Seeking Eccentricity

En busca de lo excéntrico

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1. INTRODUCTION TO MONOGRAPH

This Sociology and Technoscience monograph extends conversations and uses of eccentricity as a methodological tool for doing research within the field of feminist and gender studies. The search for eccentricity responds to the editors' interest in reflecting on and engaging with different methodological approaches which help deviate from canonical established patterns of research onto unusual and provocative ways of doing research differently. In this collection we have gathered contributions dealing with the analysis of technologies of gender, sexuality and bodies to propose new ways to defocus, dislocate or blur the split between subjects and objects of study. In sum, with this monograph we intend to contribute to gender approaches to science by exploring "eccentrically" the ways feminist and gender scholars think and research *otherwise.*[1]

Feminist modes of knowledge and doing research have traditionally been excluded from academic discourses or denied the merits of their own specificity due to the constitution of the notion of "women" as a sexual differentiated subject. "Women", as epistemological subject, has been trapped between the unrepresented

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[1] Along these lines see also two contributions produced within the frame of the ATHENA Socrates Thematic Network, with the participation of one of the editors of the present issue. They are Rosi Braidotti and Gabrielle Griffin 2002 *Thinking Differently* (London: Zed Books, 2002) and Rosemarie Buikema, Gabrielle Griffin and Nina Lykke: *Theories and Methodologies of Postgraduate Feminist Research: Researching Differently* (New York and London: 2011). They can be used as companions to the analysis of feminist eccentricity intended in the present issue.

or unrepresentable due to the articulation of what Michel Foucault calls "technologies of sex" - that is, mechanisms, apparatuses and discourses (legal, pedagogical, medical, demographic, religious or economic) that regulate sexuality. Following the Foucaultian concept, Teresa De Lauretis (1987) coins the concept of "technologies of gender" to move away from the idea of gender as sexual difference towards its comprehension as a political tool instead. Technologies are hence understood as inseparable from their sociocultural milieus and the semiotic apparatuses which produce women and men, assigning an identity and a position to each individual within the social group.

To discuss women's contradictory position or what the author calls "women's paradox," (p. 115) De Lauretis proposes the term "space-off" (*Ibid*). This concept redefines and relocates the category of women and women's subjectivity in terms of potential and a reformulation of power and space.

De Lauretis explores the term "space-off" as a platform for the constitution of alternative subjectivities, counter-practices and community forms capable of creating new discursive spaces, that is, for the constitution of "eccentric subjectivities." For De Lauretis, a view for the "eccentric" gives the subject of feminism "a view from elsewhere" (Ibid). This discursive "elsewhere" is constituted by those "spaces in the margins of hegemonic discourses, social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparati". Indeed, feminisms can produce what de Lauretis (1990) calls "eccentric subjects" from these "elsewheres". Located inside and outside gender as ideological representation, but conscious of this twofold view and of the multiple oppressions intersecting it, subjects can generate self-critical and ironic practices, thus questioning, subverting or exceeding the limits imposed by the dominant technologies of gender.

De Lauretis traces the onset of the feminist quest for eccentricity to the beginning of the 1980s, with Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga's putting together of a collection of "radical women of color critique" contributions in their seminal *This Bridge Called my Back* (1981). She then highlights the subsequent unleashing of contestations to white/mainstream feminism with, for instance, Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott and Barbara Smith's All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave in 1982. Since then, eccentricity, understood as the effort to "work through feminism's complicity with ideology, both ideology in general [...] and the ideology of gender in particular-that is to say, heterosexism" (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 11) has found its realisation in various feminist theoretical figurations aimed at genenerating a performative displacement of subjectivites towards a more fluid spectrum of existence which embodies epistemological and ontological shifts of actual locations. The abject (Kristeva, 1982), the postcolonial subaltern (Spivak, 1983; Mohanty, 1984), the cyborg (Haraway, 1985), the borderland mestiza (Anzaldúa, 1987), the drag (Butler, 1990), the exile (Benhabib, 1992), the nomadic (Braidotti, 1994), the

diasporic (Brah, 1996), the new materialist (Barad, 2003), the cultural politics of emotion (Ahmed, 2004) or the queer act of failure (Halberstam, 2011), among others, are modes of thinking and doing from different epistemological locations in order to offer situated historial positions and methodologies capable of responding eccentrically to how we think-with and how we relate to others. Bearing these figurations in mind, this monograph asks two questions: what impact could "eccentricity" have on our methodological decisions? How could the "eccentric" help us think and research otherwise?

The articles included in this issue respond to these questions from different theoretical elsewheres and methodological doings: (auto)ethnography, participatory research, artivism and art-based research, trauma and memory studies, interdisciplinary collaboration, the affective turn or feminist new materialist diffractive practices shape the eight original contributions which inform this monograph. Collectively they illustrate the feminist commitment to do things otherwise. They all offer examples of how these fields can be approached differently, how they all seek eccentricity as a positive and constructive alternative to the way the disciplines from which they emerged have often been normativised in mainstream academia.

The issue opens with "A Diffractive Analysis of Documentary Film No existimos: Making Visible the Invisible with an Eccentric Technology of Gender" by Orianna Calderón and Adelina Sánchez. In their study of feminist documentaries and using No existimos by Spanish visual artist Ana Solano (2014) as their case study, the authors explore 'eccentricity' in the application of a new materialist diffractive approach which reads three feminist methodologies through one another. To this end, the authors ensamble emotionality, materiality and performativity as their tools to argue for responsible/response-able ways of co-creating realities with affective audiovisual narrative waves.

Silvia de Riba's contribution "Prácticas audiovisuales: un método Feminista Nuevo Materialista para una investigación educativa" also uses new materialism and affect as her method to approach audiovisual practices and how these can transform classroom environments. De Riba documents one of the sessions in her "MiCreate" research project, dealing with the social inclusion of migrant young people. The article describes the intra-action of bodies being gazed at by the camera, the mobilisation of affects unleashed by filming and the new relational, corporal, affective and, ultimately, transformative knowledges generated by the experience.

Alternative educational experiences are also the basis of the third article in this collection: "Contesting power in public art spaces. Liminal p(l)aces, diverting methodologies and observant participation in Valor y Cambio" by Angela Harris Sánchez. Claiming for the inclusion of activist practices in academia, Harris proposes epistemic decolonisation of monistic figurations of concepts as a first step along the path of academic eccentricity. As her case study, the author looks into

Frances Negrón-Muntaner's Valor y Cambio installation/experience, a circular economy public art project conducted jointly by the University of Columbia Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity and several communities in Puerto Rico and the City of New York.

The potential of public art spaces for feminist intervention protest is equally the focus of contribution number four: "Cuando la revolución es en femenino, es vandalismo. La Revolución de la Brillantina y la pugna por la memoria" by Irma Salas. Salas analyses two demonstrations against gender violence taking place in Mexico City in August 2019. Both used graffiti as a form of artistic intervention on The Angel of Independence monument, one of the landmarks in the city. The author proposes that such interventions manage to disrupt the hegemonic memory policies inscribed in historical monuments, reappropriate historical narratives and generate counter stories of fighting and resistance for the new generations to read differently.

On the potential of the use by new generations of contemporary cultural productions for resistance we find also Mariya Gorbachova's "The Queen Art of Failure: Hope/lessness, Re/productivity and Desire in Perfume Genius's Too Bright & No Shape". Considering music not just a tool for self-expression but a very powerful instrument for subversion, Gorbachova analyses the lyrics of indie band "Perfume Genius" from Too Bright (2014) and No Shape (2017) to craft the queen(r) art of failure as potential for subversion of a productive biopolitical subject. She approaches the impact the queen/queer imaginary and its refusal to pursue the commodified and sanitized queer stereotype in the musical medium can have.

Mina Hunt's "Tracing Transgender Ghosts" article present the "ghost" figure as a method for articulating moments where transgender subjectivity breaks down. By investigating occasions when the trans subject is haunted by normative institutional processes and structures, the Derridean ghost becomes the extended metaphor used by the author to anticipate and explore the transgender subject as a site of potential counter discursivity.

In the contribution that follows, "Trauma and transcryptum: towards a feminist methodology for the analysis of narratives of trauma", Sonia Cejudo attains a revision of the approaches to trauma by Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Bracha Ettinger in order to identify two different models and their respective aesthetic proposals. While for Freud and Lacan trauma is unrepresentable, Ettinger'sproposal of the "transcryptum" opens up a new epistemological pathway to understand trauma as knowable and conveyable calling for weaving, knowledge, conveyance and sharing. Cejudo also suggests that the theory of transcryptum can be used for the analysis of other artistic forms such as creative writing and trauma narratives.

Finally, in their personal contribution "Lucid dreaming as a method for living otherwise" Dresda Méndez-de la Brena and Cornelia Schoenman explore lucid

dreaming as an eccentric method for offering an alternative approach to the study of narcolepsy. Working at the intersection of affect and self-reflexive storytelling, the authors offer lucid dreaming as a form of wordling as they speculate on non-human forms of care that take place in unearthly worlds, which offer survival for those who inhabit a dream-world that terrifies them and a real-world that pathologizes them.

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