

Article

A Tale of Two Subjectivities: An Academic Life Story

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Received: 30 August 2019; Accepted: 18 September 2019; Published: 20 September 2019



Abstract: In this article I present an autobiographical account as someone who has been an academic in both Mexico and Spain for the last thirty years. My life story shows the transition from a life centred on an academic project to a life centred on mere survival in the system. These are two subjectivities that do not neatly appear consecutively but that are intertwined. The first starts from the traditional but exciting idea that an academic career must progress linearly to the achievement of a solid and stable identity, with a permanent contract as a symbolic and material destination. The second subjectivity, which starts from neo-liberalism demanding permanent mobilization, constant change, and absolute flexibility, is accompanied by pain and resignation, as precarity has already occupied the greatest part of my academic life. The story has the modest mission of exemplifying, in the flesh, without hiding class and gender marks, the neo-liberal transformation of the academy and its inhabitants. Yet it is also an example of how difficult it can be to resist this dynamic, given that we, the teaching and research staff, are more or less forced accomplices of this transformation. I write this narrative in the hope that the story may help others to visualize and plan a different future for academia and for themselves: a future based on more engaged personal relationships and built on an ethics of care which can help resist injustice, as feminist literature suggests.

Keywords: new managerialism; technologies of power; technologies of the self; new academic subjectivities; biographical methods; life stories

“When I want to tell the story of my life, it is a wandering that I tell of It is not of myself that I speak, for I look for myself with words which are made only to make me fail to find myself and which only increase the sense of being lost We are all looking for something of extraordinary importance whose nature we have forgotten.” [Eugène Ionesco \(1972, p. 171\)](#)

1. Introduction

If somebody asked me, ‘What drew you into higher education?’ and ‘When you meet strangers, how do you articulate what you do for a living?’ as [Clarke and Knights \(2015\)](#) asked their participants, my answer to each question would be, strangely, diametrically opposed. To the first question I would answer that I decided to start an academic career from the desire to produce relevant knowledge to solve the social problems that surrounded me and to answer a personal calling to teach and share a critical view of my discipline. To the second question, instead, I would have to answer that I try to seek research funding, that I must publish articles in indexed journals, that I have just survived the Spanish accreditation system, and that I resist as much as possible the continuous assessments of my résumé in order to save my precarious mental health. Without a doubt, being an academic thirty years ago, when I began, and being an academic today are no longer the same thing. Over those years neo-liberal culture has invaded the institutions in which we work and has tried to seize everything in them. According to [Gómez and Jódar \(2013\)](#), neo-liberalism is a political rationality that refers not only to a socio-economic system but to a set of discourses and practices that reconfigure the role of the state and of its subjects. These neo-liberal discourses and practices operate as government technologies

(Foucault 1982) whose goal is the management of the self through surveillance and self-discipline (Foucault 1975, 1982, 1988).

If universities were once considered the house of culture, at least in the Ibero-American imaginary, now it would be more precise to speak of universities as the house of neo-liberal culture. This culture dictates that each individual is entirely responsible for developing her or his full potential, to finance themselves and in the way finance their institution and at the same time bring their university's brand to the first rankings as an effect of their activity. The acceptance of neo-liberal mandates by Spanish universities' bodies of government, just as with most European and American ones, has introduced and consolidated policies aimed at transforming academic staff into productive producers, and at the same time aimed at creating products that are quoted and coveted by other universities or research centres. These producers and products must constantly be held accountable, assessed and compared to an unattainable ideal (Costea et al. 2012). Neo-liberal culture is about commodifying the entire university, in line with global trends in commodifying all public spaces (Rose and Miller 1992). This reduces students and teachers to mere customers and service providers—making them relevant only if they generate profits for the university (Sisto 2007).

Neo-liberal rationality stands as the solution to all problems in every social sphere. The logic of market deregulation and suppression of labour rights is being adopted as a promise to fix, through business procedures, a rigid, bureaucratic, ancient university and change it to a more flexible and more effective one. This requires embedding business management practices and rhetoric within the core of the university and its operatives and asking for the complicity of all the people who inhabit it, to respond to the growing demand for productivity and competitiveness. It also involves embracing the entrepreneurial lifestyle that requires leadership, initiative, innovation, and ongoing challenges, pursuing more patents than ideas. So that knowledge can become product which with the necessary marketing campaigns will acquire market value, new managerialism's logics, instruments, and language are required. This is how research is prioritized to the detriment of teaching, as research answers directly to the companies and institutions that finance it, is easier to 'measure' through counting publications in so-called impact journals, and bestows more 'points' and prestige to the person who undertakes it, so that, therefore, we assimilate business guidelines to plan our own academic activities, those that will occupy most of our time (Escobar 2007).

To this end, academic staff members are subject to a continuous evaluation of all their activity, and to a whole series of control, inspection, auditing, and review mechanisms that have become normal. But these disciplining power technologies would not work without their corresponding technologies of the self (Foucault 1975, 1982, 1988), such as accreditations, annual target plans, and other incentives to publish. They would not work without staff identities, lifestyles, behaviours, or desires converging into the entrepreneurial spirit that is demanded. This became possible, on the one hand, because this mandate, explicitly but superficially, uses values such as autonomy, creativity, initiative, and innovation that also come from the ancient academic identity, and on the other hand, because agreeing to and acting under these guidelines is the only way to develop an academic career promised as successful (Clarke et al. 2012) without being left out or exposed to incremental teaching loads which would exclude the possibility of conducting research. Accreditations, target plans, and assistive technologies to these mechanisms serve to offer access to certain jobs, to establish teaching loads, to assign academic positions of responsibility, to allocate participation in thesis committees, to assist in the selection of teaching and research staff, to allow application for better funding, to assign and reward participation in governing bodies, and finally to rank workers (Gómez and Jódar 2013). No longer does the academic life consist of producing knowledge relevant to different social groups and their circumstances; instead, it is about managing your curriculum and academic career by focusing on those non-risky activities that give the most clearly measurable 'evidence'—the opposite of publishing a book, for example—and which are completed with the shortest possible investment of time (Willmott 1995; Harding et al. 2010) so that one can publish more. This yields a spectrum of concerns: about obtaining competitive funding for research, which makes non-funded research irrelevant; about the ranking of a journal

before publishing in it; about our own and our colleagues' *h*-index; about the spreading of research results through social networks; about maintaining public profiles on academic social platforms, and about occupying media time slots as experts. All this changes the subjectivity of academics, who assume as their own the needs and objectives of their institutions and of particular political interests. As [Gómez and Jódar \(2013, p. 83\)](#) express:

“It helps us to identify ourselves with a game and with its rules, that we assume them as our own. This is because it articulates discourses and practices that, as we will see, favour the shifting from external control procedures to self-control mechanisms typical of neoliberal modes of governance. The uniqueness of these modes of neoliberal *rule* is that the exercise of power directly appeals to the responsibility and voluntary involvement of individuals. The subject of government is a free and autonomous subject.” ([Dean 1999; Rose 1999](#))

Hence also the concern for the time ‘taken away’ from research for teaching and office hours. Certainly, a research career under the neo-liberal paradigm leaves aside teaching and students. Of course, not every research career does that, but the need to compete for funding does so, by privileging certain types of research over others and letting only specific job positions with long-term contracts access it. This situation generates subject positions that occupy those researchers with individualistic tactics to manage their professional ambitions and to seek their self-realization, and this coincides with the challenges of their institutions, for which they gain recognition and finally prestige. These subject positions are then necessarily committed to so-called excellence, to institutional rankings ([Lynch 2014](#)), and above all to the betterment of those rankings ([Conesa 2018](#)). These subject positions do not waste an article on just any journal but purposefully and specifically bet on those which have a higher impact index (something that does not equate to more readership, citations, or discussion) because they are more concerned about *where* to publish than *what* to publish ([Clarke and Knights 2015](#)). These are flexible subjects without official work schedule limitations; rather, they are permanently involved in competitiveness, internationalization, and the search and seizure of any opportunity to make them personally profitable to their institutions. Convinced about the need to decide autonomously and to freely direct their career, they do not question assessments or accountability because they submit to them voluntarily ([Gómez and Jódar 2013](#)), because they want to progress in their career, and they have designed the optimal strategies to achieve this. “In this way, academics transform themselves into perfect ‘neo-liberal’ subjects, for ‘techniques of control work best when they make individuals “want” what the system needs in order to perform’ ([Thornborrow and Brown 2009, p. 370](#))” ([Clarke and Knights 2015, p. 1874](#)).

This neo-liberal subject position “imposes a subjectivity that undermines ‘the possibility of a genuinely just and therefore ethical community’ ([Hancock and Tyler 2001, p. 581](#))” ([Clarke and Knights 2015, p. 1870](#)). The entrepreneurial academic self ([Müller 2014](#)) and its time and work regimes leave no room for care or for relationships or life outside productive work ([Gill 2009](#)). People who work in the academy are continuously overwhelmed and impelled to do ‘productive’ academic work at the cost of sleep hours, weekends, holidays, and working days of 14, 16, or 19 h. Endless working days are necessary to plan and then perform our job, in addition to all the work required by ongoing life inside and outside the university. These are tasks that persons identifying as women do not leave aside, not just because they are socially inscribed in our gender but because they are fundamental for life. They are responsibilities that, although they have no curricular value and have little social value, are also lived and suffered in many moments as loads, ballasts, hindrances, anchors, impediments, inconveniences, annoyances, and obstacles to successful academic careers that require totally individualistic and pragmatic behaviours. This happens because meritocratic and competitive regimes do not take into account the particular situations and the different oppressions that people undergo, in addition to the contextual and problematic specificities of their geographies and institutions. However, this is not a fatality. Alternatives exist, even inside academia, as [Conesa \(2018\)](#) remarks: “while this work tends to be understood as a burden and not valued, the ethics of care perspective sees it as central; the unavoidable tasks that sustain our everyday life.”

2. Methodology

Texts on the transformation of higher education and research institutions are not infrequent. In many cases they consist of politically informed essays (i.e., [Conesa 2018](#)), analysis of legislative documents ([Sisto 2007](#); [Gómez and Jódar 2013](#)), or research using interviews ([Müller 2014](#); [Clarke and Knights 2015](#); [Vayreda et al. 2019](#)). However, first-person accounts do not abound. Therefore it seems necessary to me that the generation that has lived this transformation should offer its testimony—not to explain this change, which is something that has already been researched and debated extensively, but rather to show the consequences that this evolution has had on the lives of academics. Therefore, in this article I present an autobiographical account, specifically a life story, of someone who has been an academic in Mexico and Spain for the last thirty years.

Biographical methods have had a long tradition in the Ibero-American social sciences, starting with Oscar Lewis's classic *The Children of Sanchez* ([Lewis 2011](#)). Although it has never been a mainstream method, it has been used uninterruptedly during the last century (i.e., [Cornejo 2008](#); [Ferrarotti 2007](#); [López-Barajas 1998](#); [Ochoa 1997](#); [Prat 2004](#); [Pujadas 1992](#)). As C.W. Mills ([Mills 2000](#), p. 6) said, "No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey." Within the various methodologies and techniques that are part of the biographical method, the life story usually is referred to as the narration of a life, or a significant part of it, often told in the first person, and sometimes centred upon some episodes or specific aspects ([Denzin 1989](#)). What characterizes the biographical method is that it allows a reader to appreciate a historical and social context in a particularly vivid narrative format. Of course, the story does not provide the 'truth' about the life of the protagonist or the conditions that surrounded it; however, it is in the construction of a character who wants to be seen, understood, and interpreted in a specific way where one can appreciate the emergence of a subjectivity that is not arbitrary but a product of its context.

In life stories, characters emerge that star in it, narrate it with their voice, and therefore "impose" their point of view ([Piña 1988](#)). However, this subjectivity is not a weakness but a strength, since the verbal construction of the protagonist is created for a more or less imagined specific audience; it is a voice expressly addressed to a reader to whom a message is to be communicated. Simultaneously, this construction cannot escape a certain interlocution with the other characters in his or her story—interlocutors who could confirm or disprove not only the narrated facts but even the construction of the character or its very existence. Thus, despite being a single-authored story, it is more the product of an intertextual situation that can only reflect the conditions of its material and symbolic production.

To be transparent, I did not write the narration I present below for this article. Initially it was a therapeutic project, an intimate writing made to recover the lost perfectly identifiable self that inhabited me at the beginning of my academic career—an individual who had a great project for herself and her discipline, social psychology. However, as I progressed, and especially towards the end of the story, I stopped recognizing myself. What stood out was a consuming feeling of great unease generated by the absence of a project and the preponderance of survival attempts. This is perfectly visible when the story seems to move forward in a purely descriptive way, by accumulation of data or activities, which, even without being exhaustive, presents no common thread or specific meaning to readers. Some readers of the early versions of the story found the last part as if it were written from a second self, unrelated to the first. It looked to them as "a cluster of cold facts", "boring", "soulless", "whining", and "a tantrum", with all the symptoms of a person who has suffered some form of bullying, albeit without a specific aggressor. These interpretations were even more puzzling to me than were my own. It was not until the moment I went on to analyse the story, to know how to recover my first "beloved" self and how to restore meaning to my work, that, putting it in a theoretical framework, I could see that this account had not been written by me alone, but also by the material and symbolic conditions in today's universities.

3. A Tale of Two Academic Subjectivities

After five semesters of pursuing a bachelor's degree; four hundred and eighty hours of field placement; two years of a bachelor's thesis; four years as a research assistant; three years as assistant academic technician, as an editorial assistant of the scientific journals of the psychology faculty and two years as a high school teacher, all during my field placement and the bachelor's thesis; two years of doctoral courses and a master's thesis as a predoctoral fellow; four years writing a PhD thesis as a predoctoral fellow; six years as a full-time virtual distance university lecturer; five and two years as part-time adjunct professor at two universities simultaneously; five years as assistant professor after obtaining the corresponding accreditation; one year as a visiting professor; and two and a half years as interim associate professor after the corresponding accreditation . . . After having participated in twenty-four investigations since 1989, of which I was the lead coordinator on six; after obtaining the recognition of an emerging group—by the regional government—as its principal researcher; and after being a participant in a consolidated group, also with the recognition of the regional government . . . After having recently been granted another national research funding stream as one of the two coordinators of an international team; and after participating as an expert in my field in a newly granted large-budget European research project . . . After all of that, I still have not proved that I am good enough for a permanent position as lecturer and researcher. What is more, the possibility that I can still be is at risk. I am 52 years old. And I am tired.

3.1. Five Semesters of Bachelor's Degree; Four Hundred and Eighty Hours of Field Placement; Two Years of Bachelor's Thesis; Four Years as a Research Assistant, Three Years as Assistant Academic Technician, as Editorial Assistant of the Scientific Journals of the Psychology Faculty, and Two Years as a High School Teacher, All during the Field Placement and the Thesis

When examining an academic trajectory to be assessed or to get points in some meritocratic system, several elements that make up that trajectory are often ignored: for example, what made you a researcher and a teacher, or what put you at the starting point, to begin the academic race. This is entirely logical. It would be a titanic task to pretend to assess, or at least account for, someone's entire academic trajectory. But even if it is logical, in this way all the marks of social capital, class, and gender that have made it possible or that have hindered it are invisibilized. In this way, all the practices of power and resistance, the limits and possibilities that have constituted a trajectory, are hidden.

In my case, there was nothing that could make you suspect that one day I would dedicate myself to the academy. I was born and raised in Mexico City in a family where no member had finished a bachelor's degree. My grandmother who raised me had not even finished elementary school, so no one helped me with school homework. We had almost no books, and among the few we had there were only a couple of dictionaries and no encyclopaedia. No one in my family ever told me that research could be a profession. I have doubts even today that the members of my family clearly know what I do for a living.

Shortly before finishing high school, it was suggested that because I was someone who was quite independent and with some initiative, I could engage in vocational training, for example, to be a teacher, a secretary, or a flight attendant and have a good future. Despite having good grades, winning some awards at school, and being interested in the work of my uncle who ran a computer that occupied an entire room, I was never encouraged to have scientific curiosity. I did not go to summer camps, support classes, or museums, beyond a couple of school visits.

In short, there were none of the predictors of school success in my environment, let alone an academic career. But in the last year of secondary school, in which I had the chance to end in a school with an innovative pilot pedagogical model, the vocational counsellor explained to us that after high school we did not necessarily have to enter the labour market. He explained that we could opt for high school and then college or polytechnic and then maybe, for some, further postgraduate work—a master's or doctoral degree. And he also explained, in detail, how many of us were statistically likely to end up getting each of these grades. And what powerfully caught my attention is that of these fifty

students to whom he was speaking, only one person would likely end up having a doctorate. I found it tremendously unfair, but I also thought I would like to get it myself.

In high school, to my surprise and the surprise of all around me, I enjoyed and got excellent grades in things as unexpected as trigonometry, physics, chemistry, philosophy, communication, and psychology. So I started thinking about the possibility of studying at university, taking, of course, a part-time job. The teachers of these last two high school subjects, with whom I had an excellent relationship, recommended me to opt for psychology, which at least was a science, “not as journalism” (sic).

In fact, the communication teacher accompanied me to visit the School of Psychology, made an appointment with the coordinator, and asked her to make recommendations and explain to me what was expected of a psychology student to pursue it successfully. I was worried about having to study and work at the same time, and it was not clear that this career would allow it. But the coordinator told me that there were many part-time students who succeeded with this career choice, as long as they focused their efforts on the most important thing. She recommended that I start studying English and told me that this would allow me to stand out and do the career more easily. So I wrote down English on my to-do schedule.

But back then, in the third year of high school, my political activism and commitment to social movements, particularly feminism, also began. So I began to weigh the possibility of studying something that seemed more in line with these interests: anthropology, sociology, political science . . . or if it were psychology, it would have to be at least social psychology.

And that is how, a year after I finished high school, I finally entered the School of Psychology of the most important university in Latin America (although that fact I would not be aware of until much later). But this matriculation did not happen without first having become independent of my family, starting to study English with a friend who taught private lessons, and having three jobs: receptionist for an insurance agent; newspaper delivery girl of a monthly supplement of a national newspaper; and cashier in a supermarket, a job I kept for most of my bachelor’s degree study.

The first two years were very hard, not only because my part-time work was exhausting and the distances I had to travel were so long, but also because I could not find anything social in the psychology curricula. But when I was about to drop out, during the third year, the first subject of introduction to social psychology came at last, which, although it was not special at all, allowed me to persist in psychology until I started my specialization in that area. The area of social psychology occupied the last three semesters of a total of nine.

Apart from my already mentioned earlier professional activities, not related to the academic field, I also worked for a few months at the Center for the Care of Raped Persons. It was about holding the night shifts, two or three times a week, and supporting the people who wanted to report. It did not last long, because soon it became clear that it was not possible for me to work and study by day and then keep watch at night. It was also not workable for many people to request accompaniment, as this service was inside a police station. But I quickly learned that it was a necessary and urgent job. Although I had been recruited for my feminist activism and my ongoing psychology training, the latter did not offer me many tools with which to deal with this kind of need. This made me reflect a lot on what a psychology graduate should be able to do, thoughts that fortunately I was able to deepen and use many years later, when I had to plan an entire Bachelor of Psychology curriculum. The important thing then was that my political militancy, my work, and my training began to fit in.

Still, there were no clues showing up yet that I would opt for a career in teaching and research, but in the last semester, a teacher explained her research projects to us throughout the subject she was teaching. She told us that research consisted of reading and writing about the social phenomena that interested her, and that bit of information powerfully seduced me. It seemed to me that I kind of wanted to do that myself, even if I was not quite sure what to do to get it.

Also, in the last semester, a teacher sought out among our class two people who would want to undertake their field placement under his supervision (a supervised field placement equaling 480 h of work is required in Mexico to obtain a degree in psychology). And a cohort who was chosen for her

academic excellence for one of the spots, and whom I knew through some acquaintances within the students' movement, recommended me for the second spot. I was also accepted after they reviewed my file, interviewed me, and explained to me that doing research implied collecting data, analysing it, and communicating it. With that I began my research career—mostly unawares.

Thanks to my good performance during the field placement, I was offered the opportunity to continue in the same institution, doing the same epidemiological research project, with the same tasks plus some others, but with the status of an intern at the leading national research centre in epidemiology and psychiatry (this I found out right away because they kept repeating it to us).

At this same institute, a young researcher who also taught at the university invited me to give a talk in his developmental psychology class. And for the same period, also by chance of fate, I was asked to substitute for an adjunct professor at the first level of laboratory in psychology. I continued the first university teaching experiences in psychology, which, although brief, aroused my interest in teaching on an ongoing basis.

After completing my internship, I was offered the chance to continue at this epidemiological research institution as a research assistant, and later I got a promotion as associate researcher. As my supervisor and project manager was sent abroad to undertake a postdoctoral fellowship (something I did not even know existed until that point), and I was a research staff member in training who required supervision, I went on to work with another principal investigator in other projects. Although all research there was epidemiological, these new projects on migrant wives to the United States gained an element of my interest because they required a gender stance. Although this perspective was not properly incorporated into the projects themselves, it allowed me to think about the need to move my feminist activism into the field of research.

While working in epidemiology, my colleague and I also took part in an educational research project on cognitive processes and their implications for learning, with other teachers who also offered scholarships. In this project, part of the team was in the School of Psychology and another part in the ENP (university high school), and I had the chance to work within the latter. The team was young, enthusiastic, and committed, and in addition to having tasks as interns, we were also incorporated into the group's research seminar, where we learned the *why* behind what we were doing; this taught us and encouraged us to present our research work at a symposium and to face the full meaning of scientific communication. We also had to take on responsibilities and work as team members, not only executing the activities decided and designed by others but also taking part in every necessary part of the research process. The work carried out on this project, in which I continued beyond the completion of the scholarship, was work that allowed me subsequently to be recommended as a part-time high school teacher in psychology in one of the campuses of the university. This was a job I kept until I went to graduate school.

And between one investigation and another, I realized what kind of research I wanted to do: more concerned with the subjective than the objective, more socially centred than individual, using more qualitative than quantitative strategies, seeking to understand people and their environment rather than studying their behaviour. And including the study of affectivity, emotions, and meaning in everyday life, which until then I had missed in my formation. For example, here's what I wrote about teaching psychology at the time:

“Building teaching and education detached from culture means losing a very important part of understanding human behavior; [it] is to consider the students and the people we try to understand, as people with no family, no race, and finally no history. [. . .] Without emotions there has never been, or can be, a human search for truth. Teaching the psychologist to aesthetically perceive nature and social reality means adding a special dimension that is not provided by texts or the way in which they are learned.” (Gil 1992a)

My colleague and I also enrolled in the same thesis seminar (the thesis is another indispensable requirement to obtain a degree in psychology in Mexico), taught by a professor I met in the previous semester who did exactly the type of social research I wanted to do.

This professor, who became my undergraduate thesis supervisor, assigned me to help as executive assistant to the editorial committee of two scientific journals of the School of Psychology, a job I did under his supervision. Apart from the value of learning the academic editorial work, what was very stimulating was the project of one of the journals: to be an arena of debate and reflection; to accommodate all kinds of psychology; to make room for other social sciences; to give space to both experts and non-experts; to give space to students challenging and enriching their discipline by criticizing it; and to promote all points of view that would question psychology and its side effects on social life. With this work I also saw in practice that there is more than one way to report research results.

But the person who gave me the first opportunity to teach social psychology at a bachelor's degree level, as his assistant, was another teacher who did not teach me. I met her almost by chance, in the same building where I worked as an editorial assistant and where she and my thesis supervisor engaged in a research seminar. The subsequent opportunities—guest talk, substitution in the lab, and first classes of social psychology—would have had their weaknesses, as is the case whenever you start something new. But they became the beginning of my discovery of teaching, for wanting to connect with students and for believing that I had a social psychology project to explain. So, also without realizing it, I started my teaching career.

This teacher also worried over my pursuit of a successful academic career, told me the immediate steps to undertake to get another placement, and advised me to continue from there little by little. She had and still has a mission to have more women in social psychology, to build a discipline more diverse and plural, where all subject positions are represented. Fortunately, it was my turn to be one of the beneficiaries of her crusade. So I am a social psychologist thanks to someone who thinks it is important that there be more social psychologists in the world and that the point of view offered by our discipline must not be just that of upper-middle-class men.

With this teacher, my thesis supervisor, and other colleagues from their research seminar, I learned how to do social psychology and met other people engaged in our discipline, in our context, who exercised the discipline in other ways. With them I made my first communication at a symposium on social psychology. And thanks to them, I met a social psychologist from another continent who came to give a seminar about something called “social constructionism”, which was not yet as well known as nowadays. Although I was only a spectator, I managed to speak to this professor, and I told him that in the way he explained it, it seemed that they already had it all solved and well thought out: that their research was concerned with the subjective and meaning and at the same time had a social commitment to consider inequalities. He replied that there was so much left to do and that every contribution would be welcome.

And that is how my colleague and I decided to undertake the master's and doctoral degrees that he coordinated at a university in Europe. We talked with people who had done this “looking for friendly tribes” expedition before, to know what to do and start the paperwork. I sought to continue to delve into that way of doing social psychology in which I had ventured with all the desire of the world in the thesis I was doing (Gil 1992b), and I wanted to meet the other newly discovered tribes in the world who did more or less the same thing, albeit by another name.

Because it took me another year to finish my thesis, I continued with my part-time jobs, for in order to pay for my academic ambitions, I combined the precarious salaries of research assistant, high school psychology teacher, and editorial assistant of the scientific journals of the School. But once I finished and defended my thesis on a social psychology of projects for social transformation (Gil 1992b; Gil Juárez 2006), I set out to look for more tools for a critical social psychology in Europe with a PhD scholarship.

Over time, all these academics I mentioned became colleagues and then most of them friends, and certainly they, together with my colleague and friend, with whom I shared the beginning of the trajectory, were invaluable guides for me to see and then materialize the beginning of an academic career.

3.2. Two Years of Doctoral Courses and a Master's Thesis as a Predoctoral Fellow; Four Years Writing a PhD Thesis as a Predoctoral Fellow; Six Years as a Full-Time Virtual Distance University Lecturer; Five and Two Years as Part-Time Adjunct Professor at Two Universities Simultaneously

With all of this in my suitcase, I moved from one continent to another, to a country I had never visited. I could continue to narrate in detail the journey to the other side of the world: the difficulties of starting from scratch and settling in; the advantages and disadvantages of having to learn a new language (Catalan) that no one warned me even existed; the time it takes to understand and adopt new habits, the shock that Latin Americans suffer when we realize how little we value our training and how good it is; the juggling that needs to be done to adjust to European prices on a modest scholarship; new friendships and personal transformations that occur in these cases; the inevitable odyssey involved in undertaking a doctoral thesis; etc. But I think these challenges are clear enough, and other people have already narrated these stages. In any case, none of this appears in bureaucratic and so-called evaluation systems of excellence, in which everything comes down to a list of degrees, scholarships, funding obtained, and impact publications made. In my personal case, what I really wanted was to recover affectivity and emotions from a collective point of view, as I thought they had been put aside in the production of psychosocial knowledge.

When I finished my master's degree and defended my master's thesis in Catalonia, a former undergraduate colleague who was working in educational research invited me to do fieldwork in different Mexican provinces for a large-scale project on initial education. I re-crossed the ocean to collaborate with his team for three months, and soon it became noticeably clear to me that although I was going in the right direction, I needed even more tools. I needed to delve into critical social intervention, and I needed theory, much more theory, because as a famous social psychologist said, there is nothing more practical. I came back and began my doctoral thesis, with the conviction that, at the same time, I needed to go through other research that would test all my assumptions. Luckily, I found some spaces in which to do it.

Thanks to a friend who recommended me, I collaborated as a qualitative research consultant in a prospective study on editorial products. The work was interesting because that team had many years of experience without worrying about the theory or the methodology, and I had all the theory but not their years of experience. And both sides received help from collaboration. Later, following the suggestions of a couple of PhD colleagues, a professor in the department recommended me to advise on the qualitative methodology in research on neonatal autopsy protocols. Strangely, this was while I was pregnant with my first daughter, and I remember that the lead researcher was very concerned about whether I would be affected by the subject or if I would be able to control my emotions. But the truth is that it did not pose any problems for me, and we concluded this investigation successfully; we even presented the results at a conference. I also took part in research fieldwork on blood donation, under the supervision of the same professor, commissioned to the department of social psychology. And with this job I got into the ethnographic tools I am still using now.

Regarding teaching, this professor asked me to make a brief substitution within the sociology degree program. And this was great learning, because until then I had taught only in psychology. The truth is that they were not an accommodating public, and it was made clear to me that teaching innovation strategies are not always welcome. But as I've seen all the movies about exemplary teachers, difficult classrooms, and impacts of vocational teaching, there is nothing that gives me more encouragement than remembering teachers who had left me a mark. So without hesitation, I got involved with the next teaching challenge: online distance learning in a training course and the publication of my first teaching material, for that same course, on conflict management.

During my PhD fellowship, I taught a research practice course on the subjects of my thesis. And there is truth to that saying that there is no better way to learn something than when you must teach it. Also, my partner was offered a course in group dynamics and work equipment for sociocultural animation monitors. He had no experience in group dynamics, and I did not know the world of sociocultural animation, so we put together our skills, prepared it, and taught it. It went all right, and they offered us more courses as a team. But above all, it was a great finding to learn to work in tandem with him, and we have done so ever since, both in teaching and in research. I worked in these courses throughout the doctoral thesis, taking full advantage of my undergraduate training and learning a lot about group management.

Meanwhile, I had moved three times, I consolidated my life as part of a couple, and I had a first baby, who while breastfeeding accompanied me during the writing of the conclusions of my thesis and the final touches. I am aware that my life as a migrant, compared to the experiences of others, has been rather easy (i.e., [Bodovski 2015](#)), but that does not mean that it has not nuanced and marked my work and personal experiences in a number of ways. For example, these included having to prove many more qualifications than if I were not a migrant, having to make it clear that I do not pretend to be a threat, and being considered many times only as 'the spouse of' (even if I had had scholarships, finished my PhD thesis, belonged to the department, or held positions independently and before him).

Once the thesis was over, my next challenge was to find a place in academia. At that time, online university teaching was really something new, and as I knew some colleagues, including my partner, who had started with this as collaborators, I was aware of how it worked. So I applied for a full-time job once I had deposited my thesis, and the university hired me a few months before I defended it. I was hired as a lecturer in the bachelor's degree program in pedagogy because the psychology degree did not yet exist, and my job was to coordinate the social subjects within pedagogy and coordinate the tutors.

In this university, teaching is divided among four contractual arrangements, of which the first three collaborate with the university as external personnel and the last is the only group paid on a full-time basis: (1) consultant professors who take care of the virtual classroom; (2) authors who write the textbooks; (3) tutors who guide the students throughout their journey through the bachelor's degrees; and (4) full-time lecturers who coordinate and manage all this activity and all the people who exercise it, but do not directly teach. The latter was my role, which for a first postdoctoral job was not bad, but that by itself would not have kept me there for six years. What kept me there was that I had to set up the psychology degree. It was like having received everything I asked for in a letter to Santa. Being able to create the psychology career that I would have wanted to study, plus adding everything new that I was learning, was an irresistible temptation.

My boss, who lived abroad before working at this university, had been hired specifically to get psychology going, and for that he hired me and later another lecturer. He turned to designing the technical aspects of the curriculum, and we worked on specifying the contents and their execution in the different areas of the discipline. So we took care of the recruitment and selection of collaborating teaching figures, to the deployment of the last credit of the bachelor's degree. We looked for suitable authors, we commissioned teaching materials for each subject, and we coordinated its execution and supervised its publication. We designed all virtual spaces of teaching in psychology; we guided consultants to think about and implement all evaluation activities; we organized and managed all the teaching teams for the different subjects; and we did the same with the tutoring team.

At the same time, we helped with the selection of candidates to occupy the positions of our counterparts in the other areas of psychology, and when they incorporated, we were able to dedicate ourselves exclusively to the assembling and deploying of all the teaching of our respective areas of expertise, in my case social psychology. In addition to being fully involved in the creation of the psychology degree, I was in the first PhD program the university offered, on cybersociety, and I tutored students and their research as well as taught in online doctoral seminars.

At the same time, I fostered my research activity, creating and coordinating a research group on youth and technology. At that moment this took place with the funding of a local institution, but with the research group we formed, we continued our research in that field to date.

Once everything was underway and consolidated, I decided it was time to change to a university where I could regain face-to-face teaching, theoretical work in social psychology, a feminist perspective in gender studies in academia, and where I could broaden my research interests. This is because at that time, this particular online university was mainly interested in importing talent that had already consolidated research into only two focuses of its interest, e-learning and network society—hotspots that also had to be addressed from a predetermined perspective by the institution. But I still keep technology as a research interest, and to date I continue to work as a consultant professor for this virtual university.

At that time, I had already added another baby to my account. All the earlier reasons were more than enough reasons to make a turn in my career, but there was also the context itself that had changed enormously. Neo-liberal tendencies and the eagerness for so-called 'excellence' began to take strength, and the first spaces where they dug deep were universities with projects that were considered innovative and research centres that wanted to be on the leading edge. Interest in social transformation, commitment to eradicating inequalities, and the necessary theoretical work were not the priority at these sites.

So I went back to the face-to-face university, where I had done my PhD, to work for five years, as a part-time adjunct professor. The person working under this type of contract is supposed to work professionally elsewhere and to teach at university in a complementary way, but not everybody does this, and as a result, a large number of part-time adjunct professors were precariously hired as teaching staff in all Spanish universities for several years. Actually, this is still the contractual arrangement under which most of the teaching at universities is done, as can be seen in any cursory search on this problem (Sánchez Caballero 2019).

Although I had only a part-time contract, I continued with the research group that I had started at the online university and which had achieved recognition as an emerging group from the Catalan government's quality agency. I delved into qualitative methodology and in questioning the stigmatization of many children and youth because of their strong relationship with technology. And I certainly regained my gender gaze to explore this relationship. I also took part in a research on public spaces used to access information and communications technologies (ICTs).

There I taught in undergraduate courses and also in the doctoral program, in which I supervised three doctoral theses. The first doctoral thesis I supervised was from a student, older than me, who had also crossed an ocean to do her PhD after a lifetime of being the head of her household and its principal economic support. Even while she was in Europe, she still took care of much of the managing and monitoring of her family's day-to-day activities. She had a doctoral fellowship and a very limited time and budget to finish her thesis. However, in the research group where she had been assigned at her arrival, she had been told that they did not see her with the ability to conduct the research work needed for a thesis. However, after a seminar she did with me on the autoethnography of technological trajectories (Feliu 2007; Gil Juárez 2007), we found that it was more a problem of the subject of research that the group proposed to her than a problem with her abilities, so she found her own way with this qualitative method and took me through it with great enthusiasm and tireless work. She visited the reference research centre on the subject as many times as it took, although the centre is on another continent. She collected all the necessary information wherever she was, and she took advantage of each and every gap, large or small, in my agenda. And despite having done an excellent job, even on the same day of the defence, I doubted whether she would fail. And yet she kept repeating that whatever happened, she had learned a lot. But I actually learned more. She won the Extraordinary PhD Award, and I won a friend.

The second thesis was also from a student older than me, without a scholarship, who worked at the same time as she wrote her thesis. She had a trajectory considered atypical for having made an

artistic career in parallel and for not following the steps in the order and time marked by academic efficiency. She had been stranded in the thesis for a long time, and also in this case the subject did not help at all: it was not her subject; it was that of the research group that hosted her, but they had not helped her to appropriate it and adjust it to the measure of her interests. So from a joint effort about which we agreed, she became interested in the research we did on youth and ICT. Not only did she finish her thesis, defend it, and obtain a great qualification, but she made our research field her own and continued to collaborate in our group for a long time. We won a colleague.

The third thesis I supervised was again from a doctoral student older than me, without a scholarship as well, working in the field of psychology while writing her PhD—and of course also supporting her family, with an out-of-the-box capacity for work and study. Her interests were broad and varied. She had degrees in psychology, psychopedagogy, humanities, law, and social and cultural anthropology. She had also done postgraduate degrees in stress control and music therapy and master's degrees in psychobiology and neuroscience and another one in social psychology. And within these broad interests she was also interested in the inquiry into gender and technology. I had been her consultant professor at the virtual university and in a couple of continued training courses, and I knew her work well. But still, it did not cease to amaze me. She did novel fieldwork, a good thesis, and an impeccable defence. She also got an Excellent Cum Laude. And she was very happy to finish this stage of her life, because it would allow her to dedicate herself to finishing a degree in criminology that she had initiated!

Apart from the specific topics, what I learned very clearly from these theses was how important it is to supervise theses using a gender perspective; how important it is to empower PhD students and to fight against the 'imposter syndrome' all academics suffer at some point; and how important it is to consider criteria, parameters, and systems of monitoring and evaluation other than excellence, because that is when excellent work can be produced and the possibilities of the doctoral students are equalized.

However, as a part-time adjunct, I could apply for almost no research funding, because this activity is reserved for full-time staff. Yet our curriculum is still evaluated exclusively by the research carried out. Only near the end of my contract there, at last, leaving no stone unturned, I got another kind of funding, a Supplementary Action, comprising funds not restricted to full-time academics. This funding allowed me to enter fully into research on gender and technology, and to investigate why women were not in the spaces of design, decision, and control of technology.

Since we were already amid an economic crisis, there were no openings to consolidate academic careers. And combining part-time jobs, face-to-face and virtual ones, along with any other professional work, was the order of the day. So in the last two years of that period, I also began to work as a part-time adjunct professor at my current university, a hundred kilometres from where I live, and a hundred and thirty from the university in which I worked then.

The chances of consolidating a career were rather slim, but at least there was a chance, so I delved into the tortuous world of accreditations. This is because by that time, the new law of universities had decreed that none of the teaching figures could be hired on a full-time basis without the corresponding accreditation. Additionally, you could not continue as a part-time adjunct if you did not have a non-academic job. So instead of consolidating this entire faculty—all hired precariously as part-time staff (which in Spain is still doing more than 60% of university teaching according to [Sánchez Caballero \(2019\)](#))—suddenly, by decree, this generation of academics became a hindrance. All the investment that the system of public universities had made to train them was to be lost, under the principle that only the person who gets accredited is eligible to compete for a post, will adapt to the system of excellence and merits, and will survive.

3.3. Five Years as Assistant Professor after Obtaining the Corresponding Accreditation; One Year as a Visiting Professor; Two and a Half Years as Interim Associate Professor after the Corresponding Accreditation

After two years as a part-time adjunct professor at my current university, I had to apply twice for the assistant professor accreditation to the local government university quality agency (which allows you to be hired as an assistant professor, tenure track), and I finally obtained it after filing an appeal, with all the investment of time that that means, in addition to the personal questioning and having to stop the research activity to devote myself to the management of my curriculum. Then I worked as an assistant professor for the five years permitted under this type of contract, of course after having to pass the corresponding public examination at my department.

As an assistant professor, I worked in five teaching innovation research projects on the implementation and evaluation of introductory virtual courses in feminist research methodology. As principal investigator, I obtained funding for two projects that I coordinated over five years, on psychosocial factors involved in girls' access to computer engineering. And one of the most important results of these projects was the spontaneous assessment of the people who were affected by our research, because projects have to do with understanding research as a job we do for people, a job to share understandings of the world and to offer interpretations different from the dominant ones, about realities that we socially construct.

For example, in one of the projects we carried out to make visible the difficulties and the ways of getting around those difficulties for women who had studied and/or worked in computer engineering, we left an online contact form for people who visited the website. We received some messages of thanks for talking about this topic, for offering resources to work on it, and for making visible ways to survive it. But there was one response that was particularly rewarding to us. It was from a grandmother who explained to her granddaughter that a girl could devote herself to technology and that it was a possible, legitimate, and more than interesting aspiration. While she was looking for examples of known professional women in technology, to tell her that what interested her had interested other people before, she found our website and all our work, and she was able to explain to her granddaughter why there were no models for her in her daily life. These kinds of recognitions do not serve as evidence or curricular merits, but they are precisely the reason I do research.

All this took place in addition to the usual teaching in the psychology and social work degree programs. I also did and still do teaching in an inter-university master's degree program in gender studies. I also made two stays abroad, of one year and of four months. The first experience was in teaching social psychology (at the only university in Latin America that has an entire degree in social psychology), and the second was in researching gender and technology (in a department that combines a research centre in science, technology, and society plus a research centre in gender and women's studies).

During the first stay, I was invited to give a doctoral seminar in a neighbouring country, and there I met the doctoral student of the fourth thesis, which I am currently co-supervising. This time she is younger than me, a mother of two, without a scholarship and without job stability. Her work has been interrupted several times by the urgencies of daily life, and although remote supervision adds one more difficulty to the equation, I have no doubt that the thesis will reach completion and that it will also be very good. However, in a course on thesis supervision that I attended, as part of ongoing training for teaching staff, it was recommended that I set aside her doctoral supervision and not waste time or effort on a candidate with such 'low' possibilities of success. Even if she cannot finish her PhD or if she does not keep going with me, I think there is life beyond the indicators of 'quality' in doctoral supervision, and it is worth betting on her. She recently sent me a collective book on the research in which she works and invited me to collaborate on a second book.

Regarding stays, I remember that a few years ago, in the informal dinner talk following a round table, the professor who had invited us asked where we had made our stays. I was surprised that she took for granted that we would all have made stays, and also 'stays' in the plural. She was also surprised by a colleague who said embarrassedly that she had done none, and then the professor,

to encourage her, told her that she at her age had not yet done them either. The 'yet' left behind a sepulchral silence—silence that a colleague broke, claiming that he had been to three centres of international prestige and then explaining with a luxury of detail their international prestige. But then, seeing that we were not particularly surprised or that we did not express an explicit desire to do the same, he told us that he had actually suffered a lot. He said that it was not fair to be forced to leave, to go to places you did not know or had anything to do with you, no matter what vital moment you were in, and that he had young children at the time, and that he had a hard time leaving them, knowing that they needed him, especially because in prestigious centres they did not listen much to visiting researchers or receive them with open arms, apart from the circumstance of being very expensive.

In the meantime, in the same period, if I wanted to pursue my academic life, I had to restart the accreditation process, now to be an associate professor. I requested it three times and was denied twice, with the corresponding appeals. On the first occasion, I asked just at the beginning of my contract as assistant to see the points of my CV that needed improvement. The second time, I applied with the conviction that I had improved the only aspect they had negatively assessed (more publications in high-impact journals). But as it took them longer to answer, and they said no, and I had to file an appeal and wait longer for the answer, in the meantime I was left in a kind of contractual limbo. On the one hand my assistant professor contract by law could not continue, and on the other hand I could not access the associate professor category without the corresponding accreditation (even if it was the official response deadlines that had not been met). So I finally decided to present a request a third time, which was when I got the accreditation, in extremis, because at that time I was already with a one-year contract as visiting professor in my own university, which could lead to losing my job.

Finally, with this accreditation in hand, I was hired as an interim associate professor, which is the contract I have had for the last two and a half years. The university has employed accredited faculty, pending the budget needed to call for the corresponding permanent posts, since, according to the regional government, there are not enough resources to do so. I am now 52 years old and waiting for a public examination to finally have a permanent contract.

4. Conclusions

In the last thirty years, the university I joined has ceased to be defined as a space of knowledge production that could lead us to transform society. Instead it is more and more defined as a space that must serve a society that is described as a market (Ibarra 2002). So students have become consumers, teachers have become service providers, and a new type of customer has appeared: companies. In these thirty years the university has become a cog of "academic capitalism" (Slaughter and Leslie 1997). For this to take place, we, the university workers, have accepted the replacement of educational language with the language of management (Sisto 2007), and also our own replacement with managers. We have gone from being those who defined our own goals and aspirations to letting this be done by the university's management structures, under the pressure of neo-liberal guidelines from national and international institutions such as the World Bank (Johnstone et al. 1998).

My autobiographical account reflects the transition from a life centred on an academic project to a life centred on mere survival in the system. As Learmonth and Humphreys (2012) comment, we have gone from seeing us as people who wanted to write and teach based on our political and moral concerns to discover in ourselves another type of self that plays the academic career game. Naturally, it would be easy to criticize this effort to forcefully continue in an institution that is no longer the one we dreamt of; after all, the logical thing would be to depart and look for or even create the desired job outside the academy. However, resigning would also mean accepting defeat—accepting that the institution is lost forever and for everyone. Moreover, this would also be playing the game, accepting that we must be entrepreneurs of our lives and renounce to the collective projects that are public institutions. Neo-liberal discourse extends its networks in complex ways. Gaining a permanent place within the academy is only possible by assuming that this is not a dream fit for majorities but

only for a small number of winners. The endless reduction of tenured posts means that whoever gets one of these seats reproduces, merely for their very success, the rhetoric of personal triumph, thus regulating himself or herself and the others as well (Clarke and Knights 2015).

As a whole, this narrative also facilitates an appreciation that it is not possible to escape a contemporary subjectivity that has in self-management one of its defining features (Grey 1994). The story exemplifies how “Subjects experience their lives in terms of ‘linear progressive career stages in a hierarchy of increasing professionalism’ (Gleeson and Knights 2006, p. 283) that transcend economics to include the whole self, so that the career is a signifier: ‘we are what we make ourselves’ (McKinlay 2002, pp. 596, 597)” (Clarke and Knights 2015, p. 1868). However, neither subjectivity nor expectations are the same now as they were thirty years ago. This life story shows two subjectivities that do not neatly appear consecutively, but that are intertwined, so that the former tries to resist the advent of the latter. The first starts from the exciting idea that the academic career must linearly progress toward the achievement of a solid and stable identity that has a permanent contract as a symbolic and material destination; at this stage the academic can begin to build a welcoming entourage for those who want to pursue a career as well. The second subjectivity, which starts from neo-liberalism demanding a permanent mobilization, a constant change, and an absolute flexibility, appears with pain and resignation as precarity, and it has already occupied the greatest part of my academic life.

The constant activation, searching for funding, or trying to publish in high-impact journals also shows the time regimes to which we are subjected and that accelerate our lives (Müller 2014; Vostal 2016), emptying of us moments to think and reflect (something essential for the production of rigorous knowledge). I judge my life on the basis of an ideal figure who has unlimited time to improve her or his CV, without other priorities or time for care and social responsibility (Conesa 2018)—a disembodied figure (Bailyn 2003).

The figure of the disembodied academic (Bailyn 2003) is also evoked in this story through the doctoral theses I have supervised—all of them to older women or women with children, academics who are no longer expected to have a profitable future in higher education and research. There is therefore a new category of academic ‘refugees’, people who are not welcome in the academy because they will not be able to adapt to the demands of the new employment context. These people will be denied entry into academia unless they find someone who welcomes them, because their gender, age, class, or social capital will not allow them to respond to the demands of the new ways of being acceptable, or because they may not want to adapt to criteria that do not include them and that they challenge (Gómez and Jódar 2013). These people will also not be inclined to choose the research topics that university clients prioritize and can neglect what is not profitable, or they will want to write books (an out-of-fashion communication mode) or use “certain styles of thought and writing [. . .] not functional or not easily manipulated” (Gómez and Jódar 2013, p. 95). As Clarke and Knights (Clarke and Knights 2015, p. 1873) comment,

“This normalizing judgement oppresses and silences deviance—under the gaze, what does not meet the rule departs from it, requiring correction. Individuals are constituted through these knowledge–power effects so writing a book may be punishable and terminal, by career-death.”

Although I identify myself as a teacher, it is surprising, seen in retrospect, the little space that teaching occupies in my story. Of course, there are reasons for this, and the story could not spread indefinitely. But it is not inconsequential that by focusing on precariousness and instability, teaching has been put aside, since, in the Spanish managerialism discourses, teaching is a devalued activity, something that cannot bring resources to the university. Nor is teaching even something that can bring individual recognition or prestige. In this way, the transformation that teaching undergoes, from a calling to a burden, reflects how the discourse of new public managerialism has become an additional technology of the self, a mechanism of self-orientation through which one guides oneself (Foucault 1988). Likewise, accreditations, which in Spain are not easy to apply for and that represent weeks or months of working in order to accumulate original documents and fill out applications, end up becoming an end in themselves, a practice that conditions the rest of the activity for years. I have found myself in need of obtaining four accreditations: assistant professor by the Catalan University Quality

Agency, associate professor by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain, associate professor (civil servant) by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain, and associate professor by the Catalan University Quality Agency. Some of these have required two or three requests and their corresponding appeals to be obtained. Each accreditation is a rite of passage that forces you to voluntarily align with the purposes, visions, and missions of each accreditation agency (Zangaro 2011). As Gómez and Jódar (2013, p. 86) comment, “Through these discursive and practical procedures, academics acquire an ethos, a way of being. In responding to the neoliberal organizational modes, subjectivities are produced that must be competitive, autonomous, responsible, active, versatile and flexible, entrepreneurs of themselves.”

Although my story has only the modest mission of exemplifying in the flesh the neo-liberal transformation of the academy and its inhabitants, it is also an example of how difficult it can be to resist this dynamic, given that as teaching staff and researchers we are responsible for such a transformation. Without our complicity, more or less forced, this would not have been possible. Of course, the burden of responsibility is not the same for those of us who have been precariously contracted over the years as for those who have had the privilege of having permanent contracts. However, even for the latter, the chances of resisting have been slim. One of the traps in which we have all fallen has been precisely that neo-liberal discourse has adopted our vocabulary of creativity, innovation, flexibility, plurality, autonomy, quality, and transparency to confront the rigidity and authoritarianism of the previous bureaucratic rationality (Gómez and Jódar 2013; Lorenz 2012). Those who have wanted to retain a model of safe and stable recruitment have been accused of defending their privileges and of being responsible for alleged inbred practices that would have discredited Spanish and Latin American universities. For this reason, trying to acquire a stable position, for example, by publishing in mainstream journals to have the possibility of building a space of freedom is, as Clarke and Knights (2015) say, in some ways illusory, since it does not change the demands of managerialism but rather supports them in practice.

Although I would like to end this article on an optimistic note, it is difficult for me to formulate such optimism from the weariness that involves all the work done in search of that stable and secure academic identity. Safe spaces probably no longer exist, and if there are some left, they do not allow us to reverse this dynamic. However, let us hope that the possibility of publishing these more personal texts can serve as more than just a venting exercise, but can allow others to visualize and plan a different future for academia, a future based on more personal relationships and built on an ethics of care which can help to resist injustice, as feminist literature suggests (Gilligan 2011).

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Joel Feliu for his comments and careful review of the manuscript and Anna Vitores and Maria Feliu for their comments on an earlier version of the central tale.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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