

Researching Pedagogically for Social Intervention

Mediating Social Challenges Through the “Gender Response-Able Literary and Visual Labs (Reslab)” Experience

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Abstract *In this chapter, I present an Andalusian R&D project of excellence: “Gender Response-able Lecturing Labs: Interfacing cultural and visual cultures as agents for social intervention” (ResLab). The objective of ResLab (2020–2023) was to implement literature, visual cultures and their various interfaces as methodological tools in specific labs to generate response-able transgressive teaching and research (hooks, 1994; Buikema et al., 2011; Revelles and González, 2017). One of its most defining features is our strong belief on transnational, transdisciplinary and transgenerational collaborations not only within the ResLab group of researchers but also congenially interwoven with the participants in other international teaching and research projects such as the Erasmus Mundus GEMMA, the MSCA GRACE and EUTERPE and the CHANSE DIGISCREENS which we either lead or are PIs in them. The chapter illustrates three of the moments in the project (inside the undergraduate classroom, at master’s level and with extra-academic audiences) and their respective labs. Specific attention is paid to ImaGenLab which becomes our case study to analyze the long genealogies of the research and teaching practices in it. One interesting finding from our experiences in the labs is the need to queer our failure and accept and share our vulnerabilities inside the classroom so as to create authentically “safer” spaces. The other is that from feminist response-able perspectives we can, and should, be activist researchers and teachers who, ultimately, help mediate our most immediate social challenges by disseminating beyond academic spaces the knowledges created in academia.*

Keywords *Feminist Research Convergences; Affective Genealogies; Gender Responsible Labs; Queer Failure; Transgenerational Alliances*

Introduction

This contribution presents an Andalusian R&D project of excellence: “Gender Responsible Lecturing Labs: Interfacing cultural and visual cultures as agents for social intervention” (funded by Junta de Andalucía (P20_00337. 2021–2023) as an example of researching pedagogically for social intervention. What follows reviews and comments on the achievements on the main project goals of social intervention, with specific examples from two of these labs. It finishes with a detailed illustration with one case study: ImaGenLab, the lab presented within the Mediating Social Challenges conference at Graz, in May 2023.

What was ResLab?

The objective of this research project has been to implement literature, visual cultures and their various interfaces as methodological tools to enhance feminist “transgressive teaching” (hooks) and, in turn, end up generating ways of thinking and researching differently (Braidotti and Griffin; Buikema et al.). We chose to depart from two standpoints which represented the common denominator to the members of the ResLab research group: Feminist Close Reading and New Materialist methodologies, two frames which allowed us to concentrate on our own positionality and relationality and on how we could move from a study of discourses as representations onto our common search for performative practices of social intervention. Could our pedagogical practices inside classrooms have a political effect in the frame of our most pressing current social challenges, particularly those which represent a threat to the hard-earned conquests of feminism? We collectively looked for answers to this question within the interdisciplinarity of our own UGR research team composition (with members from fields as diverse as Literature, Visual Studies, Material cultures, Legal Medicine, Sociology, Literature, Art Therapy and Pedagogy). At a later stage our international research team collaborators Literatures at the universities of Coventry, Goldsmiths College and Central European University also joined us in this search bringing forward their expertise in fields such as political theory, sociology, anthropology and Transnational literatures.

The project duration was three years (2021–2023) which we divided accordingly into three different stages, each corresponding to one of the years. We thought we should start by exploring labs within our most immediate environment, our ordinary teaching with our daily under and post graduate students

at the UGR, and then move out and into extra-academic spaces. That way we would transfer the knowledges obtained on that first phase beyond the university: first, on a second stage, to social agents such as NGOs and local administrative bodies and activist groups, and then, on the third stage to the public in general, i.e., audiences from the Granada/Andalusian citizenship. We also intended to culminate the project by organizing a think tank abroad with our international collaborators.¹

Fig. 1: "My name is Virginia Woolf" Performance



Fig. 2: "My name is Virginia Woolf" Performance and Affective Feedback in the Form of Art



Fig. 3: "My name is Virginia Woolf" Performance and Affective Feedback in the Form of Art



As with most good intentions, though, they are often not fulfilled in their totality. And that's exactly what happened to our, apparently, perfectly planned

periodization. To begin with there were technical problems of project execution: the Andalusian government took longer to activate the funding than we expected and, hence, we could not start executing our activities until almost a year into the original span of the project. This, obviously, meant having to adjust the time structure to not three but two phases. But then there was also the availability of the other actors who collaborated in the project: The Organization of the Dissident Masculinities Lab with the “Hombres por la Igualdad Association” had to take place in the first semester of 2022 and the activities with the regional council at Granada needed to take place around the 25th November, the day for the prevention of gender violence. This change, nevertheless, was productive since we could take some of the findings of these activities back to the dialogue with UGR students who then became even more motivated to get involved in our activities. In fact, five of those students became official collaborators in the project, designing their own activities (the “My name is Virginia Woolf” Lab, for instance)² or even contributing to the internationalization of ResLab with ARQUS universities such as Graz³. All five of them are now doing doctoral research with us.

The Labs in the UGR Classrooms

Pilot Lab (Undergraduate Level): from Literature to Experience to Song Answering Song. Time as Trap and the Suspension of the Present

The first case study lab was conducted from September 2021 to December 2021 at the Faculty of Translation with Third Language English, Level 1, 1st years students in the degree of translation and interpreting. It was intended as pilot lab to set the bases for the labs which followed. In it one of the research team members, Beatriz Revelles-Benavente, used Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* in order to activate debates around the concepts of gender violence and memory. The choice of this novel was actually very timely since a few days before an ultraconservative association had started a case against a feminist teacher who had taught Margaret Atwood's novels in her classes. She was accused of prompting rebellion in class and of instigating hatred against men. Fortunately, the case was filed by the judge and did not progress any further. However, its being considered so transgressive benefitted our purposes.

The methodology followed for this lab consisted of collective reading of two chapters a day and taking turns to explain them to the rest of the class commenting on how they illustrated the social problems they encountered in their

immediate surroundings. The intention was to emphasize the capability of the novel to mediate as a social artifact, “blurring the lines between the classroom and their own context” as Revelles Benavente and Lorente Acosta (14) put it. Afterwards, quotes were selected by each student on those passages which they found most illuminating. These were then explained by using other media such as “role plays” or popular songs. The idea was to actually choose media with which these younger students were more familiar so that they could understand that the concepts under discussion were actually part of their daily experiences. Students finally prepared presentations on the issues in the novel which they found had most to do with their daily experiences. Some of these were: gender violence, memory and trauma, environmental crisis, and homelessness in the city of Granada.

The pilot lab included a session with the ResLab research team joining the student group as audience and offering feedback on the presentations. It was to be followed by an internal post-session reflection on how to take the baton from the pilot onto the next lab which could, so to speak, “replicate” the good practices. However, what happened in the session took us all by surprise and made us replicate sooner than we expected. The students chose to represent the affects generated by the reading via a song which, in their opinion, could comment explicitly about the main social problem which affected them all, “precarity”. The song chosen was Manic Street Preachers’s “If you tolerate this, your children will be next” (1998)⁴ from which they highlighted lines such as “The future teaches you to be alone/ The present to be afraid and cold”. In their interpretation the precedent generations were responsible for the terrible precarious future they envisaged for themselves. They believed that before their feeling of loneliness and hopelessness they could only change that situation by reinforcing their individual search for their own ideals. In that way, the research group discovered the devastating truth plainly exposed by the “your children will be next” allusion in the title of the chosen song: the motor for the fight for improvement was not the search for the collective good but for the defense of what they considered their own.

One of the research team members attending the presentations, Miguel Lorente, decided then to act on this, to “replicate” and answer with another song. We, therefore, all met again a week later with the students and Lorente played the official video of another song: “The Future is Now”, published in 2012 by The Offspring.⁵ This served him to wonder about the meaning of the concept of “future” and he asked whether the division between past, past, present and future was a neoliberal practice which could end up reinforcing the capi-

talist hegemonies of our liquid times (Bauman). As Lorente suggested, this is “the new regime in which individuals need to adapt themselves and become resilient subjects” (16). He finally coined the term “passenture” to refer to “an androcentric figuration that demonstrates how history does not repeat itself, indeed what happens is that it remains the same” (Ibid) and suspends the present so that this finally results in a “dyschronopia”, that is an asynchrony between actuality and reality which prevents people from taking action right here and now. Before this our feminist practices gain force since, as Revelles and Lorente conclude, they “interfere in that suspension of the present and allow feminist politics to produce interferences in those structural inequalities that permeate our cultural discourses” (20).

ArtherapyLab (Master level): Queer Failure and Horizontal Learning

Our plan of action also took place within the first-year Master’s Degree course “Feminist Research: Case Studies I” for the Erasmus Mundus GEMMA master in Women’s and Gender Studies, a course coordinated by one of the research team members, Gerardo Rodríguez-Salas, during the 2021–22 academic year.

The laboratory consisted of the reading by the group of Rodríguez-Salas’s short story collection *Hijas de un sueño* (2017) and its theatrical adaptation *Vulnicones* (2021), two texts which deal with women’s oral memory set in a small rural village in Andalusia. The lab was conducted by Rodríguez Salas and Angie Harris, another one of the team members and had as its original intention to create a “safer” space⁶ for the participants to reflect and debate on postmemory family narratives. Postmemory, as Harris and Rodríguez Salas state was understood after Marianne Hirsh’s 2008 definition as: “the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (Hirsh quot. in Harris and Rodríguez-Salas, 25).

As with the previous labs, this one also intended to use affect theory (Ahmed) from our conviction that artworks, as Aby Warburg puts it (Olick and Robins, 106), can serve as repositories of history and collective memory. Hence, students were invited to submit stories, poems, collages, cartoons, photographs, film or any sort of visual-culture material, which made them affectively committed and could help them communicate about that postmemory. Among such material was a documentary film about a great-grandmother which employed family photos and testimonies by other members of

the family; creative writing about a great-grandmother based on the testimonies of two great-aunts; a piece of writing where the grandmother's recipes trigger the reconstruction of the family genealogy; a cartoon of a silenced great-grandmother with heroine-like attributes or a critical memoir on the idea of family as kinship which replaced the grandmother by a roommate.

Besides, Angie Harris's experience as art therapist gave us the idea of resorting to feminist art therapy techniques to help the group share their vulnerabilities (Rogowska) and generate a "safer space" for the lab. The choice of art therapy was itself an exercise of response-able pedagogy since, as Harris-Sánchez and Rodríguez-Salas put it in their narration of the experience for our joint volume: "Artherapy moves away from traditional aesthetics, and resignifies art outside naturalised senses of beauty and representation that are dependent on exercises of power [...] [it brings] affect back to art" (26).

Harris and Rodríguez had also decided to explore the experience from the frame of queer failure (Halberstam), which they found was very much related to the methodological tools provided by art therapy. Surprisingly, queer failure took protagonism as the activity progressed and those unexpected and unplanned reactions produced during the activity, both on the part of the students participating and the coordinators of the activity, became precious when reflected upon them in retrospect. It was such failure that actually managed to break the vertical inequality of the different degrees of power (students vs teachers) situation and to create horizontal relations between both groups.

As part of the art therapy methodology, the facilitators chose the form of the spiral. This simple form, based upon the moving in and out of a simple geometrical shape, would not generate high expectations and hence anxiety and could help participants open up. It would facilitate the intended "safer space", assisting in the production of emotions via language or gestures which could be difficult to express in the normal sitting distribution of the classroom (with long rows of rigid benches). Harris and Rodríguez anticipated that the technique would actually work as originally tested in other art therapeutic group practices by Angie Harris: towards the inside there would brainstorm words which, as they put it "would serve as a moment of meditative pause within the accelerated rhythm of the academic space" (28). This first movement would then naturally drift towards a second stage, the gradual outing of the spiral, a more conscious move on articulating their narratives before the group.

The experience, nevertheless, soon became a challenge to the instructors because of what all this planning had taken for granted. One of the most challenging moments of the experience, as Harris and Rodríguez reflect on, was the

discovery that postmemory family narratives could also be negative, as proven by the narrative which replaced the grandmother by a roommate, dearer to the narrator than the former. This traumatic narrative actually generated violent reactions of uncomfortable animosity and ended up in tears.⁷ The instructors started feeling out of their depths:

After several minutes explaining the scheme of the session, we started sensing we were losing control in ways neither of us had experienced before in academic activities we had coordinated. The faces around us were unclear and we could sense the insecurities in the group, including ourselves [...] [W]e both looked at each other and decided simultaneously that we had to become part of those generated spirals. After speaking about horizontality, the deconstruction of the “academic wall” and more response-able practices of knowledge, our privilege as teachers was still there. Although we had entered the classroom with the idea of this alternative pedagogy in mind, we had to deal with a sense of vulnerability in our own bodies that was unplanned (*Ibid*).

The most interesting finding of the lab for the two instructors was precisely the need to become involved in sharing their own vulnerability (Rogowska) as they felt it at the time. The mingling of the personal and the collective through this sharing is actually what transformed the space into a horizontal lab rather than an average class. As Harris and Rodríguez put it: “In these unexpected moves of radical failure, there were unexpected outcomes (29). And as such the lab was open-ended, as it prolonged beyond the space and time of the session. As they both conclude their contribution:

Without expecting that our own reflections would be part of the outcomes of the session, we have come to an understanding of our limits as professors. Through the planned and unplanned theoretical and methodological bases of counter-narratives, storytelling, artherapy and autoethnography, we have realised that these foundations became independent tools in an activity that surpassed our expectations. In this willful loss of control, failure, low theory, vulnerability, fictions and prosaic narratives appeared as affective conductors to guide us as facilitators of the activity throughout the collective memory labyrinth (32).

ImaGenLab (General Public) as a Case Study

We finish with a case study which exemplifies the bridging between a university course and a dissemination activity for the general public: ImaGenLab. In the second stage I decided to put into play the methodologies explored throughout the first stage taking on board the feminist cinema-forum practice undertaken throughout the last 15 years. My objective was to devise a lab which could be presented in a workshop open to people interested in the connections between film and gender but not necessarily from the university community. The pilot experience was my plenary at the Languaging Diversity Association Conference on Discourse and Persuasion 3.0 (2019) The opportunity presented itself with the celebration of the FilmingLab conference in May 2022, within the 1st GenderMedia Conference, followed by my plenary for the conference on Mediating Social Challenges: Art, Storytelling, Social Practices in Graz a year later, in May 2023.

Genealogy

The story of this ImaGenLab is long, since it collected and summarized many years of teaching and research. To begin with my 20 years of teaching USA students within a cinema course called: "Images of Women in Mediterranean Cinema"⁸ and just as many years of teaching two postgrad courses within two different master programmes: the English Literature and Language Master Programme run from the English Department and the Gender, Art and Literature course within the Erasmus Mundus GEMMA master (Gender and Cultures of Equality in Europe) run by the Women's Studies Center. It also encapsulated my research experience since it incorporated the results of an MSCA Research Doctoral Network, GRACE, Gender and cultures of Equality in Europe where I had had the fortune of coordinating Work Package 4 on "Textual and Artistic cultures of gender equality" which explored in what ways the performative practices and artefacts of the humanities figured in the production and contestation of gender cultures of equality. It was thanks to this that I supervised Orianna Calderón, the ESR in that package. The Lab also encompassed the practices on "Feminist Close Reading" (Lukic and Sánchez), the research methodological frame we have put into practice since we first published our contribution almost 15 years ago.

Let us, therefore, start with the teaching and how research has been filtering in it throughout the years in order to finally produce the ResLab outcomes and the ImagenLab we are using as case study in particular. Images of Women in Med Cinema course is organised into 10 4-hour sessions which over the gender analysis of recent Spanish films, touching on their filmic representation of the major issues in the Spanish feminist agenda. Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) serve as an introduction to Laura Mulvey's theories of the gaze and scopophilia (1978); motherhood and women's affective alliances are studied in Pedro Almodóvar's *All about my Mother* (*Todo sobre mi madre*, 1999) and Benito Zambrano's *Solas* (1999); Iciar Bollaín's *Take my Eyes* (*Te doy mis ojos*, 2003) is used to discuss gender based violence while Fernando León de Aranoa's *Princesses* (*Princesas*, 2006) and Dunia Ayaso and Felix Sabroso's *The Naked Years* (*Los años desnudos*, 2008) serve to deepen into sex work, forced prostitution and women's rights over their own bodies. Each session covers a brief introduction of the film and presentation of a viewing card prepared by me as instructor, followed by film viewing and small student group discussion of the questions and prompts in the viewing. It finishes with a "cinema forum", ie, an open debate of the whole group on the main ideas which came out of the previous discussions and is followed-up by selected readings (selected by the teacher from a pool which has been collected over the years).

This "cinema forum" experience has also been adapted to the format of the two master course groups above mentioned. On the one hand, the group of students taking the "Feminisms, silences and absences" course I teach within the 1-year Master's in English Studies and, on the other, the group taking my "Gender, art and Literature" course within the 2-year GEMMA Erasmus Master in Women's Studies and Gender. While the former is encountering Gender Studies for the first time at postgraduate level, the latter is in their second year and already familiar with gender theories, methodologies and practices. I change the methodology slightly so that the introductory session consists on viewing the first part of *Psycho* after reading Annette Kuhn and feminist film theory by Anneke Smelik and Mulvey⁹ and then acting on a viewing card containing questions on the gaze and the agency of the main characters, so as to promote group discussion on common grounds (see figure 4). It is at this stage that I introduce the importance of feminist close reading of the selected scenes (Lukic and Sánchez-Espinosa) paying very close attention to our own situated position before the text.¹⁰

Fig. 4: Example of a Viewing Card for Feminist Close Viewing of the Films

Viewing Card: Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960)

A) Briefly summarise the plot of the film: what do you think will come next (after the famous shower scene)?

B) The three gazes:

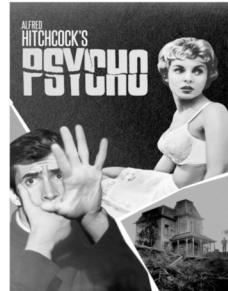
1. Director (camera travelling, zooming, entering intimate spaces, angles and inclinations of the camera, sequence of shots, scopophilia, fetishism, power issue)
2. Characters (can they all gaze actively? issue of agency and power.)
3. Spectators (do we feel comfortable as women gazers?)

C) Images:

1. Passivity/activity: is Marion active? Can she actually look/ act? Is Marion to be gazed-at? Are male characters active? Can they look/act actively? Are they to be gazed-at? (pay attention to the use of mirrors, shades and symbols)
2. To what extent does the film reproduce patriarchal stereotypes?
3. Is women's agency/power punished or rewarded?

D) Conclusion: Empowerment and Feminism.

Following the previous questions: Do you think *Psycho* is a feminist film?



This is then followed by individual tutorial sessions in which each student works with me on a viewing card for their chosen film or tv show. Finally, the last three open sessions are devoted to their presentations of clips of the chosen visual product and discussion with the whole group prompted by the student viewing cards, after each student's presentation of the clips. Debates are coordinated by the students presenting. Among the films and shows chosen in recent years are: Sally Potter's *Orlando*, Josefina Molina's *Evening Performance*, Pedro Almodóvar's *The Skin I live in*, Greta Gerwig's *Little Women*, Celine Sciamma's *Tomboy* and *Portrait of a lady on fire* or Netflix VOD platform *Squid Game*. The final step is an individual post-viewing written reflection on the lessons learned during the presentation, particularly on how the group reacted to their communication skills. Alumni of the courses have now been invited to contribute these reflections together with their viewing cards for a publication which is now ongoing.

It was in 2019 that I first encountered the opportunity to utilize all these methodologies to comprise them into one lab which could be open to people who did not necessarily come from the university community. I was invited to do the plenary at the Languaging Diversity: Discourse and Persuasion 3.0 Conference at University of Zaragoza, Teruel. I decided to approach the central topic, persuasion, by talking about "Resisting cultures of inequality through countervisuality practices in recent Spanish fiction and non-fiction cinema."¹¹ For this I revised those passages from the used films which had, over the years, promoted the highest amount of discussion in the corresponding cinema forums. My thesis was that "persuasion" could be understood as manipulation, the way that audiences are persuaded into patriarchal systems by the repre-

sentations of mainstream media and their scopophilic gazing practices. This approach could also help me reach the conference audience which was not so familiarized with gender theories. Given also that I had recently finished the supervision of a PhD thesis on visualities and countervisualities in documentary film (Calderón-Sandoval), I decided that, perhaps, “resisting viewing” (after resisting reading by Judith Fetterley) and countervisuality (Mirzoeff) could be a nice, easy to grasp approach.¹²

I asked the audience in which ways the scenes presented could exemplify authorial strategies to resist oppressive gazes over the embodiment of the women represented. The open discussion on the clips was amazing and the feedback which came out was extremely productive since it made me reflect on my own choices of those specific clips. I realised that I had actually chosen those specific clips because they exemplified gender dissidence by different narrative techniques: open performance in two of the cases, parallelism in another one, and the transformation of a dialogue between two people into a role play. All of them called attention both to the position of those gazed up and of those who gazed.

All this was the background which I decided to use when coming to the devising of the ImaGenLab activity within the FilmingLab conference at UGR in May 2022. I invited one of the members of the research team, Orianna Calderón, a frequent collaborator in my publications, to share the seminar with me.¹³ We chose to concentrate on four countervisuality narrative strategies found in the films: gazing back, narrative parallelism and counterpointing, role play/performativity, intertextuality (see figure 5).

We collected the scenes selected for watching into a short film which displayed the scenes one after the other. The selection started with Agrado's famous monologue in Almodóvar's *All about my mother*, followed by two scenes from Benito Zambrano's *Solas*, two from Iciar Bollaín's *Take my Eyes* and finished with the opening scene to Dunia Ayaso and Felix Sabroso's *The Naked Years*. Putting them together allowed the participants to get a sense of progression in the issues for discussion and how they represented a certain activist dissidence. We divided the group in several smaller sub-groups and asked them to look for the four different countervisuality strategies. Calderón and I circulated listening to their discussion and offering tips and clues to some of the aspects we thought deserved commenting upon. We finally opened the discussion to the whole group.

Fig. 5: Counter-Visuality Techniques for the Close-Reading/Viewing of the four Films



People commented on how, for the first clip, Agrado's monologue was actually placed as performer on a stage from which she was gazed up by the audience, but she could counter-gaze dissidently.¹⁴ Agrado, played by cis standup comedian Antonia San Juan, is a trans person in the film who makes a last minute stage performance when Huma Rojo, the great actress is involved in an incident which prevents her from getting to the theatre in time for her own performance. Agrado improvises a monologue about the story of her life, her transformations and her femininity. Sensually, nonchalantly and confidently she unbuttons her cardigan to display a perfectly modelled neck while she goes over the narration of all the plastic surgery she has undertaken. Her daring performance creates scandal with some older members of the audience who were there for Huma but are not ready to take Agrado's cheeky provocation. "My apologies to those who decide to leave. You will get your ticket money refunded. But for those who stay, I promise to make you have a good time" she says. Indeed, those who stay gaze at Agrado in admiration and the camera is respectful of this reaction, moving from Agrado to the audience as if to transmit the cooperation and equality of the gaze exchange. Once we finish this discussion, we, as instructors, add content which the lab participants may not get from simply watching this clip. We call their attention to Almodóvar's intended intertextuality as a countervisuality strategy, as indicated from the title of the film, a play on Joseph Mankievich's *All about Eve* (1950) and by the characters and scenes which serve as counternarrative of that film. Whereas Eve in the

latter fulfills the stereotype of the femme fatale in classical movies, the sinner who acts evil on those around her, Almodóvar's main female protagonists, Agrado, Manuela and Sister Rosa, are motherly carers who, as Agrado states in her monologue "They call me Agrado because I have always tried to make people's lives agreeable", the actual improvised performance being a counter-scene of the intentional stealing of the show by Eve Carrington in *All about Eve*.

With the two scenes from Zambrano's *Solas* they all commented on the obviously intended parallelism between them. The first scene deals with Rosa, the mother, looking after her husband in a Seville hospital. Bedridden as he is, he still enforces his toxic masculine tyranny on his wife in several ways. He asks his wife: "have I been a good man?", "Yes... you did hit me sometimes", she replies, "but have I BEHAVE like a good man!!!!?" he insists, "We always had food on our plates", she replies. "But a man, a GOOD man?!!?", he shouts angrily before her baffled expression, "You stupid old woman, you never understand anything", he finally concludes.¹⁵ A very similar scene takes place when, with the husband out of hospital, Rosa must return to the village. On that occasion daughter María's old neighbour, who has cultivated a friendship with Rosa, is seeing her down the stairs to say goodbye. Rosa comments "you are a good man" and he replies "no, not really, I have lots of flaws", to which she retorts: "but did you ever hit your wife" to his immediate reaction "of course not!". "Then you are a good man", she concludes.¹⁶ The group is quick to realise that the parallelism is an excellent way to highlight the meaning of being "a good man". While to traditional toxic masculinity a man is "good" if he acts as provider, regardless of whether he cares for his family or even perpetrates GBV, there are alternatives to this and the neighbour, who is the same age as the husband and could have been an excellent understanding partner to Rosa, exemplifies that. The following events in the film, with the neighbour becoming a surrogate dad and grandad to the daughter and granddaughter respectively, prove that such alternative can, indeed, be possible.

In Bollaín's *Take my Eyes* (*Te doy mis ojos*, "I give you my eyes", in Spanish) countervisibility plays an essential role since the film is about the capacity to "see", its main thesis being that the women who undergo the experience of GBV are deprived of such capacity. The film is articulated around visual art, with Pilar, the protagonist gradually opening her eyes as she analyses art masterpieces in museum tours. The first scene watched uses role play as a strategy for both Pilar and the spectators to understand the cycle of GBV. Thanks to her new job, Pilar is making new friends, one of which has just broken up with her boyfriend. The group of friends are all sitting at a table in a nearby bar when

her friend's boyfriend knocks on the window begging her to come out. Those inside the bar can see the scene taking place outside but cannot hear what the couple is actually saying. Nevertheless, two of them improvise a conversation playing the roles of the friend and the boyfriend: "why did you do that to me?" says the one, "I didn't mean it, please forgive me" retorts the other, adding "I love you, you are my sun, you are my life, I cannot live without you". The two kiss and the friend waves goodbye and shrugs as if to say she cannot help it. As they disappear from their view, the role players comment "There she is, just where he wanted her". "Yes. Until next time". The camera then focuses on Pilar whose smiley face has now become somber. She realises how natural that conversation was and how familiar she is with it. Indeed, as the film has shown spectators before, her husband, Antonio, has also used similar words to get her to forgive him and she has actually fallen for them many times before. The role play does the trick and both Pilar and us understand the gender violence cycle immediately.¹⁷ The following scene serves us to conclude the discussion. In it we see Pilar feeling happy and at ease as she explains Tiziano's "Danae receiving the golden rain" to an audience. Being gazed by the audience but totally in control of the discussion, she responds to some of the provocative questions with an admirable sense of humor which her husband, hidden within the audience, finds disconcertingly threatening to him. She has talked about how the painting was censored and kept hidden from public view for centuries but how, in the end, they could not hide it any longer "and here it is, for all of us to see", she concludes as the camera focuses on her superimposed figure over that of Danae just behind her. Their parallel positions and similar inclinations of their heads seem to indicate that she, too, will eventually succeed in coming out in the open and break free from the violence she is suffering in the domestic realm.

The final passage watched in the selection is taken from the opening of *the Naked Years*. Here the critical counter visual comment is, as the lab participants rightly spot, the intertextuality with the famous monologue of *Doña Rosita la soltera* (Doña Rosita the spinster, 1935) by Federico García Lorca. Sandra, played by Candela Peña, is auditioning for a role in a film in the late 1970s. As the scene progresses, with the camera becoming subjective and adopting the gaze of the man conducting the audition, we realise that the film is actually a porno film. It will be one of the S-rated films which marked those years in the Spanish transition just after the death of Franco and the lifting of the severe censorship of his dictatorship regime. The thesis of the film is that those were, indeed, very naked years for both women and men: women fighting for their lost rights trying to follow the dimly remembered model of the pre-Franco 1930s liberties;

men desperately holding onto the supreme powers that the patriarchal dictatorship had endowed them with. Even at such pathetic situation, Sandra is resolute she wants to be an actress, and she insists on reciting although she knows far well that those listening will not understand. She chooses to perform Lorca's denouncing words in the mouth of Doña Rosita, that famous monologue now being played by Sandra:

And what should I talk of? There are things that can't be said because there are no words in which to say them; and if there were, no one would understand their meaning. You would understand if I asked for bread or water or even a kiss, but no one can understand or remove this dark hand, that freezes or burns my heart, I don't know which, whenever I'm alone [...] It's a never-ending tale. I know my eyes will stay young always, while my back will curve more each day. After all what has happened to me happens to thousands of women. (Pause) But why am I speaking of it? [...] I don't like being looked at that way. This gaze like a faithful dog's annoys me. (0:00:17-0:02:58)

Such intertextuality works very well as a devastating comment on the situation. It comes at the right moment, with Sandra in the nude, having undressed slowly, shyly, uncomfortably and as if aware of what she was getting into but still reluctant to comply, keeping her shades on until the very last minute after she has removed her clothes, as a final self-protection gesture, as if to protect her vulnerable inner self from those devouring gazes and as the camera closes up on her, and you, as spectator can feel her extreme disgust as if physically pressed by the action of the camera. And we understand it all when Lorca's words make the comment: it is about gazes, oppressive and abusive gazes. Neither Sandra nor Lina and Eva, the two other female protagonists who also end up working in soft porno films are unique in their experiences. Their rebellious dissidence against the Francoist moral constrictions which are still very present in the post-Franco transition years was also the story of those other women in Lorca's trilogy: from Doña Rosita to the Bride in *Blood Wedding*, to Yerma or Adela in *The House of Bernarda Alba*, in those Republican transition years in the 1930s. Those earlier women were claiming for their rights in similar ways as their predecessors who take their feminist baton 40 years later in order to keep on with the interrupted fight. They are all fighting those who ignore their legitimate aspirations to control their own bodies and who objectify them into mere flesh for male consumption. Doña Rosita la Soltera, single and alone as her name indicates, is also the precedent for those women who must

now tackle the directions of their lives alone, bravely facing those naked years which are still dominated by the ultraconservative society constructed by the dictator over forty years. It is a society which needs to change in order to be able to find space for their feminist claims. As Rafa, the trans performer says to Sandra “The men who can match women like you have not been born yet” (1:02:27-1:02:30).

Conclusions or Refusal to Conclude. Staying with the Trouble¹⁸

Perhaps the first conclusion from our project is a “still to be continued”. Indeed, the most response-able way to close it is actually to leave it open, to dis-sidently state our purpose to, as Donna Haraway would put it, “stay with the trouble”. We have decided to “stay with the trouble” of the experiences lived in our labs and to call on various sorts of response-abilities in order to disseminate the lessons learnt. Our first response-ability is to keep cultivating the transnational alliances we started planting over 30 years ago. We have consciously done so from the affective convergences (Sánchez-Espinosa and Ménendez de la Brena) with other feminists all over the world and we have developed embodied infrastructures (Clisby and Sánchez Espinosa) and teaching and research alliances which will help us continue the good practices learned in ResLab. Athena, GEMMA, EDGES, GRACE, EUTERPE, DIGISCREENS, AT-GENDER, are simply some of the acronyms which synthetize our response-able transnational endevours. ResLab or this forum created by University of Graz, are two others adding themselves to the affective genealogy signified by those names. The second response-able take ResLab project is our continuation of Response-able transgenerational collaboration. The affective convergences we have generated during the span of the project between senior and junior researchers are to be continued with synergic intergenerational projects and actions such as the one undertaken between the Universities of Graz and Granada in the frame of the ARQUS alliance.¹⁹ Last but not least, we have learnt from our failed plans. As we reflect in the introduction to *Feminist Literary and Filmic Cultures for Social Action*:

Perhaps, we need to state that even if the original intention of our research was finding solutions and strategies, we have finally discovered more questions than answers in order to continue identifying patterns and movements in our classrooms. (Revelles and Sánchez, 3)

We have, finally, learned that searching for “safer spaces” for our students also involves accepting and sharing our own vulnerabilities. To queer our failure is, indeed, the most response-ably powerful tool to mediate inside and outside our academic spaces.

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