in social groups or on concrete approaches that can be used in different institutions with specific equality related agendas, to generate debate of varying levels of importance or to be transferred to the social field using broad and global perspectives.

To explain this pedagogical process, in the first part of this chapter, I discuss the connections between feminism and the teaching practices of an introductory-level required course in the Erasmus Mundus master's degree: *Feminist History: Women's Movements Worldwid**e***. My point of departure is that the academic space of training and research naturally becomes a space for diverse learning experiences between students and professors, with shared wisdom arising out of an ongoing examination of the topic's theoretical and methodological foundations, which affect the elements of a feminist pedagogy in permanent exploration.

To the foregoing I must add a related idea that pertains to the subject itself: since it is a history course that examines the idiosyncrasies of feminist agendas in different feminist and women's groups around the world, in the past and present, analysing this topic has enriched – and prompted us to review – the experience of our own activism, of the theoretical and conceptual approaches adopted over the course of our lives, influencing our political strategies as a feminist group of academic and social activism, all through the action of teaching.

The second part of the chapter outlines the process by which the class material has been configured, a mixture of the proposal initially made by the professors who teach it and the autobiographical reflections made by our students. The intersections between their experiences in feminism, the need they felt to explain their lives and the recurring phenomena in their biographies, and also the search for concepts about the problems experienced and contemplated, generated a dialogue that led us to review our

2 In the original Spanish text, the author uses the neutral pronouns "todes" and "nosotres" and the noun "alumne" instead of the commonly used option of todos/todas, nosotros/nosotras and alumno/alumna (the feminine and masculine versions of the Spanish words *all, us* and *student*). This political position intended to help create a symbolic space for non-binary linguistic options that also designate persons in identity transition. It is the strategy proposed by some LGBTQI collectives.

attitudes and reflections and to question concepts in light of our interpretations, broadening them or nuancing them. In the outline, I examine some episodes of "what" the students have discussed in their processes of gaining self-awareness and feminist political reflection and of "how" the subject – and the teaching of it – has changed over time as a result of these common contexts. I also look at "how" feminist concepts have gradually permeated the students' situated thinking.

Part I. Feminist pedagogies and the value of the self-referential document

I.1. Feminist pedagogies in a post-graduate academic context

Regardless of where the exchange of feminist knowledge and teachings takes place, our academic teaching activity heavily marks the processes of transformation or perpetuation of the social inequalities of gender, racialisation, class, sexualities, people with disabilities, religious culture, geographies, migratory or ethnic conditions, among other categories. The essential aim of teaching in feminist institutional spheres is to engage in reflection about theory, methodology and practice regarding the challenges existing in gender relations, and also to promote the exchanges that often occur between students and professors.

The academic teaching and learning framework that I use as a starting point and that I describe as "feminist pedagogy" comprises three principles, following the ideas of Pagé et al., (2018) establishing egalitarian relationships in the classroom, ensuring that the students feel valued and using their experiences as a source of learning.

Feminist pedagogies can develop as a result of feminist studies, gender studies or women's studies – in any stage of the education system – that bring feminist ideas and perspectives into the classroom. As I have discussed in another article, and has been highlighted by authors such as Briskin (1990), feminist studies have developed in parallel to women's movements, to feminist groups, centres and organisations and to incipient gay, lesbian and trans groups, all of which have progressively given

meaning to the situation of women. Together these collectives generated the first political, theoretical and socio-educational strategies, and the first bodies of knowledge concerning women. This theoretical and ideological component has naturally been accompanied by methodologies that we have found to be effective and useful in deepening the political awareness of students.

Teaching in this master's degree programme was not the first teaching experience of any of the professors involved in it. The feminist institution to which some of us have belonged for decades (Women's and Gender Studies Institute) has focused on imparting feminist teachings to many different groups of students with diverse needs (courses for university/non-university students, for under-graduate/post-graduate students, courses with highly specialized content, courses in more general master's programmes, classes for the general public, in addition to the material that each of us has introduced to our teaching in our respective departments). All of this contributed to a didactic experience that encouraged us to reflect on our teaching. Although the master's degree programme provided us with a meeting place in a post-graduate context, we considered the very early stages, even with all our prior experience, to be a trial run with which to enhance our teaching. This point will be further developed in section II.

In the area of feminist studies, both teaching and learning aim to be transformative experiences. A good definition of this transformative relationship is offered by Burke and Jackson (2007) when they situate the collective experience in the classroom as a source of knowledge, emphasising the development of critical thinking and social awareness, participatory practices, the deconstruction of power relations and knowing how to share feminist knowledge (in our case, methodological questions are addressed below).

Teaching a course in the history of feminism necessarily entails a collective encounter of our renegotiations of the gender pact imposed upon us. It therefore entails the collective revision of our understanding of feminism, in plural, and also of its history, also in plural. Feminist historians such as M. Nash (2014: 31) have highlighted the importance of examining the plurality of historical feminisms "from the intersection of spaces and the constant interaction of experience in the dynamics of gender power relations and in the articulation of women's collective experience". If women

around the world have proposed critiques of and alternatives to the power relations in place in each society, the coming-together of students from different cultures and analytical frameworks in this course has forced us to take into consideration the specificity of our own particular gazes and contexts.

The historical exercise of examining our problems in the past not only gives us a better understanding of concepts that have been revised in successive historical frameworks (Hannam 1997, Hernández 2004) it also, in light of the social subject "women", expands the content of the female cultural model in each specific period, taking into account key concepts such as marginality, time, body, sexuality/ies, work, politics, education, private life, domesticity and the public sphere. All of this is very valuable in helping us review our current experiences, our actions aimed at breaking with old models of coexistence and proposing new ones different from those normalised by sexist culture.

The teaching of feminism, whether historical or not, entails understanding and combatting processes of oppression and discrimination, giving protagonism to women as subjects of social transformation in the sex-gender system. Solar (1992), interweaving pedagogy with the feminism perspective in any discipline, highlights five broad categories that must be taken into account: sexism (closely linked to ethnoculturalism, racism and heterosexism); sexual stereotypes; the non-verbal field; verbal language and curricula. The incorporation of new categories and concepts in feminism, as we see in this author, is the result of the advancement of feminist readings of the world we want to transform: the notion of gender has replaced that of sex in descriptions of the social sphere; new anti-racism perspectives have arrived; the intersection of oppressions has been adopted as an analytical tool; we are now looking into different resistance strategies.

As part of all of this, I begin with the premise that the collective experience of students and professors is a source of knowledge and thus an essential support, and that the identities involved and interwoven in this academic community vary according to the contexts, cultures, countries and types of education; all of this enriches the pedagogical relationship between teaching and learning, and in this relationship it is evident that the intention of feminist pedagogies is to counteract power relations wherever they have taken root.

I.2. Social approaches and self-referential methodologies in a history course

One of the basic aims of the course *Feminist History: Women's Movements Worldwide*
, which takes a historical approach and is global in scope, is to generate knowledge that incorporates the comprehension and interpretation of women's groups and feminist collectives around the world, past and present, regarding their own problems and oppressions. This knowledge must necessarily allude to the political agendas and activities of feminist movements around the world and also to the oppressions and violations of rights experienced by women in their daily lives. I agree with Joan Scott when she says that the representations of our past help to build gender in the present (2007), an affirmation that in practice sheds light on the connection between social organizations and the production of culture about sexual difference.

Since it is a course that examines the relationships between feminism and its cultural and socio-historical contexts, I made it a priority, from the very first year of the programme, to pay attention to the points of interest, practices and rhetoric present in such contexts. This priority has materialised progressively in the form of analyses on the multi-layered web of relationships, political and cultural strategies, contradictions and historical absences of feminist groups and networks. A by-product of these analyses is that we have gradually reviewed and enriched our own diverse examples of activism. This framework that brings together diverse reflections about our history and our present has been nourished by self-referential, multidimensional and critical processes arising out of our theoretical and conceptual approaches and reapproaches to ourselves as subjects of feminism. This has allowed us, as a feminist group engaged in academic and social action, to elaborate increasingly meaningful political strategies.

The next section shows in more detail that feminist pedagogy is linked to the critical pedagogy emanating primarily from the writings of the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire on popular education, and also from reflections on his work on educational and academic feminism. As Teresa García points out in her book on Freire's critical pedagogy (2015), education, in the broad sense, can be an instrument for social change, because it

is education, intervention and empowerment that will pave the way for a social transformation focusing on women's well-being and autonomy.

Freire has been the source of pedagogical inspiration within feminist knowledge. It is no coincidence that the feminist movement, through its associations, has been involved in all kinds of projects promoting popular education, which we understand as a source of autonomy and collective power for women.

If Freire worked on the link between education, knowledge and oppression, it was American and European feminism (Hooks 1994, Dhar 2014, Pagé et al 2008, Robles 2018) that some years ago developed an interpretation that linked education to knowledge and oppressed collectives. In our practice, this interpretation and related currents have contributed to the development of processes of reflection about practices of teaching and of liberation in the students enrolled in this course, although this final aspect requires more detailed analysis and reflection about the meanings of the process and its effects.

The biographical experience of each student has had a significant influence on the course, as each of them had some degree of contact with feminist action groups or certain knowledge regarding feminist theory, or both. If uncovering oppressions was part of the ethical and moral principles of the master's programme, it was important to see the students in civil society, their participation and the emergence of a feminist and political awareness.

So in this course I assumed from the very beginning that a student's enrolment in a master's degree of feminist orientation was no accident[3]; on the contrary, the personal growth of our students in their processes and their needs for social change through education and social activism, whether defined as feminist or not, had put them in a political/academic juncture in which questions and answers regarding discriminatory

3 For the first two editions, I discussed possible approaches, criteria and methodologies with Soledad Vieitez, an anthropologist and fellow student in my master's degree programme, with the intention of proposing and debating the matter with the students. I had already decided that autobiographies would be an essential part of the collective learning process. For the second two editions, it was María Espinosa, a social worker who was also from my master's degree programme, with whom I explored other biographies and self-referential documents with which we learned more about the usefulness of autobiographical construction of the students' political and activist experience. I am grateful to them for the learning that I myself acquired during our dialogues.

processes and the exclusion of women, men and LGBTQ collectives took on great importance.

The writing of autobiographies – here an introspective process concerning the individual's passage through social groups, networks and communities directly or indirectly related to feminism – was conceived as a methodological tool that would aid in the search for the discursive memory of what students have experienced and transformed in the light of feminism's social tenets, embedded in discourses, books, practices, events, liturgies, symbols, families and/or friendships. Recomposing the past with one's memory is part of a strategy to bring together life experiences and ideas and practices, what is inscribed in bodies and desires and what is projected in a present that seeks to look at realities that concern us as political subjects of feminism.

We used the reading of autobiographies by feminists from different places, fighters in communities, women's groups, writers or researchers, although for the course no indications were given as to the specific method of creating the autobiography or even its format or most basic characteristics. To gradually give shape to the written story, I did occasionally use the work of the anthropologist Teresa del Valle, "Procesos de la memoria: cronotopos genéricos" [Processes of memory: generic chronotopes], created as a lecture in 1997 and adapted for publication in 1999. In this work, the aim is something different from the conscious telling of the past, because generic chronotopes are connected to the non-discursive memory, memory that is embodied deep within us. They are recollections of human processes that combine dimensions of existence, such as pain, joy, love and sexuality. In her methodology, del Valle makes use of memory-structuring axes that act on our embodied past, which seemed to me to be extremely useful for a preliminary exercise in autobiographical memory. Particular attention is given to *milestones*, such as decisions or life experiences which, when remembered, become a significant reference because they often trigger major life decisions. Special attention is also paid to *crossroads*, which are those moments in which various possibilities exist and there is a certain margin for decision-making, those moments in which people must make a decision that will affect the rest of their lives, for which each person makes use of specific space and time markers (spaces of fear, darkness, everyday rhythms/times).

Focusing on the autobiographical projects of 9 years of the course *Women's movements around the world* (the first year we did not use

autobiography as a didactic exercise), the next section examines the connection between problems of exclusion and gender subordination that students consider to be essential in their lives and how these processes have determined, in a loop that renews and enriches itself, the focal point and material explored in the course.

Part II. The students: Responses, introspections and mutual learning

Every year my teaching activity in this course follows a similar pattern: first we examine Western ideas regarding equality in the three waves of feminism as a continuum, and then we analyse geographical contexts in which feminisms have arisen and developed their own singularities, as the product of cultural mosaics and specific agendas. In the early editions, it was the African and then the Chinese feminist movements that drew our attention. This was followed, in subsequent editions, by women's movements in Latin America and in Spain during this country's transition to democracy following the death of Franco, and finally, in the past three editions, the feminist movements of African-American women, Saharan women, Chicana women and community movements in Latin America and in refugee camps in Western Sahara.

The gender perspective that I incorporate into our review of feminist historiography has expanded over the years for two reasons. The first is the very methods used to teach, share knowledge and make use of the new tools for reflection that have come to us from collective culture. The second is the pedagogy of feminists throughout history who, in their fight against different forms of oppression, have inspired the group as a whole to seek a heightened critical awareness and richer and more detailed social knowledge.

Below I will discuss four aspects that I believe to be especially relevant in the eyes of students: situated knowledge, geopolitics as a space infused with colonialism, the link between street feminism and theoretical feminism and, finally, other feminist socialisations for autonomy, freedom and equality.

II.1. Situated knowledge and conscious self-reflection in the classroom

The history of each person is explored with the certainty that definite knowledge or absolute truth does not exist. This premise is accepted by students as of the second edition of the course, when we first asked students to look back at their past.

To many of them the work of Donna Haraway (1991) was instrumental in revealing their own reality, a multiple reality in which different particularities intersect. As a teacher I had not yet used the work of this epistemologist, although I had great esteem for her approach. It is likely that this approach was also explored in other early courses of GEMMA, and for the majority (for me and for many others) it expanded the prism from which to situate ourselves as researchers, women and feminists in our analytical approaches.

Haraway's concept of situated knowledges led directly to the acknowledgement that the observation of reality affected students personally in the results of their and our investigations, and for this reason it had an immediate effect on their introspective gaze: "Haraway reminds us of the importance of taking responsibility for our cognitive statements, which is possible only if we see clearly that our knowledge is partial, critical, localizable and located" (C.G. 2008)[4].

The epistemologies of the South can be used as another innovative approach in the master's programme if the feminist gaze is applied to them. Using these epistemologies, some students of the second and third editions emphasised elements that helped them find explanations about themselves and their variable, not fixed social contexts. In so doing they created situated cartographies in multiple places and borders, another novel concept explored in this course, given the fact that the context we worked with was eminently Western and little attention was paid in class to epistemological reflections on feminist movements all over Latin America and their specific socio-political context. Here is one case: "I am the daughter of the bloody Latin American dictatorships orchestrated through Operation

4 Please note that C.G. 2008, L.T. 2009, D.Q. 2010, S.F. 2011, C.M. 2009, A.C. 2008, D.M. 2009, A.M. 2011, V.N. 2012, J.H. 2011, D.F. 2016 are acronyms of students who kindly have consented to be cited in the text. As such, no reference of these sources is provided in the reference list.

Condor with the support of the CIA. I was born at the end of the dictatorship that in Uruguay lasted from 1971 to 1984 (...) My political awareness was somehow incomplete until it incorporated the gender perspective and assumed it as part of a broader political project: that of feminism" (C.G. 2008). A second example, this one about the harsh reality of Colombia in 2009, underlined the relativity of the experience of paramilitary and guerrilla violence depending on where the person lived: "There is not a single person who has not been affected by the armed conflict in Columbia and the illegal economies that support it, although how the effects are felt does depend on where the person lives and the socio-economic context. So I, who had lived in the city my whole life, had experienced the violence in a very way different from those coming from rural areas, where the presence of armed groups is more visible" (L.T. 2009).

Recognizing subjectivity in the production of knowledge led some of them to think of themselves differently. They found they were rethinking themselves as women that are far from unitary, coherent or static, and even less so in cultural contexts in which *mestizaje* was considered a sign of resistance and therefore highlighted: "I am inhabited by many selves; some of them contradict each other; I am in the margins and on the periphery, in a border situation (...) I am Uruguayan and Italian; I am middle class, I am a University student, I am heterosexual; I am married and single; I am white" (C.G. 2008). In this other testimony, a student puts the spotlight of her reflected identity on what she calls a mode of being, which gives her a variable identity [the Spanish verb "estar" indicates a transitory state, as opposed to "ser", which conveys a more permanent state]: "Now I am L. [yo soy L.]. I am [yo estoy] a woman, a feminist, a person with nonheteronormative desires, an antiracist, Columbian, Latin American, middle class, (im)migrant, student, young, anticapitalist, agnostic, against any type of discrimination…and much more" (L.T. 2009).

Autobiography as part of an epistemology of our being [ser], our transitory being [estar] and our doing [hacer] situates us and resituates us as part of collectives, reviving forgotten things and drawing landscapes of marginalized groups (paraphrasing Del Valle 1999): "I think doing this autobiographical project is very valuable because it allows me to rescue part of the tangential memory of the circles and networks I feel I am a part of, reflecting on meaningful experiences with these groups, –, fundamentally from my personal experience as a woman with working-class roots, now an educational/community psychologist and social scientist, Chilean,

Mapuche, migrant, *sudaka* [pejorative expression used in Spain to refer to Latin Americans], non-European, student and young feminist worker" (D.Q. 2010). This tangentiality is marked by one's circumstances in life, the harsh reality of which comes signified in advance, from the outside: "I vividly remember when a classmate asked me what my father did for a living and then, before I could answer, he spit out: 'since you live in La Pintana, he must be a thief'. At that moment, with repressed tears of anger and a tight throat, I felt my first spark of class awareness" (D.Q. 2010).

Autobiographical construction enabled these students to take a critical look at the knowledges self-endowed with normativity and universality, an aspect we had worked with in the historiography of the feminist movement in the West and in the androcentric construction of the history of humanity. Our students' stories about everyday family life sometimes point out that the universal is used to replace human diversity (as Seyla Benhabib would say): "When I was born 23 years ago in Bogotá, Colombia, my family expected a boy. That was what the doctor had said, with all his authority, about the sex of the baby to be born. This very prestigious doctor with many years of experience had a profound mistrust of ultrasounds because of the potential harmfulness of X rays, so he did only one ultrasound during my mother's pregnancy. In it the presence of either a penis or a vagina was not clear; however, according to the doctor my heart was beating strongly, which was a clear indication of the sex: it had to be a boy, if it was active it had to be male" (L.T. 2009).

In another autobiographical story, knowledges endowed with normativity and domination are described in all of their bluntness. D. F. mentions the extreme harshness of the doctor attending her mother while she gave birth, in a small town in the middle of Spain: "My mother, Fina, told me how, as she screamed in pain during the delivery in the wee hours of the morning, the doctor on duty shouted at her: 'Mad, you're absolutely mad, shut your mouth!' " (2016).

Likewise, the autobiographical project has given them knowledge of and a reference to all that has built the life of a woman and that needs to be uncovered in order for her to understand herself and her practice: "I want to explore how the experiences, persons and factors in my life have inspired a feminist consciousness in me. I need to uncover my privileges, experiences and biases in order to understand how they shape my vision of the world and situate me in my research. I see in this autobiography an act of great intentionality and I hope that the experience of writing it, just like

my participation in the GEMMA programme, represents yet another step towards the realization of my feminist practice" (S.F. 2011).

II.2. Feminisms in the West and in America: A few brief critical approaches

When Latin America turns its gaze to Europe, it tends to proffer a harsh critique of Europe's colonial past and present, and also of its homogenous and universal feminism. In interpretations more or less based on the work of historians and also on general perceptions of a subjective nature made by non-historians, Europe is seen and analysed as a space that is closed and at times exhausted, compared to the vitality of Latin American women's movements.

The material I use in the course must be reviewed and expanded with the experiences and perspectives provided by the class group, which is sometimes critical of the content. There have been omissions is a basic conclusion. Missing from the material are the experiences of groups of women living different forms of feminism. As the years pass and editions come and go, the programme has come to include working-class feminism, socialist feminism, black feminism and its role in the civil rights struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the feminism of sexual difference, with innovative contributions from Spain. In addition, visiting professors have worked with the "Other" feminist genealogy which since the 1960s and the 1970s has been questioning the epistemic racism, classism and heterosexism present in Western feminist political thinking. To do so, using an intersectional prism, they have worked with the agendas of different currents of feminism: lesbian feminism, black or of colour feminism, Chicana feminism, Saharan feminism and Latin American community feminism.

Our students feel the need to rethink the place they have occupied for years in cultures expropriated of their own history and to look critically at the "privileged" place of temporary asylum in Granada while completing the master's degree programme: "...in Europe, in the 1980s, there was a decline in European feminism as a new social movement, with fragmentation due to internal disagreements [including the *difference feminism/ equality feminism* polarization] and its progressive institutionalization (Nash 2004)", while in South America "the 1980s…marked the rebirth of

social movements in general and of women's and feminist movements in particular, as countries transitioned from dictatorial regimes to newfound democracies" (C.G. 2008).

Echoes of Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of Western colonialism and of feminism tainted by colonialism, as cultural products, can be heard in this testimony which resituates political agendas while also invalidating a homogenising conception of gender equality: "The question of 'how' we decolonize Western feminism thus becomes top priority in struggles involving gender and race, or cultural and gender identities, and also in the design and implementation of strategies to address the effects that the close links among racism, imperialism, colonialism and patriarchies have on the lives of women" (D.Q. 2010).

In this process of "deconstructing" the West to explain it from the South, another America will be seen, not an oppressed place, but rather an oppressor, like in the case of the United States. Here the lens through which oppression is analysed must focus not just on racial and ethnic discrimination, but on the extent and influence of white privilege: "*My name is S.F.*: there are three different factors that have defined my experiences and perspectives. The first is that my mother tongue is the language that has colonised the world. The fact that I am from the United States and speak English immediately puts me into a position of dominance. The second is that (...) I have a north-eastern accent, the accent considered by some to be the most prestigious in the country. I didn't recognize my accent as a privilege until I went to university, where I met students from the south who tried hard to hide their southern accent, which is sometimes viewed as a sign of ignorance. The third factor that pops up when I say my name is my Judaism" (S.F. 2011).

II.3. There is no activist feminism without theoretical feminism and vice versa

Many of our students have experience in associations and in the political organisation done by feminist groups involved in long-term struggles in their respective countries, with both national and transnational perspectives. From these groups and from the teaching tools they generate, the students have learned a great deal; they have acquired experience in publishing, in different types of activism and in the articulation of a political

network with all types of social groups and institutions. Some examples are: Cotidiano Mujer (Uruguay); Paréntesis, Grupo Interdisciplinario de Estudios de Género y Sexualidad (Colombia); Asociación de Mujeres Luisa Amanda Espinoza (Nicaragua); Mesa de la Mujer Indígena Urbana de la Región Metropolitana (Chile) and Articulación Feminista Marcosur (Uruguay). The idea behind them, the participants explained, was to transversalise the agendas of many social movements with feminist perspectives and, especially, "to challenge any attempt to put all women in the same bag, in a fixed, monolithic category" (C.G. 2008). Again, notes can be heard of C. T. Mohanty and her firm support for the analysis of micropolitics in everyday life.

Socio-political contexts often explain us to ourselves. For this reason, we analyse them: "The Movement progressively takes shape as a 'diverse agent', as successive stages of 'construction and experimentation' that represent the attempt to manage a diversity of interests, needs and strategic approaches" (C.M. 2009).

Historical-theoretical space is a place of harmonious coexistence, discovery and engagement: "The multicultural learning environment has marked me profoundly, by enriching me with other experiences that have been conveyed and exchanged in and out of the classroom, through the friendship and companionship built with people from countries I knew very little about" (C.G. 2008). "I had never defined myself as a feminist and, although I valued what groups of women – in the French Revolution, the abolitionist movement, the fight for universal suffrage or the Second Spanish Republic – had done for the rights of women and for equality, I had always thought that at the personal level my struggle was at home, with my family, my partner and my friends. I didn't think it was a struggle of all women together but rather of each woman in her own life" (A.C. 2008).

The issue of male privilege, which also appears in the autobiographies as discourse on the expropriation of women's rights, was at times treated with irony: "... they asked me if I wanted to have a little brother; my answer was an emphatic NO. I like the privileged position I was in and I didn't want anyone to take it away from me" (A.C. 2008).

Through the autobiography project, oppressions were progressively situated in the corresponding places and in the true protagonists, who were lacking in rights or lacking in the ability to enjoy rights in their daily activity: "The memory of my mother getting up at 6 a.m. with my aunt, preparing breakfast for us, and then going to the mine while we stayed

with my cousins' grandmother, now I remember it as a solemn rite. Many groups of women throughout history have decided to organize to take action, not for a cause that would benefit them personally but for a just cause" (A.C. 2008). Similarly, participation in some well-known feminist liturgies in public places was viewed as relevant: "In 2006 I went to a March 8th demonstration for the first time (...) I found it incredibly moving to see some women get on stage to demand the same changes for women that I asked for in every project I did for my university classes" (A.C. 2008).

The list of heartfelt acknowledgements for those professors, mostly women but with a few men among them, who taught so many to think and to live, is so long that it would require a separate article.

II.4. A feminism with advantages: The socialisation of autonomy, freedom and equality

From the different currents of feminist theory, each with its multiple approaches, an insightful vision can be built of the opaque reality of inequality. In the autobiographies with a peripheral or Southern approach, the concepts set forth support the idea of multiplicity: "My feminism, on the other hand, believes it is necessary to destabilize that dichotomy between men and women, so my feminism is not separatist. Rather, it invites men to take part, to reflect on their privileges, recognizing in them the potential to become- minority (Braidotti 2004). In my feminism my body is the place from which I am, it is my primary site of localization, it is the place of intersection for the strengths and tensions comprising my days" (L.T. 2009).

Feminist thinking forges, in addition to a better understanding of the historical experiences of those Others, a unique personality, one that is individual and multiple at the same time: "So, I think that starting when I was a girl I have been forging my character with feminist thinking, without even knowing what it was or having heard anything about it. It was only when I went to University, I think, that I came into contact with the issue. Since I saw my mother suffering, I knew I didn't want that kind of suffering for myself, I wanted to change things even for other women. I started to develop my sense of justice as a child" (D.M. 2009). For A. M (2011) "...within the view of feminism as something educational there is an

important element, and it is that the way we organize ordinary day-to-day life is fundamental for transmitting feminist values through practice".

The need for networks in the lives of students is also a constant: "In these neurotic shifts I reproach myself for not having built a strong network capable of supporting me, within which to fight as a woman, a citizen, an immigrant, a political subject" (V.N. 2012). Such networks are necessary precisely because of the silencing we finally become aware of after centuries and because of the need to become political, economic and social subjects.

Starting in 2011, signs emerge of the need to rethink masculinities, either through dissident sexuality or through historicity: "... I think we should study men's history just like we study women's history and we should not focus our work only on the dominated sex, just as a historian who is a specialist in social classes cannot study only peasants" (J.H. 2011). And faced with the invisibility of historical and current realities, in both women and men, there is an evident need to rethink who we are: "I have felt the absence of models of gay men who could have given me another vision of the world. I have felt the absence of references" (J.H. 2011).

Processes of deconstructing normative masculinities also appear when reflections on rethinking masculinity begin to emerge. But these processes are fraught with difficulties due to the lack of references – again – and of strategies for experiencing and feeling satisfied with the male body and its desires: "... imagining or visualizing (or looking online, in magazines, books...) sexualized male bodies seemed like a trouble-free path provided it occurred in total secrecy. I am not sure when my sexual pleasure turned, from those childhood games, into a progressive warehousing of images that made my tension explode, in secret masturbation sessions. I think that in order to understand the current naturalized version of masculinity it is vital that we take an honest look at the sexual narrative and the irrepressible desire for the end of the act itself (orgasm). Relearning how to enjoy sexuality without self-imposed dynamics of domination, not sadomasochistic dynamics but normative ones, is a process I am still going through in relation to my desire" (D.F. 2016).

The need for a genealogy of feminist men is becoming evident. We hear more and more words expressing the wish to know that one is different from the oppressor, that one is in need of light, affection and Other desires. For this reason, I am currently revising the syllabus to begin a construction of signs of feminism in the history of men.

A final note

Using feminist pedagogy in a course on the history of women's movements around the world is much more a "political position" than a method and a feminist teaching. It is the feminist response to a situation recognised as problematic. It is the politicisation of all spaces of interaction and thus represents a desire for transformation. Feminist pedagogy seeks change in prevailing social values. It is a denunciation and deconstruction of predominant social relations of sex, social class and race.

Our students, in the considerations that emerge from personal memory, view theoretical space and their participation in it as a conquest, a place from which to fight inequality, further their own knowledge and increase the social awareness of others through whatever form of activism theory inspires in them. The common aim is to contribute to building a society whose references are the principles of equality, equity and justice without just a single meaning, but rather adapted to all the dimensions of the social, political, economic and cultural life of each country or region. The different points of view and the link drawn between knowledge and social action demand a high level of collaboration-based participation, which is undoubtedly a liberating process when the goal is to combat domination and its structures.

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