Revelles-Benavente, Beatriz and González Ramos, Ana M. (Eds.). *Teaching Gender: Feminist Pedagogy and Responsibility in Times of Political Crisis.* London: Routledge, 2017, 204 p. [978-1-13-870123-6]

Teaching Gender: Feminist Pedagogy and Responsibility in Times of Political Crisis gives readers the opportunity to disclose the complexity of the contemporary economic crisis and its far-reaching and devastating consequences in society, particularly the hindering of the advancement of women's rights and gender equality.

No panic. Aside exposing how the neoliberal crisis has negatively affected and often collapsed the rise of social change and women's rights, feminist researchers in this book consider and study different alternatives to resist and respond to neoliberal policies. Throughout eleven chapters, contributors to this book find in *education* a major tool to free individuals of the normalisation of precariousness and austerity and the consequent individualisation of society. According to these authors, rethinking the situation and the search for new strategies and methods to combat neoliberal policies is what Donna Haraway (2008) calls our "response-ability".

Inspired by Donna Haraway's (1988) work *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, feminist researchers in this book commit to this response-ability and suggest diverse methods, from pedagogy, human values and solidarity to the inclusion of new themes and identities, to engage individuals in re-thinking the current status of *society.* Following Haraway, they attempt to go beyond the myths and discourses surrounding traditional objectivity, and to challenge what Haraway calls the "god trick" of the scientific vision (p.582). Based on these premises, readers are encouraged to deconstruct not only the outside world but their own deep inner selves. In consequence, the reader finds her or himself torn into little pieces of *identity*, like in a puzzle, each of them containing a portion of our *old/current-selves.* Complexity is turned into a 'complex' *partiality*. As Haraway's points out:

"I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims" (1988, p.589).

However, one may wonder what the concept of response-ability entails. Feminist intervention is essential to devote attention to the *situatedness* of knowledge and to the promotion of new forms of transversal and intersectional dialogue and organisation practices and to devote attention to the "situatedness" of knowledge is of utmost importance in times of political and economic turmoil. Eventually, response-ability means the engagement of society in learning and teaching how to rethink and understand from their *situated knowledge* and respond to the current precarious and austere scene. To this aim, the contributors to this book argue that feminists are response-able to produce responsible knowledge and a pedagogic system to learn and teach others how to be response-able. In other words, feminists are response-able to build what bell hooks, the well-known feminist and social activist, calls "communities of resistance" in order to address neoliberalism and its dire consequences for the educational and the sociopolitical systems (1994, p.15).

Situation, vulnerability, austerity, precariousness and the importance of 'sharing and caring'

Rogowska-Strangret sets the *vulnerability of the self* in the core of the development of these new response-able strategies to address austerity, precariousness and individualisation. She suggests the 'unpacking of the self' to deconstruct the identities of individuals to have a better understanding of themselves and their *situated knowledge* (2017, p.18) Bringing shared vulnerabilities and concerns together enable the openness of new spaces for dialogue and therefore fosters the possibilities to collectively respond.

One of the most common and shared vulnerabilities of our times is precisely the normalisation of the economic crisis and its negative effects in the educational system. Neoliberalism has promoted individualism in academia and has established competition, individual efficiency and productivity as the most valued virtues to fight for. On top of that, the sense of collectivity has been inhibited.

As Cielmecka and Revelles-Benavente explain from their *situated* experience of being postdoc scholars, neoliberalist policies have resulted in what they called "knowmadism", a way to refer to the instability and precarity of the teaching and researching community. The concept of *knowmadism* applies to every individual from the academic world who, out of choice or need, has moved around the globe in a continuous hunt for job excellence and economic and personal stability. Drawing on the argument of *shared vulnerabilities*, the *knowmadist* community should understand their shared experiences and concerns as potentials of collectivity. A chance to build alternative spaces and strategies to resist this ambulant, individualistic, neoliberalist teaching-learning culture. Furthermore, a chance to be response-able and find the way not only to resist, but as Cielmecka and Revelles-Benavente claim, to denounce the normalisation of the crisis and all its sequels and to find the way to *re-exist* (2017, p.38). New spaces where *care for* and *being cared* are the foundations to build transnational and intersectional networks to create time and practices and processes of response and responsibility (Conesa Carpintero, 2017, p.50).

Ideally, this civic engagement that feminist scholars combat for, does not mean a scape from oneself's *situated experience and knowledge* –since the actual ability to comprehend the latter enriches our capacity of understanding and teaching- , but a way out of a fragmenting, individualistic and competitive self-made autonomy. If we go further, it could be suggested that the response to these neoliberal policies could be a combination of two: collectivity and a "responsible auto-knowmy". This could relate to Sánchez-Pardo's definition of *ethics*. She defines *ethics* "as relationships to others (...) rather than as morality or a code of conduct" (2017, p.66). By building these *ethical* networks where shared vulnerabilities, concerns and cares are shared, scholars would be responsible to others, themselves and the production of responsible knowledge. They will develop an ability to respond and resist, in addition to craft new practices of teaching and learning, all of them crucial to the response-ability cycle. To put it differently, for these feminist scholars there is not a merge of the personal and the political, but an on-going *(in)*tense dialogue.

Alternative practices and knowledge to teach and learn responseability

Throughout the different chapters of the book contributors suggest a variety of alternative methods to teach about the importance of situating our knowledge and developing practices of resistance and re-existance.

There is a common agreement among the researchers on how the classroom, with its limitations, could become a safe space to build up strategies and practices where individuals unpack themselves and have the opportunity to share vulnerabilities and where they eventually start to *care for* a cause and to *be cared* by the individuals whose concerns are similar to theirs. In the hope that the classroom becomes a safe space of resistance, Costa and Mendel emphasise the importance to unpack the theoretically 'objective' relationship between the teacher and the students (2017, p.84). Barriers of hierarchy should be torn down and respect should prevail overall. Students should stop being conceived as 'passive containers' of information and data, the same way teachers should not be defined as the personification of Harway's 'god trick'. In short, the neoliberal system should not punish critical thinking among students and teachers but promote it.

In the light of the latter, Colman and Stapleton argue feminist scholars should go beyond the space of the classroom to teach how to be response-able. Contrary to the limited space of a classroom where shared vulnerabilities are related to the set of ideas discussed, Colman and Stapleton find in *screening,* and particularly in *films*, an efficient tool to go beyond the individual's share vulnerabilities to the broader shared vulnerabilities of *society* (2017, p.109). In the same line, Mahlknecht discusses how *art education* could be used as a transformative catalyst of emotions and feelings through which individuals could unpack themselves and connect with the rest of the community through painting and drawing (2017, p.117). By the same token, Harris Sánchez and Sánchez Espinosa denounce the need for a change in educational politics and mention Brexit as an example of misinformation and of the failure of the British educational system. They urge to integrate social commitment

and civil engagement in education cannot wait any longer. Education should be seen as a powerful means of defence against radicalism, extremism, violence, intolerance and discrimination. Actually, as they point out the *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* adopted by the Council of Europe in 2010 calls for the incorporation of an ethics and social responsibility into education (2017, p.132). However, neoliberalist austerity policies have cut education policies inviting for self-reflection and multidirectional learning practices such as in the case of Spain and the compulsory subject called 'Educación para la Ciudadanía'. 'Educación para la Ciudadanía' had as its main goal:

> "to encourage the development of free and honest people beyond the consolidation of their self-esteem, personal dignity, freedom and responsibility and the shaping of future citizens with their own criteria, respectful, participative and sympathetic, who know their rights, assume their duties and develop civic habits so that they can exercise citizenship and *[responseability]*" (BOE, 2007, p.715)

Correspondingly, until a change in education policies is implemented, Cheira advises feminist scholars not to despair and bet on alternative practices inside the classroom. She suggests the use of *tale narratives* in order to combat the traditional gender discourses and stereotypes at the base of the legitimisation of the neoliberal project. Binary oppositions such as masculine/feminine, culture/nature, reason/emotion or rational/irrational inhibit the flow of the dialogue between individuals and hinder the 'unpacking of the self' process and of the 'sharing and caring' (2017, p.157). In like manner, Bustillos presents how *technology* and particularly *social surveillance* and *social media* have an influence on the learning process and the identity construction of young people and serve neoliberalism to normalise traditional gender stereotypes, austerity and precariousness (2017, p.163). She takes note of the importance of teaching students how to use technology to be also response-able offline and create new open spaces to discuss and deconstruct and resist neoliberalism.

Fighting back our shared rights and responseabilities

The contributors to *Teaching Gender: Feminist Pedagogy and Responsibility in Times of Political Crisis* do not draw any definitive conclusions. The book aims to simulate a fruitful discussion and critical thinking on new practices and teaching and learning methods to establish solidarity, responseability and civic engagement as the very basic values of society. The normalisation discourses and practices which sustain the current management of the crisis with its legitimation of precariousness and austerity are not sustainable any longer. This book brings to light that there are many alternatives to this neoliberal mode of governance which has been established as the only rational and viable one (Gracia, 2017, p.179).

All things considered, it may be the case that the concept of *empathy* can conciliate the social bonds neoliberalism has destroyed. The concept of empathy lays behind the 'unpacking of the self' and the 'sharing of vulnerabilities'. Unpacking yourself might be meaningless if there is not the will to share your vulnerabilities. Empathy is not something automatic individuals *have,* but something individuals *do.* Teaching empathy is fundamental if individuals are to be successful in the processes of sharing vulnerabilities and concerns. Following the line of argument of the book, it could be concluded that teaching and learning how to be empathetic is a need and a responseability if we are to change the system. The potentiality empathy has in order to make individuals embrace reliability and build mutual trust, should be carefully examined in feminist pedagogy and feminist networks. Given these points, there is no doubt each of us is and can be responseable to share not only our vulnerabilities but also our ideas and expertise so that we, all together as a society, find a getaway towards dialogue and eventually a common grounding towards solidarity and collectivity.

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