

# Time as Becoming Women and Travel<sup>1</sup>

CLAUDIA MATUS

*Florida International University*

**T**HE REPRESENTATION and uses of time have critical implications for the ways we orient discourses, practices, and bodies in institutions of higher education. Performing time in a taken-for-granted fashion incites practices of regulation, prescription, and limitation which deserve to be talked about. In this work, I discuss the naturalization of time using the experiences of women who travel “abroad” to obtain their graduate degrees and their subsequent narratives of “going back to their home countries.” I seek to bring the discussion of time to the fore to explore the potential of ideas of becoming and of the new, particularly in times where the notions of fluidity, movement, and openness have been described as constituent elements of contemporary cultural and social life. The experiences of movement, dislocation, displacement, and reorientation lived by these women serve to explore the ways in which imagined notions of time support normalizing discourses and practices in academia.

In this article, I understand curriculum as a lived text (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2000, p. 446), aligned with ideas of temporality worked by authors interested in the connections between phenomenology and curriculum (Aoki, 1993; Huebner, 1975; Jardine, 1992). To reflect on how these women’s experiences interrupt and trouble issues of knowledge is a way to understand curriculum as a generative text. These women academics’ stories of knowledge represent contradictions rendered invisible by traditional accounts of curriculum practice, signaling the complexities when adding notions of movement, duration, variation, and flux to the ways we imagine knowledge and curriculum. As curriculum traditionally has been characterized with metaphors of paths and signs of linearities and continuities, to analyze the experiences of women mobilizing knowledge allows questioning if it is possible to abandon the path, and if it is so, where we should be looking in order to recognize those dissonances and slippages.

---

<sup>1</sup> The writing of this article was supported by Fondecyt (Chilean National Commission of Scientific and Technological Research), project No 1050741. The ideas expressed are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the commission.

Universities today, as active “players” within the global economy, have pushed internationalization policies as a desirable standard to meet. In this environment, higher education institutions privilege the movement of students and academics. Academics’ mobility and flexibility appear as directed toward convenient institutional ends but with scarce problematization of the reconfiguration of institutional practices due to these experiences of “going abroad.” Institutional discourses and policies ignore the “geopolitics of intellectual practices and their effect on other geographies, other people, and other cultures” (Sidhu, 2006, p. 61).

The fact that these academics’ experiences of movement have been subjected to a number of concrete regulations such as visa restrictions and institutional commitments in their “home countries,” among others, the usual ways of claiming knowledge about their experiences are through already worked out ideas of the immigrant, the foreigner, the journey, the home. These ideas are imagined as isolated and unproblematic segments of the narration of “going abroad” but not as constitutive and reproductive dimensions of the meanings of these experiences.

The taken-for-granted institutional temporal imagination perceives these academics’ experiences in a linear, predictable, and unproblematized manner: they go abroad, complete their degrees, and come back. This already sounds as if it were possible “to claim a single universal duration” (Casey, 1999, p. 94) of the experiences of these people. In this linear and traditional way to give meaning to these experiences, time is understood as “divisible into a static past, a given present, and a predictable future” (Grosz, 1999, p. 9). In simple terms, this way of using time perpetuates static meanings of what it is to bring knowledge “back to the nation,” the practices of being an outsider, and impedes, as a consequence, more productive imaginaries of becoming. These representations and uses of time not only perpetuate repetition and circularity of discourses of spatial orientations, nation, and instrumental knowledge in academia, but also deprive us of “becoming something other, we know not yet what” (Rajchman, 1999, p. 48). To think and perform time as a succession requires imagining and confining the self as *being someone we already know*, which in this article, is read as problematic and in need of questioning.

As a way to understand how traditional representations and uses of time operate in universities, as we know them today, concepts such as competitiveness in the market, self-regulatory/monitoring systems, efficiency, customer service, and the idea of internationalization need to be considered as part of the major discourses producing specific temporalities. Under the meta-discourse of market competitiveness, time is represented as an assertive line that moves between two points. Direction and anticipation are possible only if I know what is coming next. Using Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) metaphor of space that comprises the idea of time, I come to know that

the smooth and the striated [spaces] are distinguished first of all by an inverse relation between the point and the line (in the case of the striated, the line is between two points, while in the smooth, the point is between two lines). (p. 480)

In other words, the striated space represents the logical arrangement of trajectories where positions and locations are easily determined by a defined beginning and end. Here time is understood as “divided into standard and standardizing units that are like snapshots of transition” (Massumi, 2002, p. 167). In the case of the smooth space, orientations are more fluid and not pre-defined by an already designed route or path. In this representation of space, time requires theorizing as an open-ended dimension.

In the case of striated space, time is used as a predictable pattern which provides an image of the world that can be presented, monitored, evaluated, and reproduced. In the case of the academic world, it represents a trace where straight lines are ready to be followed. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) clarify this idea when commenting on the difference between the figure of a map and a tracing: “What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it [the map] is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious” (p. 12). Then, they go further: “A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back ‘to the same.’ The map has to do with performance, whereas the tracing always involves an alleged ‘competence’” (p. 13). These ways of imagining experiences using a linear representation of time mark meanings, subjectivities, and practices to previous and already established ways of being, knowing, and behaving. As Derrida expresses, “. . . when the path is given . . . the decision is already made” (as quoted in Lather, 2007, p. 15). As I mentioned before, these normative narratives of time are at the center of nearly every definition and practice in higher education. For instance, the use of the discourse of quality assurance to govern higher education is based on the logic of standards which set a specific point of departure and arrival for processes and practices in higher education. Once these departure and arrival points have been set up, institutional efforts are directed toward meeting those ends. This implies a singular and specific way to imagine, inhabit, and perform institutional time. Moreover, market-based orientations and managerial accountability systems also shape a subject’s sense and experience of time. The discourse of the expert, as an external entity that monitors and surveils the functioning of others in higher education, prevents spontaneity and non-linear behaviors and favors the circularity of homogeneity, repetition, and regularity. As Lyotard (1984) reminds us,

The decision makers, however, attempt to manage these clouds of sociality according to input/output matrices, following a logic which implies that their elements are commensurable and that the whole is determinable. They allocate our lives for the growth of power...[and] the legitimation of that power is based on its optimizing the system’s performance-efficiency. (p. xxiv)

These temporal patterns described above incite specific ways to read women academics’ experiences of going abroad to earn their graduate degrees, which are confined to already-made imaginations of ways of doing, behaving, and inhabiting institutional spaces. Interestingly universities address the return of these academics under the discourse of “academic reinsertion.” Under these practices of institutional reinsertion that indicate where to start, where to go, and how to behave, it is important to ask how academic subjectivities exercise and practice this conditioned autonomy and authenticity. The ways these women talk about their experiences are crucial to question the perseverance of certain temporal imaginaries (such as the *coming back professor*) that reassert specific academic identities premised on essentialized notions of time. To imagine the knower and what she/he does under this a-political notion of time sustains an unquestionable set of practices and meanings in higher education institutions.

It is in this context that this article problematizes how intellectual practices of travel have been normalized by traditional understandings of time with critical implications such as those that repeat and circulate normative ideas and practices in academia. To trouble normative ways of using time in universities requires the uses of time as a force, which means that time can be thought of as something else (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Grosz, 1999), not only as locked in the

idea of the succession of specific units. Therefore, one of the goals of this article is to use these narratives of academics who travel “abroad” to question the “promise of the new” (Grosz, 1999). As Elizabeth Grosz (1999) proposes, to rethink

temporality in terms of the surprise of the new, the inherent capacity for time to link, in extraordinarily complex ways, the past and present to a future that is uncontained by them and has the capacity to rewrite and transform them. (p. 7)

### The Site, the Subject, and Methodological Approaches

I use excerpts from interviews with women academics in Chile from two different universities to show how the uses of time sustain, and probably revitalize, neutral and universal discourses of spatial orientations, the nation, and instrumental knowledge. The chosen interviews are part of a larger project whose purpose was to understand uses of policies and practices of internationalization of higher education in Chile. I interviewed thirty women in multiple disciplines, including natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts, who obtained their graduate degrees in Australia, the United States of America, England, and Spain. As I mentioned before, a substantial dimension of the internationalization initiatives in higher education institutions are oriented to “sending” and “receiving” students and academics to and from different parts of the world. As expected, Chilean universities are mimicking the global tendency to foster academic movement as highly desirable to respond to “global standards” that construct mobility as a characteristic of “global times” and as a source of privilege and important means to increase economic resources for the institution.

When reading the interviews, I was interested in what may seem repetitive and taken-for-granted when these women narrate their experiences of going back to their institutions. In reading the interviews, some of the questions that came to my mind were: How do these women use ideas of time and what do they reiterate? How do the uses of time serve the stabilization of neutral discourses in academia? And finally, how does time, as a force, offer a way to think about the *becoming* and the *new*?

In the following pages I discuss the uses of time and its functioning as a frame to reproduce and repeat discourses. I focus on the ways in which women narrate their experiences of *going abroad* and *coming back* in relation to the production of narratives of spatial orientations, the perseverance of the idea of the nation, and the reproduction of the notion of neutral knowledge. The reiteration of these ideas demands a constant affirmation of time as a way of passing and the knower as someone we already know. I intend to show that these people’s narratives offer a critical scenario to talk about how the tenacious hold of the language of traditional time revitalizes the neutral and universalized understanding of how we inhabit places, reproduces practices of a contained self, and repeats unquestionable essentialisms.

### Spatial Orientations—Mapping Time

In this section I explore how narratives of linear time relate to specific orientations towards spaces (geographical and institutional) represented by the interviewees’ experiences. There is a distinctive determination of boundaries made by these academics between the self and the world,

that in many ways are products of the uses of normative ideas of time. The purpose is to show how these ways of confining experiences to a certain logic of time creates ideas of spaces as containers of happenings and, by doing this, reaffirms specific orientations towards objects and practices. The confinement of experiences to traditional ways of thinking time and space establishes and formalizes a way to behave in institutions, allowing specific understandings of what “counts” as experiences of “going abroad” and “coming back.” The idea of space presented by the participants through their narratives suggests that space is inhabited by “things”; therefore, the possibility of change and movement is only an attribute of time. For instance, one of the participants mentions that

...the process of coming back does not happen, and if it happens, you are all the time tumbling, the only thing that you want is to come back to where you come from...I came back [to Chile] three years ago, but the truth is that I came back only a couple of months ago.

The idealized process of “coming back” expressed by this participant seems problematic. Expectations about the institutional meanings of their *returning* processes show the dissonances between what has happened to them in time and what is not absorbed by the place they inhabit. What I think is interesting is how the construction of a static, contained past offers a specific way to imagine the relation between the academic and the institutional space. To imagine spaces as absolute containers of experiences suggests that time reflects a *past* only possible to be accounted for. This kind of subjection to places, depending on specific ways to imagine time, requires a specific subject—a subject who is determined to *be* the teller of that past and the promoter of the predictable future based on that history.

The way these women are constructing ideas of time as a way to re-orient themselves to geographic experiences has something to say about the possibilities of imagining themselves as something else, not yet to be known. To “come back,” as expressed by these women, involves a nostalgic account of the past. As these women orient themselves toward time as central to their experiences, space becomes a passive construction to be inhabited. What matters here is what it does to imagine space as subjected to time. As Sarah Ahmed (2006) points out, “To be oriented around something means to make that thing central, or as being as the center of one’s being or action” (p. 116).

One of the participants shows how the representation of space is subjected to imaginations of time,

what happens is that the institution remains immune to the changes experienced by the academic after four or five years being abroad. So a struggle starts between what I hope is going to happen after coming back and what really happens, and that is hard to bear.

The passivity of space against the idea of an active time, as where experiences actually happen, is a problematic construction mainly because it dissociates and depoliticizes the past in relation to the present. To grant the past the possibility to disappear, to no longer act, is a way to maintain the neutrality of institutional spaces. Institutions remain untouched by the complex experiences of travel. Taken-for-granted ideas of time and space allow the reproduction and repetition of subjectivities, meanings, symbols, and practices. As Elizabeth Grosz (1995) re-

minds us, “The kinds of world we inhabit, and our understandings of our places in these worlds are to some extent an effect of the ways in which we understand space and time” (p. 97).

What most of these narratives do is to reaffirm representations of a past, present, and future as divisible and self-contained. This notion of time creates an absolute space, a “spatialization of time” (Grosz, 1999, p. 6), which incites the proliferation of other discourses, such as nation and instrumental knowledge, and revitalizes an unquestionable separation between geographies, which reproduces essentialisms and hierarchies of power. Neil Smith and Cindi Katz (1993) explain that “it is not space per se that expresses power, but the thoroughly naturalized absolute conception of space that grew up with capitalism” (p. 76), which indicates that money (along with race, gender, sexuality, etc.) dictates access and therefore determines the experience of space. The “absoluteness of space” (Smith & Katz, 1993, p. 75) expressed by the participants of this study appears equally impossible to question. For instance, one of the participants comments when describing her experience being abroad:

I think it is very important that we can look at our country with a more international perspective. To do what you have to do in order to earn certain standards, if not, we [meaning Chilean academics] stay too isolated, and we will be perceived as a small little town. It is important to observe situations from the outside. From the outside you can observe the good and the bad of your country. I think the world is not in a moment where we can choose to live in isolation.

The repetition of geographic representations such as “outside” and “inside,” “abroad” and “home country,” shows the perseverance of essentialist ideas involved in the construction of spaces. These oppositional ways of perceiving and representing spaces have succeeded through a specific understanding of time. To imagine time as a sequence of pieces and experiences reinforces the imagination of space as the container of those pieces. Doreen Massey (1993) reminds us, “Over and over again, time is defined by such things as change, movement, history, dynamism; while space, rather lamely by comparison, is simply the absence of those things” (p. 148). To experience space as a reservoir of contacts, symbols, and meanings suggests that people “arrive” to a pre-defined set of practices that require accommodation to be lived. In this notion of time dislocated from space, time becomes a way of passing, producing depolitized spaces. Women academics’ going back experiences are fabricated around these atemporal ideas of space.

As an example of the spatialized construction of these experiences another participant eloquently expresses: “Chile is perceived as a place away from the world, away from the places where things really happen, away from the First World.” What these ideas do is to naturalize the relationship between space and time reinforcing a “position-gridded space” (Masumi, 2002, p. 15). As a consequence of this spatial and temporal orientation, other constructs, such as nation, become revitalized.

### The Nation—Revitalized

My argument in this section is that the essentialized ideas of the nation sustained by the participants in this study have, as antecedents, the separation of time and space, where time is claimed to be a dimension governing the construction of essential spaces. Time, as a divisible past, present, and future, creates specific ways to imagine the nation, which in turn produce

specific practices and languages for women in academia, such as nationalisms and patriotic impulses. For instance, Alarcon, Kaplan, and Moallen (1999), when discussing the transnational subjects of feminist movements, note that international movement "...relies on and reinforces the discrete nature of the nation, reifying and mystifying the historical phenomenon of the modern state" (p. 13).

In the case of the interviewees' narratives, there is a repetitive disposition to talk about the nation as an entity in need of constant reconstruction. One of the participants notes:

...it is not only to bring knowledge from the outside. It also has to do with the fact that we go outside and show what we are doing. We need to be that bridge within Latin America, in other words, I want to believe that the processes of internationalization contribute to the fostering of our identity.

Following the same nationalistic tone, another interviewee suggests,

... at the end you are representing a country. You arrive to this other country and nobody knows a thing about Chile. At least, this is what happens to Chile because it is a far away country, you are not representing yourself, you represent a community.

The self-identity of the nation requires duties and responsibilities to be performed. The sense of belonging and the desire to bind oneself to territories are produced and reproduced through the insistence of the notion of a community and the unified identity of a group.

For instance, one of the participants states that when thinking of going abroad for graduate studies, sponsored by countries different than the home country, there is a fear that these academics will become "experts" in issues pertaining the interests of the other nations, which leads her to state, "every time you are making decisions that distance you from Chile, and you get integrated to another country's interests, it is one lost brain for Chile." As these women start experiencing gendered, disciplinary, and institutional constraints themselves once they are "back," the normalized construction of ideas of a nation constitutes itself as a way to sustain a certain stability to represent their experiences of being "abroad." This produces problematic imaginations of the relations between the knower and the purposes of knowing. In other words, knowledge serves to sustain and bind the imagination of a nation and a unitary identity.

In a different reading of these experiences, one could argue that they produce a deterritorialization of the knower, but at the same time, the experiences of being outside reterritorialize the knower (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). As Deleuze and Guattari explain,

reterritorialization must not be confused with a return to a primitive or older territoriality: it necessarily implies a set of artifices by which one element, itself deterritorialized, serves as a new territoriality for another, which has also lost its territoriality as well. (p. 174)

For example, in the case of these women's experiences, the idea of nation (always slippery) acts as the meaningful signifier from where to reterritorialize the knower, but at the same time, it creates a strong revitalization of the meaning of the nation itself. What is reproduced is the fiction of a nation as an entity that demands identities and communities in order to survive and

compete with other nations within the world economy. The idea of the nation revitalizes itself with renewed meanings. For instance, one of the participants notes that:

...to go abroad does not guarantee that you are going to be better.... What I think is good is to have the capacity to experience going abroad but to focus your research interests in Chile, do you understand what I am saying? In other words, to take the U.S. or European experiences to improve your research methods and procedures, theoretical frameworks, etc., but I think that your research interests must be located in Chile.

In a different interview, a participant recalls, “I had the chance to go back to Australia, but I did not feel motivated, because I always thought that the knowledge you get, being a little bit patriotic, you have to use it to improve something in Chile.” As I mentioned before, these academics’ specific ways to orient themselves to geographical spaces in relation to knowledge reproduces and circulates essentialized constructions of identities and national territories. Knowledge is used to reproduce the fiction of the nation. These women’s narratives indicate their desire to retain a national identity; at the same time, they invoke boundaries and express good intentions directed to the well-being of the nation. All these facilitate new expressions of nationalist sentiments generated by the logics of academic travel. As Benedict Anderson argues, “nations are brought into being by peoples whose access to print culture enables collective imagination of involvement in political and cultural projects that extends back into a ‘immemorial past’ and ‘glides into a timeless future’” (as quoted in Weinbaum, 2007, p. 167). Women’s narratives embody the future of the nation. As Pheng Cheah (1999) contends, “the nation, in other words, guarantees an eternal future” (p. 177). To desire and imagine the permanency of a nation suggests that the past precedes the present. In these women’s narratives, the future of the nation is constructed through the image of a specific kind of knowledge, a kind of knowledge which does not dialogue with the world around, a knowledge that follows the game of a dual temporality, that is past and future. To rely on practices of guarding the future of the nation and the stability of the institution is a way for these women to define their academic intelligibility. This, of course, resonates with traditional stories of subordination of women, which can be understood as a reinscription of masculine practices.

When analyzing academic’s ideas of the nation, space, geography, and/or territory are treated as a structure to sustain. And, as many scholars have noted, women’s commitment to the building of the nation has different venues to be expressed. For example, Alys Eve Weinbaum (2007) suggests that “...men and women participate differently in nation-building and that reproductive heterosexuality plays a decisive role in the creation of nationalist ideologies, which are, in turn deeply gendered and heteronormative” (p. 169). Women contribute actively

in nationalist struggles for liberation; as mothers, the biological reproducers of subjects and national populations; as upholders of the boundaries of nations through restrictions on reproductive sexuality and the circumscription of marriage within ethnic and racial groups; as teachers and transmitters of national culture; and as symbolic signifiers of nations. (Yuval-Davis & Anthias, as quoted in Weinbaum, 2007, p. 167)

Normative time uses and reuses existing gender hierarchies to reproduce ideas of the nation, notions of attachment, and the need to protect an imagined community. At the same time, the



idea of the nation normalizes time which, consequently, reiterates practices of submission to the already-given.

These nationalist constructions unfold other connected discourses such as the proliferation of instrumental knowledge.

### Knowledge—Travels

My interest in this section is to discuss how academic women situate themselves in institutional practices and how knowledge can be talked in a way that reflects and includes the breakdowns in representing the experiences of going abroad. What do the uses of time (as we know it) do to the practices and meanings of *doing* knowledge?

The ways these women talk about politics and representations of knowledge when *returning* offers a possibility to trouble what it is repeated and revitalized by discourses of globalization and objectified knowledge. Knowledge takes the figure of a product mobilized between spaces. When knowledge comes to be a part of the equation, academics do not *do knowledge*, they acquire it, and make it travel and spread. The academics' narratives show the repetition of neutral ideas of knowledge and how they help preserve authoritarian practices in higher education. For these people, who have gone through processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), the past, as part of the becoming of the knower, is bracketed, set aside. The past can be told as an experience to be recounted, but it is not told as an interruption to how they know. What interests me is that most of their narratives express a desire to be intelligible, institutionally speaking. And apparently to do so, they "...need to repeat the familiar and normalized" (Lather, 2007, p. 39). The contradictions lived by these women are diverse; for instance, one of the participants eloquently expresses: "You come back with the feeling that you want to share all you've learned, but when you get back it does not work like this and this is the moment in time when you start feeling contradicted and scared." These expressions of anxieties around their institutional experiences show some of the reactions to the dissonances they go through.

Another way to understand the ways these women proliferate ideas of knowledge as something people mobilize between places is related to those discourses that insist on academic performance, auditing, and accountability. Under these discourses knowledge needs to be represented as *something* in order to be accounted for. As a consequence, this way to represent knowledge neutralizes the complexities of what it means to be an academic constructing knowledge in a context of global movement. In this way of understanding knowledge, "... a person does not have to know how to be what knowledge says [s]he is" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 26).

Another interesting point one of the participants makes is how creating knowledge while abroad is perceived as an open, creative, and transformative experience. She states: "... to go abroad helps you abandon a more traditional way of thinking." My question here is what kind of knowledge or way of knowing is it that they abandon, and to what extent, until when? If *going abroad* invokes a past, a different way of doing, then, when they return, they become encapsulated in tradition, whatever that means. They come back to the limits imposed by disciplines and institutions. If I follow what Grosz (2005) explains, "... [past and present] exist, they 'occur' at the same time. The past and present are created simultaneously" (p. 103), then what are those forces that incite these women to conform to and repeat frames of references, spatial divisions of

experiences, and to confine themselves to imaginations of time? If time were conceptualized and imagined in a different way, as “not simply mechanical repetition, the causal effects of objects on objects, but the indeterminate, the unfolding and the emergence of the new” (Grosz, 2005, p. 110), the dialogue between those experiences that reconstruct a past as static with the refiguration of the new, of the not-yet-to become, would require different discourses about what is to be known and the knower.

The ways they construct their experiences of *return* reflect not only a return to a specific place left behind, but a return to foundations, to referents, to the ways they used to *do knowledge*. Another participant expresses her frustrations when talking about the sacralization of disciplines and what it does to her present work. She states:

In Social Sciences there is an academic dialogue, but it is restricted because of the disciplinary limits. Somehow the college urges, implicitly, to use the theoretical assumptions pertaining to the disciplines you are in (psychology, sociology or social work) and, when the disciplinary fields get integrated, a delegitimation is produced. For instance, I have been presenting my research advances to some of my colleagues using concepts that do not belong to psychology, and they do not understand me or they resist to understand. That is very serious to me.

This rigidity raises critical questions about how the experiences of going abroad in relation to knowledge complicate the politics of knowledge in universities. It is like knowledge is already set as a path to follow (Ahmed, 2006), as a strict line that guides and orients bodies, practices, and imaginaries. If it is so, experiences of going abroad and coming back for these women academics are decisions already made. It is, as Brian Massumi (2002) expresses, “if you know where you will end up when you begin, nothing has happened in the meantime” (p. 18).

These passages show the dependence created around traditional conceptual systems that dictate a way to behave and follow already authorized paths. The repetition of institutional and disciplinary constructions assures and protects the continuum, the stability of knowledges, the definition of the objects to know, and certainly, the identity of the knower. Sidhu (2006) explains,

Only certain objects are talked about and then only certain ways within disciplinary paradigms. Historically, the discourses of women, indigenous people, and many non-Western people, along with other minorities, have been constructed as irrational, and their knowledges subsequently subordinated. Overall, the rules of discourse contribute toward a tendency by disciplines to remain fixed in time and space. (p. 33)

In this case, women’s aspirations take shape as the result of limits. The way they understand and interpret knowledge normalizes their subjectivities. They subject themselves to what is already given. Also Lyotard (1984) reminds us that

we know today that the limits the institution imposes on potential language ‘moves’ are never established once and for all (even if they have been formally defined). Rather, the limits are themselves the stakes and provisional results of language, strategies, within the institutions and without. (p. 17)

Women's representations of knowledge tell me that there are at least two ways in which they imagine what they do. One is unquestioned, imposed, technocratized, unscrutinized, institutionalized. The other is something they have to struggle for, not recognized, invalidated, more creative. This may be connected to what Lyotard (1984) describes as scientific knowledge and narrative knowledge. He explains,

In the first place, scientific knowledge does not represent the totality of knowledge; it has always existed in addition to, and in competition and conflict with another kind of knowledge, which I will call narrative in the interest of simplicity. (p. 7)

What these women describe as a complex practice of creating knowledge when they are back tells about their involvement in both the normalization and revitalization of practices of power. As an example of the critical meanings of knowledge one interviewee explains:

If you work around problematic issues such as the H.I.V. you have to name them in a different way. I have modified my research a little bit because I am part of this institution [religious institution] and, the truth is that it hasn't been an obstacle to do my work. In fact, my work is very complicated from a religious perspective, and I have never seen a closed door.

The same participant in a different line notes,

At one point we had to talk to one religious authority, because of our research study on issues of sexuality. We had to explain that we were aware that the topic was a sensitive one, and this person gave us his support. The only thing he requested was discretion, in the sense that not to be public and appear in newspapers as faculty members of the X University.

The ways these women revitalize normative practices of knowledge creation guarantee the identity of the knower as apolitical. Institutions dictate the kind of research to be done and the ways it should be communicated. For instance, one of the participants who speaks as a member of a religious institution expresses:

Well, for instance, there is a very interesting discussion about the uses of the day-after pill. As you may imagine, there are institutional effects because of the topic. I talk as a religious person, and I value my position. But in this case, it is the same when we talk about abortion or the divorce law, by teaching the students about divorce, it does not mean that we favor divorce.

The lack of politics of knowledge produced by the imagination that knowledge is something people move around, not something that people *do*, resonates with the idea of detachment produced by the uses of time understood as discrete units of succession (past, present, and future). This way to understand and give meaning to knowledge confines the self as a predictable subjectivity who *reinserts* her/himself into already existing institutions and disciplines.

In a different but related dimension, these women talk about their experiences of institutional exclusion. One of them states:

sometimes I have the impression that these dynamics of discrimination are produced because I am perceived as a menace because of the new knowledge I bring, and the new ways I have to work. This is one of the reasons why it is so hard to find an academic space when you are back.

Again, knowledge as a practice constitutes a way to differentiate what these women do from institutional practices. The experiences of constructing knowledge in a more open, creative, and political manner make these people question the institutional present and the precautions they have to face. For instance, another participant expresses some kind of confusion when trying to explain why her academic activities have not been as successful as she expected:

I have like six papers in process, I even have the tables with results, but I still cannot sit down and write. Now, as I told you, it may be something related to my personality, I am not sure, but there are some people who do it anyway, so I think that it is because I tried to do only the hours I am paid for.<sup>1</sup>

As might be predictable, one of the participants questions the fact of being a woman and she states: “[the fact of being a woman] . . . does not assure that whatever you say is going to be accepted, but I do believe that going abroad helps you having a healthy self esteem, right?” In these two comments, the lack of politics to interpret the institutional experiences they go through speaks to the representations of institutional spaces as a container of meanings and symbols where they “arrive” to. This depoliticization of institutional knowledge incites them to promote repetition of traditional uses of power (e.g., gender, sexuality, race, etc.) in a non-critical manner.

What is interesting to me is the propensity of these women to conform and follow the comfortable (even gender is narrated as a comfortable position). It is as if they discipline themselves to forge the idea of stability and institutional obedience. As Grosz, when describing Deleuze’s worries about the production of the new (1995) explains,

It is as if the forces of knowledge and power cannot tolerate difference, the new, the unthought, the outside, and do all that they can to suppress it, force it to conform to expectation, to fit into a structure, be absorbable, assimilable, and digestible without disturbance or perturbation. (p. 130)

And these women act as if they believe the same.

## Conclusions

The circulation and repetition of normalized discourses presented by these women’s narratives illustrate the persuasive force of time, time as a way of passing that acts upon us, and goes beyond our control. To think and perform time as a succession requires the confirmation of the self as someone we already know. Time works as a trace, as a line to follow, a pattern to revitalize. From this point of view, women academics will always come back to *the same*. If time is understood this way to explain what is happening to these women, then time becomes a performance that entails a *being* (different from becoming), a subjectivity we already know.

When Elizabeth Grosz (2005) discusses Deleuze and Bergson's ideas about life, duration, and history, she says that these ideas "...are never either a matter of unfolding and already work out blueprint or simply the gradual accretion of qualities which progress stage by stage of piecemeal over time" (p. 111). In this article, time has been posed as a question, as the possibility to interrupt the preconceived notions of who we are and what we do.

Time, traditionally imagined as mechanical repetition, functions in implicit ways. As Grosz (1999) explains "[time] tends to function as a silent accompaniment, a shadowy implication underlying, contextualizing, and eventually undoing all knowledges and practices without being their explicit object of analysis or speculation" (p. 1). The collective imagination of time as intangible neutralizes the notion of time as a force of becoming. If time works as the silent entity behind our representations, it must also work as a force. As Bergson explains time also incites "the indeterminate, the unfolding and the emergence of the new: 'Time is something. Therefore it acts. Time is what hinders everything from being given at once. It retards, or rather it is retardation. It must therefore be elaboration'" (as quoted in Grosz, 2005, p. 110).

What I have done in this article is to trouble potential *becomings* through the experiences of travel of women academics. To conceptualize time as becoming means that we have to interrupt the reduction of time as the frame that dictates temporal orders (e.g., causality). Time as becoming is "an opening up which is at the same time a form of bifurcation or divergence" (Grosz, 1999, p. 4). In this sense, time is seen as the possibility of the new, of the unpredictable. Elizabeth Grosz (1999) when discussing the work of Nietzsche, Deleuze, and Bergson, states that

it is significant that this future-oriented temporality brings with it the centrality of the concept of chance, of what is in principle unpredictable, is of the essence of a time that is not regulated by causality and determination but unfolds with its own rhythms and logic, its own enigmas and impetus. (p. 4)

To imagine and perform time this way implies that the knower is open to the unpredictability of the future, to experience becoming someone else, someone she/he does not know. This also brings the possibility to unfolding complex experiences of knowing. As Grosz (1999) argues, "We cannot know what the new will bring, what the promise of the future is for us: to know the future is deny it as future, to place it as a given, as past" (p. 6). By exploring the representations and uses of time of these women academics, it is clear to me that the power of traditional ideas of time prevent people from the new and the surprise of the unknown. Their narratives portray a highly stable definition of time as succession that is based on the idea that past-present-future are separated and independent segments of a trace. In this imaginary, the self is restricted to perform and embody the characteristics of each portion of the trace: past as a given, present as the transition to what is next, and future as the consolidation of the anticipation grounded in the present. To naturalize these temporal dimensions implies erasing the knower from the known, and impeding anything that relates to the "yet-to-come."

If time were seen as a force that incites an unknown future, a future with no linear precedents, how would these women's narratives look? What if we actualize the idea of time? How would new thinking of time transform the relations between travel, internationalization, and knowledge?

The imaginations of these women about who they are and what they do reflect habits of memory. My argument here is that the repetition of pasts in the presents signals the reproduction of the same, of what we already know. Therefore, concepts and meanings such as nation, will

continue being stuck on time. The reinvention of time as an open-ended dimension transforms political and cultural imaginations of ideas of internationalization and travel in academia.

Time as becoming resonates with other concepts such as openness, randomness, the yet-to-come, the new. Elizabeth Grosz (1999) when discussing the approaches of *time as difference* explains, “. . . each in his way [referring to Deleuze, Bergson, and Nietzsche] affirms time as open-ended and fundamentally active force—a materializing if not material-force whose movements and operations have an inherent element of surprise, unpredictability, or newness” (p. 4). If uses of time resonate more with indeterminacy of the future, in what ways are the past and present in dialogue with the knower and what is to be known? Probably, discourses of internationalization and movement of academics will not be oriented to only “secure *the* truth, but to explore the dimensions of the multiple forms of knowing and practices by which truths are ascertained” (Alcoff, 1999, p. 75).

Time, as a force, offers the possibility to think who we are and what we do otherwise. To think the new, to unfold the unexpected, to provoke the unpredictable. These women academics’ stories show how the unconscious uses of time reiterate essentialisms and ways of doing. The predictability, anticipated duration, and already-worked-out temporalities of these women’s experiences tell that time (as we know it) works as another strategic effect of self-regulation. To trouble the regularity of their temporal movement and meanings attached to their experiences seems important, particularly, if they are related to other constructions (space, nation, and knowledge) that are in need of being reimagined.

My aim here has been to mobilize my own way to think time. These women’s experiences helped me to imagine the “knower to come” and to imagine the reinvention of the time of the travel. Time has served as a framework to question those impulses beyond our control that impede us to think otherwise.

## NOTES

1. She speaks from an administrative position which is a very common activity performed by women academics when they are back.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. (2006). *Orientations, objects, others. Queer phenomenology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Alarcon, N., Kaplan, C., & Moallen M. (1999). Introduction: Between woman and nation. In *Between woman and nation. Nationalisms, transnational feminisms, and the state* (pp. 1–16). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Alcoff, L (1999). Becoming an epistemologist. In E. Grosz (Ed.), *Becomings. Exploration in time, memory, and futures* (pp. 55–75). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Aoki, T. (1993). Legitimizing lived curriculum: Toward a curricular landscape of multiplicity. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 8(3), 255–168.
- Casey, E. (1999). The time of the glance: Toward becoming otherwise. In E. Grosz (Ed.), *Becomings. Exploration in time, memory, and futures* (pp. 29–41). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- Cheah, P. (1999). Spectral nationality: The living-on [sur-vie] of the postcolonial nation in neocolonial globalization. In E. Grosz (Ed.) *Becomings. Explorations of time, memory, and futures* (pp. 176–200). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus. Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Grosz, E. (1995). Space, time, and bodies. In E. Grosz, *Space, time, and perversion* (pp. 83–101). New York: Routledge.
- Grosz, E. (1999). *Becomings. Exploration in time, memory, and futures*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Grosz, E. (2005). *Time travels. Feminism, nature, power*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Huebner, D. (1975). Curriculum as the concern for man's temporality. In W. Pinar (Ed.), *Curriculum theorizing: The reconceptualists* (pp. 237–249). Berkeley, CA: Mc.Cutchan.
- Jardine, D. (1992). Reflections on education, hermeneutics, and ambiguity. In W. Pinar & W. Reynolds (Eds.), *Understanding curriculum as phenomenological and deconstructed text* (pp. 116–127). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lather, P. (2007). Methodology as subversive repetition. Practices toward a feminist double(d) science. In *Getting lost. Feminist efforts toward a double(d) science* (pp. 33–48). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Lyotard, J. F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Massey, D. (1993). Politics and space/time. In M. Keith & S. Pile, *Place and the politics of identity* (pp. 141–161). New York: Routledge.
- Massumi, B. (2002). *Movement, affect, sensation. Parables for the virtual*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Pinar, W., Reynolds, W., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. (2000). Understanding Curriculum as phenomenological text. In W. Pinar, W. M. Reynolds, P. Slattery, & P. M. Taubman (Eds.), *Understanding Curriculum* (pp. 404–449). New York: Peter Lang.
- Rajchman, J. (1999). Diagram and Diagnosis. In E. Grosz (Ed.), *Becomings. Explorations of time, memory, and futures* (pp. 42–54). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Sidhu, R. K. (2006). *Universities and globalization: To market, to market*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Smith, N., & Katz, C. (1993). Grounding Metaphor: Towards a spatialized politics. In M. Keith & S. Pile (Eds.), *Place and the politics of identity* (pp. 67–83). New York: Routledge.
- Weinbaum, A. E. (2007). Nation. In B. Burgett & G. Hendler (Eds.), *Keywords for American cultural studies* (pp. 164–170). New York: New York University Press.

