

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

Kate Bower

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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.

Chapter 1 – From crisis to possibility?

This thesis is concerned with re-thinking the possibilities of feminist scholarship in the contemporary Australian university. But why should these possibilities be re-thought and why now?

Robyn Wiegman has noted that “there is something particular that compels our attention to the current moment of feminism’s academic institutionalization in the US university” (Wiegman 2004b: 166). To this I would add the Australian university because, despite the many differences between the Australian and American institutional contexts, there is something particular that compels our attention to the institutionalisation of feminism in the academy: namely, the ‘epistemic’ transformation of feminism from a social movement into another type of movement, which is intimately linked to the university as an institution (Wiegman 2004b).

Wiegman (2004a: 94) is referring to the:

epistemic shift that identity undergoes as it is transformed into an academic object of study, specifically the way that institutionalization ushers identity through a ‘threshold moment’ after which it is not legible solely within the framework of its origination in ... social movement.

As feminism became institutionalised over the past 30 years, it became epistemologically distinct from, while still related to, other types of feminism, especially movement feminism. In other words, feminism in the academy can now no longer be understood solely within the terms of movement feminism; therefore, it is necessary “to attend to the epistemological practices and effects of institutionalization” itself (Wiegman 2004a: 95).

Both universities and feminism have undergone rapid change in the past three decades; hence, the position and function of feminist scholarship has also shifted significantly and often in unpredictable and unimagined directions. When feminism entered the university, many feminists had

great expectations for what feminist scholarship might be able to achieve, yet the current conditions of the university have been transformed from those early days to such an extent as to warrant a re-assessment of the field. Indeed, the current moment is one in which feminism in the academy is being re-thought, in terms of understanding the many ways in which it has become both more than expected and less than expected.

The past three decades have been problematic for feminist scholarship and, in simple terms, my research is a strategic response to these problems. For the purposes of my argument, I will define the problematic of contemporary feminist scholarship as having two parts. Firstly, there are a number of 'real' world changes that have threatened feminism's survival in the academy, including, but not limited to: the rise of audit culture and the performative university; the declining women's movement; and a series of changes within feminist scholarship that led to dispersal, diffusion and decline. Secondly, there is the 'crisis' literature – filled with 'apocalyptic' (Wiegman 2000) narratives that declare feminism in the university to be 'ailing' (Gubar 1998), 'failing' (Martin 1997) and 'disciplined' to death (Messer-Davidow 2002).

I make a distinction here between the material conditions and the literature describing them, not in order to reinstate a boundary between 'materiality' and 'representation' but to mark out the ground in which this thesis operates. It is an important political and ethical motive of my research, as explicitly feminist in nature, to change the current circumstances in which feminist scholarship exists. Yet it is an impossibly large task to change the effects of neo-liberalism on the university or to turn around a declining women's movement. Hence, while I may not be able to change the material conditions in which feminist scholarship is practised, I can make an intervention into how we think/write about it. At the same time, I also acknowledge that representations are not 'merely' representations they are also constitutive of material conditions.

The focus of the research presented in this thesis is how feminist scholarship has been discursively produced in the literature to create the sense of crisis that limits our understanding of the field and its possibilities. I am concerned with the here and now of feminist scholarship; or to put it another way, I am interested in ways it is possible to practise feminism in the contemporary university. I am also interested in the conceivable futures produced by those practices, a notion I will return to later in this chapter and in Chapter 7. Yet in focusing on the here and now I must come to terms with representations of feminist scholarship's history. The time frame of academic feminism is 30 plus years and its histories are now firmly entrenched in the literature.

Thus the material conditions provide a context for this research, but it is within the domain of representation that this thesis seeks to make an intervention. I engage in a re-conceptualisation of the field of feminist scholarship by troubling the ways the field is discursively produced by feminist scholars in both 'official' histories and 'crisis' narratives. I do this in the hope that such a re-conceptualisation of the field will create new possibilities for thinking/being/doing feminism. Specifically, I argue in this thesis that the crisis narrative refuses the complexity of contemporary feminist scholarship and academic practice in two ways: by relying on an unproblematised notion of origin and by abstraction. These arguments are extrapolated further in this and the subsequent chapters. They provide a rationale for why the time is right for a re-assessment of the field.

This introduction also lays out the strategy I have used to address this research problem. I describe how the interview study I have undertaken in this research intervenes in the crisis narrative by re-theorising the feminist principle of the 'personal is political', thereby complicating the history of feminist scholarship as it has been discursively produced. In the final

section of this chapter I offer suggestions on how to read this two-volume thesis.

Why ‘feminist scholarship’?

In its simplest terms, I define ‘feminist’ as being concerned with relations of gender and power. Feminism is a complex and contested term, a point I return to in this section; however, the ‘scholarship’ element of the term ‘feminist scholarship’ is also significant. The title of this thesis, which is also the research question, has been specifically designed to resist the tendency towards describing the field as in crisis by inverting and reframing the title of Wendy Brown’s ‘The impossibility of women’s studies’ (Brown 1997). In that article, Brown argues that the field is impossible because it is governed by a structural paradox: namely that retaining gender as a critical, rather than regulatory, category is at odds with establishing a coherent field of study. I do not deny the structural paradox that Brown is referring to and certainly women’s studies has struggled to define itself as a coherent field of study that is able to accommodate the wide diversity of scholarship that contemporary feminists produce. However, I also want to claim that the field *is* possible and argue that contemporary feminist scholarship is much more than ‘women’s studies’. In other words, if women’s studies is impossible, how might feminist scholarship be possible? Accordingly, my research question is framed as: what are the possibilities for feminist scholarship in the contemporary Australian university? The paradox here is that, although a scholarly field that relies on identity for its definition, while simultaneously challenging that identity, might be impossible for the reasons Brown suggests, it is also perhaps a necessity. As many scholars have noted, feminist scholarship is as vital as ever (see Baird 2010; Braidotti 2005; Wiegman 2004a). Furthermore, as Davies notes “the possible is embedded in the (im)possible” (2005: 5). I attempt to keep the notion of (im)possibility in play in this thesis, yet as it has important political implications for the future of feminism, I return to consider it further in Chapter 7.

I intend for the term 'feminist scholarship' to be broader than the narrowly defined 'women's studies' that Brown identifies as a structural paradox, but it should be noted that I did not choose to investigate the terms 'feminist theory' 'feminist research' or, even, 'feminist pedagogy'. I define feminist scholarship as the institutionalised practice of feminist knowledge production. The idea of feminist scholarship captures the above terms and includes many of the other practices that feminist academics engage in, but most importantly it is directly defined as being linked to the institution of the academy. When Wiegman (2004a) noted the epistemic transformation of feminism, it was the process of institutionalisation that was the 'threshold moment' that transformed feminism from a social movement into something other. In the process of becoming academic, feminist scholarship became different from, while still related to, its movement-based counterpart. Therefore, in this research, I define feminist scholarship, not as the application of feminist politics to academic knowledge, but the *institutionalised* practice of feminist knowledge production.

This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, some of the literature declaring a crisis identifies the institutionalisation of feminism as its cause, proclaiming feminism in the university to be depoliticised and seeking to return feminism to its activist roots. As I explain in this and the following chapter, this argument is highly problematic. Secondly, like it or not, the university is one of the key sites for the practice of feminism in Australian society; feminists in the university are 'in power' in ways scarcely conceivable in the early days of feminist interventions into the academy. In addition, the women's studies project of educating women of all ages and arming them with the tools of feminist critique and analysis has been largely successful. There is at least one, possibly two, generations of Australian women who, equipped with a feminist education, have influenced society in their professional endeavours. Some, like the so-

called 'femocrats', are well-known and their stories well documented (Eisenstein 1996), yet there are also many feminists working in professional practice, such as nursing and social work and even in corporations, such as banking and telecommunications. It would be fair to say, therefore, that feminist interventions into the university have not gone according to plan, with some successes and some shortcomings, but I believe, and will argue, that the question should be what to make of these developments, rather than declare a crisis in the field because original expectations were not met.

The term 'feminism' is more difficult to define and it is not uncommon to talk of feminisms rather than the singular feminism. As feminist scholarship has changed, so too has the meaning of 'feminist'. Definition becomes even more difficult when taking into consideration the challenges to mainstream feminism from non-white or non-Western women who claim "I'm a feminist, but ..." (Ang 1995) to draw attention to the history of Australian feminism as particularly white and middle-class. Furthermore, the rejection of feminism by some Indigenous women scholars, such as Jackie Huggins (1994), serves to construct feminism through exclusion: defined by what it does not address, rather than by what it does. More recently, definitions of feminism are being expanded and challenged by a 'post-secular turn' in which "religion is easily added to a list mutually informing axes of power, difference and deconstruction isolated from which gender appears such a limited centre of analysis" (Baird 2010: 122).

Feminist scholarship has also become more difficult to identify as the field has expanded and diversified and the use of the terms feminist and feminism are less visible. One must develop what I will term a kind of *feminist literacy* to be able to identify feminist intellectual work in a variety of disciplines, as it is more usually marked by terms like gender, subjectivity, and difference than by feminism or feminist. Hence, feminism is more usually defined by what it is not or by what it excludes rather than

any agreement on what it is or what it includes. As I indicated at the beginning of this section, a broad definition might define feminism as being concerned with gender and relations of power. This kind of definition is broad enough to refuse some limitations but does little to capture the complexity and diversity of the intellectual and political work that contemporary feminism entails. I consider the usefulness of the concept of feminist literacy in helping define feminism in Chapter 7 in light of my analyses of the material produced through my study.

I do not intend to put forward a comprehensive definition of 'feminism' or 'feminist' in this research, but choose to keep the term in play. However, in Chapter 6 I do interrogate the question of what contemporary feminist scholarship might be and therefore do enter peripherally into a discussion about defining feminism. In Chapter 7 I elaborate further on this discussion by proposing terms that may assist in re-thinking contemporary feminist scholarship. The struggle over the term feminism, and the need for many women scholars to define themselves in relation to it (whether through identification or refusal), further demonstrates the influence of feminist scholarship in the contemporary Australian university. It was the contradiction between the influence of feminism and the claims that institutionalisation was depoliticising that motivated me to pursue this particular research problem.

Why me and why now?

My observation of the influence of feminism within the university was what originally drew me to this particular research problem. Specifically, the influence of feminist thought and feminist scholars seemed to be at odds with the way the field was described in the literature. The literature was describing the field as in crisis, and plagued by generational conflict and divisive debate about how best to deal with differences amongst women. It seemed paradoxical that so many scholars could be successful within the

academy, yet be members of a community in turmoil. The sense of crisis was also at odds with my own experiences of academic feminism.

I came to feminist scholarship as a first year undergraduate in 1999, enrolled in a women's studies major at the University of Tasmania. Some of the theories and issues I recall as being central to women's studies at that time were: postcolonial feminism; queer theory; philosophical debates on sameness versus difference; and Indigenous women's challenge to feminism's white, middle-class bias. 1999 was the first year women's studies was offered as a major as part of a Bachelor of Arts degree, with first-year subjects and with a full-time coordinator. Subsequently, the faculty management threatened to remove the entire program from the degree (Rockel 2000) by 'de-profiling' the position of coordinator.

Fortunately, the coordinator of the program at that time, Barbara Baird, was able to mount a campaign with support from feminist academics and community supporters to retain the program as it was (Baird 2010). Baird argues for an 'ambivalent optimism' towards the current state of women's and gender studies programs, based on her experiences at UTAS.

Although an isolated example, and one perhaps not possible in larger cities, Baird notes that "the direct threat to abolish the Women's Studies position enabled a somewhat anachronistic strategy in the UTAS story: 'women' and even 'feminism' had currency in the campaign, even in a broadly neo-liberal, post-feminist environment" (Baird 2010: 119). After completing my degree in Tasmania, I went on to an Honours year in women's and gender studies at UNSW. There also the positioning of women's and gender studies was precarious. I had to enrol in a combined Honours year in sociology and women's and gender studies, as women's and gender studies was a secondary specialisation: it was impossible to do Honours in that alone. My story serves as a case in point for the current state of women's studies and academic feminism more generally – women's studies is often in a precarious position yet it persists. Baird notes that the fate of women's and gender studies programs over the last

15 years or so has been varied; while some programs have struggled, most have remained stable and a few have flourished. We both agree that the narrative of women's studies dying is unjustified.

Despite the prevalence of crisis narratives, and the uncertainty generated by debates around issues of representation and difference (whether in relation to race as in the Bell/Huggins debate or sexual difference as in debates about the saliency of the category 'woman'), I found the experience to be politically enabling and it confirmed rather than discouraged my identification as a feminist. My Honours thesis (Bower 2003) investigated student perspectives of women's studies and was motivated in part by trying to make sense of the crisis literature and to find out if others shared my experience, which was at odds with the literature. Although it was a small sample, the interviews with students of women's and gender studies at UNSW produced some interesting insights. All of the participants came to an identification with feminism, or had a prior identification strengthened, through studying women's and gender studies and all found the experience of studying women's and gender studies politically enabling and positive, despite finding it challenging at times. On the whole, they found the crisis literature unconvincing and inconsistent with their experience. This observation is echoed by Zora Simic (2010), who noted that many of the respondents to a recent survey conducted by Simic and co-author Monica Dux (2008) about feminism indicated that their primary identification as feminist was through exposure to academic feminism.

These experiences influenced the kinds of questions I brought to bear on this research: I wondered why the crisis literature was so prevalent and what effects it might have on the possibilities of feminist scholarship? As a young woman embarking on a career in feminist scholarship, I am personally invested in questions about feminist scholarship's future and debates about how it should proceed. And, as a member of a younger

generation of feminists, I am personally implicated in the generational conflict that has characterised the field since the 1990s. Hence, one of the motivations for doing this research is to ask what future is there for me, and others like me, in the university? In what ways is it possible to practise feminist scholarship under the current conditions of the university?

There is no doubt that I came into feminist scholarship at a time when academic feminism was being re-thought; the turn of the millennium prompted many feminist scholars to reflect on its past and ponder its future. I bring with me my own perspective on feminism's past, present and future that is shaped by my temporal and geo-political location within the field. In this thesis, I engage in the task of re-thinking feminist scholarship's past in order to re-imagine its future. I draw on the experiences of the women who were there over the past four decades of its existence, who created and influenced the field, yet I interpret and analyse these experiences from the perspective of someone who came after. Therefore the questions I bring to this research are likely to be different from those that might be posed by the scholars who are the creators and early and later practitioners of the field. This means that this research offers my deliberations on the question of the possibilities of feminist scholarship in the contemporary Australian university from the perspective of someone with particular questions about feminist scholarship's future and as someone who entered academic feminism at a time when the field and its past were being fundamentally re-examined.

The current conditions of the university

One of the many reasons the field was being re-examined by feminist scholars during the past decade or so was the significant change to the university since the inception of feminist scholarship. The changing idea and function of the university was driven by the neo-liberal economic policies of governments, (particularly in Australia and the United Kingdom); the effects of which are well documented (see Barnett 2000;

Barnett & Griffin 1997; Blackmore 1999, 2003; Kinnear 2001; Marginson & Considine 2000; Readings 1996; Scott 1998; Strathern 2000; Thornton 2008). The contemporary university has been referred to as 'corporatised' (Thornton 2008), 'globalised' (Scott 1998), 'performative' (Blackmore 2003) and as the 'enterprise university' (Marginson & Considine 2000) reflecting the market paradigm currently dominating the governance of universities.

Many scholars have drawn attention to the depoliticising effect of the massification, privatisation and bureaucratisation brought about by neo-liberal policy. Through 'coercive accountability' (Shore & Wright 2000) and by a 'culture of compliance' (Marginson & Considine 2000) certain kinds of critique are effectively discouraged and only outcomes that reflect market values are legitimised. As Margaret Thornton (2008: 9) argues:

In this environment, it is only knowledge with use value in the market that is privileged. Any critique that takes place is circumscribed by the constraints of market orthodoxy. In this way, the vital role of academics as public intellectuals is inhibited through the new marketised research norms. The repressive tendency is subtle and insidious. It is effected through processes of governmentality that are shaped by prevailing state and university priorities within a climate of neoconservatism.

Thornton and others (Blackmore 2003; Shore & Wright 2000) have noted the particularly deleterious effects of corporatisation for feminist scholarship and other fields of study motivated by critical scholarship or social justice issues. The current conditions of the university are not conducive to the practice of such scholarship. This contributes to a sense of crisis in the field, but it also makes the successes of feminist scholarship more intriguing. That is, the need to re-examine feminist scholarship is driven in part by changes to the idea and function of the university, as much as by changes within the field of feminist scholarship itself.

Unexpected challenges

The transformation of universities over the past two decades has presented unexpected challenges to feminists working in the academy. Yet there were also other unanticipated developments that affected the possibilities of feminist scholarship, many of which are cause for concern amongst feminist scholars, perhaps rightly so. The issue at stake in this thesis is how these challenges have been taken up in the feminist literature to create a sense of crisis in the field that I argue is problematic and refuses the complexity of what feminist scholarship has become. In the following paragraphs I give a condensed account of the challenges to feminist scholarship and how feminist scholars have described these challenges in the literature. This discussion will be expanded on in the following chapter but it is necessary to broach it here in order to explain how this crisis literature serves to limit the possibilities of feminist scholarship and refuse the complexity of the current moment. In general, it does so by creating an unproblematized 'origin' of feminist scholarship that has the effect of trapping feminist scholarship within dichotomous terms, thereby permitting only a narrative of either success or failure. In addition, the literature refuses the complexity of contemporary scholarship through a kind of abstraction, as a result of the absence of personal and local accounts of experiences of the changes.

Some of the challenges facing contemporary feminist scholarship in the Australian context are relatively external to the university. The trend towards neo-liberal economic policy and restructuring in the 1990s was society-wide and global, yet, as discussed above, it has had particular effects on universities. Moreover, the decline of the women's movement and the collapse of the Left, although intimately linked with academia, were external to the institution. But other challenges did originate within the university – in particular, postmodern critiques of feminism's key terms and the accompanying arguments that feminism has become too theoretical and has lost touch with 'real' women.

These developments certainly presented unexpected challenges to feminist scholarship and meant that its narrative did not proceed in the ways originally intended by its instigators. Yet, there is a prevalence of crisis phrases associated with the discussion of these challenges within feminist literature. For instance, Bronwyn Davies decries the negative effects of new managerialism and neo-liberal economics in “The (im)possibility of intellectual work in neo-liberal regimes” (Davies 2005); and Ellen Messer-Davidow tackles the distance between movement feminism and academic feminism in her book *Disciplining feminism: from social activism to academic discourse* (Messer-Davidow 2002). As previously mentioned, Wendy Brown’s “The impossibility of women’s studies” (Brown 1997) suggests that postmodern critiques of identity make the concept of an academic discipline based on an identity – namely ‘women’ – redundant. Meanwhile, Susan Gubar is claiming that all this postmodern theorising is making feminism sick (“What ails feminist criticism?” 1998), even admitting that she originally intended to use a murder metaphor by claiming that feminist criticism is ‘dead’.

It is possible then to conclude from this literature that feminist scholarship in the contemporary university is ‘ailing’ and ‘disciplined’, even ‘impossible’? This also raises the question of whether it should be abandoned altogether. Yet what this literature does not take into account is the fact these women, and many others, have had successful careers as feminist academics despite these challenges. Nor does it consider the diverse intellectual work being carried out by feminist scholars, both in Australian universities and internationally. Hence, I have framed the research question as exploring ‘possibilities’ of feminist scholarship as a critical response to the absence of complexity and possibility in the crisis literature.

It is also worth noting that the narrative of crisis within feminism or what Wiegman (1999a) refers to as the ‘idiom of failure’ is produced in the literature by mainstream feminists, mainly white, middle-class American and Australian feminist scholars. Unlike the post-feminist rhetoric of the 1990s that was promulgated by younger generations of feminists in an attempt to challenge perceived orthodoxy (Denfeld 1995; Roiphe 1993), the crisis narrative is produced by feminist scholars who are well-established in the academy. They are feminist academics who are mainstream, influential and whose career successes have been predicated on feminist scholarship. This is a further reason why the crisis literature is problematic, because it fails to acknowledge that the existence of the crisis literature is itself a sign of feminism’s success. That is, I suggest that the crisis narrative is not adequate to understand the complexity of the experiences and scholarship of the women producing the narrative, let alone the field as a whole.

Critiquing crisis

In the remaining part of this chapter, I argue that the crisis literature fails to account for the complexity of the field of feminist scholarship, both in terms of its history and its intellectual premises. Furthermore, it fails to account for the diverse trajectories of the lives of the women who constitute the field. The central premise of this thesis is that we need more complex and nuanced accounts of feminist scholarship in order to attend to the complexity of what the field has become.

In critiquing the crisis literature, I am indebted to the work of Robyn Wiegman, in particular, her characterisation of the prevailing mood within feminist scholarship as ‘apocalyptic’. Her term apocalyptic refers here to a “fear about the failure of the future” (Wiegman, 2000: 807), in the sense that the current moment of feminism fails to bring the past to utopic completion. Wiegman notes that the common response to this perceived failure is to argue for a return to grassroots or movement feminism – a

response she believes is misguided. It is misguided because it serves to confirm the disciplinary effects it is seeking to escape. Wiegman (2002a: 33) states, “any call for a return to movement feminism as a form of generational reproduction will not rescue feminism from institutionalization’s disciplinary effects: it can only confirm them.” By engaging with Wiegman’s critique I have identified three distinct, but related, problems produced by the crisis literature that I introduce here and go on to elaborate in Chapter 2: the problems of generational succession, origin and abstraction.

The problem of generational succession

The first problem, that of generational reproduction or succession, is identified through Wiegman’s critique as expressing an underlying fear within much of the crisis literature. Wiegman notes that calls for a return to movement feminism are related to the issue of generational reproduction. Feminism and feminist scholarship are of course reliant on new generations of feminists to survive. The unexpected challenges of the past two decades have meant that feminist scholarship did not evolve and develop in line with the expectations and intentions held by the first generation of feminist scholars, prompting a call to return feminist scholarship to its activist roots. In the following sections and in the subsequent chapter I critique this premise in greater depth, but it is important here to raise the issue of generational reproduction and succession because the problem of generational succession underpins my research problematic in the specific sense that ongoing generations of feminist scholars are essential for feminist scholarship to be ‘possible’ into the future. In the absence of a women’s movement, and with the decline of women’s studies programs, the question of how and where new feminists will be made is important and legitimate. The importance of new generations of feminists to the survival of feminist scholarship and feminism generally cannot be understated. Yet, as I suggested earlier,

academic feminism is a key site for young women to identify with feminism, particularly in the absence of a vibrant women's movement. Despite claims that institutionalisation is necessarily depoliticising, it may be the most likely avenue for younger generations of women to become politicised.

The problem of generational succession is compounded by the fact that feminist scholarship has been around for almost 40 years and the generation of women who entered the academy during the heyday of the women's movement and women's studies are nearing retirement age. The question of what will happen to feminist scholarship when this occurs is a legitimate concern. Many of the apprehensions detailed in the crisis literature may have a significant effect on the number of young women who become feminist scholars and, therefore, the importance of creating future possibilities for feminist scholarship becomes ever more important.

The problem of generational succession is a serious concern. My research, although focused on how the field is represented within the literature, has implications for this problem and I will return to it, in Chapter 7 to consider it in the light of my research. Yet, the major concern in this thesis is how the history of feminist scholarship has been discursively produced up to this moment to create a sense of crisis within the field, which serves to limit what is possible/sayable/doable in the name of feminist scholarship. I have identified two problems within the crisis literature that limit future possibilities of the field by refusing the complexity of contemporary feminist scholarship and illustrate the need for more multifaceted accounts of the field. They are the problem of 'origin' and the problem of 'abstraction'.

The problem of 'origin'

The second problem is produced by a reliance within crisis narratives on an unproblematised notion of feminist scholarship's origin. That is, central to the crisis narratives is the assumption that feminist scholarship originated in the women's movement. I argue in this thesis that the notion of the women's movement as the origin of feminist scholarship is insufficient in understanding the complex relation between the feminist movement and feminist scholarship.

Several feminist scholars have been critical of the ways in which 'the women's movement' has been deployed in contemporary feminist literature, arguing that it constrains the possibilities of the present. In particular, Megan Jones (1998, 2002) has argued that the 'present' of academic feminism is defined and limited by its past, specifically conceptions of 1970s feminism. In undertaking a study of received mythologies of 1970s feminism, she found that the history of academic feminism was configured in one of two ways. One depiction presents the origins of women's studies in the 1970s as a glorified, coherent and legitimate project, which has been corrupted by dispersed and depoliticised crossings into theory. A contrasting view regards women's studies of the 1970s as an outdated, naïve and inevitably erroneous attempt to bring women into academia that has thankfully been transformed by more serious intellectual efforts to develop a feminist theory that addresses the differences among women. Jones argues that both of these understandings are inadequate and are limited by an imagined 1970s feminism that continues to frame debates within a temporal framework; acting to construct feminism in a past/present nexus. This, she argues limits our abilities to attend to the complexity of feminism history and also its future.

In related work, Clare Hemmings (2005) argues that a developmental narrative that inevitably leads to the success or failure of the current

moment is used to explain feminist theory's recent past. Like Jones, Hemmings argues that this narrative is not adequate to the complexity of feminism's past or present.

The problem of abstraction

The third problem, what I term a problem of abstraction, is the result of the absence of personal and local accounts. This absence permits the notion of origin to stand in place of particularised accounts of feminist scholarship's beginnings. There is a general absence in the crisis literature of the lives of individual women; what they did, what happened to them and what part they played in the events being construed as crisis. The arguments within the crisis literature are often theoretical in nature and the experiences of the individual feminist scholars who generated the feminist knowledge in question remain largely unexplored. Women's studies and feminist scholarship did not appear in Australian universities out of nowhere; the first feminist courses and programs were the result of campaigning and organising by individual women in local contexts. Yet it is precisely the accounts of the local and individual that are absent from the crisis literature. For instance, Brown's (1997) argument for the impossibility of women's studies is exclusively based in theory, with little regard for the day-to-day experience of the women who administer and teach women's studies programs or the feminist scholars who work in a variety of disciplines outside women's studies. This is not to say that Brown's argument is incorrect or of little use, but it serves to demonstrate that debates about feminism's vitality and future are dominated by abstract argument rather than local or specific accounts.

The problem of abstraction is also apparent in the failure of the crisis literature to account for the career trajectories of the women in the field. For example, Magarey and Sheridan (2002) noted that by the late 1980s many feminist scholars were more renowned for their disciplinary work

than their feminist work, for example Meaghan Morris and Len Ang in cultural studies or Elizabeth Grosz in philosophy. This is significant because it raises a question: if many of the women who were involved in women's and gender studies programs or were involved in explicitly feminist courses or research, left these programs or expanded their scholarly interest to broader subjects than 'women' and 'gender' – where did they go and why?

These two points highlight the absence of the personal and local accounts of the history of feminist scholarship in the feminist literature, particularly that which declares the field to be in crisis. This is what I mean by the problem of abstraction.

With regard to the history of feminist scholarship, abstraction is problematic because, by erasing the local and personal accounts of this history, arguments are made on the basis of the imagined origins of feminist scholarship. As I have argued, this is problematic because it limits the possibilities of feminist scholarship and refuses the complexity of the current moment.

'The personal is political': research methodologies

In this thesis I seek to make an intervention into how the field is discursively produced within crisis literatures. The problems with the literature, as I have described above, are three-fold: the problem of intergenerational succession, the problem of origin and the problem of abstraction. In order to address these problems and investigate the research task of re-thinking the possibilities, I designed an interview study with four methodological elements.

Firstly, in order to address the absence of individual women's experiences in the literature, I attempt to re-theorise the feminist principle of the 'personal is political' by collecting personal accounts of women who were

there. I examine these accounts to interrogate the feminist literature and attempt to complicate the history of feminist scholarship, addressing the problem of origin and demonstrating the need for more complex and nuanced accounts.

Secondly, I produce these accounts as intellectual biographies using a process of ghostwriting. These accounts, which form the second volume of this thesis, also contribute to a more multi-faceted account of the field. The third element of the methodology is that these accounts are on-the-record, rather than de-identified. The purpose of this strategy is that these accounts contribute to the public record of the history of feminist scholarship. The fourth element is that the scholars chosen to participate in the research are influential. The strategy of targeting influential scholars is adapted from Foucault's archaeological method (2002 [1969]), and as I explain in detail in Chapter 3, it is useful in understanding the epistemic transformation of feminism as movement into feminist scholarship.

The interview study involved me asking seven influential Australian feminist scholars to reflect at length on their intellectual biography. The interviews were (re)produced as 'ghostwritten' texts. Ghostwriting is a poststructuralist methodology, explained in more detail on Chapter 3, that highlights my role, as the researcher, in producing these accounts (Rhodes 2000). The ghostwritten accounts in Volume 2 demonstrate the intertwined connections of being feminist and academic in the lived experience of individual women and provide an opportunity to reflect on the complexity of the relationship between feminist movement and feminist scholarship.

This research is not intended to be 'restorative', nor does it seek to replace one kind of representation with another, thereby 'correcting' the problematic representations of feminist scholarship in the contemporary literature. Rather, it asks questions of the crisis literature and opens a

space where the history of feminist scholarship can be thought differently, in order to imagine new possibilities for the future of academic feminism. By focusing on the influential feminist scholars, this thesis tells a particular story or stories of contemporary Australian academic feminism – one told by those with the power to make decisions about what does or does not count as feminism in the university. It is a very different story than the one that might be generated by asking the less powerful, the excluded or the marginalised members of the feminist academic community. Yet the authority of these women and their on-the-record accounts of feminism's recent past, permit certain questions to be asked of the crisis literatures. As I observed earlier, it is mainstream influential feminists who most often expound the crisis narrative. Therefore, it is useful to focus my research on these women's experiences in order to complicate that narrative and, although the participants in this research are not the specific women who produce the narrative of crisis, they are arguably influential within the field.

Conceivable futures

This thesis is future-oriented, insofar in that it is interested in the possibilities of feminist scholarship now and into the future. However, in order to think the future differently, this thesis inevitably engages with the past – with history and with how histories of the field have been discursively produced in the literature. I take Michel Foucault's and, more recently, Liz Grosz's view that histories are informed more by the concerns of the present than by the past (Grosz 2000). History is not a representation of a 'real' past but rather a construction of the past that makes sense of the present. But history is also the "production of *conceivable futures*, the future here being understood not as that which is similarly contained in the present, but rather, that which diverges from the present, one uncontained by and unpredicted from within the present" (Grosz 2000: 1020). In relation to the field of 'future studies', my research proposes a positive, visionary and evolutionary future for feminist scholarship, rather than a negative doom and gloom future (Groff &

Smoker 2010). Hence, this thesis engages in the task of re-thinking the past and present in order to produce new 'conceivable futures' for feminist scholarship.

Therefore, what is produced by this research and thesis is not a 'history' (although Chapter 5 may be read as a kind of counter-history) but a collection of accounts of and engagements with the field. These seek both to disrupt and challenge the existing literature but also to re-imagine the field in ways previously unwritten. In a way, this thesis not only seeks to re-think the possibilities of feminist scholarship in the contemporary university but is itself an enactment of one of the possibilities. As such, it can be read in a number of ways.

The thesis is a two-volume work. The first volume proceeds as a traditional thesis might, by engaging with the research problematic and methodology in greater depth in Chapters 2 and 3 and presenting an analysis of the data in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The second volume is a compilation of the texts generated from the research interviews through the process of ghostwriting. It is intended to be read either as a stand-alone volume or as a companion to Volume 1.

The accounts in Volume 2 can be read in a variety of ways and I invite the readers' own interpretations. On one level, they can be read as individual, personal and local accounts of being a feminist academic over the past 40 or more years. Yet they also raise important questions about what feminist scholarship is now and will be in the future. They prompt a re-thinking of how the past of feminist scholarship has been discursively produced and invite new conceivable futures.

My suggestion is to read Chapters 1-3 at least before picking up Volume 2. In Chapter 2 I engage in more detail with the problems of abstraction and origin through a sustained critique of the ways in which the field is

discursively produced in histories and crisis literatures. Then in Chapter 3, I elaborate the four elements of the methodology and detail how and why the accounts in Volume 2 were generated. Hence, these two chapters provide useful background information for both the content and creation of the second volume. While Volume 2 may be read at any time, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 draw on the ghostwritten accounts contained in it. It is therefore preferable to read the accounts before these chapters.

In Chapter 4 I offer my reading of the accounts as individual texts. I focus on the version(s) of feminism constructed within the accounts by the participants and I detail how each account contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the field. This chapter provides the necessary context for the analytical work I undertake in Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapter 5 I examine specific excerpts from the accounts, which focus on ‘becoming a feminist academic’ to produce a counter-history. I do this in order to re-think the relations between feminist scholarship and feminist movement. In this chapter I interrogate two assumptions from the literature: the assumption that feminist scholarship originated in the women’s movement and the purported decline of women’s movement in the late 1980s.

Chapter 6 follows on from Chapter 5 in the sense that it examines the period after the 1980s that I explored in Chapter 5, but it differs in how I use the excerpts from the ghostwritten texts. Rather than providing a counter-history, as in Chapter 5, I examine the unique position of these individual women to provide a kind of ‘expert testimony’ of the changes that occurred in the university during the 1990s – the period when universities were restructured according to neo-liberal economic principles. I explore the effects of these challenges, what happened to theory and how the feminist scholars in this study responded to these changes. I explore the ways in which the participants continued to practice feminism in the changed conditions of the university and suggest ways to re-think contemporary feminist scholarship in light of these practices.

In the concluding chapter of the thesis I offer some reflections on the implications of my analysis. I return to the problems of origin, abstraction and generational succession and reiterate the need for local and particular accounts of the field. I propose several strategies for thinking about contemporary feminist scholarship that open possibilities and encourage new conceivable futures for the field.

Chapter 2 – Producing crisis: origin and abstraction in feminist literatures

Introduction

In this chapter I elaborate the problems of origin and abstraction through a sustained critique of the way the field has been discursively produced within feminist literatures. My argument in this chapter, and throughout the thesis, is that we need more nuanced and complex accounts of feminist scholarship's history in order to re-think 'crisis', to re-think the possibilities for contemporary scholarship and to create different conceivable futures for feminist scholarship. In order to do this we must attend to the complexity of feminist scholarship's past, present and future. Although the work of this thesis does not resolve the problems of origin or abstraction present in the literature, it engages with textual accounts of feminist scholars' experiences to argue that current representations are inadequate.

With all this in mind, I devote considerable space in this chapter to exploring the work of two scholars, also introduced in Chapter 1, whose work has made a substantial contribution to thinking the research problematic. Robyn Wiegman unpacks what she calls the 'idiom of failure' that characterises contemporary feminist scholarship, and Megan Jones translates Wiegman's work into the Australian context. The great contribution of both Wiegman and Jones, and the reason for their lengthy elaboration in this chapter, is that their work establishes the research problematic in such a way that it opens a space for my thesis to do its work.

I do not attempt to give an account, definitive or otherwise, of the history of feminist scholarship in this chapter, so there are many literatures that are not addressed directly here. Rather, my intention is to examine some of

the ways in which this history has been written and instances in which it has been taken up within feminist literature in order to claim that the field is in crisis. In the initial section of this chapter I do however provide an overview of some key aspects of feminist scholarship's history, as a background to understanding how the history has been written and why such attempts have been problematic. I also give a brief assessment of the current state of feminist scholarship from within the same framework as that provided by the literature that characterises the history of feminist scholarship as a series of phases.

Hence, the literature examined in this chapter serves two purposes: firstly, to argue that the representations of feminist scholarship discursively produced in the 'official' histories of feminist scholarship and the crisis literature are problematic and inadequate. Secondly, these representations of feminist scholarship are juxtaposed with the textual accounts of the experiences of the feminist scholars in Volume 2 and in the analysis Chapters 4, 5 and 6. The juxtaposition between the research texts on one hand, and the crisis literature and official histories on the other, demonstrate that we need, as feminist scholars, to be doing different sorts of histories; the kinds of histories that will give better and more complex accounts of the field, the kinds of histories that will generate future possibilities for feminist scholarship.

How has the history of feminist scholarship been written?

In this section, I establish what I regard to be the 'official' history of feminist scholarship in Australia and argue that this history is heavily reliant on an oversimplified story of origin that serves to create a firm distinction between feminist movement and feminist scholarship.

Histories of feminist scholarship are generally also histories of women's studies, as this was the way that feminism first entered the university as an academic practice. Hence, most of the histories, particularly those

written before 1995, describe the beginnings of various forms of women's studies programs in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. In the mid-1990s, alternative histories of feminist scholarship began appearing in the literature – partly because of changes within the field at that time, including a shift towards 'gender studies' and the rise of a 'third wave' of feminists inside and outside the academy. But it was also because there was now discussion of the importance of histories of feminist scholarship to the field and questions were being raised about how these histories had been discursively produced up to this point. This point will be taken up in the final section of the chapter.

The 'birth' of women's studies

Most of the literature produced by feminist scholars about academic feminism in the 1970s and 1980s and about the beginnings of women's studies were more like mission statements than histories because the field was still in its infancy. Most of the literature focused on key debates within the field about how it should proceed, particularly in relation to the disciplines. One of the earliest written accounts of the history of women's studies in the United States is Sheila Tobias's "Women's studies: its origins, its organization and its prospects" (1978), published in the very first issue of *Women's Studies International Quarterly* in 1978. This article gives an account of the inception of women's studies, as well as a description of the key debates dominating the field at that time. Perhaps the reason that there is little written within academia about the origins of women's studies before this article is that there was a lack of spaces in which to publish such work. Until the establishment of dedicated women's studies journals, there were few opportunities to publish feminist academic work.

Tobias states that women's studies in the United States began as a result of student protest and is somewhat derivative of the free university movement, which preceded it by a few years. It was students involved in

both or either who agitated for the inclusion of feminist material in university courses. Tobias notes that most women's studies programs were started by junior staff and students, who began introducing feminist material into courses as early as 1968. Because of this, most courses simply appeared without formal administrative approval. According to Tobias, these may have stayed as small specific courses on individual campuses, if not for the enormous sharing of information made possible by the women's movement. There was a proliferation of women's studies courses between 1971 and 1976 throughout the United States, with as many as 4000 courses operating by 1977.

Tobias also notes that, from 1970 onwards, women's studies became bogged down by debates about what women's studies should be, what should be taught and how they should be taught. In particular, two key debates dominated discussion. Firstly, should the focus of women's studies be challenging academic tradition or be consciousness-raising? Secondly, what should be the involvement, if any, of men? By 1972 further divisions were emerging between what can be termed revolutionary versus liberal goals. There were divisions about the relationship of academic feminism to the women's movement and between 'street' women's studies and classroom-based women's studies. Further, there was debate about whether women's studies should be a radical approach to pedagogy and curriculum or whether it should be the insertion of radical content in a traditional academic setting.

Hence, from its earliest incarnations academic feminism had a complex relationship with movement feminism. Most of these early debates relied on a firm distinction between the intellectual and the political, as well as positing feminist movement as the origin of both women's studies and feminist scholarship generally. Yet, despite this, it was a belief of women's studies scholars in these early days that a union between the intellectual and political was possible and could be enacted through women's studies

programs. Hence, it was a foundational goal of women's studies to unify activism and academia. However, these debates also expounded a viewpoint that politics is located in the 'street' (outside academia) and that the intellectual cannot be inherently political but must be connected to some form of direct action. This distinction will become relevant in interpreting and critiquing the crisis literature because, as I argue later in this chapter, this distinction is the unexamined, underlying premise on which much of the crisis literature is based, particularly those arguments claiming that feminism has become depoliticised through institutionalisation. Furthermore, this distinction and its relevance to the origins of feminist scholarship are brought into question by the accounts of the feminist academics in my research. For instance, the accounts of becoming feminist and academic, which are explored in Chapter 5, demonstrate that the relationship between feminist movement and feminist scholarship is complicated. Hence, the different experiences of the individual women who embody the field demonstrate the need for individualised accounts in addition to abstracted descriptions.

Before delving into the crisis literature, it is necessary to explore how the history of women's studies in Australia has been written. This establishes firmly the concept of the women's movement as the origin of feminist scholarship and problematically frames activism and academia as diametrically opposed.

The 'official' history of Australian academic feminism

Most of the published histories of women's studies in Australia have been written by a handful of women, in particular Susan Sheridan and Susan Magarey. Former heads of, respectively, the Women's Studies Department at Flinders University and the Research Centre for Women's Studies at the University of Adelaide, and founders of *Australian Feminist Studies*, they have published at least six articles on the history of feminist scholarship (see Magarey 1983, 1998a; Magarey, Ryan & Sheridan 1994;

Magarey & Sheridan 2002; Sheridan 1990; Sheridan 1998). Feminist historian Lyndall Ryan has also published several accounts of women's studies history, both individually (Ryan 1991, 1998) and with Magarey and Sheridan (Magarey, Ryan & Sheridan 1994) .

There are also several publications about the history and development of specific women's studies programs, including a special issue of *Australian Feminist Studies* in 1998, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Philosophy strike at the University of Sydney, which led to the first women's studies subject. It contains articles on the beginnings of women's studies at University of Adelaide (1998); the first dedicated research centre for women's studies, also at Adelaide; and a piece on the beginning of the program at Australian National University, written by its first director, Ann Curthoys (1998b).

There are also many other localised accounts of the history of women's studies, including a booklet documenting women's studies at the University of Tasmania (Rockel 2000) and an article reflecting on the decline of women's studies at Australian National University (Matthews & Broom 1991).

In addition, Ann Curthoys and Terry Threadgold, both of whom are participants in this research, have published accounts of the history of feminist scholarship. Interestingly, both of these accounts refer to 'gender studies' in their title and were published in 2000 (see Curthoys 2000; Threadgold 2000b). Similarly, the special issue of *Australian Feminist Studies* configured feminist scholarship's past in a different way than had been previously written, thereby questioning the common view of women's studies as being synonymous with academic feminism generally. These later accounts of feminist scholarship's history will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, which details more recent accounts of feminist scholarship's history.

The problem of origin

It could be argued that Ryan, Magarey and Sheridan have produced an 'official' account of the history of the field through their many publications, which focus on the development of the field as a whole in the Australian context and are frequently cited by other feminist scholars. In all of the articles by these scholars about the history of women's studies in Australia the origin of women's studies is considered to be the women's movement. For example, Lyndall Ryan (1991) states:

The first Women's Studies topics offered in Australian universities came as a result of agitation from university students and staff in the Women's Liberation movement who wanted to question the hegemony of patriarchal course structures and content (1991: 2).

And Magarey, Ryan and Sheridan (1994) write:

Women's Studies began as a reflex of a social movement upon the world of learning and scholarship. The exuberant Women's Liberation Movement of the early 1970s, and the more broadly-defined women's movement since then, has always been an educational movement (1994: 285).

This story of the origin of women's studies in the Women's Liberation Movement is well supported by Ryan, Magarey and Sheridan's personal involvement in the movement and by prior literature. Speaking as part of a panel on the 'State and status of women's studies' at the ANZAAS Congress in 1985, Robyn Rowland (1987) claimed that "the central issue of importance when considering the aims of women's studies and feminist scholarship is that women's studies came from the women's liberation movement"(1987: 519). Similarly, Philipa Rothfield in 1987 wrote "it was the women's liberation movement in the late 1960s which inspired the theoretical and scholarly pursuit which we now call (academic) feminism, or more tamely, women's studies" (1987: 525).

In this version of the history of feminist scholarship, the term is synonymous with women's studies and women's studies originates in the

women's movement. The Women's Liberation Movement is posited as the cause or impetus for the establishment of women's studies courses and it is assumed that the women academics and students who agitated for and established women's studies were also involved in the Women's Liberation Movement.

I suggest that these accounts are an oversimplification of the complex history of academic feminism. They overlook the important contribution to academic feminism made by women who were already academics during the 1960s and early 1970s, who included feminist thought in their subjects at undergraduate level and were not necessarily involved in the Women's Liberation Movement or became involved at a later date. In fact, in Susan Sheridan's contribution to the special issue of *Australian Feminist Studies*, in which I later argue that the 'official' history began to be questioned and re-imagined, she notes that she does not want to:

overlook the pioneering efforts of those few women academics who were already researching and sometimes teaching, women and gender issues from a feminist perspective: historians like Kay Daniels at the University of Tasmania, Jill Roe at Macquarie, Bev Kingston at the University of New South Wales, Miriam Dixson at the University of New England, and sociologists like Shirley Sampson (Sheridan 1998: 67).

More importantly, the 'official' history of feminist scholarship's beginnings is problematic because it places the origin of feminist scholarship in the women's movement, which is positioned firmly outside the academy, rather than positing feminist scholarship and the women's movement as two interrelated and contiguous phenomena that intersect with each other at various points. This produces a dichotomy between 'politics' as external to the academy and 'scholarship' as internal to the academy, which is of limited use in explaining the origins of feminist scholarship, particularly in the experiences of individual scholars. The analysis, in Chapter 5, of the participants' accounts suggests that the discursive positioning of the

feminist movement as the 'origin' of feminist scholarship cannot account for the experiences recounted in these texts.

The 'official' history of the development of feminist scholarship

The distinction between feminist movement and feminist scholarship is not just present in the 'origin' story; it is used to frame the entire history of feminism in the academy as written in these histories. In this section I summarise the 'official' history of Australian feminist scholarship as it has been discursively produced in the feminist literature.

The history of feminist scholarship is often conceptualised in terms of phases or stages, as a way to organise feminist scholarship's past (see in particular Maynard 1998; Ryan 1991). I will replicate the use of phases here, not to valorise their use but rather to mimic the ways in which this history has been written in various publications. I do this in order to give an overview of the main events and debates within feminist scholarship's history, as discursively produced in the literature, and to contextualise my arguments about the problem of origin and the problem of abstraction, which limit feminist scholarship's conceivable futures. It should be noted that the 'official' histories that I am drawing on in this chapter are not homogenous, nor do they fail in their aims of producing an account of the major developments of feminist scholarship. In fact, they are extremely useful to younger generations of feminist scholars, such as myself, who were yet to be born when these developments occurred. The reason I suggest these texts are problematic lies not within the histories themselves but in the way in which the origin and development of feminist scholarship is utilised in order to declare the field as in crisis. This problem will be further explained in the section of this chapter titled 'critiquing the crisis literatures' but first it is necessary to detail how the development of feminist scholarship has been constructed in the literature in terms of phases.

The following phases of feminist scholarship are loosely based on those described in Ryan's (1991) article on Australian women's studies (origins, development, post-Dawkins) and Maynard's (1998) book chapter on women's studies in general. Maynard writes from a UK perspective and identifies three phases: recuperative, reconstructive and reflexive. I have consolidated Maynard's phases into two, rather than three because, from the present-day perspective, there is, I would argue, less separation between the recuperative and reconstructive phases of women's studies than she suggests. However, drawing on more recent literature, I propose the idea of a third phase of feminist scholarship related to the rise of the 'crisis' literature. In describing these phases of the development of feminist scholarship I draw on published accounts written by Susan Sheridan, Susan Magarey, and Robyn Rowland in addition to Lyndall Ryan and Mary Maynard.

Phase 1: inception of women's studies 1972 – 1981

The first phase of feminist scholarship is characterised by its close association with the women's movement; thus, key debates of feminist scholarship mirrored those of the women's movement (Magarey, Ryan & Sheridan 1994). The motivating factor for the establishment of women's studies was the belief that women had been so excluded from the academy as to warrant the study of women as an exclusive field in itself. The goals of women's studies were to find, reclaim and rename ourselves; to reintroduce women to all issues and knowledges; to create woman-centred knowledge; to search for origins of women's oppression and develop strategies for change; and to advance the development of feminist teaching and pedagogy (Rowland 1987). Two key debates were: should women's studies be autonomous or integrated; and should women's studies be disciplinary or transdisciplinary. These were supplemented by debates over the desirability of men in women's studies; the relationship of women's studies to the women's movement; the role of consciousness-raising in women's studies; and the relation between theory and practice.

These debates can be summarised as being about revolutionary versus liberal goals. (Klein 1989; Magarey 1983, 1998a; Magarey, Ryan & Sheridan 1994; Magarey & Sheridan 2002; Rowland 1987; Ryan 1991, 1998)

Phase 2: reflexive phase 1982 – 1991

This phase is characterised by the consolidation of women's studies throughout Australian universities, the establishment of the first ever Australian research centres dedicated to women's studies and the creation of a professional association, the *Australian Women's Studies Association*, in 1989 (Ryan 1991).

Debates between autonomy and integration and between a disciplinary or transdisciplinary approach continued into this phase but other issues were also coming to the fore – principally critiques of women's studies by women who claimed not to be represented in its aims and practice, particularly women of colour and lesbians. During this phase, questions were being raised more often than hitherto about the “white, Western, privileged, heterosexist biases (both political and intellectual) in women's studies” (Maynard 1998: 251).

In Australia, these problems were probably most fiercely debated in *Women's Studies International Forum* and the ensuing articles and books in what has come to be known as the Bell-Huggins debate. The two main protagonists of this were Dianne Bell, whose article “Speaking about rape is everyone's business” (Bell & Nelson 1989) on Aboriginal intraracial rape sparked the debate, and Jackie Huggins, the leader of a group of Aboriginal women who wrote to *Forum* expressing their dissent. This debate centred on the relationship of Aboriginal women to the white women's movement and women's studies and, although it was never resolved, it demarcated a new phase of women's studies, characterised by

self-reflection and self-criticism and preoccupied with differences among women, rather than just women's difference from men.

In this phase, feminist scholarship was largely concerned with how to address the concerns of women who not only identified themselves as women but also aligned themselves with other identifications – what came to be known as 'identity politics'. In sum, this phase is defined by a period of expansion and consolidation of women's studies as transdisciplinary enterprise and is characterised by an intense period of reflexive criticism of feminism's core aims and practices (Rowland 1987; Ryan 1991).

Phase 3: feminism in crisis? 1991 – present

The 1990s is positioned in the literature as a time of crisis for feminist scholarship and for feminism generally. The crisis literature is discussed in detail in the next section but there were a number of developments that are significant in adding to the perception that the field was in crisis. The women's movement was regarded as being in decline (Epstein 2003). There was decline in institutional space dedicated to feminist scholarship as a result of the transformation of the university (Magarey & Sheridan 2002). There was a decline in the number of women's studies programs, partly caused by an increasing interest in postmodern, postcolonial and queer theory among feminists (Serematakis 1994). And, perhaps most significant in generating a sense of crisis, was the bitter generational debate. Internationally, generational conflict was triggered by the publication of several books by young feminists explicitly attacking earlier generations of feminists (see Denfeld 1995; Roiphe 1993) and it was the publication of Helen Garner's *The first stone* (1995) that sparked a bitter generational debate in Australia. Garner's book generated a huge amount of controversy in Australia and demarcated the differences in attitudes of academic feminists and feminists in the general community. Much has been written on the impact of *The first stone* and the ensuing controversy, which I do not wish to replicate here (see for example Taylor 2006; Trioli

1996), but it is relevant because it was a keystone moment in the perceived crisis within feminism in the 1990s.

All of these developments created a mood of 'decline' and 'crisis' within feminist scholarship in Australia. This mood was echoed in the United States where similar debates in relation to postmodern theory, queer theory and generational conflict led Wiegman to declare the mood of feminist scholarship in the United States as 'apocalyptic' (Wiegman 2000).

Phase 3 reconsidered: paradox rather than crisis?

The arguments within the crisis literature will be critiqued in the next section of this chapter. But I want to raise a question first about the framing of this phase of feminist scholarship in the literature and suggest that this time period, rather than being characterised as 'decline' or 'conflict', can be better characterised as a series of three paradoxes.

Firstly, in this phase, post-theory had a significant impact on changing the directions and shape of feminist scholarship (Kirby 1994). The flow-on effect of the increased interest and acceptance of post-theory was the rejection of 'identity politics', which resulted in a re-assessment of how the field should be organised. This led to the decline of many women's studies programs in Australia and internationally. However, most of these programs continued under the name of gender studies (Serematakis 1994), a thriving field in its own right. Hence, the demise of women's studies meant, among other things, the rise of gender studies.

Secondly, following this trend, there was also an expansion in the disciplinary fields in which feminist work was located. There was a growth of feminist intellectual work in the humanities disciplines, particularly literary theory, philosophy and cultural studies (Magarey & Sheridan 2002), thereby expanding feminist knowledge into locations outside of women's studies programs. Moreover, during this phase many women

who had previously been located within specifically feminist contexts moved away from a narrow focus on 'women' or even 'gender' and pursued a broader concentration on 'subjectification' or 'difference', and/or they changed disciplinary locations from women's studies into mainstream disciplines. In fact, Magarey and Sheridan (2002) note that, in the 1990s, many feminist scholars became widely known for their work in the disciplines rather than their feminist work, such as Meaghan Morris or Ien Ang in cultural studies. I term these moves 'gendered to general' (see Davies 2005 as an example). These developments are paradoxical because, on one hand, they contributed to a decline in the institutional space dedicated to feminist scholarship, as well as to the dispersal and diffusion of feminist ideas but, on the other, they represent the widespread integration of feminist knowledge and feminist scholars into wider disciplines.

A third paradox is that, during this time, the effects of restructuring and corporatisation were limiting the spaces and opportunities to engage in feminist work (Davies 1997; Ryan 1991). Many women who had entered the academy during the early years of women's studies were reaching career peaks, meaning that more feminists were in institutionally powerful positions than ever before (Magarey & Sheridan 2002).

In sum, this phase of feminist scholarship is, I suggest, better characterised as a series of paradoxes than simply as 'crisis': the demise of women's studies, coupled with the rise of gender studies; integration of feminist scholars in the academy but the dispersal and diffusion of feminist ideas; and the rise to institutional power for many feminist academics, yet a decline in the dedicated institutional space. These paradoxes are evident in the accounts of the women who participated in this research. As will be shown in Chapters 5 and 6, the experiences of these feminist scholars during the purported decline of the women's movement and the period of restructuring of universities were complex because these developments

had both positive and negative effects. The separation of history into chronological phases is a technique used within the discipline of history that can be useful but, when applied to the history of feminist scholarship it elides the complexity of the development of feminist scholarship and shifts focus away from the lives of the individual women who inhabit and shape the field.

Hence, a further criticism of framing the history of feminist scholarship in this way is the absence of personal and embodied accounts of the women who inhabit the field. By focusing on key debates, like those between revolutionary versus liberal goals (for example Ryan 1991), and tracking developments, such as the first research centre (Magarey 1998b), the accounts of the women who experienced these debates and developments are rendered conspicuously absent. The effect of the absence of the personal and local in the 'official' history of feminist scholarship in Australia, as produced by only a handful of feminist historians, is that arguments within the crisis literature can be made on the basis of imagined origins, rather than on complex, nuanced accounts of the field. As I discuss in the following section, this absence limits the possibilities for imagining feminist scholarship into the future.

The idiom of failure: re-reading the crisis literature

There are two opposing strands of argument within the crisis literature, which both end in the perceived failure of feminist scholarship in the contemporary moment. The first pertains to the idea that feminism has become depoliticised through its institutionalisation in the university. This argument generally relies on the belief that theory has come to dominate contemporary feminist scholarship at the expense of 'real politics'. I argue here, however, that this argument is problematic because it retrospectively creates a boundary between the academic and the political by relying on an unproblematised 'origin' story. The second argument relates to the critique of identity politics and, in particular, the perceived failure of the

category of 'woman'. The second argument is also problematic because it elides the complexity of feminist scholarship's past by generating a past/present nexus that privileges more 'theoretical' feminisms. Furthermore, by contextualising the field within a theoretical framework, it erases the experiences of the women whose bodies inhabit the field.

My argument in this chapter, and indeed the whole thesis, owes a debt to the work of Robyn Wiegman, whose extensive publications on this subject provide a detailed, yet succinct, critique of what she terms the 'idiom of failure' (Wiegman 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b, 2004b). Hence, the first part of this section will examine her arguments about the 'idiom of failure' that haunts contemporary academic feminism. I also discuss what she refers to as 'feminism's apocalyptic futures' – the "temporal disorientation: the hyperbolic anxiety that the future may now be unattainable because the present fails to bring the past to utopic completion" (Wiegman 2000: 807).

Wiegman's work gives a strong indication why current representations of the field are problematic and, furthermore, why we need a more sophisticated understanding of feminist scholarship's past and present. In 'Feminism, institutionalism, and the idiom of failure' (1999a) Wiegman argues that 1990s academic feminism was constrained by a profound anxiety about the failure of the present. The idiom of failure is played out in the United States in "debates about the category of women and its saliency as a guarantee for knowledge and political movement" (Wiegman 1999a: 107-8). In these debates, feminist scholars such as Judith Butler, Joan Scott and Denise Riley argue that it is the refusal of the category of women "as a foundational referent that gives to feminism the internal critique necessary to re-think its own historical emergence within modern forms of liberal governmentality" (Wiegman 1999a: 108). They are pitted against feminist scholars such as Susan Gubar, Susan Bordo and Martha Nussbaum who find this argument "unproductive if not damaging for

feminism, as theoretical considerations are seen to overwhelm the imperative for a public political voice” (Wiegman 1999a: 108). For further examples see Hoff (1994) and Ramazanoglu’s (1996) response or Gubar (Gubar 1998) and Wiegman’s (1999b) response.

Wiegman argues that at the heart of this debate there is an assumed opposition between politics and academics. Furthermore, she argues that these debates are an attempt to come to terms with the negative feelings that have accompanied the success of feminism’s institutionalisation. As she argues:

‘academic feminism’ as a term ... indicates something quite profound about the indivisibility of politics and academic and institutional intervention. And yet, to conjoin academic to feminism today is almost always a distinct insult, an accusation that draws blood precisely because politics and academics have come to be so firmly opposed. It is this opposition between the political as a set of social movement ideals and the institutional as a project of academic transformation that underlies to a great extent the mood swing in academic feminism in the 1990s, where feminist articulations of the political agenda that impelled it into the academy have been held in check by a diagnostic analysis that seeks to understand the tenor of bad feeling (and hurt feelings) of feminism’s current institutional success (Wiegman 1999a: 108).

In other words, the crisis within feminism results from both the opposition between the political and academic and the unexpected institutional success of feminism. Wiegman argues that the apocalyptic narratives of 1990s feminist literature are an attempt to understand the ways in which feminism is now able to “claim and inhabit institutional power” (Wiegman 1999a: 119).

In this article, Wiegman unpacks the underlying assumptions of both sides of the debate. Firstly, she critiques Martha Nussbaum’s ‘The professor of parody’ as an example of the literature that argues that feminism has been depoliticised as the result of institutionalisation. Wiegman argues that Nussbaum, by calling for a return to ‘old style feminist politics’, equates

'the real' with politics and as antithetical to theory and the institution. Hence, poststructuralism is situated "as the locus of failure, the means for abandoning both politics and the real" (Wiegman 1999a: 116). Such an argument is problematic, claims Wiegman, because it relies on an unexamined and imagined past of feminist scholarship in which feminist politics is equated with 'the real' world. This argument against poststructuralism positions "theory as the interloper in a contemporary context that tends to wager the symbolic against the real and writes abstraction as antithetical to practical politics" (Wiegman 1999a: 117).

In other words, arguments against theory-based feminism and the institutionalisation of feminism in the academy produce a past/present nexus whereby 'old' feminism equates with 'real politics' and resides in the real world external to the academy and contemporary feminism is linked to theory, which is regarded as an abstraction that is antithetical to real politics. Hence, contemporary feminist scholarship is in crisis and the only resolution of this crisis must be a return to 'old style' feminism. The problem with this argument, as Wiegman has demonstrated, is that it relies on a set of binary oppositions between past/present, real/abstract, political/intellectual, which are largely unexamined by Nussbaum and other proponents of this view. Opposing these terms in such a way excludes the possibilities that the interplay between them is much more complex both in feminism's past and also in its present. I contend that this view of contemporary academic feminism relies on the oversimplified story of 'origin' that locates politics as external to the academy, as described in the previous section of this chapter.

As I have already indicated, this story of 'origin' is disputed and complicated by the accounts of the participants in my research, which suggest a more multifaceted relation between feminist scholarship and movement. Hence, arguments such as those made by Nussbaum in 'The professor of parody' are unnecessarily generating a sense of crisis within

the field and discursively producing the 'failure' of contemporary feminism. By so doing, this strand of the crisis literature elides the complexity of both the past and present and fails to account for the ways in which feminist scholarship and feminist scholars have been successful in the academy.

It is the reduction of 'present' feminism as failing to live up the promise of the past – imagined by Nussbaum as 'old-style' politics – that Wiegman claims adds to the generational disunity of the field. Wiegman also notes the paradox perpetrated by commentators such as Nussbaum that promote an older version of feminism: the paradox that locates the political end of feminism in the academic field they themselves created. She states:

Nussbaum's characterization of contemporary feminism is yet another contribution to the growing list of generational laments that invest in accusation and attack to rescue feminism's future from certain academic feminists. That these apocalyptic narratives, as I call them, always find the specter of feminism's political end in the academy is one of the paradoxical features of 'old feminism' today: it has come to define itself against the very project of institutional intervention it inaugurated, and hence against those women who inherited from it a feminism animated by the questions, contradictions, and complicities of academic feminism's relationship to both politics and knowledge (Wiegman 1999a: 120).

Hence, the argument propounded by Nussbaum and others contributes to generational disunity and relies on an oversimplified story of feminist scholarship's origins; a story in which their own history is hidden and in which feminist scholars' complex engagements with the questions of the field are ignored.

Yet the argument that the institutionalisation of feminism is necessarily depoliticising is not solely responsible for the idiom of failure within feminism; Wiegman also unpacks the arguments put forward by the feminist theorists that Nussbaum was criticising. Wiegman (1999a) critiques Brown's argument that women's studies is impossible (Brown 1997). It is important to note, as Wiegman does, that Wendy Brown is not

claiming that academic feminism as a whole is impossible, but rather the enterprise of women's studies. Yet arguments against women's studies inevitably contribute to an 'idiom of failure' and a sense of crisis within the field. Furthermore, Brown's argument is part of a broader feminist literature that critiques identity politics within feminist scholarship.

Simply put, Browns' argument is that the project of women's studies has become impossible because of the failure of the category of 'woman' to encompass the complexity of social identity and because such a category is essential to the coherence of a field of study that claims it as its object. Wiegman criticises this argument for a number of reasons. Firstly, she argues that the questions posed by Brown could not be thought without the existence of women's studies. She suggests that:

the critical diagnosis of the fields offered by Brown is not intellectually possible from outside it, that indeed it is the productive disparity between the field's own critical horizons and its internal critique that have rendered 'The Impossibility of Women's Studies' possible as a critical project (Wiegman 1999a: 129-130).

Further, Wiegman argues that Brown ignores the fact that knowledge production itself is an identitarian project as she explains:

within the disciplinary apparatus of knowledge production, one does not simply study literature, politics or social organization. One is constituted as belonging on an identitarian basis, where the imperative to be a biologist, philosopher ... is to partake in an identitarian project (Wiegman 1999a: 130).

Wiegman also criticises Brown's argument and others like it for privileging contemporary feminist scholarship over past scholarship by glossing over past deliberations on questions of difference and the category of 'woman'. These arguments promote a view that feminist scholarship in the past was theoretically inferior to contemporary engagements with these questions and thereby invoking a past/present nexus, albeit in an opposite configuration to Nussbaum's call for a return to 'old style' feminism.

Drawing on Wiegman's useful critique of Brown's argument and other critiques of identity politics, I wish to elaborate a number of related points here. Firstly, this argument equates identity politics with women's studies. This, I believe, is problematic because it does not account for the complexity of women's studies as a field of study, ignoring the diversity of theories and practices that exist within women's studies programs. Secondly, it is, I contend, an oversimplified argument that suggests that identity politics, centred on the category of 'woman', is inadequate in understanding 'difference'. This ignores a number of things including, as Wiegman pointed out, that much of the contemporary intellectual engagement was made possible by the existence of women's studies. Women's studies was one of few locations within the academy where questions of difference could be thought and written about. It also suggests that 'difference' may be more usefully thought somewhere else in the academy but without acknowledging that disciplines have perhaps been even less successful at meeting the challenge of thinking difference. Furthermore, such arguments elide the complex history of feminist scholar's engagements with questions of difference and, in so doing, write/create a history of feminist scholarship that privileges the now and criticises the past, further adding to generational disunity.

Finally, these critiques of identity politics are problematic because they direct focus away from the women who inhabit the field. They paint the world of women's studies and academic feminism in general as being inhabited purely by theory rather than actual women, as actors in the world being represented. Missing from Brown's argument and other critiques of identity politics are individualised and localised accounts of what it means to be a feminist scholar, both within women's studies or outside the field. This is what I have identified as the problem of abstraction.

So far in this chapter, this line of argument has focused on the United States, partly because of Wiegman's very useful and succinct critique of

the 'idiom of failure' prevalent in contemporary feminist scholarship. Yet this critique is also applicable to some of the feminist literature produced in Australia in the 1990s and early 2000s. Despite the fact that the bulk of the crisis literature is produced and published in the United States, where metaphors of illness or death in relation to feminism are prevalent (Wiegman 1999b, 2000), its influence is felt in the writing of Australian feminist scholars. However, there are some noteworthy differences. In Australia poststructuralist theory was taken up by feminist scholars much more widely (Kirby 1994) and less problematically than in the United States, where radical feminism still had considerable saliency, thereby creating a rift between feminists that centred on the validity of the category of 'woman'. I propose that, because of the widespread acceptance among feminist scholars in Australia of poststructuralism's critique of identity, debates about the saliency of the category of 'woman' were played out as the 'politics of difference' in Australia. For instance, in the introduction to *Feminism and the politics of difference*, Sneja Gunew and Anna Yeatman note that the authors of the essays in that text share a "desire to work with poststructuralist critical theory in and around feminism" (1993: xiii) and that the "essays also address in a range of ways the necessity of moving beyond identity politics" (1993: xiv). Hence, the crisis literature written by Australian feminist scholars has more in common with the critiques of identity politics written by US feminist scholars, such as Judith Butler and Wendy Brown, than with the argument that feminist scholarship has become depoliticised through institutionalisation, with some exceptions (see Curthoys 1997, and Jones' critique below).

In terms of a critique of the way the crisis literature functions in the Australian context, my analysis is greatly indebted to the doctoral work of Megan Jones, whose doctoral thesis (2002) elaborates on Wiegman's work. As I sketched briefly in Chapter 1, Jones argues that the 'present' of academic feminism is defined and limited by its past. In her doctoral work on the received mythologies of 1970s feminism, Jones applies Wiegman's

critique of the crisis literature to Australian academic feminism. She argues that contemporary Australian academic feminism is constrained by a past/present nexus in which the history of feminist scholarship is configured in either one of two ways. The first is a view that depicts the origins of women's studies in the 1970s as a glorified, coherent and legitimate project, which has been corrupted by dispersed and depoliticised crossings into theory. The other regards 1970s women's studies as an outdated, naïve and inevitably erroneous attempt to bring women into academia, which has fortunately been transformed by more serious intellectual efforts to develop feminist theory that attends to the differences among women. Like Wiegman, Jones argues that there is an idiom of failure within current literature on feminist scholarship that serves to limit future possibilities for the field. She also notes that Wiegman's critique is valuable, despite its focus on the US, because of "the paucity of recent material that engages specifically with Australian academic feminism and its mediation of the academy" (Jones 2002: 203). I am fortunate that Megan Jones has added to this literature by providing a succinct critique of the ways in which the past and present are configured within Australian feminist literature, thus generating an idiom of failure. Because Jones was able to make such a critique, her work is a point of departure for my research and, as her thesis is unpublished, I will reproduce some of her argument here.

Utilising Wiegman's insight into the 'idiom of failure', Jones deconstructs two feminist accounts of the history of Australian feminist scholarship. These texts are indicative of the opposing viewpoints that Jones argues are limiting our present conceptions of feminist scholarship and therefore also its future. They are Jean Curthoys' *Feminist amnesia* (1997) and Rosi Braidotti's "Remembering Fitzroy High" (1997).

Like Martha Nussbaum's 'The professor of parody' (1999), Jean Curthoys' book *Feminist amnesia* (1997) is another example of the argument that the

institutionalisation of feminism is necessarily depoliticising and, also like Nussbaum, Curthoys argues for a return to the old-style politics of the Women's Liberation Movement. Megan Jones, following on from Wiegman, takes issue with the implications of this viewpoint. Jones is "concerned with Curthoys' central contention that contemporary academic feminism is the corrupted form of a once moral and ethical movement, an account driven by the spectre of failure" (Jones 2002: 206).

Feminist amnesia claims to recover the liberation theory of the Women's Liberation Movement, which, according to Curthoys, was a fundamentally moral position and has been 'forgotten' in the course of feminism's supposed success in the academy. Curthoys admonishes the "prevailing academic feminist view that there is something special and unique about the emergence of recent feminist thought" (Curthoys 1997: ix). Jones notes that "rather than subscribing to the idea of feminism having reached its political time, Curthoys cites the present as the tense in which feminism has gone wrong" (Jones 2002: 206). This is problematic, argues Jones, because it locates the end of feminism within the present-day academy, thereby constraining its future possibilities. Jones notes that Curthoys' analysis of contemporary feminist scholarship takes place in a wider context of the "end of identity politics and the death of political optimism" (Jones 2002). She posits that Curthoys is a victim of the 'Left melancholy' defined by Wendy Brown (1999) but is equally constrained by a "fear of the failure in the future" (Jones 2002: 211). Jones argues that:

In writing the present as the scene of both crisis and failure, Jean Curthoys' aim is to guarantee the past as the unspoiled origin not only for utopian affect but for a (paradoxically) normative discourse of the political. In effect, Curthoys preserves the past as 'transhistorically inadequate' (Wiegman 2000: 807), as she defines the present as out of, indeed against, political time. With this in mind, I contend that Curthoys' political attachment to the past is one motivated at least as much by a fear of failure in the future, as by a sense of past loss. For one, Curthoys locates the end of feminism in today's academy (Jones 2002: 211).

Hence, Jean Curthoys' *Feminist amnesia* (1997) is exemplary of the belief that contemporary feminist scholarship is in crisis, specifically because of its institutionalisation within the academy. As Jones has argued, it relies on an unproblematised, oversimplified and even romanticised view of feminism's past. It promotes an oversimplified story of feminist scholarship's origins as being in the Women's Liberation Movement.

Megan Jones also provides a useful critique of the opposing viewpoint, that current day feminist scholarship is superior to its naïve origins, as exemplified in Rosi Braidotti's 'Remembering Fitzroy High' (Braidotti 1997). Braidotti's article is comparable to US feminist scholars critiques of identity politics, such as Wendy Brown's 'The impossibility of women's studies', which Wiegman critiqued. It is indicative of a trend within contemporary feminist scholarship in Australia that argues that in the past feminist scholarship dealt inadequately with difference and further that contemporary scholarship is much more adept at understanding the multiplicities of difference. Or, more simply, Braidotti's article is an example of the 'politics of difference' in Australia. However, it is Jones' comparison of Braidotti's proposition with Curthoys' argument that is particularly useful here.

Jones argues that Braidotti's assessment of contemporary feminist scholarship, although opposite to Jean Curthoys' view, is equally problematic because it also relies on an oversimplified story of 'origin' and an insufficiently nuanced understanding of 1970s feminism. As she elaborates:

In a reversal of the temporal plotting proposed by Curthoys, Braidotti figures the present as the point of feminism's political time, and the past as the scene of its failure ... [the article] works to reinforce rather than interrogate a progress narrative that pits a culturally insensitive and uncritical 1970s feminism against a self-reflexive, multiple and diverse present-day feminism. In leaving the determining historical polarity intact, she defines the present against a fixed and unitary past (Jones 2002).

Jones goes on to argue that Braidotti's work is dominated by *ressentiment* (see Brown 1995: 66-67 for elaboration). This is an argument that I will not replicate here but significant in Jones' critique is that Braidotti, like Curthoys, relies on an oversimplified story of feminist scholarship's origins. For Braidotti it is the issue of differences among women, which she claims were ignored by earlier feminisms, that resulted in feminism's past failure, whereas for Curthoys it is the abandonment of past morality that resulted in feminism's present failure. Yet, as Jones usefully demonstrates, both these accounts of feminist scholarship's history tell a story of failure and both rely on an unproblematised and under-interrogated account of feminist scholarship's origins.

Jones' critique again highlights the need for more sophisticated and nuanced accounts of feminist scholarship's history. My research builds on the work of Jones by generating particular and localised accounts of feminist scholarship to develop a more complex account of its history.

Re-thinking feminist scholarship's history

I suggested earlier that the history of feminist scholarship as produced in feminist literature changed somewhat in the late 1990s, coinciding with the emergence of the 'crisis' literature. As established in this chapter, the 1990s was a time of significant change for feminist scholarship, as well as for feminism and universities in general. Changes such as the decline of women's studies programs, the increasing influence of postmodern theory and the restructuring of universities meant that the history of women's studies simultaneously became more important, because it was at risk of being lost (Summers 1994); and came under review because of the prevalence of postmodern scepticism on the value of history (Scott 1992).

Furthermore, the controversy surrounding the 'Garner Affair', raised questions about the motivations of earlier generations of feminists, particularly those involved in the Women's Liberation Movement. Hence,

some feminist scholars felt the need at this time to account for their involvement in the history of feminism in Australia. As Ion (1998: 110) states:

The interconnected notion that there is a generational gap separating and alienating 'older' and 'younger' feminists has led to heated disagreements both inside and outside the academy. Garner's book, and the ensuing debates, have had a remarkable impact; an impact that has illustrated to a steadily growing number of Australian feminists the increasingly urgent need to explain past aims, objectives, desires, goals, aspirations, dreams, ideals, politics and disagreements of a splintered, but still breathing movement.

Furthermore, the end of the millennium presented an opportunity for reflection on feminist scholarship's history. Hence, at this time there were a number of books and articles published on the history of Australian feminism, the Women's Liberation Movement, women's studies and academic feminism.

Some of these were broad in scope: for example Marilyn Lake's *Getting equal: the history of Australian feminism* (1999) focused on the history of feminism in Australia from the first wave until the present day, whereas other publications focused a critical eye on the history of the second wave women's movement in Australia, such as Gisela Kaplan's *The meagre harvest* (1996) and the aforementioned Curthoys' *Feminist amnesia* (1997). These histories, while useful, further the problem of abstraction by focusing on the women's movement as a whole; there is an absence of personal and localised accounts of the field that would add complexity to this history. In particular, because of the broad scope of Marilyn Lake's *Getting equal*, there is only a small section in one chapter on academic feminism, meaning that the personal and local accounts of individual women are largely absent – Lake even refers to her own involvement in this history in the third person (Lake 1999: 251). Arguably, Kaplan's account of the second wave women's movement falls victim to the same problems critiqued by Jones in reference to Curthoys' and Braidotti, in that

it produces a past/present nexus of feminist scholarship's history by relying on an unproblematised 'origin' story, and again the accounts of individual women are largely absent. One example of a personal account of feminism's history is Anne Summers' autobiography, *Ducks on the pond* (Summers 1999), in which she gives an account of her involvement in the Women's Liberation Movement (until 1976), but unfortunately Summers had little involvement in academic feminism.

In terms of histories of feminist scholarship specifically, there was a change in how the history was presented, in terms of a focus on 'gender studies' rather than women's studies (see Curthoys 1998a, 2000; Threadgold 2000b). Also there was a focus on the emergence of women's studies in specific locations as the result of a 1996 conference, called 'Return of the repressed' commemorating the 25th anniversary of 'The Philosophy Strike' at the University of Sydney, which led to the introduction of the first women's studies subjects at the University of Sydney. The conference gave rise to a special issue of *Australian Feminist Studies* (1998). This special issue, hereafter referred to as 'Return of the repressed', signals a change in the way that the history of feminist scholarship is discursively produced. In particular, it raises the significance of remembering and forgetting in history-building, while at the same time restating the importance of 'history', particularly the history of feminist scholarship's beginnings to the future possibilities of feminist scholarship. 'Return of the repressed' featured several articles on the specifics of setting up women's studies programs at the University of Sydney and other universities by the women who were involved in those events (Caine 1998; Curthoys 1998b; Curthoys 1998c; Magarey 1998b; Poiner 1998; Sheridan 1998; Wills 1998). As such they represent a more localised and personal engagement with the history of feminist scholarship than the generalised histories produced previously that provide an overview of several significant events or developments.

My research is aligned with these more recent accounts of feminist scholarship's history in that it attempts to generate that focus on the personal and local rather than broad-scale generalisations. On the other hand, the local histories in the special issue of *Australian Feminist Studies* focus on specific events, such as the setting up of the first research centre for women's studies (Magarey 1998b) or the early years of women's studies at Australian National University (Curthoys 1998b) and as such, the story of individual women who inhabit the field over the history of feminist scholarship is absent. These local accounts do produce a more complex account of the history in terms of specific events, particularly in relation to the origin of feminist scholarship, but they give little indication of why feminist scholarship proceeded in the ways that it did following that time period.

For example, Ann Curthoys' article in the 'Return of the repressed' (1998b) focuses on the early years of women's studies at the Australian National University, the period in which she was the first director of the program there, giving valuable insight into how the program developed and the interdisciplinary nature of the program at that time. However, what is absent from this story is what happened when Ann left ANU to take up a position at NSWIT (now UTS) and what this might mean for definitions of feminist scholarship. Ann later returned to ANU as Professor of History and is now currently at the University of Sydney in the history department. As one of the participants in this research, Ann's ghostwritten account of being feminist and academic is in Volume 2 of this thesis. By focusing on her individual trajectory through feminist scholarship and in and out of disciplinary locations, a different story of feminist scholarship is produced. This approach will be explained further in the following chapter on methodology and in analysis Chapters four, 5 and 6. My point here is that my research is aligned with these more contemporary engagements with feminist scholarship's past in that both acknowledge the need for more

nuanced accounts of the field, yet that literature is still problematic in that it still tends towards abstraction by focusing on specific events.

Ann Curthoys article 'Gender studies in Australia: a history' (2000) was inspired by the 'Return of the repressed' issue of *AFS* and a report she wrote for the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia on gender in the social sciences (Curthoys 1998a). In this article, Curthoys provides a more complex account of the origin of feminist scholarship by positioning the women's movement and women's studies as separate but related developments with crossover by the people involved and sharing of information. Yet Curthoys' purpose in the article is "providing a survey of the scholarship that resulted, not only from women's studies programs specifically, but also from feminist activity in the academy generally" (Curthoys 1998a: 19), hence the accounts of the women who were responsible for producing that scholarship remain only as a trace, abstracted to the scholarship itself. This is not a criticism of this article, which is in fact an extensive and concise survey of work done on gender in a variety of disciplines, but the article does suffer the problem of abstraction, thereby limiting the possibilities for contemporary academic feminism. Therefore, we need accounts of the field that focus not just on scholarship but on the women who produced that scholarship.

Similarly, accounts of the contribution of feminist knowledge within specific disciplines, such as Lyn Yates account of the history of feminist activity in education in Australia (Yates 2008), suffer the same problem of abstraction. Yates' focus on feminist knowledge is a useful reflection on the ways in which feminism was taken up within the discipline of education, yet the complexity of the experiences of feminist scholars within education is absent. By abstracting the history of feminist scholarship to the level of feminist knowledge, eliding the women who produce that knowledge, we are missing opportunities to understand feminist scholarship as the women who inhabit the field experience it. For example,

Yates' account of feminist knowledge in education is unable to account for the trajectory weaving in and out of feminism (and the academy and the discipline of education) of Erica McWilliam – a participant in this research, whose ghostwritten account is in Volume 2.

Nor can histories of feminism within a specific discipline account for the career trajectories of many of the feminist scholars in this research who changed disciplines many times and have held both academic and management positions. For instance, Kalpana Ram moved from philosophy to sociology to anthropology over the course of her career, and Terry Threadgold has at various times been aligned with English Literature, language and semiotics, performance studies, women's studies, media and journalism, as both a scholar and in a management role – she is currently Pro Vice-Chancellor of Staff & Diversity at Cardiff University in Wales. The intricate and multilayered trajectories of these women's lives may add something different to the history of feminist scholarship and expand on definitions of what it means to be both academic and feminist and thereby produce different conceivable futures. Again, this is not a criticism of accounts of the field that focus on scholarship and knowledge, but those accounts do present the need for more personal and local accounts of the field in order to re-think the possibilities of feminist scholarship.

In sum, more recently produced accounts of the field have contributed a more complex understanding of feminist scholarship's history, which my research aligns to because we share the need for producing accounts of the field that can attend to the complexity of what the field has become.

Yet the influence of an oversimplified 'origin' of feminist scholarship should not be understated; the abundance of crisis literature indicates the prevalence of an assumed and unproblematized 'origin'. Writing accounts of feminist scholarship's history necessarily involves engaging with this

taken for granted 'origin' of feminist scholarship and the oppositions between feminist movement and scholarship that it entrenches. In her editorial for the 'Return of the repressed' issue of *AFS* Alison Bashford notes that:

Historicising women's studies of the 1970s and women's liberation necessarily requires a critical engagement with the fact that the past of the 1970s is already composed in a fairly fixed way, and this with particular effects. It seems not unfair to suggest that many feminist scholars rely on a set of more or less standard stories about the feminist past: stories that are poorly interrogated and that usually function to define and separate the present in comparatively flattering terms (Bashford 1998: 52-3).

With this in mind, my research begins to interrogate this history by producing personal and particular accounts that question assumptions about feminism's past.

Chapter 3 – Re-thinking ‘the personal is political’: generating accounts of feminist scholars’ experiences

Introduction

Drawing on my elaboration of the problems of origin and abstraction in the previous chapter, I engage in more detail, in this chapter, with the methodological strategies of my research. As I stated in Chapter 1, my research seeks to make an intervention into the representation of feminist scholarship as it is discursively produced in the crisis literature. Moreover, in response to the abundance of theoretical engagement with the topic and the problem of abstraction associated with these engagements, I elected to conduct empirical research; in particular, I conducted in-depth, on-the-record interviews with senior Australian feminist scholars. My decisions were based on four methodological strategies, as I outlined in Chapter 1.

Firstly, as I have demonstrated in the previous two chapters, there is an absence in the ‘official’ histories and in the crisis literature of accounts of the individual women who inhabit and shape the field of feminist scholarship. This absence permits an oversimplified story of origin to stand in place of particularised accounts. Hence it is an important methodological strategy of my research to reinstate and re-theorise the feminist principle of the ‘personal is political’; firstly, by collecting accounts of the personal experiences of the women who were ‘there’ and, secondly, by using these accounts to interrogate the feminist literature.

Secondly, as the literature has few biographical accounts, my research addresses this absence by creating and (re)presenting, through the processes of interviewing and ghostwriting, seven biographical accounts of feminist scholarship.

The third significant element of the methodology is the fact that the accounts are on-the-record, rather than being de-identified. As such, they contribute to the public record of the history of feminist scholarship, as local and individual accounts.

Finally, I specifically selected scholars who are influential within the field as a strategy adapted from Foucault's (2002 [1969]) archaeological method to interpret the epistemic transformation that feminism underwent upon entering the academy.

The influential feminist scholars in this research are neither intended to be representative of feminist scholars as a group, nor are the accounts of their experience intended to be generalisable in any literal or simple way. On the contrary, their inclusion in the research is precisely because of the particularity of their experience as women who were there, and not just there as bystanders but as players, as contributors, as creators; these women, through their institutional positioning and experience, have the power to define what is meant by the terms feminist scholar and feminist scholarship. Hence their experience produces a warrant for the on-the-record element of my research. While the accounts may not be generalisable in a literal sense, they produced common themes that raise questions that are relevant to the field as a whole and that I take up in the following chapters.

However, as my research is located within a feminist poststructuralist epistemology, this strategy is not without its problems. The terms 'personal experience', 'on-the-record' and 'influential' imply a set of realist assumptions about the relationship between experience and representation and the warrant of knowledge produced by such a relation, which is problematic from a poststructuralist perspective. Moreover, the methodology I have chosen has meant that one-to-one interviews were a natural choice in terms of possible research methods. However, the status

of the interview in traditional qualitative research is also challenged by poststructuralist epistemologies. I take up these points in the discussion to follow.

Experience as the construction of subjectivity

From a feminist poststructuralist epistemological standpoint, terms such as ‘personal experience’ and ‘on-the-record’ are contested, as are all terms that rely on a claim to reality. In particular, experience as a form of evidence and as a claim to the real has been problematised by both Scott (1992) and Usher (1992), among others. The problem with utilising experience as a form of evidence, according to Scott (1992), is that it locates experience as the origin of knowing and relegates writing to the role of reproduction or transmission of such experience. The rhetorical treatment of experience within the discipline of history “depends on a referential notion of evidence which denies that it is anything but a reflection of the real” (Scott 1992: 24). Scott argues that the strategy of privileging experience as more authentic or real form of evidence serves to dismiss questions about the construction and constitution of experience, subjectification and difference:

When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject (the person who had the experience or the historian who recounts it) becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one’s vision is structured – about language (or discourse) and history – are left aside (Scott 1992: 25).

Scott is primarily referring to recuperative histories of difference that rely on recounting experience to make subjectivities visible that have previously been hidden from history. Yet her critique is pertinent here because it requires me to define what I mean by experience and in what ways I rely on it in my analysis.

The experience that I refer to in this thesis draws on Teresa de Lauretis: “the process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed” (de Lauretis 1984: 159). In other words, experience should not be read as truth or a claim to reality; rather it is understood as a process through which subjectivity is constituted. Therefore, I am not engaging, in this thesis, in the task of making visible that which has been hidden from history but, rather, utilising experience as a way to interrogate the ways in which history, specifically histories of feminist scholarship, have been discursively produced.

Usher further draws attention to the poststructuralist understanding of experience as itself a text and, therefore, as open to multiple interpretations, both by the person giving an account of their own experience and by others who attempt to make sense of that account. He argues that:

Experience is a text whose meaning is not bounded by the meaning given by the subject as supposed author of the text, thus the meanings cannot be captured definitively, univocally, and with exactitude by reflection, the activity of the subject’s methodical consciousness where it makes itself the object of knowledge and thus sees itself and its experience clearly and distinctly (Usher 1992: 205).

In other words, experience itself is an interpretation, a text; it cannot be a claim to the real – it is of the same ontological order as ‘theory’ and ‘history’. It follows that any interpretation of experience from the point of view of the researcher cannot seek an exhaustive or totalising explanation of its meaning:

From a post-modernist standpoint it is possible to argue that any reading of the ‘text’ of experience should not seek a terminal and totalising explanation of its meaning through constructing a particular kind of subjectivity, either constitutive or determined (Usher 1992: 206).

Scott also makes this point by arguing that the use of experience in recuperative histories privileges ‘experience’ (visual and visceral) as real

and writing as merely the transmission or reproduction of the real. As a feminist poststructuralist researcher, I am mindful not to reify the experience of the feminist scholars who participated in the research to the realm of the real, authentic or truthful. Rather, I strategically employ the concept of experience to address some of the problems I identified in the literature that serve to limit the possibilities of feminist scholarship.

To reiterate, I draw on the concept of experience in order to address the problem of abstraction but not in order to produce a restorative account. As I argued in the previous chapter, the ways in which the histories of feminist scholarship have been written produces certain effects – effects which limit the conceivable futures of feminist scholarship. I am deploying experience as a way to intervene in the history, in order to incite different effects. Importantly experience should not be regarded as having a different status than the current historical or theoretical accounts in the literature; that is, experience is no more and no less ‘real’ than ‘theory’ or ‘history’ in the current accounts of feminist scholarship’s history.

Interviewing from within a poststructuralist epistemology

If experience is a constructed category in which meaning is multiple and contested rather than a claim to the real, it follows that the interview itself can also not be a claim to or window into truth or reality. Hence I position the interviews I conducted for this research as epistemologically postmodern rather than positivist or realist.

Arguing for a postmodern approach to interviewing, Scheurich (1997) contends that positivist and realist approaches to interviewing equate interview data with quantitative data by understanding the research interview as a purposeful conversation to get information, after which the researcher sorts and categorises the data as an ‘accurate representation’ of the information garnered in the interview. From this perspective, the researcher is seen as purposeful and able to design questions in which

the meaning is easily understood by the participants and is not affected by the specific circumstances of the individual interview such as time of day, location of the interview, or gender of the interviewer. Furthermore, it is assumed that the language of the interview is bounded and stable and meaning is fixed, so that the interview can be replicated in other places and times (Scheurich 1997).

However, a postmodernist critique of positivist interviewing contends that language is not bounded and stable; meaning is not fixed; the people, place and time affect the interview; and that data analysis is not the development of an accurate representation of the data (Scheurich 1997: 62-63). On the contrary, such a perspective regards the relationship between meaning and language to be “contextually grounded, unstable, ambiguous, and subject to endless reinterpretation” (Mishler 1991: 260).

The implications of this perspective for my research are that the relationship between the researcher and the participants must not be understood as one where information passes from interviewee to interviewer in a linear fashion, in which meanings are shared and fixed. Rather, the relationship must be construed as one in which meaning is constructed and contested and is subject to the “complexity, uniqueness and indeterminateness of each one-to-one human interaction” (Scheurich 1997: 64). Therefore, what is produced by the research is not an accurate or truthful representation of the interview, nor of the experience of the participants, but is a constructed account (constructed by both me and the participant) that is open to multiple interpretations.

Hence, from a feminist poststructuralist epistemological position, it was important for me to draw on a methodology that would attend to the complexities of the research interview and that troubled the relation between the real and representation, both in relation to the category of experience and the process of collecting data. In order to destabilise the

authority of the category of experience and to trouble the ways that 'power', 'language' and 'meaning' are produced in and by the research, I employed the methodological strategy of ghostwriting – a technique that explicitly draws attention to issues of representation and textuality.

Ghostwriting

Ghostwriting as a research methodology was first developed by Carl Rhodes in his doctoral research (Rhodes 1999, 2000). Rhodes uses the term to refer to the practice of constructing a negotiated research text from an interview, where the researcher writes an account of the interview in a narrative form as though they were the participant. In other words, the researcher ghostwrites the (fictive) autobiography of the participant. The text then goes through a process of edits and rewrites in consultation with the interviewee until a mutually agreed account, which represents the lived experience of the interviewee, is produced. The final text is one that tells the story of the interviewee but in which the researcher is also present as the constructor/creator of the text. The researcher remains in the text as a 'ghost' but it is the experience of the participant that is in focus.

The primary purpose of ghostwriting is to acknowledge the researcher's role in generating research data in order to contest assumptions about meaning-making and the relation between the interviewees, the research, the text and 'reality'. In this sense, ghostwriting deliberately constructs a narrative from the interview material in order to draw attention to the constructed nature of the research interview and, more broadly, the research process itself. Ghostwriting enables the researcher to generate a (re)presentation of the data and foreground the tension between text and 'reality'.

It is the focus on issues of representation and writing that distinguishes ghostwriting from other narrative techniques used in qualitative interviewing such as oral history and life history interviewing, although it

does share some common ground with these techniques. Like oral histories, the ghostwritten accounts are attempts to capture one person's perspective on particular events or experiences and, accordingly, it will always be a partial and incomplete representation of those events and experiences (Lee, Manathunga & Kandlbinder 2008). And, as is the case in some types of oral history, the interview is presented as a narrative with the interviewer's voice removed (Gluck 1996). However, ghostwriting differs from oral history in that it explicitly draws attention to issues of representation by focusing on the co-construction of the text.

Through ghostwriting, the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the interview is foregrounded by the visibility of the construction of the research text. Moreover, the deliberate construction of the texts acknowledges the complexity and uniqueness of the research event in the sense that the interviews, and the resulting texts, occurred as a result of the researcher's instigations.

Therefore, the texts that resulted from the interviews must not be understood as accurate or 'truthful' accounts of the interview itself or of the participants' 'real' experience but as textual (re)presentations of the interview in which meanings associated with the lived experience of the participant are constructed and contested. In this way, ghostwriting is a useful response to Scott's (1992) claim that using experience as a form of evidence reifies experience to the realm of the real and constructs writing as a mere reproduction because it (re)locates 'meaning' in the interplay between 'experience', the research interview and text that results from it. As such, ghostwriting as methodology simultaneously refuses experience as real or truthful, and acknowledges the constructed nature of the texts generated by the interviews as well as the interviews themselves. Therefore, the ghostwritten accounts in Volume 2 are not merely a (re)presentation of the data; on the contrary they are artefacts of the research and as such, they constitute new knowledge objects.

Yet, as the practice of ghostwriting troubles representations of the interviews, it also makes trouble for the 'authority' of the women selected for the research, creating a tension in the research between the on-the-record accounts of influential feminist scholars and the methodological coherence of the research as epistemologically poststructuralist.

As stated, the women chosen to participate in this research are some of the women responsible, through their intellectual work and institutional positioning, for defining the boundaries of legitimate feminist discourse in Australia. Their authority derives not just from within their scholarly work or their institutional position, but also from their embodied experience as 'eyewitnesses' to the changes in feminist scholarship over the past 40 or more years; hence the importance of these interviews being on-the-record. But what is the significance of on-the-record interviews? The on-the-record interview creates an authority that is based on it being attached to a 'real' person, someone with a material existence in the world. The warrant is based on the authority of the person to comment on the topic being interviewed – in this case, their influence within Australian feminist academic discourse – and the authenticity and accuracy of the (re)presentation of the interview. When these texts are produced as narratives they might be read as oral histories, life histories or even memoirs in the sense that, as participants in significant historical events, they have borne witness to these events and their memories contribute to our understanding of the events.

Ghostwriting is a process of de-authoring, in the sense of replacing the participant's authorship with my own and creating a new authorial voice in the account, not as myself but as them. The de-authoring process of ghostwriting also, to some extent, de-authorises the legitimacy of their experience as feminist scholars to define the boundaries of feminist academic discourse. Yet the on-the-record authority of the experiences of

these women was something I wanted to retain because of the need for more multifaceted accounts of the field and my belief that a focus on the personal lived experiences of influential feminist scholars would be able to contribute to such accounts. The problems of abstraction, origin and generational succession demonstrate the need for accounts of the field that do not simply reproduce a sense of crisis but offer different conceivable futures for feminist scholarship. The authority of these scholars' accounts is reliant on their influential position within it. Hence it is important for me to establish the grounds on which I employ the category of 'influential' in relation to the scholars who participated in my research.

Selecting participants: those that set the boundaries of discourse

In previous chapters I specified my object of study for this research as feminist scholarship – defined as the institutionalised practice of feminist knowledge production, rather than feminism generally. My reasoning rests on the claim that feminism has undergone an epistemic transformation from a social movement into another kind of movement linked to the academy, and that this transformation means it can no longer be understood purely within the terms of movement feminism. I explored the concept of feminism's epistemic transformation (Wiegman 2004a) in Chapter 1. Here I want to go further into what is meant by episteme, in order to explain why selecting influential scholars permitted me to generate personal accounts that I take up in the following chapters to question the ways the field has been discursively produced during this epistemic transformation.

In Foucauldian terms, episteme refers to the structures underlying the production of knowledge in a particular time and place. In Foucault's words, episteme:

Is not a form of knowledge, or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences,

manifests the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period; it is the *totality of relations* that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them *at the level of discursive regularities* (Foucault 2002 [1969]: 211, my emphasis).

To think of feminist scholarship in epistemic terms is to understand the totality of relations that permit certain academic feminist knowledges to exist. By doing this I am expanding Foucault's archaeological method, which he used initially to understand the sciences, to the field of feminist scholarship. In his elaboration of the method in *The archaeology of knowledge*, Foucault (2002 [1969]) argues that the method can reasonably be applied to any field that is engaged in the task of knowledge production. The archaeological method analyses the discursive regularities of a discursive formation or episteme.

One of the approaches to understanding discursive regularities as described by Foucault (2002 [1969]) is to understand the formation of strategies, by which he means the formation of the themes or theories of discourse. In order to do so it is necessary to "determine the possible points of diffraction of discourse"; to study "the economy of the discursive constellation"; and also, and this is particularly significant for this research, to understand that "the determination of the theoretical choices that were actually made is also dependent on another authority" (Foucault 2002 [1969]: 74-75). This authority is first characterised by its function but also "involves the rules and processes of the appropriation of discourse" (Foucault 2002 [1969]: 75). He continues:

For in our societies (and no doubt in many others) the property of discourse – in the sense of the right to speak, ability to understand, licit and immediate access to the corpus of already formulated statements, and the capacity to invest this discourse in decisions, institutions, or practices – is in fact confined (sometimes with the addition of legal sanctions) to a particular group of individuals (Foucault 2002 [1969]: 75-76).

In other words, in order to understand discourse and its regularities it is necessary to understand the function of the discourse, but also its

authority and the particular group of individuals who produce and legitimate its authority. It is this element of the archaeological method that is significant for my study. That is, in order to examine the epistemic transformation of feminism and to understand feminist scholarship as a discursive formation, it is necessary to analyse the discursive regularities and how they develop their authority. To do this we need to understand not just the function of these discursive regularities but also the particular group of individuals who maintain the rules and processes of appropriation of discourse. Within feminist scholarship there are individuals who have been able to pursue questions or develop strands of thought that, for complex reasons, become influential. It is these scholars whom I have focused my research on.

The purpose of interviewing influential feminist scholars is to gain insight into the conditions of possibility for contemporary feminist scholarship. So not only do these scholars' personal experiences provide different accounts of the field but their influential positions also provide access to the intellectual conversations that define and delimit the field. Or, as Cookson (1994: 166) states in relation to studying elites, "elites create a public conversation that sets the legitimate boundaries of discourse". Therefore, the participants in my research are among the women responsible, through their intellectual work and institutional positioning, for defining the boundaries of legitimate feminist discourse in Australia. They have either had a role in the development of academic feminism or are currently located in influential positions (either institutionally or intellectually) in feminist scholarship and, in most instances, these women have been influential both in the past and the present.

Yet Wiegman (2004b) notes the 'discordant temporality' and 'constitutive otherness' of feminism to be inescapable features of the field and, as such, the field is always more complex than any account of it can provide. Hence it is not possible to grasp the totality of the discursive relations of

feminist scholarship necessary to an understanding of this ‘epistemic’ transformation.

However, it should be noted that there is no claim for the particular women who have been chosen to participate as necessarily being the ‘most’ influential feminist academics. It stands to reason that identifying a group of individuals who define the boundaries of feminist scholarship is open to interpretation, is largely subjective and depends on the time and place of the discursive formation. Furthermore, it is not possible to produce an exhaustive list of feminist scholars who might be part of this group. Yet, in terms of the practicalities of conducting research, it was necessary to make decisions on who might reasonably be considered (either through their institutional positioning or influence within feminist thought) to be part of this group.

Practical considerations

As established, the purpose of my research is not corrective, in the sense of using these interviews to determine what ‘actually’ happened or to produce some kind of new official account of feminist scholarship’s history. With that in mind, the process of selecting participants was less about choosing the ‘right’ scholars and more about choosing scholars who could be considered influential in some way but who also had complex and interesting career trajectories within feminist scholarship. My approach to the analysis of the interviews, which will be elaborated in the following chapter, was multilayered; hence interviews of only a small number of participants produced more than enough data. In some sense it does not matter which feminist scholars were selected to participate in the research, as long as they could be considered influential in some way or other. Given that one of the purposes of the methodology is to highlight the need for more local and personal accounts, it is likely that other women’s accounts of their experiences would be equally complex and messy and still, therefore, achieve this end.

Yet, in order to identify possible interviewees, I had to develop a process of selection. The following paragraphs explain this selection process and the inclusions and exclusions I made during this process. This process inevitably produced certain effects in terms of the diversity of scholars selected. Furthermore, my intention was to produce detailed, in-depth descriptions of the experiences of a small number of feminist scholars; therefore, only a small number were required from the large field of possible participants.

The field of possible participants was large and diverse, reflecting the complexity and diversity of feminist scholarship at the time of undertaking the study. In order to navigate through this complexity, I created several categories of feminist scholars who might be considered as potentially appropriate research participants. These categories are not by any means all the categories of influential feminist scholars that are possible but they do provide a starting point for selecting suitable participants. They included:

- a. women's or gender studies coordinators
- b. feminists in management or senior management positions
- c. feminists with highly visible public profiles
- d. historians of feminism and feminist scholarship
- e. feminists in the highest growth areas of feminist scholarship (humanities, particularly philosophy, literary theory and cultural studies)
- f. Australian feminists currently working overseas
- g. feminists who have changed their positions in relation to feminism ('gendered to general')
- h. radical feminists
- i. feminists involved in key controversies in the field
- j. scholars with a self-declared problematic relation to feminism

- k. Indigenous feminists
- l. feminists in non-traditional disciplines

The first six categories (a – f) are focused on different kinds of influence within the field: women’s and gender studies coordinators have direct control over what is taught as ‘women’s studies’; feminist scholars in management roles are institutionally powerful; feminists with highly visible public profiles, particularly media profiles, are culturally influential; historians of feminism and feminist scholarship create and influence the accepted narrative of feminism’s past; and, given the growth of feminist scholarship in the humanities, these scholars are likely to have more influence than scholars in other areas. Also, as noted by Magarey and Sheridan (2002), there are many notable feminist scholars currently working in universities overseas.

On the other hand, categories (g) through (h) are of a different order and offer different perspectives on what counts as feminist scholarship. Scholars involved in key controversies or with problematic relations to feminism are not influential in the same way as a women’s studies coordinator or head of department, but events such as the Bell/Huggins debate, discussion of Ang’s article “I’m a feminist but ...” (1995) and Garner’s *The first stone* (1995) certainly influenced the field of feminist scholarship. Similarly, Indigenous feminists and radical feminists have challenged mainstream feminist scholarship. By feminists in non-traditional disciplines I mean feminists in disciplines outside of the humanities and social sciences, which is where feminist scholarship is concentrated. These scholars may be able to offer unique perspectives on the field.

Once I had listed the categories that would produce suitable research participants, I made a series of exclusions. I excluded categories (i) feminists involved in key controversies, (j) feminists with self-declared problematic relation to feminism and (k) Indigenous feminists for the same

reason, namely, that the issues likely to be raised in these interviews are very complex and, although extremely important to contemporary feminist scholarship, I felt to include these categories would be tokenistic at best and not do justice to the issues involved. The inclusion of these categories would elide the complexity of the issues at stake, which warrant a research design devoted exclusively to their investigation. However, the most important reason for excluding these categories was the observation, detailed in Chapter 1, that much of the crisis literature was generated by feminist scholars who were within mainstream feminism – typically white middle-class feminists who held influential positions within the university. Therefore, it makes sense to focus the research on women who reside in the mainstream of feminist scholarship.

Because the major consideration in selecting participants was that they be influential, I targeted feminist scholars who fell into one or more of the first six categories. I also eliminated category (g) ‘gendered to general’, because it is difficult to ascertain whether a particular feminist scholar’s trajectory fits this model prior to interviewing them and it was therefore not useful as a method of selection. However, I did anticipate that the pattern of ‘gendered to general’ would come up in the accounts of the feminist scholars who were selected, as it in fact did, and it is discussed in detail in analysis Chapter 6.

From these categories, I generated a shortlist of 12 participants who fitted within one or more categories. Some of these women declined to participate in the research (for a variety of reasons) and ultimately seven participated: Ann Curthoys, Erica McWilliam, Sheila Jeffreys, Catharine Lumby, Terry Threadgold, Kalpana Ram and Kate Lilley.

At the time of the interviews, three of the seven women were professors, two were associate professors and two were senior lecturers. They also came from a range of disciplines including English, history, education,

political science, anthropology, cultural studies, media studies and women's and gender studies. Since the interviews several of the participants have been promoted, thereby confirming that they were an appropriate sample of senior Australian feminist scholars.

Each of these women can be considered influential, often in more than one way, and, although they share this in common, they are also a diverse group of women with very different backgrounds, perspectives, experiences and career trajectories, as the ghostwritten accounts of their experience attest. However, I also note that the story produced by these accounts is a particular story and is likely to be very different from one that might be produced by the more marginal or excluded members of the community of feminist scholarship. Yet, as I explained above, the purpose of selecting these scholars was to gain access to the conversations that define feminist scholarship, as a way to interrogate its epistemic transformation. The methodological significance for my study, of the individual experiences of these influential scholars was at the forefront of my mind during the interviewing and ghostwriting process.

I interviewed each of the participants in 2007. Most of the interviews were conducted in Sydney; in their respective offices I interviewed Catharine Lumby, Kalpana Ram and Kate Lilley. I also interviewed Terry Threadgold and Erica McWilliam when they visited Sydney. I travelled to Melbourne to interview Sheila Jeffreys and to Canberra to interview Ann Curthoys. Each interview was 1 to 1.5 hours in length and digitally recorded. I began each interview with the question "How did you become a feminist academic?" and encouraged each of the participants to tell their experiences in the way they felt most appropriate. All of the other questions I asked during the interviews were based on topics raised by the participants. I took this approach to the interviews because the participants are highly skilled, articulate scholars who are able to speak about their experiences in a

considered way. Therefore, I was keen to let them direct the flow of the interview rather than impose any kind of schema onto the interview.

Following the interviews I transcribed the digital recordings. The ghostwritten accounts are based on these transcripts. The first step in the ghostwriting process was a light edit of the transcripts in which I removed some of the disfluencies and corrected grammatical errors. In the second edit, I reviewed the accounts for narrative consistency and in some I changed the chronology of the interview either to better fit the biographical chronology of the participant or to bring together related themes. In general, my crafting of the texts was light-handed. As one of the significant elements of the methodology is to focus on personal accounts of these influential scholars, I attempted to retain the conversational tone of the interviews so as to retain the 'autobiographic' feel of the texts. The goal of ghostwriting an interview is not to retell the narrative from my perspective but to craft it as if I were the participant. It is the experiences of the participants that are the focus, yet I remain in the text as the ghostly presence crafting and shaping the account.

Once I produced the ghostwritten texts, I sent each account to the participant inviting them to edit or expand the account. Most of the participants made only a few changes to the ghostwritten text, correcting names of people or places. A couple of the participants removed personal information about other people and any information they did not want on the public record. Some participants also opted to write into the accounts by adding more information about particular events. I accepted these changes and it is these approved versions that are presented in Volume 2. These ghostwritten texts are of course already an interpretation of the research interviews. And, as indicated above, they are themselves texts, or writings, new things in the world that will in some ways speak for themselves, or can be read in a number of ways. However, I also re-read these ghostwritten accounts in several ways in the following chapters.

Hodge and McHoul (1992) have flagged the difficulties of working with text and commentary, or what I have called re-readings. They argue that, in the disciplinary formations of the humanities and social sciences, there are commonly two approaches to text and commentary, which are both problematic. Firstly 'mastery' implies that the meaning of the text can only be discovered through commentary about it – "the commentary of mastery presumes to dominate and colonize its text" (Hodge & McHoul 1992: 190). The second approach to text and commentary is 'liberty' or letting the text speak for itself where meaning is understood to reside in the text. The problem with "disciplinary formations of mastery are...they rely on a basic assumption of epistemic and moral privilege over the texts they analyse but rarely inspect their own grounding in this respect" (1992: 203). The libertarian approach, on the other hand, is problematic because it also cannot escape "the politics of the *processing* of object texts" (1992: 203) and faces the moral problem of which text to valorise while still allowing the text to speak for itself. Instead of these approaches, Hodge and McHoul argue for an interventional strategy, in which "the *problems* of commentary would be always already present along with...any statement on any text" (1992: 205).

In the following chapters, I attempt to adopt Hodge and McHoul's interventional strategy to text and commentary, in the sense that I do not intend to impose meaning on these texts nor engage in the fallacy of letting these texts speak for themselves. Rather I position my commentary as readings of the accounts for the particular purpose of exploring the research problematic. I explain and exemplify this approach further in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 – Feminists of influence: reading the accounts

Introduction

In the previous chapter I outlined the four key elements of my methodology and described how and why the accounts in the second volume of this thesis were created. This chapter marks the beginning of the analytical portion of the thesis. In one sense, the second volume is already an analysis because the texts therein – the results of the ghostwriting process described in the previous chapter – are in themselves interpretations of the research interviews. Yet, in the interests of the re-thinking work I am undertaking in this thesis, I also wanted to re-read these accounts in terms of how they prompt us to think differently about the history of feminist scholarship and its current possibilities.

In this chapter, and the two that follow it, I provide a commentary on the accounts in Volume 2. However, following Hodge and McHoul, I adopt an “interventional strategy ... [that] ... works along with and through its ‘object texts’” (1992: 205). The object texts in my case are the ghostwritten accounts. This strategy is congruent with the aims of ghostwriting in acknowledging that textual meaning is not inherent or absolute and is always linked to writing. Therefore, the analytical work I undertake in the next three chapters is best thought about as readings and writings about the ghostwritten accounts. I approach this task in a number of ways as I explain in the following paragraphs. Yet my readings are only some of the possible readings of these accounts and I invite the reader to engage in their own reading of the texts.

This chapter serves as an introduction to the accounts presented in Volume 2 and my analysis of them. I present an initial reading of each of the accounts in order to direct attention to certain elements of these that

relate to my argument in Chapters 5 and 6. While in this chapter I treat each account individually, in Chapters 5 and 6 I engage with the whole corpus of data, reading across the accounts for patterns and critical themes. There are several different ways to think about the analytical work of Chapters 5 and 6. While the focus of my research is contemporary feminist scholarship and its future possibilities, I must, from necessity, address certain aspects of feminist scholarship's history, in particular the accepted narrative and underlying assumptions of that history. This is necessary because, as I argued in Chapter 2, it is the way feminist scholarship's history has been discursively produced in feminist literature that has generated particular themes of crisis within the field and limits its future possibilities. With that in mind, Chapters 5 and 6 are focused on re-thinking key elements of the accepted narrative of feminist scholarship.

When I first approached the analysis of these accounts, what struck me was the disparity between the experience of these influential feminist scholars and the accepted narrative of feminist scholarship as recorded in key texts, such as those by Magarey and Sheridan that I discussed in Chapter 2 (Magarey 1983, 1998a; Magarey, Ryan & Sheridan 1994; Magarey & Sheridan 2002; Sheridan 1990). I do not intend to imply here that the accepted narrative is incorrect but rather that the accounts wrought a more complex picture of feminist scholarship's past than the literature conveyed. In Chapter 2 I argued why some of the current ways that feminist scholarship is discursively produced are problematic. The purpose of my analysis is to juxtapose the accounts in Volume 2 with that literature in order to re-think some assumptions in the accepted narrative of feminist scholarship. In terms of the time periods being discussed, Chapter 5 focuses on the 1970s and 1980s and Chapter 6 on the 1990s up until the current moment. However, my analysis focuses on different aspects of the accounts for these two chapters and I approach the data analysis in a slightly different way in each chapter.

In Chapter 5 I utilise the accounts in Volume 2 as a kind of counter-history, juxtaposing the ghostwritten accounts with the published narratives of feminist scholarship's history. I examine the experiences of the feminist scholars in these accounts in order to re-think the notions of origin and decline in the quasi-official narrative of feminist scholarship over the past 40 years.

My first point of focus lies in re-thinking the notion of 'origin'. I unpack the notion of the origin by exploring how these individual scholars experienced the origin of feminist scholarship as a process of becoming both feminist and academic. The second element of the accepted narrative of feminist scholarship that I re-think in Chapter 5 is the 'decline' of the women's movement. In analysing the accounts as a whole I was aware of a dissonance between how this 'decline' of the women's movement was spoken about by the participants and their own experiences during that time. I examine these dissonances as a way to rewrite this period of feminism's history, viewing it as something other than decline by suggesting that the accounts are examples of feminism's survival.

In Chapter 6 I take up the ghostwritten accounts in a different way. In Chapter 3, I argued for the importance of these scholars' experiences in understanding the epistemic transformation of feminism from a social movement into feminist scholarship. I noted the importance of their status as influential scholars and described how their on-the-record accounts contribute to the public record of feminist scholarship's history and provide a more multifaceted and nuanced account of the field. Therefore, in Chapter 6, I take advantage of the experiences of these scholars by utilising their accounts as a kind of expert testimony on the effects of the restructuring of the university during the 1990s. Furthermore, I indicate how, as influential academics, their scholarly practices can give an indication of what contemporary feminist scholarship might be. For this reason, I also examine their scholarly practices in order to re-think

contemporary feminist academic practice. I explore these practices in the second part of Chapter 6, in order to re-think what is meant by contemporary feminist academic practice. The change in the language, from 'feminist scholarship' to 'feminist academic practice' signals an argument that I develop in Chapter 6 about how these feminist scholars have shifted towards practice-oriented feminisms.

This current chapter provides the necessary context for my analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 by compiling background information about the participants with my reading of the account. I have assembled biographical information about each participant from sources within the public domain, such as staff websites and biographies for conference papers or books. I have also considered these alongside relevant sources that illustrate the contribution of each participant to the field, such as their cultural impact, publication record and involvement in specific events or organisations. My reading focuses on the version(s) of feminism constructed within the accounts by the participant and I detail how each account serves to complicate our understanding of the field. Again, I emphasise that this is one possible reading of these accounts and I suggest that the reader may wish to interpret the texts in Volume 2 themselves before reading the following chapters.

Ann Curthoys

Professor Ann Curthoys has had a long and prestigious career as an historian at several institutions including University of Technology Sydney (UTS, formerly NSWIT), Australian National University (ANU) and the University of Sydney, where she is currently located. She is an ARC Professorial Fellow and a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences of Australia (ASSA) and the Australian Academy of the Humanities, and formerly Head of the Department of History at ANU. In her youth, Ann was involved in the Freedom Ride, which promoted Indigenous rights and wrote of her experiences in the book *Freedom Ride: a Freedomrider remembers* (2002). She was also involved in the Glebe Point Road and, later, Balmain Women's Liberation Groups in the early 1970s. Ann was the first director of women's studies at ANU and has held several academic positions as an historian. She was actively involved in some of Australia's earliest feminist journals, including *Mejane* and later *Refractory Girl*, and has published extensively in the areas of Australian history, specifically Indigenous and colonial history, historiography and feminism and feminist history. She has written several accounts of her experiences as a feminist scholar (Curthoys 1984, 1993, 1998b) and on the history of women's studies and gender studies (Curthoys 1998a, 2000).

It is her experiences as a feminist scholar involved in both the feminist movement and women's studies, and as someone who is institutionally highly recognised that make Ann an interesting subject for this research. She has been influential both within the feminist movement and feminist academia and has become very successful within the academy, as indicated by her appointment as a Fellow of the ASSA and the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Ann's account is a personal journey through some of the key developments in feminist scholarship from its inception. She gives an account of her involvement in the early days of women's liberation in

Australia and much of her account serves as an eyewitness perspective on those events but also to correct the record in some instances. She sometimes uses the phrase ‘people think it was like ...’ before providing her perspective on the subject. Ann’s account also provides a unique perspective on the divisions emerging in feminism during the 1980s – she describes her decision to move away from involvement in feminist journal *Refractory Girl* because of increasing tension between radical and so-called non-radical feminists. Ann describes how her decisions were motivated by increasing divisions within movement feminism, as well as by developments in the academy that allowed her to undertake feminist politics within the institution, such as developing and implementing the Equal Employment Opportunity policy at UTS.

Ann gives an account of the inception of women’s studies that is local, specific and personal by detailing her experiences as the first Director of Women’s Studies at ANU. Yet she also describes how she moved away from direct involvement in women’s studies by pursuing her interests in Australian history more broadly and by taking up a position at NSWIT. Again, the effects of these decisions are taken up in Chapters 5 and 6.

Ann’s account constructs a version of feminism that is focused on pragmatism. She constructs her feminist identity as a doer rather than talker and describes that she has had several ways of ‘doing’ feminism throughout her career. She does this firstly, by writing, publishing and editing – whether for movement-based journals such as *Mejane* or *Refractory Girl*, or scholarly journals and books; secondly, through her involvement in practical activities such as sitting on EEO committees; and thirdly, through pedagogy – Ann mentions supervision of research students and undergraduate teaching as important aspects of her feminist identity.

Interestingly, Ann does not regard some of her scholarly work on issues other than gender to be part of her feminist practice but admits that a feminist perspective becomes subsumed in everything she does. Ann also provides insight into some of the personal reasons why certain kinds of work are done at certain times. For example, she describes how researching race relations in Australia can be quite depressing and difficult to work with for extended periods of time, showing that emotions are tied to the kinds of work that scholars pursue and perhaps indicating that what might be most important politically can also take the greatest toll on one's state of mind. Overall, it is an account of what it means to be a feminist scholar in a variety of contexts – both inside and outside the academy. Her account of her experiences provides a unique and personal perspective on some of the key developments within feminist scholarship's history.

Catharine Lumby

Professor Catharine Lumby is a well-known and widely published public commentator, having worked as a news reporter, feature writer and opinion columnist for newspapers *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* and *The Bulletin* magazine before becoming a full-time academic in 1999. She was the Foundation Chair of the Department of Media and Communications at the University of Sydney and is currently the Director of Journalism and Media Research at the University of New South Wales. Catharine is one of Australia's most visible academic feminists. Zora Simic (2010) noted that she found, during research for her book *The great feminist denial* (Dux & Simic 2008), that Lumby was the third most cited feminist (after Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer) and is often a controversial figure.

Catharine has attracted public controversy through her *pro bono* work for the National Rugby League (she sits on its Education and Welfare committee and Research Committee, advising on gender issues); her work as a consultant on gender and sexual harassment for the reality television show *Big Brother Australia*; and through her appointment to the Advertising Standards Board. She also became embroiled in the Culture Wars, when Keith Windschuttle successfully sued *The Bulletin* for defamation, because of a 2002 article written by Lumby about him. She has also attracted criticism in some circles for her anti-censorship opinions on sexuality and media issues, including pornography (see her latest book *The porn report*, (Lumby, McKee & Albury 2008); sexism in advertising (Lumby 1993); and the sexualisation of children in the media (Lumby & Fine 2006). Within academic feminism she is best known for her book *Bad girls* (Lumby 1997), which critiques feminist attitudes to the mass media.

As Australia's most visible feminist scholar, Catharine was a must for inclusion in this research. Although her work is sometimes controversial, she is undoubtedly influential, particularly in defining feminist scholarship

for the broader community. Yet she retains influence within the academic feminist community through her exceptional research and publication history. She is one of a handful of Australian feminist academics who has crossed over to the mainstream with some success while retaining legitimacy within academic circles.

Accordingly, Catharine's account focuses on the difficulties and the benefits of walking the line between academia and the mainstream. She frequently muses on the dangers of speaking feminism publicly, in terms of unpacking complex ideas for a mainstream public audience, while also trying to keep those ideas in play in her academic work. She expresses the fear that she is perhaps not playing either role very well by trying to do both. Much of the account provides a rationale for why it is important to her to be a visible public figurehead for feminism while, at the same time, she gives insights into why this is not a role that she particularly enjoys.

My reading of her account is that Catharine is trying to explain why she is involved in public debates about gender and why she continues to do so, despite several negative experiences. She gives insight into the negative side of her media involvement by providing snapshots of her private experiences behind the public persona. Yet in her account I also think Catharine is providing justification for her life as an academic. She speaks of academia as something like a vocation and explains why it has been important for her to be an academic as well as a journalist and the difficulties of navigating the spaces in between these, where her work is frequently located. In terms of her identification as a feminist, she provides an account of how her interest in feminism came about through an intellectual process of conversion and details how her identification as a feminist was linked to theory. Yet she also recounts the influences of her childhood and adolescence that encouraged a feminist way of thinking.

Furthermore, Catharine's account of her experience as a feminist academic is the personal details of her life, which provide insight into the ideas she was thinking and writing about and the professional decisions that she made. She correlates experiences, for instance her involvement in the Sydney lesbian S&M scene, with her intellectual preoccupations, such as an interest in unpacking feminist notions of sexism and sexuality, which led to her first book *Bad girls*. There are many other examples in the account where Catharine links what was happening in her personal life to her scholarly and professional life.

I think overall Catharine's account can be read as a detailed explanation of her decision-making process, in terms of her scholarly and professional career. She gives a personal account of why she has made the decisions that she did and, in so doing, provides a complex account of what it means to be a feminist academic and, in particular, one who works in both the academy and the mainstream media.

Erica McWilliam

Professor Erica McWilliam has been an educator for almost four decades and is an internationally recognised scholar in the field of pedagogy. She began her career teaching in schools and has taught in a variety of settings, from rural to urban, in both government and non-government sectors. She utilised her experiences as a teacher by joining the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology and becoming a leader in the field of teaching and learning. At the time of our interview, Erica was Assistant Dean Research in the faculty and Program Leader of the Creative Workforce Research Program within the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation – she is now Adjunct Professor for this Centre. She is also an Associate Fellow of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

Erica's inclusion in this research is partly due to her influence within the discipline of education in terms of her research and publications. She is a leader in the field of pedagogy and is particularly known for her work on gender, which is influenced by poststructuralist theory. Yet she is also included because, as a feminist scholar, she has been willing, perhaps even eager, to take on managerial roles within the university. This is a move that might be read by some feminist critics as being complicit with an inherently patriarchal institution, but is one that has made Erica institutionally powerful as well as influential. By including her in my research, I was hoping to explore what it means for feminists to take on managerial roles within the university and what effect this has on the possibilities of feminist scholarship.

So it is unsurprising that much of Erica's account is devoted to exploring how one performs feminism from a position of power, either as a teacher or as a manager. In the account, Erica constructs herself as being very strategic and as someone who favours a practical application of feminist politics in ways that result in her desired outcomes. She juxtaposes her

version of feminism with a feminism that is concerned with principles rather than outcomes. In the textual account Erica gives insight into why she believes it is important for feminist scholars to be participants in the managerial aspects of academic life, rather than just bystanders. Her account gives a complex reading of the current conditions of the university and how it is possible for feminists to negotiate these conditions to engage in feminist practice.

Erica's account is also interesting in the way she constructs her feminist identity. As with the other scholars in this research, she details experiences in her childhood and adolescence that were important in her identifying as feminist. Yet she also talks of times where she distanced herself or felt distanced from other feminists. She tells the story of being ostracised by other feminist scholars in her faculty for discussing cricket with some (anti-feminist) men in the same faculty. This does a particular kind of work in her account, telling me and subsequent readers what kind of feminist Erica sees herself as – primarily concerned with the outcomes of her actions, rather than the principles – talking to men about sport might build collegiality with those men, making them more likely to listen to her opinion on gender issues at a later date.

A further example of Erica defining what kind of feminist she sees herself as is the story about being accosted on a train. In analysing her account I wondered why Erica tells this story. Does she tell it to demonstrate a certain type of feminist positioning? A positioning that states 'I am a feminist because I am against sexual assault and believe it is appropriate to be upset by it and to want to do something about it.' On one level the story functions as a demonstration of how she is like other feminists, particularly when she says, "I know what it's like ...". Yet at the same time she is telling the story as justification for her actions at another time – when she makes a decision not to help when a female teacher at her previous school had been harassed. Is it possible that Erica thinks other

feminists might read this instance of ‘not helping’ as unfeminist by implication? Hence the telling of the train incident serves to demonstrate empathy with other women who have gone through similar experiences; furthermore, it serves to demonstrate her feminist credentials when she states “there are appropriate times to do it” – meaning there are appropriate times for her to respond. I read this part of Erica’s account as being about the kind of feminist Erica sees herself as; it is discursively creating a version of feminism that Erica identifies with. Yet it is also meaningful in a broader context in that it is saying something about the difficulties and complexities of being and behaving as a feminist. It speaks of being a feminist in terms of what one believes individually but also acknowledges that to be a feminist is also to be part of a community and to be committed to helping other women. This is illustrated by the fact that it is her commitment to helping other women that motivates her to take on a managerial role, believing it will ultimately result in more equitable outcomes. In this text, Erica provides a sophisticated account of the terrain that feminist scholars negotiate daily in terms of their own personal desires and their commitment to a feminist community.

Kalpana Ram

Kalpana Ram is an anthropologist at Macquarie University. At the time of our interview she was a senior lecturer, but has since been promoted to Associate Professor. Kalpana had only recently joined the teaching staff full time after a decade-long career in research in the disciplines of philosophy, sociology and anthropology. Born in India and university-educated in Australia, Kalpana has a unique perspective on the tensions between Anglophone feminism and being an Indian-Australian woman. She describes her current interests as “developing connections between anthropology, post-colonial critique, feminist theory and phenomenological philosophy” (‘Kalpana Ram, Staff Profile’ 2010).

Kalpana’s work often focuses on the tensions between the concerns of Third World women and contemporary feminist theory. She was one of the founders of the Third World Women’s Group during the 1970s – a women’s liberation group highlighting racism in the women’s movement and exploring experiences of immigrant women. The group was quite influential within the women’s movement and made a significant contribution to unmasking racism within the movement in Australia. Kalpana’s scholarly work has also been very influential, in particular her first book *Mukkuvar women* (Ram 1991) was very well received. Interestingly, of the seven women who are participants in this research, Kalpana Ram has the most Google hits – searching the name Kalpana Ram, there were approximately 417,000 hits, more than double those of the next closest, Kate Lilley, with approximately 184,000. Kalpana has also influenced research directions in feminist scholarship by being involved in setting up the Gender Relations Project at the Institute of Advanced Studies at ANU in the early 1990s. Furthermore, she has published several papers on the difficulties presented by cultural/religious diversity in Australian feminist scholarship (see for example: Ram 1993, 1999, 2006).

Kalpana's textual account is interesting for a number of reasons. One of the first things I noticed about it was that she explains her experiences in a very anthropological way. For instance, the account she gives of becoming a feminist is not just about her personal history but is linked to the cultural and political history of India, along with the history of her family. This is unsurprising given that she is an anthropologist, but it is also significant because it gives an indication of how Kalpana constructs her version of feminism and how she practises feminism in her scholarly work. Kalpana frequently draws on personal experiences that she believes to be of cultural significance in highlighting differences and similarities between India and Australia in order to explain her intellectual positioning.

For instance, Kalpana highlights the differences between Indian and Australian perspectives on gender relations by contrasting the sex-segregated, yet supportive, environment she was accustomed to in India with an incident at a party in Sydney where she felt pressured to go along with a drunk boy's advances in order to fit in with the other girls. She uses this incident from her own life to reflect on the different perceptions of sexism and oppression in India and Australia and describes how reflecting on her experience motivated the kinds of scholarly work she undertook.

Another interesting aspect of Kalpana's account is her description of becoming feminist and this is something I take up in more detail in Chapter 5. Kalpana was an undergraduate student at the University of Sydney in the mid 1970s, a time when students and academics were politicised. Her account provides a unique eyewitness perspective on these events and this raises questions about the relation between intellectual and political life. Kalpana also describes how her identification as a feminist has always been tied up in a critique of capitalism and race relations, partly because of these experiences as a student but also because of her personal experiences as a woman who identifies as both Indian and Australian.

The version of feminism that Kalpana constructs in her account is a feminism that consistently asks questions of race and class along with gender. Kalpana describes how she has tried to bring these concerns together through her scholarly work and how they have influenced her career path. For instance, her transition from philosophy to sociology to anthropology was motivated by her desire to address class, race and gender issues in her scholarly work, rather than any allegiance to a discipline. Also, her decision to join the Gender Relations Project at ANU was made because it enabled her to pursue her interest in gender and migration and expanded her focus from India-Australia relations to Asia and the Pacific.

Overall, Kalpana's account links her personal experiences and unique perspective to the questions she pursues in her scholarly work. The text offers an account of what it means to be a feminist scholar whose version of feminism encapsulates the complex relations between race, class and gender.

Kate Lilley

Kate Lilley is both an academic and a published poet. She is currently Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Sydney, where she specialises in early modern literature and culture, as well as gender and genre. Kate undertook her doctorate on masculine elegy at University College London and undertook a Postdoctoral Fellowship at Oxford University before returning to Sydney in 1990 to take up her current position. Although Kate wrote poetry throughout her teens, she was focused on her scholarly work until the early 2000s when she began to write poetry again. Her book of poems, *Versary*, was published in 2002 and was very successful; it was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Award and Kate was invited to be Poet in Residence at Brandeis University in the United States.

Kate is also well known as the daughter of two famous Australian writers, Dorothy Hewett and Merv Lilley. Dorothy was a well-known feminist novelist, poet and playwright and was also an academic in the English department at the University of Western Australia in Perth, where Kate grew up. Dorothy was also a member of the Communist Party of Australia for more than 20 years and was known for her feminist and left-wing views. Unsurprisingly then, Kate's account is as much about being Dorothy's daughter as it is about being a feminist scholar.

Kate's text gives an account of her experiences growing up in a feminist household, but finding her own way to a feminist identification through feminist theory. The account describes how Kate discovered and constructed her own version of feminism that was much more theoretically inclined than her mother's politics. The importance of her mother in Kate's life is obvious in many ways: it is the first thing she mentions in the account, and she frequently compares her own choices to her mother's or refers to her mother's opinions on her decisions. Kate compares herself to her mother frequently, noting the similarities in their experiences (both

were poets and academics), yet also carefully demarcating the differences. In particular Kate notes the divergence between herself and her mother in expressions of sexuality; where Kate feels that her mother sought the attention of men and was quite heterosexist, Kate consciously chose to become a lesbian. Hence Kate's relationship with her mother was one of mimesis and rejection; Kate's ability to reflect on the relationship is perhaps due to her enthusiastic engagement with psychoanalysis. Therefore, her account provides a unique insight into what it is like to be a second-generation feminist scholar.

Kate also gives an account of the impact of the economic imperatives of the contemporary university and the increasing emphasis on measurable outputs from the perspective of someone who regards academia as a calling or vocation, as opposed to an employment choice. My reading of her account of these changes is that she is trying to make sense of the delicate balance between compromise and complicity in response to them.

Another interesting aspect of Kate's account is her uncertainty about what kinds of work feminists should be doing now. In her early days as an academic Kate expresses that she had a certainty about the kinds of material she should teach yet, as time went on, she found herself drawn towards the non-canonical in a more general way and became less certain about what feminist scholars should focus on.

As with the other accounts, Kate offers insights into her personal experiences as a way to make sense of her scholarly work and to explain her career decisions. Her account is tinged with the shadow of a famous feminist mother, serving as a reminder that individuals and their life histories are significant elements of feminist scholarship's history. Hence this text provides an account of what it is to be a feminist scholar in the contemporary university but also a second-generation feminist scholar.

Sheila Jeffreys

Originally from the UK, Sheila Jeffreys moved to Melbourne in 1991 to take up a lectureship at the University of Melbourne. She describes herself as “actively involved in feminist and feminist lesbian politics, particularly around the issue of sexual violence, since 1973” (‘Professor Sheila Jeffreys, Staff Profile’ 2010). Her areas of research focus mainly on sexual violence against women, but she has also published books on beauty, pornography, queer politics, prostitution and transgenderism.

Sheila has been a proponent of radical lesbian feminism since 1973 and is one of the most well-known (and frequently reviled) radical feminists in the world, along with the late Andrea Dworkin. Sheila is still involved in activism alongside her academic work; she was a founding member of the Australian branch of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATWA) and still sits on the CATWA board. Sheila has published more than eight books and her work is frequently discussed in the mainstream media (Bindel 2005) as well as in online social media (De Brito 2010). Yet she is often mocked and derided for her beliefs: she was named on a list of ‘13 women who make us cringe’ (Harper 2010); the sex industry named a dildo – *The Sheila* – after her; and there is even a Twitter parody of her (@FakeSheilaJeffreys). Although supporters of radical lesbian feminism are rare in the academy, Sheila is still undoubtedly influential because she is so well known and her opinions so controversial. She is also someone who, despite considerable opposition, has cemented her place in the university: since our interview Sheila was promoted to Professor.

As one of only a handful of radical feminists in Australian universities, Sheila’s account offers a different perspective on the possibilities of feminist scholarship. Radical feminism exists in a state of resistance to the academy as an institution because of the revolutionary ideals at the heart of radical feminist politics. Therefore, I was interested to understand how Sheila negotiates the tension between revolutionary politics and

institutional demands in her everyday life. This tension is omnipresent in Sheila's account and underlies most of the events within it. Yet the tension exists in an obscure way because Sheila is not explicit in describing the situation – she often refers to faculty management as 'they', for example when she says, "they downgraded Gender Studies". My interpretation of this reservation is that Sheila is cautious not to be seen as publicly criticising the university. This gives a small insight into the complexities for Sheila of critiquing the institution that employs her – despite being secure in the position, there is still a reluctance or hesitance to criticise the university. This is not to say that Sheila does not criticise the university's actions, she certainly does, but it is with some caution. Sheila's account also conveys a sense that the university has changed and she frequently refers to what was possible in earlier days. For example, she describes a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor when she first arrived at the University of Melbourne and makes the point that such things are no longer possible. She also uses phrases like "you couldn't do that now" or "it's all changed now", expressing an almost melancholic nostalgia.

Even more complex than the tension between Sheila's radical politics and the institution is the tension between Sheila and other feminists, particularly other feminist scholars. There are several points in the account where Sheila refers to differences and disagreements with other feminists. For instance, Sheila was at odds with feminist activists because of her stance on issues of sadomasochism, pornography and queer politics, and she was either in conflict with or distanced from other feminist scholars, because of her opposition to postmodernism and queer theory. In a similar way to how she describes her relationship with the university, there is some hesitation from Sheila in discussing the tension between her and other feminists. This hesitation is understandable given some of the negative experiences Sheila has had and the anger that is often directed at her but it means that Sheila's account is a thin story that only touches the surface of what was happening. In some ways, all of the accounts

provide only a glimpse of the experiences described in them but Sheila's, more than the others, gives a sense of many things left unsaid.

Yet Sheila's account is not only about tensions and conflicts. She also gives an account of what has kept her going through these conflicts, namely the relationships with other like-minded feminist activists and, most of all, her students. Sheila views teaching as an opportunity to create new feminists and it is an aspect of the job that she finds very rewarding. She also describes helping students become involved in feminism as activists. The version of feminist scholarship that Sheila constructs in this account is pedagogical and directly linked to activism. This gives some indication as to why Sheila, as a radical feminist, would choose to stay in the university. Another reason is because it enables Sheila to be an activist. Sheila describes how the university actually supports her activist work as part of her job, indicating that the tensions between radical feminism and the institution are actually quite complex. The text is a multifaceted account of Sheila's experiences as a feminist scholar who is often at odds with other feminists and the institution but who is also quite successful as a feminist scholar.

Terry Threadgold

Terry has a long history of involvement in feminist scholarship in Australia and the UK. She has “published widely in the areas of poststructuralist feminist discourse analysis, performance studies, feminist legal studies and on race, identity and nation in contexts of globalisation” (Staff Profile Website, Cardiff). Hence she is well qualified to comment on some of the central tensions in the field, particularly the ongoing debates concerning the place of poststructuralism in feminism and its relation to theory-practice binaries and feminist politics.

Terry has had a very successful career as an academic and is currently Pro Vice-Chancellor for Staff and Diversity at Cardiff University in Wales. She has also held several other institutionally powerful positions: at the time of our interview Terry was Head of School, Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies and Director of the Race, Representation and Cultural Identity Group. Previously she was Head of the Department of English, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Monash University in Melbourne.

Terry was among the first scholars to teach feminist theory in the English department at the University of Sydney and was involved in setting up the Centres for Women’s Studies and Performance Studies there. Her book *Feminist poetics: poeisis, performance, histories* (1997) is still a key text in the field of feminist cultural studies. Terry has also published several articles about feminist theory and academic feminism (Threadgold 1996a, 1996b, 2000a, 2000b).

As an Australian feminist scholar at a foreign university, she is able to offer views on Australian feminist scholarship from the perspective of an ‘insider’ who is located ‘outside’ the contemporary Australian context. Moreover, Terry has been a university lecturer since 1970, so has borne

witness to the history of feminist scholarship and has played a key role in that history.

Terry's account covers the longest time period – from her experiences as a teaching fellow and Masters student in 1968 at the University of Sydney to her current work as Pro Vice-Chancellor at Cardiff. The history of feminist scholarship is echoed in Terry's account, meaning that the changes in feminist scholarship are apparent in her experiences. Terry's account is a micro-history of feminist scholarship: developing a feminist consciousness in the late 1960s; setting up women's studies in the early 1980s; being involved in feminist theory throughout the 1980s and 1990s; taking on managerial roles in the 1990s; and expanding scholarly interests in 2000s. Terry experienced many of the key developments in the history of feminist scholarship; therefore her account is an individual and personal perspective on these developments, providing a more nuanced account of the field. The processes by which Terry has been constructed and constituted as feminist have changed over time in relation to the changes in the field. Her account indicates different modes of feminist subjectivity available at different times throughout that history; giving a nuanced account of what being a feminist scholar means now and has meant in the past.

Like the other accounts in the research, personal experiences add to the account of Terry's scholarly life. Terry provides personal details of her life to make sense of the official account of her academic career. For instance, a ten year gap in publishing is glossed over in the biography on Terry's website at Cardiff ('Professor Terry Threadgold, Staff Profile' 2010) but in her account we find out that, during this decade, she was in fact very ill, had almost died in childbirth and was raising two small children. This highlights the importance of personal and individual accounts of feminist scholarship's history.

There are several other personal details in Terry's account that add complexity to the history of feminist scholarship, such as being passed over for a Chair position because of her feminist and postmodern theoretical background or the serendipitous events leading to the formation of the Centre for Performance Studies at Sydney University, among many others. These kinds of details in Terry's account highlight what is missing from those accounts of feminist scholarship that focus on events and developments rather than individual experiences.

Overall, Terry's text presents a complex account of being a feminist scholar both in the contemporary university and throughout the 40-year history of feminist scholarship in Australia.

Chapter 5 – Becoming feminist, becoming academic: re-thinking the relations between feminist scholarship and feminist movement.

In the first part of this chapter, I complicate the premise that the women's movement is the origin of feminist scholarship by analysing excerpts from the accounts of influential feminist academics in Volume 2. I then examine the accounts to complicate the relation between the institutionalisation of feminism and the purported 'decline' of the women's movement. The purpose of this re-thinking is to problematise the relation between feminist scholarship and feminist movement. I do this in order to challenge the way this relation has been utilised within some feminist literatures to declare both of these the fields to be in crisis. As I suggested in Chapter 2, some of the claims within the crisis literature rely on the construction of an unproblematized origin of feminist scholarship, leading to an often oversimplified view of the relation between feminist scholarship and feminist movement. By arguing for more multifaceted accounts of the relation between feminist scholarship and the feminist movement, this chapter opens a space for conversations, producing new conceivable futures for feminist scholarship to take place.

Re-thinking the origin of feminist scholarship

In the following pages I analyse excerpts from the accounts in Volume 2 that challenge the proposition that the women's movement is the origin of feminist scholarship. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate that, in the experiences of these feminist scholars, movement feminism and scholarship were experienced synchronously. That is, rather than the women's movement being the origin of feminist scholarship in a linear progression, feminist movement and feminist scholarship were experienced by these scholars in concert and in complex relation to one another.

Critical and analytical readings of the accounts in Volume 2 suggest that, in the experience of these women, the relationship between the women's movement and feminist scholarship is much more complex than the literature would suggest. Feminism was not something that you brought with you to the academy, a political consciousness that exists 'out there', but rather it was a subjectivity mediated by the academy. For example, Catharine Lumby states:

It's interesting the question of how you become a feminist ... there are two separate processes here. One is the time at which I would have identified myself as a 'feminist' using that word and that wouldn't have been until I was at university. I did an Arts/Law degree ... in 1979 and, at some point, I think I did become formally politicised and that would have been definitely through studying critical theory.

She continues:

By third year of university I would have been calling myself a feminist ... I came to that open identification through an intellectual process. It was an intellectual process of conversion ... I found feminism so intellectually persuasive.

These excerpts suggest that Catharine experiences feminism as an intellectual process, which is simultaneously political and academic. She does not locate the origin of her feminist subjectivity or feminist practice as a scholar as being outside the academy. She later revises the timing of becoming a feminist by stating, "I say third-year university but really by the end of high school I was reading Simone de Beauvoir and so I was thinking about it."

Interestingly, quite a few of the accounts reflect the scholars' early identification with feminism, by reading feminist books as a young adult. For instance, Kalpana Ram described one of her early identifications with feminism in this way:

Germaine Greer's Female eunuch came out when I was in sixth year (now Year 12) and I just went out and bought it because I was interested and there was a lot of media publicity about it. I just loved it; it was THE book.

Sheila Jeffreys also read Greer's *The female eunuch* as a young adult.

She recalls:

I became a feminist in 1973. I had been teaching for two years at a girls' private boarding school in Britain and I read Sexual politics and The female eunuch while I was there and immediately started teaching them in a discussion group in the evening in the Headmistress's lounge.

Kate Millet's *Sexual politics*, Greer's *The female eunuch* and De Beauvoir's *The second sex* were frequently cited by the feminist scholars in their accounts of becoming a feminist in Volume 2. These books are considered classics of the second wave women's movement and, according to the feminist literature, they were widely read by ordinary women in their everyday lives at home, at work and in consciousness-raising groups around the country (Lake 1999). Yet, curiously, these books are rarely described as being academic when, in fact, they were written by feminist scholars. Kate Millet's *Sexual politics* is in fact her PhD dissertation that was developed into a book ('The liberation of Kate Millet' 1970); Greer had already gained her doctorate and had taken up a lectureship at the University of Warwick when *The female eunuch* was published ('Germaine Greer' 2007); and de Beauvoir had been the youngest person ever to pass the *agrégation* in philosophy in France, nearly 20 years before writing *The second sex* and was a prominent existential philosopher at the time that it was published (Mussett 2010).

These excerpts suggest that, for these feminist scholars, identification with feminism was mediated by intellectual processes. In other words, in their accounts, feminist subjectivity and politics are directly related to intellectual practices and academic work. I am not suggesting that the women's movement did not exist prior to feminist scholarship, nor that these

accounts represent the experience of all feminist women. But I am suggesting that depicting the women's movement as outside the academy and as the origin of feminist scholarship belies the complexity of the relations between feminist movement and feminist scholarship. This is borne out by the fact that configuring the feminist movement as the origin of feminist scholarship is incongruent with the experiences of these individual feminist scholars.

Certainly the argument could be made that the feminist scholars discussed above entered the academy after the Women's Liberation Movement and, therefore, the movement had already influenced the academy to include feminist work. For that reason it is useful to examine the experiences of some of the older feminist scholars in the research, who were already involved in academia when the Women's Liberation Movement got underway. Marilyn Lake indicates that the first women's liberation meetings in Australia took place in early 1970 (Lake 1999) and this is supported by Ann Curthoys' ghostwritten account in Volume 2, in which she describes attending one of the first meetings of the Balmain/Glebe Women's Liberation Group in January 1970.

Furthermore, at that time Terry Threadgold had been teaching in the English department at the University of Sydney for a number of years. Her experiences of how she became a feminist provide a different perspective on becoming a feminist scholar. Terry describes her first engagement with feminism in this way:

I certainly didn't enter the academy being a feminist. I was being a medievalist at Sydney University and I didn't even think about feminism until I was having my first baby. At the time [1968] I was a teaching fellow in the English Department at Sydney University. I hadn't quite finished my Honours/Masters degree and I found out I was pregnant. I went to see my supervisor and Head of School just to tell him I was pregnant because I was excited. I left the room having resigned. What he actually said to me was, "oh, that's wonderful but we'll be sorry to lose you". I was so taken aback by this

at the time that I didn't actually say, "well I don't actually mean to be going anywhere".

There are other experiences Terry talks about in her account that also influenced her identification with feminism; in particular she heard rumours about other women academics who did not get promotion despite being well ahead of their male peers in experience and publications. However, it was not until the early 1980s, when she became friends with feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz, that she began thinking and writing feminist theory and identifying as a feminist scholar. She recalls:

About that time [1968] was when I started thinking about feminist issues. I didn't really get involved in feminist theory straight away ... My awareness of feminism really emerged in the early '80s ... when I worked for the first time closely with Liz Grosz. The Semiotics, Ideology and Language conference was one that I ran with Liz Grosz and Michael Halliday ... and Gunther Kress ... it was talking to Liz and working with her around that conference that made me aware of things I should be reading and thinking about.

Although Terry was the most senior participant in the research, she experienced feminism principally as being mediated by the academy: first, developing feminist consciousness through direct discrimination while teaching at the university and secondly, by engaging in feminist theory through an association with feminist philosopher Liz Grosz and organising a conference. Terry's account raises important questions about the way movement feminism is deployed as the origin of feminist scholarship. Her experience of being a feminist scholar does not originate in the women's movement; on the contrary, in her accounts feminism has a complex relation to the academy. The experiences that led to her identification with feminism included direct discrimination; hearing rumours about discrimination against other female academics; reading and discussing feminist theory; organising academic conferences; and developing a friendship with feminist philosopher Liz Grosz. All of these experiences are linked with the academy in one way or another.

By examining Terry's individual account, it is possible to see how deploying movement feminism as the origin of feminist scholarship limits the possibilities for what counts as legitimate and politically useful feminist knowledge. For instance, should her work be regarded as less feminist or less political because it did not originate in the women's movement? What accounts are left behind or erased by arguing for movement feminism as the origin of feminist scholarship?

It is worthwhile to examine in detail one account, which I think is of particular interest in understanding the complex relation between feminism and the academy – specifically in the 1970s, the time of the inception of women's studies. The ghostwritten account based on the interview with feminist anthropologist Kalpana Ram provides fruitful evidence of the ways in which activist and academic feminist subjectivities were experienced in concert. It also suggests that the particular temporal/spatial location of the University of Sydney in the mid 1970s was one in which the boundaries between activism and academia were blurred – as were boundaries between the intellectual and the political, and between the academy and the street.

The ways that these elements are interwoven in her accounts illustrates the blurred boundaries and for that reason it is useful to examine a lengthy excerpt from her account. Kalpana Ram was born in India and moved with her family to Australia as a teenager in 1970. In 1973 she started a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Sydney. She describes her experiences of this time thus:

Going to university was like a liberation for me because suddenly I was back in the mainstream, back in the swing of things ... As my luck would have it, I walked straight into what was actually a student strike, where they had pitched tents up on the front lawn of the quad. And it just so happened that the strike was about setting up a feminist philosophy course at Sydney University.

Actually, that was my second year but even in my first year, which was 1973, I had discovered politics. I attended courses in philosophy and politics (government) and I was attending as many classes as possible but basically two things made a really big difference to me. Firstly, I heard some lectures on Marxism, socialism, and political philosophy and anarchist philosophy by some of the senior philosophy staff – I was electrified by them! So it wasn't just about feminism for me. I was also interested in broad class issues.

The second thing was, in that same year 'Chile' happened; the Allende government was toppled. I remember there was a deep rumbling in the student body at lunchtime one day and I just followed a huge lot of students crowding into a meeting at Wallace Theatre about the overthrow of Allende. I didn't even know all the issues at that point but I got swept up in a sea of humanity and I knew I wanted to hear what was going on and there was speaker after speaker talking about how the CIA and the Americans had been involved and that it involved the overthrow of a Socialist government in Chile ... So that was a very important incident for me. It wasn't just about feminism but was a very broad politicisation.

This excerpt indicates the complexity of the relationship between feminist movement and feminist scholarship, particularly during this time period. For instance, Kalpana's experiences of political protest and activism were mainly located on campus and were part of a broad scale politicisation of students and academics. Her account suggests that the people who were involved in political scholarship were also involved in forms of direct action, both on and off campus. She continues:

The next year the feminist strike happened and there were several other movements happening around campus as well. There was the political economy movement in the Economics Department. I'd heard people like Dennis Altman and Lex Watson talking about gay rights. By the next year, there was a whole range of issues that I was involved with. Some of the older students were involved in Victoria Street squats ... I was watching a lot of radical films ... I went to a protest at the court and some of my friends got arrested ... Some of my friends were mishandled by police and that left a real impression on me.

Then, when the university had set up a department to teach feminist and Marxist philosophy, I enrolled in those courses. I studied a wonderful course run by Liz Jacka and Jean Curthoys that had a very highly charged atmosphere; there were books that we'd read

and that would spill over into very long discussions. Also, we had little groups – consciousness-raising groups where we all talked about our lives. It was all part of the academic program, but it didn't feel like an academic program, it felt like this was about life. It was about life and politics – the university was just the stage for it but it went way outside that.

Kalpana heard academics speak on topics such as gay rights, Marxism and feminist philosophy in class as well as in the quad. As she experienced it, there was no difference between feminist movement and feminist scholarship and both formed her feminist subjectivity. It is possible to conclude, from the way she tells the story, moving seamlessly between street protests and academic subjects, that her process of politicisation was the result of multiple experiences, which were both intellectual and political. In addition, Kalpana experienced consciousness-raising groups as part of an academic program, rather than in a location outside the university, suggesting that at this time the boundaries between the political and the intellectual were blurred. For Kalpana becoming feminist was directly mediated by her experiences in the academy and was a complex process of politicisation, not only around feminist issues but also including issues of race, class and poverty and drawing on her childhood in India.

Kalpana's account again raises questions about the legitimacy and usefulness of describing the women's movement as the origin of feminist scholarship. Indeed, it suggests that, rather than the women's movement being the origin of feminist scholarship in her experience, the women's movement was experienced in synchronicity with scholarship and other political movements of the time. So, rather than positioning activism and politics as something external to the academy, happening in the mythical street, Kalpana's account suggests that, at this particular historical location, there was no difference between the action on the street and the action in the academy. In this sense the academy was the street. The strike at Sydney University in 1973, which split the philosophy department

and established the first feminist course at the University of Sydney, is a powerful example of how at this time activism was practised on campus.

These individual accounts, when considered together, suggest that feminist scholarship did not simply spring up from a social movement anterior to the academy but instead that the origins of feminist scholarship lie in the complex and varied experiences of these individuals. The accounts also suggest that the historical period of the inception of women's studies was one in which boundaries between academia and activism were blurred. Placed together, these accounts of becoming a feminist scholar raise questions about the usefulness of deploying the women's movement as the origin of feminist scholarship. These personal accounts of the process of becoming a feminist scholar serve as reminder that feminist scholarship is not simply a body of knowledge but is also constituted by the women who produce that knowledge.

Re-thinking the decline of the women's movement

The idea that the women's movement has declined is generally accepted within feminist academia and the broader community. I am interested in the idea of decline because it is closely linked to the narrative of feminist scholarship in crisis. Perceptions of a declining women's movement feeds post-feminist rhetoric and sparks fears about the failure of generational succession within feminism generally. The idea that the women's movement has declined was frequently discussed in the accounts but I was curious as to whether the phenomenon was as simple as a 'decline' or if something else – more and other – was going on in terms of what happened to feminism during that time.

In analysing the accounts as a whole I was aware of a dissonance between how the decline of the women's movement was spoken about by the participants and their own experiences during that time. In particular, I observed dissonances between what they thought happened to the

women's movement and their actions during the time period when the movement is said to have declined. This observation has led me to propose, in this section, that some of their actions, such as travelling overseas or taking up a managerial role in the university, meant that they had less direct involvement in the women's movement, thereby contributing to its apparent decline within Australian universities.

However, I also propose a different reading of these actions, arguing that they are, as much as anything, the result of successes within the women's movement. Despite having less explicit involvement in the movement, these scholars enacted gender politics in institutional settings and were able to do so as a result of the success of the women's movement and feminist scholarship up to that point in time. I argue that, instead of decline, this period of feminism's history can more usefully be thought of as a transitional period, whereby past success in the women's movement enabled feminist politics to be enacted within the institutional setting of the university. This is another way to re-think the relation between feminist scholarship and feminist movement and may open up a new set of political questions for feminism's future. These new questions may direct our attention away from the recuperative aspects of some of the literature. They will challenge the arguments that it is necessary to recuperate feminist movement in order for feminist scholarship to be politically useful now and into the future, such as that made by Jean Curthoys, discussed in Chapter 2 (Curthoys 1997). Instead, these new questions require us to think about the ways in which feminist scholarship is already powerful and useful.

Understandably, the issue of the decline of the women's movement came up often in the interviews and certainly there were a variety of suggestions put forward as to why the movement declined (usually preceded by unsure musings – 'I don't really know'). But I think more interesting than the reasons put forward are the dissonances between how the participants

describe their experience of feminism during this time period and their reasoning for the movement's decline. Upon reading the parts of the account relating to their opinions on what happened to the women's movement, it is as if the movement involved some other women in another place. This is a marked difference to how they described themselves in relation to the women's movement in earlier times, when they were more actively involved. This difference, again, leads me to suggest that the accounts of this period of feminist scholarship's history can be read in a variety of ways other than through a narrative of decline such as: the successful integration of feminist ideas into academic disciplines; the successful implementation of feminist agendas in the workplace, creating career success for feminist women; and feminists 'growing up' or simply 'getting on with it'.

In order to re-think the notion of decline, I examined the ghostwritten accounts specifically for indications of what these particular feminist scholars were doing during the period of time that the women's movement is said to have declined. In doing so, I found that there were several things going on that may be relevant to understanding this phenomenon.

Ann Curthoys is an example of a feminist who began her academic career in an explicitly feminist environment but who then moved into another discipline. She took up the first ever position of Director of Women's Studies at ANU after completing her doctorate. Three years later she was appointed as a sociologist at NSWIT (now UTS), although she quickly transformed the position into an Australian history role more appropriate to her doctoral training in this field. At the time she gave her account, Ann was Manning Clark Professor of History at ANU. She describes her move from ANU to NSWIT in this way:

Both my husband and I wanted to get back to Sydney and there was a job advertised at what was then the NSW Institute of Technology. The advertised job was in sociology. It was called 'Sociology of Work and Industry' or something similar. I was not a sociologist but I had

written a lot about women and work at this point. So I applied for that as a way of getting back to Sydney and I got it.

I was thrown into a completely different environment. The BA in Communications at UTS, or what we now call UTS, was completely different. I didn't teach a lot of women's studies in that new environment. I did teach a course called Social history of women but by then I had moved more into more straight, standard type Australian history teaching because I was the only person doing Australian history at UTS.

The interesting thing about this excerpt is that Ann made the decision to move into a discipline for mainly personal or lifestyle reasons – she wanted to return to Sydney. Moreover, she took up an appointment in a disciplinary field that she was not trained in as a matter of convenience, suggesting perhaps that disciplinary boundaries are less solidified than we might expect.

Other feminists too have never held explicitly feminist positions within the university but have found ways to do feminist work within the disciplines. For example, after completing her degree in philosophy at the University of Sydney, which included some of the first feminist courses, those run by Liz Jacka and Jean Curthoys, Kalpana Ram moved into the newly established Sociology Department at Macquarie University to complete her Masters degree, prior to receiving a PhD scholarship in Anthropology at ANU. She recalls:

When I finished philosophy at Sydney Uni, I came to Macquarie University. The Sociology Department was just being set up then; that was 1977. Bob Connell, who was the Professor of Sociology in those days, was very supportive of me and the research I wanted to do about class and working class politics in India. The research was not about feminism per se but, while I was doing the research, I was finding that the whole women's movement was taking off there so I ended up getting very interested in that as well.

After completing her Masters in sociology, Kalpana found that the anthropologists were more supportive of her interest in comparative study of the gender and class issues between India and Australia. She explains:

By then I was talking to the anthropologists here at Macquarie and they were more familiar with the kinds of comparative issues I was trying to raise. So I applied for a scholarship in anthropology at the ANU, in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

From these excerpts, it is clear that finding ways to incorporate gender and class issues, as well as her interest in comparative issues between Australia and India, was very important to Kalpana and integral to her decision-making about her research career. From her, and also from Ann's account, we can conclude that feminists moved into disciplinary positions for a variety of personal, political and academic reasons. In Ann's case it was a desire to return to Sydney that spurred her to apply for a sociology position at NSWIT, whereas Kalpana based her decisions to move from philosophy to sociology to anthropology on her evolving research interests.

Absent from these accounts, however, is the effects of these actions on the movement. Specifically absent is the ways in which the transition of feminists into academic disciplines may have effected the strength and cogency of the movement, especially when those feminists were heavily involved in the women's movement, as Ann and Kalpana were. It is possible to interpret these actions as contributing to a 'decline' in the social movement; however, they might also be read as successfully integrating feminist knowledge into the disciplines. I return to this point later, but first it should be noted that, during this time, considerable divisions among feminists began to occur.

As Ann explains:

Then in the early '80s, feminism started to experience these big divisions and conflicts, which were really around the issue of radical feminism I suppose. It was highlighted by the visit of Mary Daly in about '81. I think there were a whole lot of feminists who thought they roughly shared her views but when she came they found out that they didn't. Some of them loved her and some of them hated her. I was one of the ones who hated her. So Refractory Girl was internally split. I stopped going to Refractory Girl at some point in the early '80s

really for that reason; just because we didn't have enough in common any more.

In this excerpt, Ann deliberately distances herself from one of her main direct involvements with the women's movement because of differences of opinion with radical feminists. Ann and others have previously written on the effects of these divisions on the movement (Curthoys in Rowland 1984: 59) and, undoubtedly, these divisions had a strong influence on many women deciding that their time was better spent elsewhere, which ultimately influenced the decline of feminism as a social movement.

During this time radical feminism came to be seen by some as orthodoxy, limiting the political possibilities for feminism. This debate was also played out within the academy, as experienced by Erica McWilliam in her first academic job. After “enacting a gender politics” while working at a boys’ school for 14 years, Erica was surprised and frustrated by the actions of her feminist colleagues in the Faculty of Education at QUT:

So then I went straight into the Education faculty at QUT in Brisbane and when I got there they already had established the three equity lectures: class, race and gender – very predictable. I remember an incident early on. I came into a school where there were some very strong feminists with very good credentials in gender education and I found myself offside amongst them. I love sport and I was very interested in cricket ... When I got to the university one of the things I did do was talk to a couple of the men who were thought to be unsympathetic to gender issues about cricket. There was a bit of concern amongst these women about me discussing cricket at length ... So it was put to me that I used too many sporting metaphors or that I basically needed to temper my interest in sport because it was looking like, I don't know, too blokey or something. And I remember being really annoyed at that and I thought, “I do have a genuine interest in sport”.

In this comment, Erica appears frustrated by her relationship with her feminist colleagues, expressing the sense that there was inflexibility in their approach to enacting feminist politics that was at odds with her more pragmatic approach. She continues:

So I felt that there was a dissonance between the way I was enjoying my own sport and loving that and this sense that maybe I was being, well we call it now politically incorrect I suppose ... So I just heard indirectly that there was a bit of harrumphing about it, which I felt was a bit of a straitjacket. And I thought should I have to apologise for the fact that I know about these things or for the fact that it was a great way to engage with the men.

For Erica, discussing sport was a practical way to engage with men in the faculty, creating relationships she could draw on to enact her own gender politics, yet it caused a rift between Erica and some her feminist colleagues. Evidently, this experience of conflict with other feminist scholars restricted Erica's perceptions of herself as a feminist and her direct involvement with feminist movement. The senior feminists of the department policed what counted as feminist and what did not. The 'old guard' also had a strong influence over what was taught in the name of feminism, as this excerpt from Erica's account shows:

In terms of decision making in the department, the senior people, the old guard if you like, had a fair amount of scrutiny of the program. The old guard were mainly sociologists, not so much empiricists but into a particular form of ideology critique. There would be the necessary things that had to appear: like Women's ways of knowing by Belenky et al. and other things like Freire and of course Bob Connell's Making the difference had to be on there and so on. So when I arrived there was already consensus. Nobody actually said it but if those works weren't there then somebody moved very quickly to add them to the reading list. Once you've got that, you've got the agenda for who is going to do what and so I think that it was a senior group of people who get to make that call.

By the time that Erica took up an academic position in 1988 certain versions of feminism had been largely successful in influencing what was being taught and researched, at least in some areas, such as education at QUT. By the early 1990s, there was a clear separation between the old and new guard of feminists. Erica continues:

Certainly there was a party line, in terms of what counts as curriculum; what counts as things that should be said from the lectern in front of 400 people. I had spent so long enacting a feminist agenda in a very misogynistic environment that I didn't feel like I had

anything to prove in that sense. It wasn't a huge issue but I do think there was definitely an old guard and a new guard in relation to feminist enactments of pedagogy in those times – I'm thinking about the early '90s.

It would be fair to say that, in certain locations such as this, feminist women were in power in ways they had never previously experienced, to the extent that women with differing experiences of feminism were beginning to regard these women as orthodox and actively distanced themselves from this version of feminism. They also essentially distanced themselves from the label of 'feminist' and any connection to the women's movement. This certainly influenced Erica's identification with feminism. As she explains it:

There were some questions over the extent to which my work was feminist. I mean all the time I'd had people, feminists, saying to me that my work wasn't sufficiently feminist or things like, "this work is interesting but not quite sure if it's feminist". I got quite a lot of that, but that's all right, I wasn't sure if it was feminist either, or at least what they meant by feminist. By this time I was more interested in pleasure and women in the academy, so I was more interested in the question of 'how do we make pleasure for ourselves?' rather than 'is this sufficiently feminist?'

Clearly this distancing would have had an impact on the already weakened movement. On the other hand, these excerpts from Erica's account also suggest that feminism had gained some level of acceptance in order for it to be so powerful within the faculty that it was seen as orthodoxy. By the 1990s some versions of feminism had become powerful enough within the academy that they were no longer reliant on feminism as a social movement to survive. Yet the beginnings of change are present in the Erica's account. By the early 1990s postmodern feminism and queer theory were gaining influence, and Erica's position shifted as postmodern theory became more known and respected within her discipline of education. In fact, the 1990s was a period of significant change for feminist scholarship and universities, the effects of which I take up further in Chapter 6.

In addition to moving into disciplines and divisions among feminists, there were several other observable changes present in the accounts that may have contributed to the decline of the women's movement. Simply being physically absent – by travelling overseas – may have had an inadvertent effect on the movement. For instance, both Kalpana Ram and Kate Lilley pursued their research overseas during the 1980s. In this excerpt Kalpana acknowledges the difficulty of staying involved in the movement while travelling back and forth to India:

It has always been hard for me to keep up to date with the women's movement either here or in India. Because I keep going overseas it is hard for me to keep things happening with activities I'm involved in here. At that time I can remember coming back and giving these very detailed reports. I was reporting back on how politics is going in India. It was like an update into people's knowledge here about what was happening over there. But it also meant that I didn't have the energy to put into keeping things happening here. I could come back and feed it in but I couldn't keep the groups going and neither could I sustain my involvement there.

Again Kalpana understandably based her decisions on her research interests and career, while simultaneously trying to sustain a commitment to the women's movement, both here and in India. However, if large numbers of women travelled internationally for whatever reasons during this time and likely experienced the same difficulties in maintaining their involvement in the movement, this would ultimately negatively affect the strength and size of the movement within Australia. During this time, the individual women in this study made decisions based on personal and professional considerations (decisions perhaps made possible by the women's movement being somewhat successful up to this point), which ultimately may have influenced the movement's decline.

By the late 1980s most universities had established women's studies programs or departments (Magarey & Sheridan 2002) and, as these excerpts suggest, feminist knowledge was integrated into many

disciplines, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. The effects of this were that women who had previously dedicated large portions of their life to achieving these successes could now focus on other things. The feminist women in the study could concentrate on getting on with their lives rather than on their commitment to feminist movement. Certainly, this meant that the movement declined as a distinct political movement, but it also meant that feminism was becoming more powerful in other locations and these individual women were able to find new and innovative ways to practice feminism within the institution.

As feminist ideas became integrated into disciplinary fields, the need for specialised feminist courses and women's studies programs became less urgent and arguably less important, particularly as other social justice issues became more pressing. Accordingly, the individual feminists in this study changed their approach to teaching feminist knowledge over time. In this excerpt Ann tries to make sense of the changing focus of her teaching commitments:

I think if I needed to develop another course I probably could have done a feminist course; it wasn't that it was wrong or not wanted, it's just that other courses felt more pressing at the time. I always had material about Aboriginal women in the Aboriginal history course, and I had material on women generally in the Australian history course and I always had feminist theory in the history and theory course. So I dispersed the feminist material into the other courses.

I think some people had been doing feminism like that for a number of years but for me I had certainly by that stage started seeing feminist scholarship as part of everything, rather than its own thing. Also I think because there was such a strong women's studies program at ANU and because Jill Matthews was teaching women's history and the history of sexuality in the Women's Studies Program, I felt freer to do other things. Actually neither of us taught a 'women in Australian history' type course, which probably we should have but I think both of us thought it was a bit old hat by then. We'd already done it. So she covered that field so I was free not to do it.

In this excerpt, Ann describes the integration of feminist ideas into disciplinary knowledges, as well as touching on the 'feeling' among

feminists that it no longer seemed appropriate to develop women-centred courses – a premise that I examine more closely in the next chapter when discussing the effects of the restructuring of universities. The above excerpt suggests that feminist material became dispersed into other courses, in this case by a feminist academic introducing the material as part of her other teaching commitments.

The integration of feminist ideas into existing disciplines was seen as one of the original aims of most women's studies programs and, undoubtedly, this was achieved to some extent in several institutional locations, as noted by feminist commentators such as Threadgold (2000b) and Curthoys (1998a). However, the integration of feminist ideas into existing knowledge potentially meant that the ideas would become dissociated from their origins in women's studies or the women's movement. This may have weakened the historical links between feminist knowledge and women's studies and the women's movement and, thereby, contributed to the increasing invisibility of feminist scholarship and the visible decline of the movement.

In addition to the integration of feminist knowledge in the disciplines as a success of the women's movement the campaign for equal opportunity employment was also largely successful. By the mid 1980s, Australian governments had implemented equal opportunity and anti-discrimination acts and most workplaces were in the process of developing EEO policies. Unsurprisingly, many feminists became involved in the newly formed EEO boards and they became effective vehicles for enacting feminist agendas. This would inevitably affect the ways these women engaged in feminism and their relationship to the women's movement external to institutions (see Yeatman 1990). In the following excerpt Ann suggests that one of the reasons for her being less involved in women's groups and journals in the movement was because she became more involved with enacting feminist politics in the workplace:

At NSWIT during the 1980s, I was quite involved in feminism in that more structured workplace way. I wasn't going to women's groups anymore and I wasn't involved with Refractory Girl – I was doing more in the workplace. I think maybe something was changing in Australian society too at that point. People were starting to work harder or maybe I was just getting older, but people were work-focused and political movements were really in the workplace in a way.

In other words, because some feminist campaigns were successful in being taken up by governments, there were more opportunities to enact feminism in the workplace and, therefore, less need for social movement-based activism. From the evidence of these accounts, it is possible to argue that feminism's success in integrating feminist ideas into some academic fields and success in establishing EEO and anti-discrimination policies may have, directly or indirectly, contributed to the decline of the women's movement. This is borne out by the fact that, in the experiences of the scholars in my research, feminism became increasingly enacted through their everyday working practices – either as educators or through their involvement in EEO committees and so on. It is therefore likely that their direct involvement with a women's movement external to the academy decreased.

However, perhaps the most significant change in the lives of these women during this time period was career success. As is expressed in the accounts, most of the feminist scholars in the research experienced significant career success during this time. For example, Ann Curthoys went from Lecturer to a senior management position within the faculty within a very short time of only five years:

I eventually got appointed with tenure in the early '80s and then got promoted to Senior Lecturer in '83. In 1985 I had a year's secondment to ANU to the Social Justice Project ... while I was at ANU an advertisement for a position at UTS came up. The position was called Associate Head of School. It was Professor level but it had this weird title, Associate Head of School; they don't have it any more. I applied for that from ANU and got it and came back into that new position and very quickly was in fact Acting Dean. So I went

from a Lecturer to Acting Dean in a very short space of time which was a bit scary.

Most of the other participants shared Ann's experience of moving up the ranks. For instance, Terry Threadgold was appointed Head of the English Department at Monash University in 1993, became Acting Dean the following year, and Deputy Dean of Graduate Studies in 1997.

Admittedly, the participants in my research were selected because of their influence within feminist scholarship, so their experiences are in no way representative of feminist scholars in general. However, we cannot discount the possible effects of career success on the decline on the women's movement. This is especially true for women who were very active in the movement, such as Ann Curthoys. The successful careers of the women in this study and many others within the academy are one of the great achievements of both feminist scholarship and the women's movement. Yet it is also possible that this success may have resulted in these women having less time to dedicate to their involvement in the women's movement and a feeling that their time was better spent enacting feminist agendas inside the institutions in which they worked. However, because there was a series of developments that led to these feminist scholars being less involved in the movement, rather than an explicit decision by specific feminists to leave the movement, the need for succession planning would not have been immediately apparent. The gradual shift of focus away from activism and towards institutionalised practices, without concerted effort to bring in new generations of feminists, ultimately meant that the movement fell by the wayside in many places.

The reasons for the decline in the women's movement put forward in the ghostwritten accounts, primarily relate to a perceived lack of generational succession, insofar as younger generations either take feminism for granted or show little interest in pursuing feminist agendas. Other reasons suggested by the participants were the collapse of the Left, the Garner

affair and the changing culture of universities pushing academics' attention towards performative rather than political work, issues I take up in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Reasons for a declining women's movement that were frequently mentioned in the accounts were cultural change and generational differences. For instance, Ann identifies the Garner affair as being symbolic of the change in the public's perception of feminism:

*But what happened with the movement? I don't know. It was so lively right up until the late '80s, early '90s and then it started fading; the politics were changing. There are still strong feminist voices being heard, it's not as if they are gone, but that notion of an organised movement is gone. There were a couple of turning points – the Bell/Huggins debate about sexual abuse in Aboriginal society and the Garner affair – about how feminists should respond to cases of sexual harassment. More so the Garner affair I think. The sexual abuse one is a troubling issue, even more so now, but I don't particularly remember people being divided over it and I don't have an answer to it. The Helen Garner book, *The first stone*, generated a lot of feminist anger and I didn't like it at all. But there was also a lot of public approval, a sign I think, that feminism was going out of style. Feminism had lost some of its gloss with the general public, it was starting to be seen by young women as the orthodoxy, as something to rebel against, and the wheel turns in circles.*

Erica agrees that younger women have a different relationship to feminism than women of earlier generations:

There are generational issues, there is a shift in the politics and in the interests of young people and I think digital literacy means that kids are getting a lot more information about things before they even get to university. They've got a lot more sources of information and they not prepared to take one 'Bible' on something, whether it's feminism, gender or whatever else.

Both these excerpts suggest that Ann and Erica believe that a lack of generational succession is partly responsible for a decline in the women's movement, although neither claims this to be a negative development and, interestingly, they have different views on how university students have changed over this time. On the one hand, Ann finds them to be as

politically committed as earlier generations, yet no longer identifying explicitly as feminist. On the other hand, Erica believes that today's students have moved on from feminist debates and show little interest.

In the following comment Ann describes her feeling that the public perception of feminism has changed despite there being continuity in the attitudes of her students:

Certainly the general public had changed their views on feminism but there wasn't really any noticeable change in the students I was teaching. You've always got a mix of students: you've got your feminist students, you've got some who are against and you've got some New Age guys who like it and some men that hate it. That's all still the case, that mix. If I set a women's topic you still get quite a number of people who do it. It's not as if it's on the nose amongst students. Of course there might be people who teach women's history who might have a different view on that but for me, teaching a generalist course on Australian history, I can't see a big change. It's the same with Aboriginal topics. People say, "oh you know Aboriginal politics has changed and there's very negative things happening" but, in terms of putting on a course, you still get all these highly committed and sympathetic students. I think in some ways universities can have a continuity of their own which overrides some of these political changes.

Certainly an argument can be made that politically committed students are more likely to take feminist and other politically motivated courses than other students, but this excerpt suggests that young women are not involved in the women's movement not because of lack of commitment but for other reasons. Ann believes that one reason for this is that most young women take feminism for granted:

There has been some decline in the presence of organised feminism on campus, but in terms of students' attitudes, my impression is that most young women take feminism for granted. They don't call it feminism but it's what I call feminism and they take it for granted. They may not call themselves feminist, but if somebody says something sexist they are really offended. There has been a change in the language and a change in the politics but, in terms of people's expectations about themselves and their futures, I don't really see a big change, which is interesting. In terms of women's expectations, the kind of women at university are expecting a professional career

and they have one, so I don't really see that changing. Maybe in other parts of society you'd see it more, but in the university not so much.

On the other hand, Erica believes that young people are no longer interested in feminism and have heard it all before:

But what happened to feminism? Part of what happened was supply-side thinking; it was thinking in the academy that a lot of kids coming in weren't very interested in feminism. They knew it; they'd heard it in English class and so on. So I think part of what happened is that supply/demand style thinking became more important and students started voting with their feet and saying, "that's the gender lecture, I'm not going to that! That's the Aboriginal one, not going to that". I think those subjects became too pick-off able – part of it was that the students genuinely felt patronised by some of those things and opted out of those electives. So that was part of it and of course universities can't afford to ignore where the students are going and not going. But I think that the larger questions are around risk society and the performative, audit culture that arises out of that and the way in which people's attention has shifted from the moral/ethical work to the performative work. Even people with an enormous amount of investment in the ethical work, the politicising work, have had their attention pulled to the performative work.

As we will see in Chapter 6, these effects on feminist scholarship can be attributed to the major changes within the university during this period. Also important to this discussion, however, is the perception noted by Erica that young people are not interested in feminism either as a social movement or academic field.

From these excerpts, it is clear that organised feminism on campus declined, as did young women's involvement in the women's movement in general. However, absent from this reasoning is the role Ann and other women in her generation had in creating the conditions for the movement's decline. As detailed earlier, several actions identified in the ghostwritten accounts, such as moving into the disciplines, travelling overseas and career success would have resulted in women who were involved in the grassroots movement reducing their commitment and focusing on enacting feminist agendas within the institution, thereby contributing to a decline in

the social movement. There is an obvious absence in the participants' accounts, in that they only identify changes happening externally to their experience as being relevant to the decline in the women's movement. From their perspective, it was a lack of generational succession that ultimately led to the movement's decline.

However, as I have detailed in this chapter, there were many changes in the lives of the women involved in the movement and in feminist scholarship, which may have resulted in a decline in feminist movement. I believe that the question should be how do we choose to interpret this period in feminism's history? And can we do so in a way that expands the possibilities for feminist scholarship? In the readings I have made of the ghostwritten accounts, I am able to suggest that these individual accounts of the purported decline of the women's movement actually help to rewrite this history as being about more than 'decline'. The accounts indicate ways that feminist scholarship was becoming powerful and ways that feminists, as individuals, were benefiting from the gains made by the combined efforts of feminist activists/scholars.

Chapter 6 – Gendered to general: re-thinking contemporary feminist academic practice

Introduction

In Chapter 5 I examined the ghostwritten accounts in Volume 2, producing a kind of counter-history, in order to re-think the relationship between feminist scholarship and feminist movement. Although this chapter follows on chronologically from Chapter 5 in the sense that it examines the time period following the decline of the women's movement, it differs in how I approach the accounts. In this chapter I employ the accounts as a kind of expert testimony. I take advantage of the experiences of these influential feminist scholars to re-think what happened to feminism as a result of major changes to universities during this period – from the late 1980s onwards. I also interpret their scholarly practices as examples of contemporary feminist scholarship, as well as being accounts of the history of the field.

By examining excerpts from the accounts in Volume 2, I make a case for what I will argue are the negative effects of the transformation of universities on feminist scholarship and feminist scholars during this period that follows from and in some sense runs parallel to the period of decline in the women's movement. These negative effects include: the diffusion of critical nexuses of theory; dispersal of academics; uncertainty and insecurity about jobs and promotions; and more difficult working conditions. A critical reading of the accounts suggests that the significant changes within the university have, to some extent, limited the possibilities of feminist scholarship.

Despite such limitations, these academics continued to engage in feminist scholarship. In fact, it was during this time period that these feminist scholars became even more successful in the academy and cemented

their influence within the field. I argue in this chapter that, in order to have achieved this success, feminist scholars changed the ways in which they engaged in feminist scholarship. Specifically, I draw on the ghostwritten accounts to show that, for these feminist scholars, in the 1980s, ‘theory’ was the *modus operandi* of feminist scholarship, enabling feminists to critique existing knowledge structures in ways that were deemed legible and legitimate to the Australian university’s disciplinary and post-disciplinary cultures.

However, as the university was restructured along neo-liberal principles from the late 1980s onwards, different kinds of knowledge and knowledge products were valued – essentially those kinds of knowledge products that were easily quantifiable. Based on the accounts of the scholars in my research, I seek to demonstrate in this chapter that the participants responded to the major changes in universities by developing new forms of feminist subjectivities and practices that allowed them to continue to enact a gender politics in the university.

Re-thinking what happened to feminist scholarship

Feminism and theory in the 1980s: “a time when theory really mattered”

The importance of theory, particularly feminist theory, was raised in the interviews by most of the feminist scholars who participated in the research. Engagements with theory were often described as being integral in their decisions to identify as feminist. This was the case with Terry Threadgold and Catharine Lumby, as previously discussed in Chapter 5. The importance of theory is further elaborated in this excerpt from Kate Lilley’s accounts, in which she describes finding her feminist feet at Oxford during the mid-80s:

Straight away I joined the feminist theory group. I think I saw a flyer up somewhere. So I went along and that became my set – my friends ... It was the heyday of feminist theory.

In addition to theory being an important feature in connecting women and encouraging identification with feminism, it was also integral to the establishment of feminism as a legitimate field of knowledge in the academy, as this excerpt from Terry's accounts suggests:

I remember a couple of quite heated and lengthy meetings when the Centre for Women's Studies was being set up. There was a clear division between the social scientist feminists and theorists on one side and the hard scientists on the other. The hard scientists didn't really believe that the Centre for Women's Studies was necessary and certainly didn't believe that it should have a theoretically focused working brief ... In the end everyone accepted that feminist theory was necessary and it had to be there in a major way. We all felt very strongly about that at the time because the difficulty of everything else was that we were just adding women to what was there and we weren't really theorising the structures that were making it difficult for women to operate. So feminist theory was very important at the time.

This implies that feminist theory at this time was seen to be crucial for critiquing existing knowledge. By 'theorising the structures' that produced patriarchal knowledge, feminists were able to critique these structures and the knowledge they produced. Furthermore, theory was regarded as an essential requirement for women's studies centres, at least by feminists from the social sciences and humanities, who campaigned for its inclusion as a core, rather than supplementary, aspect.

This was a time period when scholars from disciplines across the arts and social sciences were taking up various kinds of theory, but particularly critical and poststructuralist theories. Catharine Lumby's account gives a good indication of the increased interest in theory during the mid 1980s by describing the critical nexus that formed in the Fine Arts Department of

Sydney University while she was studying there as an undergraduate and Honours student:

At that time, around 1984, theory was pretty cutting edge. I was really very lucky, I think, to be part of the Fine Arts Department at that time ... it was just completely coincidental that there happened to be people in the Fine Arts Department who were trained in poststructuralist thought; who formed a fairly small network of people who had been to France and studied with Foucault. There was Meaghan Morris, she was associated with the Fine Arts Department, and there was Paul Patton, he was in Philosophy but he was part of this network ... There was a group of them and a group of very interested students who really formed a little critical nexus. They brought Baudrillard out in '84 ... This was a time when this kind of theory was still quite new and there was a lot of discussion about it. I mean Baudrillard was unheard of at this point; he wasn't even a big star in America yet.

This excerpt from Catharine's account illustrates the excitement among academics at the University of Sydney about poststructuralist theory during the mid 1980s. This critical nexus, of which she was part, was formed by a select group of scholars who became very influential, not just within fine arts but as leading scholars of the then emergent field of cultural studies. Catharine's account further emphasises the importance of theory during that time. Theory was also of central importance in other disciplines; Terry Threadgold was lecturing in English literature at that time and she began to teach theory to her Honours students:

That was the first course of that kind that I taught and I taught it for years as part of fourth-year Honours in literature. The course was very successful and the students liked it. It was the first injection of theory into the English literature context. Then I developed a couple of similar courses at undergraduate level and I taught those for a number of years. Again they were very successful courses. People came to them in droves because this was theory at a time when theory really mattered and needed to be taught.

Like Catharine, Terry mentions the excitement among her peers about theory and its potential to transform how knowledge was produced within their respective disciplines. These excerpts suggest that, during this

period, theory was seen as not only important and useful but absolutely necessary to the production of knowledge in universities. For these feminist scholars, theory provided the tools to critique existing knowledge and, more importantly, it did so within terms that were generally accepted by the disciplines they were critiquing.

Feminist engagements with poststructuralist theory in particular allowed them to ask questions about the legitimacy of knowledge claims while, at the same time, establishing feminist theory as a legitimate and legible form of knowledge, which was accepted and recognised by the disciplines that it was simultaneously critiquing. In the following excerpt, Erica McWilliam explains why poststructuralist theory was useful for feminism:

What it actually meant was that you were able to ask the questions: 'what are the claims and warrants coming out of those fields and how were those claims made and how were they warranted through a particular epistemology?' So what I really enjoyed when I came to Foucault was to have a sense that I understand how people think about thinking about something; a sense of what is thinkable, sayable, doable, as a result of this set of propositions.

In other words, feminist engagements with poststructuralist theory meant that feminists could provide critiques of patriarchal knowledge and disciplines by using the tools preferred by those disciplines. As discussed in Chapter 5, it was also during this period that feminist thought became integrated into the social sciences and humanities, showing that feminism was gaining wider acceptance in the academy and suggesting that feminist scholars felt that mainstreaming feminist knowledge was an important strategy to achieve change in the disciplines. Theory allowed feminists to both enter into and simultaneously critique these disciplines because 'theory' was at that time the preferred type of knowledge in the academy. However, the transformation of universities along neo-liberal economic principles changed the kinds of knowledges that were valued by the institution.

The restructured university: “an organisation run by Joe Stalin and John Elliott”

As discussed in Chapter 1, most Australian universities underwent a period of major restructuring during the 1990s as part of an overall transformation of these institutions by neo-liberal regimes of governance. The impact of funding constraints and restructuring was raised as a significant issue that affected the possibilities of feminist scholarship by all of the participants in the study. In her interview Cathy Lumby described the contemporary Australian university as “an organisation run by Joe Stalin and John Elliott”, referring both to the hangover of the bureaucratic university and the additional pressures of hardline neo-liberal economic principles (John Elliott is a prominent Australian business man and former president of the Liberal Party). She goes on to say: “We are now in this completely entrepreneurial mode, where it is hand over fist panic for money.” This sentiment is echoed throughout the other accounts. The effects of the effective reduction in funding for universities over this time were to restructure universities at an institutional level, with the intention to ‘quantify quality’ (Strathern 2000). The transformation changed the culture of universities and the work of academics, pressuring them to become managers, meaning that they were less able to engage in theory and critique, as the following excerpt from Erica McWilliam’s accounts suggests:

I think a lot has changed in universities since then. What’s changed is the way in which funding works and the way in which the university is now a much more performative place. The quantification of quality, upon which our funding depends, drives just about everything now. So that there has been an erosion of all the little oases I was talking about. The climate in which we do our work, which is governed by the logic of performativity, is so geared up to performance indicators; so geared up to “you’re only as good as your last month’s sale”; so geared up to quantifying how many publications you’ve got or how many grants you’ve applied for that it has tended to consume and to recuperate maverick behaviour.

Erica's account highlights some of the effects of the performative university. The shift towards performance indicators dramatically changed the way that academics approached their work and one of its effects was to discourage nonconformist behaviour. She continues:

I think that the rise of audit culture – what Marilyn Strathern calls the audit explosion – has been responsible for a climate in which there is very little differentiation, in the sense that the same logic applies almost everywhere ... So it means that everything is calculable. Once everything is rendered calculable a lot of things that once counted as worthy of investigation and interrogation start to slope off to the sides.

In Erica's account a further effect of these changes, in addition to altering the way academics approached their work, was a modification in the kinds of scholarship that were deemed valuable. As Erica's account suggests, the effects of the transformation of the university were wide ranging. It was a broad scale organisational cultural change that ultimately affected the kinds of work academics engaged in and which functioned to discourage critique. I expand on the effects on scholarship later but, firstly, I detail the effects of these changes on academics.

Effects on academics: "the feeling is that it's never okay"

Kate Lilley noted: "There has been a noticeable change in the economic imperatives of the university as a whole and that has affected the ways academics see themselves." In her experience, the new audit processes, now a part of the day-to-day work of academics, have a demoralising effect on their sense of self, as well as increasing competition among peers and creating anxiety, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

Inside universities now we live in this crazy economy where many people will do anything to get research money, whether it's the stuff they are most interested in or not ... Actually doing applications is not so bad; it's the continual surveillance that gets you down. It used to be the case that you got an academic job and once you were credentialed you were kind of okay as long as you didn't completely

fuck up or something, as long as you did your job; but now the feeling is that it's never okay ... perhaps it doesn't matter what you do, it doesn't matter what area you work in ... there is so much anxiety about publication and employment. You can't do anything, you can't get any job, you can't move without heaps of publications – endless credentialing ... at the moment I have what they call 'near miss' funding for being close to getting an ARC Discovery Grant last year ... For the near miss money I got \$20,000 for this year from the university. Of course it was very nice, I was very happy to be given twenty thousand, but people in the department kind of spoke to me like it was good but it was like someone had given me \$2 – like, what would you do with that.

In Kate's account, a changing culture in academia has increased the pressures on individual academics to perform in certain ways easily quantifiable by managers. Furthermore the changes have encouraged competition rather than collaboration among peers, and resulted in anxiety and loss of morale. This resonates with Shore and Wright's (2000) assessment of audit culture:

The substitution of trust by measurement, the replacement of academic autonomy by management control, the deliberate attempt to engineer competition and a climate of insecurity are all features of new managerialism's disciplinary grid of audit (Shore & Wright 2000: 78).

A further effect of this organisational cultural change was that academics who were able to leave Australian institutions and go elsewhere did so. As Terry Threadgold said in relation to the faculty restructure at Monash during the 1990s: "What happens in those situations is that the good people who are able to move on, move on and those who aren't able to find an alternative get left behind."

Ironically, it is likely that initiatives introduced to the university to improve quality in fact reduced quality because many talented academics left Australia to take up positions overseas. Indeed, Terry also made the decision to leave Australia as a result of the funding pressures:

The financial pressures were not the same as here and that was partly why I went there. Cardiff has been a very well resourced institution ... I am able to support people doing lots of things that I couldn't have done at Monash and I was supported to do things that there was just never the money for at Monash. It has been a much better resourced place to be.

Effects on scholarship: "we were no longer able to do the theory"

These changes also affected the kinds of work done by academics and the kinds of work valued by the institution. In the earlier excerpt from Erica's account she stated: "Once everything is rendered calculable, a lot of things that once counted as worthy of investigation and interrogation start to slope off to the sides." Many of the scholars in my research spoke about the effects of restructuring and audit culture on the kinds of work that academics engage in. One of the effects of the restructuring was to turn many academics into managers, meaning that they had less time to pursue their own research interests, as Terry Threadgold articulated:

It changed the dynamics hugely because we all became managers. We were struggling with financial and other issues and we were no longer able to do the theory and things we were really interested in.

In addition to having less time to engage in theory, audit practices such as journal ranking, citation indexing and publication reporting encouraged academics to publish in mainstream journals, rather than politically motivated or interdisciplinary journals. As Erica explains in the following excerpt:

In practice, journals like Feminist Studies don't have a very high impact factor, so you'd move your article from that thinking, "I won't put it there, that's got a low impact factor, I'll move it to Harvard Ed Review, I think that's a better way to go". That's what I mean by the attentional economy of the university having changed. I don't think you will find feminist work, or any other work about marginal politics, in any really high impact factor journals. For example, you won't find that Indigenous education has a high impact factor; these journals deal with a small clientele and it's all well and good for us to be

saying, “well everyone should be reading Feminist Studies”, but in fact that’s not the case. A journal that offers a big metaview of everything with a long term track and run out of sandstone university is going to be the one that you go for in practice.

In other words, the effects of audit culture, particularly practices such as journal ranking and publication reporting, actively discouraged academics from publishing in journals purely on the basis of ethical or political concerns. Ultimately, this was likely to have affected the kinds of scholarship that academics chose to engage in. At an institutional level, the effect was to encourage scholarship suitable for mainstream publications, which more often than not support the status quo. Intellectual work that is ethically motivated towards political change was effectively discouraged. Erica continued:

For me now as a university manager all the reporting that I do is about what’s calculable and about the quantification of the quality of the place. It means that specific questions, such as questions about Indigenous education or equity grants, how many equity grants did you get and what were they about; these questions don’t get asked. The questions of the politicised and politicising work of feminism is just not something that people want to know about; they want to know how many articles did you write? Whether they were about feminism or about Tiddlywinks isn’t as important as did you get a tier 1 publication – what was the impact factor of that publication – that’s the sort of thing that matters.

The implications of these kind of auditing processes mean that feminist scholars are actively discouraged from engaging in feminist theory and scholarship because this kind of scholarship would not readily be published in high-impact journals. Furthermore, this means that ethical questions are regarded by the institution and, by extension, academic peers, to be less important than quantifiable outcomes. The end result is that there are fewer possibilities for feminist scholarship than previously.

The audit culture, or the quantification of quality (Strathern 2000), also extends to research funding, affecting what kind of work is funded.

Essentially the same rules apply as with publications – funding is allocated on the basis of indicators such as impact factor measured on a purely quantitative basis in terms of citations and the like, rather than impact on equity for example. Or as Margaret Thornton described it:

In this environment, it is only knowledge with use value in the market that is privileged. Any critique that takes place is circumscribed by the constraints of market orthodoxy (2008: 9).

The effect on academics is to create divisions among those with funding and those without, further discouraging academics to pursue research on the basis of ethics or feminist politics, as Kate Lilley conveys:

In this new culture the world is divided into those who have research funding and those who don't. It's an aristocrats and rank and file kind of model. But of course certain kinds of work are more likely to get funded.

This also extends to funding that comes from outside the university, as this excerpt from the interview with Sheila Jeffreys suggests:

Because the federal government cut university funding so dramatically, they are now always saying that academics have to bring in money themselves through grants and paid consultancies, but that means nothing radical can ever happen because you cannot get money for anything even in the least radical.

In summary, by turning academics into managers, increasing their workloads and introducing quality assessment practices, the university as an institution favoured work which was monetarily beneficial, effectively discouraging feminist scholarship and research, particularly the production of feminist theory.

Effects on women's studies departments and dedicated feminist spaces: "It was seen as a kind of luxury to have these women off thinking about themselves"

The application of neo-liberal principles and the subsequent restructuring of faculties and departments also affected women's studies departments. Terry Threadgold was Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Monash during the period of restructuring and in the following excerpt she explains that one of the strategies was to group smaller programs, such as women's studies, together or subsume them into larger departments.

They were putting things together that didn't really belong together for the sake of the restructure. The effect was really wiping Women's Studies out in terms of being an effective centre. That happened not only at Monash at that time but across most universities in Australia. Women's studies programs had been set up and so women in mid career could come back and study. It had gone on for so long, quite successfully, and with the restructuring it just stopped. It stopped at Flinders, it stopped at Melbourne, and it was difficult in Adelaide. The Susans [Sheridan and Magarey] managed to hold it together a bit better in Adelaide but it still got absorbed into other areas. That was the basic strategy, to put all things back together into more complex departments, where it became a smaller part of something else so it was much less effective. It meant that there was no space for women to become educated amongst other women. I honestly don't know all the changes that it had on women's studies because I moved on.

One of the major effects of restructuring was to dismantle women's studies departments or collapse them into larger departments with more generic titles, such as gender and cultural studies. Ultimately this transformed women's studies into just another academic discipline, effectively removing some of the original aims of women's studies as being a place where women of all ages could learn about women in an environment of women academics and students. As neo-liberal economics were maintained as the primary motivating principle of the university as an institution, the dilution and downgrading of women's and gender studies programs has continued, as this excerpt from Sheila's accounts suggests:

What has happened more recently is that they downgraded Gender Studies down to a minor. They said that there weren't enough students going through to the major, so they downgraded it to a minor and I think they did that with most of the 50 interdisciplinary programs. So much has changed in women's studies, I remember when I first arrived here [1991] we had a women's studies committee ... I remember once giving a presentation to the Vice-Chancellor. There was a meeting on the importance of mainstreaming women's studies, quite a big meeting with the Vice-Chancellor attending and other important people and I gave a presentation on why it was important to mainstream feminism in the university and it was all taken very seriously – can you imagine that happening now? The day of women is so passed that it's inconceivable.

Terry Threadgold concurs, agreeing that placing women's studies into other disciplines and subsuming feminist knowledge into disciplinary knowledge diluted and dispersed feminism, ultimately making it more difficult to do feminist work:

I think what tended to happen was the feminist elements were always diluted by their inclusion in other disciplines, so that the straight feminist curriculum became attached to a feminist version of media studies or whatever. Instead of allowing people to really explore the feminist aspect of it, it became added on. It was almost a return to the 'add-on' model of feminism that scientific women had wanted in the '60s. I am sure it was a way of diluting it. Feminist studies was seen as a not economically productive area of the universities work by managers. It was seen as a kind of luxury to have these women off thinking about themselves and gazing at their navels. A senior man once told me he thought that's what feminist studies was about – women sitting around gazing at their navels.

Essentially, anything seen not to be economically productive for the institution was regarded as less important and was eradicated or restructured into larger moneymaking parts of the university. As Terry said:

As more and more of the work of the academy got to be focused on making money and keeping the budget secure, anything which was seen as a frill on the edge (as feminism was) got knocked off or put in with something else.

In short, the restructuring of Australian universities significantly reduced the institutional possibilities for feminist scholarship as can be seen by the

losses throughout the period of restructuring. Certainly, the restructuring meant job losses. Terry Threadgold was Deputy Dean of Arts at Monash when she chaired “the meeting that persuaded the Faculty Board to allow itself to be restructured, which basically meant sackings”. In some instances ‘restructuring’ was a synonym for sackings, but there were also other losses. Terry bemoaned the loss of feminist networks and Kate Lilley felt “very nostalgic about the old days of feminist theory”. The opportunity to engage in theory and all that that entails is probably one of the greatest losses in the restructured university. Erica McWilliam mourns the playfulness of the moment of theory, arguing that, in becoming more performative, the academy has also become less fun:

I think that serious play is something that we've lost; it's not something that is readily available now. Sure I do it anyway but I think that the time of the great pleasure and excitement of the serious play of poststructuralism is gone and I feel for people who have missed out on that opportunity. The academy has become a more desiccated place now, with less pure oases and pure places to pull back to, to engage and enjoy, women's groups or anything else.

Based on close reading across all of the ghostwritten accounts, I contend that these ‘losses’, along with the many negative effects of funding cuts, restructuring and the introduction of audit culture and new managerialism, generated a climate of melancholy among many feminists. Therefore, their written commentaries of this period are understandably apocalyptic, as Robyn Wiegman (2000) noted. Certainly, the changes to the university resulted in fewer possibilities to engage in and produce feminist theory, thereby making it more difficult for feminists to produce feminist scholarship in ways that the university deemed valuable. The accounts suggested that, prior to the transformation of the university, these feminist scholars regarded theory as the foremost method of doing feminist scholarship. But in the new environment, theory, and feminist theory in particular, became less valued by the university because it is less easily quantifiable. These effects continue to be problematic in that they persist in limiting engagements with feminist theory and scholarship.

The negative effects are only part of this story, however. In the next section I identify ways that feminists have responded positively to these changes and developed new ways to engage in feminist politics within the academy.

Re-thinking contemporary feminist academic practice

I have until now concentrated mainly on aspects of the accounts that relate to the past. In this section, in contrast, I shift my focus to aspects of the accounts that relate to how these scholars engage in feminist scholarship presently. I first draw through the implications of the effects of the transformation explained above and focus on how these scholars have responded to this transformation in a variety of ways. I then explore how feminist academics are currently engaging in feminist scholarship and consider future possibilities for the field, which I will elaborate further in Chapter 7.

The influential feminist scholars in this research responded to restructuring of the university and the introduction of audit culture, in a variety of ways, some by resisting the changes, while others developed strategies to work with the changes.

Mentoring as a strategy of resistance: “I try to fit my students into niches and massage them in”

One of the main strategies adopted to resist the new performative university is to mentor and collaborate with postgraduate students to ensure their survival in an environment that can be hostile to feminists in the ways detailed above. As Sheila describes it:

When I get postgrads I’m always saying to them, what is your area? And I try to fit my students into niches and massage them in, so they will be secure. Where are these wonderful young women going to fit

in to the academy? They are so smart and so capable, what will happen to them?

Interestingly, despite being at loggerheads on many issues and having a very different theoretical persuasion to Sheila, Catharine Lumby also adopts this strategy as a way of resisting the demands of the contemporary university. In the excerpt below, she reflects on the positive experiences she had as an undergraduate and Honours student in fine arts at the University of Sydney. This was an experience, which she described positively in her account, as being part of a critical nexus of theory. She discusses how this experience now influences her in re-creating that kind of supportive environment:

In terms of how the university has changed since I was a student, I think there is still the possibility for that sort of excitement and fermentation that I was talking about back then, it still definitely happens. And I certainly did and do seek out colleagues and graduate students who want to be part of that sort of thing. I think in a way that I unconsciously tried to recreate that environment. I enjoy working collaboratively.

The first thing I did when I got here was to hook up with Elspeth Probyn who was working here. We started doing some collaborative research on girls and that's the other thing that I try to do very actively, which Elspeth certainly does too, is try to be a mentor, by bringing people from Honours level on into research projects and getting them working on things. Elspeth and I are working on our fourth large research project together but we actively work with PhD students and other people and socialise with them as well. The lines between work and socialising are quite blurred because they're also the people who I like to hang out with and I am interested in.

Catharine works collaboratively with peers and students as an explicit strategy to encourage the future possibilities of feminist scholarship. By bringing students into funded research projects, Catharine is able to act as a mentor and creates a supportive work environment, thereby making it easier for new generations of feminist scholars to find a place in the contemporary Australian university.

Non-academic work as a strategy of resistance: “I turn to poetry as some way to avoid that pressure”

In addition to mentoring postgraduate students, another strategy of resistance to the corporatisation of the university is that utilised by Kate Lilley, who turned to poetry as an escape from the pressures created by the performative university. Surprisingly, this strategy turned out to be very beneficial to Kate’s career and her work was highly regarded in the faculty and pleasing to management, as she describes here:

I think that partly I turn to poetry as some way to avoid that pressure. Ironically and happily, writing poetry has proved to be beneficial in ways I didn’t expect within the university – no doubt because I work in an English department and creative writing is on the rise in English departments. I didn’t really expect that but it has been helpful to me in the job. I’ve gained more respect and more acceptance, because you get into this world of prizes and so on. I was shortlisted for the NSW Premier’s Award and things like that the faculty can put on its website. I was invited as a poet in residence to Brandeis University in America and I did a big reading at Berkeley, and this is all stuff that the university can use and extract value from. So that’s turned out to be beneficial to it and great for me. I didn’t know that stuff would happen or do it because of that.

Poetry allowed Kate to do the kinds of work she was interested in but in an unexpected way, was also highly valued by the university. There were also other mutually beneficial strategies employed by some of the feminist scholars in the research.

Feminists becoming managers: “we can’t afford to say let’s just stay out of management”

Rather than engaging in strategies of resistance, some of the other feminist scholars chose to tackle the funding cuts and restructuring head on. Specifically, they opted to take on management positions, allowing them to have relative control over sackings and funding cuts. For example, Erica McWilliam argues that it is dangerous to resist audit culture because it will ultimately lead to people losing their jobs:

I also think there are dangers in trying to resist the audit culture altogether. If we decide: we are not going to do the audit culture thing, we are not going to do the reporting, we are not going to do this regulatory work for the university, we are not going to do the performative university – because we're not interested in the performative university; we're interested in the moral, ethical university or whatever it is, then people actually lose their jobs. If you don't make a case, if you cannot quantify your quality, you will not get funding and then you have to make staff cuts; the university will start asking which of your staff members you want to get rid of. So you are really damned if you do pay attention to management and damned if you don't. If you don't pay attention to management and you hold some high ethical ground, by refusing to quantify, people will lose their jobs. There is no future for people in universities if we were to take the view that a particular sort of politics is more important.

This sentiment is echoed by Terry Threadgold, who took over from Marion Courtley as Dean during the period of restructuring because Marion was finding it difficult to handle the pressures from the Vice-Chancellor to sack staff:

But there was really no way around it, you could fight it until you were blue in the face. There was enormous pressure and once I knew there was no way around it, I thought it was better to try to get a good deal for people that were being sacked, rather than them being sacked anyway and probably getting nothing. So we all struggled with that for a very long time. I finally stepped in for Marion when she just couldn't deal with it any longer. She was being bullied by the Vice-Chancellor and all sorts of other people. She was finding it too hard to deal with and I was asked if I would stand in and act as Dean until it all got sorted out and so I did. But I hated it! There was not much choice about it but somebody had to be there to try and protect people and support people. It was a very, very difficult period. In the end, by working with the unions we did manage to get good early retirement packages for those people who had to go.

Both Terry and Erica regarded this response as an appropriate feminist response to these changes. They believed that they were able to negotiate better redundancy packages and prevent sackings by taking on the extra responsibilities of management. Labelling this kind of action as feminist expands definitions of feminist scholarship. By employing the definition of

feminist scholarship as the institutionalised practice of knowledge production, taking up managerial roles could be seen as a kind of feminist scholarship. The effects of these accounts in expanding the definition of feminist scholarship is something I take up in more detail in the concluding chapter.

In the following excerpt, Erica makes a case for why feminists can't afford to stay out of management and argues that there is a feminist way to manage:

I guess we can demonise management and decide that management is just awful, but we can't afford to say let's just stay out of management and let somebody else do it because once you are in control of the budget, as I am – budgets over a million dollars – there is a huge amount of power and responsibility that comes with that. I think being a feminist is to some extent accepting the responsibility of a budget over a million dollars and trying to work in such a way that your staff are feeling supported. High expectations and high support is how I try to do that work.

Based on this excerpt and the previous one from Terry Threadgold, it can be argued that one way of being a feminist scholar is to make ethical decisions from a position of power. As feminist academics have become more powerful in the academy, both in terms of broader intellectual acceptance and taking on managerial roles, they have had to create ways to be powerful and feminist. Terry and Erica have both suggested that some ways to do this are to create positive outcomes from negative events, such as securing good retirement packages for people being made redundant and to create positive and supportive work environments.

However, trying to do that work, as a manager, does not mean that Erica no longer engages more traditional feminist political strategies, such as critiquing existing knowledges or foregrounding gender equity:

I still raise questions about gender balance. I raised with the Vice-Chancellor the issue of how many senior women we don't have in

the university and when I am on very male dominated committees, I will say things like, “this must be a very high-powered committee, I’m the only woman here, this must be about finance, is it?” Or I’ve actually resigned from a committee full of women, a staffing committee, saying “this is ridiculous – what? The women are supposed to do all the nurturing of the staff?, that’s what this committee is about, so I am resigning from it and I am going to suggest that one of my male colleagues might like to do it”. So there are still times when I feel that those things are stark and need to be done but, at the same time, because I do get along very well with men, I am invited to a lot of forums for gender balance and I take those up because it gives me a chance to go in there. And not just as a passive body there, but to actively ask questions. So if they say, “Erica, would you mind asking the equity question”, well I don’t want to be stuck with that but if I think there is a lot that can be done there I will. And I’m not going to be doing it in some fluffy way, I talk about precise practical things that they can actually do.

The changing conditions of the university have required feminists to change the way they practise feminism in the academy. As theory has become less relevant and audit practices are favoured by the administration, feminist scholars, such as Erica, have had to develop sophisticated ways to continue to enact feminist politics. Erica describes this work as choreography:

So what I end up with is a strange hybrid identity. My choreography, and I think about it as a sort of manoeuvring or choreography, is about trying to pre-empt what is the performance that’s needed of me here? What is the best I can do here?

The word ‘performance’ is critical here, as it hints at different kinds of feminist academic practice than those previously theorised as an outcome of feminist scholarship’s first forays into academia. It indicates a shift towards the pragmatic, which may partly be the result of Erica’s background as a schoolteacher, but I believe it is also indicative of a shift towards feminist engagements that are more practical. This shift is evident across the range of experiences of the participants, as detailed in their accounts, and I explore it further in this chapter by proposing that feminist scholars are choosing to enact feminism in more practical ways. The shift

towards practice is motivated by many considerations, some of which I explore in the following pages.

What happened to theory: “the stakes have changed”

As I discussed above, one of the outcomes of the corporatised performative university was less engagement with theory – partly because there was less time to engage in it and partly because other forms of knowledge were more highly valued by the university. However, the accounts suggest several other factors also contributed to the declining interest in theory. There was a feeling among the participants that the moment of theory has passed and that it no longer feels appropriate to engage in theory in the same way. In the following excerpt Kate Lilley reflects on the moment of theory and its passing:

I feel very nostalgic about the old days of feminist theory. I think there still is lots of great work being done and all the great stuff is still around, it's just not as prominent as it once was. Actually, thinking about it, it's probably more freakish that there was a moment in which it was so highly valued – that was probably the freakish thing! And now even though there are still people who work in those territories, and who've made successful careers on the basis of it, and I'm one of them, my sense is that the stakes have changed. It's not that I want to go back to then and I don't think that's possible. I'm given a lot of freedom in what I teach and I'm not sure that I would run women's writing courses again myself. I'm not sure. But the opportunity pretty much went away for complex reasons and what was very clear was that it was always going to be a return to the canon, a kind of rejuvenated canon.

Kate makes mention of the feeling that ‘the stakes have changed’. Although she doesn't elaborate and states only that the opportunity disappeared for complex reasons, we can ascertain from this that it is no longer possible to engage in theory in the same way it once was, if only for a brief moment, in the 1980s. She indicates uncertainty about whether she would choose to practise feminism in that way, even if the opportunity was still present. In fact, uncertainty was a common theme in the accounts,

particularly uncertainty about what counted as feminist practice in the current conditions of the university and whether the previous methods of engagement, through theory and critique, are still possible and relevant as political strategies. In a sense, there was certainty that the moment of theory has passed, but the implications of its passing are still up for debate.

The problem of integration: “the utopian idea of a gender-integrated curriculum is all well and good but it’s very hard to achieve”

Tied in with the passing of the moment of theory are the unexpected difficulties of integrating feminism into the curriculum of the disciplines. As discussed in Chapter 5, feminist scholars were largely successful in integrating feminist knowledge into the disciplines, but not without unexpected outcomes such as a declining grassroots movement and shrinking dedicated feminist spaces within the university. Yet there were still difficulties in creating a gender-integrated curriculum as opposed to a curriculum with a built-in feminist critique. As the excerpt from Terry Threadgold’s accounts referred to earlier in this discussion suggests, one of the consequences of integrating feminist studies into other disciplines was a return to the add-on model of doing feminism that feminist theorists, such as Terry, had so vigorously tried to refute when setting up women’s studies centres and programs (at least in the context of the University of Sydney and Monash University, which Terry is familiar with).

The difficulty of creating a gender-integrated curriculum was relatively unforeseen by those feminists responsible for setting up women’s studies departments and courses. This is likely the result of a combination of factors, including those mentioned that related to the corporatisation of the university, but also because of the larger scale cultural changes in the general public’s perception of feminism, as evidenced in backlash and

post-feminist discourses prevalent at the time, such as Denfeld (1995). Australian-specific events also contributed to the changing perception of feminism, including controversies generated by the Helen Demidenko affair ('The Demidenko scandal' 2010); the Ormond College affair and subsequent book, Helen Garner's *The first stone* (Garner 1995); and the Mabo decision (*Mabo v Queensland* 1992) and Stolen Children report (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997) and subsequent debates over Aboriginal rights. All of these events and changes are likely to have affected the success of integrating feminist knowledge into the disciplines, as Terry Threadgold explains in the following passage:

About the time I left Australia there was a kind of a cultural backlash to equity agendas. There were a couple of things that happened that changed the cultural landscape. There was the Helen Demidenko affair that was going on when I left Australia. There were an awful lot of men in the Australian academy about that time writing about how neglected they were as white, middle-class men. Suddenly you had the Mabo decision and the Stolen Children report – so there was increasing interest in Aboriginal issues. All those things at the beginning of the '90s were hitting home and challenging people's identities and sense of who they were. You had an awful lot of men writing funny articles at the time. Men writing about how neglected they were as middle-class men and how they couldn't talk, couldn't speak anymore, about how they didn't have a voice. Some of them were speaking very loudly, shouting all the time about how they didn't have a voice. The Helen Garner First stone affair had a big effect. It was a huge controversy and a lot of writing went on around it. I was in Melbourne when that was going on, and certainly in Melbourne there was a lot of disaffection around feminism and any of these more radical movements around difference and acceptance of difference. It was more disaffection than we had seen for a long time and I do think it was generated by that particular debate and controversy.

However, there were also difficulties with the integration of feminist knowledge into the disciplines that were explicitly related to the academy and specifically to disciplinary knowledges. The following excerpt from Kate Lilley's accounts reflects on her own experience of becoming and being a feminist scholar during this period:

I think the utopian idea of a gender-integrated curriculum is all well and good and but it's very hard to achieve. Someone like me who came through in the high moment of feminism in literary studies is focused on the less canonical work. My whole training is oriented around gender from the other side and although I'm familiar with the canonical tradition, I know a lot more about the non-canonical than I do about the canonical.

The difficulty presented by this excerpt is how to deal with the 'canon', how to teach feminism in an integrated way rather than primarily as a critique. As Kate stated in an earlier excerpt from her accounts, it was an almost inevitable outcome that the 'canon' would remain as the core knowledge base of the arts and humanities. Although feminism and other politically motivated scholarship was largely successful in integrating critiques of canonical knowledge into the disciplines, the ideal that feminist studies would be able to produce a gender-integrated curriculum was elusive.

Uncertainty about what counts as feminist: "I had a lot more certainty when I started out as an academic about what I should be doing and what must be taught"

The result for Kate and the others interviewed, in terms of academic subjectivities and practices, is a climate of uncertainty: uncertainty about the appropriate ways to perform feminism in the academy; uncertainty about what counts as feminist; and uncertainty about what feminism can achieve. Kate expresses this uncertainty in the following passage:

So it's curious, it is a big reorientation, it's not an A plus B thing. I think this new generation of scholars, the best of them, are trying to do something with this legacy that is very fascinating. They are trying to sort out a response to that and I feel betwixt and between. I feel like it's all provisional. I had a lot more certainty when I started out as an academic about what I should be doing and what must be taught and all that sort of thing. I don't feel that level of certainty now. I hope that what I do is no less progressive, but it's in a different way. The way that things have shifted around it's not so clear what the progressive positions are.

From this passage, it is clear that the aims and purpose of feminist scholarship have come under revision as some of the original aims of women's studies either failed to come to fruition or, perhaps more accurately, had unexpected outcomes and unforeseen difficulties. Certainly, some of the interest in poststructuralist theory among feminist scholars was already a questioning of some of the original goals.

Also relevant here is the sense that feminists maybe made some mistakes or got things wrong in the early days. This is present when Ann talks about her decision to leave the editorial board of *Refractory Girl* or when Erica refers to the 'old guard' of feminists in the education faculty at QUT. These examples suggest that uncertainty may be a good thing; that it is wise for feminist scholars to tread more carefully so as not to repeat the same mistakes.

Yet as Kate also indicated there is the sense that 'the stakes have changed'; so that even if the early feminist scholarly practices still held, they would not be appropriate to the current conditions in which feminist scholars must practice. Talking about her choice of subject material for designing undergraduate courses in the early 2000s Ann Curthoys said:

I think if I needed to develop another course I probably could have done a feminist course; it wasn't that it was wrong or not wanted, it's just that other courses felt more pressing at the time.

The 'other things' Ann is referring to were Indigenous issues and the so-called 'History wars' or 'Culture wars', which, although about power, were not explicitly about 'gender'.

Gendered to general: "I probably feel more passionately about the non-canonical generally than I do about gender specifically"

Turning towards more generalised critiques of power relationships, rather than gender-specific ones, was a common thread in the accounts and a

development within feminist scholarship, a shift that I identified in Chapter 2 and named 'gendered' to 'general'. In the following passage Kate Lilley describes how she sees the most important aspect of her feminist practice as an academic to be providing students with the tools necessary to mount a critique, rather than with teaching a specific critique of gendered power relations:

Now I think it doesn't so much matter which specific text I teach, I mean it matters to some degree but perhaps it's not the most important thing. It's more important how I teach them and what kinds of analysis I can help students to make. But I feel very passionately about it. I probably feel more passionately about the non-canonical generally than I do about gender specifically. I think gender is always central to whatever analysis you are going to make but I'm much more interested in how different kinds of investments and questions can be brought to bear on each other. That's how I do it, but I am more than happy as an academic and as a teacher to say I'm a lesbian and I'm a feminist.

Therefore, in this instance, uncertainty has had the effect of producing new ways of teaching feminism and the boundaries of what counts as feminist have been expanded. In Kate's account, the most important part of what she teaches to students is the ability to make analyses on the basis of many considerations, of which gender is one. This suggests that Kate regards her feminist scholarly practices as incorporating gender among other analyses of power. In her account she acknowledges a shift from being concerned with gender specifically to this more general focus on the non-canonical.

A further example of the shift from 'gendered to general' analyses may be related to the internalisation of feminist politics. By that I mean that it does not need to be stated explicitly. The internalisation and related invisibility of feminist politics brings into question what counts as feminist scholarship. In the following excerpt Ann Curthoys eloquently describes the process of embodying feminism to the point where you are no longer aware of it:

I have been out of touch with feminist scholarship and I suppose because I've been doing it so long, it does become a bit taken for granted. It becomes a part of you and you can't articulate it anymore, or name it – it's just how you think. I have recently been thinking, "don't let the feminist questions go" because they are productive and important.

There is an interesting contradiction in this excerpt: on the one hand, Ann claims to be 'out of touch' with feminist scholarship, yet on the other hand, she is arguing that feminism becomes 'part of you', 'how you think', indicating that all the scholarship she produces is in some way 'feminist' because it is produced by her. This challenges the definition of feminist scholarship by raising the question: is feminist scholarship work explicitly about gender or women or is it scholarship produced by a feminist? Or as Ann suggested, is it scholarship driven by particular sets of questions?

In Ann's account, she discusses writing her recent book, *Is history fiction?* (2006), with John Docker. She mentions that she particularly enjoyed writing the chapter on feminism because it enabled her to get back in touch with feminist history and theory. Yet the question I would ask here is: why is it only the explicitly feminist-titled chapter that is considered 'feminist' and, furthermore, is it possible that the whole book can be understood as feminist scholarship?

If the move from 'gendered to general' is common among feminists and predicated on making 'feminism' work in practical ways suitable to the contemporary conditions in which feminism is practised, then is it not possible that any scholarly work about power written by a feminist scholar is feminist scholarship? Especially considering the fact that feminist concerns have never existed in isolation from other political and ethical concerns. I continue this discussion in Chapter 7.

Feminist academic practice: “that is not to say that theory doesn’t still inform what I’m doing but I am very much concerned with more practical solutions”

The shift from gendered to general has been one way that these feminist scholars responded to the changing conditions of the university. They also responded by engaging in more practical academic strategies. Ann Curthoys spoke about ways to engage with feminism in her practice as an academic. Like Sheila and Catharine, Ann mentions postgraduate pedagogical relationships as a site where she continues to practice feminism. She states:

The other dimension for me that keeps me in touch with feminism has been PhD supervision. PhD supervision has often been with women, not always, but largely with women and quite often doing feminist topics or topics where feminism is involved. To me that’s still part of my feminist practice – maintaining links with younger women, what they are talking about, thinking about, finding out about new work ... It is in those interactions that I suppose I feel more like a feminist.

So Ann identifies this practice as ‘feminist’ for a number of reasons: it connects her with other women, particularly young women, it connects her with explicitly feminist topics and recent scholarship and it also enables her to engage with feminism as a practice.

The participants frequently mentioned pedagogy as a site where they can continue to enact feminist politics. For instance, Kalpana Ram articulated her contemporary feminist practice to include teaching, feminist pedagogy and engaging with the body, as she describes in the following statement:

Teaching I find very rewarding as a form of feminist engagement with the world. Increasingly universities are drawing women from overseas, from different parts of Asia, and our own immigrant communities of men and women come to me as students. I use the fact of being an Indian woman and an anthropologist to underline the fact that the discipline of anthropology cannot be understood any longer as a matter of European or Europe derived societies describing the rest of the world. I still emphasise very much the

insights of learning that came to me in the feminism courses of the university; use small groups to integrate lecture material and deep engagement with texts, with personal life experiences of people in the group. It allows people to relax, get to know one another and to learn more directly. My engagement with the body – itself a part of the feminist tradition – is also coming into my teaching; I use the senses as much as possible, both as something to think about and integrate into what we mean by knowledge and as a means of learning. For example, in teaching about India I use dance workshops, dinner at a restaurant, lecture demonstrations in music, get students to describe temple worship, music groups, concerts, performances. And, of course, gender can come through in all my teaching.

Kalpana's approach to teaching and scholarship is an example of the ways that feminist scholars have integrated feminist theory and pedagogy into their everyday academic practice and also how feminist scholars have broadened the scope of their scholarship.

There has also been a noticeable shift towards more practical academic work, usually as applied research work. For instance, five of the seven feminist scholars in the study mentioned applied research work as a relatively recent development in their feminist practice. Catharine Lumby describes her experience below:

What's been interesting throughout that time is that I have also done a lot of applied research work and that's something that's grown and I've really enjoyed that. That's a different way of making an intervention. It does involve doing some public media work but it's not just about writing stuff, it's about getting in and doing practical things.

This excerpt suggests that even feminist scholars with a strong background in theory such as Catharine, who was part of the critical nexus in fine arts during the 1980s at the University of Sydney, have reconsidered the usefulness of theory for intervening in positive ways in women's lives. This excerpt shows that some feminist scholars are, instead, now focused on 'doing practical things'.

Perhaps one of the most useful examples of the changing practices of feminist scholars is Terry Threadgold's account. Terry worked her way up from a casual lecturing position at the University of Sydney in the mid 1960s to her current position as Pro Vice-Chancellor for Staff and Diversity at Cardiff University. As I discussed in this and the previous chapter, Terry has extensive experience working with, producing and teaching feminist theory. Yet her experience is similar to the other scholars in that she has changed the way she engages in feminist politics in recent years. The following excerpt describes how her work has changed:

I haven't given up on feminist theory. I still use it but I use it very differently now. I work with ethnography and focus groups and questionnaires – all the things I never did when I was in Sydney because back then I was very much more a human sciences kind of researcher. I worked with theory and I worked with books. Just before I left Melbourne I'd started working with Barbara Kamler and Susan Feldman. We did a project for the Australian Research Council on women and ageing. That was probably the first fieldwork project I ever did ... So I had started to move that way already, but having got to Cardiff I realised that journalists were not going to listen to me if I talked about 'habitus' and embodiment but they would if I could give them a graph. So I had to change horses and do both.

In this part of her account, Terry describes why it was necessary for her to engage in more practice-based and less theoretical scholarship; she needed to be able to communicate her ideas to other scholars and professionals outside the university.

I do think that there is still a radical need for teaching and theorising on these issues, but I'm not doing that work anymore. I tend to be working with ethnic minority communities, finding out what happens to the women in those communities and, if I can, finding practical ways of supporting women to deal with some of those issues. So instead of theorising I am doing action research. That is not to say that the theory doesn't still inform what I am doing but I am very much concerned with more practical solutions, like saying to government, "well, you could help those Somali women if you did X". I've moved full circle from theorising about it in the classroom, or doing it in performance studies to actually going out there and seeing how people live their real lives. I found that transition very interesting. It doesn't remove my interest in gender issues or equality issues, but

I think I've now developed different ways of dealing with those things. Some of those ways have been becoming involved in student groups, writing policy at government level and local level and trying to implement those things in practice.

Terry acknowledges that theory still very much informs her work but she now applies that insight to 'practical solutions'. She describes how she is now engaged with feminism in a different way than during her many years producing and teaching theory but connects the experiences by arguing that her current work is the application of her theoretical pursuits to specific problems. The way she describes this development in her scholarly work indicates that the shift towards more practical solutions was borne out of her continued commitment to feminism and the need for solutions to problems faced by the women in the community that she was working in. She continues:

It's partly why I have taken on the Pro Vice-Chancellor role. That will become a full Pro Vice-Chancellorship next year and I will step down as Head of School at that point. Taking on that role is trying to make the things I've always believed in theoretically happen in a larger, broader organisation.

Terry describes many of the changes that I have identified in this chapter as new ways of enacting feminist politics in the contemporary university. She admits that she no longer engages in feminist theory as she once did, but states that she is now working towards more practical solutions by doing applied research work and broadening the scope of the work to more general questions of power. Furthermore, she has taken this more practical approach to being a feminist scholar into her position as Pro Vice-Chancellor and is now enacting a feminist politics from a position of power. In this excerpt Terry acknowledges that this more practical approach is still concerned with gender and power issues, yet it is quite different from the kinds of theoretical work she engaged in earlier her career.

In this chapter I have identified several changes to the way that these feminist academics engage in feminist scholarship. These include applied research work; pedagogy; working with governments and community organisations; crossover work, such as Catharine Lumby's *Why TV is good for kids?* (2006) and Kate Lilley's *Versary* (2002); a shift from 'gendered to general' in the focus of their analyses; and feminists taking up management positions. Placed together, these strategies paint a picture of contemporary feminist scholarship that is oriented towards practice and the practical. The shift away from theoretical feminisms towards feminist academic practice raises questions about what contemporary feminist might be. This is a conversation I enter into in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

I began this research with the claim that the possibilities of feminist scholarship in the contemporary Australian university need to be rethought. This was necessary, I argued, because of the existence of a body of feminist literature that declared the field to be in crisis, which in turn limits the future possibilities of the field.

In Chapter 2 I engaged in an extended critique of this literature. I examined the way that the origin of feminist scholarship was configured within histories of feminist scholarship as being the direct result or outcome of the women's movement. I then critiqued the way in which this notion of origin was unreflexively taken up within some feminist literatures, thereby contributing to an 'idiom of failure'. I also argued that there is an absence of personal and local accounts of being a feminist scholar in both the historical and crisis literature, which elides the complexity of the field. Drawing on the work of Robyn Wiegman and Megan Jones, I argued that the problems of abstraction and origin within the literature limit the possibilities of the field by eliding the complexity of feminist scholarship's past and present and by erasing the experiences of the women who inhabit the field. I asserted the need for more complex and nuanced accounts of feminist scholarship that would allow feminist scholars to rethink contemporary academic feminism outside of the idiom of failure.

In Chapter 5, I presented aspects of the ghostwritten accounts from Volume 2, which question the way that 'origin' is configured within the literature discussed in Chapter 2. By examining local and personal accounts of feminist scholars' experiences of becoming feminist academics, as I did in Chapter 5, the complexity of the relation between feminist scholarship and feminist movement was brought into focus. It appeared that there was little separation between the intellectual and the

political in the context of an individual scholar's experience. This suggested that the positioning of feminist movement as the origin of feminist scholarship is overstated within the literature and that perhaps the relation between movement and scholarship is not as straightforward as it might seem.

In addition to re-thinking the notion of origin, the excerpts from the accounts that I discussed in Chapter 5 also prompt a re-thinking of the notion of the decline of the women's movement. I argued that, instead of decline, this period of feminism's history can more usefully be thought of as a transitional period, whereby past successes of the women's movement enabled feminist politics to be enacted within the institutional setting of the university.

The ghostwritten accounts of these feminist scholars' experiences, which I explored in Chapter 5, raise questions about the relation between feminist scholarship and feminist movement, and highlight the limitations of configuring the women's movement as the origin of feminist scholarship. These accounts demonstrate that local and personal accounts of feminist scholarship's history contribute to a more complex understanding of this history and open up possibilities for what the field might become. These kinds of complex and nuanced accounts of this history are needed if we are to think about the field outside of or other than the idiom of failure.

I also claimed in Chapter 1 that re-thinking the possibilities of feminist scholarship was necessary because of the current conditions of the university. The effects of the neoliberal performative university have also contributed to the idiom of failure within the literature. Articles such as Davies "The (im)possibility of intellectual work in neo-liberal regimes" (2005) or Thornton's "The retreat from the critical" (2008) paint a bleak picture of the possibilities for feminist intellectual work in the contemporary university. Yet the excerpts of the accounts that I examined in Chapter 6

suggest a more complex story. In that chapter I used excerpts from the ghostwritten accounts to examine the effects of the transformation of universities on feminist scholarship. Indeed, many of the effects were negative, such as loss of collegiality; increased anxiety for academics because of pressure to publish or attract research funding; loss of institutional spaces for feminist scholarship; and a decline in the number of women's and gender studies programs.

However, by focusing on the personal accounts of these influential feminist scholars paths of possibility appear. As I detailed in Chapter 6, these scholars not only survived during this period of downsizing and restructuring, but some of them flourished, finding new ways to enact feminist politics in the changing environment. Admittedly the women in this study were chosen specifically because of their influential position within feminist scholarship and the institution, but their experiences show that, despite the negative effects of the changes, feminist scholarship in some form is still possible within the contemporary Australian university.

One of the consequences of the transformation of Australian universities according to neo-liberal economic principles was reduced emphasis and value on theory and theory production. As I described in Chapter 6, theory was the *modus operandi* of feminist scholarship but this was challenged by the neo-liberal economic principles underlying the governance of universities, which favour forms of knowledge that are easily quantifiable. The feminist scholars in this research responded to these changes by changing the way they practised feminism – using strategies recognised by the performative university. This created a path of possibility for these scholars that allowed them to bring the insights of feminist theory to a variety of more practical contexts.

To lay claim to and understand these possibilities requires an expanded definition of feminist scholarship. Some of the practices of these feminist

scholars that I discussed in Chapter 6, such as taking up managerial roles or shifting research focus from gendered to general, may not be within the traditional boundaries of feminist scholarship. As I discussed in Chapter 1, there is no firm definition of feminist scholarship or of academic feminism and the field is frequently defined by what it does not encompass. However, most definitions would reasonably assume that feminist scholarship has something explicitly to do with women, gender or sexual difference. The examples I gave above of managerial roles and gendered to general research interests are not explicitly related to women, gender or sexual difference so can they reasonably be claimed as feminist academic practices? I would argue that they are feminist practices based on my reading of the accounts. Furthermore, they are examples of feminist scholarship, because they involve the institutionalised practice (directly or indirectly) of feminist knowledge production. As I explained in Chapter 6, the feminist scholars approach their academic practice as feminists – whether this means acting as a feminist in a position of power in a managerial role; bringing feminist questions to whatever research they are working on; mentoring younger women in the university; or liaising with governments to assist refugees. These are just a few of the examples from the accounts in Volume 2.

To claim these practices as feminist is useful partly because it acknowledges the current work that these feminist scholars are doing – rather than focusing on the losses – but also because it opens possibilities for the field and produces new conceivable futures. But what is it about these practices that can be considered ‘feminist’, especially in relation to other scholars’ practices?

There are some indications within the accounts of what constitutes these practices as feminist. For instance, Erica McWilliam speaks of the ‘strategic choreography’ of finding a feminist way to manage; Ann Curthoys reminds us that ‘it’s the questions you ask that matter’; and Kate

Lilley promotes the non-canonical. In other instances, the traces of feminism are more visible. For example, Kalpana Ram brings insights from her experiences in feminist courses into her teaching methods. The feminist element of these practices is difficult to identify but I suggest that it can be broadly defined as an ethical imperative. I would also further suggest that this ethical imperative is firmly rooted in feminist theory. It is perhaps not coincidental that these particular feminist scholars, who were successful in the institution and found new ways to practise feminism within it, have strong backgrounds in feminist theory. This is apparent in Terry Threadgold's observation that she has moved full circle from producing theory in the academy to implementing theory into practice through action research and policy development. She described taking up the Pro Vice-Chancellor role at Cardiff as "trying to make the things I've always believed in theoretically happen in a larger broader organisation". The ethical imperative of academic feminism and its relationship to feminist theory is worthy of further consideration, as my research only begins a conversation about the 'feminist' in feminist scholarship.

In Chapter 6 I asserted that any scholarly work done by a feminist could be considered feminist scholarship by arguing that the whole of a book such as Ann Curthoys' and John Docker's *Is history fiction?* (2006), not just the chapter on the feminist challenge to history. I argued that it be considered feminist because it is informed by a feminist sensibility, a term I explore further in the following section. If we extend that assertion further, why not recognise an entire body of work from a feminist scholar as feminist scholarship, rather than just those publications explicitly related to women or gender.

The benefit of this kind of redefinition would be to acknowledge the complexity and variety of scholarly work that feminist scholars currently engage in. Such a move would also encompass the shift in the aims of feminist scholarship towards more general critiques of power and

subjectivity, as evident in Judith Butler's claim that "the point of modern politics is no longer to liberate a subject, but rather to interrogate the regulatory mechanisms through which 'subjects' are produced and maintained" (1997 cited in Wiegman 2004b: 175). This claim was echoed in Kate Lilley's description of her teaching practices in her ghostwritten account where she states:

I think gender is always central to whatever analysis you are going to make but I'm much more interested in how different kinds of investments and questions can be brought to bear on each other.

This kind of definition of feminist scholarship does not discard gender but it recognises that many feminist scholars have expanded their repertoire of analyses to include more than gender. For instance, the most important thing to convey to students, according to Kate's comment, is the ability to analyse and interpret information critically, so that gender is one of many considerations brought to the analysis.

However, expanding the definition of feminist scholarship in this way raises the question of how to identify feminist work. And how can it be distinguished from other scholarship? This is a question that is worthy of further consideration. The ethical imperative that I mentioned above is one aspect of feminist scholarship that may distinguish it, yet it is not unique to feminism – other scholarly fields are also motivated by ethics or social justice concerns. Some terms that may be useful in helping to identify and distinguish contemporary feminist scholarship are feminist sensibility and feminist literacy.

I do not have the space here to explore these terms at length, but I can suggest why it may be useful to develop these terms as a way to think about contemporary feminist scholarship.

The term 'feminist sensibility' is useful because it relates to a person rather than an object, meaning definitions of feminist scholarship need not be focused on the content of a body of knowledge but rather on the individual(s) who produce that knowledge. Sensibility infers awareness or sensitivity, along with discernment and responsiveness. Therefore, feminist sensibility implies not only an awareness of gendered oppression but also an ability to make value judgements on the basis of that awareness and respond accordingly. Sensibility can also mean a keen consciousness or the capacity for intellectual distinctions, meaning that a person with a feminist sensibility has the capacity to evaluate complex ideas. These attributes of awareness, discernment and responsiveness are the key elements of a feminist sensibility and they can be seen in the experiences of the feminist scholars in this study.

I suggested the term 'feminist literacy' in Chapter 1 as a way to identify contemporary feminist intellectual work. Contemporary feminist scholarship is often not explicitly named as such by the author; rather it is identifiable by other terms, which are frequently used by feminist scholars. For instance, in a recent issue of *Australian Feminist Studies* (2010), none of the articles featured the word 'feminist' in their titles (except for a conference report) but most of the articles mention feminism in the body of the article. However, these articles can still be identified as feminist by their titles alone, because the titles use terms that are associated to feminist thought. Some of the terms used in the articles' titles are embodiment, ethics, politics, discursive bodies, transgendering and gender violence. These terms are familiar to someone who is literate in feminist theory and scholarship and do not need to be explicitly identified as feminist concepts. This list is by no means intended to be exhaustive. I chose this particular issue of *Australian Feminist Studies* as an example because it was the most recent, but because it also illustrates the point that contemporary feminist scholarship can be identified as feminist by

employing a kind of feminist literacy, rather than explicit use of the term 'feminist'.

The idea of feminist literacy is a useful way to identify feminist sensibility, in the sense that being familiar with the language of feminist thought assists in identifying an author who has a feminist sensibility without the need for the author to name the work as feminist. I propose that further developing these terms may assist in capturing some of the complexity and diversity of current feminist academic practice. This kind of redefining work can open possibilities for the field by acknowledging the shift towards practice-oriented feminist engagements. However, these terms feminist sensibility and feminist scholarship are still closely linked with feminist theory; in fact they are rooted in a broad and deep understanding of past and present feminist theory.

As I stated earlier, it is perhaps not coincidental that the feminist scholars in this research, who were able to enact feminist politics under the current conditions of the university, have strong backgrounds in feminist theory. So, despite their more recent scholarship being enacted in more practical ways, they are also well versed in feminist theory and were a part of the heyday of feminist theory in the 1980s. Their experience of this time constituted an education in a body of foundational knowledge that equips them to bring certain analyses and questions to their current work oriented towards practice.

As I explained in Chapter 6, the shift towards feminist academic practice is partly due to theory being less valued by the university and a sense among feminists that it was no longer appropriate to focus on theory. Therefore, there is some risk of loss with regard to feminist theory and specifically related to generational succession. In the absence of dedicated institutional spaces, such as women's studies programs, there is a risk that foundational feminist knowledge will not be taught to future

generations of feminist scholars. However, this risk is purely speculative for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, the accounts indicated that a substantial amount of what might be considered foundational feminist knowledge has been integrated into many of the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences (as I discussed in Chapters 5 and 6). However, this is qualified by the difficulties of producing a gender-integrated curriculum, which I identified in Chapter 6, and Terry Threadgold's claim that "it will always need doing again".

Secondly, I would question the extent to which the teaching of foundational feminist knowledge is in fact what women's studies programs are currently doing. My own experience of women's studies programs suggests that women's studies has already shifted away from passing on what might be understood as foundational knowledge, in favour of a focus on contemporary issues.

Therefore, there is a potential risk of the loss of foundational feminist knowledge, which potentially could affect future possibilities of feminist scholarship and contribute to the problem of generational succession, but there is currently little evidence that this is happening. I would suggest going forward that there is a need to be cautious about or 'alert to' the problem of generational succession but not 'alarmed'. The idiom of failure and the crisis narrative within the literature is, I have argued in this thesis, a generally unproductive way to think about generational succession.

Given the changing nature of feminist scholarship and the changing conditions of the university, it is important to acknowledge that generational succession may not proceed as we imagine it. In Chapter 1 I proposed that the narrative of crisis within the field was partly a response to the fact that feminist scholarship did not proceed in the ways originally

intended. The accounts I have examined in this thesis have indicated that feminist scholars responded to the unexpected challenges of the past three decades and feminist scholarship changed accordingly. Based on what I have discussed in this chapter, it would be fair to say that contemporary feminist scholarship would be unimaginable within the terms of feminism's earliest incarnations in the academy. In the same way that current feminist scholarship was unimaginable in the past, future feminist scholarship is also to some extent unimaginable.

As Grosz (2000) notes, our conceivable futures are based firmly in our understanding of the past and present. Therefore the possibilities of succession may be unrecognisable within our current understandings. I have attempted in this thesis to complicate current understandings of feminist scholarship so that future possibilities of feminist scholarship may become recognisable and visible.

The focus of this research has not been on issues of content within feminist scholarship, but the accounts do give some indications of the issues that will be important for feminist scholars in the future. Specifically, I think more attention will be focused on global and transnational issues, such as Terry's work with Somali refugees or Sheila's work with the Coalition Against Trafficking of Women Australia and it is likely that feminist scholars will engage more with the public sphere, through actions like Kate Lilley's book of poetry or Catharine Lumby's work with the National Rugby League and Big Brother.

In conclusion, in this thesis I have created space to re-think some key concepts that discursively configure the field of feminist scholarship. I have re-thought the relation between feminist movement and feminist scholarship by re-thinking the notions of origin and decline. I have also proposed a re-thinking of the ways that feminist scholarship responded to the transformation of universities and of contemporary feminist academic

practice. I have engaged in this task in order to open possibilities for feminist scholarship. As I have elaborated in this chapter, the accounts I examined throughout this thesis suggest that feminist scholarship is possible under the current conditions of the university. Yet to be able to recognise this scholarship it may require that we expand our definition of what feminist scholarship is and begin to develop ways to capture the complexity and diversity of contemporary feminist academic practice. This task is important not only because it recognises the contribution of current feminist scholars, including the influential scholars in this study, but also because it creates a place for younger generations of feminist scholars to produce new conceivable futures for the field. I admitted in Chapter 1 that part of my motivation for this research was to find a place for myself and other feminist women who are just embarking on a career as a feminist scholar. It therefore seems appropriate to conclude this work with the observation that, on the basis of this study, feminist scholarship would appear to have many possibilities in the contemporary Australian university for myself and other scholars.

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

Kate Bower

Volume 2

It's the questions you ask that matter: Ann Curthoys

Well how I became a feminist, it was really Women's Liberation arriving in Sydney in late 1969. My first meeting was in January 1970, so it was right at the beginning of the '70s, like maybe ten days into the '70s. But the background to that is that I was brought up in a relatively feminist household for the '50s and '60s. My mother, although she wouldn't have called herself a feminist, she would say 'I'm interested in women's equality', so really she was a feminist. My father – not as much as my mother – but he did cook, which was really unusual at that time. So I definitely think that early background lies behind my identification as feminist. But I also think that it was part of general student radicalism at the time too. I was in the antiwar movement and involved in Aboriginal protest politics and in some ways it was all part of that spectrum.

I was involved in lots of movements but I think the feminist one I got more involved with. The antiwar movement had by this stage been going quite awhile and it had been saying the same thing for some years. I was involved in it but I certainly wasn't a leader in it. And in the Aboriginal movement at that time, non-Aboriginal people were standing back. So really the feminist movement came to the fore as something that I could really believe in and act in, more than the other two, for some years – right through the '70s.

I went to university as an undergraduate on a teachers' college scholarship, as we had back then, so I was all set to be a teacher. But then I got first class Honours in history and I thought I should follow on to the next thing, doing a PhD but I think it was quite some time before I really thought I wanted to be an academic. Certainly it was by the time I'd finished the PhD, somewhere during that time. The other thing is that people think it was easy to get jobs then and that it's hard now; well it

wasn't easy to get jobs then either. So you never thought, "I'm going to find an academic job" or "I'm going to be an academic". As things turned out my first academic job was in women's studies, so that all fitted nicely.

I did the PhD in history at Macquarie. I started in 1968 and I submitted in 1973. It was on race relations in New South Wales in the 19th Century. It dealt with both Aboriginal-European relations and anti-Chinese attitudes and politics, leading to the development of the White Australia Policy. Because I became involved in the Women's Liberation Movement while doing my PhD, I started writing about feminist issues. I think I probably called it feminist theory, which was an elaborate title. When women's studies jobs came up there wasn't anyone who really had appropriate training or knowledge. There were only people like me, who had done something else but got interested in feminist issues, who sort of moved sideways into those jobs. And that was the case for quite a while until the body of feminist scholarship was built up enough to feel that you had actually been trained in it or you were very well versed in it. But I really learnt from doing, from teaching it.

Going back to that first meeting: I knew about it because I went on an antiwar march in December '69 and they handed out leaflets that said come to this meeting. It was an activist meeting. Some people had been meeting in the previous few months in Balmain and there was a mixture of people involved in the movement at that time. There was an American woman, Martha Ansara, who had come to Australia, and then there were Australian women who'd been to America and come back with stories about what was going on in the US. So it was mixture of Australian and American women. I think this meeting, I couldn't say for sure, but at the meeting I went to, one of the key people there was a young woman called Barbara Levy, who was quite a key person in the very early stages of the movement but then sort of vanished at a certain point. She was a very key person and she was probably at that first meeting, but I can't remember. It

was mainly young women; I would have been 24 or something, so it was other people like me.

Then after that first meeting, they set up the Glebe Point Road Women's Liberation Group and I went to that. That was pretty mixed in age; I can remember that a bit better because I went several times. Sue Bellamy was there, who was a PhD student at the time, but there were some older women there too. It was a bit more diverse because it was off-campus. I went to that for a while but then it got too big and it split into two – a Glebe group and a Balmain group – and I went to the Balmain group. Two of our filmmakers went to the Balmain group, so it wasn't all students or postgrads but the people I knew best were probably the postgrad students.

One thing I do remember is that there were quite a lot of American journals lying around – you picked them up and read them – like *Off Our Backs* and those sort of things. It was a reading group in a sense but it never saw itself that way. There was a bit of consciousness-raising but that was very brief. People tend to think that went on for ages but it didn't really. It then became more of an activist group. There was the abortion campaign – this was 1970 – and there was a key legal case in 1970 or a little bit later, which really meant that abortion was legal but there was campaigning before that happened and campaigning on some other issues.

I then got involved in the production of *Mejane*, the journal. So instead of just being in the group that was just talking about what to do, this was my actual activism. That started in early 1971 and I was involved in that for a couple of years. The work was writing and editing and involved interviewing women about their work. I used to love doing that and editing, writing, production meetings, layout and so on – all this stuff that we used to do. So I would say that that took over from the meetings within a year. And I was still working on the PhD. I submitted in May 1973 and then went

straight overseas. I went to England from May '73 to June '74. That was a total shift and then I came back pregnant, so that was another shift. Then I got the Women's Studies job, which was here at ANU, when the baby would have been about eight weeks old, so I never went back to the Women's Liberation Group. I moved on to other things. I went along to some things in England but I wasn't really part of one group. I tried lots of different groups and didn't really fit in to any of them.

When I came back, well I'd had the baby, and I moved to Canberra with my husband when my baby was eight weeks old. John came to do his PhD. I'd done my PhD but he'd done an MA first. So I came with baby and a PhD and did some part-time teaching at the old Canberra CAE and then the Women's Studies job was advertised. That was the result of a big campaign here at ANU in 1974. I've got to get my dates right – for an historian I'm not doing very well. The big campaign here was '74. We would have arrived here in early '75 with my eight-week old baby. I did part-time teaching through '75 and during that year they advertised the position, and I got it. So yes, the baby was about 13 months old when I actually started teaching.

It was the first year of Women's Studies at ANU and it was one of the first programs in the country. I think the only earlier program was at Flinders and there were feminist courses at other institutions, such as the course on the political economy of women at the University of Sydney that Margaret Power ran and there were a few others. But I think this would have been the second one with the title Women's Studies. In fact it was set up on a much more secure basis than any of the others. Like the Flinders' one was a tutor, whereas this was a lectureship and, in the first instance, it was a contract position, a two- or three-year job, and when I left, it was converted into a tenured job. It was called a Lecturing Fellow (that's an old title they don't use anymore), which was a bit funny for

women's studies, but in current terms that would be like a Level B academic job. So I think ANU did it quite well.

I then had the task of designing all the courses and I'd only ever been a tutor. I didn't know all that much about course design. I didn't even know that much about women. I just scrambled together everything I could find. The Women's Liberation Movement was pretty intellectual in lots of ways. There were lots of articles; I'd written a few and there were lots of other articles and reading lists and things. I just gave it everything I could and got assistance from people on staff. I did that through 1976 to '77.

It was just a one-year course at that point. I designed it so the first half of the course I designed and taught, which was like *Introduction to women's studies*, or *Introduction to feminist theory* or something like that. Then the second half I broke into strands and I taught one on women in Australian history and I taught another one on history of feminist thought. Then other people – out of the goodness of their hearts really when I look back on it – taught the other strands. Jenny Macklin taught one on economics and Susan Magarey taught one on women and the family and I also had a couple of men contributing. A man in demography taught one on women and demography.

So I did that both years (1976 and 1977). The teachers of those second-half courses changed in the second year but it was the same structure. But then, in my second year, I planned for the third year to split it into two courses: *Women's studies A* and *Women's studies B*. I forget now but one would have been more historical and one more something else – I can't quite remember. Anyway I left before that came into practice, so the next person picked up those two courses. In fact, the numbers just kept going up and up; it was very popular. The first year it was only about 30 students, the second year was 90 and then, when it split into two, there were in total about 150 students, so it was growing very fast.

Susan Magarey took over after me. Both my husband and I wanted to get back to Sydney and there was a job advertised at what was then the NSW Institute of Technology. The advertised job was in sociology. It was called 'Sociology of Work and Industry' or something similar. I was not a sociologist but I had written a lot about women and work at this point. So I applied for that as a way of getting back to Sydney and I got it.

I was thrown into a completely different environment. The BA in Communications at UTS, or what we now call UTS, was completely different. I didn't teach a lot of women's studies in that new environment. I did teach a course called *Social history of women* but by then I had moved more into more straight, standard type Australian history teaching because I was the only person doing Australian history at UTS. So I taught a course called *Australian history* and I taught a course called *Work and industry* because that's what I was meant to be doing and I taught some other things, like *Introduction to social theory*. I was teaching Australian history as a sociology appointment but UTS wasn't fussy and I mean I had applied for a sociology job but I was clearly an historian.

Here is an interesting detail: the person teaching Australian history before I got there was Keith Windschuttle. He was appointed to teach journalism so, when I arrived, he seemed quite happy to hand over Australian history to me and concentrate on journalism. Then he left for the University of Wollongong about two years after that. I gradually shifted my teaching towards history and social theory. Half my teaching was history and the other half wasn't really work and industry after a while – it was introduction to social theory. I taught with Paul Gillen for a long time; a course on classical social theory. So it was still sociology but in a different way than what I had been appointed to do. The stuff on work and industry wasn't all that popular, so I think it just got forgotten.

By this stage –it was 1978/79 – and a lot of people were interested in Althusserian theory and Marxist theory. I wasn't particularly interested in that but the whole environment of theory meant I taught more theoretical courses. The other thing I then did was teach a first-year course called *Australian history and politics*, so I started to play a different role. The feminist stuff was still there but it was only a part of it.

I hadn't lived in Sydney since I finished my thesis in 1973 and so, when I got back to Sydney in 1978, lots of things had changed. The journal *Mejane* had finished I think, but *Refractory Girl* had become the established women's studies journal and I got very involved in that. I had been involved in it a bit while in Canberra, helping to edit an issue in 1977. There was a lot of talk at that time about women and work; that was the key issue. There was a group called WERC – Women's Employment Rights Campaign. I got involved in that but again on the writing/editing side of things. That says a lot; I've always done that. So it was still in that editorial writing role and I did that through the late '70s and early '80s

Then in the early '80s, feminism started to experience these big divisions and conflicts, which were really around the issue of radical feminism I suppose. It was highlighted by the visit of Mary Daly in about '81. I think there were a whole lot of feminists who thought they roughly shared her views but when she came they found out that they didn't. Some of them loved her and some of them hated her. I was one of the ones who hated her. So *Refractory Girl* was internally split. I stopped going to *Refractory Girl* at some point in the early '80s really for that reason; just because we didn't have enough in common any more.

This sounds all mad now, but the main divisive issue was whether gender was the most defining feature of social life or whether it was one amongst a number. What status did you give gender divisions? A lot of feminists felt that gender was absolutely primary and they might say, "oh yes, race and

class matter but in a secondary way”. I’ve had a strong Marxist background. I wouldn’t say I was a Marxist at this stage but I was interested in class and race and had been involved in teaching it, so I started thinking I’m not a radical feminist. I call myself a feminist but I wouldn’t call myself a radical feminist in that precise sense. Then, in terms of issues, some of it was around issues of heterosexuality and lesbianism, separatism, the role of men in meetings and conferences, men in women’s studies, all of those things. And I think that those divisions were probably always there a little bit but they got much sharper in the first part of the ‘80s.

But on a whole other side, by the early to mid ‘80s, equal opportunity legislation had gone through in NSW. Suddenly in the workplace you had a whole lot of very pragmatic, practical things to do like being on equal opportunity committees and things to do with employment policies. I got a bit involved in the union at that stage and involved with those very pragmatic things, such as affirmative action and antidiscrimination.

At NSWIT (the New South Wales Institute of Technology) during the 1980s, I was quite involved in feminism in that more structured workplace way. I wasn’t going to women’s groups anymore and I wasn’t involved with *Refractory Girl* – I was doing more in the workplace. I think maybe something was changing in Australian society too at that point. People were starting to work harder or maybe I was just getting older, but people were work-focused and political movements were really in the workplace in a way.

I arrived as a lecturer in 1978 and it was only a temporary lectureship. There’s a really long story behind that that I won’t bore you with but there was a lot of conflict at UTS in those years about the radical humanities faculty. So that took up a lot of energy through that period. But I eventually got appointed with tenure in the early ‘80s and then got promoted to

Senior Lecturer in '83. In 1985 I had a year's secondment to ANU to the Social Justice Project in the Research School of Social Sciences. I got out of the mad NSWIT hothouse for a while and concentrated on my own research, something which I hadn't done for a long time at that point. I started to write a lot about women and work and other things but while I was at ANU an advertisement for a position at UTS came up. The position was called Associate Head of School. It was Professor level but it had this weird title, Associate Head of School; they don't have it any more. I applied for that from ANU and got it and came back into that new position and very quickly was in fact Acting Dean. So I went from a Lecturer to Acting Dean in a very short space of time which was a bit scary.

The actual getting of the job wasn't the hard part; it was doing it that was difficult. I was already in the CAE system, so I understood that system but I probably did more research than most people in that system. Having had that year at ANU I had a chance to really develop my research profile, so that helped to get the job.

But I think one of the bad things in my life is that I've been reasonably good at administration. I always organised the social political studies area as a quite junior person. It was an organisational ability type thing. It did help me along the way, but it was also a negative because as you get more deeply involved, it starts to blot other things out. When I became Dean I did do some of my own scholarly work but it was a very, very heavy period in terms of workload.

1988 saw the big Dawkins reforms and NSWIT became UTS in, I think, January that year. My position was renamed and soon after that I had to go through an application process, to have my position renamed from Associate Head of School to Professor. Around the same time I was elected Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. I was suddenly in a university, suddenly a Dean, and suddenly in a totally

different environment. As a Dean I still taught but not a full load. The other thing that was happening in this period was that, with some colleagues, I developed the Applied History Program. It was an Applied Masters program and it took a lot of work. We got some funding in the Bicentennial year, 1988, or maybe we got the funding in '87 for the Bicentennial year. I am not sure of the sequence but the program started in 1989. I put a lot of work into that and taught a course on writing history, which is still an area that I work in. So that was the teaching side and I still taught a bit of Australian history.

On the research side, I stopped researching women and work. I was influenced by my peers at UTS and I was getting more into popular culture and media studies, including the history of journalism. That work lasted into the 1990s. I worked with Paula Hamilton and Julianne Schultz, and Julianne and I later edited a book on the history of print journalism called *Journalism: print, politics and popular culture*. I also wrote a joint article with Stephen Muecke around that time called 'Australia for Example'. Being the Bicentennial year, the republic issue was hotting up, so through the early '90s I was writing a lot about Australian nationalism and republicanism. I was still writing some feminist stuff, for instance I was writing histories of feminism because people would want them for a collection of essays. I also wrote some essays in the late '80s about the history of the antiwar movement.

And then in 1990 I got the bright idea of writing a history of the Freedom Ride that I'd been involved in in 1965. I applied for an ARC grant, which I got, and I started work on that in 1991. I probably didn't work on it as concentratedly as I should have because I had just been Dean and it took a long time to come out of that; to refresh and read and get back into being a full-time academic. I worked on the Freedom Ride book off and on all through the '90s and it was only in the early 2000s that I found the time to

actually finish it. So in that book I was going back to Aboriginal studies, which I'd left behind in the mid '70s.

I don't really know where I got the idea. The Bicentennial did have something to do with it because it did bring the whole question of Aboriginal history to the fore. But I actually think the germ of it was Peter Read writing the biography of Charles Perkins. He's a very good oral historian and he interviewed me as someone who was on the Freedom Ride. So I did the interview but I started to think, "why is *he* doing it? – I should be doing this". I think that was the germ of it, but it took another couple of years before I formulated 'I am going to write the history of the Freedom Ride'. By this time Peter had written his book and he had half a chapter on the Freedom Ride, six to 12 pages or so. It was very good but quite short and I thought it deserved more, so I dreamed up the idea of a book. I shifted back into the scholarship on race that I had really dealt with in the late 1960s. It seemed in the late '80s that it was now appropriate to look back; there was a bit of distance from the events themselves.

When I was working on racism in my thesis in the late '60s it was often very depressing because you read all this racist stuff over and over each day. You go to the Mitchell Library and read horrendous stuff. Even the material that's at the level of ideas and not actually about killing people, they are still horrendous ideas. You get to the stage where you don't want to think about it anymore. I really just couldn't stand it anymore, so I was quite happy to leave it and get into feminism and the popular culture and the like. But by the mid '80s that had worn off; I'd forgotten about that. Australian society had changed and I had another way into the subject. I was also starting to think about questions of writing much more specifically than I had before, mainly because of teaching the *Writing history* course in the Applied History Program at UTS. So I was thinking how would I write a book about the Freedom Ride. I would be in the book as a participant but also an historian, so it would be both a memoir and a history. I was

thinking about those kinds of problems and UTS was the right place to be for talking about those issues. So that influenced me as well, at least in the idea of writing a book instead of just an article.

I was at UTS right through that period, until the end of 1994 when I took long service leave. I'd been there so long. Actually it was a very nice time while I was on long service leave; I did a few consultancies and a few different things. But the job I've now got was advertised during that time. It's funny; every time I've taken leave a job gets advertised. Anyway, Professor of History here at ANU was advertised and because I was on long service leave I had time to think about it and time to apply. I think had it been advertised in the middle of teaching I don't think I would have had the time to apply. I applied for the job at ANU and got it.

I left UTS at the end of 1994. Applying for the job at ANU wasn't about leaving Sydney; it was about leaving UTS. I'd rather not have left Sydney but I thought that the job that I'm doing now at ANU was much more appropriate for me than UTS. I'd been at UTS for 17 years by this stage and it had changed several times over. The Applied History Program was very successful but one of the problems there was that I had very few history colleagues. I liked my own discipline and I wanted more people around who were in the history discipline. At UTS there was only Paula Hamilton, Heather Goodall and myself at this point who were teaching history. We were all doing Australian history and we were all quite similar in some ways, so there was no one doing any British or European or Asian or Ancient. It was a very narrow place in terms of what kind of history was done. That was a major issue and I compensated for that by mixing with people in other disciplines and getting involved in writing. All of that was good but that couldn't go forever. I wanted a position in my own discipline and I thought that ANU was more clearly a research university.

At UTS you always had to do research a little bit against the grain at that time. A lot of people didn't do any research, well some did and some didn't. There wasn't a lot of research culture at UTS, so that was the main reason for wanting to leave. Although in the last few years that I was there that did change. I had PhD students for the first time and I was on a research committee and UTS was talking about developing its research culture. But it was still pretty raw. There were some good researchers like Stephen Muecke and Heather Goodall and others. There were some very good people there but I found it hard to get a lot written while I was there. Research wasn't given a high enough priority, in the same way as I thought it would be at ANU.

When I got to ANU I realised it wasn't that different in lots of ways. There were a lot of people who just teach and don't do research and a lot of people don't see research as very important, just like at UTS. But it's still a very different place, much less frenetic, and I was ready for that. ANU has a slightly calmer pace. I was 49 when I came here, so I wanted to focus on my own writing and research. What I missed about UTS was the fact it was very lively and very stimulating. There were lots of new ideas and different people. ANU is very lively in certain areas but some areas, like media studies, just didn't exist here. I did miss aspects of UTS but I've been much more productive here. In a way part of it is the physical location. Life is much easier here, it's quiet and you can work. There aren't the same sorts of distractions; it's very work focused. I was probably at the stage of life when I was ready to be more work focused – my son had grown up and so on. There are still things about Sydney that I miss. Sydney is a very lively place and that's nice. I will probably retire to Sydney but Canberra has been great for research and writing.¹

I came here to focus on research but that's not really what happened because I had to develop a whole lot of new courses. I don't think I

¹ Since giving this interview I have accepted a position at the University of Sydney, transferring my ARC Professorial Fellowship there in late 2008.

realised just how different it was and how what looked like the same courses on paper were really new courses. I'd taught Australian history there, Australian history here, but there were completely different students, demands, contexts. I developed a history and theory course here that built on things I'd done at UTS but it was very different. The main difference was basically that here at ANU I was teaching history to history students, that's their major, whereas at UTS I was mainly teaching history to students whose major was in something else. So it's a different experience.

So teaching was very time consuming for a while. I was Head of Department here for the first five years. Again, that was more of an administrative role. Although it wasn't as bad as being Dean, it was pretty bad in terms of taking up time and energy. Once it was over then I really for the first time had the time to focus on research – I had my teaching got under control and I'd done all that work recasting my courses and so on.

Women's studies was thriving when I returned to Canberra. By this stage it was run by Jill Matthews and Dorothy Broom. It was absolutely thriving and they had terrific seminars. That was nice to see and I thought, 'it's all happening without me and that's great'. Something started, which now just has a life of its own. Actually, although it's changed and it's changed name and so on, it's still thriving really; it's still a perfectly healthy academic program. But I wouldn't say there was any real organised feminism happening. There was some student activism when I first arrived but I was too old for that by this time. Anyway feminism itself had changed a lot in this time. So my involvement was more in writing.

I would still have feminist parts of my courses but I no longer had a women's history course as such. I wonder about that. Maybe if I'd put one on it would have gone perfectly well. But by that point I was writing the Freedom Ride book and there was an existing Indigenous Australian

history course – it was called Aboriginal history then – waiting for a teacher and I thought I've never had a chance to teach this at UTS. At UTS there was a strong belief there that you had to be Aboriginal to teach Indigenous studies but, in fact, while I was there this approach meant no one taught it. I think it was a misguided politics. When the opportunity came up I took it and in fact I did draw Aboriginal people into the teaching of it. So that's what I did instead of continuing on with the feminist courses. I was still writing about Australian women's history but I suppose by that time the Aboriginal cause took priority for me.

And then I taught a first-year generalist Australian history course, which I continued teaching until 2003 and I also taught history and theory, so I had plenty to do without doing the feminist courses. I think if I needed to develop another course I probably could have done a feminist course; it wasn't that it was wrong or not wanted, it's just that other courses felt more pressing at the time. I always had material about Aboriginal women in the Aboriginal history course, and I had material on women generally in the Australian history course and I always had feminist theory in the history and theory course. So I dispersed the feminist material into the other courses.

I think some people had been doing feminism like that for a number of years but for me I had certainly by that stage started seeing feminist scholarship as part of everything, rather than its own thing. Also I think because there was such a strong women's studies program at ANU and because Jill Matthews was teaching women's history and the history of sexuality in the Women's Studies Program, I felt freer to do other things. Actually neither of us taught a 'women in Australian history' type course, which probably we should have but I think both of us thought it was a bit old hat by then. We'd already done it. So she covered that field so I was free not to do it.

I was Head of Department until about May 2000 and that's the other thing to mention: a lot of universities, humanities especially, had terrible financial crises in the late '90s. And we were no exception. So I was Head of Department in a period when people were leaving and not being replaced. Actually when I first arrived that wasn't the case. I did have a chance to appoint some people and that was good. But then it all froze and I didn't have any more chances to appoint new staff the whole time I was Head. The late '90s was a really dead time for that, so being Head of Department was really a matter of keeping the show on the road in difficult times.

In terms of the effects that had, at one level you just keep teaching and researching, you keep doing your thing but overall it's demoralising. You're not bringing new people in, you're not bringing young people in and you're all getting old together so that's demoralising. In response to that I would reach out beyond my own department, to other parts of the university and beyond. So I was very involved in what goes on in the Humanities Research Centre and other parts of ANU. For example, there is a history program in the Research School of Social Sciences. So I didn't just sit in my own little shrinking group. You have to make other connections and I would say that's what I did. So it wasn't as though I got depressed but the situation here was difficult. I just kept going by doing things like collaborative projects and conferences and that sort of thing. I did a big collaborative project on history, law and Indigenous peoples, which was about the role of the historian in native title cases and other kinds of cases involving Indigenous litigants, like the Cubillo case. So that was a big project involving Alex Reilly from Macquarie and Ann Genovese from UTS (and then Melbourne) and me. That's been very consuming, we are just finishing it now.² I also did another big collaborative project on a companion to women's historical writing, with Mary Spongberg at Macquarie and Barbara Caine at Monash. So that's how I dealt with those changes. I tried to connect sideways and then somewhere, around about

² The book from this project, Ann Curthoys, Ann Genovese, and Alexander Reilly, *Rights and Redemption: History, Law, and Indigenous Peoples*, was published by UNSW Press in April 2008.

2001 or 2002, things turned around here and started to stabilise. I wouldn't say grow but we stopped declining.

Women's Studies changed its name at some point, early 2000s I think, to Gender, Sexuality, and Culture. There was quite a lot of debate around it at the time and even later on after it had been changed. I went to an event to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of Women's Studies at ANU and the change had been made but the debate wasn't over. There were still quite a lot of people angry about it. But I think well it's happened everywhere so there's got to be a reason for it. It's not on a whim, there are strong reasons to do with the changing politics and the changing relationship to a political movement and the whole rise of masculinity studies; a whole set of reasons. So I wasn't worried by it. I think it expressed something; it didn't cause something.

My feeling is that the idea behind women's studies wasn't to have feminist or women's studies courses *per se* for ever for their own reasons, it was more saying that universities are not studying women or using feminist insights in the way they should and this is one way to make them do it. But I don't think that I ever saw it as the only way to make it happen. I think the more worrying thing is the declining political movement, not universities. I think the project of women's studies was largely successful in raising these questions but that's not to say that you don't always need some focus on feminist scholarship. If you lose that point of focus I think it can dissipate and be forgotten. I'm glad that Gender, Sexuality and Culture is still there, doing their thing and, if they weren't, I would probably be pushing it a bit harder within history. That's a sort of awful thing to say but it's true. They are the flagship, which I still think is very important. They haven't been so successful that they've taught themselves out of existence. It's still necessary.

But what happened with the movement? I don't know. It was so lively right up until the late '80s, early '90s and then it started fading; the politics were changing. There are still strong feminist voices being heard, it's not as if they are gone, but that notion of an organised movement is gone. There were a couple of turning points – the Bell/Huggins debate about sexual abuse in Aboriginal society and the Garner affair – about how feminists should respond to cases of sexual harassment. More so the Garner affair I think. The sexual abuse one is a troubling issue, even more so now, but I don't particularly remember people being divided over it and I don't have an answer to it. The Helen Garner book, *The first stone*, generated a lot of feminist anger and I didn't like it at all. But there was also a lot of public approval, a sign I think, that feminism was going out of style. Feminism had lost some of its gloss with the general public, it was starting to be seen by young women as the orthodoxy, as something to rebel against, and the wheel turns in circles.

Certainly the general public had changed their views on feminism but there wasn't really any noticeable change in the students I was teaching. You've always got a mix of students: you've got your feminist students, you've got some who are against and you've got some New Age guys who like it and some men that hate it. That's all still the case, that mix. If I set a women's topic you still get quite a number of people who do it. It's not as if it's on the nose amongst students. Of course there might be people who teach women's history who might have a different view on that but for me, teaching a generalist course on Australian history, I can't see a big change. It's the same with Aboriginal topics. People say, "oh you know Aboriginal politics has changed and there's very negative things happening" but, in terms of putting on a course, you still get all these highly committed and sympathetic students. I think in some ways universities can have a continuity of their own which overrides some of these political changes.

There has been some decline in the presence of organised feminism on campus, but in terms of students' attitudes, my impression is that most young women take feminism for granted. They don't call it feminism but it's what I call feminism and they take it for granted. They may not call themselves feminist, but if somebody says something sexist they are really offended. There has been a change in the language and a change in the politics but, in terms of people's expectations about themselves and their futures, I don't really see a big change, which is interesting. In terms of women's expectations, the kind of women at university are expecting a professional career and they have one, so I don't really see that changing. Maybe in other parts of society you'd see it more, but in the university not so much.

Feminism is a smaller part of what I do than it used to be. I am now doing a big research project, which is going back to 19th-century Australian history. It's called *Indigenous peoples, the British Empire and self-government for the Australian colonies*. It is a return to political history; it's about the relationship between Britain and Australia in terms of Indigenous people at the level of policy, which is a bit like my PhD many years ago but in a different framework. I'm conscious that I need to have a gendered approach to it but I don't actually have one yet. My questions have been a bit different, they are about colonialism and humanitarianism and paternalism and democracy, which is a different conceptual framework from feminism. I have been out of touch with feminist scholarship and I suppose because I've been doing it so long, it does become a bit taken for granted. It becomes a part of you and you can't articulate it anymore, or name it – it's just how you think. I have recently been thinking, "don't let the feminist questions go" because they are productive and important.

It's very easy to forget the feminist side. When you're doing mid-19th century politics and most of the actors are men, you've got to remind yourself of the gender dimensions of that because it's not leaping out at

you. So it has reminded me that it's the questions you ask that matter. If you're studying say 'the history of feminism' it's just there automatically, but if I'm doing this complicated thing about the British handing over Aboriginal policy to the settlers and the consequences of that (it's in some ways a more conventional 19th-century history), it's still gendered but I have to remind myself of it. The primary sources don't include women overtly, so you have to think about it. For example, with the humanitarians a lot of the spokespeople were men but women did a lot of the behind the scenes work. And for the Aboriginal population what was happening with them was very much to do with reproduction. So there are gendered issues all over it but you could easily just ignore them. So that's what I'm thinking about intellectually.

With the book I wrote with my husband, John Docker, called *Is history fiction?*, which came out in 2005, I wrote the feminist chapter for that. It did slightly make me think that I haven't done this for a while and it reminded me of all the work we did in the '70s and '80s. I loved doing that. The idea for the book took a long time to formulate but came out of teaching historical writing at UTS and then at ANU. John and I had written a couple of articles on history and fiction and then decided we could do a book. But the feminist dimension came much later. In the sense of writing about what feminist histories added to theories of history, that was a much later thought. But, once I thought of it, I totally enjoyed it and it was one of the easier chapters to write.

The other dimension for me that keeps me in touch with feminism has been PhD supervision. PhD supervision has often been with women, not always, but largely with women and quite often doing feminist topics or topics where feminism is involved. To me that's still part of my feminist practice – maintaining links with younger women, what they are talking about, thinking about, finding out about new work. I've got two women PhD students at the moment, both of them older, both women in their 50s and

both highly successful women in their occupations but who've always wanted to do a PhD and are now finding the time on top of other things, so they are not young women in this particular case but there is something about those interactions. It is in those interactions that I suppose I feel more like a feminist.

I think that one of the goals of women's studies, encouraging mature age women to study, is still there at least at the graduate level, maybe not at the undergraduate level. I know over in Gender, Sexuality and Culture they have a lot of very successful women doing PhDs. I have many women PhD students myself. One of the women I'm supervising works at the Institute of Aboriginal Studies and has been their Executive Director for 35 years. Another one is general manager of audiences and programs at the National Museum of Australia and she is doing work on representations of Australia overseas up to 1940. And I have supervised many other younger women over the years.

I am not doing any undergraduate teaching at the moment because I've got a research grant, and I think I am probably nearing the end of undergraduate teaching. I've done a lot of it over the years, nearly 40 years, and I've enjoyed it but I found I wasn't doing anything new, I was just repeating myself. Whereas with a PhD student it's always new because you don't dream up the course – they do –so that's the part for me that's still challenging.

I'm only at the beginning of this great big project. It will take five years and I've only been doing it three months. I really like that fact that I've got this grant because at my age (61) people start asking, "when are you going to retire" and I say, "no I'm not going to retire, go away!" Now I've got the grant people don't ask anymore. I still feel there's plenty to do, not so much undergraduate teaching but definitely in terms of research and graduate teaching, so I will be sticking around for a while yet.

Negotiating the space between academia and the public world: Catharine Lumby

It's interesting the question of how you become a feminist. I certainly couldn't put any sort of date on saying I decided to call myself a feminist because I think there are two separate processes here. One is the time at which I would have identified myself as a 'feminist' using that word and that wouldn't have been until I was at university. I did an Arts/Law degree at the University of Sydney starting in 1979 and, at some point, I think I did become formally politicised and that would have been definitely through studying critical theory, particularly in the Fine Arts Department, and getting very interested in, well initially, traditional Leftist theorists like Althusser and feminist theorists like Meaghan Morris. She would probably have been the strongest influence. I was very interested in poststructuralist stuff and new French feminisms as it was called then and I went and sat in on Liz Grosz's lectures. So that would have been in my early 20s. But there is also a history to that story.

I think I identified as a feminist without using that word from a very young age, really I would say from the age of seven or eight. I was feminist in the sense that I was conscious from that age that I was uncomfortable with some of the ways that girls were placed; I was uncomfortable with some of the norms around girlhood and they included things like being censured for being physically aggressive or for asking too many questions in class. I specifically remember a teacher in fourth grade whom I had a huge conflict with. I was always in the Principal's office and it was always to do with fighting with boys or asking too many questions or challenging the teacher's authority – things like that.

My father is from a very working class background and my mother is from a lower-middle-class background. She got married very young and had three kids shortly after. She was a nurse but was very much more

intellectually capable than I guess her career path indicated at that point. I'm not saying that nurses are stupid but she didn't go to university, she didn't really explore any of those things at that point. And my father is bright too and he went back and did high school at night and then he went to university and started a degree. So I was growing up in this very aspirational environment.

Interestingly a lot of academics come from lower-middle class backgrounds. Anecdotally I've observed this and I think it's partly because those are backgrounds in which conformism or convention are often not as strongly encouraged as in established middle-class families. There is less of a sense of "this is how we do things around here" because people are escaping the working class and often they see themselves in flight from it, so everything is getting invented as you go along. I think there is a lot of room for reinventing yourself. So that was critical, that and the fact that both my parents were very socially motivated; I mean motivated by wanting to help other people. I can remember for years we had what were then called unmarried mothers living with us; girls who had been kicked out of home because they were pregnant. So there was always a sense that social justice was enormously important and that plays into the idea that of course women should be able to do what they want.

Then when I was 15 my parents moved to Sydney and I came to a private school on the North Shore. Prior to that we lived in Newcastle and I had gone to public school, so that was a very different experience. I had lots of friends and I got on well academically but I felt like an outsider, at least in the sense that I had come from a lower-middle class background and this was a very conservative, all female school on the North Shore. This was the late '70s, so there were still some pretty conservative ideas about what girls did with their future; it certainly involved marriage and you certainly married up – you married a barrister or a doctor. Whereas I went on to uni to do Arts/Law and I had absolutely no interest in getting married – I still

don't. So even as a teenager I was someone who hadn't bought into the norms and I think all of that is quite important in me identifying as feminist.

I was an outsider to the middle class but there's something valuable in that. You're more likely to question social norms if you are not automatically rewarded by them. I didn't grow up in a well-off family where everything was stable. It was a family which was constantly in flux; my middle sister was born with a handicap, there were constant money issues and a lot of general chaos. But there was also a lot of emphasis on looking out for people who needed help and on the importance of making a contribution to the community.

So it was natural for me to link social justice issues with intellectual things and that's the other thing, I've naturally always been a fairly intellectual person. I've always been really interested in ideas and in challenging received ideas; wanting to know why things happened this way and why they couldn't happen that way. I probably a very irritating child to be around!

Some of the girls I went to high school with – particularly those from families where Dad was a doctor or a lawyer – did go to university. But if I look at my three closest girlfriends, and they've remained my best friends, none of them completed a university degree. It's funny because they've all gone and done degrees in their 40s. So it certainly wasn't an established thing to be doing. And, certainly in law, girls were in the minority then.

Doing law was a bit of a shock to the system actually after majoring in Fine Arts. The Fine Arts Department was very politically quite radical and I went through at a time of real intellectual ferment – it was fantastic. I did an Honours degree and I loved it. But when I spent the last two years of the degree at the Law School in Phillip Street, I was surrounded by the kind of guys who came to lectures in suits. The story I always tell illustrates how

unreconstructed the place was then: in criminal law, when the law lecturer was going to give a lecture on sexual assault, some of the guys in the class gave him a blow-up sex doll to hold while he was giving the lectures on sexual assault. And he actually took the doll, which for me was mind-blowing. And I remember that I and some of the other girls staged a walkout from this lecture and of course we got called 'lezzos' as a result.

It doesn't seem that long ago to me but it really was a world apart. This was a world too in which I moved out of home and straight in with a guy and most of my girlfriends were having casual sex or living with people but that was still a pretty contentious thing. I can remember even my parents, who would now laugh at the fact that they were a bit horrified, *were* a bit horrified and had to come to terms with it. So it was still an era in which 'living in sin' was a concept that was hanging around; the pill had really only arrived in the '70s – it's very different now. I think in terms of gender roles, a lot of spadework had been done in the '70s but I wouldn't say that the path had been laid. There was still a lot of tension around gender roles, particularly when it came to things like sexuality.

By third year of university I would have been calling myself a feminist. It was like a lot of things in my life – I came to that open identification through an intellectual process. It was an intellectual process of conversion. With most things for me I need to intellectually work them through before I feel emotionally committed to them, whereas for some people it's the other way round. I found feminism so intellectually persuasive.

I had read de Beauvoir. Actually when I think about it I say third-year university but really by the end of high school I was reading Simone de Beauvoir and so I was thinking about it. Actually when I think back to sixth form, I was very interested in punk and I was interested in people like Patti Smith. So a lot of the music and the culture that I was absorbing

influenced me. It wasn't so much an intellectual thing but just identifying with women outside of the frame or who were rebellious or not conforming to the norms. They held a real fascination for me. Maybe I was partly fascinated because there has always been a tension for me and maybe this is the case for a lot of academics; there was always a tension for me between the fact that I was a really 'good girl' in the sense that I got really good grades and was Vice-Captain of the school, I toed the line and I didn't really flout authority but on an intellectual level I wanted to question a lot of the structures that were in place, so in a way I had a secret (or not so secret) admiration for people who 'don't give a fuck' about rules and don't feel they have to study for their exams and jump through all the hoops – the Patti Smiths of the world. I could never be like that in a million years but there is something romantically fascinating about them and really deeply appealing.

So, in a way, I think emotionally and in an affective sense, women who rebelled were always appealing to me. I have a bit of a thing for Suzi Quatro; she was my favourite pop artist when I was a kid. And then at university I worked through the ideas that were intellectually persuasive and this helped form my political identity. The influence of continental philosophy on feminism was particularly formative for me. My bookshelf is really a map for this stuff, I started moving away from conventional left frameworks, or what I would call conventional liberal and radical frameworks, towards less binary ways of understanding sex, gender and identity and ethics. I was very influenced, like so many people of my generation, by Foucault and Derrida and by the iteration of their ideas in the work of people like Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick. Another person I was interested in, and still am, is Baudrillard, who is sometimes seen as a bit of a poison chalice for feminism but I think he is still very interesting.

At that time, around 1984, theory was pretty cutting edge. I was really very lucky, I think, to be part of the Fine Arts Department at that time and it's

also odd to me because I can't even draw a stick figure. I guess my interest in art is different than for artists; I am a very visual person even though I can't perform that. I think there is an abstraction in the visual world and in forms of visual communication that I find mysterious and fascinating. So it's kind of odd that I ended up doing fine arts as a major because maybe philosophy or literature would have been more natural homes for someone like me. But I pursued this fascination I had with the visual and it was just completely coincidental that there happened to be people in the Fine Arts Department who were trained in poststructuralist thought; who formed a fairly small network of people who had been to France and studied with Foucault. There was Meaghan Morris, she was associated with the Fine Arts Department, and there was Paul Patton, he was in Philosophy but he was part of this network. There was a guy called Ted Colless, who was in Fine Arts and Film Studies, and also Allen Cholodenko. There was a group of them and a group of very interested students who really formed a little critical nexus. They brought Baudrillard out in '84 and they were also producing small publications as well as translating really interesting work. I happened to be right there. We were studying in that environment, undergraduates were attending conferences and they were putting out their own publications. I can remember Rex Butler and David Messer, two friends of mine at the time, had this photocopy publication called *Frogger*, which was a video game at the time but it was also a reference to French philosophy. It was funny, witty and really quite intelligently written. Rex used to translate Deleuze, and some things of Foucault; a really wide range of people.

This was a time when this kind of theory was still quite new and there was a lot of discussion about it. I mean Baudrillard was unheard of at this point; he wasn't even a big star in America yet. There were a lot of Australians who had gone to France; they were people from the Left who were really interested in post-'68 what becomes of the Left? And of course there was also the influence of psychoanalysis on film studies, which was critical to

this moment, and of course Meaghan Morris had come much more out of the film studies area. There was also the influence of linguistics and semiotics and, in feminism, there were tussles going on between liberal and radical feminists. And then you had the poststructuralist framework coming into it; well first structuralism and then poststructuralism. So many things contributed to that critical nexus.

In a way, when I think about it, studying in that department was a stroke of luck. The other stroke of luck was that I had planned to do Honours in English literature and I was tossing up between fine arts and literature and I submitted an essay on Milton to a lecturer in the English Department in which I'd used some of the feminist methodologies that I'd gained in my fine arts studies and applied them to *Paradise lost*. I got the essay back and he'd crossed the whole thing out – just crossed it out! I mean, that was it! I got a zero because I'd dared to put feminist theory on the same page as Milton! And I thought, “who is this freak?”, so I just didn't go back.

Whereas the atmosphere in fine arts was really electric! When I look back on it, we were treated, even as undergraduate students, as complete equals. We were contributing to publications. When I was an Honours student I was already writing as an art critic, contributing to *Art Network* – that's how I found my voice as a writer, through art criticism. That confidence came from the environment I was studying in. There was also a magazine called *On the Beach*, which is an example of one of the publications that mixed critical theory with fine arts and philosophy and did it in a fairly cheeky sort of way. I've forgotten when I took over the editorship, about '87 I think. So by 1987 I actually was editing a publication – and doing a pretty mediocre job it must be said – but having a go anyway. That's what people did! That was the spirit of the time: you can just get in, you can just start doing it, YOU can be an intellectual! It certainly wasn't like once you've finished your PhD someone will listen to you, it wasn't like that; it was very organic.

I finished my law degree partly as a ‘good girl’; because you finish what’s on your plate sort of thing but because I didn’t come from a background where anyone was a lawyer and I didn’t really move in those sort of circles. As soon as I left home I was living in Kings Cross and going to nightclubs and taking drugs, as well as going to uni and working to support myself as a waitress. I didn’t know professional people with full-time jobs and I didn’t know what professional people did, so there was no sense for me of what full-time work was like. I didn’t know what a lawyer did; I had no idea. I was 25 or 26 when I finished my law degree and I went to all these interviews in big law firms and basically I didn’t get a job. I got to the third round of interviews in lots of firms and I think they sensed that I wasn’t really the right person. I had reasonable marks and I don’t know what I did wrong in the interviews but I had a lot of rejection letters. And it was really just the fact that they had rejected me that made me think, “well, what is it that I want to do with my life?”. I’d never really thought about it.

And then I realised what I really enjoy doing is writing, so I started to write a lot more about contemporary art and after about a year of freelancing I got myself a job with the *Sydney Morning Herald* just by persistently writing things for them and hassling the editor.

What’s really different for students today, or what I observe that appears different, is that there was far less structure then and it was much less professionalised. I mean students in year 11 today are thinking about what they want to do and how to get from here to there. I never did that at all. I floated in and out of relationships and I just did what pleased me. And looking back I think, “god, I was lucky to get that job on the *Herald*”, but it certainly wasn’t planned.

What was good about going to the *Herald* – and this is I think formative in my intellectual practice and in my practice as a feminist, which is part and

parcel of it – is that, when you are working in mainstream media, there are lots of downsides but one of the upsides is that you really cannot obfuscate. You really have to work out what you are trying to say, what is the central message and say it. You really work all the pretension out of your style and all the preciousness.

When I look back at the journals I was editing and contributing to, some of what I wrote is laughable. Just to give you an example, this is an interview I did with John Nixon, who is an artist. I sometimes use this when I talk to students about pretension in academic styles and I actually asked him this question: “In relation to my fourth question, I would like you to comment more specifically on the idea that the advent of non-objective art was ultimately a kind of interiorised imitation, an aphopatic gesture.” I’m not even going to look that up in the dictionary, I don’t know what that means, it’s just bullshit. I asked him the question and he answered it! He should have said, “what are you talking about?”

So I came out of that world and the good thing about the *Herald* was that all the pretension got stripped out and then I started writing very much the area I’d carved out for myself, which was human rights, particularly women’s rights and so I wrote an enormous about that. Working in that area allowed me to bring some of my legal training into it too because I was looking at social structural issues and areas that had impinged on areas of the law. In that sense it was a great experience because I had started to get a much better understanding of the way social and legal institutions frame and structure gender and sexuality and politics. I went and worked in Canberra in the Press Gallery for a while. I also wrote a lot about disadvantaged people and I got to understand a lot about community organisations’ structures and really got immersed in a real world sense with those issues. And really I continued on as a journalist, I worked in TV, which I hated and then ended up going to America on a Harkness scholarship where I wrote *Bad girls*, which was my first book.

I went from academia, to the *Herald* and into the writing world and by the time I came back into academia in '99, full time that is, what I brought with me was a really strong sense of the need to apply ideas. For me the question is how you can maintain the quality of intellectual work while putting it into practice.

If I had a role model during that time it would have been Meaghan Morris because she is someone who worked outside the academy. I was also very influenced by Moira Gatens as well, her work has always been very important to me. Elspeth Probyn, who is a bit younger than them, is someone whose work was also influential and is someone who I have now sort of come to work closely with on a lot of projects. It's nice when you have admired someone's work and then you get to work together. I suppose what I became very interested in, which was very formative, was the relationship between norms of sexuality and gender. That interest is also linked to my personal experience.

When I was working in journalism in '91, when a major relationship had finished with a guy, I got involved with a fellow journalist Margo Kingston who has written a few books and is fairly high profile. We had a relationship and that sort of introduced me into the dyke world and, in a lucky way, it was an interesting time in that community. It was a point at which definitions of lesbianism were being contested. The magazine *Wicked Women* was produced and it was a point where you had a whole group of women in the dyke community, who were really challenging the 'Sheila Jeffreys' model' of the politics of lesbianism. There was a challenge to the idea that expressions of sexuality in terms of voyeurism, in terms of objectification of the body, in terms of the BDSM elements of sexuality and also in terms of any femme style projection of sexuality, are always imbricated in a heterosexist oppression of women or heterosexist fantasy and that anyone who participated in those expressions of sexuality or

engagements in sexuality was really just a dupe of the patriarchy and was just kind of performing their own oppression. This group of women wanted to say no that's not right, it's not an either/or but in fact that there was something quite radical sometimes in women reappropriating those modes. And this was the debate: was it a re-appropriation or was it a kind of reaffirmation of heterosexist frameworks of sexuality?

Wicked Women was a magazine but it was also a kind of collective of women who did lesbian strip shows and this was also the genesis of 'dykes on bikes' and that sort of thing. It was a very kind of assertive/aggressive expression of sexuality; it was in a sense a reclamation of certain kinds of expressions of sexuality. And I found that an interesting time to be involved in the dyke scene because it was a time of change.

There was a kind of Sydney/Melbourne split happening in feminism at the time. It's funny actually, I remember Liz Grosz moved to Melbourne and I visited her down there once and I remember asking her, "what's it like in Melbourne?" and of course she is a philosopher but she said, "god, everyone is so intellectual here, it's so serious!" which was hilarious coming from her. Meaghan Morris has got a theory that the libertarian push in Sydney, the history of the libertarian push, has left its fingerprints on Sydney's feminism, on certain strands of it anyway. Whereas the kind of work that is well received in Melbourne, and I have consistently found this with other thinkers from Melbourne, whether it's Virginia Trioli or someone else, is that there's often a kind of moralism and purism, which pervades some of the ways that Melbourne feminism is framed. So you probably could talk about it being divided along those lines; I mean Jocelyne Scutt is another figure who I had a lot of debates with in print at that time.

There were sort of two ideas I was interested in at the time; one involved understanding the norms which framed expressions of sexuality whether they were defined by heterosexist norms or by radical or liberal feminists who had agendas about how to perform feminism appropriately in terms of sexuality. I was very interested in why are these people so interested in setting these agendas and what's at stake in them? And I was kind of living it out in my personal life as well, and again it comes back to this, maybe it's a puerile streak in me, I don't know, but I enjoy, well I wouldn't say that I like rebellion for rebellion's sake, but I'm often drawn to the idea of querying the normative – I take pleasure from that. I hope it's not a sort of vanity or something. I don't think it is that, but I just find myself naturally comfortable in uncomfortable situations. Not for the sake of pissing people off and enjoying that, in fact I don't like conflict very much. Ironically I like to please people and I like people to be happy but I do get energised being in places where it's not clear what's normal or what's right or wrong and you have to actively negotiate that.

The other element to all of this is that sexuality is all about the visual and a common theme in my work which actually ties *Bad girls* into the kind of work I do now, is I think there is a deep iconoclasm that runs through Judeo-Christian thought and which has structured a lot of feminist thought. It's about appearances, a mistrust of appearances, a fear of the seductive power of the image and that image could be the female body or certain expressions of sexuality, or it could be the power of the television image. I suppose I was starting to put two things together: one was my interest in feminist framings of sexuality and of appropriate and inappropriate modes of femininity and the other was my long standing interest in the visual, and this is where Baudrillard becomes important for me, the power of appearances and the fear about the seductive power of the image. And so *Bad girls* was really about both of those things. For example, the chapter on pornography was partly about sexuality but I also think that feminist debates about pornography are really just a metaphor for deeper feminist

conflicts over the relationship between appearance and reality. I think in that book, I haven't obviously reread my own book since I wrote it, but I think there is a section in the pornography chapter where I actually say that feminists need pornography because it's almost like a kind of glue. In a funny way I think that what pulls feminism apart is also what holds it together and what structures it and defines it. I don't think that rifts or differences are always destructive; they can also be productive.

The story of how the book came about. Well, in my journalism career I was freelancing for a journal called the *Independent Monthly*, which had a reasonable circulation, and I wrote an article for it about sexism. I'd become familiar with the fact that every couple of weeks, you'd pick up a copy of the *Sydney Morning Herald* or turn on ABC news and there would be a story about another protest about another lingerie ad. The received idea was that a lingerie ad is sexist because it shows an attractive, buxom woman in lingerie. I started to notice how a term like sexist that ten years before, which had been associated with radical weirdos or at least radicals, was now commonplace and something that was said at middle-class dinner parties. And I wondered if people were constantly conflating sexy with sexist. I had also noticed that people like Brian Harradine, conservatives, had appropriated feminist language and were talking about women being objectified and demeaned in the same voice that they were talking about really religious values about women's place in the world. So I suppose I got interested in the conflation of what I saw as a left and right position on this into a middle-class received idea because I think that maybe what made some women uncomfortable with *Penthouse* remained unexamined. Some of the people saying that *Penthouse* is terrible because it's sexist may not have really looked at pornography in the first place or may not have explored what the real nature of their concerns about pornography were, like maybe they weren't feminist concerns at all, maybe they was something else operating there. I think there are lots of reasons why one might have an issue or even long term objections to

pornography, but I don't think they had been sufficiently unpacked from the way they were circulating in the mainstream media.

So I wrote an article for the *Independent Monthly* and they put it on the cover and it was looking at different ads that had been complained about and it was called 'Sexist or Sexy?' I remember there was an ad with a picture of a car and a photo of a pregnant woman naked and the photo was taken just under her breast with her hands on her belly and the caption said, "there's nowhere more comfortable than a wide body". I'd looked at this ad, and my reading of it, which is just my reading, was well it's good that the pregnant body is displayed rather than hidden but immediately it was said that this is terrible, using a pregnant woman, how dare people use a pregnant woman, a sacred object, to sell a car! And I can understand that argument, but on the other hand it's also about putting other people on a pedestal and that worries me. I am always very wary of what is at stake in exaggerated respect for women. I am very concerned with that, offers of care and protection, I think, are ones that women should probably run screaming from most of the time. The Catholic Church has decided to protect women but I don't know how well that serves women.

So I wrote this article and I was teaching at Macquarie Uni at the time, just as a casual Lecturer and I had started my PhD by then, anyway the women's collective at Macquarie staged a protest and got the newsagency to take all the copies of the magazine out, which I was kind of a bit taken aback by. So that article did cause a stir and as a result of that Sophie Cunningham, who's a fantastic publisher, she's now a fiction writer, but at the time she was a young publisher at Allen & Unwin, approached me and said I think there's a book in this. So I then got this Harkness scholarship and went off to New York and stopped working on my PhD and wrote the book.

And when it came out it did get a lot of publicity and I didn't want it to be divisive but it did cause a stir. I think that a lot of people think they know what the book says and probably haven't read the book. And, when I think about the way I wrote it, it was still in a fairly convoluted style and it was drawing on a lot of poststructuralist philosophy but the reception was written in much more simple terms – sort of pro-sex and anti-sex. In fact the book argues against any binaries but that didn't get picked up in the reception of it.

I was also writing a column for *Sydney Morning Herald* from New York as well, so in a way I was starting to unpack ideas like that from about 1993. I was freelancing and writing, I remember, when Madonna's *Sex* book came out. I was writing things about that and talked about why I thought it was an interesting book and not just shameful or sexist or whatever other people were saying. So I suppose I had been slowly unpacking what was to come in *Bad girls* over a period of five years or so, but it was really when *Bad girls* came out there was a lot of publicity and I can remember people used to leave really abusive messages on my voicemail, saying my friend got raped and it's because of books like yours, stuff like that.

And just to speak personally for a minute, I really don't like conflict at all; I almost pathologically avoid it, which is not really a good thing. I will go a long way to get consensus and even with people I thoroughly disagree with. I suppose I have a really strong ethical principle that it's really important to try to listen to them and try to engage them and not to get personal. And yet, and this is true of all the work I do, the sort of work I do always puts me in a situation where some people will react emotionally and personally and form very strong negative views about me because they disagree with the ideas. And at first, and this would have been true of *Bad girls*, I found that incredibly difficult and *Bad girls* got shocking reviews. Not as bad as the second book, it just gets worse, but it got some shocking reviews and I did find that really hard. But I suppose what kept

me going was people like Moira Gatens and Meaghan Morris loved it. Moira blurbed it and Meaghan Morris said very positive things about it and I only say that because I mentioned before that their opinions meant so much to me. So I thought that there were key figures who were saying this was a really important book. I think that one of the things I have learned to do now, I don't know at what point, but is grow a pretty thick skin. I am pretty impervious. There would be a lot of intelligent people out there who a) misconstrue a lot of my ideas and b) have a strange impression of what kind of person I am and, awfully, might even think I am some kind of misogynist because I don't agree with a particular way of doing feminism.

In academia there wasn't so much a 'right way' of doing feminism. What had happened was, and this is what I am picking on when I talk about a dictionary of middle-class ideas, is that feminism became genuinely popular, which I think is a good thing. But in that process there was a kind of reification of certain terms so that a term like sexist was used as though it was kind of a given and really what it was, was a moral judgment. So there were a lot of ideas which in fact needed a lot of unpacking and thinking through which were being used as blunt instruments: we know what sexism is and we can identify it. And a lot of statements like, and this is the intellectual in me but this drives me crazy, statements like, "well, we need more real women in ads". Well what the fuck does a real woman look like? And who gets to decide? Clive Hamilton? I hope not. So really I think, and this is where my work does its work and it's also what's difficult about the kind of work I do, I think in intellectual academic terms I've become much more of a translator, negotiating the space between academia and the public world.

In fact, when it comes to what people are doing in gender studies, no one has a problem with what I am doing or thinks it's radical or anything. *Au contraire*, if anything they think probably I am insufficiently intellectually detailed in my work, which is true because that's not the sort of work I

want to be doing right now. As much as I enjoyed all of that, you know the very, very careful unpacking of concepts, it's not what I do now, I haven't done that in ten years. My work has become more about trying to intervene in public discourses and be a bit of an irritant and that process of being an irritant is trying to get some air into the mix, trying to open it up, trying to get people to think that some of these concepts are more complex than they first seem. But part of the problem with performing that irritation is that you are irritating and people think, fuck, that woman irritates me. So you can't help but have your persona implicated and that's the bit I have found hard, but I think I am better at dealing with it now.

What led me back to academia was boredom with journalism, that's why I left the *Herald* after six years. One of the things about journalism is that it's very adversarial and I've just explained to you why the adversarial mode doesn't appeal to me at all, it's just so unsubtle and ethically I find it a bit abhorrent. Journalism is also full of, and don't get me wrong there are lots of great people working in it, but on the negative side it's full of people who have got a BA from the '70s or '80s, who have never felt the need to question their frameworks for thinking about issues, they have gone in with these frameworks and never moved on from them. And because their name's in the paper, or their head's on TV, or their voice is on radio, they get more and more self-assured and cocksure and confident about their own ideas. So there is a lot of arrogance, there is a real anti-intellectualism basically and this combative approach. It's interesting because Marjorie Garber, who is a writer who I really like, who does a lot of crossover stuff, says that it used to be the arts and sciences which were seen as the most antagonistic fields of knowledge but now she thinks it's academia and journalism. I think that when I went into journalism I kind of shook off the things I needed to shake off from my academic work but ten years later I really needed to get back into a place where you were allowed to finish a thought, where you didn't have a deadline a minute and most importantly, far more important than anything else, was that you were working with

people who cared about ideas and who had an ethics of engagement mostly which said you can't get personal. You don't personalise the issue, you learn, you can revise, you can change your position. In the public sphere, that's seen as an admission of failure, as backing down – it's always the language of war.

And I love universities, I love the people who work in them, I mean I hate marking but I love teaching. I love working with PhD students. In my experience universities are just fantastic places to be and I feel very privileged because I'm paid to read books and write books and talk about stuff and listen to other people tell me their ideas.

I had been working on my PhD since about 1993 and suspended that when I went to New York but then I came back and finished it. Typically for me, I wrote a book and then finished the PhD. So I got a book contract for a book called *Gotcha*, and again I do have to say this because I suppose one of the negatives for me of trying to do crossover work between journalism and academia is the reception of my work by the mainstream media. *Gotcha*, which is my PhD thesis crunched down, was an analysis of how and why celebrity culture became so important, in other words, the tabloidisation of the public sphere. In that book I argued that it's not all bad; in a way there might be some radical elements to this instead of the decline that we hear about tabloidisation and celebrity. It came out in '99 and, it's interesting, it was sort of before everyone was talking about why we are so obsessed with celebrity and again at the *Sydney Morning Herald* they gave it to the gossip writer Daphne Guinness, who writes about socialites and she just didn't get it. This was a book that talks about Habermas and stuff and she just didn't understand anything in the book and she said, "this is a book that is about Catharine Lumby's obsession with Princess Diana. How sad that she thinks Princess Diana's a role model!"

The reason I raise that is, for me, some of the frustration of working in between academia and the popular sphere is that you just have to throw your hands up and accept that if you put yourself out there for public comment people can say whatever they want. There are no academic style rules of engagement and they can completely misunderstand your project, they can misrepresent what you are doing and you can't do a thing about it. At the same time you are giving up some of your respect in academia because you are not doing that kind of work as much. But I'm prepared to live with that because I think we do need people in the humanities who are prepared to act as translators of scholarly ideas

So part of the problem is if you are trying to work in that zone, unless your trading in ideas that everyone already believes to be true, like Naomi Wolf writes a book that says sexism is terrible, and there's the thing called 'the beauty myth', or Ariel Levy who writes a book that says young girls are being sexualised and it's because of this pop culture. These are received and very middle-class ideas that don't begin to grapple with the complexity of gender and sexuality. They are really moral positions masquerading as ideas. But they are familiar and so lots of people will read a book like *The beauty myth* and say, "oh, yes, we know, thanks Naomi!" This isn't sour grapes on my part by the way; it's just a description of how it works in the public sphere.

That's how you develop a reputation as a public intellectual in Australia, you tell people what they already think they know – at least most of the time that's how it works. I sometimes wonder if I have marginalised myself in both the public intellectual world and the academic world by trying to do something that doesn't fit comfortably into either. But I just can't help it I suppose. I just feel like ideas really matter because ideas structure the real world, despite this silly opposition between the real world and ideas that so often gets set up. I think that ideas do change the world and it matters how we see things. Reality is all a matter of perception and how we understand

a term like sexist and what we think sexist means and what causes the oppression of women will make a difference in the lives of women. One of my big interests now is teenage girls and children and these obsessive debates about the sexualisation of children and teenage girls. I think that those debates are not only wrongheaded most of the time but they are really dangerous. I think they are going to have dangerous implications for how teenage girls and children view themselves and understand their bodies. I think they divert resources and attention away from the real causes of abuse. In other words, I get involved in those things because I actually believe that these debates have a real political and social effect.

The second thing to say, is again another huge piece of luck, probably the biggest luck of my life, is that I was offered the job to set up this department. Basically Sydney University had decided to offer a media and communications degree in '99 and, at the time, I was a casual lecturer at Macquarie University. So I had no job security and I'd only just finished the PhD – I don't think I'd even submitted it. I had two books out and quite a few journal publications but I didn't have a PhD and obviously I had a large professional background in the field but they took a huge risk hiring me. But they just decided that they wanted someone with a professional background who they thought was going to be a star researcher, rather than banking on someone who was safe but didn't have a professional background and there just weren't many people with my professional background and the academic track record, so I was just very lucky that they took a bet. It's a dream job; I mean I got to set up a program from scratch with a lot of help from my terrific colleagues. And so that's what got me back full time into academia.

When I look back on those first five years, I was on a hugely steep learning curve. I walked out of the job interview in April '99 and I went home that night and did a home pregnancy test and discovered I was pregnant. So I literally found out I was pregnant with my first child on the

day of the interview. I had Charlie and went back to work about three weeks after he was born because I had to; I was still setting things up and I had to teach everything and get the lectures written. Then I had Sam two years later. So I had two babies or toddlers during that time – it was really a kind of a blur in some ways.

What's been interesting throughout that time is that I have also done a lot of applied research work and that's something that's grown and I've really enjoyed that. That's a different way of making an intervention. It does involve doing some public media work but it's not just about writing stuff, it's about getting in and doing practical things.

In terms of how the university has changed since I was a student, I think there is still the possibility for that sort of excitement and fermentation that I was talking about back then, it still definitely happens. And I certainly did and do seek out colleagues and graduate students who want to be part of that sort of thing. I think in a way that I unconsciously tried to recreate that environment. I enjoy working collaboratively.

The first thing I did when I got here was to hook up with Elspeth Probyn who was working here. We started doing some collaborative research on girls and that's the other thing that I try to do very actively, which Elspeth certainly does too, is try to be a mentor, by bringing people from Honours level on into research projects and getting them working on things. Elspeth and I are working on our fourth large research project together but we actively work with PhD students and other people and socialise with them as well. The lines between work and socialising are quite blurred because they're also the people who I like to hang out with and I am interested in.

I suppose it's a big difference – then and now. That's why I talk about the privilege of having this job. The difference is that I think it's much harder for people now, I worry a lot about PhD students getting jobs. It's not that

there aren't any jobs but just that it has become much more expensive to study. There is this sort of professionalisation process that's gone on that I think just means that people looking for academic jobs have to jump through so many hoops it's a nightmare. I suppose I worry that with the commodification of education that there is a sort of locking out process that goes on and it's very easy for me to say it's heaven, you know, working with all these great people and we have all these staff – it's brilliant. But then I think, hang on, you know, for every person we can get on the payroll or on a postdoc, there are people who are just casual lecturers. I guess I spent my 30s as a casual lecturer and a freelancer and all of that and that was ok, but for a lot of students I think there is an understandable level of anxiety, given the property market, given everything ... I mean it's just harder to do that.

The way I would characterise universities at the moment, certainly this one, is an organisation run by Joe Stalin and John Elliott. It's got all the old inflexibilities, especially as a Sandstone, inflexibilities and insanities, ridiculous rules and the bureaucracy is insane and out of control, so all of that and yet there's blind panic because the Howard government has crippled universities in terms of what they have done with education funding. So we are now in this completely entrepreneurial mode, where it is a hand over fist panic for money.

One of the reasons I say I'm really happy in my job is that I have had a lot of positive feedback about how I've done my job from higher powers. But that's because I'm in an area that is sexy – the undergraduate degree attracts students with very high UAI's and lots of local fee payers. Our postgraduate program is making more than a million dollars for the faculty, they love that and that puts me in a good position. There is no one standing over me saying fire someone, instead they are saying you need to hire new people and good job and hooray. So of course it's human to feel good if people are being nice to you, so again that goes with the

territory I'm in; if I was a Classicist it would be a different situation because they are just not hiring there.

Elsbeth is a very mentoring sort of person and I think that she was very instrumental in me being headhunted for this job, because I was sort of headhunted, in the sense of being invited to apply. And I'd met her at conferences and things and I suppose when I first met her I was a bit intimidated by her because she is a bit of an international superstar. But we both love a glass of wine or 12, I mean we both like to do our work over a glass of wine or bottle of wine and we think really similarly about a lot of things. I mean we just really clicked, we are now very close friends and again, that reflects for me that the lines between work and socialising are often very blurred and obviously there are times when it's not appropriate to blur them but it's a sort of sense of working in a familial community kind of way – it's not work, it's really pleasurable. I've never thought about it before but maybe it was partly formed by my early experiences in the Fine Arts Department. I guess that's probably where I formed my sense of what academic work is. For me, it's about creating a community, it's exciting and you expect people to be excited by ideas and to want to contribute and want to not see it as work.

In terms of my more recent work, I am still concerned with the anxiety over appearances and sexuality and that's transferred to what I'm interested in now. Currently, I am very interested in what's at stake in admitting that children have a sexuality and this doesn't make them appropriate sexual objects for adult attention of course but we still cannot acknowledge that as a society; there is still huge concern about that. I think that the child and the woman as figures are somehow tied together historically, that women were seen as children. I am very interested in the whole positioning or exclusion of groups outside citizenship, or outside full civility if you like, and the idea that some groups are insufficiently civilised and in need of protection and I think that discourses of protection are often discourses of

control. I am interested in what are the discourses of control around childhood and teenagers, as an extension of childhood, and whose interests do they serve? And what are the anxieties motivating them because I think, and this comes into media studies domain, that anxieties about media consumption and popular culture of children and teenagers are bound up with the fear that they will be able to express themselves in ways that aren't controlled, or that they will be able to obtain information, and knowledge being power, that is insufficiently policed. It is a kind of authoritarian mentality. I think our whole education system is set up that way – basically to force people into submission.

Of course when you have children you start to notice these things. I wrote a book with my partner, who is not an academic – he was a lawyer originally and then he went to NIDA and became a theatre director and then he started writing for children's TV. He was the stay-at-home person when the children were young and so we used to talk a lot about it. We'd see articles in the newspaper and programs on television saying if you let your children watch TV they will be brain damaged – really extreme claims. A lot of that authoritarian stuff comes out of US psychology and that psychological model is very determinist and I think highly simplistic. It sees the media as cause and effect – the bat hitting the ball model of this will do that.

So I started collecting research on children and media consumption and also the mainstream articles I mentioned and we decided to do something together, so that we can position it as we're writing as parents as well as an informed academic view on the subject. I don't know if that was entirely successful. It was just a kind of different way of doing it. And that was *Why TV is good for kids*. And it hasn't particularly sold so I don't think it worked as a crossover book, it was sort of an experiment in genre. It was also an expression on my part about a frustration with neo-conservative

discourses around culture. And I had found myself involved in some of these debates sort of by accident.

What happened was, I wrote a column for *The Bulletin* for about five years from '99 through to about 2004 or 5. It was during the same time I was setting up the department and had two young children, so I was ridiculously busy. I was contracted to write a fortnightly column and about eight features a year. I don't know what I thought I was doing. Well, I think what I was doing was maintaining my credentials as a journalist. I felt that I owed it to the university to still be in professional practice and of course I realise now that I was overreaching but it was a sign that I felt that I had to really earn my position here.

Why TV is good for kids is also an attempt to unpack and respond to the claims which have been made over the past decade about the way humanities research is done and the allegedly dreadful things that contemporary humanities knowledge including feminism is doing to the school curriculum, to young people, all of that. So it's also about those debates about Australian culture and history. I think that there has been an unbelievably anti-intellectual trend in public discourse that really concerns me.

I do quite a lot of public talks and I do media appearances and panels and those sort of things and really it's just an attempt to intervene in some of those debates and say people are being sold a pup here. You know contemporary humanities thinkers not saying anything goes, nothing matters, who cares about morals. In fact, the seminal thinkers in this tradition are people for whom ethics is the primary field, whether we are talking about feminist philosophers or people like Foucault and Derrida. Sure you can argue, sure you can debate their work, but actually debate their work, don't misrepresent them – I find it infuriating!

In terms of my media commitments, I feel quite conflicted about it because I certainly don't think anyone is a spokesperson, particularly me. But I suppose for a long time the position I took is I may as well get in and say something if I think I can say something productive or progressive or constructive because a lot of people won't. Someone like Moira Gatens whose work I think is brilliant has made it clear that she doesn't ever want to do that public stuff – a lot of people actually don't and I know why and I respect that totally. So on one hand I thought, if it's just going to be Sheila Jeffreys out there or someone else, or the Clive Hamiltons of the world – the authoritarian Leftist males – who are continually commenting on what is or what is not an appropriate expression of female sexuality, then I think a counter voice is needed. But increasingly what I have tried to do is to share that back out, to mentor other people. Like Kath Albury, who is someone who is now well known and I'm not saying that it's because of me but some years back I was ensuring that I passed along a lot of stuff to her and she now gets an enormous amount of media in her own right anyway. I'd really like to do less rather than more media these days because I think that you become a kind of parody of yourself. It's really hard to know how much is too much or when to shut up. I really don't know the answer to that but I worry a lot about it and maybe think I should just withdraw completely sometimes.

If I did withdraw altogether, my selfish fear would be that I feel voiceless and powerless and not able to participate. Part of my identity comes from being involved in public debates, that's for sure, but I think public debates can get on fine without me. I think increasingly there are other people who are likely to put forward positions, which I think are insufficiently articulated; but it's very odd, you don't really have any sense of your public impact. I don't know if I've had any impact at all, it's really hard to measure that and often the things you are sure of, is where you've had a negative impact or people hate you because they tell you. People don't write to you and say, "I really enjoyed it when you said that", but I get hate mail and

that sort of stuff a lot – it's consistent throughout my career and its often sexualised as well, which is a bit horrible. I sort of feel that I am on the fringes of public debate, I'm not a central figure in it even though I've been consistently doing it. It is something you can hear I'm ambivalent about it.

With the NRL I did a big research project for them and did a write up of recommendations and now I'm overseeing the education and mentoring program and I enjoy that because that means actually seeing some practical things in place. And I'm on the committee of Rape Crisis NSW and so I enjoy the connection with the community stuff. And again with *Big Brother* – I've been up to the Gold Coast twice now to do work for them. I went up this year as well as last year to do education with the producers about what is sexual harassment, what is sexual assault, what is bullying and what do you look for – talking through the ethics of it too because there are a lot of grey areas. That's a different level of having an impact and I like that sort of work but the problem is then that you can't do that sort of work without having the media stuff because part of what the organisation wants from you is to go out and articulate what you are doing. So there are, in a way, two levels of involvement.

I will just say really briefly on this, something else that was really seminal for me and where my ambivalence or my sense of maybe it would be nice not to do this public stuff ever again comes from, is when I did the research project for the Rugby League or rather when I started it. Basically I had said to them that you can't have solutions until you know what the problems are so let's go in and do a methodologically sound research project, which we did. We spoke to more than 200 first grade players, we spoke to coaches, we spoke to CEOs, we talked to women across the organisation, with a team of people with different expertise, because there are established methods for doing that. But then when I did the media bit, the media was obsessed because some footballer had come out and said that group sex was common and that it was a sort of recreational thing that

footballers do, but this just got picked up by the media. Of course you can have consensual group sex and on the other end of the scale you can have group sexual assault, and in between you can have unethical sexual practices which may not amount to assault but which are still very questionable, like a woman being called a slut as a result of having group sex to which she might have consented, but is that ok – no! But the media just conflated assault and group sex.

I did a few interviews in which grabs got taken out of context. The position was that as a feminist I should condemn group sex but I wasn't willing to do that because that is condemning practices in lots of communities that may well be consensual, so I said, "look group sex really isn't the problem". That grab got played again and again and again ... and people were saying so you don't think group sex is a problem. It was ferocious and it went on for about a week. *The Australian* newspaper ran three news articles, an editorial, an opinion poll and then a feature article in one week and every conservative columnist in the country wrote something. I remember Andrew Bolt said that my appointment was the end of civilisation, which I think wow, thanks, I'm pretty powerful, and the *PM* program ran the story as a headline, "controversial gender studies expert endorses group sexual behaviour"; it was like that.

And it's like someone pouring a tonne of wet cement over you, you can't breathe and there were 20 million calls a day and by about the third day I was at Fox Studios with my two-year old and these photographers just sort of burst out of nowhere and really frightened him and he was really upset and I was freaked out because they'd really upset him and I was saying, "you don't need to stalk me, if you want an interview or a photograph just ask me, I'll do it but don't ambush me while I'm carrying my two-year old". So it got really visceral and scary and I think what I realised is how, even having worked in the media all that time, how ferocious it is in the eye of the storm, and how you can just say one thing and if it catches light you're

suddenly at the mercy of this thing. I remember this media adviser guy, a very good guy at the NRL said to me, you know what, you are caught in a rip, don't try and swim across it, go with it and it will eventually stop. And that's what I had to do.

And I just tell that anecdote really because I have this ambivalence about what can be achieved through public discourse and also the real dangers inherent in doing that kind of work. Now I am really aware when I see people being torn up in the media of what's going on, and I am not saying poor me, but it's frightening in a way that I find very hard to express. In an anthropomorphic way, it is like being attacked by wild animals – they will go and go and go until they get what they want and they can sense fear and that's why you've got to get back on the front foot. It was terrifying and the image that some people would have of me – I mean *The Australian* article says something like Catharine Lumby thinks porn is empowering for women, cunt is a nice word and group sex is fine, so what it was really saying is Catharine Lumby is a stupid slut. It is a sexualising of me, which is kind of frightening when it's negative. That was a couple of years ago but it has made me more careful.

What's the most strategic way to say things that need to be said: Erica McWilliam

I taught in a boys' school for 14 years. I got there in 1974 and when I arrived there had only ever been one other female teacher at the school. She was a part-time teacher and wasn't really taken seriously as a teacher. So when I came into that school, she made me aware of some of the things that happened in the school. For example, the boys used to hold out mirrors to look under her dress as she walked down the corridor and she alerted me to that and said, "you need to know that that's what they do here". You know it was a fairly typical boys, Catholic, working class school. She introduced me to one of the teachers and I was told, "he doesn't even bet on fillies". So it was put to me quite bluntly that there was a lot of misogyny in that school. I became very aware very quickly that, for a lot of those boys, you're either Mary or Eve and there is nothing much in between – so their mother is Mary and any other girl around the place is Eve. The idea that you might be a woman who is respected but not their mother or that you are a woman who is sexual and respected was quite obviously not a space that was operating and it was ladies bring a plate and all that.

I certainly taught about the rise of feminism in the senior history class and I don't think the boys had much doubt that I was what they would call a feminist. However, I did try not to be too pick-off-able because basically at that stage a feminist was seen to be someone with facial hair, who was bra-burning and strident. That plays into the hands of those boys – it's too easy for them to say, we know all the other things that go with that. So they knew, for example, that I expected parity of esteem with all the other men on staff. So that made parity of esteem the issue and I would make it a human rights issue. It became a broader question about parity of esteem for the Greek and Italian kids in the school, parity of esteem for the Indigenous kids in the school, parity of esteem for all the different kinds of

teachers in the school, old and young, male and female. I would put it into that frame: this is a Franciscan school, human rights are fundamental to Franciscan schools – we value people. So I put it in the context of valuing people and that was much less pick-off-able. It was a deliberate strategy.

So in the 14 years I was at the boys' school, I was involved in forms of direct action but with humour. I felt it was very important not to be sucking a lemon while you were trying to indicate to people that there might be better ways to do things. I know that the students would say that, "we are a bit worried about you because of the power of your tongue to embarrass us". They wouldn't take me on in the way they might another woman. So, to that extent, it was very important to me not to be too tedious about that. I tried to get on well with the boys. I certainly didn't take any nonsense from them. I did things like leave the Annie Lennox posters up but took the Samantha Fox posters down, and if I came into a classroom where someone had put up a poster of a woman with big breasts, I'd say something like, "oh, I must have the wrong room, this must be the meat auction room"; I wouldn't say, "how dare you, take that down!" I would try to do it with humour but the poster would still come down.

I remember there was a difficulty one time, where I had to almost physically rescue a woman who was being harassed by boys in a classroom next door. They were being very rude and were being sexually suggestive with her. I loomed outside the window and the students began to settle down but she had already fled the room in tears. I led a group of teachers going back into that class to talk about what had happened and that she had a right to teach there. I did take on a couple of those battles because I didn't want the men fixing it. As a senior female teacher I should be able to do something about the situation and I didn't want it to be a case of the poor female teachers and men have to come in and fix it all.

But about two months after I had left the school I was rung up by the female teacher saying something had happened and what should they do about it and so on. And I said to her, “deal with it! deal with it! I’m not there and I’m not going to be there, so you deal with it!” and then she said, “oh, Erica, we just wondered if you could help us” and I said, “no, you have to do it yourselves”. I wasn’t going to be an all-purpose tank to do those things. It may have seemed rather uncollegial, but I was no longer there and they couldn’t just keep ringing me up when those things occurred. I think what had happened was that a student had pinched one of the teacher’s bums and it wasn’t handled well by the school. The female teacher was outraged and upset and went to speak to the Rector and he did this “boys will be boys” or “let’s not overreact” kind of thing and she was more outraged and so on.

But outrage is not a substitute for strategy and even though people can be shocked and say that is inappropriate – it’s no substitute for doing something. The issue for me is to work out what you want to achieve, and then think about, and then get together and develop a strategy for achieving it. So I said to that teacher, “what do you want? Do you want him expelled? Do you just want everyone to be outraged on your behalf? What do you want from the strategy?” But I made it clear that I wouldn’t be going over there to rescue her.

It became a question for me of how will I know when I have got what I want out of this, it might just be that what I want is for the boys to speak to me properly or what I want is ... it’s knowing what that is. I mean, I certainly wasn’t going to be yahooped walking past a class and the kids knew that; they found that out pretty quickly.

I think part of the problem is that there are a lot of well-meaning people who are in those situations who are confronted and justifiably outraged but don’t know what to do about it. Of course there are times when women are

harassed and there is no space to do something and of course you feel outraged and like you have no allies, and that's deeply distressing and probably we've all been in a situation like that. And I certainly have, I've been in a situation when I was travelling when I was accosted by a man and I really didn't have any choice but to put up with it. So I do know what it feels like to be deeply, deeply angry and to experience a sense of powerlessness. That was on a train and I got on a carriage with lots of people on board. I thought I'd done all the right things, women know what to do but everyone got out except him and the train was coming in at night, and I knew you don't travel at night but the train was delayed, and all the things lined up so, even with all the best information in the world, I was still stuck with this creep. So I do remember the powerful sense of outrage myself and I don't deny that there are times when women, well basically, they just want to hit someone. Those things are also part of this picture.

By the time I got to that school, I was already aware of gender issues. My mother was a widow of five children, three boys and two girls. I have to say that I saw the fathers of my friends as complete tyrants in their households; you would hear, "be quiet, your father's sleeping!" or "your father wants you to get a haircut" – the message has been passed on. And we didn't have a father because my father died when I was eight. I thought it was fantastic because all my friends would come to our place and we'd stay up till two in the morning playing records or cards, sometimes all night and my mother would not behave like that, like my friend's fathers. She said, "I knew where you were and I was pleased that you were there". In other words, there were no arbitrary exercises of power of the sort that I saw my friend's fathers exercising. Their fathers would shout things like, "all right, you, that's it, you've finished!" And I thought, "what gives him the right to say we've finished? Oh well, he's the father". And I thought to myself, "I don't see mothers doing that". All I saw was mothers passing messages on from fathers who often were never there: "your dad wants

you to turn it down, your dad wants”. And I thought, “gee, who’d have a father!”

But I saw male power exercised like that and I didn’t like it at all. We had a much more flat power structure in our household. I mean we knew Mum was the boss but our table was democratic and myself and my sister had opinions that were equally important as the boys, so there was no sense that the boys were getting special privileges. So I think that is a very important context for my outlook. My mother was a very intelligent woman and very strong in her views about the values of education. She is also an attractive woman, she was life-loving I guess and I saw that, even though she was a widow, she was able to enact herself without giving over to men. She was able to be attractive and social but she certainly didn’t give in to men. I can remember my two uncles used to come over and tell her what to do: “now, Hazel, you can’t expect to educate five children, they have to leave school, you can’t expect them to go to university”. But she never did what they told her. She did what she wanted to do, which was give all us kids an education. I know at times she would be in tears after they left, tears of frustration, and I think partly it was also their frustration. We saw men telling her what to do, being a widow all the blokes wanted to come over and give her advice, and we saw her as being quite capable of not taking that advice and actually speaking to us about the fact that she wasn’t going to take it. So that was healthy, I think, good for us to see, to know that a man can tell you things and a woman can say no.

But there were very few women like that in that generation. There were a few women who were important in terms of role-modelling. For example, my Auntie Elsa – she wasn’t really an auntie but we called her that – she smoked, which was really quite astounding for women of that generation and she also told her husband to shut up one day. I had never heard a woman tell a man to shut up: “Shut up, Harry!” she said, and I thought, “ooh”. I don’t know why but I thought something terrible would happen if

you told a man to do anything. Most women I knew deferred to men. I also met another woman – who I realise now and I was told later on, was a lesbian – Miss Brown, she was a teacher who I just loved because she was different around men too. She didn't seem to take nonsense from them. I thought she was a fascinating person who seemed to have a life of her own unlike a lot of the other women who were waiting for someone; it seemed like they were half of something and they were waiting for the other half. Miss Brown was actually a full person who seemed a lot less needy than some of the other women I'd met. So I do remember her as an important person in my development. Also, I was a tomboy and she had a motorbike, which I thought was just fabulous. So I guess she was important to me as an example of having an autonomous existence that didn't depend on what men wanted of you.

I went straight from school basically into teaching. I did flirt with the idea of becoming a computer programmer but I failed the aptitude test and, in any case, I knew by the time that I finished the test that I didn't have a clue. So that was all right and teaching was all in the family; my mother, my two brothers, my older sister, everyone was a teacher, so you sort of start heading in that direction. I was trying to resist it somewhat by looking at the possibility of journalism or computer programming, but in the end it kind of sucked me in as families do. I don't regret it at all but I think you need a particular sort of disposition to be a secondary teacher and it's incredibly challenging, especially in an age when we've moved from Britannica to Wikipedia. I think that what does it mean to educate now is a hugely complex issue and I don't think that most teacher educators have got a clue and I'm not blaming them for that. I've enjoyed my teaching enormously but after nine or ten years you probably need to do something else, which I certainly did. My feet couldn't walk down the verandah anymore.

So, in many ways, working at the boys' school was the full catastrophe, but within all that I learnt quite a lot about the subtlety of enacting a gender politics. And trying to do it in a way that I got some pleasure out of it and I wasn't in adversarial mode the whole time. That's too tiring and it also means you get picked off. I've always believed in creeping up on people. So when I went to university, to become a teacher educator, I continued to find a way to do that gender politics work in perhaps a more oblique way. For example, I'd write up two words on the board – 'slut' and 'stud' – and say, "all right, what's the difference?" And the difference is gender, it isn't behaviour. So how do we know well, both are about promiscuous behaviour, predatory behaviour, whatever you want to call it – one is a terrific thing to be, one isn't. In other words, I would try to work through how we have come to think that way and to try to make some defamiliarising moves, as Foucault would call it.

I tried to do that with humour rather than to give the predictable gender lecture, which I think at times was quite counter productive. It was the same kind of predictability of sobbing for the proletariat, sobbing for the women, sobbing for the Indigenous. Our students are much smarter than that and actually they got very fed up with it very quickly. The students were sick of the focus on -isms, on victimhood, on oppression, and on patriarchy sort of eerily de-peopled somehow. The students would say, "well, what do I do about patriarchy, I don't know what to do about that". To the students it sounded like feminists were blaming a group of old, white men sitting in a room somewhere. Now when I heard my nieces give an incredibly powerful satire of a gender lecture, that's when I knew you couldn't continue to do that sort of advocacy in that way – they were miles ahead, they knew how it worked, they knew all the moves that were made, they knew what gender lecturer women looked like. Actually I advocated for one of the men to do the gender lecture, he was a very funny man, very clever and did a terrific job; it was one of the first things I did to move things round a bit.

In terms of enacting a pedagogy based on gender, I think it needed to be nuanced and not quite so ham-fisted. There were questions around the neatness of the claims that were being made about patriarchy. I mean the question of who was more powerful: Jackie Kennedy or Jackie Kennedy's gardener? The critique was not very nuanced in terms of gender. When people went off to the Civil Rights march in 1963, as Maxine Greene says, "we went off on behalf of women and we left black women cleaning our houses". She was saying that we didn't see the black women cleaning our houses, when we might have invited them there with us. There were class issues intersecting with ethnic issues, along with gender issues and it was always a very complex tapestry. When you render it a very simple story about oppression you can always find a backlash from students who say, "well, I know someone who's not like that" and "I know someone who is wealthy or I know someone who is greedy and they're a woman" and so, in trying to teach a simple profound tale about women's oppression, you can end up in some sort of trouble.

So again for me the question was what's the most strategic way to say things that need to be said and always with young people, it's with humour. Humour has always got to be a part of it and it works to create a form of infotainment. So I think I was always trying to find a way to not water down the message. I mean slut and stud doesn't water down the message but it was trying to find a pedagogical way in rather than continue on with what I call the three drearies: class, race, gender. I think that moral pleading as a platform for pedagogy never works very well and especially not with 'generation Y', who were not very interested in the whole thing.

It was 1988 that I moved from being a teacher to a teacher educator. I think a lot of experienced teachers think that teacher educators should be doing a better job than they are doing. I had a lot of student teachers who

would say I really love working with you as a teacher; I am really learning a lot about teaching and it would be great to have you in the university. We need experienced teachers as teacher educators and a lot of people in the university don't know how to teach and it's obvious. And I don't believe, by the way, that experienced teachers always make good teacher educators. I think teaching education is another thing altogether but there is crossover. I felt that I could do a better job at teacher education and I'd been in schools for nearly 20 years by then and I felt that I had learnt enough to be able to teach another generation of teachers to feel more powerful about what they were doing and more authoritative without being authoritarian. I thought I had been an innovative teacher, and I had seen a lot of innovative teaching fall flat on its face and I wanted to help young people to be idealistic, visionary teachers but to do things that actually worked.

So that mobilised me to actually do it and I think teaching in the boys' school taught me that you can be a very powerful presence in the lives of boys and you can be a powerful presence in the midst of patriarchy and misogyny and you can enjoy your life, without feeling like you have to be constantly shaking your fist at something or someone, which I certainly wouldn't want to spend my whole time doing but there are times to do it.

So then I went straight into the Education faculty at QUT in Brisbane and when I got there they already had established the three equity lectures: class, race and gender – very predictable. I remember an incident early on. I came into a school where there were some very strong feminists with very good credentials in gender education and I found myself offside amongst them. I love sport and I was very interested in cricket, partly because I grew up with three brothers. And in the boys' school knowing about sport and male sporting teams was a very important part of the relationship with the boys. There was a lot of byplay like, "we know what happened to Collingwood on the weekend", which was part of working with

kids and part of the enjoyment, knowing which kids backed which teams and getting a bit of byplay on the ground and out. When I got to the university one of the things I did do was talk to a couple of the men who were thought to be unsympathetic to gender issues about cricket. There was a bit of concern amongst these women about me discussing cricket at length. I don't know whether they thought I should have been advocating for women's cricket or what. It was reported to me by a woman who had joined the staff and she was told, "well Erica spends a bit too much time talking to the men about cricket and that's not really cricket! She uses a lot sporting metaphors" and so on. So it was put to me that I used too many sporting metaphors or that I basically needed to temper my interest in sport because it was looking like, I don't know, too blokey or something. And I remember being really annoyed at that and I thought, "I do have a genuine interest in sport". I was still playing hockey myself at that stage in a women's team with a fantastic camaraderie; it was great fun!

So I felt that there was a dissonance between the way I was enjoying my own sport and loving that and this sense that maybe I was being, well we call it now politically incorrect I suppose, by being or talking about male sport so much, knowing about leg spin or things like that, that you weren't really supposed to know about or spend your time talking about.

So I just heard indirectly that there was a bit of harrumphing about it, which I felt was a bit of a straitjacket. And I thought should I have to apologise for the fact that I know about these things or for the fact that it was a great way to engage with the men, and that had been true in the boys' school as well. And I'd always known discussing sport was a great way to relate to people who might then go on to listen to you about other things, rather than just completely ignore you. And I knew that some of those men were prepared to talk to me about things, whereas there were a couple of women on the staff that they didn't want to have anything to do with – they would just absent themselves from the room instead of listening to them.

At least I felt I had a pathway to engage a shared agenda but I wasn't doing it just for that – I genuinely like sport.

In terms of decision-making in the department, the senior people, the old guard if you like, had a fair amount of scrutiny of the program. The old guard were mainly sociologists, not so much empiricists but into a particular form of ideology critique. There would be the necessary things that had to appear: like *Women's ways of knowing* by Belenky et al. and other things like Freire and of course Bob Connell's *Making the difference* had to be on there and so on. So when I arrived there was already consensus. Nobody actually said it but if those works weren't there then somebody moved very quickly to add them to the reading list. Once you've got that, you've got the agenda for who's going to do what and so I think that it was a senior group of people who get to make that call. Having said that, there were inputs that more junior people could make and I think that was the case with the guy who ended up doing the gender lectures. He was so funny, it was like having Billy Connolly in the place, but I also think he was very savvy about those issues and, once they saw his capacity to engage the students, he was very in demand for doing that. So I tried to challenge that agenda; I just kept talking about do we have to have the Puritanism alongside the ideology work, do we have to do it in such a joyless way, I just kept saying. I don't understand that high protestant seriousness, as though we can't talk about gender relations without drawing in breath and furrowing our brow.

So that was always the issue for me. I think it was a view that was perceived very well by the students but I think there was always a bit of rub amongst my colleagues, as there often has been for me with larger educational organisations, just a bit of a concern that I might not say all the things that people think I should say. A concern that if we give Erica a presentation or a keynote address we are not sure what she will come up with and it might not be what we wanted her to say. I think they would say,

“we know Erica will be entertaining but she won’t necessarily take the party line”. And I don’t recoil from that – I don’t think that’s awful. But I also think that there has been respect for my capacity to work with, not on, students and I insisted on that. So I didn’t find my students complaining even if my colleagues felt that maybe I should fly a little bit straighter.

Certainly there was a party line, in terms of what counts as curriculum, what counts as things that should be said from the lectern in front of 400 people. I had spent so long enacting a feminist agenda in a very misogynistic environment that I didn’t feel like I had anything to prove in that sense. It wasn’t a huge issue but I do think there was definitely an old guard and a new guard in relation to feminist enactments of pedagogy in those times – I’m thinking about the early ‘90s. In my view there was a form of table manners within the department, a sense of the way we do things here and once you learn a bit more you will understand why it is that we need to be careful when we talk about x or y. Basically it was requiring those sorts of table manners to be adhered to and the subtle ways people can do that, to sort of require it from each other. It was sort of a form of shadow boxing because no one would really come out into the open and say it to me directly. It’s funny, those sorts of things that are unsaid, because they get reported to you but nobody actually is there saying, “Erica, I’ve got real concerns about the way you are framing that”. I mean it wasn’t a huge part of it, mostly people were pleased that you were trying to make something that could otherwise be deathly dull into something that was interesting and absorbing for people.

But people would say things like, “oh, I don’t think we need a lecture on sexuality, do we? I think we will just do gender and that will cover that”. For them, talking about sexuality was a bit worrying. I did a lot of work theorising the body, so a lot of my work is about the physicality of teaching and about corporeal relations. That starts to worry some people a bit because you say a teacher is some ‘body’ who teaches some ‘body’. Once

you start breaking those words up and talk about teaching as a physical business to do, then the inevitable physicality of teaching starts to become a concern if you are talking about sexual harassment or about harassability and the almost necessary eroticism of teaching. Work like Jane Gallop's *The teacher's breasts* was an incredibly confronting title when it came out, as you can imagine, and when you are alluding to things like that people need a Bex and a good lie-down. People worry that you are going off on to something which is more troubling, we'd rather you stayed on politics and women's salaries and those sort of things, we can deal with those. You can say, "did you know that there are only 9% of professors who are women" and so forth and that's much easier to deal with than moving off into the murkier water of sexual politics.

One of the things that I saw a number of times was how girls could tyrannise young male teachers. I saw examples of incredible sexual harassment by girls of attractive male phys-ed teachers for example and when I'd say that it's not simply a case of men harassing women, women can harass men and young girls can harass men and that's again making the waters a bit more murky than we need them to be. There was a sense that we should get the big story out there first and then worry about all the rest of it, so let's not be talking about year 9 girls and their behaviour towards a young male phys-ed teacher. A lot of male teachers asked me for advice and I would try to counsel them on how to protect themselves by not being alone with female students, not talking about their personal life or sharing playground duty with a female colleague. And I know that it helped a lot of the young men to work out what to do and I felt that that was an important thing to be doing, not just saying, "well we know where sexual oppression comes from, men are the oppressors and women are the oppressed" and so on. I guess the issue for me became, "what's a priority here?" And the priority for me was what is the teaching reality that they are going to be engaged with?

Ideology critique was still the main version of feminism operating in the faculty and I think it played out in reasonably predictable ways, which were to do with a particular kind of empirical research that women were unequal and of course, still are in the academy and so on. I mean teaching had a history of men being paid more than women and so on. So that was fairly standard and I guess debates about whether women did have a different way of knowing. At that stage there was nothing about female brain and male brain and anything like that. You wouldn't have been game to start to insinuate that stuff, not that I would want to do that anyway but there was nothing in neuroscience coming in at that point on gender, so we weren't into "what about the boys?" And the boys' brains and things like that at that stage – that was still a joy to come!

When I got in to begin teacher education I only had an 18-month position, so I applied for a job and the job application said that you must have a PhD or be a PhD candidate. I didn't have a PhD at this stage but I had my Masters and I'd done some publishing so within the space of a week I became a PhD candidate purely to get the job, but once I was in there I thought well what do I want to do? I thought I should do it about teacher education. I should do about it how to understand the nature and purpose of teacher education. What sort of knowledge should we be trying to get across? There is no course in teacher education that you can do, there is no Bachelor in teacher education, so I decided to do it to help myself become a good teacher educator. By then I understood that it wasn't exactly the same as being an experienced teacher, but what I could always do is give practical examples, and I still can; I still work with teachers and principals and they say, "you sound like you stepped out of a classroom yesterday" and that means a lot. And I did have that as a very credible thing and I wanted to make sure that I continued to think about that more complex world of teaching. And that is not a simple sexual politics, it's not a simple gender politics, despite all the way in which dices are loaded against most women; it's a more complex world.

So when I had done my PhD I thought, “what’s wrong with this literature?” Madeleine Grumet wrote a fantastic book called *Bitter milk: women and teaching*. In it she talks about the world that we carry on weight-bearing joints, and she talks about the physicality of the female teacher and the relentless work. It’s focused on spinster women in 19th-century schools in America, but really it’s about re-memembering the body of the teacher. About the same time I went to an art exhibition that was about pedagogy. It was an incredibly powerful experience of the physicality of pedagogy—somehow it was captured in the installations. I remember that afternoon coming out of the exhibition and thinking, “that’s what’s wrong with the literature; it’s expunged the body, it’s saying that learning is about mind to mind”. The literature on teaching was eerily de-peopled. I thought, “where are the smells and the sounds of teaching?” As teacher educators, we are speaking as though the head is not connected through the neck to the body, we’ve expunged all the carcasses and we are trying to talk about how learning is about cognition or whatever. And in sociology too we are talking about class or talking about gender but not talking about all of the things about bodies and all the ways that bodies keep insisting upon themselves. You’ve only got to be in a classroom and some kid farts to know that suddenly it makes all the difference in the world and that’s not something you can predict. Bodies do things that we wish they didn’t and some things that we like them to do.

I felt that the literature was being deodorised and for me the issue was put to put the body in a more central location. So I wrote articles like ‘Things to do with the body in the classroom’. Of course they were deliberately provocative titles: sounds like you are killing somebody or you’ve murdered them but I was happy to do that. So I wrote papers like ‘Seductress or School Marm’ about the impossibility of the sexually attractive and capable teacher. In other words, the impossibility of a sexual female teacher in terms of having a persona, which was attractive to

others, but then also being able to adopt a position of authority. How does one adopt a position of authority out of a female body and out of a particular sort of female body?

I was trying to say is it necessary for us, as women teachers, to masculinise ourselves. I'd been told many times to dress in a drab way while I was teaching. When I heard about the mirrors at the boys' school I wore long pants and jackets or pant suits and, although I tend to dress like that anyway, I made an adjustment to my wardrobe. I guess you could say I masculinised myself to adjust to that but I wouldn't have gone in wearing things that I just didn't want to wear. For example, I wouldn't wear Dacron pleats and clumpy shoes; I wouldn't have done that. So the issue for me is how do I display myself in a way that I'm feeling comfortable and I'm not feeling like I am trying to desexualise myself but at the same time I am able to go about my work without giving messages that I don't want to give. So all those things, they're tricky and they're performances of the body. And the idea that the body doesn't matter is of course ludicrous; it matters in terms of gender but also in terms of a whole lot of other things to do with its physicality and the way in which we adjust it and do things to it.

The PhD was on teacher education and it was at the end of that that I started thinking about what's missing, so it was really the postdoctoral project that was about the body. And after that I looked at pleasure – you can see how that follows on – so I wrote *Pedagogical pleasures* and then after that I began to write about risk, so you can see the progression of that in my scholarship. So then I was talking about the risk of being pleased by the body of the teacher – you can see how that follows.

So I did get the PhD so that I could get that job. It was a Level B job but because I published so much out of my PhD I was able to go for and get a senior lecturer position. I got that position also because of my teaching

performance and so forth. But once I was senior lecturer it was around that time that the body was the big difference in terms of my scholarship. It became the difference between the senior lectureship and the Associate Professorship. My work on the body was the thing for which I became internationally known, as well as feminist poststructuralist work more generally.

There were some questions over the extent to which my work was feminist. I mean all the time I'd had people, feminists, saying to me that my work wasn't sufficiently feminist or things like, "this work is interesting but not quite sure if it's feminist". I got quite a lot of that, but that's all right, I wasn't sure if it was feminist either, or at least what they meant by feminist. By this time I was more interested in pleasure and women in the academy, so I was more interested in the question of 'how do we make pleasure for ourselves?' rather than 'is this sufficiently feminist?' Pleasure and corporeality were the central projects; that's what had come out of my work on the delimitation of the teacher education literature.

I became interested in feminist poststructuralist work during the writing of my thesis. The three people I used in my thesis were: Patti Lather on methodology; Nancy Fraser on needs talk or articulation of needs, which I used to talk about teacher education needs; and Liz Elsworth on defiant speech in the classroom. So those three came together for me epistemologically and I became very familiar with their work and how it made trouble for a traditional teacher education project. So that's how I came to know about the debates and the tools that were available through feminist poststructuralism and how to use them. I was also interested in literary criticism and so people like Jane Gallop's work, which I came to through my brother's (Peter Cryle) work in literary criticism. His area is 17th-century French literature and he did a lot of work on Sade and put me onto quite a lot of interesting stuff about pedagogy and eroticism. There were feminists working in literary criticism as well as education, especially

those that were working in new French theory, and I was able to access a larger view on some of these issues. It certainly allowed me to understand how the work was working.

One of the nice things about that kind of work is that it gave you an understanding of what the discursive organisation of a field was. For example, how psychology was discursively organised – particular sorts like cognitive psychology as distinct from humanistic psychology – or how sociology was organised and how particular sorts of traditions were formed. What it actually meant was that you were able to ask the questions: ‘what are the claims and warrants coming out of those fields and how were those claims made and how were they warranted through a particular epistemology?’ So what I really enjoyed when I came to Foucault was to have a sense that I understand how people think about thinking about something; a sense of what is thinkable, sayable, doable, as a result of this set of propositions.

So I think I was probably fairly arrogant about that, as a lot of us were. We had a great time making trouble in the academy. It was probably about 1995 or 1996. In San Francisco and then New York I can remember just fantastic things, great exciting moments working with other women, going to seminars and sort of having a very joyful time saying outrageous things, but still knowing what we were doing. People like Deborah Britzman, Patti Lather and Alison Jones, a good friend of mine who I’d met by then, were all terrific to be with. They were people with a robust sense of what new theory could deliver in the academy. That was great and it was really great fun when I think back – that was a decade ago. It was serious play and I really enjoyed that. I think that serious play is something that we’ve lost; it’s not something that is readily available now. Sure I do it anyway but I think that the time of the great pleasure and excitement of the serious play of poststructuralism is gone and I feel for people who have missed out on that opportunity. The academy has become a more desiccated place now,

with less pure oases and pure places to pull back to, to engage and enjoy, women's groups or anything else.

In the mid '90s it was a transition for me from being a junior person to a more senior person. Some people were retiring; I think it was a bit of a changing of the guard at that time. People began to see my work differently; my work was obviously being taken up. I'd sent my thesis to Patti Lather who marked it and really liked it. She said it was the only one she liked and the next 20 theses she was sent to mark she hated. She was really an empiricist deep down, but I think people thought that she liked poems and things but she couldn't stand them and my work wasn't like that and it did involve some quantitative data.

Patti Lather, Liz Elsworth and Deb Britzman were all quite well known at that time and once it was known that I was working closely with those people it became a bit of a different story and my work was known amongst sociologists. The psychologists still wouldn't have known who those people were but that's okay – I wouldn't have known the people they were working with. I think at that time it was still very much like silos – sociology kept very much to itself. I think it is very different now because insisting that your disciplinary take is the only or best way to view an issue is just not possible anymore. I mean no one is going to believe that sociology can save the world and nor can psychology for that matter. I guess that psychology's got a better claim historically, in the sense that it has had more funding and more support, but I think there is a lot more that's transdisciplinary. For example, the issue of obesity. You could do a gender take on obesity, certainly you could do a take on undereating as well as overeating and there is lots of work on anorexia, but obesity is a classic issue that is not so readily translatable into a discipline because it seems to be to do with mental and emotional health, as well as physical and family patterns of eating and genetics – so you can't just make it precisely one discipline. Same with water quality and we haven't even

started to address the fact that no one discipline is going to be able to address these problems.

You could call it a breakdown of disciplinary boundaries or you could call it an acknowledgement of the limitations of disciplines but one way or another, probably both, meant that in the '90s there were uneasy coalitions developing across disciplinary worlds. People had started to say, "well maybe we need a psychologist and a sociologist to work together on that project and maybe with some people from health". So you'd start to get perhaps more strategic engagement with issues rather than insistence that we'll just look at our bit of it. I was a senior lecturer during that time and I became Associate Professor in 1997 and then Professor in 2001. I was lucky that I stayed within the same university and I just kept going for promotion and getting it. It's hard to do; in general it is much easier to get a promotion by moving outside your own university.

Luckily for me, I was getting opportunities to change my job while staying in the same place. Personally I don't like to do the same thing all the time and that was true at the boys' school as well. So I got an opportunity to coordinate big programs, then to move to head up the Masters by Research and then to head up the educational Doctorate and then I got to be the postgraduate coordinator and so my job was changing a lot and if it hadn't been I think I would have been looking elsewhere. I kept finding that there was wriggle room, finding that I had choices, finding that I was wanted for things, finding encouragement in terms of my career, so that was why I stayed.

I think a lot has changed in universities since then. What's changed is the way in which funding works and the way in which the university is now a much more performative place. The quantification of quality, upon which our funding depends, drives just about everything now, so that there has been an erosion of all the little oases I was talking about. The climate in

which we do our work, which is governed by the logic of performativity, is so geared up to performance indicators; so geared up to “you’re only as good as your last month’s sale”; so geared up to quantifying how many publications you’ve got or how many grants you’ve applied for that it has tended to consume and to recuperate maverick behaviour.

I think that the rise of audit culture – what Marilyn Strathern calls the audit explosion – has been responsible for a climate in which there is very little differentiation, in the sense that the same logic applies almost everywhere. So critical sociologists are busy looking at their performance indicators and their number of publications and, for example, in our centre we can tell a senior lecturer that the average number of publications for senior lecturers in the last three years is this per year, so if you are below the mean you need to go to your Head of School to make a case. So it means that everything is calculable.

Once everything is rendered calculable a lot of things that once counted as worthy of investigation and interrogation start to slope off to the sides. And in response you get a whole lot of people talking about economic rationalism and shaking their fists, but the audit culture does a number of things. It does equity in a sort of way because it doesn’t matter if you’re black/white, male/female, tall/short, Indigenous/non-Indigenous, what matters is your last month’s sales. Now you could argue that when we are all turned into human resources, like in human resource management, there are things that have been really achieved in terms of gender equity. I mean no one is allowed to employ anybody without a committee with gender balance and I mean no one. Everybody knows and accepts that you’ve got to have gender balance. I get pulled into committees all the time because they need gender balance. In some ways you could say there’s the triumph of feminism and, well, it’s not nothing. But I did think it was very interesting what happened in New Zealand when universities were required to have not only a female member on the committee but

also a Maori member and suddenly Maori women were very much in demand. They all resigned en masse because they said you will just have to employ more Maori women because we are not going to cover all these committees for you. I think that was a very smart move. So I think there were smart ways of resisting it.

I do think that something is gained but something is also lost. I think that what happens when we say we are all human resources and by inference sexuality or gender don't matter, then what actually happens is that those things still matter but they are not rendered calculable. The effect of that is in terms of what you pay attention to; the intention economy of the university has changed. For me now as a university manager all the reporting that I do is about what's calculable and about the quantification of the quality of the place. It means that specific questions, such as questions about Indigenous education or equity grants, how many equity grants did you get and what were they about, these questions don't get asked. The questions of the politicised and politicising work of feminism is just not something that people want to know about; they want to know how many articles did you write? Whether they were about feminism or about Tiddlywinks isn't as important as did you get a tier 1 publication – what was the impact factor of that publication – that's the sort of thing that matters.

And, in practice, journals like *Feminist Studies* don't have a very high impact factor, so you'd move your article from that thinking, "I won't put it there, that's got a low impact factor, I'll move it to *Harvard Ed Review*, I think that's a better way to go". That's what I mean by the attentional of the university having changed. I don't think you will find feminist work, or any other work about marginal politics, in any really high impact factor journals. For example, you won't find that Indigenous education has a high impact factor; these journals deal with a small clientele and it's all well and good for us to be saying, "well everyone should be reading *Feminist Studies*",

but in fact that's not the case. A journal that offers a big metaview of everything with a long term track and run out of a sandstone university is going to be the one that you go for in practice. So the question of sisterhood and whether you should continue to publish in *Feminist Studies*, well I am sure that there are people who would say I still do that because of my own commitment to it or whatever, but broadly there's not really enough women doing that. I don't know how many people you will find in women's studies that make a dedicated commitment to publishing in feminist journals. It's tough enough to find people in women's studies.

But that's not to say that some politicising work isn't still going on, I remember back then it was a big political issue to show the christian name as well as the surname in reference lists. We would say we don't want Brown, A., we want McWilliam, Erica; so we can basically look down the list and see where the women are. That was a political act – to say to editors we think there should be a full name in the list of references. We all became very alert to that, as well as looking at names on editorial boards and so on. Recently I was at a conference, a higher education conference, I think last year; I was sitting there with Miriam David and we were looking down the list of editors saying you know editorial boards are about 95% male. So that work's still going on. We raised that as an issue because it is still something that's important. It was stark-staring obvious to us but the question still had to be asked, "excuse me, have you noticed in your data?" I think that work must continue. Whether you call that work feminist, well I suppose it is – it's still a local politics that you are enacting.

But I also think there are dangers in trying to resist the audit culture altogether. If we decide: we are not going to do the audit culture thing, we are not going to do the reporting, we are not going to do this regulatory work for the university, we are not going to do the performative university – because we're not interested in the performative university; we're interested in the moral, ethical university or whatever it is, then people

actually lose their jobs. If you don't make a case, if you cannot quantify your quality, you will not get funding and then you have to make staff cuts; the university will start asking which of your staff members you want to get rid of.

So you are really damned if you do pay attention to management and damned if you don't. If you don't pay attention to management and you hold some high ethical ground, by refusing to quantify, people will lose their jobs. There is no future for people in universities if we were to take the view that a particular sort of politics is more important. So what I end up with is a strange hybrid identity. My choreography, and I think about it as a sort of manoeuvring or choreography, is about trying to pre-empt what is the performance that's needed of me here? What is the best I can do here?

I still raise questions about gender balance. I raised with the Vice-Chancellor the issue of how many senior women we don't have in the university and when I am on very male dominated committees, I will say things like, "this must be a very high-powered committee, I'm the only woman here, this must be about finance, is it?" Or I've actually resigned from a committee full of women, a staffing committee, saying "this is ridiculous – what? The women are supposed to do all the nurturing of the staff?, that's what this committee is about, so I am resigning from it and I am going to suggest that one of my male colleagues might like to do it". So there are still times when I feel that those things are stark and need to be done but, at the same time, because I do get along very well with men, I am invited to a lot of forums for gender balance and I take those up because it gives me a chance to go in there. And not just as a passive body there, but to actively ask questions. So if they say, "Erica, would you mind asking the equity question", well I don't want to be stuck with that but if I think there is a lot that can be done there, I will. And I'm not going to be doing it in some fluffy way. I talk about precise practical things that they

can actually do. So it isn't a pure place and I don't think there is any safety here but I don't think there ever was. I guess we can demonise management and decide that management is just awful, but we can't afford to say let's just stay out of management and let somebody else do it because once you are in control of the budget, as I am – budgets over a million dollars – there is a huge amount of power and responsibility that comes with that. I think being a feminist is to some extent accepting the responsibility of a budget over a million dollars and trying to work in such a way that your staff are feeling supported. High expectations and high support is how I try to do that work.

So I think that it is tremendous to have the opportunity to do that, especially for young women. I do spend a lot of time trying to make sure that young women are not pawns in the game but players, who see themselves not taking crumbs from the table but sitting at the table, trying to help them up, to get a sense of themselves – that is a terrific thing to be able to do.

But what happened to feminism? Part of what happened was supply-side thinking; it was thinking in the academy that a lot of kids coming in weren't very interested in feminism. They knew it; they'd heard it in English class and so on. So I think part of what happened is that supply/demand style thinking became more important and students started voting with their feet and saying, "that's the gender lecture, I'm not going to that! That's the Aboriginal one, not going to that". I think those subjects became too pick-off able – part of it was that the students genuinely felt patronised by some of those things and opted out of those electives. So that was part of it and of course universities can't afford to ignore where the students are going and not going. But I think that the larger questions are around risk society and the performative, audit culture that arises out of that and the way in which people's attention has shifted from the moral/ethical work to the performative work. Even people with an enormous amount of investment

in the ethical work, the politicising work, have had their attention pulled to the performative work.

Also we've had some of the myths of the Left exploded. I mean no one believes in revolution anymore, no one thinks it's coming. Well we do have one guy in our university now who does think it's coming – it's very sweet. An old Marxist, and people are like, "isn't that nice"; it sort of seems so quaint these days. Anyone with a thorough-going political agenda to bring down the capitalist system or whatever is seen to be quaint and once upon a time he would have been seen to be dangerous and radical and likely to cause trouble but nowadays he wanders around looking scruffy and old.

So I think that's also had a lot to do with it and it's a generational question as well; you are not going to find 35-year-old Marxists unless there is something really odd going on. There are generational issues, there is a shift in the politics and in the interests of young people and I think digital literacy means that kids are getting a lot more information about things before they even get to university. They've got a lot more sources of information and they not prepared to take one 'Bible' on something, whether it's feminism, gender or whatever else. And I think that we are devoting all our time to management, to a high standard of standardness – that's what David McKay calls it – for better and worse. I do think we should be able to make stronger, better cases about our quality. I don't think we can say, "believe me when I say my students love me!" I don't think that is good enough but I think there are some things that aren't quantifiable and certain kinds of moral, ethical behaviour clearly is not. It's one thing to say let's get gender balance on the committee and we tick it all off, but it does not mean that we have achieved all that we wanted to achieve in terms of gender in the academy. So even if we have 50% women, which is going to take a long time in terms of professors, those numbers can be indicators but they will never tell the whole story about gender balance – whatever that means.

A conduit between Indian and Australian women's movements and academia: Kalpana Ram

For me being a feminist goes right back to my history in India, to my family's history and to the modern history of India itself. I came to Australia from India at age 14 and a good deal of my work as an academic and as a feminist has been about bringing out not just the differences but the similarities between these two countries. I do this very readily because both these places are an essential part of me.

I come from a very large family back in India – extended and strong family networks, clans really, on both my parents' sides, my mother and father's – with a very strong female lineage on both sides again. I can count many among them who were deeply affected by the politics of the anti-colonial struggle. Some, like my maternal grandmother, made it a life-long engagement with Gandhi's philosophy. Others, like some of the women on my father's side, were more activist in their political engagement. Women and women's issues have been very important in the modern history of India. During colonialism, the British often used gender and women's status as a political tool – as an example of why Indian men were not fit to govern themselves. In a sense, therefore, women's freedom became a politicised issue through colonial rule itself and it has continued to be a politically resonant theme in Indian modernity. There was a long history of social reform in the 19th-century, largely concerned with issues to do with women – child marriage, widow remarriage, *sati* or widow burning – long before there was any anti-colonial movement at the mass level. It took Gandhi to come on the scene though to make politics not only a mass affair, but to make politics women-friendly. He sincerely believed that women had a unique spiritual strength that was necessary for social activism. So it was not just in an instrumental way that he created techniques and political strategies that could involve women. There is a genius to his methods: in a way that reminds me of feminist politics itself,

he encouraged techniques of resistance to the British that Indian women could use in their everyday lives rather than insisting that women adapt to masculine modes of politics. For example, he used simple techniques such as fasting as a mode of protest – something you could almost say he learned from Indian women’s everyday tactics of resistance– or, to take another example, he encouraged the burning of textiles manufactured in England and the buying of handloom Indian cloth. These were things that women could do in their everyday lives.

My history of feminism goes all the way back through *this* history. As I said, I came from a large family with many different kinds of strong and attractive women around me. My grandmother who died only recently, was someone who introduced the wearing of *khadi* (handloom woven cloth) for all the family during the nationalist movement and thought deeply about his philosophy all her life. My mother was involved even as a young school girl in the Congress *dal* or youth movement. Many of the women of my mother’s generation broke new ground in terms of education and professional achievements. My mother is a physics graduate, won medals for Sanskrit scholarship, and postponed her career till her youngest was at school; then went on to teach physics to PLC (Pymble Presbyterian School) for 20 years in Sydney to Australian girls, always blending a lively sense of the arts as well as Hindu philosophy in her teaching. In India we lived in a joint family with my paternal grandparents but also my father’s brother’s wife, who came and lived with us after marriage. There were also some unmarried aunts – my father’s younger sister and his cousins. It was a big clan of women and they were all very exciting aunties, who had lived in different parts of India and with lots of different life experiences. My father’s family had lived in Rangoon, Burma, till well after the Second World War, and started life all over again in India as refugees. The aunt who came to live with us after marriage would tell me about her life in Calcutta, part of a very different social scene to our own. But also she wrote fiery short stories, often about women, and confided in me, a very

young girl then, about wanting to express herself in a professional life – she later went on to work, first for the *Indian Express*, a major newspaper, then as a senior management figure in the British High Commission – but at the time she was this young mother, conveying to me her feeling a sense of not being fulfilled by domesticity. This rich fabric of the women in my family planted the seeds of my feminism.

All of a sudden I was taken out of this rich, very warm, rather safe environment and we were in Sydney. Initially, it was just an adventure – we thought we were here only for three years. But even then we all had to deal with the day-to-day challenges. The advice my father received was that the North Shore was the place to raise kids. While I came to love the Australian bush down the end of our street – I would disappear there for the day – we all of us three kids felt the North Shore was very quiet, very white – we were the only ‘Asians’ in the school – and very isolated in comparison to where I had come from. School was so different. It was the first time that I had gone to a co-educational school. But it was not just that I had gone to a girls’ school in India. Even in ordinary life, girls spend a lot of time with other girls and women and boys spend a lot of time with other boys and men. As children there is more shared play between girls and boys but, as you get older, you hive off into different worlds and the contact between those worlds becomes harder – but for that very reason, it also becomes very charged with daring and excitement. Every contact, every glance can be charged! And I was just on the cusp of that phase when I moved to Australia. In school in Sydney the 16-year-old girls were a lot more distracted from their studies (study was taken far more seriously in India) and the girls also spent much more time trying to look attractive to please the boys. But at the same time I did appreciate the casualness about contact with boys here, which took some of the mystery out of it – for better or worse. Better in the sense that it certainly provided an opportunity for a greater sense of camaraderie between boys and girls and I can see that very much in my daughter’s relations with boys – lots of

mateship, which I find very attractive. But I was disturbed by the lack of ambition in the girls around me. My family moved to Sydney in late 1970 and in 1971 it seemed to me that girls were setting their sights far lower than the women back home I was used to. I remember an incident that really struck me: back in those days they offered a bond to do teaching and someone came to our school and spoke to us about applying for the bond to become a teacher. All of the girls with any aspirations put up their hand and I remember I said to them, “how come you’re all so keen on teaching?” Their answer was that it would give them a chance to combine it with motherhood and looking after their children in school holidays, picking them up from school etc. They were already fitting themselves into motherhood – I was really shocked by that. Even my grandmother (the Gandhian one) would tell me not to stop till I had a higher degree!

I was also taken aback by the emphasis on dating, which seemed to be all of existence. And what I am about to say seems crazy only because the West think that we, Indian women, are the more oppressed group but I actually thought that these girls were more oppressed because they were so much more individually responsible for looking good to get a boy. But in our system – it’s very paradoxical but true – you don’t need to worry about getting a boy because sooner or later Mum and Dad are going to get our husbands for us. Now in the West that seems like unfreedom but for us it meant we did not have to be preoccupied with finding partners. Sure, we were into appearances, we loved our clothes and jewellery, but we dressed for each other, for other girls as much as anyone else. In a way, we were dressing for each other because we spent so much time together. There was a lot of homosociality, a lot of warmth and a lot of hand holding, putting arms around each others’ waists and a lot of close physical relationships between girls. I missed all that dreadfully when I came here. I remember a first experience of a drunk boy at a Sydney party getting very physical with me with not so much as a conversation before it; it felt a little exciting at first but at the same time I remember feeling a pressure to go

along just because this was a story to tell others about afterwards, a way of being accepted. I remember I was trying to shake him off at one point and realising I had no one really to turn to at the party – these girls I was trying to impress did not care anything really about me. It was not out and out racism but because I came from a different background I felt very much on a different planet to them. So there I was – really isolated when confronted with male sexuality of a kind I was not familiar with at all and I didn't have the female solidarity I was used to. I was somehow on my own with this whole situation and didn't know how to control it.

Germaine Greer's *Female eunuch* came out when I was in sixth year (now Year 12) and I just went out and bought it because I was interested and there was a lot of media publicity about it. I just loved it; it was THE book. She was very witty and funny as well, which I liked. I remember having a real laugh when reading the whole part on romance literature – the part on women just sitting around mooning and thinking that they must have a certain kind of guy with a huge, prominent jaw who will sweep her off her feet. I had read plenty of such books, and it was great to be able to laugh at it and get a good pungent critique at the same time. So that was a good book to start off with; the next year I got into Sydney University and basically I never looked back.

Going to university was like a liberation for me because suddenly I was back in the mainstream, back in the swing of things. I didn't feel like I was stuck in some strange backwater in Turrumurra, wondering where the rest of the world had gone. I was at least part of a big university and a big student population. As my luck would have it, I walked straight into what was actually a student strike, where they had pitched tents up on the front lawn of the quad. And it just so happened that the strike was about setting up a feminist philosophy course at Sydney University.

Actually, that was my second year but even in my first year, which was 1973, I had discovered politics. I attended courses in philosophy and politics (government) and I was attending as many classes as possible but basically two things made a really big difference to me. Firstly, I heard some lectures on Marxism, socialism, and political philosophy and anarchist philosophy by some of the senior philosophy staff – I was electrified by them! So it wasn't just about feminism for me. I was also interested in broad class issues. Even in high school in Turrumurra I was very attracted by novels about social injustice: Steinbeck on destruction of farmers' livelihood by agribusiness; Upton Sinclair on the grim tanneries of Chicago and the way they just used up even a big strong immigrant man like the hero. I think this is because of where I had come from. In India poverty had been naturalised to some extent, though even there the politics of socialism was a strong element in the Nehru years, a lot of emphasis on affirmative action and social justice. Even Hindi films used to make us weep over the injustices of landlords to poor peasants. But the whole experience of coming from India to here meant that I became more concerned with why is this place so rich compared to India. I'd grown up just thinking this is the way things are in the world, that everywhere in the world there are thousands of people on the street without jobs, living in slums, living with no adequate drinking water and suddenly I come here and, ok, I discovered poverty here too later, but nothing on that scale. You grow up not only thinking poverty is everyday but also that if you've got money you just have servants and get them to do everything for you; whereas here in Australia you have to do everything yourself. So that experience of having to do things for yourself also left a mark on me. So all the issues of class, poverty, why there is a Third World and First World, the politics of the creation of global inequality, those issues were very important to me.

The second thing was, in that same year 'Chile' happened; the Allende government was toppled. I remember there was a deep rumbling in the

student body at lunchtime one day and I just followed a huge lot of students crowding into a meeting at Wallace Theatre about the overthrow of Allende. I didn't even know all the issues at that point but I got swept up in a sea of humanity and I knew I wanted to hear what was going on and there was speaker after speaker talking about how the CIA and the Americans had been involved and that it involved the overthrow of a Socialist government in Chile. The speakers were talking about what the government had tried to achieve in that period and of course I was immediately very interested in that. So that was a very important incident for me. It wasn't just about feminism but was a very broad politicisation.

The next year the feminist strike happened and there were several other movements happening around campus as well. There was the political economy movement in the Economics Department. I'd heard people like Dennis Altman and Lex Watson talking about gay rights. By the next year, there was a whole range of issues that I was involved with. Some of the older students were involved in Victoria Street squats – were raising questions about the developers forcing low-income earners from housing. The BLF was placing green bans on various sites and making alliances with student activists. I was watching a lot of radical films. One was *Who killed Juanita Nielson?*, which was about one of the activists disappearing under very suspicious circumstances. I went to a protest at the court and some of friends got arrested and I was very predisposed by this stage to see police as an arm of a state I was starting to no longer identify with. Some of my friends were mishandled by police and that left a real impression on me.

Then, when the university had set up a department to teach feminist and Marxist philosophy, I enrolled in those courses. I studied a wonderful course run by Liz Jacka and Jean Curthoys that had a very highly charged atmosphere; there were books that we'd read and that would spill over into very long discussions. Also, we had little groups – consciousness-raising

groups where we all talked about our lives. It was all part of the academic program, but it didn't feel like an academic program, it felt like this was about life. It was about life and politics – the university was just the stage for it but it went way outside that. I went down to Melbourne for my first feminist conference, was billeted at the Pram Factory, and I couldn't believe how women were just rushing to one another as if they were long lost lovers. The euphoria and the way that women were interacting, I can still remember it. And I thought, "oh, I haven't seen this in Australia ever". I had been missing that female world from India and looking back on it I feel now I moved so easily into feminism because it offered me a way of getting back to my lost female world – it was a politicised version of sex segregation going on here but the dynamics of female solidarity and female world felt very similar. It felt very comfortable, very familiar.

But, in those consciousness-raising groups, I started bringing up very early on the fact that things were not the same for me as they were for them, that there were issues about race that were important to raise. There was a big critique going on within the feminist movement about the family as a site of oppression and I remember saying to them, "yes, yes, the family is a site of oppression BUT, as an immigrant woman, if I didn't have my family to go back to and speak my own language and eat my Indian food, sometimes I feel like it's taking off a really tight set of clothes, when I go home I can breathe for the first time that day".

So right from the start I was raising these issues about being an immigrant woman and I remember asking to have a consciousness-raising group with older women because I felt like that they knew a bit more about the world than these really much younger women. Already there was a strong awareness on my part that I wasn't just part of the women's movement in any homogeneous sense. I was responding enormously to it, but I was really aware from the start that I was coming from somewhere else.

Looking back then, I've always been trying to raise these issues, through my work and through my politics and through whatever I do. I've always called myself a feminist since those first days but my feminism has always been of the kind that makes it really central to raise questions about how gender is not just male/female relations. Male/female relations are shaped by virtually every power relationship you can name and usually people reel off a little list – race, class, colonialism etc. All those things come into it and much, much more. My kind of feminism is one that would always resist seeing the world primarily as male/female relations but rather in a way in which gender politics is really important. A way that includes gender in the whole complexity of the world makes it central without simplifying it. .

After my degree in philosophy, I went on to be a founding member of a group called the Third World Women's Group in Sydney and that included about eight women. This would have been in 1979 or so. It included among others some women who went on to be academics such as Lalleen Jayamanne, Santi Rozario. We had a little chapter in Melbourne as well. It was an immigrant women, Third World women's group, raising issues about racism within the women's movement, exploring our own issues with respect to our countries of origin, but also connecting with parallel issues being raised in other Western countries. At one point we had a big series of meetings where I came back from the UK – this would have been 1981 by this stage – where I gave a report on parallel issues and struggles among black and immigrant feminist groups in London, where I had visited women's refuges specifically for women of colour. We went to Melbourne sometimes to meet the other women; I think we made a presentation in the first *Women in Asia conference*. We wrote a manifesto. In fact we became too big too quickly. We made such a big splash because the women's movement was now aware of the critique of racism and was wanting to hear from spokeswomen from immigrant women and Third World women or whatever. We kept getting asked to come on various things and give

our input into it and that put too much strain on the women in the group. I think for many of them it was more like we were trying to sort stuff out for ourselves, we didn't feel that we could represent a group with a unified voice.

The women's movement at that time had a very Western perspective. I had grown up with this very complicated history, so it wasn't as if I saw it as India versus the West because British colonialism was already there in that history, it already included 'the West'. It's not just a cultural perspective where we say we are culturally different but rather it is as if those whose countries have been involved in colonialism do not reflect on the history of colonialism. So Western feminism was able to come up with this rather innocent version of politics as just about just male/female relations, as if the history of colonialism hasn't gone into making them who they are as much as me who I am. I stress a *relational* politics, not just one that says, "you white women need to know about us", as if we/you exist on different planets; but rather see it as looking at the relationships between your mob and our mob, relationships that have shaped both of us but often in an unequal way.

The other thing is that my own class background meant that socialism has meant as much to me as colonial or anti-colonial politics. I would never say that I have had an experience of racism in Australia that makes me the same as immigrant women working in factories. But this feature also meant that I wanted to make new connections back in India. I felt like the stage here in Australia couldn't contain me. It wasn't enough for me and by this stage, the late '70s, there was a burgeoning second wave women's movement happening in India. So I went back there and I was swept up there and it was just so exciting involved on both sides – that is in both India and Australia. My first experiences of feminist protests were in Bombay, now Mumbai, with an organisation called Forum Against Rape. Here in Australia I had been more aligned with left socialist women's

groups. What was interesting to me about Indian feminism was that a lot of it was coming out of left socialist groupings. Even where groups like Forum took up the politics of rape it tended to be class-based issues: the main focus was on the rape of a tribal woman by a police officer; others concerned the rape of poor women by landlords. In fact, I found the politics of class and caste was being stressed by most feminist groups in India in a way that it wasn't necessarily here. So I spent quite a bit of time not just with feminist groups but I was interested in what kinds of new union and other kinds of organisations might be possible among the huge urban groups of those in makeshift jobs, new unionisms. I came back here and wrote an article for *Refractory Girl* and another journal called *Social Alternatives* and those were the first articles I ever published in a journal. In a sense I had already started what became a career of being a conduit between Indian and Western or Australian women's movements and also academia.

While this was going on, I kept doing research. When I finished philosophy at Sydney Uni, I came to Macquarie University. The Sociology Department was just being set up then; that was 1977. Bob Connell, who was the Professor of Sociology in those days, was very supportive of me and the research I wanted to do about class and working class politics in India. The research was not about feminism *per se* but, while I was doing the research, I was finding that the whole women's movement was taking off there so I ended up getting very interested in that as well. In fact, lots of the women in my family, my own cousins and other members of my family were involved in the emerging second wave of feminism in India, that so it is clear to me that had I stayed there in India that's where I would have ended up – it's just a blip really that my feminism officially started here in Australia.

So in my Masters in sociology I wanted to find out the particular features of class, asking is 'the working class' this homogenous thing which is the

same all over the world, anymore than 'women' are a homogenous category all over the world. So I researched class formation and the ways a huge number of people in urban centres aren't involved in any organised employment; they have all kinds of makeshift jobs doing a bit of this and a bit of that, and that's really how the economy keeps going and they keep going, but what is happening in class terms – is it working class? It's not unionised or part of any kind of organised or formal sector. Marxism used to just call such groups *lumpenproletariat* but I tried to establish that in a Third World economy they are an essential ingredient of the working class. So I looked at a whole range of class issues but I'd already become interested in all sorts of gender issues in India and so I decided to do a PhD on women in India.

By then I was talking to the anthropologists here at Macquarie and they were more familiar with the kinds of comparative issues I was trying to raise. So I applied for a scholarship in anthropology at the ANU, in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies. I know they had a bit of a hard time arguing I should get a scholarship at ANU on the basis of my publications – they were in *Refractory Girl* and had titles like 'Women's Liberation in India'!

As a socialist I didn't want to focus on middle-class women in India, I wanted to focus on women in the labouring classes. I was also sick of the Western stereotype of Indian women being meek, mild and oppressed and victims and so on. I'd already seen plenty of action and activism among Indian women. I wanted to focus on oppression but I also wanted to focus on women's agency, women's organised agency as activists, their involvement in various types of campaigns.

So my PhD took me to back to India. I tried several different sites and I ended up doing my ethnography on fishing villages in South India. I come from South India, but I'd never really spent any time living in South India

because I'd grown up in Delhi in the North. So this was my first extended stay in South India and also the first time I'd lived in villages – I actually liked it! I liked the sense of community I got from it and the fisherwomen were incredibly direct, very bold, and it challenged my own background assumptions. Even though I was already intent on challenging stereotypes of Indian women, there were still middle-class assumptions that I had. It challenged my class but also my religion because these women were Catholic not Hindu. And you don't really know your own assumptions until you live with a group that's like you but not like you – you've got to have that combination.

So these women were Catholic, they were fisher people, which was also challenging because India is such an agrarian society that most of our models of tradition come from agricultural history. Caste and so on come from the agricultural models and, even though I'd grown up in the city, my grandparents' generation came from that agrarian background.

So this was my first exposure to many things – fishing! I didn't know the first thing about fishing and it also deeply challenged my vegetarianism. I'd been a vegetarian by upbringing. I'd hung on to it here in Australia because it had become an icon for all of my family of not being assimilated. Anyway, Australian food in those days was pretty unappetising to an Indian migrant. I'd been a vegetarian through all of that and so I go back to India and I find I'm in a community where they just don't grow vegetables; dairy is really hard to come by and they're living right by the ocean. Their entire diet revolves around fish – if there is no fish the women don't even bother to light the stove. So I had to eat fish. At a very personal level that was very hard and a real turning point for me. Research had always been integrated into the personal but now it required radical change in my daily life and habits of a really profound kind.

I wrote the book *Mukkuvar women* from this research. Although I had a strong orientation towards class, I got very interested in popular culture. I was looking at ways in which their lives were being transformed by capitalist technologies and social relations of gender were central to my ethnography. The sexual division of labour was changing, men were working away from home, sometimes fishing quite a distance from their village, and it was changing women's access to the catch. Traditionally women did not fish but they did play a role in marketing and they still made all the decisions about household expenditure. Now one of the reasons the men were going away was there had been overfishing on the coastline, with big trawlers coming in and pushing out the local fishermen. Women were losing access to the markets. It was a very broad canvas that I was working with and again gender was being mediated by historical and political relations. But religion was very important to my work too. I was fascinated by popular Catholicism, which took on so many aspects of popular Hinduism, such as goddess worship, and modes of worship, often in conflict with the Church's official line.

This was a time when communalism (which is a name given to religious conflict in India) was already an issue. The Catholic fisherwomen were feeling very vulnerable and had been attacked already by Hindu extremists. This was starting to happen more and more and, unfortunately, it has gotten a lot worse since then. I have found it very important since then to write about Catholics and about what an important part of India Christians are because there is an increasing equation of India with Hinduism and being Hindu. I didn't plan for my work to address issues of communalism but that aspect gets taken up quite a lot as validating the perspective of religious minority communities and what kind of a contribution they have made. It's similar to here in Australia where, because of racism, it's important to talk about Greeks and Italians as being as Australian, as Anglo-Australians, it's very similar to that.

It has always been hard for me to keep up to date with the women's movement either here or in India. Because I keep going overseas it is hard for me to keep things happening with activities I'm involved in here. At that time I can remember coming back and giving these very detailed reports. I was reporting back on how politics is going in India. It was like an update into people's knowledge here about what was happening over there. But it also meant that I didn't have the energy to put into keeping things happening here. I could come back and feed it in but I couldn't keep the groups going and neither could I sustain my involvement there.

I think this has always been a problem for me, with Australia's distances so vast, and the fact that I can't get to India very often; coupled with more and more work commitments here, it becomes a process of straddling two worlds. Being a politically motivated person I want to straddle two worlds because they are both part of me. Sometimes I feel that I'm not really able to do justice to either but other times I also feel like it's really great to be able to go from one to the other. In my writing, I often refer to it; I bring Australia into my writing on India and vice versa. I find it very useful to break down the sense that we otherwise have of there being nothing in common between the two places. The problems of religious majority versus religious minority are actually very, very similar and parallel to the whole politics of race in this country. Not so much the issues to do with internal colonialism and Indigenous issues but certainly the politics of multiculturalism here and multi-religiousness in India are very parallel and come out a very similar political framework – namely liberal democracy. India, for all its problems, is a liberal democracy. So there is a very interesting and important way that the two countries are facing important political dilemmas that I can see as having a lot of resonance with one another and the potential to learn from one another. In particular, issues around difference: how do you cater to issues of exclusion and marginality in a liberal democracy; what is the place of real difference when liberal democracy also carries with it a certain set of assumptions about what

kind of person embodies modern citizenship; how do you deepen the meaning of democracy. The whole socialist model has died now, so how do we replace it and still hang on to the notion of activating people from the bottom up, rather than just this electoral trooping every once in a while to a ballot box as if that were the end and limit of democracy. Both countries have a very strong press. And there are also similarities in terms of racism; when Hansonism was happening here I was hearing echoes of Hindu right wing ideology and vice versa. In fact they speak the same language in that they have both mobilised the language of democracy. “We are the majority, and look what these ‘soft’ minority lovers are doing.” All these terms come into play. So Howard will talk about the ‘chardonnay-sipping set’ while the Hindu Right will talk about ‘these liberals’ who want to pamper minorities, pandering to the Muslims in particular and about minorities being a threat to democracy. And of course since 9/11 it’s even more converged because Muslims are now the target in both societies. So raising these issues and the similarities between the two places to others through my writing has been important to me.

In the ‘90s I went to the Australian National University to work with Margaret Jolly in setting up the Gender Relations Centre. In some ways it was a very good period for me because it freed me up to concentrate on research at a very advanced level. I was no longer a PhD student, I was not going from one discipline to another learning about whole new approaches; I could concentrate on synthesising, which is something I have always loved. Also during the writing of the PhD – I think I was just struggling with so much new experience – being plunged into rural India, trying to write about huge numbers of issues – and there was such a lot riding on it, you’ve got to write this huge thing called the PhD. You’re still learning, learning in the sense of the apprenticeship model but also learning to write at that academic level.

I grew up with English as a child, as middle class Indians do, I wouldn't call myself a non-English speaking person and there was a period where I was labelled NESB (non-English speaking background), which felt quite inappropriate. But Tamil was my first language and there is always a trace of that in my English and writing at an advanced academic level is another level of mastery again; but by the '90s I had acquired much more mastery of style – so that was exhilarating. The other interesting thing about the gender relations project was that it forced me to move outside this Australia-India dynamic I'd been working with. It forced me to look outside that. It was a project that was meant to look at Asia and the Pacific. That was exciting for me because I was suddenly involved with my senior colleague in hosting conferences with delegates from parts of Asia and the Pacific, or bringing scholars from around Australia. A highlight for me was a conference on women and migration, which we co-hosted with Melbourne University and was attended by women from different parts of Asia and around Australia. The conference discussed specific issues for women as migrants and what kind of flows are there in female labour – as domestic servants, in sex work, as key earners for national economies like the Philippines. The atmosphere at these conferences was also warm – creating new networks and friendships, often ending up with co-writing projects. I co-edited a special issue of *Women's Studies International Forum* with a Hawaiian feminist studying in California and the special issue looked at feminism itself as a form of migration; the way the ideas and social movement travels around from place to place, acquiring new meanings and often in tension with previous meanings.

About that time I also started to work on issues that were more intimate and bodily. I started to work on a project on maternity and also later included puberty. And so I went back to some of the groups I'd worked with in India but, unlike the days of *Mukkuvar women*, I was now talking to women about their experiences of becoming mothers. In the meantime I too had become a mother; maybe that was feeding into my new interests. I

was also interested in maternity historically. Margaret Jolly and I edited a book on it, *Maternities and modernities*, which was looking at historical changes through colonialism; I was interested in the way development programs continue with the class and colonial paradigms of relationships with poor women. This set of themes is still part of my research. So I am still working on issues to do with class; only now I am looking at how class interactions, between middle-class educators/development organisations/professionals on the one hand and rural women on the other, is shaping and reshaping rural women's experiences of periods of embodied transition – like puberty and maternity.

Canberra being a small town, I also got to know people quickly – a bit like my enjoyment of the village! I also got very involved in dance while I was there and that's been another growth area in my interests. I took my daughter for dance classes – Indian dance classes – and just fell in love with it. I mean I had always been interested in dance – my father's family is deeply involved in the music and dance scene in south India and I learned classical music as a child – but now I actually wanted to dance. And the teacher who also ran a dance company was a very talented and intellectually gifted woman called Padma Menon. She became a close friend of mine, I started writing reviews of the dance company productions, I went on the management board of her dance company. Before I knew it I was in the midst of this very young lively mix of Australian and Australian Indian women involved in Indian dance and that's something that I'm still working with and exploring in my writing and I want to do something more about that. My next research is going to be about dance, migration and diaspora – something I have already written a bit about – but I want to explore it in a much more systematic way.

But for some time now I have been giving a lot of my energy to teaching and to building up this department. Teaching I find very rewarding as a form of feminist engagement with the world. Increasingly universities are

drawing women from overseas, from different parts of Asia, and our own immigrant communities of men and women come to me as students. I use the fact of being an Indian woman and an anthropologist to underline the fact that the discipline of anthropology cannot be understood any longer as a matter of European or Europe-derived societies describing the rest of the world. I still emphasise very much the insights of learning that came to me in the feminism courses of the university: use small groups to integrate lecture material and deep engagement with texts, with personal life experiences of people in the group. It allows people to relax, get to know one another and to learn more directly. My engagement with the body – itself a part of the feminist tradition – is also coming into my teaching; I use the senses as much as possible, both as something to think about and integrate into what we mean by knowledge and as a means of learning. For example, in teaching about India I use dance workshops, dinner at a restaurant, lecture demonstrations in music, get students to describe temple worship, music groups, concerts, performances. And, of course, gender can come through in all my teaching.

I don't know what I'd do if I wasn't an academic, I suppose I'd be some other kind of writer: Kate Lilley

I grew up in a feminist household. My mother was a well-known feminist writer – Dorothy Hewett. She was also an academic in the English Department at the University of Western Australia. So I grew up in that kind of milieu but I became most explicitly interested in feminist theory just around the time I'd finished my undergraduate degree here at the University of Sydney. Liz Grosz was teaching at Sydney Uni then and, even though I didn't do any of her courses, I had friends who were doing those courses, so there was word of mouth about that stuff. Also there were beginning to be translations of Irigaray, Kristeva and Cixous around. I started to read those things in a general climate of interest in literary theory and feminist theory.

This would have been about 1982. I did my fourth year here at Sydney in 1982 and my undergraduate years were '79 to '82. Then I went away to do my PhD in London in 1983 and by then I was very interested in feminist theory. I did my PhD on a genre study of elegy (poems of mourning) but it was about gender and elegy. When I look back on it now, I started out doing a kind of gender and ideology thing because it was before gender and genre was a thing – a genre if you will. Somewhere in the middle of doing my thesis I realised that gender was very important and should be very important to the analysis. I'd already done all this work on masculine canonical elegy and then, somewhere in the middle, I just saw the topic differently. And so then I made it into a thesis on masculine elegy, which was really the most economical way to cope with this realisation. Then when I finished that I decided to move into a more explicitly feminist area. I then went into 17th-century women's writing. The first thing I wrote and published was a chapter on 17th-century women's elegy. So that was

research that was very new and very unknown; early modern women's writing is now a very thriving field that I still work in.

Growing up I definitely would have thought of myself as a feminist. I went to various kinds of marches and things when I was a kid. I went along with my mother and I was in that kind of environment. I didn't really go through a stage of rebellion from my mother. I seemed to have precious little of that. Well I had it as Freud says in 'the paranoia of small differences' kind of way. To the casual observer I am very much doing what my mother did – I work in an English Department, I am a poet, and I look like my mother. So of all her children, and I have three brothers and one sister, I am the one who has ended up in a position most like hers. But I feel that my own interests are much more theoretical than hers. The terrain has shifted but undoubtedly I wanted to emulate the kind of feminism that I first encountered in her and the kind of stories I heard from her growing up. For instance, she had gone back and completed her degree as a mature age student when I was little; she did very well and she then moved into a tutorship in the Department, which was what tended to happen then. The tutorship was a casual contract for nine months I believe, so she would have these contracts for nine months and then nothing over the summer and then get reappointed the next year. That went on like that for 12 years or so. Also in the early days she wanted to do a higher degree on Christina Stead and the department would not allow her to do that. The department said that Christina Stead was not a topic for a higher degree. That was in the early '60s. Now of course Stead is a highly canonical figure but even then she was one of the best-known Australian women writers, so it's a good index of how much things have shifted in the intervening half century.

I grew up with those stories and stories of the crap employment conditions that she and her friends had. Various women would come around to the house – her students and friends. Carmen Lawrence was one of those students. She was in her early 20s. So I met various young women who

are now quite prominent. Adele Horin was a student of Mum's in those days. She is now a senior writer for the *Herald* and often writes on feminist journalistic topics. I saw the big impact that Mum had in teaching and have tried to emulate that. I grew up in a pretty Leftist feminist politicised environment but one in which creative writing was always the most highly valued thing. But, as you would expect perhaps in the next generation, I became more consciously aligned with the academic and theoretical side of things.

I didn't really become interested in feminist theory until after my undergraduate degree. As an undergraduate I was quite conservative – not politically conservative but socially conservative in the department. Once I struck a teacher that I liked I did all their courses. It just so happened that the two teachers that I liked the best were men. I just happened to strike them first and so I did all their courses. One of those teachers was Stephen Knight and he was relatively interested in questions of gender. So you could say that they were feminist courses in their way but they weren't women's writing courses. It's funny to me now that I didn't do any of the feminist courses on offer.

But growing up, I had access to a very diverse library and I used to read my way around it. I was very lucky in that sense. I had a lot of access and I always knew a lot. There were always a lot of interesting women around who had various occupations. They worked in the theatre or were writers or academics; I had stacks and stacks of role models. My other closest female relative, my mother's only sister (she's still alive, Mum's not), was a doctor, a cancer specialist. So there was also a role model of a woman scientist and although I never had any interest in that I saw it.

There were also lots of contradictions in the milieu that I grew up in. Although it was explicitly feminist, it was really a set up in which a lot of the drive of it all was to be interesting to men. It was all about a certain kind of

heterosexuality, which I was thoroughly schooled in. I suppose my interest in feminist theory went alongside an interest that came from various different directions including trying to move away from that. And moving away from the contradictions that I had seen growing up between my mother's feminist principles, the way in which she was admired as a feminist, and her male-oriented behaviour. As I got older and she got more well known as a writer people used to turn up at the house to see her. Young women used to turn up to pay court to her but she was far more interested in the young men that would turn up – they were definitely the centre of her interest. By the time I went away to do my PhD I wanted to be in the world as an independent person and get away from this overwhelming mother. I moved to the other side of the world to do that.

I got a travelling scholarship after Honours and went to London. I'd never been out of Australia and I was excited to do that but scared also. I didn't know anything much about anything. My interests were more in American stuff but it was a lot more complicated to apply to America and it cost a lot of money. It was much easier to negotiate going to England because of the whole Commonwealth connection. I applied to London because I liked the idea of going to a huge city. The department wanted me to apply to Oxford but I thought it would be too conservative. In fact the department I went to, University College London, turned out to be extremely conservative and quite horrible in many ways.

I liked living in London even though I was lonely and alarmed to find myself not knowing anyone on the other side of the world in this dark, cold place and by myself for the first time ever. It took a while to make some friends but I did in the end. My supervisor was nice but we never had much academically in common. There wasn't much academically of interest to me in that department, but there was stacks to interest me in London in general.

Ironically, when I was coming to the end of my PhD I applied for whatever I could apply for and I got a postdoc at Oxford to do this 17th-century women project that I'd put together on spec. And actually Oxford turned out to be a very intellectually exciting place. It turned out to be a place that I could get on very well with. Straight away I joined the feminist theory group. I think I saw a flyer up somewhere. So I went along and that became my set – my friends. We used to meet every week and discuss a reading. It was the heyday of feminist theory so I read stacks of stuff about psychoanalysis. I'd never read anything about psychoanalysis much before. At its biggest the group had about 40 people going to it every week, so it was really very substantial. Some undergraduates used to come but really there were about a dozen of us who were either postgrads or postdocs and we were the core of it; it was a fascinating group of women. After a while I was involved in the running of the group. We would put together reading lists and read things and different people would introduce the reading each week. It was great for me; it was a great time.

There was also a spinoff group called Women, Text and History, which was early modern women stuff (15th to 18th century). In fact my first two academic publications came out of my involvement in those reading groups. Funnily enough, the first thing I ever published was a chapter on Christina Stead. It wasn't anything to do with what I worked on but it was the result of a lecture series. At Oxford, they used to have these lectures on women's writing and they asked our reading group to do lectures. I was supposed to do an Australian woman who was in print in England, so I did Christina Stead. And Oxford being Oxford it ended up being published. Although we didn't have or need money for this group, whenever you do anything in a place like that, there is so much infrastructure around, so much prestige attached to it, that things happen. The series of lectures became a book. And the other group, Women, Text and History, also produced a book. There was a readymade segue into academic

publishing. That was a tremendous perk of being somewhere like Oxford, being taken seriously.

That was all pretty exciting. And it was evident as soon as I got involved in that, that it was theoretical but also personal. It was probably the first time that I started to think of myself as a lesbian. I had always had primary relationships with men up to that point though I'd had various flings with women. But around that time I put it all together. There had been lesbians around when I was growing up. For all her progressive aspects, my mother was quite homophobic. She wouldn't have thought of herself as that but it was certainly dispreferred.

So I started to put it all together. By this time I was 26. So it was a combination of things. I left home when I was 16 to live with a man who was almost twice as old as me. I'd had a series of relationships within my mother's milieu, and then had extricated myself from that. Then I had another long-term relationship, this time with a man my own age. In fact we went to England at the same time – he went to Edinburgh to do his PhD at the same time that I went to London and that came apart over the next few years. But it wasn't until I went to Oxford that I had a major love affair with a woman. That was with someone from the feminist theory group and that's where I started to get some idea of an academic lesbian milieu, which I had never been in before and which is now the milieu I am most comfortable in. I've been in it for a long time, so it's now very familiar to me and, from this vantage point, it's no surprise to find that universities are chock-a-block with lesbians. I think it was a surprise to me at first purely because I'd grown up with this other model.

Around this same time there would have been a lot of other women like me who thought about sexual orientation or desire, not even as orientation but as a matter of choice. That was certainly my feeling – that I made a choice at a certain point. I don't think that's everybody's experience but it

was pretty much mine. At a certain point I made a choice to be open to that and see what it would bring. By the time I came back to Australia in 1990, to take up this job in fact, I had made a conscious decision to try to find a girlfriend when I got back. I had made a decision to start again, Australia second time around, as a professed lesbian and see how that went. In fact I remember coming back – and this is a mark of what things were like back then – I'd just got back and I went to a conference. I don't remember what the conference was, it wasn't just a feminist thing, it was a conference at UTS over a couple of days but it certainly had some kind of experimental, feminist, fictocritical kind of panel on it. I think it was Kathleen Fallon, Anna Gibbs and Jan McKemmish. I think Kathleen had just published *Working hot* and, in fact, my brother knew her and so he gave me that to read when I came back as part of my re-entry into Australia and Anna Gibbs I am now close friends with. Anyway, I remember going to the pub afterwards and Jan McKemmish said to me, "who do you fuck?" That was her opening and I thought, "whoa". People don't really talk to you like that in England; no one had ever said that to me before. I was thinking, "is this what it's going to be like in Australia?" And, in fact, I don't think anyone else ever said anything like that to me ever again. So I came back straight into that kind of environment then I met my girlfriend, Melissa, not long after I got back. We've been together getting on 17 years or so. So I was very lucky. And I started teaching women's writing courses and feminist theory and later queer theory – all that.

I had wanted to be an academic since I was a child. I had imagined being an academic in an English department. A few other things crossed my mind from time to time but it only came to seem more and more possible as I got older. I kept being good at the work. I love academic work. I published quite a lot of poetry when I was very young, mid teens, but that pretty much stopped when I did my PhD and went away. I did a little bit here and there. Then I picked it up again much later, only in the last seven years or so. I had pretty much decided that that had finished and I was just

an academic. In fact I even wrote something to that effect. I was asked to write something on the history of Australian women's poetry anthologies for a conference that was then published in *Australian Feminist Studies*. It was mainly about *Mother I'm rooted*, which was a landmark Australian feminist anthology edited by Kate Jennings. I said something in there about not returning to poetry. But then in the wake of that, and partly because of writing that, I came back to writing poetry again. I spent a leave in New York and I had some space and time and thought I'd give it a shot again. Out of that came my book of poems, *Versary*, which I published in 2002 and which has had a big impact really in my life. In a way it brought me back to the Mum persona, the poet/academic, but I feel very much like I'm my own thing within that now.

Versary had a much bigger effect on my life than I realised it would. People are far more interested in and far more responsive to poetry than academic writing. I don't see poetry and academia as being very different. They feel like parts of the same practice to me. People who are interested in my poems will be in this crossover world between the academy and creative writing. I think that poetry for me is a much freer territory than academic writing. Most of my academic publications are either on early modern women, with some work on Australian literature and in feminist theory. Academic writing is very painstaking, but the kind of writing that it suits me to do is very 'high', that is it is probably not very 'crossovery'. That's just what I do – it just comes out that way – but the poetry is more crossovery, more direct. That's been very interesting, Even though I think it's just as intellectual as anything else I do, there is something affectively open and direct about poetry that people connect with. That's very different from the academic writing I do.

Also part of what else was going on in the book of poems is that I decided to go into psychoanalysis around that time. It was about 1999. That's got a lot to do with coming back to poetry as well and there's a lot of stuff sort of

obliquely to do with that. So I've been seeing this woman, my psychoanalyst, since then. That's been to do with coming to terms with depression. There is a very big history in my family of depression. My mother attempted suicide when she was young, and my father constantly threatened to kill himself. I think my father is bipolar, but undiagnosed. So there are lots of mental problems in my family, anxiety and depression, and also great gifts. I lived with depression for a long time and didn't really do anything about. I grew up in this politically progressive world, but it was very anti-psychiatric and anti-psychoanalytic. It was hostile to anything like that. At the time I went into therapy I was just very depressed and I knew I needed help. I think that it can't be reduced to politics, but it has its own kind of politics.

I've now been taking antidepressants for all that time and may take them forever, I don't know. One of the things I've learned through being in analysis and taking drugs, and it's very interesting territory, is that it becomes more and more difficult to say what's biological and what's cultural. For instance, the ways in which I had come to feel that things like sexuality were a choice; I didn't feel that about depression. I didn't feel that was something I could escape, I felt like it kind of ran me. But that process of analysis and taking drugs (and I can't say where one stops and the other starts or how that might work itself out in the future) has made it possible for me to have a much more considered thought about my family history – how I am in the world and how it's possible, by knowing more about that, to make certain kinds of shifts in my life. That has been a very transformative experience for me.

It was certainly something that my mother hated. She used to say to me, "do you talk about me to that woman?" Of course! I don't think there has ever been psychoanalysis without people talking about their mothers. I grew up with this overwhelming mother and I was just a 'little her'. That's what she wanted I think and that's what I learned to do. But now I feel like I

have a much better, much more complicated understanding. I don't know that there's any type of freedom in it, but there's more flexibility, I think it puts more give and more agency into the system.

So I have become a great fan of psychoanalysis. When I was in England, the academic milieu, on the one hand, was extremely historical and, on the other hand, the feminist theory world was very psychoanalytic. So there is an abiding tension between those two that's still with me. I think I have stuck with the 17th-century stuff because half my career is built on it. Once you have publications in a certain area of expertise you tend to get more publications and you find yourself being an authority on something just by keeping going in it. Some of my students have done PhDs in early modern women and now they've got academic posts. I've been doing it long enough that there is a generation after me where I have explicit pedagogical connections. So I think the whole question about self-consciousness about what you do, what you choose to work in and what you choose to teach, all that, it gets very complicated.

When I first came back in 1990 I was a very gung-ho young feminist type. The first course I ever put on was a course on African-American women's writing. It was very of its moment. Now I wouldn't teach such a thing. I co-teach a course on contemporary American literature and I set some African-American women's poetry in it but I wouldn't frame a course in that way now. In fact, all over the Western world, women's writing courses have vanished. Those courses and women's writing lists had a big moment but they have more or less stopped now and people say things to me like, "oh, you don't need those things anymore" – a post-feminist rhetoric.

I feel very mixed about all that. There was a separatist moment in the academy but that moment didn't last very long at all. Certainly within universities it was always extremely under siege. When I first started

teaching here one of the things I had to do was teach in the compulsory full-year Renaissance course that all Honours students had to do. There were no women at all on the course syllabus. Of course that was what I was doing research on, so I succeeded in getting my very conservative male colleagues to allow me to teach one week in a full-year course on the two most prominent women writers of the Renaissance. At that time there weren't any editions and they would have been too expensive to set anyway, so there was a handout. And these classes were co-taught, there were actually two people in the room running the seminar; that was how we did it then. So this man that I taught this seminar with, who in other ways and at other times was perfectly okay to teach with, was demented when it came to this. He was absolutely enraged and he quite literally threw this handout on the floor. He said that it was a disgrace to have to do this and that he shouldn't have to. If anyone did that now, well, this particular scene I can't see happening. It wouldn't happen this way now. I was very young and new to teaching so I didn't say anything much. Afterwards I came to my office and cried. I was very traumatised. Whereas of course now, well it wouldn't happen; but if it did happen I would be furious. But back then I was just kind of cowed. I kept doing things but I was thwarted to some extent by these senior men; and mostly helped out by senior women.

There were lots of senior women here and certainly most would have called themselves feminists. One in particular, Judy Barbour, was and is very important to me and another, Pam Law, who taught me but retired just after I started working here. I had the great pleasure of teaching with Judy for a while before she retired. Margaret Harris was instrumental in my appointment. Margaret Clunies Ross helped me to get promoted.

There are now five female Professors in this department and my dealings with them have been mixed but they would all call themselves feminists and they are liberal feminists. I am a poststructuralist queer feminist, which

is another matter. Part of the relationship between feminism and other disciplinary ways of being an academic don't always go together well.

I was around when women's studies was set up here and I was among the first cohort of people who taught women's studies courses. This was in the days when the syllabus was taken from courses that already existed in other departments that were crosslisted. You could do a women's studies major but there was no department. Barbara Caine was the director and she was in the History Department then and she just did it; it was a left hand kind of job. Then I can't remember what year it was but Elspeth Probyn was the first person appointed to actually run what was still the Women's Studies Department. It changed its name almost immediately to Gender Studies, as most programs all over the world had. Now it's a big success. It's got half a dozen appointments and a thriving population of students. One of the full-time academics there, Natalya Lusty, was one of my students; I supervised her PhD, so there is also a second generation of feminists in that department.

But I do feel that feminism has receded from the academic landscape. I went to a big theory conference in Belgium a couple of years ago and I gave an early modern women paper and it was very evident that feminism was absent. Although they were happy to take the paper, it was the only feminist paper in the entire conference. In a sea of Lacanian analyses, gender was hardly engaged at all. So part of what seems to have happened in the rise of the 'ethical turn' is that the ethical turn seems to have often been a turning away from gender and sexuality to some degree. That moment in which gender first meant women, and then meant men and women – a critical analysis of both, is still there in the literature to some degree but nowhere near as powerfully. There was a tremendous amount of work of various kinds that went with that; that accompanied the rise of gender studies. But then there was a quite sudden turning away

from it – perhaps because it was not seen as institutionally viable, particularly in the American academy, which is the world-dominating one.

I think the backlash against political criticism and ideological correctness (or political correctness – a term I despise) was very powerful. I think that young scholars coming through thought they would not get jobs, perhaps quite rightly. It's not as though people aren't interested in other things. The word on the street is that English is being overtaken by political criticism but it's not the case at all. It's really been taken over to a great extent by a historicist model, which pays a kind of lip service to political engagement but still continues to read the same canonical texts. I mean Shakespeare studies was never dislodged one bit.

As it happens, and for reasons I'm not quite sure of, early modern women became a really thriving field. I went into it at the beginning partly because I saw an opportunity there. I thought it would make sense as a project to propose for the Oxford postdoc and it worked. Now there's more scholarship going on in early modern women's studies than in most of the rest of early modern literary studies. It's a weirdly disorienting experience. I think it's possibly true to say that more is published about gender and sexuality in early modern studies than any other topic. So that's a weird experience and I don't know what to make of it.

But perhaps it doesn't matter what you do, it doesn't matter what area you work in, there's huge productivity because there is so much anxiety about publication and employment. You can't do anything, you can't get any job, you can't move without heaps of publications – endless credentialing. So all these very capable people who are trying to be academics, if you say, this is what you must do and you ramp it up, people will on the whole do it.

Some students of mine who went to America and are now part of the American academy and talk the American talk, will say to me, "you can't

get a job without two books”. When I was an undergraduate there might have been one person in the department who’d published two books in their entire academic career. It certainly wasn’t the norm. Lots of members of staff didn’t have PhDs. It was a different economy completely and it’s nothing to do with people not being as able then or anything – it’s just a different economy. Certainly there has been a noticeable change in the economic imperatives of the university as a whole and that has affected the ways academics see themselves.

Most academics really, really want to be academics – it’s a vocational job. Mostly they wouldn’t know what to do if they weren’t academics. I don’t know what I would do if I wasn’t an academic, I suppose I’d be some other kind of writer. There’s always this weird double thing where you are supposed to, on the one hand, be extraordinarily grateful to have an academic job and, on the other hand, you’re just worked into the ground. You are told to jump through more and more hoops, not so much to keep your job but so as not to be shamed. The threat for me is not that I’m going to lose my job, I had tenure from the start, but it’s more a culture of shame. In this new culture the world is divided into those who have research funding and those who don’t. It’s an aristocrats and rank and file kind of model. But of course certain kinds of work are more likely to get funded.

Inside universities now we live in this crazy economy where many people will do anything to get research money, whether it’s the stuff they are most interested in or not. I was quite resistant to it for a long time and then in a classic sort of way I gave up resisting because I decided it was too damaging. Actually doing applications is not so bad; it’s the continual surveillance that gets you down. It used to be the case that you got an academic job and once you were credentialed you were kind of okay as long as you didn’t completely fuck up or something, as long as you did your job; but now the feeling is that it’s never okay.

I think that partly I turn to poetry as some way to avoid that pressure. Ironically and happily, writing poetry has proved to be beneficial in ways I didn't expect within the university – no doubt because I work in an English department and creative writing is on the rise in English departments. I didn't really expect that but it has been helpful to me in the job. I've gained more respect and more acceptance, because you get into this world of prizes and so on. I was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Award and things like that the faculty can put on its website. I was invited as a poet in residence to Brandeis University in America and I did a big reading at Berkeley, and this is all stuff that the university can use and extract value from. So that's turned out to be beneficial to it and great for me. I didn't know that stuff would happen or do it because of that. Whereas quite often I do research applications because of what it will mean. Even to do the application is worth something institutionally. You have to do that in order to be okay in the department. You count in some kind of way. They put all these figures together constantly. There are endless tables and accounting and it goes all the way up the line.

So at the moment I have what they call 'near miss' funding for being close to getting an ARC Discovery Grant last year. They invent all these other weird categories, in order to cope with the fact that very few people in humanities get large grants. In English, the people who have got them are almost invariably professors, and they are often for things like editions not for analytic work. That work is valuable but it's just one kind of work in the discipline. For the near miss money I got \$20,000 for this year from the university. Of course it was very nice, I was very happy to be given twenty thousand, but people in the department kind of spoke to me like it was good but it was like someone had given me \$2 – like, what would you do with that. But I thought no one has ever given me this huge amount of money and I'll do a lot with it. You can buy a lot of books for \$20,000. But the whole thing is kind of mad because the thing that's now taken to be real, more real, is the size of the grant.

I feel very nostalgic about the old days of feminist theory. I think there still is lots of great work being done and all the great stuff is still around, it's just not as prominent as it once was. Actually, thinking about it, it's probably more freakish that there was a moment in which it was so highly valued – that was probably the freakish thing! And now even though there are still people who work in those territories, and who've made successful careers on the basis of it, and I'm one of them, my sense is that the stakes have changed.

It's not that I want to go back to then and I don't think that's possible. I'm given a lot of freedom in what I teach and I'm not sure that I would run women's writing courses again myself. I'm not sure. But the opportunity pretty much went away for complex reasons and what was very clear was that it was always going to be a return to the canon, a kind of rejuvenated canon. The truism was that all the big canonical anthologies got revised and now what we had was a much more gender-balanced picture, and there's a bit of truth in that. The effect of it all was that departments got themselves someone or a couple of people who 'did' gender, as many as they thought they had to have to cope with some perceived demand. But the people who were already in place didn't alter their practices at all for the most part.

I remember a colleague saying to me that he had an 18th-century course which he'd like some help with. He had rung me up and asked me about 18th-century women's writing and I'd done all this stuff for him, given him lists. I'd fallen over backwards for him because I thought he was going to redo the course (I was being a good feminist). And then at the meeting the next day he said that he'd had a look at the women's writing and there was nothing suitable to put on the course. I was just flabbergasted. I was very critical of that in the meeting, which was kind of knocked down. And he said, "well you do women, so no one else needs to do it". I didn't teach

anything 18th-century, but the fact that there was a woman teaching something with women in it anywhere seemed to cover it. It was taken on as a special interest thing; even though in this department about 80% of students will be women.

I don't know how many of those students would identify as feminist. I hear a lot of post-feminist rhetoric from them. But one of the things that has changed over the years is that I teach very few small groups, that's mostly done by casual staff. I spend most of my life as a teacher lecturing to hundreds of students. I would say that I get a good response to the kind of things I teach. One of my big senior courses, *Reading sexuality*, routinely has 200 or more students. There will be always be a small contingent of more savvy students but I am always amazed that mostly they are quite naïve. They do the course in good faith, to try and learn something, and they don't always like what they learn. It is a self-selecting group in that they have to be open enough to sign up for it. When I first taught it I used to get a lot of complaints, homophobic complaints, that there were too many lesbians in the course; if there was one or two weeks on lesbian writers that was seen as overtaking the course. I do think the students are more comfortable with gay male stuff. I think the default of homosexuality was always men, just like the default of gender was always women. But I must say I rarely see a very conservative or bigoted essay from a student. Perhaps it's because they know better or maybe those students are in different courses.

Now I get a lot more students who are out, and I don't get so many of the offended ones. When I first used to teach *Reading sexuality* there would always be a small number of offended young women who said they were straight and what was wrong with that, who felt that it was all some sort of implicit criticism of them. I think the utopian idea of a gender-integrated curriculum is all well and good and but it's very hard to achieve. Someone like me who came through in the high moment of feminism in literary

studies is focused on the less canonical work. My whole training is oriented around gender from the other side and although I'm familiar with the canonical tradition, I know a lot more about the non-canonical than I do about the canonical.

So it's curious, it is a big reorientation, it's not an A plus B thing. I think this new generation of scholars, the best of them, are trying to do something with this legacy that is very fascinating. They are trying to sort out a response to that and I feel betwixt and between. I feel like it's all provisional. I had a lot more certainty when I started out as an academic about what I should be doing and what must be taught and all that sort of thing. I don't feel that level of certainty now. I hope that what I do is no less progressive, but it's in a different way. The way that things have shifted around it's not so clear what the progressive positions are. Now I think it doesn't so much matter which specific text I teach, I mean it matters to some degree but perhaps it's not the most important thing. It's more important how I teach them and what kinds of analysis I can help students to make. But I feel very passionately about it. I probably feel more passionately about the non-canonical generally than I do about gender specifically. I think gender is always central to whatever analysis you are going to make but I'm much more interested in how different kinds of investments and questions can be brought to bear on each other. That's how I do it, but I am more than happy as an academic and as a teacher to say I'm a lesbian and I'm a feminist.

In the early days of me saying that it meant a lot to me because I felt the path I'd travelled to get there, to be able to say it. Now it doesn't come with that sort of charge to me. I'm not sure what charge it might have to them. In the early days it had a heart on sleeve feeling to me and I was thrilled to say it and be it and all of that and I suppose that was all to do with the sense of what a big deal it felt like to me. Now it just feels everyday to me, but I think there is value in both. There is another value to it; I've always

had this joke with Melissa that if I didn't tell people I was a lesbian they probably wouldn't know. So I was saying, "I am, I am". I am interested in styles of masculinity and femininity and I'm interested enough in butch/femme stuff. But I'm more interested in styles of writing, it's endlessly variable, endlessly to be read. I think I always carry the legacy of this mother who styled herself as the queen of heterosexuality and I'm just happy to get out of that, just to be in a different space than that.

That dirty postcard woman: Sheila Jeffreys

I became a feminist in 1973. I had been teaching for two years at a girls' private boarding school in Britain and I read *Sexual politics* and the *Female eunuch* while I was there and immediately started teaching them in a discussion group in the evening in the Headmistress's lounge. It was a discussion group for sixth form and it was easy to start telling the students what was in those books. The Headmistress supported me in that, which was good.

I wasn't teacher trained, so I went back to my old university in Manchester to be teacher trained. And when I was there in that one year I joined the National Union of Teachers women's group and I started writing. They asked me to write a 500 word introduction to their new newsletter called *Women and Education*, which I did. And then I wrote something by request for the magazine *Libertarian Education* on discrimination towards girls in education. And that was it really; I was involved in writing on feminism. Then I went to teach in Derbyshire for a year and then on to London for three years teaching liberal studies before I went back up to University of Bradford to do a PhD.

I was in Leeds for two years and politically it went very well. There was all kinds of stuff going on. There were endless groups about women's education going on during this time. But I had to leave after those two years because things did not go well with my supervisor. I went back down to London with an unfinished PhD. It became my first book, *The spinster and her enemies*, which everyone assumes is a PhD because it's quite an important book. It was published in 1985.

While I was living in London I taught mainly in extramural departments. I helped set up the South West London Women's Studies Group and I was teaching for the WEA (Worker's Educational Association). I did that for

years. I also taught in a prison for teenage boys who'd raped women and killed their mothers and that sort of thing.

I also started teaching A level and O level history at the equivalent of something like a TAFE here – it was called a College of Further Education. And then I was invited to go to America to be a Fulbright Scholar in Residence on the strength of the first book. So I went to America for a year and I worked with Cynthia Enloe in politics at Clark University. When I came back I had no idea what to do next, so I went back to the College for Further Education and taught full time there for about three years.

I was there until 1991 when I came here to Melbourne. It was while I was working at the college that I wrote my second book. I used to get lots of holidays, about eight weeks in the summer; it meant that you could write books over the summer. It's much harder to do that at a university, particularly if you are teaching, it's almost impossible. You do it obviously, but you don't get the long holidays that make it easier to write books. I only get a month off a year. But I used to write books in my holidays and that was very nice, so that job was very good for me. That was from '86 to '91 and the book came out in 1990. I quite enjoyed teaching A level history and the students liked it. I was teaching all sorts of things like the age of dictators, communist Russia, Nazi Germany, Mussolini in Italy, all of that. But there was nothing feminist about it.

At that time my feminism was mainly activist based, but I was teaching feminism in the extramural and WEA programs that I was involved in. Through the '80s, I was teaching the history of sexuality, lesbian history, homosexuality and literature – all of that stuff, which I enjoyed tremendously.

Then I started thinking that I can't keep going on like this, I need a job in a university. So I started applying for jobs in Britain. But I was not getting

jobs; I was not even getting interviews mostly. I wouldn't get an interview for a job and then someone else I knew who didn't have a book out would get the position. I was beginning to get the message that I was too controversial for teaching women's history. I didn't even get a job at a college that offered two-year bridging courses for women to get into university, I didn't even get that!

So obviously I was seen as too controversial. I was very high profile in Britain. I'd been involved in creating something called 'revolutionary feminism' and a lot of people knew who I was. I'd also been involved in the late '70s in a very controversial paper. We wrote a paper for a leading revolutionary feminist group called 'Political Lesbianism: the case against heterosexuality', so I was also controversial for being a lesbian feminist.

So as a lesbian and a radical feminist I was pretty controversial. My first book, *Spinster and her enemies*, was pretty controversial and *Anticlimax*, my second book, was much more so. So at that time there was no welcome space for me in a university in Britain. I didn't have a PhD at that time but other people were getting jobs without books or PhDs – but not me.

So I got the impression in the late '80s that I was not going to get a job and then I saw this job here in Melbourne, advertised in the *Guardian*. It said that there was a three to five-year position in feminism, sexuality and gender, or those three words in some combination. And I thought, "I can do that", so I applied.

I'd never been to Australia. I knew nothing about Melbourne except that I'd heard it was rather stuffy. I got interviewed on the phone. My application was picked up by somebody in this department, a woman who said, "look, she's got two books and they are both being taught here". Apparently my application didn't make that very clear but that was the case – not many

people had two books back then. So I was interviewed over the phone, by the then Head of the Department, who was a man, and he was very interested. Then someone from Women's Studies was sent to interview me in London. Maila Stivens met me in London and she had been told to ask me would I be prepared to teach lesbian and gay politics and I said "sure". It was extraordinary really to be asked that in 1990. And I think I was the first person teaching lesbian and gay studies when I came here to the university. So that was fine and I got that job.

My partner, who was a geographer, made me a cardboard map of Australia with corks hanging off it. We had been together for about four years then. She had just finished her law degree and had been teaching geography, so she came with me. When I came home that day after the interview with Maila there was this map of Australia and we had a glass of champagne to celebrate. We had no idea what we were coming to but off we went.

So that's how I got here. When I first arrived there was a big fuss in some newspaper in Queensland about how I was teaching lesbian and gay studies, and all this fuss about 'lezzos' and who was this professor and how dare they etc. Of course, the Department defended me. It was a different time then because you could actually teach lesbian and gay politics. You couldn't do that now – doubtful whether a teacher could even teach women's politics because now everything is narrowing, narrowing, narrowing. At that time the idea was let a thousand flowers bloom. Students should have choice, students had demanded a feminist scholar in the department and so it eventuated. It was a department led by the demand of students and all of that is really changing now.

So I taught that lesbian and gay politics course only for a few years, or it was quite a few years on and off. I got 50 students the first year and then the numbers dwindled to about 33; the reason being that queer politics

took over. Shortly after I arrived queer politics was on the scene and it became so that the lesbians wouldn't come to my classes because they were getting all this anti-feminist stuff from queer politics. So the people who ended up coming were young heterosexual women mainly. They wanted to do everything I was teaching, so they came to the lesbian and gay politics class as well. But the lesbians were mostly avoiding me like the plague; because queer politics was taking over I was seen as this horrible 'feminist' person.

Politically I found moving to Melbourne very, very difficult because there wasn't any developed politics around pornography here. In fact, when I first arrived I'd thought there was a pornography group going in Fitzroy, where I lived, so I went along to this group and someone brought up the issue of sadomasochism. I'd been very involved in Britain in fighting against sadomasochism – there was a lot about it in my book – and I said, “bear in mind that lesbians get pornography too and we've got to fight that”. I had been involved in doing all of that stuff back in Britain and this young heterosexual woman said, “some of my best friends are lesbian sadomasochists”. So I said to her, “look, I'll bring some stuff along next week to show you”. She phoned me up in between and said, “we don't want you in the group, you've got old fashioned Dworkin feminism and we don't want you”. So, after 20 years of activism against porn, I was being told don't come, don't be there. That was pretty depressing.

Then I discovered that politics here was all about femocrats. In Britain we didn't have any women in positions in governments or things like that, we didn't have anything like that because we had Tories in government; it changed with Blair. So I was not familiar with this femocrat stuff. It seemed to me to all be terribly respectable and very liberal feminism and there just wasn't any radical feminism here as I was used to. It took me a while to find women and lesbians on a similar wavelength in any numbers. This is

easier now, interestingly, because of the formation of a radical feminist eList out of the Townsville feminist conferences.

I did set up a group called MLIT, just a discussion group for feminists in town. MLIT stood for Melbourne Lesbian Intellectual Terrorists. And if you came to talk you got an honorary MLIT. So women came to it but there was not much lively interest in books and ideas, whereas in Britain I'd been involved in organising and setting up the Lesbian History Group, which had fervent discussion of all kinds of things. Feminists were very helpful to us but only a few were much interested in ideas, such as those involved with Spinifex Press.

In 1994 there was the Feminist International Book Fair in Melbourne and I was on a session on prostitution or I was on a panel talking about prostitution. I had already asked Kathleen Barry, who was then the Director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women in the US, if I could set up a branch in Melbourne and she said yes. So I said from this panel that I wanted to set up a branch here in Melbourne and is anybody interested? Quite a few women said they were interested, half a dozen or so, and we started to meet. And so from that we've now got an email list that has about 70 people on it, so I guess I became involved in developing anti-prostitution feminism in this country. So I did discover some women who either had radical feminist politics, or developed them, through doing that. So it got a bit better from then on. But in the first few years it was really, really difficult. Very, very, very difficult!

I've had a pretty good run in the Politics Department, people have been pretty friendly to me but of course I don't fit in.

I got a PhD by the way. When I got here I was advised that I should sign on for a PhD because Les Holmes, who appointed me, thought I could just put one of my books in and get a PhD. They gave PhDs for books at this

university at that time. It was a system that was accepted, even Oxford and Cambridge did that at the time. Then that stopped and they said they weren't going to accept books, you have to sign on and do a PhD, which was a pain in the neck but I signed on at Monash. I wrote my next book, *The idea of prostitution*, which was accepted as a PhD because I was signed on when I wrote it.

I was never really involved with the Women's Studies Department here. It was already set up when I arrived. I was quite alarmed when I arrived because it became clear to me very quickly that the ideological persuasion of women's studies here was postmodern and therefore was not going to be particularly sympathetic to my brand of feminism.

And then a few years back they changed their title from Women's Studies to Gender Studies. My courses were all listed in the Women's Studies program. But then they wanted to change it to Gender Studies. They had a meeting about it, with all the teachers and I said that I didn't like it, and I gave all my reasons why I dislike the word gender and I said that I don't want to be associated with it. The reasons given for wanting to change was the word women's studies: it was thought that gender was more marketable internationally for things like the MA course. I'm not keen on women's studies either, I think it should be feminist studies – I don't understand women's studies. We need to understand the way the world works, not study women, but obviously feminist studies was not an option. I said I would be happy to still be in there if it was Women's and Gender Studies or Gender and Women's Studies as some places have chosen to do. I thought that was a reasonable compromise but that wasn't accepted, so I left and took my courses out of the program.

It was a very difficult decision. I think the move to gender harmed women's studies pretty much everywhere. I mean what the hell is gender studies? I now write a huge amount about transgenderism, and gender is the

problem that I write about – but gender as the problem, not that I want to teach gender studies. You could have transgender courses, there's transgender studies now, but it doesn't help, does it? I mean we want to end gender, not have gender studies: gender is the problem.

What has happened more recently is that they downgraded Gender Studies down to a minor. They said that there weren't enough students going through to the major, so they downgraded it to a minor and I think they did that with most of the 50 interdisciplinary programs. So much has changed in women's studies, I remember when I first arrived here we had a women's studies committee where all the women who were teaching would get together and any other people who were interested. I remember once giving a presentation to the Vice-Chancellor. There was a meeting on the importance of mainstreaming women's studies, quite a big meeting with the Vice-Chancellor attending and other important people and I gave a presentation on why it was important to mainstream feminism in the university and it was all taken very seriously – can you imagine that happening now? The day of women is so passed that it's inconceivable.

When I first got into this department, I would look at my colleagues' course syllabuses and try to get them to put more about women in, and sure, people might have got a bit fed up with me, but now it is inconceivable to try and do that. And back then I was in the Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Studies Committee representing the Department and Pat Grimshaw, who set up women's studies here, and we got the forms changed for new courses so that you actually had to say when you were setting up a new course whether it covered gender. Now, I don't know if that requirement is still in there but nobody would certainly take it seriously in any way. But at that time it mattered, you were able to bring those things up and have those discussions. Feminism became less and less and less acceptable in the '90s. When I first arrived in '91 there was still a hangover from second

wave feminism but the '90s were the era of post-feminism: girls pretending to be porn models, sluts and prostitutes and that made them feminists.

That cultural change was very deliberate because it was created by the media; so it was not something that women and girls did to themselves. But the pornography industry and the sex industry were immensely successful in marketing feminism as being sexualisation in the '90s. That was immensely undermining. It meant that old-fashioned feminists like me, dinosaurs as they call me, from the '70s, the Andrea Dworkin type dinosaurs, were extremely unpopular because everything was sexualised to an extraordinary degree.

And that's partly why women went off feminism during the '90s. They were desperate to give their loyalty oaths to male dominance by wearing high heel shoes and showing the most stomach and whatever it is that the girls have to do. It was a very, very, very bad time for feminism and I don't see any signs of that changing around, but as far as the university is concerned feminism just went off the radar.

What has kept me going is the fact that I like teaching and my students are marvellous – I love them, they are always fantastic. What kind of a job is it where you are allowed to make feminists? You're not allowed to do that, but I do. And now I'm sitting here and, because it's the end of the semester, I'm getting all these really lovely emails from students. I got one yesterday from a student, a person actually who is not one of my students but a friend got her to come along and then she got all her friends to come along and she said, "what can I do? I'm a radical feminist now, are there groups around, people I can talk to? I'm feeling so isolated"; so getting those sorts of emails is just lovely. And I get lots of my students bringing people along, not just people's boyfriends, sometimes mothers and friends. So that is an extraordinary thing to be able to do and get paid for.

Also my job enables me to do my activism. If I am invited to a women's NGO conference somewhere my university wants me to go, they see that as part of my work, I can get leave and I can go. For example, I was invited to participate in a big conference in Sweden, run by a women's disability group, on violence against women with disabilities. Obviously, the conference organisers paid for me to go not the university, but they still see that as part of my work. The university will pay for one trip a year, so last year I was able to go to the University of Oxford, where there was a one-day conference memorial for Andrea Dworkin and the conference organisers couldn't afford to pay my airfare from Australia, but they said they could pay from within Europe, so the university did pay for me to attend that conference as a research trip.

All of that is marvellous! I do my political work and it still has meaning for the university. In fact in the future it's going to have more meaning because the university is now introducing this thing called knowledge transfer, so that everybody's promotion and everything will now depend on three things: research, teaching and knowledge transfer. And knowledge transfer, in theory, includes lots of things I do and I do a huge amount of them.

I am still involved in the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. We've just done a shadow report for New Zealand about CEDAW (Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) and we've done that here because, although we have two members in New Zealand, they weren't in a position to do it. Most of the women who are in CATWA (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Australia) now are undergraduate students, Honours students and postgrad students. It's lovely to know that it forms a network of women so that younger women can get involved. I also feel that I am training activists because they are writing reports and doing all sorts of things. So my students are involved in all of that and I think that's very important and I love it.

At the moment, I've got 132 students in *International gender politics*, and about 100 in *Sexual politics*, but it's very hard to say how the support has changed over the years. *Sexual politics* is my main course, which includes pornography and everything else – my flagship course, the real nitty-gritty of radical feminism. It can be difficult to teach and sometimes it takes a long time into the course before it drops in but the moment it does, that's it. At some point I think it's got to happen that the really big campaign amongst young women against pornography has to get off the ground again. I think pornography will be the issue that gets feminist activism going again. It's starting to happen in other places, but it's not happening in Australia just yet.

In America things are really happening again, and in Britain, there's young radical feminist reading groups being set up. They are reading stuff from the '70s, books and things I can't even remember reading. And of course there is all this fantastic feminist writing online, feminist blogging like *witchywoo* and *Laurelin in the rain* – fantastic stuff. And there's one here in Australia too, by a young woman called Alex, her blog is *Mad Sheila's musings* – nothing to do with me – she's 22 apparently and the quality of her writing is fantastic. So that is all happening out there, but there's nothing really happening on the ground that young women can get into.

But you do have to think about how would they do it now? I was thinking this when I was walking into work this morning. Back in London, we used to demonstrate at the sex shop on the corner because it was selling pornography and Channel Ten News would come and film us. There'd be six of us with placards walking up and down, backwards and forwards in front of the shop and Channel Ten News would film it and it would be on the news that evening.

Now that the whole of Western culture is totally pornographised, can you imagine us outside the corner store with a placard? So where would women even get in to start their protest about the fact that basically huge amounts of their lives is completely controlled by the values of pornography? It's so huge and so far reaching, whereas when the problem was developing in the '70s, we were able to fight everything that happened as it happened. Now I don't know how you would start, a news crew would certainly not be interested. I mean we've got legalised prostitution in this town, what could they do? One of the extraordinary things is how little information people have. For instance, the prostitutes in Melbourne use local anaesthetic to numb their vaginas to be able to work as prostitutes. I have used the safety tips for sex workers from the South Melbourne Community Health website, as a discussion point in my class. I put them up and say what do you think of all of this? But we are supposed to think this is a wonderful job!

I've just written a little bit on this into the CEDAW report for New Zealand because they've got an occupational health and safety procedure, which talks about overuse injuries. Basically that means be careful of a bad back and make sure your bed is at the right height and of course I wrote in it that there is nothing about the overuse of the anus and vagina. You can't mention that but that's the reality – pain, pain, pain, and that's what the local anaesthetic is for. It's extraordinary stuff really but that's the situation we're in.

A whole new generation of young women are going to have to overturn it and I just hope that some of the young women who are coming through my courses or doing PhDs with me, will be part of all of this. I'm sure they will be, but I'm concerned because the tradition of activism is gone now and it doesn't seem possible for women to get together and know what to do.

What happened in the '80s is that sadomasochism and pornography became popular amongst lesbians. In my mind that totally undermined any of our possibilities for doing anything much in terms of activism because the opposition called itself feminist. That's why I'm involved in the movement against sadomasochism and lesbian pornography. When we got here lesbian sadomasochism was huge! There were lesbians in S&M costume, with their pit bull terriers, with collars with studs on, all the way down Brunswick Street – it was incredible.

So feminism was just totally split by that, but I now think it's much clearer what's going on. There has been Ariel Levy's book about raunch culture and I think there are young women now who are able to see the differences. I think it's becoming clearer, it's not as confusing anymore.

I knew nothing about the situation here, but it was pretty similar: sadomasochism was big and it became more so over the next couple of years.

I do think that's changing now. You don't see any lesbians sitting with their pit bulls in studs in Brunswick St anymore. So I think sadomasochism has had its peak but it's done its job. And the job was to smash feminists out of the way and instantiate something called 'rough sex' if you like. Sex is now often related to aggression and it's painful. They've got rid of all those values of loving women that were created around feminism and lesbianism. So it's done its job.

We don't need sadomasochism anymore. Lesbians all think that having a little porn is a perfectly fine thing. Certainly not all lesbians, but many do. There are clubs now where they strip and so on. That's all happened. I'm sure there is some sadomasochism out there but they don't really need it because everything has been smashed away already. It was very clever. I

would never have thought of all of this, but it was very clever. The whole thing came from the sex industry.

My more recent work has been about beauty. I saw the high-heeled shoes, dreadful shoes with pointy toes and high heels, coming into fashion. I thought it was getting worse. I'd known for years that I had to write something about beauty, so I decided that was the moment. It was all getting too much, the shoes were too much. Why should women be tortured? The work has been very well received. Of course there are people who hate it, lots of people, but huge numbers of people love it. Lots of young women love it. Obviously it was exactly suited to young women. I wanted it for young women, I did it for young women, I didn't do it for women in their 50s. I did it for women who are 24 and up with it they cannot stand or put. And that's exactly who likes it. So that was great.

In theory that book was very different for me. I'd been writing about the sex industry and pornography for so long and I had to write on something that I knew absolutely nothing about. I had to get out there and find out what was happening in fashion. I'm not interested in the least in fashion, but I had to find out what all these fashion designers were up to, what they were designing. It was absolutely fascinating. Now when I meet young women around the place they think I know all this stuff and I don't really. I just know the bits that I found out but, because it's the world they live in, it's the magazines they read, they know all about this beauty stuff, whereas I just delved in and found little bits and pieces of it.

I think that is the problem, a lot of young women think they have to keep their heads down and not be too radical. So they all went postmodern in the '90s; they all went in for this unintelligible stuff! No feminism came out of that, no activism can ever come out of it, no clear head can come out of it, no passion can come out of it, nothing can come out of it. But they all did it desperately to stay in the game. Now I don't think there is a game to

be had to be honest. I don't think you can do feminism at all. We've got to make spaces for it to happen outside the university. I won't be replaced when I retire. They are not going to bring into the university someone like me. In the future you have got to come in with grant money. Because the federal government cut university funding so dramatically, they are now always saying that academics have to bring in money themselves through grants and paid consultancies, but that means nothing radical can ever happen because you cannot get money for anything even in the least radical.

When I get postgrads I'm always saying to them, what is your area? And I try to fit my students into niches and massage them in, so they will be secure. Where are these wonderful young women going to fit in to the academy? They are so smart and so capable, what will happen to them? We are in a position now in this faculty where we can't appoint new staff; we are trying to shed staff. That is not a good position to be in.

Take for example the piece I wrote on pornography for the *Sydney Morning Herald* last week. I had huge difficulties getting it through the editorial process because it started off with all the titles of the films in it and saying what was really going on. It all had to be taken out. The editor said that I was using shock tactics and that couldn't be allowed. In the end, the editor changed it completely so it didn't make sense. It was nice that he asked me to write it, and it was the big editor who wouldn't allow any of the 'dirty' words in, but the editor who asked me to write it changed it so it didn't make sense anymore. He actually changed one line to say that the people in pornography have enemas as a consequence of being in porn, but in fact they have enemas so they can have anal sex. It is extraordinary that so little is understood about something that is so common. They cut out all the rude words, and have no idea what I'm talking about; they transform the sentence. All the time in my life I've felt like I was sending a dirty postcard. That is basically what I'm doing in my work. I'm saying, "it's

absolutely horrendous"! All I get from people is, "calm down, calm down, take the dirty words out" and people turn away from you at dinner parties. I don't really enjoy having to be the person who sends the dirty postcards and I think that is one of the reasons why people are not always very fond of having me around. I'm that dirty postcard woman!

It will always need doing again: Terry Threadgold

I certainly didn't enter the academy being a feminist. I was being a medievalist at Sydney University and I didn't even think about feminism until I was having my first baby. At the time I was a teaching fellow in the English Department at Sydney University. I hadn't quite finished my Honours/Masters degree and I found out I was pregnant. I went to see my supervisor and Head of School just to tell him I was pregnant because I was excited. I left the room having resigned. What he actually said to me was, "oh, that's wonderful but we'll be sorry to lose you". I was so taken aback by this at the time that I didn't actually say, "well I don't actually mean to be going anywhere".

Over the next couple of months I told him that I hadn't actually come in to his office to resign but just to tell him I was pregnant and that I wanted to stay. He wouldn't believe me and he kept saying, "you'll feel different when you've had the baby". And I kept saying, "no I won't, I'll still want my job when I've had the baby". It took a long while to get the message through. Even when I was in hospital having delivered my baby, he called in to see me and said, "well, you don't really want to come back now you've had the baby", and I said, "yes, yes, I do actually". This was 1968. It took until I was actually at home with her that he was willing to accept that I really wanted to come back to work and then he renewed my Teaching Fellowship position and I went back to work.

I think I might have been the first person in the English Department at Sydney Uni to have a bassinet under the desk. I was married at the time to an academic who was working in the Geology Department at Sydney and we used to share the responsibility for childcare. I was breastfeeding for the first seven or eight months, but we used to share her back and forth. She'd be in his laboratory or under my desk. After that of course, lots of women had babies and brought them into the Sydney English Department.

But it was that experience that finally woke me up to the fact that things were a bit different for women than they were for men.

I'd never really experienced anything prior to that that seemed like a difficulty. It seemed to me that I was getting all the same chances. In fact there were a lot of very bright women working in the English Department at that stage and I think we were all being given terrific opportunities. Nobody was actually privileging the boys over us, we were getting the jobs, but suddenly babies come and make a difference. A number of us had babies soon after that, so it did become an issue. It probably hadn't happened quite like that in that way before because, if you think back to 1968, most of the senior positions, including in the humanities, were filled by people from the UK. It was a very postcolonial, colonial even, atmosphere. People didn't feel that locals were well qualified so they brought people in from overseas. People who actually might not have got very far overseas came to Australia. When I think back to that Head of School, he had an Oxford MA, not a PhD and had never published anything. There were a lot of people like that. I think that the generation that I was part of was the first generation of Australian scholars who, as a group, got somewhere in the Australian academy. Of course later on there was a movement back the other way with Australians getting jobs in universities overseas. It is an interesting history in terms of that.

About that time was when I started thinking about feminist issues. I didn't really get involved in feminist theory straight away because I had another baby and took a couple of years off. From 1968 until the late '70s I had a reasonably interrupted academic career. I was bringing up children and doing other things. Interestingly enough the same person who had said those things about my first baby came looking for me after my second baby and wanted to offer me a job. He contacted me after my second baby. I'd been very sick after the second baby and I had to take a year off, but when I was recovering he rang me up and said, "look, Terry, I don't know how you're feeling about jobs these days but I'm about to advertise a

lectureship and if you're still looking for a job in the English Department then this is one you should apply for because we are not going to have any more positions available for a while". Things were tightening up by that stage.

I did apply for that job and got it and I was back in the system from then on. I would have to say that in that system, despite the baby issue, I don't feel that I ever struggled as a woman in the context of that English Department. There were good senior women in place. Leonie Kramer was there at the time. She could hardly be considered a feminist but she did look out for younger women. Even the senior men, like Gerry Wilkes, were extraordinarily open about the gender thing as long as people were doing their job well. They were much more traditional and conventional about the things you taught. I was talking to someone in Hong Kong just last week about how you were never allowed to teach cultural studies or media studies in the English Department. I introduced a degree in semiotics at one stage because that was the only name under which they would allow that kind of work to be done, mainly because they didn't know what semiotics was.

There were lots of strangenesses about working there, but being prejudiced against women wasn't one of them. When I applied for my senior lectureship, that would have been late '70s, early '80s, I'd actually had no publications at that time because I'd been at home having babies. I applied on the basis of teaching and I had very, very strong support from the men of the department. You would never get to that level now without publications. My publications didn't really start until the early '80s. There was a gap of ten years when I taught and did research but didn't actually publish. You could never do that now as a young woman academic. If you didn't have the publications coming out, you just wouldn't get anywhere. There was a lot of quite strong masculine support, probably because some of the men hadn't published much themselves. The whole environment

was different. When I think back on it, we could never do it again in quite that same way.

So it was in the early '80s that I began to think feminist theory and I became much more interested in these types of questions. I can actually locate it in a particular moment. There was a conference I ran here in Sydney in 1982 or 1983; it was a conference called *Semiotics, Ideology and Language*. There was a conference with it that I was also involved with called *Future Fall*. The *Future Fall* conference was being run by the Fine Arts Department at Sydney. At the time the Fine Arts Department were into French theory in a big way and Meaghan Morris and others were working with the French Department translating Michel Foucault and that sort of thing.

My awareness of feminism really emerged in the early '80s, around those two conferences. This was when I worked for the first time closely with Liz Grosz. The *Semiotics, Ideology and Language* conference was one that I ran with Liz Grosz and Michael Halliday, who was a British linguist who was then Head of Linguistics at Sydney Uni, and Gunther Kress who was working at UTS at the time. It was an unusual group of people in lots of ways. But it was talking to Liz and working with her around that conference that made me aware of things I should be reading and thinking about. Then we brought over Gayatri Spivak for the *Future Fall* conference, which ran the same week. I had a lot of contact with Gayatri about that conference and a lot of conversations. It was really after that that I started reading and thinking in earnest about these questions. At that time I also became aware of what was happening to other women academics, like Liz, at Sydney Uni.

Liz was one of my pals at Sydney University. Liz had been working in the Philosophy Department for many years at that stage. She was a lesbian woman and I think there may have been big differences between what

happened to lesbian women and what happened to hetero women in terms of promotions. Plus the fact that she was in Philosophy made it more difficult. The Philosophy Department was divided in half after the strike – into traditional and modern. Liz was in the modern section with Moira Gatens. She had been trying to get permanency in that department for an enormously long time and was always being rejected, just never getting it. Finally, John Burnheim, who was Head of the Modern Philosophy part, decided to take it to the faculty as an issue of discrimination. He broke all confidentiality arrangements around promotion committees and everything else. He got the board to sign a petition and she got the promotion. It caused a huge stir! There was outrage among a lot of the senior men in the place that he had broken the confidentiality agreements related to promotions committees, so people knew what was going on in promotions committees.

About the same time I became aware of Carole Pateman and what had happened to her at Sydney Uni. She had been in Politics I think, but whatever department it was, she had tried for years and years to be promoted and had never got the promotion. Finally she had taken a Chair in the United States. Interestingly, Carole is now working at Cardiff like me and we have had some great meals together. I was becoming aware of things that were happening to women and the feeling around the faculty was that Carole didn't get promoted because she was too good. She had published and she was doing too much. People thought the men were absolutely frightened out of their minds about this terribly able woman who might want to take things over. So she went overseas and never came back. Germaine Greer was another one. She had been there during my undergraduate degree at Sydney and she was a couple of years ahead of me in the English Department. I had been very aware of what she was doing as a student activist and in student drama and I knew she had gone on to Oxford and never come back.

During the next few years I was involved in setting up Women's Studies at Sydney University. Barbara Caine was also there at the time. So it was Barbara, Liz and I who were the central people pushing to get the centre established and to get critical theoretical feminisms taught. Barbara ended up as director of Women's Studies. Marie de Lepervanche and Gill Bottomley were also involved. It was an interesting time, because there was still a lot of opposition. There was a group of women from the hard sciences who were very much against the kind of feminist work that we wanted to do and the kinds of theories we were espousing. I remember a couple of quite heated and lengthy meetings when the centre for Women's Studies was being set up. There was a clear division between the social scientist feminists and theorists on one side and the hard scientists on the other. The hard scientists didn't really believe that the Centre for Women's Studies was necessary and certainly didn't believe that it should have a theoretically focused working brief.

I did start teaching a course within the English Department that included feminist theory but I think it was called 'Semiotics'. You couldn't get away with teaching a feminist theory course in English in those days, but I used to teach all sorts of things under the name of semiotics. The history of that course is interesting in itself. In the early '80s, just after that conference, there were a group of very bright students in the English Department who were heading in to fourth-year Honours in literature. At this stage the English Department was divided into early English Literature and Language, and Literature. I was in English Literature and Language, partly because that let me do lots of things I couldn't have done in Literature and partly because of history. The students came to me and said we would like you to teach us a theory course for fourth-year Honours, but we don't know whether Gerry Wilkes will let us do it. They asked if I would be prepared to develop such a course and teach it. I said, "yes I would be interested" and they said, "well what should we call it?" So we decided we'd call it Semiotics. Semiotics was a fairly new and radical development

at that stage because it was theory based and theory driven. I taught all sorts of things as semiotics: I taught feminist theory, Foucault, Derrida. I taught anything and everything under the name semiotics.

In those days there were no validation committees or external examiners or anything, you just proposed a course and taught it. So when I proposed this Honours subject, I remember Margaret Harris was sent to see me by Gerry Wilkes. She sat down in my office and said, "Gerry has sent me to talk to you about this course you're proposing for fourth-year Honours" and I said, "fine, what's the problem?" She said, "well, can we see the curriculum?" No one saw the curriculum in those days; when I think back on it, it seems insane. I said, "of course you can, it's all written, you can have a look at it". She said, "well, he really sent me to see if it was a respectable course and something that the students should be let do". She said, "is it?" and I said, "yes, I wouldn't be doing it if I didn't think it was respectable". "Good", she said, "then that's what I'll go back and tell him!" and that's what she did. She was very concerned to give Gerry the answer he wanted and she trusted me. She was very supportive, as was Liz Webby and a whole range of other women who were at that stage rising to the surface in the English Department and later on became Heads of it. But she had been given a job to do, which was to reassure Gerry and that's what she was about. There was really no probing or criticism. I suppose what they were trying to establish was that it was going to be hard enough to be at fourth-year level. So the course ran and that was probably the first theory course I taught. It was at fourth-year Honours level and to a group of very bright people who are now in very senior positions in the Australian academy in various ways.

That was the first course of that kind that I taught and I taught it for years as part of fourth-year Honours in literature. The course was very successful and the students liked it. It was the first injection of theory into the English literature context. Then I developed a couple of similar courses

at undergraduate level and I taught those for a number of years. Again they were very successful courses. People came to them in droves because this was theory at a time when theory really mattered and needed to be taught.

At the same time as I was doing that, we had set up the Women's Studies centre. Barbara Caine was running it and it had a curriculum that was heavily theoretical in a number of its modules. I taught some of those, with Moira Gatens and Liz Grosz. They're the people I remember and that I was closest too but there may have been others. It was an interdisciplinary program and run as a separate centre. Students could take courses from that centre alongside their majors in other subjects. There was a whole year of women's studies that they could take. In the end the hard scientists did actually contribute modules to that program, which were less theoretical. In the end everyone accepted that feminist theory was necessary and it had to be there in a major way. We all felt very strongly about that at the time because the difficulty of everything else was that we were just adding women to what was there and we weren't really theorising the structures that were making it difficult for women to operate. So feminist theory was very important at the time.

During that same period in the 1980s, I set up the Centre for Performance Studies at Sydney University with Gay McAuley from the French Department and Tim Fitzpatrick from Italian. It's interesting how I got involved in that because I never knew anything about the theatre. During the '80s my children had reached high school and I was finally able to travel. There was an amazing summer school every year in either Indiana, in the US or Toronto in Canada. It was run by Tom Sebeok in the US and a man called Paul Bouissac in Toronto both of whom were heavily into semiotics as a kind of industry. It was called the International Summer School in Structuralist and Semiotic Studies (ISSISSS) and it lasted for six weeks in the summer. They would bring in a dozen world figures from the

semiotics area every year. One particular year I was asked to review the whole summer school for the journal, *Semiotica*. It meant that I had to dip in and out of all sorts of things that I might not normally have gone to. So I went to a course run by Erika Fische-Lichte, a feminist theatre scholar. I found it absolutely fascinating and thought it was the most brilliant way to teach people about intertextuality and communication and critical theory because you could do it through theatre.

I came home and I was telling people in the English Department about the course and the drama person in the English Department at the time, I can't think of his name and he's died long since, but anyway he said, "we've got a project coming up with Strindberg's *Miss Julie*". They had funding to put on a performance and he said that I might like to be involved with the production. I became fascinated with the rehearsal process, the way that meanings were being constructed and remade and how bodies were being shaped. I sat through a six-week rehearsal process, with my fourth-year Honours students from my semiotics course and taught them all this stuff through the rehearsal process that year. They produced the most amazing essays and results and I thought this is brilliant. I started talking to other people in the faculty who were interested in semiotics and theatre, and that's how I ended up with Gay and Tim. They were really the driving force for the new centre for theatre and performance studies, but I joined in with them and worked with them on it. We set that up and it became a full undergraduate major, just like the Department for Women's Studies did.

Within English I had developed my teaching into a full pathway in semiotics – with people who were doing semiotics. It was into first, second and third year at that time and along it went. It was basically feminist and critical theory, plus linguistics and semiotics. By the time that I left the Sydney English Department, I was only doing about 0.4 in the English Department. I was doing 0.2 in my semiotics role, 0.2 in performance studies and even 0.2 in women's studies, so I was doing this whole

interdisciplinary thing. That was very interesting in terms of the way those things developed.

By this stage I was publishing. The first significant publication came out of that conference, *Semiotics, ideology and language*. I wrote a paper for that which was published in a significant journal and that was really my breakthrough into refereed journal articles. From then on I just kept publishing, but by then I had the energy and the time. There is a health story to go with this. I often tell it, as I just have, as being a mother and having children in the '70s being the reason I didn't publish but, in fact, I think it was much more significant than that.

I'd had my first baby by caesarian, so when I had my second child, I wanted to have it naturally. The doctors said that was fine but if you get into trouble we will do another caesar. The problem was that they didn't pick up that I was in trouble. I actually ruptured my uterus and nearly died in childbirth with my second baby. I had massive haemorrhaging. They gave me 48 pints of blood in a couple of days, and I had several bouts of surgery to sort me out. I was in intensive care and hospital for three months after the birth, so that gives you a sense of the seriousness.

After that I appeared to be all right except that, throughout the '70s, I struggled with ill health. In fact I was suffering from hyper-pituitarism, which is a total failure of the pituitary gland, as a result of the haemorrhage in childbirth. No one diagnosed that until 1981. It's really interesting to see when I began to publish because I always felt that it was just me and I was too tired with two small children – but in fact I was very ill. I also suffered from coeliac disease, which is a gluten allergy. That was undiagnosed for ten years. Because of the coeliac disease I was losing weight and not absorbing food. I was really very ill and taking care of two small children and working full time. I always felt that it was just me; that I was too tired. People convince you that you are a woman and therefore you should just

not try to do things because actually you're a bit neurotic and unstable. It was one of those awful medical stories, the doctors had more or less convinced me that I was a neurotic woman and there wasn't really anything wrong with me and I was just exhausted. I knew I was exhausted quite a lot of the time.

I was diagnosed quite by accident by a woman doctor, who had been my doctor in the hospital when my second child was born. She was the specialist called in to look after me when the second child was born and all this mayhem broke out, so she had seen me through that but I had not seen her again since. All the doctors I was going to with diarrhoea, stomach problems and feeling tired – these were all men. They would diagnose bits of the problem here and there but nobody ever got the whole picture. So in 1981 I was visiting a friend up in the maternity ward at RPA, a friend who had just had a baby. I was coming down the lift and this woman got in and I was thinking she is looking at me and I thought I think I know you too from somewhere. When we got out of the lift she said, "Terry Threadgold", and as soon as she spoke I knew who she was. She was Joan Storey, the specialist who'd looked after me in hospital.

She said to me, "what's the matter with you – you're not well", and I said, "no I haven't been terribly well Joan", and she said, "come over here". She sat me down in the foyer of the hospital and took a medical history. She said, "I want to see you in my office tomorrow morning; I think I know what's wrong with you". I was back there the next morning and she had me in hospital the next day getting a pituitary functions test and a month later having a biopsy for coeliac disease. Within six weeks, she had me in treatment, on hormone replacement therapy, which I needed because when your pituitary stops functioning you just don't make any hormones. After treatment, I was another woman, just like that! She had been doing research on the consequences of massive haemorrhaging in childbirth and she knew of the connections only very recently, within six months,

between that and pituitary failure and coeliac disease. So there is the very interesting reason, I think, why I wasn't publishing and it was more than just the fact that I had two children and was busy. So from the '80s onwards, as I was healthy again, I just never stopped working.

I went to Monash in 1993. My husband had died in 1991. I had been divorced from him for about three years before he died but because he was in Sydney and my children were still teenagers I wouldn't have gone anywhere because they needed both parents around. So he died in '91 and that was a liberating moment for me in interesting ways. It provided space to do something else and I was looking around for Chairs by that stage. I had already become Associate Professor at Sydney University, again with a lot of support from all sorts of people. Among them were senior women who were around in greater numbers than they had been when I was first applying for a senior lectureship ten years before. So I was starting to look for Chairs; I had been Head of the English language section for a couple of years.

I applied for one Chair in Adelaide, which Penny Boumelha actually got and that was an interesting experience for someone who was by then a reasonably senior feminist in the Australian academy. I applied for a Chair in the English Department and got a phone call from Susan Magarey who was on the appointment committee, a day or so later saying we are going to offer you a Chair and think you should be told at this point that the offer is coming. Then she had to ring back a couple of days later to say they are not going to offer you the Chair, because the whole English Department had rebelled against me going there. It was a very conventional English Department at that time and they didn't want somebody who was into performance studies and interdisciplinarity and all the things I was doing. So that was an interesting wakeup call about the way things still had not changed.

At this time Women's Studies was well established; Susan had been running it with Susan Sheridan for a number of years. So you thought you had this thing fixed and then there was this backlash, basically from men in the Department. Penny was a great scholar, I don't for one minute want to say that she shouldn't have got that Chair, because she was terrific, but she also had a very conventional English department profile in a way that I did not and they were not prepared to wear that. So I didn't get that Chair.

I had another unfortunate experience applying for a Chair at the Humanities Research Centre in Canberra. I was interviewed by some people who were very offensive about postmodernism. In the interview panel, we had to give papers and presentations, and I gave a paper about postmodernism and so had two or three other shortlisted applicants. That really upset them down there because the Humanities Research Centre at that stage had really not moved as far forward as it has now, so they were very offended by this. I really felt that the interview process was one that was full of bullying and harassment. It was really as bad as that. I wouldn't have gone there if they had offered it to me which of course they didn't. In the end, I began to ask questions back to the Chair of the interview panel because I was sick of being treated that way. So that was my second Chair application, which was not particularly cheerful to say the least. I'd almost decided to stay put. I thought, "I am happy where I am, what am I doing this for, why am I beating myself up?"

Then a Chair became available at Monash in Victoria. It was Liz Webby and Margaret Harris, who were in the English Department, and to some extent, Gerry Wilkes, who could never have been said to be a feminist – bless him – but who said, "look, Terry, this Chair is really written for you". It had performance studies, it had semiotics, it had critical theory, it had all these things in it. And I said, "oh god no, I'm not applying for another Chair, I've had enough of that, I'm just going to stay put". "No, no", they kept insisting, "you have to apply!" So I finally stuck an application together

without much interest and sent it off to Monash. I got shortlisted and the others were asking me what happened and I said, “oh, I’ve been shortlisted but they want me to go down there next week”. The interview was scheduled for the 28th of November, which was my birthday and in the middle of a very busy exam week. I remember thinking, “I don’t want to go, I’ll just cancel it”. It was really Liz Webby saying to me, “look, either you go on your own or I will push you in a wheelbarrow but you’re going!” So I finally booked the thing and went down and did the interview, again in a fairly laid back and disinterested way. I didn’t really think that I wanted this Chair at all. I was so disinterested that I went straight to the airport after the interview and came back to Sydney. I was living in Ashfield at the time and I remember walking in the front door of the Ashfield apartment and the phone was ringing. I picked it up and it was Mal Logan, who was then the Vice-Chancellor at Monash, and in his very laconic Australian voice he said, “hi Terry, it’s Mal Logan here, well, we’re offering you this job, are you gonna take it?” I found myself saying, “yes, yes, I’ll take that – thank you”. I got off the phone and thought, “oh all right then”, and that was how I ended up at Monash.

I went down as Head of the English Department and was running an English Department that also included a critical theory and a drama centre. The Department included people like Liz Grosz, Kevin Hart, Claire Colebrook and a whole lot of other interesting people like Clive Probyn, Andrew Milner and Chris Worth. It was a really interesting group of scholars working with me in the school. It had a drama and theatre studies section as well, which was run by Peter Fitzpatrick. It was really the ideal place for me to work in lots of ways. It was everything I’d been doing but under one roof and I was in charge of it!

We were also working into the Women’s Studies Department at Monash. I can’t remember who was running it at that stage. I think it had a lot to do with Ann Edwards who is now Vice-Chancellor at Flinders. I think Ann was

largely in charge of Women's Studies when I arrived and later on it was Denise Cuthbert. Denise went from the English Department to do it, a couple of years after my arrival because Ann moved up to be Deputy Vice-Chancellor at that point. And then Ann went to Flinders, probably three years after I got there. Marion Courtly was also involved. She later became Dean of the Faculty. Marion and Ann were probably the driving forces in Women's Studies when I got to Monash in 1993. That changed over time and younger women moved into that space as others became more senior and moved away from direct teaching roles. It was still a very active Women's Studies program right through the '90s at Monash.

I stayed on as Head of English for a number of years. I became Deputy Dean of Graduate Studies as well, which took me out of the English Department and into the Graduate Centre half time. The last two years I was there, I was deputy or acting Dean. Marion stepped down during the period when we were busy sacking all the staff and having terrible fights with the Vice-Chancellor. That period of crisis really hit about 1996, not that long after I got there. David Robinson came in as Vice-Chancellor and the Howard Government began to slash finances to the academy generally.

It changed the dynamics hugely because we all became managers. We were struggling with financial and other issues and we were no longer able to do the theory and things we were really interested in. Marion was Dean of the Faculty from about 1994, just after I got there and she was a great Dean, but when the trouble hit, she just didn't want to do that kind of job. She couldn't deal with what was happening with David Robertson as Vice-Chancellor. I was Deputy Dean at the time and I was asked if I would chair some key meetings for her while she was still Dean. That included the meeting that persuaded the Faculty Board to allow itself to be restructured, which basically meant sackings. But there was really no way around it, you could fight it until you were blue in the face. There was enormous pressure

and once I knew there was no way around it, I thought it was better to try to get a good deal for people that were being sacked, rather than them being sacked anyway and probably getting nothing. So we all struggled with that for a very long time. I finally stepped in for Marion when she just couldn't deal with it any longer. She was being bullied by the Vice-Chancellor and all sorts of other people. She was finding it too hard to deal with and I was asked if I would stand in and act as Dean until it all got sorted out and so I did. But I hated it! There was not much choice about it but somebody had to be there to try and protect people and support people. It was a very, very difficult period. In the end, by working with the unions we did manage to get good early retirement packages for those people who had to go.

What happens in those situations is that the good people who are able to move on, move on and those who aren't able to find an alternative get left behind. I think that the faculty now is probably working well again but the restructuring didn't help that for a long time. They were putting things together that didn't really belong together for the sake of the restructure. The effect was really wiping Women's Studies out in terms of being an effective centre. That happened not only at Monash at that time but across most universities in Australia. Women's studies programs had been set up and so women in mid career could come back and study. It had gone on for so long, quite successfully, and with the restructuring it just stopped. It stopped at Flinders, it stopped at Melbourne, and it was difficult in Adelaide. The Susans managed to hold it together a bit better in Adelaide but it still got absorbed into other areas. That was the basic strategy, to put all things back together into more complex departments, where it became a smaller part of something else so it was much less effective. It meant that there was no space for women to become educated amongst other women. I honestly don't know all the changes that it had on women's studies because I moved on. Like a lot of other people at that time, I also

moved on. I saw the faculty restructure through but then I was offered a Research Chair at Cardiff.

John Hartley, who is now back at QUT as Dean was then Head of the department which I am now Head of in Cardiff. He contacted me. I heard about the Chair in Cardiff from John Tulloch. John was working in Cultural Studies at Charles Sturt and had already accepted a Research Chair in Cardiff for the same reasons as I ended up going there – because of the things that were happening to Cultural Studies at Bathurst. John Tulloch and I were editing a cultural studies series for Allen & Unwin at that time, so I had lots of contact with him over this period. He told me about this job that he was going to in Cardiff and we were chatting on the phone one night about some editing thing and he said, “look, you know they still can’t find anyone for that Research Chair in Cardiff”. I said, “which Research Chair in Cardiff?” and he told me about it. He said, “I didn’t tell you about it because I didn’t think you would ever leave the country” but I said, “tell me more”. So he told me a bit about it and then I got in touch with John Hartley, who is now back at QUT but at that time he was Head of the Department at Cardiff which I am now Head of. So I spoke to John Hartley and found out some more about the position and then I applied. It had just been readvertised. They had advertised it once already and hadn’t got the sort of person they wanted. I was shortlisted and I went over for an interview that Christmas. That was Christmas 1998. I got the job the next day and accepted it, so I moved to Cardiff.

It was interesting what had happened with women’s studies by the time I got to Cardiff. There had been an active interdisciplinary women’s studies movement there, which had just been dismantled there too. It was gone. The financial pressures were not the same as here and that was partly why I went there. Cardiff has been a very well resourced institution. The school I am running, which is now much bigger than it was when I took it over, is financially very secure. I am able to support people doing lots of

things that I couldn't have done at Monash and I was supported to do things that there was just never the money for at Monash. It has been a much better resourced place to be. That has been very reassuring and very helpful, but it's interesting where the feminist stuff has gone in amongst that. We do run the *Feminist Media Studies* subject from the school and I am still running the *Journal of Social Semiotics* from the school. There is a group of very interesting women at Cardiff who are well-known feminists like Chris Weedon, Carole Pateman, Debbie Epstein and Valerie Walkerdine – all with Australian connections. There's a range of people.

Cardiff is quite interesting because there is no faculty structure. It has a very flat, devolved organisation. As I get more senior, I am now beginning to argue that is not a good thing. There are 28 schools and they are almost little fiefdoms. They don't talk to one another very much, which makes interdisciplinary work difficult because people are caught in their own silo and don't get outside it very much. Getting women to meet and talk and think about the issues is really quite difficult. I was involved in a senior women's mentoring movement at Cardiff with a couple of other people when I first arrived, so that when senior women needed a mentor they could contact us and we could try and match them up with other people. It was unofficial and done around the edges.

I am now working as Head of School and Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor, Staff and Students. Teaching and learning is a different portfolio so the staff and students role is basically creating a positive work environment for staff, rolling out the diversity and quality agenda, human resource issues, working with the unions, dealing with grievances, all that stuff within the university. I am working as Deputy to somebody called Terry Rees, another woman. She and I have set up another senior women's group in the last 12 months. There are 38 women professors at Cardiff, which is not many because there are still hundreds of men. That particular statistic has

not improved vastly since I have been in the academy. Since we set up the group, we now have regular women professors' lunches and regular women professorial dinners, which are letting people talk to one another and raise important issues. The issues haven't changed – they haven't gone away for women. Many of them feel very oppressed by the male senior people in their schools, particularly in business, engineering and the hard sciences. Unfortunately that hasn't changed. We are moving now towards something similar for women at Senior Lecturer level and see how that goes and go down from there. But it's interesting to me that after a long period in the academy and on both sides of the world, the issues really haven't changed very much.

There are still people with very backward attitudes. On the university Equality and Diversity committee, about only six months ago, we have a very well-known chap from one of the schools who thinks he's very supportive of all these sorts of issues who actually asked a question of Terry when she was chairing the committee about a PhD student. He was awarding a PhD bursary and he said, "I've got this problem and you might be able to give me advice, this young woman is very bright and I'm sure she will do a great PhD but she's pregnant. Should I award her this bursary even though she is pregnant?" He said, "I am really anxious about doing it because she is pregnant". I nearly hit the ceiling! Terry was more restrained than I was, but what the hell has her pregnancy got to do with her brain! I couldn't believe it! I was hearing the same thing over again. My experience was back in 1968 and this is almost 2008 and they are still saying the same thing. So a lot hasn't changed and there is still a real need for that stuff.

In terms of what has happened to curriculum, I think what tended to happen was the feminist elements were always diluted by their inclusion in other disciplines, so that the straight feminist curriculum became attached to a feminist version of media studies or whatever. Instead of allowing

people to really explore the feminist aspect of it, it became added on. It was almost a return to the 'add-on' model of feminism that scientific women had wanted in the '60s. I am sure it was a way of diluting it. Feminist studies was seen as a not economically productive area of the university's work by managers. It was seen as a kind of luxury to have these women off thinking about themselves and gazing at their navels. A senior man once told me he thought that's what feminist studies was about – women sitting around gazing at their navels.

Looking back to those early days there was a fairly cooperative atmosphere. People didn't really interfere, partly because they didn't know what was going on. I've often thought back upon that because there were no accountability structures like we have now. You didn't have to write the proposal beforehand and have it go through seven committees and be approved before you could teach it. You could just do it, so nobody bothered much about what anyone else was doing. I sensed that a lot of those things happened by benign neglect rather than by active support. Nobody was really worrying too much about what people were doing, but later on they did get to worry. As more and more of the work of the academy got to be focused on making money and keeping the budget secure, anything which was seen as a frill on the edge (as feminism was) got knocked off or put in with something else where it would be safer. I think there were still a lot of men who were very supportive of women's agendas in the academy, particularly at younger levels. I know that in my own school in Cardiff, there wouldn't be one of the Senior Lecturers or below who isn't interested in gender equality or race equality, but that is very different in an interdisciplinary school like mine than it would be in dentistry or somewhere else. There is a lot of evidence that women in business or engineering at Cardiff are really struggling with male attitudes about these things, in both these cases with the strong support of male heads of school. So different schools and different disciplines look differently at these things on the ground. But it would be unfair to say that

there aren't men who support feminist agendas. There is still a lot of masculine support for women's agendas in certain areas. It was more like the men who had never been supportive of these issues suddenly had more pressure on them to find out what was going on and when they did find out they didn't like it.

About the time I left Australia there was a kind of a cultural backlash to equity agendas. There were a couple of things that happened that changed the cultural landscape. There was the Helen Demidenko affair that was going on when I left Australia. There were an awful lot of men in the Australian academy about that time writing about how neglected they were as white, middle-class men. Suddenly you had the Mabo decision and the Stolen Children report – so there was increasing interest in Aboriginal issues. All those things at the beginning of the '90s were hitting home and challenging people's identities and sense of who they were. You had an awful lot of men writing funny articles at the time. Men writing about how neglected they were as middle-class men and how they couldn't talk, couldn't speak anymore, about how they didn't have a voice. Some of them were speaking very loudly, shouting all the time about how they didn't have a voice. The Helen Garner *First stone* affair had a big effect. It was a huge controversy and a lot of writing went on around it. I was in Melbourne when that was going on, and certainly in Melbourne there was a lot of disaffection around feminism and any of these more radical movements around difference and acceptance of difference. It was more disaffection than we had seen for a long time and I do think it was generated by that particular debate and controversy.

But you still hear that kind of rhetoric. A few weeks ago Terry and I were running a meeting on the positive working environment and a university manager, who is a very interesting and very intelligent woman, voiced these type of concerns at the meeting. We were talking about setting up staff reference groups, we'd already done it for transsexuals and lesbian

and gay people and that was working very successfully and we were about to do it for the disabled and race equality needs people. She was expressing real anxiety about how this didn't deal with the white mainstream staff. So that's exactly the same positioning – if you give special consideration for people with special needs, then what happens to the rest of them? The fact that they have been getting special attention for years is not part of the equation. That attitude hasn't gone away. In my experience it's very profound and deeply embodied and quite hard to change. I think it's gone in circles. There probably is more feminist theory built into courses now across the board than was the case when women's studies movements started in the '60s, but I'm not sure that it ever accomplishes quite what that specialised women's studies work did for women. For a time, women's studies was a very special space. It was a space where women who'd had babies and gone away and not had a higher education could come back in mid career and learn about themselves and actually do something quite different with their lives. So many women in their 30s and 40s, who went through those programs went on and did lovely things with their lives that would never have happened otherwise. It was a very specialised and very privileged space for a while. That isn't there in quite the same way anymore. Of course that is compounded by the fact of the introduction of fees and even if you had the women's studies programs available, people in the middle of their life with two children can't always afford the fees to go back to uni. The reasons for the changes are all very complex.

Going back to my own work, I was still publishing furiously up until I went to Cardiff. My publication rates slowed down a bit when I got to there but that was for different reasons than what was holding me back earlier. It was because I hadn't taken into account how complex it was going to be to settle in a new place. I was well known in Britain and I had all sorts of networks, but I didn't have the research networks that enable you to do work in communities and around the university. Here in Australia I knew

the people in the curriculum areas in education. I'd been working on curriculum issues at the secondary level as well as the tertiary level for many years, so if I wanted to talk to someone in government I knew who to go to; if I needed someone at local authority level I could do it. I knew who everybody was. But when I got to Cardiff I suddenly realised that I don't know where to go anymore. Although I was a research professor for the first three years, my output wasn't huge because I was struggling to establish myself and build up those networks again. Now that I've done that the research is coming again in huge waves. But it has taken about three years to settle in, to get to know the assembly government and have contacts there, to get to know where all the multi-ethnic groups were and what I could do with them. There was a lot of trust building, a lot of talking, and a lot of just being there that goes on around making those things happen. I did have to re-theorise in a new space too, because I'd gone to a journalism, media and cultural studies department not an English department. It became very clear to me very early on that if I was going to actually work effectively in the area of journalism and media studies, which I did, because I wanted to make interventions into the media area, I was going to have to learn to be a social scientist, much more of a social scientist feminist than I had been.

I haven't given up on feminist theory. I still use it but I use it very differently now. I work with ethnography and focus groups and questionnaires – all the things I never did when I was in Sydney because back then I was very much more a human sciences kind of researcher. I worked with theory and I worked with books. Just before I left Melbourne I'd started working with Barbara Kamler and Susan Feldman. We did a project for the Australian Research Council on women and ageing. That was probably the first fieldwork project I ever did. I did a couple with the Women's Studies Department which were fairly minor and the work was really others' in which I just participated, but this involved writing workshops with older women (75 and above) over a three year period. It involved Vietnamese

women and white Australian women and we did a lot of work with them and ultimately we had them perform as well. They performed their stories as a play. It was a fascinating project. So I had started to move that way already, but having got to Cardiff I realised that journalists were not going to listen to me if I talked about 'habitus' and embodiment but they would if I could give them a graph. So I had to change horses and do both.

I do think that there is still a radical need for teaching and theorising on these issues, but I'm not doing that work anymore. I tend to be working with ethnic minority communities, finding out what happens to the women in those communities and, if I can, finding practical ways of supporting women to deal with some of those issues. So instead of theorising I am doing action research. That is not to say that the theory doesn't still inform what I am doing but I am very much concerned with more practical solutions, like saying to government, "well, you could help those Somali women if you did X". I've moved full circle from theorising about it in the classroom, or doing it in performance studies to actually going out there and seeing how people live their real lives. I found that transition very interesting. It doesn't remove my interest in gender issues or equality issues, but I think I've now developed different ways of dealing with those things. Some of those ways have been becoming involved in student groups, writing policy at government level and local level and trying to implement those things in practice.

It's partly why I have taken on the Pro Vice-Chancellor role. That will become a full Pro Vice-Chancellorship next year and I will step down as Head of School at that point. Taking on that role is trying to make the things I've always believed in theoretically happen in a larger, broader organisation.

When I go into this new role, I will stop teaching. I will be 64 in November so it's probably time I stopped teaching. I won't stop supervising though; I

really enjoy supervising PhD students. Already this year, because I've taken on two jobs, I've had to push back the teaching and not do as much. Also I will stop doing large funded research projects. The time has come for me to start operationalising that stuff – to use that jargon – within the academy. Cardiff is sorely in need of attention on some of these equity issues across the board, so I will be trying to make some sort of contribution in that area before I retire. I am absolutely thinking about retirement. I would probably go sooner if I could afford it – but I can't. There is a financial issue about moving countries in midstream, in your mid 50s. I lost a lot of superannuation, so there are issues to do with that. I am not ready to retire just yet. I probably wouldn't retire yet even if I could, but two or three years will see me out.

In terms of how feminism has developed over the years I think many of the issues are exactly the same unfortunately. One of the things that has emerged during the course of this discussion is that you put a lot of work in to make things happen for people to change things, but sometimes it has moved backwards, for example, all the work I did for feminist legal studies here in Australia. We worked hugely on rape law trying to make things better for women in the courts and the same sort of thing happened in the UK, but actually all of it has gone backwards in the UK. I don't think it's gone back quite as far here but all that feminist work that was about educating judges, making them understand what the issues were, and training women to deal with the court situation and so on – it has just gone backwards in the UK. There are no convictions for rape anymore and women again are not game to admit that they have been raped because of what happens to them when they do.

I see it having gone in circles. When you realise that you have put an enormous amount of effort in, you realise that until a whole lot of people keep putting the effort in it's not actually ever going to change. It will always need doing again, from the beginning almost, because it does keep

going backwards. I mean the right for women to work, the right for women to be educated, the right for women to have children and continue doing those things. Those rights will always need defending. And one of the key issues still now – and has been for some time – is learning to understand the differences between the very white, middle-class Western feminism that we all espoused in the '60s, which is totally inappropriate in lots of cases now in universities where you have a multicultural, multi-ethnic group of students, and learning to develop theoretical frameworks and paradigms that will actually work better for those many different women. I've had some fascinating classes with some of our Masters students who come from all over the world. Those women have very different approaches to feminism depending on where they come from and what culture they come from. Those issues were emerging in Australia in the '90s and I'm not really sure where it's at here now, I've been concentrating on where it is at in the UK. Cultural differences among women continues to be an issue but it's almost like feminist theory has put that issue to one side and thought it's all too hard. Actually I think that is something that really needs doing. It was a big conversation, but it didn't develop the theory or develop the curriculum because it was all in the too hard basket.

So the difficulty is trying to manage that issue in large organisations. Believe it or not, I think that the corporate social responsibility agenda that large corporations have adopted has got some tools for handling that. They thought about those questions rather more realistically perhaps than feminist theory itself has because they had to. But that said, there is still some extraordinarily good work going on. For instance, Radhika Mohanram's work. She is a postcolonial feminist who works in the English Department at Cardiff and John Tulloch and I published her book on the black body before John and I left Australia. She is now producing a major thing on whiteness. So there are interesting things going on in that area but it's fairly few and far between.

I would say that I have lost most of my feminist networks, except for the women I work with at Cardiff. I think that is something that has definitely changed. At one stage there was a global network of feminist scholars, everyone knew where we were and what we were doing. As people got older and this new regime was imposed on us by university structures, which has happened internationally, that has changed. I rarely hear any more from Sneja Gunew but when we lived in Australia we had worked very closely together. Margaret Thornton in Law in Victoria is someone who I hear from occasionally as she passes through the UK. The original networks are fading because we have all gone on to other things. Even Liz Grosz and I haven't spoken even on email for about 18 months and she's been a very continuous link for a very long time. On the other hand though, Carole Pateman turns up in Cardiff and we can have good conversations. There are networks developing within Cardiff. Something that Terry and I have found very interesting is that the first time we brought women together at the professorial level they didn't seem to feel that they had many issues or things that needed discussion, but as they've gone on, they are going hammer and tongs at what needs fixing and what needs doing and what is wrong in their own schools. That is where I see that not a lot has changed. A lot has changed but there is a lot that still needs changing. It would be untruthful to say that not a lot has changed because I think things are better for women in general. It has got easier for women. There is greater acceptance of the fact that equality should be the thing that we're working for and that we should be accepting difference and all those other things, but in some contexts, they remain a kind of mantra rather than a reality.

There is a difference between the policy rhetoric and what actually happens. You can write good policy about these things but it's not so easy to actually make things happen. Sarah Ahmed has just recently published a very interesting book, which was a funded research project on the rolling out of equity and diversity policy legislation in the higher education sector

in the UK. It was a very interesting book in terms of what it shows about how patchy it is. It focused on what actually happens when policies are implemented, rather than what the policy says should happen and also what is needed to make it happen. I have been having lots of conversations with her and her writing about those sorts of questions. I still talk to people like Sarah. Certainly there is still work to be done.

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