

**Re-thinking the possibilities
of feminist scholarship
in the contemporary
Australian university**

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Certificate of authorship/originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

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Abstract

This thesis explores the possibilities of feminist scholarship in the Australian university in a time when the conditions of the university are sufficiently different from those at women's studies inception as to warrant a re-assessment of the field. Feminist scholarship is being re-thought in response to the epistemic transformation of feminism from a social movement into an institutionalised practice of feminist knowledge production (what I refer to as feminist scholarship) and the effects produced by this transformation over the past 40 years.

The research begins from the observation that contemporary feminist literature is framed by a 'crisis' narrative. This is understood as problematic because it elides the complexity of the field and limits its future possibilities. By relying on an unproblematised 'origin' for feminist scholarship, the crisis literature fails to account for its more diverse history and intellectual premises. Furthermore, through the general absence of personal or biographical accounts, the literature does not account sufficiently for the diverse trajectories of the lives of women who constitute(d) the field. This thesis argues that we need more multifaceted and nuanced accounts of feminist scholarship in order to attend to the complexity of what the field has become.

This thesis has four methodological components: to re-theorise the 'personal is political' by generating personal accounts of the field to address the problems within the literature; to produce accounts of individual scholars to address the absence of biographical accounts in the literature; for these accounts to be on-the-record, thereby contributing to the public record and producing a more complex account of the history of the field and finally, to focus on influential scholars whose experiences provide insight into the epistemic transformation of feminism as a movement into feminist scholarship.

This thesis is presented in two volumes. The first explores the possibilities of feminist scholarship by critiquing the ways in which it has been discursively produced in the feminist literature and through analysing the texts produced by this research to provide an account of contemporary feminist academic practice. The second volume re-presents, in 'ghostwritten' form, the personal accounts of the seven influential Australian feminist scholars who participated in this research.

What is produced by this research is not an alternative 'history' but a collection of accounts and engagements with the field of feminist scholarship by key players within the field that seeks both to challenge the existing literature but also to re-imagine the field in ways previously unwritten and thereby produce different conceivable futures.