

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF FEMINIST GENERATIONS. SOME REFLECTIONS ON NARRATING FEMINIST STORIES

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Abstract

Borrowing the cartographical mode of theorising generationality of feminist theory, this article proposes to consider the possibility of applying it to the construction of women's memory. Considering particularly the interviewer/narrator relationship in an oral history framework, it is the reciprocal «restitution of subjectivity» which enable me to look at the transmission of women's memory in terms of maps, compositions, and cyclical as opposed to linear time. This article seeks to problematize the narration of feminist stories, how they are transmitted, which the complex dynamics of passing on in feminist (hi)stories are, which the effects on thinking generationality in a relational construction of memory are.

Keywords: memory, feminist generations, women's time, oral history.

Resumen

Autobiografías de las generaciones feministas. Algunas reflexiones sobre las narraciones de historias feministas

Tomando en cuenta el modo cartográfico de teorizar generacionalmente la teoría feminista, el presente artículo se propone considerar las posibilidades de su aplicación en la construcción de la memoria de las mujeres. Considerando, en particular, la relación entre entrevistadora/narradora en el marco de una historia oral, es la recíproca «restitución de la subjetividad» aquella que permite observar la transmisión de la memoria de las mujeres en términos de mapas, composiciones y ciclos, por oposición al tiempo lineal. En este sentido, este artículo intenta problematizar la narración de las historias feministas: cómo son transmitidas, cuáles son las dinámicas complejas de transmisión de las historias feministas, cuáles son los efectos de pensar generacionalmente una construcción relacional de la memoria.

Palabras clave: memoria, generaciones feministas, tiempo de las mujeres, historia oral.

Resumo

Autobiografias de gerações feministas. Algumas reflexões sobre narrativas de histórias feministas

Recorrendo ao modo cartográfico de teorizar geracionalmente a teoria feminista, este artigo propõe-se considerar a possibilidade de o aplicar na construção da memória das mulheres. Considerando especificamente a relação entrevistadora/narradora no quadro da história oral, é a recíproca «restituição da subjetividade» que me permite observar

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a transmissão da memória das mulheres em termos de mapas, composições e ciclos, por oposição ao tempo linear. Este artigo procura problematizar a narrativa de histórias feministas, como são transmitidas, quais são as dinâmicas complexas da transmissão de histórias feministas, quais são os efeitos de pensar geracionalmente uma construção relacional da memória.

Palavras-chave: memória, gerações feministas, tempo das mulheres, história oral.

The past is a past present-a history
that is in some sense a genealogy of the historian.
What is marked is the site of desire.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 1999

I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it.
Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay....
Places, places are still there....
The picture is still there and what's more,
if you go there – you who never was there-
and stand in the place where it was,
it will happen again.

Toni Morrison, 1987

I would like to start with a story which has inspired reflections and imaginative spots of this article. Some years ago, in summer 2008, in Catania, Sicily, I had the amazing opportunity to meet Emma Baeri, a woman active in the Italian feminist movement in the Seventies and particularly in the *Coordinamento per l'autodeterminazione della donna di Catania* (Collective of women's self-determination in Catania). She participated also in what she calls the «disarmist feminism» (*disarmismo femminista*; Baeri, 2005) in the 1980s against the nuclear base in Comiso (Sicily). I stared and I still stare in fascination at the intricate scenario of war and peace, violence and nonviolence, in which the Italian feminist movement moved in ten-year period 1970-1980, between the silence (at least commonly supposed) towards the political violence of the 1970s and the pacifism which marked the ethical turn of the feminist movement in the following decade. Emma Baeri was one of the feminists which has participated most actively in that turn, as she has joined one of the biggest events (in terms of visibility and impact) confirming this ethical turn. During our encounter, we discussed the meanings she attaches to the facts of political violence enacted by the Italian extreme Left-wing during the Seventies. We were also trying to understand and analyse the kind of relation existing between the Italian feminist movement's shift from the Seventies silent position and its subsequent affirmative and clear struggle against any form of violence.

In this dialogical narration and construction of memory, one of Emma's sentences struck me: «*Il tempo delle donne è il tempo che le donne si danno*» she said. Women's time is the time that women... «*si danno*». The Italian verb «*darsi*» contains multiple meanings. In this sentence, it might mean the time that women devoted to themselves, or in a relational way, the time that women give to each other. On the one hand, it seems that the sentence situates women outside history, the male chronological history. It affirms a time for women in opposition to the linear and progressive (master) narratives. It gives space to a personal time which is also an historical one. A time which is constructed by the subjects inhabiting that time. It constructs a narration(s) «of her own» outside the master narratives. It combines a politics of location with the construction of (hi)stories through different times.

Even more interesting is the other meaning of «*si danno*» as «(women) give each other», which shapes time as relational, the time that women devote to each other. The latter meaning is particularly fascinating and evoking when situated in an oral history interview where I have perceived to play a role in the construction of the meanings attached to some facts, although I do not have direct first-hand experience of these facts and of the investigated period.

One of the preliminary remarks I care to make is the fact that this article is located in the «spacetime» I inhabit. Every generalisation makes sense only in the place from where my voice comes from. This work is exactly the moment and place when and where the following elements cross: my location, the past I have been narrated, the future projections on it, and the theoretical frames in which I insert all this.

Furthermore, the suggestions I propose in this work, particularly on the role of generations in the issue of how to narrate feminist stories, should not be conceived as a pattern, a model. It wishes to open up possibilities and alternatives which can be valid only in the context from where such possibilities are born.

Moreover, by considering particularly this article as a space for methodological reflections in a broader research project, I wish to stress the fact that the methodological aspects and the aspects pertaining to content are inevitably weaved together. In this case, how to narrate feminist stories results in which stories will be narrated. In the exact moment when I choose how to narrate feminist stories, I am also choosing which stories I am going to narrate.

Narrating feminist stories

Memory identity time: politics and time are inextricably tangled. Why not give sense and space to women's daily itineraries? Through time-knots, cartographies of memory, maps of belonging to events not grounded in the propriety of memory, but in attachments on and affects through links of resistance. Why not think of memory as a network of affects and affections?

Borrowing the cartographical mode of theorising generationality of feminist theory, I propose to consider the possibility of applying it to the construction of women's memory. This approach not only breaks up the dichotomy theory/practice, academy/activism, but also challenges the linear and developmental narratives of Western feminisms (cfr. Hemmings, 2005).

In the theorisation of feminist theory temporality I wish to refer particularly to ideas and texts of Iris Van der Tuin and Clare Hemmings (2005). My analysis in the context of the work on memory will echo their approach to feminist theory. In this sense, my argument is only suggestive. Part of my concern is about, borrowing Vikki Bell's words, «finding how movements, of real people, of concerns and of concepts, resonate through the motions and emotions of contemporary feminist theory» (Bell, 1999: 14 in Ahmed, 2003: 238).

I am especially interested in the narration of feminist stories, how they are transmitted, which the complex dynamics of passing on in feminist (hi)stories are, which the effects on thinking generationality in a relational construction of memory are. While Hemmings' question is «how does Western feminist theory tell the story of its own recent past?» (Hemmings, 2005: 115), I suggest to apply such question on the feminist movements' historiography. A pre-assumption of this shift of focus is the non-dualistic relation between theory and activism, which continuously and not-univocally shape and permeate each other.

As Sara Ahmed argues, «we need to reflect on how activist groups also do the work of feminist theory, rather than assuming that such theory is only produced within the academy» (Ahmed, 2003: 237-238).

Feminist movements are movements which might be conceived in the bodily sense of the word: as gestures of flowing, of looking back and looking forward. Thinking about the construction of feminist movements through the construction and shaping of moving gestures, of movements. Thinking about movements as moving and emotional, as links, knots and connections of emotions. *Rememorising* movements in women's movements. Indeed, the etymology of the word emotion confirms the inextricable connection: «emotion» comes from the Latin *emovere*, which means to move or move out (cfr. Ahmed, 2003: 239).

One can reflect on the personal itineraries of coming into feminism. Personally, I remember and I imagine it (memory is always a work of imagination!), as a genealogy of emotions, a map linking affects that has lead and keep on leading me to embrace particular gazes on and readings of the world I happen to live in. Furthermore, «emotions work as forms of mediation between knowledge/theory and practice/activism» (Ahmed, 2003: 238). This not only confirms the interconnectedness of theory and practice through links of emotions, but it would also propose a construction of memory of feminist movements through such links resulting in an inextricable connection between movements and emotions. As Ahmed argues,

What moves us, and how we are moved, also involve interpretations of sensations and feelings not only in the sense that we interpret what we feel, but also in that

what we feel might be dependent on past interpretations that are not necessarily made by us but that come before us. (Ahmed, 2003: 239)

Can emotions be a tool through which we (can) construct memories and organise (hi)stories? Might emotions be forms around which shaping the historiography of feminist movements? Might the historiography of feminist movements be conceived as cartography, as maps of such emotions, as stories of mediation of emotions?

Van der Tuin's definition of «*jumping generation*» has also served as a navigating tool. Van der Tuin describes *jumping generations* as a methodology which challenges linear conceptualisations of time and space, and avoids non-exhaustive dichotomies (Van der Tuin, 2009).

Indeed, important in the discussion on how to narrate feminist stories is the abandonment of the center as feature of *jumping generations*.

The multiple tracks in looking at «our» history involve the abandonment both of the center and the propriety on memory it holds. The abandonment of the center corresponds to the dismantlement of linear and progressive narratives that, although they are part of the critique feminist theory raises against the traditional historiography and the master narratives, are reproduced in the narration of the history of Western feminisms.

Despite a rhetorical insistence on the multiple trajectories of feminism, the dominant stories of Western feminist stories insist on a developmental narration of «feminist thought as a relentless march of progress or loss» (Hemmings, 2005: 115). I would argue that Hemmings' critique on the developmental narrative of Western feminist theory can also be raised in the context of narration of the memory of feminist movements. Indeed, a periodisation following a majoritarian and male conception and interpretation of historiography «oversimplifies the history of Western feminisms, fixes writers and perspectives within a particular decade», as Hemmings says (Hemmings, 2005: 115). Furthermore, it leads to a simplification of feminist stories according to linear and progressive trajectories, which divide the past, present and future in clear decades and categorize space and times of feminist generations. The «compartmentalisation» of feminist generations is characterised by an «ideology of property» (Van der Tuin, 2008: 109) on memory instead of a practice of sharing. The «inheritance [that] was left to us by no testament»² should be remembered and re-imagined as a contaminating effect, as an heritage without categories and categorisations, as a process of continuous passing and transits following trajectories outside the linear time. The participation in the construction of such trajectories outside molar time shapes itineraries and cartographies, processes of knots leading to a re-imagination of «our historical legacy and our place within it» (Hemmings, 2005: 115).

² Quotation from the writings of René Char, the French writer who had fought in the resistance, and used in reference to feminism by Françoise Collin (1999).

Important, in this sense, is the book *Feminist Waves, Feminist Generations* (2007), in which the co-authors disrupt the idea of a linear notion of progress in feminist narration by emphasizing movement and mobility of people and theories and concepts. In doing so, they distinguish between feminist generations of people and feminist waves of thought and theory. And crucially, they show how feminist knowledge and feminist movements develops unevenly rather than in progressive, linear fashion. The authors use «*feminist waves* as a metaphor for the displacement and movement of theories, methods, and ways of knowing that flow within a given generational cohort as well as across time and space, and feminist generations as a reference point for the timing of one's entry into the academic life cycle» (Aikau, Erickson, Pierce, 2007: 6). They propose to reconceptualise generations through the clockwork of academic careers. This «disrupts the simplistic binary between generations of feminists from the so called second and third wave and introduces the possibility of multiple generations» (Aikau, Erickson, Pierce, 2007: 7). As the authors acknowledge, while their «thinking about generations as multiple disrupts the binary between second and third wave feminism, it is suggestive, nonetheless, of a linear progression of people and their ideas» (Aikau, Erickson, Pierce, 2007: 8). My proposal is definitely in line with their intent «to trouble the static figuring of generations by placing emphasis on how feminism *moves* and develops *over time and place*» (Aikau, Erickson, Pierce, 2007: 3). Nonetheless, differently from the theory the co-authors develop, what I argue is that the disruption of the idea of a linear notion of progress in feminist narration is likely to be applied *both* to feminist generations of people and to feminist waves of thought.

Rather than providing a corrective history of feminisms, I suggest a re-imagination and a re-memorisation of our tracks as feminists, our singular genealogies generating multiple generations. This not only emerges in the multiplication of feminist stories in time and spaces, but also in assemblages, compositions and decompositions of generations according to an event-centered kind of history. In other words, my argumentation results in a conceptualisation of historiography privileging the event rather than the period, and goes in the direction of the construction of links of resistance and solidarities shaping around continuities and discontinuities between events. Such conceptualisation works as pre-assumption for proliferations of generations shaped and un-shaped according to links and communities of resistance. I wish to emphasise that the argumentation above exists in the context of the *narration* of things that happened (*historia rerum gestarum*) rather than in relation with *the things* that happened (*Res gestae*).

Indeed, my concern is not in the reconstruction of historical facts, but in the conceptualisation of how these facts are narrated and transmitted in the relationship between generations, and consequently how different narrations result in a different conceptualisation of generations. It is the story itself and the way it is narrated that generates generations and shapes and un-shapes both generationalities and their constitutive links. The links cannot be set aside in the way of con-

structuring generation, on the multiple possibilities and potentialities to shape it. It is the link itself which is constitutive of the generation and it is through these links that a generation takes different shapes each time.

Necessary pre-assumption of such a conceptualisation of generation detached from a traditional periodisation of feminist movements is a particular regard of what time and particularly, feminist time means. The conceptualisation of time as non-linear is not new in feminist theory. Julia Kristeva's classic essay «Women's Time» is only one of the voices in this debate. Moreover, also Elizabeth Grosz has written extensively on this issue. In order to describe and clarify the theorisation of time I adopt here, I wish to borrow Grosz's words. She says,

Time is marked not only by calendars and clocks, by uniform measurement and abstract calculation (of the kind represented by millennial celebrations!) but also by movement, through an incalculable force of passage that resists counting and numeration. The past, present, and future are composed not only of dates but also, in a more complex and incalculable way, of events. How we understand the relations between past and present has direct implications for whatever conceptions of the future, the new, creation, and production we may develop (Grosz, 2000: 1018).

What I would like to stress here is the potentiality in feminist historiography of thinking time otherwise, beyond and outside counting and periodisations. Such potentialities concern not only the narrations of feminist stories, but also the issue of how feminist generations are shaped.

Furthermore, of course and consequently, a conceptualisation of time as characterised by movements rather than numeration and calculation results in a particular understanding of history.

Indeed, I suggest a fragmentation and multiplicities of narratives which find their continuities in the events themselves and in the knots linking such events and shaping generations. The suggestion wishes to be in opposition to a «straightforward reverse narrative, which produces an identical linearity but which reframes the past as marked by a politicized unity, and the present by apolitical individualism» (Hemmings, 2005: 126). The latter is indicated by Hemmings as one of the two counter narratives to the familiar story and therefore progressive narrative of feminist thought. The second counter narratives Hemmings proposes is a «more circular narrative of 'return'» (Hemmings, 2005: 126).

Despite the fact that feminist theory as well as feminist activism is always, by its own nature, located outside dominant stories, the linear feminist historiography seems a common-sense gloss, and for this same reason, not enough investigated. In opposition to this common-sense and in line with a hybrid vision of history and time and their *fictionality*, I would argue for an archaeology of women's time and feminist historiography as an incomplete skeleton with pieces deliberately missing or omitted. Indeed, what I propose is not a corrective history.

Quite the contrary, it is the acknowledgement of holes and gapes and of the fact that which and how stories are narrated is a process of exclusions and inclusions, continuities and discontinuities. It is exactly around such exclusionary and inclusionary processes that feminist generations should be re-thought and re-imagined in time-knots perspectives. Such a conceptualisation has important implications for narratives in feminist theory as well as for a broader formulation of time. M. Jacqui Alexander focuses on the tradition/modernity opposition to highlight that the time implicit in such apparently irreconcilable binary is «constrictively linear and resolutely hierarchical» (Alexander, 2005: 189). As a consequence, «the West is presumably ‘here and now’, while the Third World is ‘there and then’» (Alexander, 2005: 190). Conjoining Ella Shohat, Johannes Fabian and Stuart Hall’s conceptualisation of time, Jacqui Alexander, within her work’s framing of the transnational, uses the idea of the *palimpsest* to define a time which is «neither vertically accumulated nor horizontally teleological. Nor it is simply a thing ordered by the mechanics of another, outside, thing – the clock» (Alexander, 2005: 190). In Jacqui Alexander’s work, scrambling time has repercussions for the social formation designated as colonial, neo-colonial and neo-imperial, in the way we understand continuity and disjuncture of practices within and among various state formations, in which heterosexuality works as a mechanism to normalize and discipline. As Alexander clearly put it, «tradition and modernity have been used to designate specific temporalities, but they are themselves practices that are constituted through social relations that are interested in their purchase, and thus in that process move them into ideological proximity to, or distance from, one another» (Alexander, 2005: 193).

As I have indicated above, the reflections of this work are methodological aspects in a research on, broadly speaking, the relationship between women and political violence, particularly in Italy during the 1970s. For this reason and in the particular context of my research, I wish to consider some examples which can be regarded as valuable resources in the combination of both methodological and pertaining to content aspects of my research. What I wish to illustrate below are clarifying examples supporting my argument and coming from the feminist debate on women and political violence.

Indeed, interesting in this analysis is Paola Di Cori’s article «*Le donne armate come problema storiografico*» («Armed women as an historiographical problem»³), in which she chooses three groups of women: women active during the resistance against fascism from 1943-1945; the female auxiliaries serving in the fascist army of the Salò Republic; and women joining armed struggle during the Seventies in Italy. In spite of the numerous differences between the three groups, such as the different geographical and historical-political contexts in which the three groups were active and the different ideological belonging, she highlights the affinities and continuities between them. Despite the obvious differences

³ My translation.

between the three groups, in her article Di Cori points out the features of resemblance between the three female groups, and particularly the prior common element in her analysis: the participation in a particular typology, the armed woman, just so. By abstracting the political and affective features positioning the women of the three groups next to their male fellows (the common goals, the common ethical and political values), she highlights the common elements between *repubblichine* (the name for female fascists of the Republic of Salò), female terrorists, and female partisans. Therefore, Di Cori brings out «women as historical category» as perspective of analysis. According to Di Cori, terrorist women's history might be interpreted as a series of passages placing them, from time to time, in a position of distance and/or closeness as regards *repubblichine* or female partisans. Furthermore, such passages and oscillations might be observed also as regards other women of the same generation, feminists interested in subverting the hierarchy between political goals and construction of personal identity in favour of the latter one (Di Cori, 1994: 327). The passages among different roles and positions and in relation to other women contribute to deprive the category «woman» of its meaning, but keeping «herstory» as necessarily relational.

Besides this example, the connections between armed struggle, sexual identity and fractures or relationships between generations are myriad and call for future researches, debates and reflections on the complexity of historical memory and on the complex relationships that each (chronological and not) generation establishes with its own past, present and future. The transmissions of experiences and the multiplicity of its interpretations should be considered as a permanent and changeable process, therefore alive in the present and in opposition to a static tradition and «dusty» memory belonging to a few groups. In this sense, it might be interesting to investigate in further researches the inheritance (if any) of the feminist practices in the new global movements, how the stories of alter-global activists and movements (re)define their genealogies and identifications between past and present, and how these stories shape new forms of memory of the 1968. The acquisition of citizenship of and legitimacy of such stories can challenge the traditional linear story about the heritage of social movements. It can not only lead to a liberation of 1968's activists from the burden and responsibility of the origins, but it can also allow the successive (chronological) generations to free themselves from a one-way inheritance which precludes any possibility of attaching new meanings to the past and to the present (see Betta, Capussotti, 2004).

In a more recent work, Di Cori uses the term «asynchrony» to describe the history of feminist movement. The intent in the transmission of the past is to be involved in an unremitting effort of «deconstructing the archives»: not an account based on a principle of experiences' accumulation, but a way of subverting past experiences, single biographies and autobiographies, through a commitment of «active asynchrony» which situates such experiences within a dynamic everyday reality (See Arfini, Di Cori, Lo Iacono, 2014: 132).

Discontinuity, intermittence, interruption, according to Di Cori, are features of feminist movements' practices in the Seventies as well as a way of dealing with the archives. As Di Cori writes, «To rethink the history of feminism is an unended operation of remains' revision» (Di Cori, 2012: 18)⁴. «*Lavorare sui resti*», *work on remains*, she proposes, remains that are neither debris, nor scrap but a legacy potentially enduring in time. I see continuities and parallelisms between Di Cori's proposal and what Judith Halberstam defines as «queer temporality», both in the attention towards the future and in rethinking the monolithic time of sexual identity. Considering particularly the queer temporalities that are proper to subcultural activities and in rethinking the adult/youth binary, Halberstam asserts that «queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, death» (Halberstam, 2005: 2). The concept of queer time is used in Halberstam's work in order to highlight how «respectability, and notions of the normal on which it depends, may be upheld by a middle-class logic of reproductive temporality» (Halberstam, 2005: 4). The notion of what in Western cultures is desirable, such as the desired process of maturation or the desirable future, and the pathologization of modes of living which do not conform with such «desirable» is based on the time of reproduction.

Furthermore, one of the issue I care to tackle here is the importance in this debate of the relationship between generation and knowledge. Indeed, I consider crucial for the potentialities of oral history the applicability of the issue Van der Tuin arises for feminist theory and epistemology. In oral history projects, to which this work specifically refers and draws inspiration from, the knowledge production through the generation generated in the interrelation between narrator and interviewer is crucial to investigate. Jennifer Purvis states that

Both the concepts of «generation» and «wave» reinscribe heteronormative principles in their assertion of both hegemonic familial structures and a heterosexist narrative of reproduction. Further, the unidirectional, linear (masculinist) logic of cause-effect narratives creates a sense of perpetual debt to the past. The dangers surrounding the use of a generational model of feminist intellectual exchange may suggest that it is reasonable, or even necessary, to cast aside such paradigmatic attachments (Purvis, 2004: 93).

In her article, Purvis questions the usefulness of generational categories, artificial boundaries, such as age brackets, or any other marker to linear history to specify feminist affiliations. More productive, according to Purvis, is articulating «a third space, a signifying process, as one that exists outside of strict chrono-

⁴ My translation: «Ripensare la storia del femminismo è una operazione non conclusa di rielaborazione dei resti».

logical categories, within and against generational paradigms» (Purvis, 2004: 95); what she identifies, using a Kristevan framework⁵, as a «third-wave political moment».

Furthermore, the construction of a generational divide hierarchizes relations. In opposition to the traditional meaning attached to (linear) generations, Purvis proposes «the incorporation of both the ‘genealogical’ and ‘generative’ in an understanding of ‘generation’» (Purvis, 2004: 116). In opposition to a dysfunctional family model reproducing dominant narratives and canon in the relationship with our foremothers, Purvis calls for a feminism rid both of the sense of debt towards the «origins» and of ideologies of ownership.

Although I agree with most of the problematic aspects Purvis points out, I still consider the (not chronological) generational paradigm productive and enabling to open up possibilities, resistances and alliances. Indeed, if conceptualised as relational, non-dialecticist and an-Oedipal manner⁶, the generational paradigm contains the transformative potential to generate knowledge and to build connections.

As Van der Tuin argues,

generation/knowledge refers to both the processes of materialization/actualization/generativity and to the generationality of all things having to do with knowledge and knowledge production. Generation/knowledge is not only intended as a tool for studying the double move of the generative and the generated, but also for studying generationality as intrinsically connected to knowledge production and as being characterized by a similar double move (Van der Tuin, 2008: 202).

Instead of thinking generations as *a priori* existing entities (see Van der Tuin, 2009), I like to regard the exact moment in which narrator and interviewer interact as the origin and the shaping moment of a generation, or rather, of an intra-generations shaped by intra-actions. I am not talking of two different generations shaping something else, a different generation, in and through their encounter. The existence of generation is only and strongly linked to the event itself, the encounter, and the knowledge produced in the relation. In this sense, generation is produced by the event of knowledge and in turn produces the knowledge process. It is the generational dimension of knowledge production which enables to generate knowledge «in a context saturated with generated knowledge» (Van der Tuin, 2008: 193). This process calls for further reflections on how entities materialise (Barad, 2001: 102), particularly in the context of an oral history project involving the «restitution of feminist subjectivities» (Passerini, 1991).

⁵ In her classic essay «Women’s Time» Kristeva states «my usage of the word ‘generation’ implies less a chronology than a signifying space, a both corporeal and mental space» (Kristeva, 1981: 33).

⁶ For an extensive explanation of these features of generationality, see Van der Tuin (2008).

In alignment with Van der Tuin's work, I suggest to regard the concrete and materialised shared conversation performed in the oral history interview as the tool through which generations are constructed. In a reversal way, it is exactly the tool of what Van der Tuin calls «jumping generations» that shapes the conversation and therefore, not only produces knowledge, but enables also a *cartographical approach to feminist stories and historiography*.

To put it differently, in an oral history context, it is precisely the relationship between narrator and interviewer and their encounter as event that produces knowledge and constructs generations which are generative of knowledge. This ongoing process enables to consider the construction of feminist memory relational and cartographical. Furthermore, I like to think that how feminist stories are narrated is the result both of the proliferation of possible encounters and of the processes of generation/knowledge. Oral history which is the method *par excellence* of narration for feminist (hi)stories should be conceived in terms of cartographies of memories which are materialised in the encounter interviewer/narrator and are (un)made through and in the *process generation/knowledge*. Of course this process as well as the way of narrating stories is not normative or prescriptive. Since it happens in the particular moment in which interviewer and narrator meet their experiences through time-knots around which shaping generations, the illuminating possibilities of how this process should be are infinite.

The relational feature of feminist historiography and its ongoing construction and reconstruction let open multiple possibilities to imagine, borrowing Grosz's words,

conceivable futures, the future here being understood not as that which is similarly contained in the present but, rather, that which diverges from the present, one uncontained by and unpredicted from within the present (Grosz, 2000: 1020).

Indeed, what I consider crucial in the work of reinvention of temporality in feminist historiography is the potentiality of imagining also feminist futures otherwise. Also in this sense, what feminist time might or can be should be considered as an important analysis calling for further researches and investigation.

To conclude, I wish to borrow Hemmings' reflections on what she figures out as an alternative for changing the historical record. She suggests «a way of imagining the feminist past somewhat differently, as a series of ongoing contests and relationships rather than a process of imagined linear displacement» (Hemmings, 2005: 131). Part of the work I tried to explain above goes in this direction.

I have intended this article as a space for reflections on the familiar way to narrate feminist movements' stories and on the alternatives to it. Indeed, for this purpose I have focused on some crucial texts mapping some of the ways in which narratives of the recent feminist past reproduce a linear and developmental kind of history (even in feminist theory). Since the place from where I draw inspirations for this work is the relational construction of memory occurring in

the interviewer/narrator encounter, I have tried to build bridges between such texts and the specific oral history context. I used an approach stressing the links rather than the discontinuities between different theoretical frameworks (Hemmings, 2005: 131).

In this article I have tried to arise some questions calling for future researches in feminist historiography. Therefore, I wish to conclude with some questions summarising some of the possibilities on which I have focused during this work.

How can we transmit and narrate and be part of this narration through attachments and emotions to movements? How can we narrate feminist stories through axes of emotions, attachments? Can, by virtue of the emotional involvement constitutive of feminist movement's memories, imagine the construction of memory as a «many hands» experience?

All these questions involve of course a reflection on the role of the researcher. As Rosi Braidotti argues, «a subject is a genealogical entity, possessing his or her own counter-memory, which in turn is an expression of degrees of affectivity and interconnectedness» (Braidotti, 2006: 151). The tensions between personal and collective, between the personal genealogy of the subject (both of the researcher and the researched, if, at this point, any distinction is even possible), and the genealogy constructed in the relationship should be taken seriously into account and feminist historiography should be accountable for such tensions.

In some way, each of these genealogies and all of them together reflect the fractures and the links, the disclosures and the possibilities existing in the tension between displacement and location in (re)writing the autobiographies of a generation, in (re)writing what you have or have not experienced and is part of your emotions, attachments and memory. Braidotti states that «a location is a spatial but also a temporal site, because it involves a commonly shared memory and sense of the past that continue to affect the present and will carry on into the future» (Braidotti, 2006: 150). I would argue that the temporal site, beyond periodisations and linear time, is the result of the crossover between stories and the intra-generations these stories shape. By taking into account the proliferations of such intra-actions and intra-connections we should restart to remember and renarrate our past, present and future.

Karen Offen speaks of feminism

in terms of eruptions, flows, fissures, molten lava (magma), looking at feminism as a threatening and rather fluid form of discontent that repeatedly presses against (and, when the pressure is sufficiently intense, bursts through) weak spots in the sedimented layers of a patriarchal crust, the institutional veneer of organized societies (Offen, 2000: 25).

The historian's task, she argues, is to burrow through the layers of time, space, and politics to «analyse the context in which they open» and «evaluate the

shifting patterns of activity» to locate feminisms' past (Offen, 2000: 26). *Rememorising* is being part of the flow, fissures, magma, to look at them and think back over the stories resulting in eruptions and fissures. Reimagining and renarrating them following unforeseeable and not-normative patterns. It is also through such processes of reimagination and renarration that the patriarchal crust is challenged.

Rememorising is a form of militancy, of attachment and belonging to stories through which conceiving futures, (un)shaping generational alliances and resistances to events that hurt because they matter, although they live in an other, not mine, chronological time, even a future one.

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