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WE ONLY TALK FEMINIST HERE

Feminist Academics, Voice and Agency in the Neoliberal University

Briony Lipton and Elizabeth Mackinlay

Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education

Series Editor

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This book is dedicated to
all those academics who
dare to talk feminist
in the contemporary university

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank friends and colleagues who have talked feminist with us, who have shared secrets and spoken into the silence, who have revealed disturbing accounts of misogyny, and given voice to stories of great determination. Our conversations with you became the flesh of life on the bones of writing this book and your courage and bravery continues to inspire us in our lifelong endeavour to destroy the joint. This book began as a shared desire to tell a different story about the neoliberal university from our perspectives as feminist academics. This yearning soon took shape as a conference paper presented first at the 2015 Gender and Education Association conference at the University of Roehampton, and then at the 2015 Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia conference in Melbourne. We are grateful for the feedback we received from conference delegates and reviewers to go further and ask more difficult and uncomfortable kinds of questions. Standing alongside us are our partners, children, families, and friends who speak feminist too, and whose belief in our project has never wavered. We cannot tell you how much we value the space you have made in your lives for us to write our feminist selves. Liz thanks Gordon, Macsen, and Hamish for the fresh pots of coffee waking her in the morning, conversations which helped her work through our confusions late at night, cuddles in the morning from small and big arms that simply wanted to show her their love, and nourishing meals placed on the table to provide her with food for her body, mind, and soul. She would also like to thank those who stand alongside in her workplace to proudly say the 'f' word. Briony gives heartfelt thanks to her colleagues and companions at the Australian National University for their continued encouragement throughout this project, in particular to Helen Keane for her unwavering support. She also expresses a deep grattitude to Tim and little Teaspoon for their calming presence, giving her the energy to keep writing when she needed it most. Thanks also to our publisher Palgrave and our editorial team, Eleanor Christie and Andrew James, for supporting our feminist talk.

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Interludes

In the contemporary university there can be upwards of 30,000 beings crammed into one campus. Some will rise to the top of the tower in just a few decades, for some, it only takes a few years. At the top, these individuals will grow in strength, while down below, on the forest floor, younger saplings are less restrained. Every new generation fights it out. These are battles we can only see by accelerating time. They must get light if they are to survive. They squeeze, crush, and even cut one another in order to reach it. Despite the thick canopy above, some light does filter down and allows a few low light specialists to bloom near the forest floor.

*

Eastern grey kangaroos live out on the grassy Australian plains. Last season's joeys are fast approaching independence, which means they will soon be early career roos (ECRs) and their supervisors will be ready to find new doctoral students. This is how these macropods are able to secure more government funding and live within the commercial harvest areas of Australia. The most dominant kangaroo is likely to 'father' the next generation of research that can be exported and patented, and that is something individuals are taught is worth fighting for. Joeys also fight but it is just a form of play fighting. It's a way of learning skills important later in their careers. But it's not always a fair fight. Fortunately some little ones have supportive peers to help them fend off the university bullies. Here we see a female kangaroo down by the watering hole, awaiting her take-away skinny latte amongst the troop of undergraduates hopping to and from lectures, and the other academics, like herself, meeting their mates and seeking out rivals for meetings and interviews.

*

Academia. Here, every living thing must fight for its space. Such beauty, but the flower is self-serving, enticing animals to unwitting alliance. Stingless bees. They have to work hard. The forest flowers make them do so by rationing their nectar, forcing each bee to visit, and so, pollinate a thousand blooms each day. For the bees, it is worth the effort, for they need the nectar to make honey. It's so precious they keep it hidden behind lock and key; password protected technologies, and publishing contracts. But their secret is out. Nothing is safe in this university. The honey badger. Homo academicus-economicus. The ideal academic. He is *The Man of Reason* (Lloyd 1984). He is Benchmark Man, and he loves honey. He seems oblivious to danger. A fall from the top of the ivory tower could be fatal. But he only needs a bigger stick. Only he has the ability to sneak into a stingless bees nest. Academics are extremely intelligent but none are born with the skill. Youngsters must learn by watching. The honey badger uses tools to get to the honey, and in doing so, destroys what took the stingless bees years to create. In academia, nothing is safe.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Framing Feminist Talk

Abstract What does it mean to only talk feminist? How do feminist academics effect change? How are feminist voices sounded, heard, received, silenced, and masked? This book aims to provide a contemporary account of what it might mean to 'only talk feminist' in the neoliberal university and draws upon qualitative interviews and conversations with feminist academics in Australia, as well as our own individual and shared experiences, to demonstrate the performative and discursive moves feminist academics make in order to be heard and effect change to the gendered status quo in Australian higher education. This opening chapter introduces the paradox of what it means to be a feminist academic and to speak as a feminist in neoliberal times.

> The rain outside falls softly against the window and blankets the afternoon in grey. Each of us cradles a steaming hot cup of coffee to keep the cold at bay and warm our conversation. We are sitting in 'a room of our own'; feeling sheltered from the academic world outside and it is not long before talk about the 'f' word starts to freely flow. In fact, that is the point of our meeting—to engage in talk about thinking, teaching and talking as feminists in higher education. 'One of the reasons I'm here is because this feels much more feminist', says Gwen. 'We don't want to, and don't have to, mix outside of feminist lands'. She pauses for a moment and then smiles conspiratorially, 'we only talk feminist here.' We all laugh, a knowing kind of laugh, because we all know what she means—Gwen is speaking explicitly about the material, affective, epistemological, ontological and discursive safety and freedom found in spaces where talking like a feminist is a given. There is no

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> need to explain, no need to clean up, no need to give the whole backstory or indeed to back step, and no need to worry about being reproached or reprimanded after the fact because we are all speaking the same kind of language. Gwen's comment and the shared laughter which follows demonstrates our awareness that being feminist has always been dangerous inside and outside the academy. Those of us who do identify as feminist—openly or otherwise—are keenly aware that in today's neoliberal institutional environment, we have to run fast and smart to keep one careful and two collective steps ahead of those who would otherwise silence us and send us into exile.

In this book we ask, what does it mean to 'only talk feminist here' in the contemporary neoliberal academy, and what happens when we do? How are feminist voices sounded, heard, received, silenced, and masked? We draw upon qualitative interviews and conversations with feminist academics in Australia, as well as our own individual and shared experiences, to demonstrate the performative and discursive moves we make in relation to talking and speaking like a feminist and the ways in which we fight for and flee to feminist spaces in the neoliberal university. When we talk of 'speaking', we follow the lead of Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) and Mimi Orner (1992) who problematise notions of voice which compare or conflate voice with that of empowerment, and instead question the entanglements of speaking *and* not-speaking within and against the power and privilege which lives and breathes inside the Westernised university. Of interest to us is how it might become possible to frame 'talking feminist' differently, by exploring what we say, when we say it, how we say it, and what it means when we do any of these things in terms of our multiple and shifting feminist subjectivities. What are the material, affective, and discursive consequences when a feminist talks or 'not talks' in the neoliberal university? What might be the underlying agendas for such moments of talk and non-talk and how does the speaking or not speaking of such agendas change both the way that we talk and the performativity of that talk at any one time? These are some of the questions that swirl, and at the same time, sit suspended beneath the surface of the discussion presented here.

Being Academic Feminists and Performing Academic Feminisms in the Neoliberal University

> The day chants a cold, damp and grey requiem to signal the semester begun. Large black umbrellas hum and drone as they swarm the grounds of the university, providing a heavy baseline of reason and rationality to the sad

> song that plays in the background. Deep voices of history, power and privilege sing the words 'Great is truth. And mighty above all things' and create a canon with those that follow next, 'A place of light, of liberty, and of learning'. Ruby shudders as she walks to her women and gender studies class, the elegy sounds a low and age-old warning to the likes of her; its stony resonance chills her to the bone. She steps inside the quadrangle and immediately feels trapped by the imposing sandstone buildings of violet, lavender, cream and brown that threaten to engulf her. Ruby's hair is tied back and the hairs on the nape of the neck become stiff and scream at her that it is time to run. Her breath catches sharply in her throat as she senses the presence of the Great one-eyed Father skulking under the archways. The dirge-like music has now become loudly insistent, thumping and pounding in her head. Ruby's heart rushes and ushers her to make pace, anxiously reminding her that this is not a song of her own making and her voice will never be able to sing the notes of its register. She hurries across the carefully clipped grass, swerving wildly around those that will get in her way. Ruby turns to her right, to her left, desperately searching for a room of her own to retreat to. Out of the corner of her eye she glimpses the naked torso of a grotesque protruding from the wall of the sandstone buildings. Ruby looks more closely and sees that it is a bare-breasted Aboriginal woman, caught and captured in (neo)colonial time by the civilising mission of the calculating stonework. She is silenced in that stuck place, her voice forever suppressed. Ruby understands now for whom the music is for—it's a funeral march of twisted and perverse celebration for all the women who have come before her and those to follow; and she knows that it will take a dead woman to begin.

In thinking-writing about talking-speaking as feminist in the academy the relationship between feminists, feminisms, and the academy similarly hovers nearby. What are the entanglements of being academic feminists and performing academic feminisms in the neoliberal university? Or perhaps the question should be framed the other way around, what does it mean to be a *feminist* academic and perform feminism inside the academy? Whichever way we turn it, the question seeks to problematise the uneasy positioning of feminist bodies inside the Westernised university. This is not a new question and the words of writers such as Virginia Woolf (1938) hover close by, reminding us that the 'daughters of educated men' have always been part of an 'Outsiders Society' within the academic confines of the university. Even before we begin we know that the terms 'neoliberal university' and 'Westernised university' are problematic terms in and of themselves because of the exclusions they bring into play. A term like 'Westernised university' silences the many other forms of power and privilege which work to keep all of those 'other than patriarchy' from entering in. Indeed, the term 'Western' might easily be replaced by Hill Collins' phrase 'Eurocentric masculinist validation processes' (1990), and by Aileen Moreton-Robinson's 'possessive logic of white patriarchal sovereignty' (2004) and bell hooks' 'imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy' (2004, p. 17). When we use and read the term 'Westernised university' it is this meaning-making we bring to bear, that is, the contemporary Western academy remains a locus for the material embodiment of a coloniality of being which seeks to negate the disagreeable and disruptive bodies of others through the systematic performance of strategies which seek to silence, remove, and render women and racialised minorities invisible.

The way in which feminism entered the academy, particularly in Australia, is linked closely to the activism of the women's movement in the 1970s and the push for women to have equal opportunity and access to education. Further, feminism in the academy is entangled with the development of women's studies. Situated in the borderlands between the academy and activism, Mary F. Rogers and C. D. Garrett (2002) remind us that Women's Studies came into being as the result of women's practical efforts of advocacy and activism, to represent marginalised, excluded, and silenced voices through a distinctly feminist politic. To this end, women's and gender studies programs and academic feminisms have developed globally to not only 'fill the gaps' on those women 'missing' in traditional post-secondary curricula, but also as Catherine Orr and Diane Lichenstein (2004, p. 1) assert, to 'sustain feminism by doing work that has shifted the paradigms by which we gain, understand, and apply knowledge'. Women's and Gender Studies has become, in many ways, an ethico-onto-epistemological site for the enactment of distinctly feminist agendas which position the discipline as a knowledge formation; as a philosophical, epistemological, theoretical, and methodological academic and disciplinary identity/ies within institutions; as a pedagogical revolution; as an agency for changing the status of women in social, economic, political, and cultural fields; and, as a vehicle for transforming lives. The call to progressive social change is thus a central commitment of academic feminism (Sprague 2005, p. 3) and is emphasised in the diverse yet distinctly feminist ways that women and gender studies perceive, position, and perform 'education as a site for possible political action' (Weiler 2001, p. 2). The historical and contemporary entanglement of feminism, the academy and women and gender studies, calls us to continue to ask critical questions about the ways in which politics of difference and alliance are negotiated; the relationship between feminist activism and feminism in the academy; and, the interdisciplinary and intersectional promises feminism and Women and Gender Studies offer. There are no claims to certainty in our reading, but rather an understanding that academic feminisms, feminist academics, and the performance of these in the locale of Women's and Gender Studies, do not abide by a set of prescriptions and are continually pushed and pulled to politically compromise within what we might think of as an already compromised neoliberal and market-driven location (Papadelos et al. 2014, n. p.). For many of us who want to speak, live, and breathe the 'f' word, the question becomes how much are we willing to compromise within the compromise to sustain a feminist voice in the academy?

Gender inequality in academia and the continued paucity of women, particularly in the professoriate and in positions of authority, influence, and leadership, can also be understood within the context of rapid global higher education reform over the last 30 years to 40 years. In Australia and internationally, the university sector is now experiencing the effects of a new era in higher education policy and while feminist scholarship is now clearly embedded within the globalised academy (David 2014), the validity of such scholarly perspectives and pursuits continues to be threatened by the transformation of the academic enterprise, an unprecedented 'massification' of student enrolments, a diminishing pool of government funding, and an increase in the marketisation and commercialisation of institutions and their research, products, and services (Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Fitzgerald and Wilkinson 2010; Lafferty and Fleming 2000; White et al. 2011). Further to this, in a bid to become more competitive in the international knowledge economy universities are moving away from government obligation to support tertiary education towards a privatised model of education delivery. Rajani Naidoo (2003, p. 250) observes:

> The perception of higher education as an industry for enhancing national competitiveness and as a lucrative service that can be sold in the global marketplace has begun to eclipse the social and cultural objectives of higher education generally encompassed in the conception of higher education as a 'public good'.

Similarly, Henry Giroux (2001, p. 30) suggests that the contemporary university as we know it now, operates as an entangled assemblage of institutional and ideological forces which govern through 'senior managerial control' to 'produce compliant workers' who serve increasingly depoliticised or apolitical clients and consumers of education, with the aim of churning out equally passive citizens from the teaching machine.

This is the rhetoric of a free market economy; it comes packaged with intensive managerial control practices (Lorenz 2012). New managerialism is a form of corporate university management influenced by private sector management practices and values. With it comes a quality assurance-driven audit culture of 'performativity' that drives a transformation of contemporary higher education (Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Chesterman et al. 2003; Fitzgerald and Wilkinson 2010; Grummell et al. 2009; Lafferty and Fleming 2000; White et al. 2011). Such changes are based on the neoliberalist rationality that institutional competition and consumer preferences are more efficient mechanisms for allocating resources than government interventions and regulatory frameworks. There is no doubt that neoliberalism is a broad and promiscuous term (Clarke 2008), used with as much vagueness and catch-all lucidity, we might add, as feminism is used today. Deregulation of the higher education environment in favour of corporatisation, metrification, and performance-based funding models is highly visible and has increased competition amongst universities for funding and prestige. As a consequence it has increased the hierarchical stratification of institutions and encouraged new forms of social and racial exclusion (Tomlinson 2003). From our reading then, there appear to be three major tropes of neoliberalism: the privatisation of state-provided services; deregulation of industry; and, disestablishment of the welfare state to reinforce individual agency through a free market economy (Wrenn 2015). Such changes have a significant impact upon the range of feminisms represented in academia today, and we wonder which voices become marginalised and excluded under a neoliberal new managerialist regime. One of the challenges for us as feminist academics is that in recognising the discursive relationship between feminist and neoliberal discourses and the way they are taken up by different university documents and individuals, how far should we remain 'outside' in oppositional feminist spaces and to what extent we should engage with and submit to 'inclusion' within the university's neoliberal system (Newman 2012, p. 176)?

In the pursuit of profit, neoliberalism perverts feminist ideals. In the university these redefined concepts are then implemented and actualised by new managerialism. Although feminism has helped shape many policy innovations and new governing rationalities in recent decades, women's claims for equal rights and opportunities have become 'mainstreamed' which has in many ways served to bureaucratise and depoliticise much of the radical intentions of second and third wave feminisms (Eveline 2004; Ahmed 2012; Newman 2012). We see this most distinctly in the oversaturation of gender equity and diversity policies, procedures, and guidelines regarding a myriad of subjects ranging from gender inclusive language, work and family responsibilities, pregnancy, breastfeeding, and parental support, through to sexual harassment, bullying, and sex and racial discrimination, and the failure of these policies to prevent and reprimand discriminatory behaviours in the workplace. The mainstreaming of equality and diversity is synonymous with the advent of new managerialism and the rhetoric of 'good governance' (Hunter 2008, p. 510). As Nirmal Puwar notes, 'the language of diversity is today embraced as a holy mantra across different sites. We are told that diversity is good for us. It makes for an enriched multicultural society' (2004, p. 1). However, the difficulty of diversity and of equality as a politics is that in legislating for equality 'it can be assumed that equality is achieved in the act' (Ahmed 2012, p. 11). Having a policy can become a substitute for action. Yet action is integral to the success of policies. Despite universities' insistence on the centrality of equity and diversity to institutions' practices, what is forgotten is the extent to which women must negotiate societal discourses and gendered barriers in order to compete on an equal footing to men. Women have been included in the academy and recognised in policy without any real change to existing gendered social structures and the barriers are multiple and systemic (Eveline 2004; Grummell et al. 2009; Morley 2014; White et al. 2011).

Universities have attempted to redress the obvious overwhelming male dominance in the professoriate and in university leadership, framing the change as economically imperative and guided by performance and merit. Yet women's contributions continue to go misrecognised or unrecognised, judged against male norms and practices (Blackmore 2014; Morley 2011; Thornton 2013), making it difficult for women to gain promotion to senior academic and leadership positions. Women's increased participation rates at all levels of tertiary education have sparked fears over the feminisation of academia (Blackmore 2013; Hey 2011; Leathwood and Read 2009; Morley 2011; Thornton 2013). When the underrepresentation of women is recognised as a result of access and participation, fears of scholarly devaluation intensify (Morley 2011). Women's inclusion in academia brings to light their previous exclusion, and their very presence instigates a moment of change and a disturbance of the status quo (Puwar 2004). It is the 'visibility of our bodies', Tracey Potts and Janet Price (1995, p. 100) note, which threatens our academic authority as feminist change agents. As a result of this incessant focus on gender representation, and compounded by the increased individualisation of academic labour, the hyper-visibility of academic women presents them as dangerous and liable for their own success or failure. What further complicates a feminist critique of contemporary Australian higher education is the way in which neoliberalism appears almost resistant to criticism precisely because it has individualised and internalised the norms of capitalist logic and self-interest (Skeggs 2014), making it difficult to articulate the origins of existing and new inequalities. As feminists, our compliance with neoliberal practices further individualises the social and collective elements integral to social change, making our ideological banner—feminism—culpable for its own depoliticisation (Newman 2013).

Academics, both male and female express a deep ambivalence when considering the impact of neoliberal practices on academic work (Davies 2006). Giroux (2001, p. 30) asserts that corporate culture has now 'intruded' upon the higher education sector in such a way that it functions both 'politically and pedagogically both to govern organisational life through senior managerial control and to produce compliant workers, depoliticised consumers, and passive citizens'. The intensification of work and the mantra of 'publish or perish' are endemic features of academic life and a result of new managerialism and the underfunded expansion of universities (Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Gill 2010). Something we find both wearisome and understandable is the lack of large-scale cohesive and collective criticism against universities' new managerialist practices. Davies (2006, p. 501) describes the panopticon as a major feature of neoliberalism in that it turns 'each member of society into one who is under surveillance, but also turning each into the morally ascendant one who monitors and reports on the behaviour of others'. Eileen Honan, Linda Henderson and Sarah Loch (2015, p. 47) suggest that 'neoliberal apparatuses' of the university work to construct academics as 'quantified selves' and women in particular are deemed to be 'lacking', that is,

> We lack the 'good' qualities of a teacher according to our student evaluations, we lack the qualities of a 'good' researcher according to the metrics that quantify our outputs. We lack an Australian Research Council Grant,

> we lack a publication in a 'Tier 1' journal, we lack tenure, we lack a promotion, we lack the ability to cross the country for a conference, we are voids.

As we read and write in the small hours of the morning with a cup of coffee in hand and toast on a plate, or late at night, in bed typing into the blue glow of the laptop screen, we too feel ourselves descending down into and becoming the 'hole' they speak of, squashing and squeezing as many words as we can into time that seems to evaporate as quickly as the intensity and hollowness of our work escalates. Valarie Hey and Louise Morley (2011, p. 170) similarly lament that the university is 'fast becoming the kind of place…which [seems] to take almost no heed of the body's need for food and downtime'—and sleep. Robyn Thomas and Annette Davies (2005) suggest that in the context of new managerialism, a politics of resistance might be better described as a politics of reinscription, in that today, attempts to institute change in the academy are not necessarily part of a deliberate and totalising emancipatory project. Stephen Ball concedes that collective interests have been replaced by competitive relations, and as a consequence 'it becomes increasingly difficult to mobilise workers around issues of general significance, collective professional values are displaced by commercial values' (2015, p. 259). The constraints of new managerial practices upon academic workloads and feminist identity politics in mainstream popular culture inhibit the mass protest style activism more commonly associated with second wave feminism. It is certainly to the detriment of gender equality projects to reprimand the failures of feminist resistance as being due to their formation as either entirely a large-scale, grassroots, collective protest or completely institutionalised, de-politicised, and aligned with organisations (Parsons and Priola 2013). Instead we should consider conceptualisations of resistance as multiple. Thomas and Davies propose that in understanding the multiple politics of feminist activism including its limitations and differences, there may not be a 'radical rupture or apocalyptic change' but smaller forms of change may, nevertheless, be effective (2005, p. 720). Barbara Bagihole and Kate White (2013) and Hey and Morley (2013) suggest that we must find 'new ways of being' in the neoliberal university in order to resist the false allure and impending capture of the globalised elitism of higher education today. These are just some of the contradictions that arise from the confluence of neoliberal and feminist discourses that we wish to problematise in more detail.

Feminisms, feminist knowledge, feminist theories, and feminist perspectives have developed and become embedded in academia in unexpected ways (David 2014), and so too have feminist identities. Jane Gallop (1992, p. 4) suggested almost 30 years ago 'we don't seem very able to theorise about how we speak as feminists *wanting social change*, from within our positions in the academy' and 20 years later Valarie Hey (2004, p. 33) similarly asserted that the demands on professional identity in the academy appear to erase the more political identity claims of 'being feminist'. Who and how am I to *be* feminist in the university are questions that continue to entangle themselves in the personal-is-political-is-pedagogical material, affective, and discursive dimensions of our academic lives. However, from the outset, we want to make it clear—in a context which is conversely deep, thick, and difficult—that this book is not about asserting or assigning, defining or confining, qualifying or quantifying, valuing or valorising a singular 'authentic' feminist subjectivity. We use the term 'subjectivity' rather than identity to position ourselves distinctly within the framework of poststructural feminism, which for us, as Elizabeth St Pierre (2000, p. 477) suggests, is a mechanism for feminists to 'trouble both discursive and material structures that limit the way we think about our work'. The very idea of 'identity', St Pierre (2000, p. 480) asserts, is linked to language as having the capacity for representation and assumes that there is a correspondence between a word and the world. Such an assumption leads to the imposition of 'identity categories', which are structured often times according to particular kinds of binaries. In this drive to name and label at all costs, a single essentialised identity becomes privileged over difference, and St Pierre (2000, p. 481) reminds us that 'women are usually on the wrong side of binaries and at the bottom of [such] hierarchies'.

A shift in language from identity to subjectivity enables us to perform the kind of 'poststructuralist double move' St Pierre refers to, that is, framing being and becoming in this world as enacted by a 'subject that exhibits agency as it constructs itself by taking up available discourses and cultural practices and a subject that, at the same time, is subjected, forced into subjectivity by those same discourses and practices' (2000, p. 502). In this way, St Pierre continues, the poststructural subject is 'certainly not dead; rather, the category of the subject has opened up to the possibility of continual reconstruction and reconfiguration'. A poststructural reframing of identity as and through subjectivity allows us to reposition the 'feminist academic subject' as 'forever on the way' (Greene 2000), as varied, refusing to be labelled and always contested. It is important then to recognise that feminist academic subjectivities are multiple, shifting and changing, as this understanding is crucial to how individuals find meaning as we move through the social world. Using a phrase such as 'the experiences of being and becoming woman' is not intended here as an essentialising statement, but rather recognition that women's experiences of being and becoming is always already 'discursively, interactively, and structurally positioned as female, and of taking up as one's own those discourses through which one is constituted as female' (Davies 1992, p. 54). In this sense then, subjectivities are also context-specific and relational, dependant on who we interact with and how we are perceived by 'others' (Wise 1997, p. 123). Indeed, we agree with Dorothy Moss and Julie Pryke (2007) who highlight that the concept of a 'feminist academic' in and of itself is inherently problematic, in that regardless of whether an academic identifies as a feminist and how they choose to define such a notion, such labelling reduces the feminist academic to a limited or almost stereotypical notion of what a feminist academic should or should not be.

We do not want to *sound* particular kinds of feminist subjectivities over others because we recognise in Ahmed's theorisation of willfulness that voicing a willful subjectivity can also become 'a form of hearing that dismisses' (Ahmed 2014, p. 168). We want to avoid falling into the humanist masculinist binary which positions and *marks* women in opposition to a 'rational objective academic man' and inevitably fixes a feminist academic subject as unheard and unsounded. Academics undertake a variety of responsibilities and Moss and Pryke (2007) observe that while one aspect of an academic's work might be informed by feminist principles and beliefs, another may not. Even if we reached a definitional consensus of what a feminist academic is, Sue Wise (1997) argues that we would still end up with very different results. We want to actively resist validating one feminist subjectivity over another, and step out of the arguably Eurocentric masculinist incessant push which seeks to set up a hierarchy of being where those 'with' and those 'without' are positioned in binary opposition to one another. Rather than enabling, this approach would seem to constrain our performativities as 'feminist academic' and this is one of the 'old lies' of patriarchy that we seek to 'shrug off' and toss away. Feminist political perspectives also vary depending on our perceptions of existing power relations (Yuval Davis 1997), and each academic, depending on their position and status within the university hierarchy, will affect and be affected by different layers of influence and power. This book is committed to Moss and Pryke's (2007) description of a feminist approach, which recognises the need to make the 'complex contours of feminist academic practice visible' (2007, p. 368). As Miriam David's (2014) research on feminism in the academy found, the neoliberal university is not such a comfortable place for academics with a feminist perspective although she alludes to the benefits of being creative in such a repressive space.

Our Positionings

The impetus for the project and book originate from our own experiences as self-identified feminist academics and the ambivalent feelings we have experienced when we choose to talk feminist in certain academic spaces. Our work together as feminist academics began, respectively, as student and lecturer in Gender Studies at the University of Queensland, from there it progressed to an honours thesis advisory relationship, and today we find ourselves standing side by side one another—at different institutions—as colleagues and friends. In coming together to write this book, we sat down to talk about talking feminist and realised that from the moment we met, we recognised we were speaking the same kind of language. We also recognised that we both find ourselves always seeking out feminists, always looking for those people whose ways of knowing, being and doing wrap around us in a comforting feminist blanket, although it isn't always comfortable. Sometimes this blanket can itch. It can make us hot and bothered, but even so, this attachment is a mode of learning and discovering the multiplicity of ways in which our female colleagues enact and communicate diverse feminist agendas. For both of us, gender justice in academia also includes the transformation of inequalities in race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity. As soon as we make this agenda transparently clear, we realise there is another we need to lay bare—that is our positionality. We speak and write from a place of cis-gendered, white, able-bodied, heterosexual, and class privilege. Although we recognise that these aspects of our identities 'are markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities' (Maher and Tetreault 1993), we acknowledge that our feminist voices are embodied and implicated in the cultural institutions, practices and performativities which imbue these subjectivities with contradictory, complicated, complacent, and complicit forms of power. Questions of how our feminist voice might speak and write in ways that disrupts and transforms such power and privilege are ever present in our discussion.

Liz tried many times to sit down and write about her positioning as an academic feminist and her relationship with speaking and writing this book. She pushed and pulled words, phrases, sentences, and whole passages this way and that, and yet, no matter how she turned them, nothing seemed quite right—for which of her feminist subjectivities should take centre stage in this story? For her, the complexity lay in speaking-writing about an academic feminist journey that has multiple beginnings and starting points. Perhaps, she wondered, she might begin when she entered university as an undergraduate student, and experienced her residential college as a 'hunting ground' for the sexual harassment and assault of women. She, and those women around her, were constantly reminded that women had only been admitted into the hallowed halls of the college five years before her arrival and their 'hysterical' female voices would not be heard against the raucous display of misogyny. The rape and murder of a female friend on college grounds by a fellow male resident and the subsequent silencing of the event shook her to the core. The ravages wrought on her body and mind from being subjected to and living and breathing the power and privilege of white hegemonic masculinity, plummeted her into an equally cruel anorexic prison from which she has never quite escaped. Perhaps she thought, that she might take a different tack, one that spoke to her sense of feminist empowerment learnt from the women in her husband's Aboriginal family while she was in a process of 'becoming researcher' during her doctorate in ethnomusicology. A chorus of Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Mara, and Kudanji women called out to her as sister, cousin, mother, aunt, granddaughter, and grandmother and embraced her with songs, dances, and ceremonies which embodied their power, status, and authority as women. Their voices and right to speak as strong women was never questioned, for under *Yijan* (Aboriginal Law), women and men were the 'same but different'. The term *kundiyarra* is used by the women in Liz's Aboriginal family to refer to the legal, land-based, social, cultural, and performative bonds between women (Mackinlay 2000). It was translated to her by a senior Yanyuwa Law woman as: 'most necessary companion' and Liz does not want to suggest that this is the same as white feminist understandings of sisterhood. The experience of being and becoming *kundiyarra*, taught her that speaking 'like a woman' is an ethico-onto-epistemological moment which holds a relationality with the material, affective, and discursive dimensions of our lives. It is an entangled personal-political-pedagogical-performativity that accompanies Liz as she speaks, writes, and enters into relationships with others as a feminist. Perhaps she could mention that once she began to live and breathe her research from a variety of feminist locations, there was no turning back. It was indeed her turn to speak and write in her feminist voices. In her current position as a tenured Associate Professor she has decided to privilege her own voice and those of women in her academic work. Words like storyline, embodiment, whiteness, wide-awakeness, ethics, relationality, love, and decoloniality begin to enter into the everyday of her speaking and writing. She loudly and proudly says the 'f' word—both of them—whenever and wherever she can, to begin the process of deterritorialising white hegemonic patriarchy from the academy. She writes autoethnography and dreams of a conference where only women are cited; knowing full well that both performativities put her in a precarious position all the same. Tossing and turning these possibilities for speaking and writing this version of her story around, Liz decides that, like Maxine Greene (in Pinar 1998, p. 1), perhaps one of the best phrases she might use to describe herself as feminist is to simply say, 'I am who I am not yet'.

Indeed, there is no one authentic feminist voice from which to speak. Briony recognises that different situations and experiences shape the way we respond to those encounters, but when she reflects on 'talking feminist' and speaking in feminist voices she feels that it is always an explicitly political act. At this early stage in her academic career Briony feels excited and happy in the feminist work that she is doing in the academy. It's not always happy work, but it makes her happy to be able to do it. Even though she knows that her research, her writing, and ideas will develop and improve over time she is comfortable with her voice, however much it may quaver with hesitation, however loud and precocious, however radical and contradictory it may sound. However she is also afraid. As a doctoral candidate she is in a highly privileged space but it is also a very precarious place. Rosalind Gill (2010, p. 232) points out that 'precariousness is one of the defining experiences of contemporary academic life' and this looms over Briony wherever she goes. When she looks to her future academic career, Briony is concerned that in academia, those whose knowledge-work is a form of political practice will not be valued. They will not count. Instead they will only become further marginalised, de-politicised, and ventriloquised in the neoliberal university. The competition is fierce. She notices how the disruptions in women's academic careers appear as little silences scattered across their CVs and Briony not only wants people to acknowledge but to change how we understand this. These gendered gaps—the 'holes and hiatuses'—invariably have an impact in the development of women's writing (Eagleton 1996), both in terms of improving gender equality in academia as well as recognising feminist research practices. Briony talks feminist with her supervisor and with particular colleagues and this is a great source of intellectual nourishment. As a teacher Briony also enjoys talking feminist in the classroom where she tutors undergraduates. She relishes opportunities to talk about the historical origins of patriarchy, of contemporary sexualities, and feminisms, and to use words during lectures that in other areas of the university—even other social science courses—would be considered taboo, words like; vulva, cunt, and fuck; terms like; hegemony, phallocentrism, and intersectionality. Briony hopes that she speaks in a language that provokes new ways of thinking. She hopes to offer an emancipatory vocabulary to her students, a language that was so important to her own educational journey. However, the classroom as a space for talking feminist is not without trepidation; Liz and Briony both worry about the ways in which students increasingly police gender and feminist politics. Liz recalls comments on her end of semester teaching evaluations where she was told by a student, 'If Liz wants to improve this course, she should stop being a feminazi'. It was a reminder to her that not everyone wants or likes feminist talk, even in a space such as a Gender Studies course.

Outside of those intimate spaces and more broadly across the university, it becomes more strategic. Briony has to think carefully about when she is going to 'put myself out there' as a feminist and openly convey her feminist political perspectives. Sometimes you can misjudge those moments—willful acts can be unsuccessful. Liz similarly recalls instances when others saw her feminist talk as objectionable; she mistakenly thought it was safe for her to 'speak' feminist and about feminism and the punishment she received was fast and furious. When the realisation comes too late that your public feminist talk has led you onto dangerous ground, the reprimand for speaking out of turn comes swiftly and often times violently, seeking to place you back behind closed doors where your voice can no longer be heard. The constant self-talk-surveillance-preservation-masquerade as a nice obedient daughter of the academy, we engage in, in public, is nothing short of exhausting. Both of us feel that sometimes it is such a relief to be able to stay behind closed doors and scream loudly 'fuck the patriarchy'. It's a secret that we keep and we find agency there. Similarly, we find agency here in writing this book, and see our feminist practice in research and writing an important act of speaking feminist—it presents our willfulness to only speak feminist.

Willful Voices? The Research and Writing Project

Ahmed explores willfulness as a charge often made by some against others and reclaims the term and uncovers its queer and feminist potential. She argues that, 'willfulness can become a style of politics through use of the word "willful"…To claim to be willful or to describe oneself or one's stance as willful is to claim the very word that has historically been used as a technique for dismissal' (Ahmed 2014, p. 133). We are not suggesting that willfulness is a definitive identity, although to be named as willful is to be branded by deviance. Instead, willfulness occurs in a particular moment, enacted and mobilised by a subject but it is also affective in that it can be taken up in different ways by different bodies. As feminists we are often labelled or judged as 'willful women'. This is because we refuse to participate in and perpetuate sexist and oppressive cultures. More than this, Ahmed claims that it is because 'we are willing to critique the very requirement that women be willing' that feminists are so harshly surveilled. Ahmed reminds us that 'feminism is a history of disagreeable women!' (2014, p. 154). As a consequence of being positioned in opposition and disagreement, feminists' speech can go unheard. The research project that is this book thus follows the feminist tradition of prioritising women's voices in constructing the narratives of their own experiences. These narratives highlight the pleasures, challenges, contradictions, and negotiations that these women experience when they speak in a feminist language. It is important to note that the women interviewed have all had quite different exposures to feminist ideology due to their background, age, and experiences working in differing organisational cultures. This is by no means a feminist fairy tale (Fitzgerald 2014, p. 17) of the ultimate willful feminist subject. It does not present one ideal way of speaking and of being a good feminist; instead, we revel and take delight in the sublime messiness the contradictions and convergences our feminist subjectivities and performativities have presented to us. Instead we find writing about talking feminist to be a willful act.

Who and what we cite, how and what we write as feminists is an intimate conversation with who and how we came to position ourselves here in the first place. Inspired by Elizabeth Grosz's (2010a, p. 101) assertion that feminist theory (and we extend this to feminist research and writing) is about 'revealing, elaborating, or unleashing the virtual forces that underlie (patriarchal, racist, militaristic, homophobic) actuality...to become otherwise', we feel that feminist research such as we present here, holds both 'exciting possibilities' and 'enormous dilemmas' (Wise 1997, p. 124). The possibilities and the problematics present themselves to us as the kind of 'yearning' that hooks (1990, p. 92) describes and we place ourselves in the in-between spaces of mourning that which was and is, while at the same time moving and shaking towards something more. We come from different intellectual places, which in some ways makes the interpretive kind of moves we hope to make at once adventurous and calamitous. Briony brings a background of intellectual work in women's studies, literature, and politics while Liz carries with her an eclectic mix of anthropology, education, and the arts. Our conversation necessarily then sways between and swerves around an equally diverse set of scholars, thinkers, and writers; some of whom we cite directly, others whom we invoke, some whom we seek to mimic, and some whose traces lie just beneath the surface. Some we refer to many times and others we mention only once; and we aware that there are still more whose wise feminist speech and writing does not appear. We have drawn on those whose words and ideas enable us to make and share the meaning of our experiences of speaking—for example, the writings of, Woolf, hooks, and Audre Lorde are scattered throughout this book, nurturing and nourishing the ground that will give rise to the branches of feminist thinking that inform the whole. This book may seem to cherry-pick, but we hope that if you follow each branch you will discover the fullness of the ideas. Some may be ripe and ready while others still blossoming with promises of something more.

In this book we shift the academic gaze from researching 'others' and instead turn the gaze towards itself (Stanley 1997, p. 15) to reflect on our positionality and performativity as feminist academics, and even more crucial, to place the practices, cultures, and discourses of our neoliberal institutions into the research spotlight as our objects of enquiry. The narratives of the researcher and researched thus become intertwined. We draw on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with six female academics: Joy, Julia, Leanne, Ruby, Sage, and Vera although there are many more voices included in the pages of this book. Who can say how many in truth, for 'we think back through our mothers if we are women' (Woolf [1928] 2001, p. 88) and all of the women we spoke with stand in particular kinds of professional-personal-political-pedagogical-philosophical relationships with us; some are lifelong academic friends, some colleagues who we have sat alongside for a short time, and others are women who stood beside as feminist academics but once. Like many qualitative interviewing projects, the women whose voices were recorded, transcribed, and now written in this work, represent a combination of planned meetings and chance encounters. However, it is because of these different relationships and un/expected moments of relationality that this book became a possibility. We refuse to count the exact number of participants here because to count places value on a number, when we believe that every story has worth. Numbers are agile. They can be used to maintain or develop a market in higher education. Numbers can have intentional and unforeseen consequences and have the capacity to veil more complex and more insidious issues (Verran 2010). One woman's experience most often resonates with the experience of many women. Hence there is slippage between individual and collective stories. It enables us to keep secrets safe but also to reveal them, because these stories, when spoken are dangerous. The women interviewed came from a variety of Australian institutions including sandstone, redbrick, and gumtree universities, and held a range of permanent positions and precarious contracts. They were also located in a variety of humanities and social science disciplines including education, gender studies, history, philosophy, social work, and sociology. The omission of feminist talking female academics in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines is not deliberate nor is it intentional. While writing this book, for what she imagines to be the first time in her academic career, Liz began to form relationships with female academics from the 'hard' sciences through her involvement in a career progression program for academic women aspiring for promotion from Associate Professor to Professor. During workshops, there has been a lot of feminist talk and she laments that the 'time poor' nature of academic work did not make space for the possibility of their voices to be included—at least not this time. Knowing that in this regard we may be viewed as having failed, we offer the experiences of the women we were able to interview to our sisters across the science disciplines in the hope of a conversation in the future.

Reading This Text: Beginnings and Endings

In the following chapters, we aim to uncover the complexities and possibilities of talking feminist; of writing as speaking, problematising notions of voice and agency, of speaking into the silences, and talking back. There are many ways we may have organised this book. The structure we have decided upon aims first and foremost to make possible and permissible to foreground the speaking-as-writing-as-thinking approach that underpins our work. In Chap. 2 we lay bare the methodological framework we have placed ourselves in. The work of Hélène Cixous has been a most necessary companion in this precarious adventure we have embarked upon to 'only talk-write feminist here' inside the dangerous neoliberal realms of the Westernised university in which we presently find ourselves. 'Write! What? Take to the wind, take to writing, form one body with letters. Live! Risk: those who risk nothing gain nothing, risk and you no longer risk anything', urges Cixous (1991, p. 41) and it is her call for texts and bodies to take new flight that the thinking-as-writing-as-speaking in this book responds to. Drawing on Cixous' *écriture féminine* and Ahmed's (2014) 'willfulness' as a methodological approach allows us to reconsider what constitutes knowledge, research practice, and ultimately power that opens up a space for the reception of feminist academic voices. While we cannot make any claims to identities as philosophers or to a deep knowledge of psychoanalysis, we are both drawn to the subversive entanglement of poetics, politics, playfulness, and performativity in Cixous and Ahmed's work. What remains largely silent from many research methodologies is the gendered nature of how we come to research and write (Phillips et al. 2014). In writing this book we want to disturb the perceived gender neutrality embedded in research methodologies. Language is an important part of methodology, but gendered language continues to be prejudicial towards women in academia. What Cixous confronts in us is our complicity as feminist academics in reproducing masculinity in our academic work at the expense of the feminine other. In Chap. 3 we seek to flesh out the concepts of voice and of feminisms and trace what speech acts do and how they affect those who dare to 'talk feminist'. Here we enter into an analytical conversation with the words shared so generously with us by our feminist colleagues and friends in relation to moments of discursive, material, and affective experience where they found their feminist voices and spoke loudly and proudly. In this chapter, our attention is critically turned towards querying notions of silence and the way silence is performed as a plausible and permissible strategy for negotiating agency, power and gender relations in the neoliberal academy. Chap. 4 then focuses on the recurring theme in this book; that of fight-or-flight. Women's feminist talk is often spoken from a state of suspension located precariously in in-between spaces—spaces replete with both comfort and discomfort, charged with offensive and defensive manoeuvres, swaying between acts of fighting and fleeing, and teetering on the edges of certainty/uncertainty. It is such in-between speech and silence moments that we explore to highlight the entanglements of feminist subjectivities and performativities in contemporary Australian higher education. In the final chapter in this book, we move towards a discussion of methods of resistance, of what it means to fight for feminist spaces and the embodied and affective dimensions of speaking like a feminist. In many ways, the closing words of this book, as Cixous might suggest 'do not give it' (1997, p. 124), that is, they do not 'unveil the password or the closing word to turn over the secret of the key of a reading' (1997, p. 124), but instead declare the beginning. We speak of the urgent and central role of collective voice in neoliberal universities and suggest that in such 'I/you' multiplicities, the willfulness of 'only talking feminist here' can fully come to our speaking-writing-thinking academic lives.

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> The women arrived at their university's International Women's Day breakfast panel event to a whitewash of male panel 'members'. International Women's Day; a day globally recognised for the celebration of the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women and not a woman in sight. The female 'master' of ceremonies rendered invisible in a sea of grey suits, overly vigorous handshakes, and thunderous pre-event jabber. The Vice-Chancellor, a wet blanket of a man, whose leadership style could only be described in the most polite of terms as damp, stepped up to the podium. In his slow and awkward intonation he proudly declared that he was a good man because he had a wife, he had daughters, and that he had 'personally fingered all the women for positions' in his Chancellery. An embarrassingly unfortunate turn of phrase. Poor use of language for someone as senior as he. Ignoring the heavily gendered connotations and misogynistic sexual intimation, the women thought this was the most ridiculous thing they had ever heard in their entire lives, with one woman almost choking on her complimentary breakfast croissant. Another senior male professor followed and delivered another deeply uninspiring presentation. The women looked at each other in complete shock. What kind of a women's day celebration was this, where women literally didn't even get to speak? Then, at the very end of the event the invisible mistress who was mastering the ceremony stepped

out from the wallpaper to graciously thank two previously unnamed, anonymous women who had plainly spent seven hours making these little purple ribbons for this very special day, burning their hands with the hot glue gun, blistering their fingers fastening lapel pins to the tiny strips of violet silk, and boiling their blood making name tags for these 'male champions of change' who had just graced the stage. The women just couldn't believe what they had seen. They silently left the event and walked back to their respective offices. They felt berated by the panel discussion and presentations. They felt like disobedient schoolgirls returning to their departments pending punishment, for how dare they expect equal rights and representation?

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Ruby looked in despair at her open closet. Tomorrow night she was to attend a very important dinner with the Vice-Chancellor and the mostly second-hand garments she saw hanging there were most uninspiring. She had been told that she needed to 'frock up', for this was a night above all others to make an impression if she ever wanted to be promoted to Professor. 'Put on your favourite version of a little black number and heels to match', the dinner organisers said, 'You want to look like a smart girl in his presence'. Ruby sighed. She refused to wear any shoes higher than her runners, and was not fond of short hemlines and clingy materials. Ruby stared forlornly at her tired 40 year old body in the mirror; a body that had given birth to two children and madly raced between their needs and the demands of work; a body that dragged her everyday from one lecture to another meeting and if she was lucky, gave her five minutes relief for a coffee and a toilet stop; a body that flopped into bed, asleep before she even hit the pillow to toss and turn all might over emails not replied too, essays not marked and reports not reviewed and responded to. How could this washed out body ever hope to look smart enough for promotion? Ruby felt wretched and had almost decided to ditch the dinner when out of the corner she spied a dress she saved for special occasions, indeed one special occasion in particular—International Women's Day. She had made it herself two years ago, wanting to adorn her body with the kind of freedom, flight and fight she experienced each year on this day. She had carefully sewn and styled the vivid purple and lime green polka dot cotton fabric into a vintage walk away dress and it said all the right things to Ruby about who she was, what she stood for, and why *this* woman would dare to want to be a professor. Who knows? Ruby might even drop the 'f' bomb, as they sipped champagne, nibbled on *hors d'oeuvre* and made small talk; for after all, she declared defiantly, who could stop her?

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CHAPTER 2

Writing as Speaking

Abstract In this chapter we explore the methodological underpinnings of this book and ask how do we do feminist research which works towards the gender just society we hope for? Here we ground our work in the writings of Hélène Cixous and Sara Ahmed, two different women writing at different times in different places but arguably searching for ways to work within/against the in-between-ness of women's experiences. Drawing on Cixous' *écriture féminine* as a 'willful' methodological approach (after Ahmed, *Willful subjects*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014) allows us to reconsider what constitutes knowledge, research practice and ultimately power that opens up a space for the reception of feminist academic voices. It makes room for us to consider writing as speaking 'other than patriarchy', that it is to speak and write like feminists.

In writing for academic publication, as feminists, we often find ourselves unwittingly participating in the very research and writing conventions and social structures that our work seeks to disrupt (Derrida 1976). Introduction, body, conclusion; introduction, background, data collection, data analysis, results and implications; such structures pervade and invade our sense of what real academic work should look like as writing. Even the mundane rhythms of everyday academic work, our email correspondence, our job applications, our promotion assessments, our administrative tasks, and our peer reviewing, 're-modulates the ways in which we relate to one another as neoliberal subjects, individual, responsible, striving, competitive,

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enterprising' (Ball 2015, p. 258). The process of speaking and thereby writing women's voices and experiences into history and into academic knowledge should not simply be to fit women into a pre-existent male-dominated tradition (Eagleton 1996; Phillips et al. 2014); simply adding women and asking us to do the stirring according to a patriarchal recipe is not enough, as women we have been relegated to that presumed role of domestic bliss too often. Instead in writing this book we wanted to pay particular attention to how we might speak and write differently in feminist research on gender inequality in academia. Knowing that language is an important part of methodology but that gendered language continues to be prejudicial towards women in academia, we want to disturb the perceived gender neutrality embedded in social science research methodologies by following Cixous who suggests that 'You write a text in order to respeak it' (Cixous in Derrida et al. 2006, p. 2), to speak in a different way through a different medium of academic language. The structure of this chapter then, is deliberately fluid, circling around and swirling between only to return again to concepts and ideas which we may have already touched upon.

Why Write with Cixous and Ahmed?

Of all of the wise women (and some men) whose words we have included here, the names of Cixous and Ahmed are perhaps those whom readers will remember most after reading this book. While we cannot make any claims to identities as philosophers or to a deep knowledge of psychoanalysis, we are both drawn to the subversive entanglement of poetics, politics, playfulness, and performativity in Cixous's work. Notably absent from this book is a deep engagement with the feminist poststructuralist philosophies of Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray. While there are many similarities—and differences—in their work to that of Cixous', we felt that Cixous would bring to bear a specific perspective on the question of writing and speaking feminist, specifically through her enactment and exploration of the concept *écriture feminine*. Translated from French as 'feminine writing', *écriture feminine* is a theory which emerged predominantly from the writings of Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva to deconstruct the relationship between the cultural and psychological inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text. However, it is not helpful to think of *écriture feminine* in the masculinist theoretical sense, bound as it is by fixed forms of representation and rigid structures, but rather one that places emphasis on feminine embodied experience, affective movement, material creativity, and fluid cycles of speaking-writing. Cixous lays out this understanding of *écriture feminine* at the very beginning of her 1976 essay, 'The laugh of the Medusa' when she writes, 'I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write her self, must write about women and bring women to writing…Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement' (p. 875).

We concur with Mary Phillips, Alison Pullen, and Carl Rhodes (2014, p. 315) that in exploring the possibilities in the writing of Cixous we do not aim to find a new 'truth' in academic writing but to 'play with the fluctuating possibilities of gender' and that this endeavour is a test of our own complicity as academics in reproducing a masculine norm in our feminist work, a norm that continues to render the feminine outside of institutionalised sites of intellectual practice. Drawing on *l'écriture feminine*as a methodological approach in this chapter allows us to reconsider what constitutes knowledge, research practice, and ultimately power, opening up a space for the reception of feminist academic voices. Cixous' writing radically and creatively disrupts everyday gender norms and distinctions and instils a desire to escape the masculine mastery and hierarchy by 'writing through the body' (Cixous 1976). Her notion of feminine writing does not replace the masculine with the feminine or suggest an erasure of difference. Instead Cixous' approach to writing is a playful displacement of gender and sex and allows for an imagining of the self as multiple, beyond the gender dualism. She searches continually for those places in-between; she wants to be heard as 'all the twos, all the couples. The duals, the duos, the differences, all the dyads in the world: each time there's two in the world' (Derrida in Cixous 1994, p. vii) and takes great delight in the uncertainty, fluidity, and possibilities of in-between-ness for it is here that we might come close to translating the word to life, to text, and back again. We find that the creative potentiality of Cixous in academic writing provides an avenue for accessing those hard-to-get dimensions of social life, opening up a multiplicity of meanings and ways of knowing (Leavy 2012a, p. 516). Similarly, through our use Ahmed's interdisciplinary queer archive of willfulness in *Willful subjects* (2014) we wanted to explore the ways in which feminist talk is willful talk inside the academy. Speaking-writing-thinking in, through and by performances of willfulness and *l'écriture feminine* present themselves as ways of embodied thinking that move beyond theory and practice. Although we do not intend to place too much on Cixous or Ahmed, because to do so might reduce the potentiality of such theorisations and undermine the power and significance of the feminist voices we have interviewed, there is no hiding that Cixous' way of thinking-speaking-writing as *écriture feminine* and Ahmed's reading of willfulness hovers in the air all around this book and are concepts to which we aspire.

A criticism of adopting Cixous' *écriture feminine* and Ahmed's willful subjectivity is how easily the individualistic nature of a willful politics fits within a neoliberal doxa. The freedom to act in a way we choose. For some, willfulness and the capacity to say 'no' and to resist on a day-to-day level ignores the broader systemic issues and hierarchies of oppression; the fact that your unwillingness to do something may in fact result in someone else carrying out that task, and if we think about the most least favourable jobs in academia they are invariably undertaken by women. It is also because of this criticism that such methodological and epistemological approaches are often confused or reduced to individualism that it offers some of its most rich potential in navigating the confluence of neoliberal and feminist discourses in academia and how we might approach contemporary feminist challenges and struggles for gender equity in the university. We do not want to reinforce the gendered, raced, and classed hierarchy that exists in Australian higher education. Rather we must then consider who our feminist 'willful' talk may impact, and how to speak in a way that empowers one another. Willfulness is an individual act, but it is an act carried out because of one's connection to 'a culture whose existence is deemed a threat' (Ahmed 2014, p. 151). There is an exciting potentiality in Ahmed's theorisation of a willful subject in the increasingly measured and corporatised university. Willfulness has the capacity to adapt discursively to such a complex and contradictory environment and connect individuals as well as create a sense of collective will. To recover the collective social body of willfulness is to garner a collective power which may distract and weaken the ever consuming 'baroque monster' (Connell 2014) that is neoliberalism. We need to recognise how women in the academy are acting willfully in different ways. In this chapter then, we trace the masculine legacy of academic research as well as our own coming to Cixous as feminist researchers to explore *écriture feminine* as a 'willful' (Ahmed 2014) methodology.

Breaking the Libidinal Economy of the Neoliberal University: Rationality in Academic Research

The production of academic knowledge in the contemporary neoliberal academy is governed by what Cixous defines as the 'masculine libidinal economy'. She states:

> I maintain unequivocally that there is such a thing as marked writing; that, until now, far more extensively and repressively than is every suspected, writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural—hence political, typically masculine—economy. (1976, p. 879)

This system of exchange privileges the masculine and that of science, rationality, objectivity and rigour. The notion of a feminine 'libidinal economy' is excluded. Silenced by patriarchy. The masculine norm renders the feminine outside of institutionalised sites of intellectual practice, even those devoted to studying gender, as Phillips et al. (2014, p. 315) contend. In such libidinal economies both masculine and feminine are predicated on a relation to the phallus, which is governed by a Freudian inspired fear of castration, which in Cixous' mind equates to a 'fear of being a woman' (Cixous 1976, p. 884). Cixous calls out the phallus as the 'primary organiser of the structure of subjectivity', it is 'the condition for all symbolic functioning' (Cixous 1991, p. 46). Moreover, in writing Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar ([1979] 2000, p. 6) observe that:

> The text's author is a father, a progenitor, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis. More, his pen's power, like his penis's power, is not just the ability to create life but the power to create a posterity to which he lays his claims.

The author is the 'man of reason' (Lloyd [1984] 1993). Although Gilbert and Gubar are referring to literary history their descriptor fits very much within the dominant discourse of academic writing and research. For Heather Höpfl (2000) to break the silence around phallic knowledge we must critique the production, and break what Kristeva calls the 'mastery' of knowledge. Women's writing interrupts the silence of phallic knowledge and organisational spaces through the subversion of language, or what Phillips et al. (2014, p. 314) refer to as the 'playful displacement' of the Cartesian dualism. Indeed, as Sissel Lie asserts, Cixous (1991, p. 43) wants us to 'oppose norms, break loose from rigid concepts, at our own risk and peril, to arrive at a new freedom for our thoughts'. This sentiment is echoed in Rosi Braidotti's (2011, p. 24) recent invitation to 'disidentify ourselves from the sedentary phallogocentric monologism of philosophical thinking'. In a resistant way, women's writing willfully ignores the punishing glare of the great 'One-Eyed Father' (Haraway 1997, p. 45) and refuses to become 'partially submerged' (Greene 1994, p. 209) by it. Together, these words urge us to find new ways of writing academic words; ways which deliver an antidote to the paralysing and prohibiting structures of high theory (Braidotti 2011, p. 24). Cixous insists that this is what writing will do, writing must no longer be determined by the past and instead must seek to break up, to destroy, and to foresee the unseeable (1976, p. 875).

Academic knowledge production has traditionally been predicated upon a masculine legacy of science and rationality. Phillips et al. (2014) claim that it is the legacy of science, as a privileged mode of inquiry and knowledge production that is central to the imperviousness of masculinity as the assumed mode of theorising. While their work focuses specifically on organisational research, we contend that the objectivity ascribed to 'hard' data, the notion of 'rigorous' methods, and primacy of 'seminal' works make up the accepted standard in research methods in the majority of scientific and social science fields. Rigour; that which is hard, strict, and severe, is understood as essential to research practice. Rigorous work is that which measures (Phillips et al. 2014). Gender is integral to measurement and valuation as a practice is connected to measure in a problematic way, not least because in the neoliberal university the value derived is one of capital. The logic of capital commodifies and monetises every aspect of our lives (Skeggs 2014). Measurement is thus a political act and plays an integral role in the creation of value and the social construction of reality (Adkins and Lury 2012). In the bean counting, hoop jumping neoliberal university, what gets researched, which projects gets funded, who researches it, and how that research is then valued reinforces rather than removes the gender dichotomy in higher education. Women's continued marginalisation in academia, as Marianna Fotaki (2013, p. 1253) observes, 'has profound implications both on how knowledge is reproduced and on what counts as knowledge'. In the neoliberal university, knowledge production is increasingly connected to academic promotion and leadership opportunities via research output. Dominant research methods are ones where rigour is pursued 'with a certain scientific rationality—one that valorises precision, systematicity, objectivity and the advancement of knowledge' (Clark, Floyd and Wright 2006, in Phillips et al. 2014, p. 316). The discourse of rationality is seen to transcend the feminine. Genevieve Lloyd ([1984] 1993, p. 1) in her historical exploration of the philosophical origins and association between rationality and maleness asserts that:

> Rational knowledge has been constructed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind.

Indeed, St Pierre (2000, p. 487) agrees and suggests that 'feminists have celebrated the profileration of reason, with good reason, since they have historically been fixed on the wrong side of the rational/irrational binary. Rationality itself is defined against the feminine, thereby casting women cast as 'reason's "other" ' (Braidotti 1991, p. 148). Women therefore, have been excluded from everywhere, argues Irigaray, through the representation of women in relation to, and exclusively through male discourse, 'most hidden as woman and absent in the capacity of the subject' (1985, p. 32). Cixous responds to the (im)possibility of women being in or outside of reason by stating that:

> If woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man...it is time for her to dislocate this 'within', to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it into her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. (Cixous 1976, p. 257)

To explode 'the discourse of man' conjures somewhat similar imagery to that which equates women with nature. To explode is to burst and shatter. An explosion is the culmination and moment of excess, an eruption of something that cannot be contained. Women; with all their leaking and flowing bodily associations with birth, breastfeeding, menstruation are seen as suspect and dangerous; as inauthentic against the construct of the 'ideal' academic subject. The leaky academic and female body can be understood as such an explosion and must therefore be carefully controlled. Their reproductive capabilities, whether or not they are mothers, sees that women are never able to transcend their bodies (Fotaki 2013; Phillips 2014), never capable of achieving rationality (Potts and Price 1995). As female academics, we sit in committee meetings, seminars, and academic appraisals as props or tokens of successful inclusion, when in fact our corporeality rips and tears at the invisible fabric of the masculine logic and rationality. Margrit Shildrick and Janet Price (1996) describe women as being both contaminating and contaminated and yet the gendered university requires and relies upon such representational aspects of maternity. Epstein et al. (2007, p. 117) provocatively suggest that women are positioned as the 'eternal breasts' of the university, naturally and expected to take on the motherly roles of 'growing up' good students, nurturing all those around us by taking down notes and cleaning up the tea rooms, taking on large amount of teaching and being attentive to the small tasks that enable the men around us to do the work that really counts. In Beryl Fletcher's ([1991] 2002) *The word burners*, a novel about the paradoxes of being a feminist academic, she writes about the need for a new language:

> For too long we listened to the voice of the non-cunt who formulated our identity in tune with His need, His desire, His vision. The muteness of our tongues has been redressed, the silence is silenced. We have regained our voice and have tuned the talk towards ourselves. The Quiet cunt is no more. The talking cunt is here. (Fletcher [1991] 2002, p. 219)

Cixous believes that it is conceivable for women to write outside of this gendered binarism, only if women write in the in-between-ness of masculine and feminine writing, although it is mode of writing that is not essential to women. When Cixous speaks of a 'decipherable libidinal femininity' it is one 'which can be read in a writing produced by a male or a female' (Cixous 1991, p. 51). It defies the patriarchal order. Cixous understands what we as women and feminist writers are up against when we write with mind and body:

> I know why you haven't written…because writing is at once too high, too great for you, its reserved for the great- that is, for 'great men'; and its 'silly.' Besides you've written a little, but in secret. And it wasn't good, because it was in secret, and because you punished yourself for writing, because you didn't go all the way; or because you wrote, irresistibly as when we would masturbate in secret, not to go further, but to attenuate the tension a bit, just enough to take the edge off. And then as soon as we come, we go and make ourselves guilty—so as to be forgiven; or to forget, to bury it until the next time. (1976, p. 876–77)

The psychological effects of women's oppression are so engrained, so much so that we doubt our ability to write and free ourselves from our patriarchal indenture. A criticism of French feminist philosophy is that it returns to female desire and women's erotic body, despite this being the very site of women's pronounced objectification as sexual objects (Weil 2006, p. 153). Yet, by calling out to female desire, by writing and speaking from the cunt, as Fletcher writes, French feminist philosophy is exposing masculine deception at its core (Weil 2006, p. 154). Cixous notes that ‘Men still have everything to say about their sexuality, and everything to write’ (1976, p. 877). Cixous and her contemporaries give us strength to challenge the primacy of masculine academic rationality at the expense of women’s sexual and scholarly constraint, and the power and influence of women’s writing.

Thinking-as-Writing-as-Speaking Through the Body: The Centrality of Cixous’ *sécriture Feminine* to This Text

It is from this ‘yearning’ for writing beyond phallocentric masculinist practices that leads us to the work of Hélène Cixous. Described by Abigail Bray (2004, p. 20) as a ‘post-structuralist feminist of difference’, Cixous’ writing takes many forms of expression including poetic fiction, chamber theatre, philosophical and feminist essays, literary theory and literary criticism (Sellers in Cixous 1991, p. xxvi). In her work, Cixous seeks to write as a woman in order to empower women, and her writing is most often associated with the concept of *écriture féminine* or ‘feminine writing’ (Sellers in Cixous 1991, p. xxix). Cixous herself, refused to ‘fix’ *l’écriture feminine* by committing the error of providing a definition (Lie 2012, p. 43). From our reading of her work and in agreement with Lie (2012, p. 42), the opening sentences of her revolutionary piece ‘The laugh of the Medusa’ provide an understanding of the concept of *l’écriture feminine* as ‘liberating writing’:

> I shall speak about women’s writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies…Woman must per herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement. (1976, p. 875)

L’écriture feminine can be interpreted as a liberating bodily practice that aims to release ‘the subject away from the stagnant confines of phallocentric thought’ (Bray 2004, p. 43) through the release of creativity. Cixous’ feminine writing is at once disruption and dismissal of the power of a Cartesian dualism which separates mind from body; it has the potential to ‘exceed the binary logic’ that informs the current phallocentric system (Sellers in Cixous 1994, p. xxix). Cixous is trying, writes Banting (1992,

p. 239), to 'unname the Cartesian body'. Bray (2004, p. 7) suggests that for Cixous 'To think is also to write, to create meaning, and that process of production is embodied'. Cixous herself explains, 'to me writing is the fastest and most efficient vehicle for thought; it may be winged, galloping, four-wheeled, jet-propelled etc.—according to the urgency' (1994, p. xxii). We might then, go so far as to say that Cixous' 'thinking-writing-body' is linked to a 'feminist way of knowing, and this in turn is linked back to a feminist way of theorising being' (Stanley 1997, p. 4). Moira Gatens (1992, p. 230) asserts that 'writing itself is a political issue and a political practice for many contemporary feminists' and for this reason, we need to resist essentialising the project of *écriture féminine*. Indeed, Cixous (in Cixous and Clement 1986, p. 72) explains, writing in the feminine is 'a place…which is not economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise. That is not obliged to reproduce the system. That is writing'. In 'The laugh of the Medusa' Cixous (1976, p. 892) further encourages a refusal to be 'impressed by the commotion of the phallic stance' in our writing—'that's the woman of yesterday!' she proclaims. Her voice reaches fever pitch as she desires us to go further still, 'Shrug off the old lies, dare what you don't dare…rejoice, rejoice in the terror, follow it where you're afraid to go…take the plunge, you're on the right trail!' (1991, p. 40). This sentiment is echoed in Greene's (1994, p. 209) refusal to be 'swept along by what the great ones have said and remain partially submerged by them' and Braidotti's (2011, p. 24) recent invitation to 'disidentify ourselves from the sedentary phallogocentric monologism of philosophical thinking'. Cixous encourages the search for new ways of writing academic words; ways which deliver an antidote to the paralysing and prohibiting structures of high theory (Braidotti 2011, p. 24).

In 'The laugh of the Medusa', Cixous urges women to enter in the flight of thinking by rewriting women's lack (Bray 2004, p. 8) and it is through *l'écriture feminine* that the body speaks in her inevitable struggle against conventional man (Cixous 1976, p. 875). We emphasise the word struggle here, it's a word that Cixous uses often: a woman in struggle, a 'fundamental struggle', 'sequences of struggle', the 'struggle for mastery', 'struggle-to-the-death'. There is no doubt that Cixous' talk of struggle results in a call to arms and rebellion from within. 'We must kill', she urges, 'the false woman who is preventing the live one from breathing' (1986, p. 880) and her words are reminiscent of Woolf who decades earlier sought to slaughter 'the angel in the house' ([1942] 1992) which prevented her from writing-speaking-thinking as a woman. Cixous further describes women writing through their bodies as militants inherently engaged in a struggle which takes place on the battlefield of a unifying, regulating, homogenising history (1976, p. 882). Here we are again reminded of the ways in which women's writing bodies hold the tantalising possibility of rendering unpredictable damage to the libidinal economy. When such movement arrives, she declares, 'it's an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return' (1976, p. 886) which cannot fail to be more than subversive (1976, p. 888). Harrowing explosions and earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, are necessary 'in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the truth with laughter' (1976, p. 888). For Cixous, in becoming a writing-speaking-thinking, woman herself becomes the ultimate 'antilogos weapon' (1976, p. 880). In a similar way, our writing-speaking-thinking performance of this text seeks to continue this Cixousian revolution.

Cixous' *écriture feminine* disrupts the perceived gender neutrality of institutional cultures, measures, discourses, and practices that coalesce in the neoliberal university. Cixous argues that in writing-as-speaking in the feminine, it is possible to break the 'codes that negate her' (1976, p. 879) and thereby inscribe the heterogeneous: the diverse, the divergent, and the different. As women, she argues, we have 'no reason to pledge allegiance to the negative' and are in 'no way obliged to deposit ourselves in their banks of lack' (1976, p. 884). Because the symbolic order of phallocentricism exists and holds power, such writing requires courage and collectivity. 'In one another', she writes, 'we will never be lacking' (1976, p. 893) and one of the aims of this book is to build a speaking-as-thinking-as-writing collectivity between and amongst ourselves as feminist academics. Cixous wants more than collectivity however; she wants women to grab hold of their own agency—each woman for her self-and-other—in order to bring about change. She insists that in order to achieve such 'emancipation of the marvellous text of her self she must urgently learn to speak' (1976, p. 880) and seize the occasion to come to voice. For Cixous then, writing *is* speaking the body and speaking *is* writing the body and through such embodied acts woman will take up 'the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus' and 'break out of the snare of silence' (1976, p. 881). This book, in a Cixousian sense, seeks to write-speak-think our bodies as feminist academics within/against the neoliberal academy as an act which holds within it 'the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures' (Cixous 1976,

p. 879). Cixous' mode of writing in the feminine destabilises gender binaries and masculine hegemony but does not replace the masculine with the feminine (Phillips 2014). It 'is a form of exchange from one subject to another where both contribute to a whole, rather than facing one another in opposition, always harbouring a potential transformation that can make us anew' (Phillips et al. 2014, p. 324). For Cixous, the feminine defies all boundaries; it cannot be pinned down or controlled. It is related to otherness, but it is not in opposition.

For us then, Cixous' writing is alluring and provocative; a mix of stylistic, narrative, poetry and philosophy that disrupts phallocentric notions of gender and language as one and the same. In relation to Cixous' writing-as-thinking, Bray suggests that it is:

> Perhaps more important to 'put the accent on the poetic', for the poetic is precisely that which rationality attempts to repress and it is the very repression of 'the poetic' which is thought to lead to violence. The poetic is the domain of excess, the unconscious, the body, sexuality, creativity, the feminine, all that the political attempts to limit and contain through the application of 'hard' and 'cruel' reason. (2004, p. 15)

In a similar way, post-academic writing seeks to respond to the question, 'what forms of writing were excluded by the way you were taught your research question should be written about?' (Livholts 2012, p. 3). Contemporary neoliberal ideology, driven as it is by 'ratings, rankings, and counting' (Livholts 2012, p. 3) 'defines out' the critical and creative potential of alternative academic writing methodologies. Mona Livholts (2012) recently described such devalued and ignored textual practices as 'post-academic writing'. 'Post-academic writing' is often 'out of time' and 'out of step' with the temporal demands of academia, and as a consequence, 'has often been put aside or mislaid, because for some reason it did not fit, even in the mind of the author' (Livholts 2012, p. 7).The academic writing that 'counts', more often than not, is that which reproduces phallocentric masculinist processes, replete as they are with words like 'rationale', 'limitation', 'objectivity', triangulation', and 'free from bias'. Livholts asserts that such main/male-stream textual forms are 'often related to a system that privileges certain kinds of knowledge over other, subjugated knowledge' (2012, p. 3) and adopting feminist creative academic writing provides an avenue for accessing those hard-to-get dimensions of social life, opening up a multiplicity of meanings and ways of knowing (Leavy 2012a, p. 516). Indeed, Cixous' *l'écriture feminine* holds the possibility, as Lie (2012, p. 50) asserts, of 'opening up more of one's resources for thinking when writing for Academia [which] is important if one does not want to repeat what others have said'. Indeed, we would argue, alongside Grosz (2010b), that it is 'time' to re-explore materialities and discourses of bodies, particularly women's bodies, in relation to the temporal forces of the contemporary neoliberal university and the ways in which we might direct questions of change to the 'out of time' and 'untimely' work we engage in as academic feminists.

In the neoliberal university where new managerialist practices suppress dissenting voices, where increased measurement and calls for innovation enforce conformity via vigorous competition, Liz finds that it is through writing that she can subvert 'the libidinal economy':

> If I'm being nice and being quiet and being seen to be subservient, the way that I can be subversive in another context is through writing and feeling that sense of no, there is no censorship. I don't have to feel censored by what I write. I can write whatever I like.

For Briony, Women's Studies offer her a vocabulary and empowering language from which to articulate inequalities. As an undergraduate student coming to the poetic prose of Cixous and other writers like Lorde, hooks, and Monique Wittig offered her a new way of writing those new words. It was a revelation. The poetic genre can in many ways be more verbally explicit in that it can reveal contradictions in dominant discourses that other forms of writing and speaking cannot (Gal 1991, p. 194). When she reads Cixous, Briony feels Cixous' presence permeates the space; like a warm whisper in your ear, forcing you to touch the hairs on the back of your neck, to look around, to stretch your body as you ponder her words. It was a surprise at first, how affecting Cixous can be, but now many years later when Briony returns to Cixous' work time and time again Cixous' arrival in the room is like that of an old friend, a weary traveller through the years, and not least a complicated and sometimes maddening companion, but Cixous is always there when you seek her out. The spectre of Cixous can be quite the comedian, offering reflections and anecdotes and theory all wrapped together into one frustratingly layered gift, simultaneously defined and ambiguous. But the poetics of Cixous and others is not merely a stylistic device. It is employed to disrupt the phallogocentric text (Hölpf 2000). Writing in the feminine allows us to break the constraints of the masculine tradition of academic writing and to speak in a way that is not mere lip service to a neoliberal institution that seeks to profit from a feminist politic.

Emergent Feminist Methods: Ruptures and Secrets

Research methodology is inextricably linked to the status of women in higher education and standing alongside Cixous in this book are other strong and inspiring women's voices from the academy who have willingly placed themselves within the field of disruptive feminist academic writing practice. Ruth Behar (1996, p. 162) positions herself as a 'Woman of the border: between places, between identities, between languages, between cultures, between longings and illusions, one foot in the academy and one foot out' in her work *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart* and seeks to research and write in a feeling-as-sensing-as-knowing way that matters. Laurel Richardson's text (1997) *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life* presents a series of feminist post structural experimental essays to search for ways to engage with concepts of 'reflexivity, authority, authorship, subjectivity, power, language, ethics, representation' so that we might 'write ourselves into our texts with intellectual and spiritual integrity' (p. 2). Carolyn Ellis (2004), in her book *The Ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*, intentionally combines the self, fiction, and ethnography to write about the material, emotional, and affective dimensions of social experience, and in doing so, contests the binaries of creativity and analysis. The social fiction works, *Low-fat love* (2012b) and *Blue* (2015) by Patricia Leavy make it possible for story as life to become life as story and importantly, demonstrate the ways in which fiction as research might become intertextual in its capacity to speak to all of us. Reading her work we imagine and see ourselves as each and every character and thereby experience the power of reflection to change the ways which we might become in the world. These are but some examples of feminist academic textual practice which we have found inspiring, largely because they reject the notion that our writing must be distant and dispassionate, and instead, 'yearn to theorise in a more passionate way' (Livholts 2012, p. 6). By putting the 'flesh of life on the bones of experience' (after Holman Jones 1998), such writing acknowledges that there is no dividing line between our academic lives and our academic writing—the personal truly becomes the political as phrases, paragraphs, and pages come into being, so much so that the use of our embodied and emotioned voices is a way we might '[break] the disembodied flow' of academic writing (Potts and Price 1995, p. 100).

Such a rupture is important to us. This book's traditional academic structure is broken, or perhaps more appropriately, built upon the presence of several interludes or vignettes of our interview participants' experiences of 'talking feminist' as well as being speckled throughout the chapters themselves. Sometimes an argument escapes us. It cannot be contained. It spills out from its appropriate bookends and leaves us questioning. This is the kind of 'untimely writing' that Livholts refers to, writing that 'appears unexpectedly, disturbing and interrupting the un-named hegemonic style' (2012, p. 7). The creative anecdotes preceding each chapter purposefully hover in the in-between spaces, disrupting the ever-present libidinal economy and what constitutes an academic text. These are characterised as short narratives which describe a personal and intimate incident and tell us something about ourselves as feminist researchers and our interview participants. Mike Michaels observes that 'such narratives become anecdotes by virtue of their telling' (2012, p. 25). Anecdotes are self-reflective narratives broadly situated within the fields of auto/ethnographies. They capture the mundane everyday as well as documenting something out of the ordinary and unusual. It enacts both difference and sameness and allows us to interrogate that which is taken-for-granted.

Ruby sat down at her desk in the room she calls her own and began to write what she imagined to be autoethnography. She was a trained anthropologist and new all about how to 'write culture' and loved a good story. As words began to take shape on the page she saw her autoethnographic writing become heartlines; letters and phrases, and then soon enough whole essays, which through their own flesh and blood, breathed life into the possibility of her becoming. Writing-as-heartlines began to decorate her sleeve, first one and then the other. The heartlines wrote themselves in white ink and Ruby saw in that moment that they belonged to the undutiful—daughters or otherwise—who delighted in the ethico-onto-epistemological disturbances and diffractions possible in the moment of writing. Ruby watched as through writing heartlines the personal become political became pedagogical became performative became thinking-full, theory-full, became hand-full and heart-full, full to overflowing. Writing watched Ruby, Ruby watched her writing as together they weaved their heartlines inwards and outwards, back and forth in time and out of time at the self and the social. She watched writing become a beautiful woman laughing, dancing and rejoicing like the Medusa in the power she held for embodied, emotioned and ethical ways of thinking, being and doing autoethnography. Ruby also knew that it would be foolish to remain unaware of the dangers; a heartline is like any other—it can break and be tossed ruthlessly aside by others, once, twice and many

> times over but Ruby is not afraid; she knows from her heart to her hand, that 'censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time… your body must be heard' (Cixous 1976, p. 880).

The autoethnographic moment is performative both for the researcher and the researched and the anecdote is a way of incorporating that explicit performativity. It is a means of writing the self 'into the narrative in order to problematise the authorial voice' (Michaels 2012, p. 28). Interviews and our autoethnographic self-reflections are always constructed and only ever partial and so in focusing on these intimate encounters that come out of our interviews and our own experiences we hope to complicate this as well as capture how these incidents are affectively charged and highly recognisable. Unlike typical forms of autoethnography, Michaels (2012) suggests that the anecdote serves as a means for tracing the co-emergence of research, researcher and researched. The anecdote is methodologically tacit in that it both adheres to and escapes the particular confines and productivities of its discipline and so this book attempts to push the methodological limits of anecdotes as a form of feminine writing.

These intimate encounters not only capture a moment that becomes a resource we can study but the performative aspect of writing these anecdotes also reveals a process of *becoming* in the research process. What we hope to capture in the stories of our interview participants is what Cixous describes as 'the eternity of the instant' (Cixous [1998] 2005, p. 30). The immense range of emotions, the minute detail of a fleeting moment. This is what Cixous does when she writes. She consciously attempts to write in the moment (Blyth 2004). She attempts to capture what is 'appearing and disappearing *in the same moment*' (Cixous qtd. in Blyth 2004, p. 77):

> The moment a something flashes…I try to note it down because I know that five minutes later its itness will have vanished totally, even from my memory. It's not because I am a miser, it's simply because this is absolutely exceptional: it's something that has been given, which is irreplaceable and if I don't make the effort to note it down immediately it's as if it never had happened.

Michaels notes that 'performativity lies in the way prior events come to enact the storyteller' (2012, p. 26). These stories illuminate critical reflection and reorientation that make them full of relevance (Michaels 2012, p. 33). Michaels asserts that anecdotes, while they may trouble the notion of traditional research methods they expose how our relationship to them is not simply in terms of 'analytic fodder' (2012, p. 34). There is an impossibility in recording such moments, in writing the present *after* the present has passed and Cixous realises this (Blyth 2004). Writing cannot capture everything but through writing these moments are spoken and in speaking there can also be a letting go.

Narrative with its emphasis on storytelling is often positioned in opposition to science and so to, to rationality. Narrative and anecdotes could be identified as a feminine method of research and writing. Such an assumption reinforces the gender binary, and yet positioning a narrative approach in this way is also a gendered act that seeks to destabilise such a polarising construct; indeed, Cixous contends that 'the masculine-conjugal subjective economy' is invested in the maintenance of the gender binary (1976, p. 888). In these creative anecdotes we deliberately make repetitious use of the phrase 'the women'. For French post-structuralists like Cixous, Irigaray, and Wittig, the French collective, plural feminine pronoun *elles*, meaning *they* in English, escapes its cultural and biological femininity, and particularly in Wittig's *Les guerilleres*, it allows Wittig's Amazonian, female warriors, freedom from the categories of wife and woman (Rosenfeld 1981). In English, this revolutionary etymological act has less impact than in the works of Wittig, yet our engagement with the pronominal 'the women' is not merely a superficial stylistic imitation. Nor is it to homogenise women's experiences. What it does is that it allows us to critically explore the multiplicity and fluidity of feminist academic identities and voices.

Indeed, we are keenly aware of the intersectional nature of feminist subjectivities. Attempts to theorise women's experiences in feminist discourse are heavily criticised by women who sit outside white-middle-class Western hegemony as nothing more than tokenistic discussions of race, or analyses which exclude race altogether and make whiteness invisible. At this point in this text, we begin to twist and turn uneasily—we are mindful that feminism has a particularly 'white' façade, colonial foundation, and exclusionary reputation. We are also wide awake to the fact that our subjectivities as white cis-gendered colonial settler middle class women place us firmly in the centre of such critique. Sandy Grande (2003) calls this type of 'racially' exclusive, conveniently ignorant and undeniably neo-colonial feminism, 'whitestream' to allude to the ways in which such feminists conveniently side-step, mis-align and refuse a dialogue with such uncomfortable entanglements. Echoing similar criticisms by Huggins (1998) and Moreton-Robinson (2000), Grande uses the term 'ludic feminists', to refer to feminist scholars who have redefined politics as a 'purely academic exercise' (p. 331) and questions the interests that theorising 'other' women by whitestream ludic feminists really serve. In this text, the 'other' women are by and large women like us—women who are not necessarily and always already performing a distinctive form of whiteness, but who occupy a particular kind of educated and class privilege because we have rooms of our own in various sizes in universities. The issue of race is another 'stuck place' we find ourselves in as we write this book—it is not a clear analytical category but it sits with us, hovering at the edges of our discussion, reminding us that there is a conversation still to have.

Cixous' multiplicity sits as a category which assumes sameness yet insists on difference across the boundaries of race. She asserts that, 'there is at this time, no general woman, no one typical woman'. Cixous' universal 'woman' is an attempt to destabilise an essentialised woman. There is much criticism (Glass 2010) towards Cixous' ahistorical gesture, which in its liberating utopian vision masks race and class divisions, rendering the experiences and struggles of women of colour, the impoverished, and the elderly invisible. Cixous romanticises blackness and appropriates the experiences of 'otherness' when she claims women as 'darkness' reinforcing racialised representations through her appropriation of Africa, 'because you are Africa', Cixous claims, 'you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous' (1976, p. 877–878). Kathy Glass finds that Cixous 'lapses into essentialism via racially charged figurative language' (2010, p. 226).

For Lorde, ignoring difference enables the status quo and white privilege to flourish unfettered. She urges white women to face the realities of our various raced, classed, sexed orientations and subjectivities within the category of 'woman' and recognise how these distinctions produce 'difference in oppressions' (Lorde 1984, p. 112). As Cixous observes, 'Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilise their immense strength against themselves, to be the executants of their virile needs' (1976, p. 878). We have in many ways been taught to internalise sexist and racist assumptions. In Cixous' words, we must 'kill the false woman' or in hooks' words, we need to 'acknowledge and confront the enemy within' ([1984] 1997, p. 398-99). For hooks, self-reflection is critical to the process of change. She argues that 'before we can resist male domination we must break our attachment to sexism; we must work to transform female consciousness' ([1984] 1997, p. 398). To allow ourselves to be self-reflective, to be vulnerable, and to be 'willing' to create change, Lorde challenges us to consider our place in such systems of oppression. This, Glass (2010) summarises, allows us to challenge racist patriarchal norms and seek out 'new ways of being in the world' (Lorde 1984, p. 111). Furthermore, both Lorde and hooks argue that engaging in women's diversity is essential to the feminist movement. Women's commonality is in their diversity. Voices are heard and meaningful dialogue emerges when we are willing to challenge our centrality and are willing to have our identities 'fractured and rebuilt' (Paris 1995 qtd. in Glass 2010, p. 228). Approaching *l'écriture feminine* as a methodology recognises and allows a layering of multiple voices and narratives that are shifting, fluid, mobile, and ambiguous (Irigaray 1985, p. 233).

In our feminist methodological and epistemological approach we want to be able to capture both the macro politics of the university and the affective states of working in, researching and teaching in the contemporary university. We concur with Gill (2010) that research into the experiences of female academics is not an excuse to have 'a good old moan' and it is precisely because of this gendered presumption that women's conversations about workplace experiences are only heard as 'moaning'; 'as an expression of complaint or unhappiness, rather than being formulated as an analysis of a (political) demand for change' (Gill 2010, p. 230), that this research becomes so important. To be unhappy, to complain, to go against the grain even if that means going against the 'happiness script' is to be a feminist killjoy (Ahmed 2010, p. 70). We are proud feminist troublemakers and to demonstrate the significance of how and why we speak and write as feminists, as well as uncover when and how feminist voices are muted, and why some voices may choose to remain silent, we experiment with several inventive and emergent feminist methods.

Ahmed (2010) speaks of feminist researchers as secretaries to invoke the more obscured meaning of the word secretary: that is of a person who is entrusted with secrets, and while Ahmed acknowledges the gendered implications of this term, we find this description aptly fitting. Carol Taylor (2011) uses the term 'intimate insider' primarily in relation to the relationship between researchers and their pre-existing friendships with informants. Dana Cuomo and Vanessa Massaro (2016) build upon

Taylor's term 'intimate insiders' to describe their experiences as feminist geographers and the complex negotiations that take place when doing feminist fieldwork. This term 'intimate insiders' could indeed be expanded to include feminist academics working within and against the neoliberal university and in the case of this book, we both reside (relatively) permanently in the locations in which we are researching. Taylor (2011, p. 9) describes this 'intimate insider research' is research conducted in:

> A contemporary cultural space with which the researcher has regular and ongoing contact; where the researcher's personal relationships are deeply embedded in the field; where one's quotidian interactions and performances of identity are made visible; where the researcher has been and remains a key social actor within the field and thus becomes engaged in a process of self-interpretation to some degree; and where the researcher is privy to undocumented historical knowledge of the people and cultural phenomenon being studied.

This is a question of feminist epistemology. This is not just an important question for us as researchers, but also perhaps for the feminist academic women we interviewed because to name gender or racial discrimination 'can be an act of disloyalty, which is at once a form of disobedience; an act which refuses the veil of secrecy offered by diversity' (Ahmed 2010, p. xviii). In this way, feminist research can be understood as a form of praxis, 'a way of knowing that transforms what is known' (Ahmed 2010, p. xx). Biographical material exposes personal encounters and intimate experiences. Experiences that Gill (2010) reflects, are often kept secret or silenced that don't have 'proper channels' of communication. The challenges facing women in academia are well documented, as Davis (1997, p. 185) points out, taken alone, such experiences of marginalisation and misogyny might not seem particularly dramatic. The drama, however, 'is rather in their routine and systematic character. They are personal, but by no means idiosyncratic. Every feminist academic will have her own collection of atrocity tales'.

Belonging to feminist communities, as David (2014) observes, means that questions of anonymity and confidentiality are never straightforward. Ahmed suggests that: 'sometimes we need not keep secrets with which we are entrusted even if this means we become untrustworthy. What we do with what we are entrusted—whether we speak up or keep silent—remains an important question' (2010, p. xx). The women interviewed welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences and relished the opportunity to talk feminist during our interviews. This is not to ignore the vulnerability we feel when we share such secrets. We are indebted to the women interviewed for the ways in which their insights have supported and enabled us to develop feminist critiques. Our sense of security in our intellectual ventures as feminist academics can feel, at times, fragile and precarious in the neoliberal university. David (2014) observes that in our belonging to such social groups as feminists in academia we must recognise that our ideas and views are never fully our own. We must 'let go of the fantasies of "writing" as autonomous intellectual work' (Potts and Price 1995, p. 99). There is no singular authorised feminist voice (Potts and Price 1995; Stanley 1997; Wise and Stanley 1993). Our work is collaborative and a product of our belonging to a community of scholars and activists (David 2014). Rather than this being a limitation, this acknowledgement serves to strengthen feminist research.

(In)decision

As we bring this chapter to a close, we want to avoid the 'Eurocentric masculinist validation process' (Hill Collins 1990) of 'concluding' with neatly packaged up statements about what we feel to be the 'Truth' of writing theoretically and methodologically with Cixous and Ahmed. Our first and enduring reflection is that, notwithstanding the raced and classed hierarchies inherent in academia, universities are incredibly privileged spaces. They are places where we are encouraged, and we encourage others, to write and to speak, and to critically engage with language and discourse. Writing then, is a part of our livelihood as academics, and writing with Cixous and Ahmed—at least for now—provides a creative strategy for making it possible and permissible to challenge post-feminist and neoliberal discourses. Moreover, the more we write with Cixous and Ahmed, the more we sense that writing-as-speaking with/in willfulness makes room for a 'collectivising' of women's voices—we use the phrase 'the women' throughout to make our shared subjectivities and performativities visible. While many of the stories are from individual women, our own experiences tell us that they are also shared by many women in many different institutions. Thus for us, writing in the feminine is a way of rethinking the gendered speaking/writing binary. Cixous invites us to unleash our creative powers, and Ahmed invites us to do so with willfulness. We are not 'always already' sure however how close we might have come to this intention and sense that we would prefer to remain in the 'stuck place' that writing within/against the academy positions us.

The Willful Writing-Is-Speaking-Is-Publishing Feminist Academic Body: A Conversation Between Cixous and Ahmed

Setting
It is five o' clock on a Friday afternoon somewhere in the world. The two women sit down at their respective computers and smile. Six months prior they had decided to embark upon a feminist research project together and now they were preparing to 'write up' their 'findings' for publication.

The stage is split into two distinct rooms. LIZ MACKINLAY *flips a sign on her office door that reads 'Caution, Woman writing. Enter at your own risk, or better yet, please come back another time! Thank you for your understanding.' She then walks across the room pulls out the office chair behind the desk in her office and sits down, fingers poised above the keyboard in front of her desktop PC, a cup of tea steams in a mug on the desk beside her.* BRIONY LIPTON *sits at home cross-legged and hunched over on a sofa, Macbook resting on her lap, several take-away coffee cups litter the low coffee table in front of her. A sign upstage left diagonally behind the sofa reads: 'Post-Grad Hot Desk' and three students play musical chairs around one small computer chair.*

The women do not need to be in the same room to write together or even be in the same time zone for they know each other's work well. But more than this, academic time has become a commodified product in the neoliberal university. The women feel increased pressures to produce, to publish research. They feel the presence of increased expectations around the attainment of grants, and increased demands to innovate in teaching and learning. Frequent restructuring, intensified workloads, the rise in a casualised academic workforce and short-term contracts, and reliance on the use of online technologies all place individual responsibility upon academics and deflect institutions' accountability to their staff. There is a cultural expectation of long hours and flexibility that comes with academic labour and it goes largely unquestioned. The women click close on the last of the marking they were to tackle that day. Flicking open and minimising Word documents and Internet browsers, they make themselves comfortable.

The two women correspond ideas and project plans via telephone and email. Their email chain appears in real-time on a large screen projector positioned centre stage. They are ready to write, but soon realise that they are both quite unsure of what it was they want to say. A voice-over dialogue between SARA AHMED *and* HÉLÈNE CIXOUS *disrupts the practicalities of* LIZ *and* BRIONY'S *conversation. Perhaps, they surmise, what they* *might say is not the problem, but rather, the manner in which they might be expected to say it. Individualised time pressures and responsibilities weigh down upon* LIZ *and* BRIONY *seeking to sabotage all that they have worked for collectively. Neither* AHMED *nor* CIXOUS *are particularly fond of conformity, and so they decide in this instance, that poetic playfulness should prevail in the presentation of* LIZ *and* BRIONY'S *manuscript.*

Act One

Scene One

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

LIZ: [*reads as she types out an email and clicks send*] Hi Briony, How are you? I hope you made it home to Canberra okay :) It was so nice to see you—a bright blue swoosh on a grey day! Thanks for setting up the manuscript folder on Dropbox—it looks great. I like all of your suggestions. I've included some more in the document.

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder]

LIZ: What do you think? The questions about the contract are good questions to ask—would you be happy to email the publisher? There still seems like a lot to do for the book but I am determined to get it done! More soon ... Best wishes.

[*Screen is empty except for the Microsoft rotating hourglass pending activity in the share folder. Finding the work life balance consumes* LIZ. *Each time she sits down to write she immediately has to get up to attend committee meetings, mentor Honours students and prepare for her undergraduate teaching. Documents piles higher and higher on her desk until she cannot see past the mounds of paper. Her cup of tea, now cold remains on the table. She hasn't even had time to drink it.*]

CIXOUS: 'A woman enters *on stage* as having that strange difference she can only describe in this differential space where she will encounter you. Where does feeling the difference begin? Where does our feeling the difference begin?' (2010/1990, p. 52)
AHMED: 'The will becomes a technique, a way of holding a subject to account, it could be understood as *a straightening device*. If we have this

understanding of will, we would not be surprised by its queer potential. After all, you only straighten what is already bent' (2014, p. 7).
CIXOUS: 'At the exterior floor, 'up above', at the floor of the semblance—of myself—of order. Below, next door, we are always adrift. We respond straight ahead and think sideways' (Cixous and Calle-Gruber 1997, p. 9).

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

BRIONY: [*nervously*] Hi Liz, Just checking in on how you feel about the book deadline of March 2016? You have more experience in publishing. Do you think we can have a polished manuscript by March? Or have we set ourselves an impossible deadline?
AHMED: 'Willfulness might be what we do when we are judged as being *not*…not being white, not being male, not being straight, not being able-bodied. Not being in coming up against being can transform being' (2014, p. 15).
LIZ: [*enthusiastically*] Great to hear from you! Are you finishing up for Christmas soon? [LIZ *and* BRIONY *laugh sarcastically at this notion of taking a holiday break*] Today is my last day in my office—I hope I can work from home after that.
CIXOUS: There's no room for her is she's not a he. If she's a her-she, it's in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the "truth" with laughter' (1976, p. 888).

[LIZ *now sits with her laptop by the pool in her backyard, watching her kids swim. She feels a pull toward the water, to frolic with her sons on this sunny day, and swim away from her work deadlines. Instead she writes about a dark encounter she had last semester and about conversations she had with female colleagues about this idea of 'talking feminist'*]

CIXOUS: 'Writing is working; being worked; questioning (in) the between (letting oneself be questioned) of same *and* of other without which nothing lives; undoing death's work by willing the togetherness of one-another' (1994, p. 43).
AHMED: 'Research involves being open to being transformed by what we encounter' (2014, p. 13).

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder][*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

LIZ: [*texts* BRIONY *a message from her iPad*] Thanks for adding to the chapter—I'll take a look at it today. My writing has gone OK, but I am about two chapters short of finishing...I didn't get the Fellowship [BRIONY *lets out a disappointed exclamation of* '*oh no*']—trying not to feel too sad or dejected!—which means I'll be back at work in full swing in early January. Perhaps we could touch base by phone in the New Year about the book? I haven't heard anything about the Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) grant. I guess no news is good news and I haven't heard that anyone else has heard either...

[BRIONY *still sits on the sofa, although now her books and possessions are packed into boxes that crowd her workspace*]

BRIONY: [*dials* LIZ'S *phone number apprehensively*] Hi Liz, how are you going? Have I caught you at a good time? [*laughs awkwardly- there is never a* '*good*' *time*] Oh, okay. Yes, well. I was wondering, since I have to move out of my place... and there's been all these upfront costs with moving that my scholarship just can't cover...Yeah, I'm moving in with a bunch of other PhD students temporarily...I don't have enough time to type up our interview transcripts and just can't afford...
LIZ: I'm happy to pay for the transcription – that's no trouble.
BRIONY: [*sighs with relief but still feels guilty*] Oh thanks so much, Liz! I think this will really help, what with our deadline coming up and all... [*Hangs up phone*]

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

Scene Two

[*Back at their respective institutions*]

BRIONY: [*emails* LIZ] Happy New Year! Hope you had a restful break. We had a lovely time on the NSW central coast. I've had some ideas over the break.
AHMED: [*cheers at* BRIONY'S *revelation*] 'There is agency in this becoming; *there is life*' (2014, p. 47).

BRIONY: I think we have to smash the traditional academic structure of a book in order to talk-write feminist. I think you are right, we need to be more explicitly creative with this book. Perhaps breaking the chapters up with a series of short affective pieces, say 500 words each? The interludes would be an example of *écriture feminine*, and they would also be a sort of continuous narrative of some of our and our interview participant's experiences of speaking and being silenced and the complexities around our argument. What do you think? It's just an idea.
CIXOUS: 'I never dream of mastering or ordering or inventing concepts. Moreover I am incapable of this. I am overtaken. All I want is to illustrate, depict fragments, events of human life and death, each unique and yet at the same time exchangeable. Not the law, the exception' (1994, p. xxii).
BRIONY: I've attached a rough chapter outline here of what I think needs to go into each of the chapters. It would be good to set some drafting deadlines as well don't you think? [*Another pile of papers falls from the sky onto* LIZ'S *desk*] Especially since you'll be back teaching by late Feb. I am worried though, about what the publisher will think. Would Friday or Monday be a good time to have a chat on the phone about the book? Talk soon!
AHMED: 'Thinking through how will relates to the past as well as the future, and how the will is thus never quite present or in the time we are in' (2014, p. 19).
CIXOUS: 'The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them, to confer upon them an irremovability the equivalent of destiny' (1976, p. 875).
AHMED: 'When you stray from the official paths, you create desire lines, faint marks on the earth, as traces of where you or others have been. A willfulness archive is premised on hope: the hope that those who wander away from the paths they are supposed to follow leave their footprints behind' (2014, p. 21).

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder]

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder]

BRIONY: Hi Liz, Can I be a terrible pain and ask to reschedule our telephone chat until Wednesday? Pregnancy has left me feeling really drained and something has come up tomorrow and I won't have my

laptop with me and it would be good to be next to the computer while we discuss the book. Hope Monday isn't too busy for you.
AHMED: [*referring to* BRIONY] 'She is a powerful container' (2014, p. 17).
CIXOUS: 'We, the sowers of disorder, know it only too well' (1976, p. 884)…'Another thing, since I am on the side of the body: this text is full of bodily expressions, excretions, secretions, effusions' (2010/1990, p. 53).
AHMED: 'I hope to return concepts to bodies' and your words indeed remind me of 'how words leak into worlds' (2014, p. 18).
CIXOUS: 'Everything is lost except words. This is a child's experience: words are our doors to all the other worlds' (Cixous p. xxvii).).
AHMED: 'Words can smother us, enrage us; they can leave us full or empty. When they touch us they create an impression' (2014, p. 18).
LIZ: Hi Briony, Sure, no problem! Hope everything is okay. Hope you and bub are okay. Please rest when you need to. I am in meetings most of the morning on Wednesday but should be free by 2 pm our time, is that ok?

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

BRIONY: [*types out an email to* LIZ *and closes her laptop. She stands up and two removalists take the sofa away*] Quick update, all the chapters are still a bit choppy but I've tried to make some head way with analysis in chapters 3 and 4 and I've started to cluster some interview material for chapter 5. I still haven't added all my parts to chapter 2 so that chapter is looking a bit crazy. It all looks a bit of a mess but there are about 20,000 words all up so far. I'll stop working on all of the documents in about an hour. This weekend I've got to work on an abstract for a special issue journal that I'd like to be considered for, oh and I leave Canberra in less than 2 weeks time. We are all packed up but I still have to take my driver's test before I leave. I'm really sorry for the awful state of the draft. I'll need to do a lot more editing. Let me know when you want to talk about the manuscript.
LIZ: That's fantastic that you have a draft ready—words are words and once they are there we can work with them—well done! I'm starting the writing chapter today—it should be a nice interval from my other academic writing. Have a great day!

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder][*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder]

LIZ: Hi Briony, Tuesday morning would be great. Would you like to make a time? We are having a double celebration tonight—Hamish was elected as a Grade 5 student council rep and is very excited—he had to give a speech and everything, a big deal when you are 10. I remember that feeling of being forgetful really well when I was pregnant with both boys, I'm not sure it ever leaves you! Take care and hope you have a great weekend :)
CIXOUS: 'When I was a young child. At the time I did not know what would become of me. But already I lived with two worlds: with the world and its writing; with the world and what was written on it' (1997, p. 95), 'I do not think there are many writers who will have been magic enough, child enough' (1997, p. 103).
AHMED: 'I too was called a willful child' (2014, p. 18), 'the figure of the willful subject—often but not always a child, often but not always female, often by not always an individual—has become so familiar' (2014, p. 17).
LIZ: How are you going this week? I haven't been able to do very much since last weekend but hope to get some time tomorrow and Wednesday. Hope you are and baby are travelling well! Will you be in Sydney for Easter? Should we chat before then?

[*Screen is empty except for the Microsoft rotating hourglass pending activity in the share folder. Briony sits expectedly in a busy hospital waiting room, looking at her watch, and at her phone, holding onto her protruding belly. She worries about the unfinished book manuscript. She worries what people will think. She worries about how all these worries will worry the baby.*]

AHMED: 'I think of this as a life paradox: *you have to become what you are judged as being*' (2014, p. 144).
CIXOUS: A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic: as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way (1976, p. 888).
AHMED: 'Willfulness represents a moment of crisis in the system of property: willful objects are unwilling to provide residence for will' (2014, p. 47).
LIZ: [*anxiously types email to publisher relaying news*] I am writing to update you on the progress of our manuscript. Unfortunately, it has not come together as quickly as we had hoped. We are finalising the text now but need a little more time to complete and proof read, and to ask colleagues for endorsements. Briony and I are hoping you might

consider granting us an extension of our submission deadline to April. If you could get back to us as soon as possible that would be great. Thanks and best wishes. [LIZ'S *computer beeps to indicate she has received an email reply*] Thank you so much for your email. This is wonderful news—we very much appreciate it!
CIXOUS: 'One cannot speak the same type of language or use the same literary form on every occasion for every scene' (1994, p. xvi).

Scene Three

[*If the women are to finish this manuscript they must unburden themselves of self-imposed deadlines, word counts and structures. They must take care of themselves and write with their bodies*].

CIXOUS: 'A woman's body, with its thousand and one thresholds of ardor—once, by smashing yokes and censors, she lets it articulate the profusion of meanings that run through it in every direction—will make the old single-grooved mother tongue reverberate with more than one language' (1976, p. 885).
AHMED: 'Happiness follows for those who will right. Those who will wrong still will happiness' (2014, p. 4).
CIXOUS: 'She too gives *for*. She too, with open hands, gives herself—pleasure, happiness, increased value, enhanced self-image. But she doesn't try to "recover her expenses". She is able not to return to herself, never settling down, never pouring out, going everywhere to the other. She does not flee extremes; she is not the being-of-the-end (the goal), but she is how-far-being-reaches' (1994, p. 44).

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

CIXOUS: 'It begins with the remains—which are not and are not being' (1997, p. 132).

[*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

AHMED: 'Mere persistence can be an act of disobedience' (2014, p. 2).

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder]

CIXOUS: 'Thanks to their history, women today know (how to do and want) what men will be able to conceive of only much later' (1976, p. 888).

[*Screen reads*: Liz made changes in your share folder][*Screen reads*: Briony made changes in your share folder]

> CIXOUS: 'Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me—the other that I am and am not, that I don't know how to be, but that I feel passing, that makes me live—that tears me apart, disturbs me, changes me, who?—a feminine one, a masculine one, some?—several, some unknown, which is indeed what gives me the desire to know and from which all life soars' (1994, p. 42).

(Not) The End

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CHAPTER 3

Concepts of Voice and Feminism

Abstract Concepts of voice and feminism and feelings of agency are in many ways connected to our multiple subjectivities as women and as feminists. In this chapter we explore the paradoxical concepts of voice and feminism, and focus on what speech acts do, whom they include and exclude, whose voices are valorised and whose are silenced. We critically interrogate notions of silencing and silence in relation to women's voices, agency, and empowerment. In doing so it is possible to reconceptualise silence as a potential strategy for negotiating gender relations.

Feminist scholarship has long confronted the problem of language and women's historic silence. Women have been systematically excluded from public life. Treated as objects in a masculine discourse and language reflects women's exclusion. When women's speech is recorded it is characterised as non-verbal, inaudible hysteria, and madness. To be included in discourse, women have been forced to accept appropriation (Crowder 1983; Gal 1991). Susan Gal (1991, p. 176) observes that gender, a system of socially constructed power relations, is perpetuated through talk and sociolinguistic interaction and a site of struggle about gender definitions and power. This, she highlights, particularly concerns who may speak, where, and what they can speak about. When Gwen decried 'we only talk feminist here' amidst much laughter and agreement during an interview with a group of feminist academics, we were struck by this phenomenon—when you don't have to explain yourself and everyone understands what you mean. A common language is somehow established, but it is not without

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complication. In this chapter we explore the paradoxical concepts of voice and feminism, and focus on what speech acts do, whom they include and exclude, whose voices are valorised and whose are rendered 'incomprehensible or simply inaudible' (McGill 2013, p. 208) through the acts of speaking and silencing.

Voice as Speech, Power, and Agency

The term 'voice' conjures a particular public expression of a certain type of perspective on self and social life. The concept of 'voice' carries with it assumptions of choice, that individuals have specific rights to 'choose'. Indeed, Bronwyn Davies (1991) asserts that a humanist view of agency and self are synonymous, and used interchangeably with others such as freedom, autonomy, rationality, and moral authority. For Davies (1991, p. 42), the dominant humanist discourse in relation to voice as agency, insists that each person is obligated to take responsibility for 'speaking for themselves'. She problematises this model of the person and agency to suggest that from a poststructuralist view, agency can never come to mean any of these things; rather, from this perspective,

> The speaking/writing subject can move within and between discourses, can see precisely how they subject her, can use the terms of one discourse to counteract, modify, refuse or go beyond the other, both in terms of her own experienced subjectivity and in the way she chooses to speak in relation to the subjectivities of others. (Davies 1991, p. 46)

Voice and the act of speaking are often understood to be an integral condition in the demonstration of women's empowerment (Gal 1991; Mahoney 1996). As Collette Oseen (1997, p. 180) puts it, how can we speak when our place has historically been to remain silent? Women's ability to make choices and speak out is often considered in feminist literature as proof of women's agency and power (Olsen [1978] 2003). Women's voice has become synonymous with empowerment in a way that needs to be further interrogated. We hear Ellsworth's (1989) questioning of claims to voice, when she asks 'Why doesn't this feel empowering?' in relation to her work in the field of education and critical pedagogy. She raises the possibility that assuming 'giving voice' leads to the 'giving of power' might instead reproduce a 'repressive myth that perpetuate(s) relations of dominance' (1989, p. 298). Ellsworth further questions the kinds of differences which might in fact be silenced by such an assumption. Certainly, for Julia the concept of voice conjures mixed feelings:

> To me that takes me back to an earlier stage of my career in which there was always this notion of women's voices and the importance of women's voices. I do think for me that sometimes problematically suggests a kind of unmediated authenticity; that if only we could hear more women's voices or more Indigenous women's voices or more 'womanly' women's voices or something that somehow that would be better. I'm not convinced that that really is necessarily useful in these kinds of institutions.

Speech as active and empowering is positioned in opposition to silence, passivity, and powerlessness (Gal 1991, p. 175). It is thought, 'women who cannot speak out are seen as disempowered, unable to act and to effect change' (Parapart 2010, p. 15). Indeed, as Davies reminds us, 'the linguistic structure through which the male/female dualism is re-constituted in almost every act of speaking, has a powerful effect on determining on what is possible/thinkable' (1991, p. 50), and further, what 'counts' and is therefore heard as a powerful voice. Michele Foucault (1972) observes that language is inextricably caught up in power. Elizabeth Parsons and Vincenza Prioloa (2013, p. 586) argue that it is not surprising then that everyday talk in both formal and informal settings is assumed to be one of the primary and most effectual methods for effecting change in the university organisation. However, Julia highlights that 'the problem is that you can end up with lots of demands on women and other types, other women, to constantly [speak]' and voices who speak from the margins can become overburdened with an expectation to speak (White and Drew 2011). There are many competing voices in and of themselves which set up this expectation, including that of feminism/s itself. It is very easy to become swept along by the insistence that as women, and further feminist academics, it is our responsibility to do so. If, for example, we were to listen only to the voice of Davies (1991, p. 52), we would be filled—and perhaps washed away by—the obligatory sense that:

> To be a feminist, or a feminist theorist is itself to engage in the very act of choosing to speak, of discovering the possibility of *authority*, of using that speaking, that *authority* to bring about fundamental changes in the possible ways of being that are available to oneself and others.

Indeed, we might well argue that becoming and being feminist has always already been connected to search for voice and for voices to be heard, but the responsibility that Davies speaks of, is awe-some. How are we positioned if we choose to not speak? Does that make us 'bad feminist academics' (Gay 2014) or does it signal that we are imperfect, messy, and always in the process of becoming and being in-between the moment of speaking and silence?

Agency and In/Authentic Feminist Voices

Neoliberal and increasingly post-feminist values have become incorporated into our own individual frames of reference aided by a discourse of individualism. There is no one singular or rigid neoliberal agenda or narrative, neoliberalism operates with promiscuity (Clarke 2008), but what we can discern is that central to the neoliberal narrative is a hyper-individualism, which serves to justify, 'legitimise and prioritise market activities about socially integrative activities' (Wrenn 2015, p. 1233). We see this most acutely with the elevation of the 'hard' sciences, engineering and computer technologies disciplines where research can be commodified through patenting, while the arts and humanities disciplines and to a lesser degree the social sciences with their focus on the social languish in our neoliberal institutions with ever-shrinking research funding and distinction. Vera notices the continual reinforcement of an individual doctrine in relation to whose voices are prioritised and legitimised by the university and states, 'There is a real essentialism…it's a liberal feminism that emerges in these spaces.' She explains how universities become preoccupied with the rights and participation of predominantly middle-class white women; of women in leadership and women on boards to the extent that other feminist issues and identities are ignored. Something happens in the way the discourse of feminism is taken up in the neoliberal university. It becomes individualised, depoliticised, contradictory, and uncritical. Discourses of choice and voice are further complicated in today's neoliberal environment and these frame our understanding of women's agency and empowerment.

We all exercise agency in our decision-making processes. It is an individual mental mode (Wrenn 2015), but what complicates our notion of 'talking feminist' is the ways in which neoliberal and feminist discourses influence our academic identities, feminist or otherwise. We as individuals are responsible for our agency; when and how we exercise it, but we might not recognise the impact institutional structures or constraints of that structure have on our agency. Self-reference refers to 'the agent's ability to develop a perception of her own position and part of the surrounding structure' (Wrenn 2015, p. 1232). Self-reflection is important in the construction of authentic agency, but as Mary Wrenn highlights, what happens is that, if that self-reflection exists only within institutional contexts it might not be possible to see the 'fallibility of their perception' and instead creates a 'veiled exercise of agency' (2015, p. 1232). Agency within the neoliberal university requires a type of 'inauthentic' agency to sustain this new structure. Neoliberal (inauthentic) agency is framed as being authentic in that it 'constructs and instructs the superficially empowered individual and perpetuates the illusion of autonomous decision making' (Wrenn 2015, p. 1233). While the exercise of agency itself is authentic the notion of empowerment within neoliberal institutions and structures is a superficial one. Wrenn (2015) focuses on how neoliberalism constructs self-referential and inauthentic agency. She argues that inauthentic agency is created and perpetuated through the fetishising of power. She states that 'neoliberalism requires tailored cultural mechanisms and artefacts to construct and support a self-referential yet inauthentic agency—inauthentic because individuals are not fully aware of the difference between the rhetoric of neoliberalism and the reality' (Wrenn 2015, p. 1231). University structures can also impact on an individual's sense of agency. This occurs through tacit, contextual relations, social mechanisms and power relations as well as formal and informal obligations and constraints (Wrenn 2015, p. 1232). Neoliberal socialisation erodes the notion of collective responsibility and our individual responsibility to others.

One of the ways feminist academics challenge neoliberal inauthentic agency is to reflect upon and resist the norms embedded in social roles and identities, and in doing so create change (Rozmarin 2011). Leanne argues that it actually means:

> Being conscious about the changes you make. I like that because sometimes I'm in a situation where I've adopted the mainstream position and I haven't recognised it until it's too late and I've thought why did I say that or why didn't I do that? You realise it's probably because of fifty-nine years of living in this culture but I hadn't got around to changing that behaviour or something.

This is not to say that neoliberal agenda and new managerialist practices do not influence feminist academics. Leanne adds that sometimes you may do something:

> And you think no, that wasn't right but I think the thing is when you hang around other feminists or you hang around people who are conscious about why they behave and talk the way they do it helps you start normalising how you talk and what you do and how you respond to situations.

Agentic actions towards change do not need to be dramatic, they can be smaller, quieter 'willful' actions. This is where criticisms against Ahmed's willfulness as being too individualistic actually becomes a useful hermeneutical device for understanding the contradictions, the complicity, and confrontation between feminist academics and neoliberal practices and discourses. Leanne struggles with the confluence of authenticity and agency:

> I think I've always struggled with that. I still struggle with that. When I thought about feminist identity as an academic I thought challenges, challenges as someone who works in the tertiary sector… being a feminist as an academic means—and again I'm talking about processes here—being accountable, being open, recognising the individual as well as the collective like in terms of some sense of egalitarianism.

She cites her feminist identity and methodology as a way of helping her navigate her day-to-day work in the current higher education environment as well as having a 'theoretical and sustainable approach to dealing with students' and 'when conducting research and interacting with the horrible kind of hierarchy that we have running the university.' Leanne states that:

> I think if I do work in that way I think it brings the two together in a much stronger way. They both inform each other in a much stronger way. I do think knowing what a feminist methodology is, is probably a really important thing to do.

Agency can be enacted in a particular moment while authenticity is produced over time. Authenticity is sustained in our decisions, choices, and achievements. Authenticity is not just about the choices we make but how we make them. Such conceptualisations of agency and authenticity are in many ways connected to our subjectivities as women and as feminists which in turn influences notions of voice. As Davies (1992, p. 73–74) proposes:

> Who we are, our subjectivity, is spoken into existence in every utterance, not just in the sense that others speak us into existence and impose unwanted structures onto us, as much as early feminist writing presumed, but, in each

> moment of speaking and being, we reinvent ourselves inside the male female dualism, socially, psychically, and physically.

Similarly Carole Leathwood observes that 'the positions that we take reflect both our theoretical and emotional identifications, and these are rooted within the social, political, and economic contexts of our own individual collective histories' (2004, p. 445). In asking Julia about her identity as a feminist academic and how she perceives the reception of feminist voices in the academy, her response echoes Leathwood and Davies in that the concept of a feminist subjectivity and voice is in fact multiple, shifting, and evolving in the moment. Julia asserts:

> I'd say that feminist voices (sic) is a multiple possibility. I think certain kinds of feminist voices do now have an audience in the academy. Again it depends very much if you're talking about an educational context, a research context or an administrative leadership context.

Vera also problematises the notion of a singular representable feminist identity when she says that:

> I guess there's this issue of defining feminism, what it means to be a feminist. So if I had some really good, clear idea of what it meant to be a feminist and then I could have a sense of that's what I have to enact, but I don't have a good clear idea of it.

Similarly Julia makes a similar point although perhaps with more of a sense of certitude in her voice than Vera, that certainty that stems from an understanding and acceptance of the impermanence or permeability of subjectivity and voice:

> I don't think about feminism as something with principles that I am true to or not true to … I actually think it's problematic to think that you can operate in this kind of complicated space and sort of be truly authentic, whatever that might be, at all times. I actually don't think I have a sort of solid authentic core, like that's not my model of personhood. So I don't go through the world thinking am I being authentically myself in this encounter; when I'm at the hairdressers and we're chit chatting about something am I being authentically myself. I think there's different versions of me in different spaces.

In her critical reflection of authenticity, Julia displays a form of authentic agency that confronts neoliberal (in)authenticity that Wrenn (2015) defines. One way of dealing with the contradictory elements of feminist subjectivity and voice is to recognise that most often, we act within the terms of any one discourse at any one time, depending on context, or we may in particular circumstances decide to refuse a discourse, 'to refuse the positioning made available within that discourse' (Davies 1992, p. 58). Feminist academics simultaneously define and are defined by those discourses. In this way, Julia notes:

> I think that in terms of adaptive authenticity to me that's the idea that it's okay and in fact it's helpful if you're in a committee, an executive committee meeting some version of expressing your authentic views about the whole structure of the university is not going to be helpful, there's no point. It's misunderstanding what your role there is. Your role there is not to express your personal views. There's kind of an expressive model of politics where you express your views. That actually achieves nothing. Your aim is to try and strategically achieve the best outcome and feminism feeds into that right. I'm always thinking about—and other forms of difference too, I'm always thinking about principles of equity and justice and diversity. That doesn't mean kind of shouting at people or refusing to operate in a collaborative way with other members of that committee.

Davies notes that it is possible to 'develop strategies for maintaining an illusion of a coherent unitary self' (1992, p. 57) but for Julia accepting the multiplicity of her feminist subjectivity comes with ease.

> The notion of adaptive authenticity means to me that you can be adaptable and you can respond in different ways in different contexts. I always try to think about something—another phrase I've got from some other article, I can't remember, called horizon of significance. So you want to think about in everything you do is it meaningful in relation to this broader thing which I don't call authenticity, I call it my horizon of significance which is this meaningful to me in terms of my broader commitments about what I want to achieve in my life, the kind of values I want to express. That's different for me than authenticity because it's broader. So you don't have to be being authentic in every moment but overall you want to be thinking about what I call my horizon of significance. I don't want to spend 12 hours of my day involved in stuff that I fundamentally think is opposed to what I think is a meaningful and worthwhile and ethical life.

For Vera her identification with and relationship to her feminist subjectivity is more difficult. She reveals: 'I get very stressed about my contradictions between my kind of structural analysis and my postmodern new kind of overtones.' She feels a strong anxiety around her identification as a feminist and an academic and often feels that people assume that identity for her because 'I talk about things like gender equality and emancipation and fighting sexism and misogyny. I believe in all those things', but while these are all commensurable with feminism Vera finds the feminist academic label limiting in that it obscures the multiple identifications like queer and Marxist that make up her academic identity. In an attempt to navigate the discomfort and the contradiction Vera attempts to compartmentalise the distinct aspects of her subjectivity as an academic and a feminist, and in doing so 'the tension for me is that I don't identify as a feminist academic.'

Vera's worries about being labelled a feminist and the impact of representation and identity politics are not unfounded. In the contemporary university, neoliberalism perverts feminist ideals in the pursuit of profit and these redefined concepts of gender equity and diversity are then implemented and actualised by new managerialism. We need to recognise that even such appropriated and depoliticised concepts of feminism are part of the multiplicity, which Julia refers to:

> So feminist voices are multiple; there's a certain kind of liberal feminism; a certain kind of I would say rather narrow understanding of gender equity which says oh it's really important to have a woman on a selection committee. That's understood now. That's kind of part of the university's operating system now. So those kinds of feminist voices have been incorporated.

> So the feminist voice is multiple. Then in the academy you've got the kind of feminist voices that you might have in a feminist theory classroom or the feminist voices that you might have in a research paper or something or a seminar. Then you have the sort of feminist voices that you might express in a committee meeting or something. I think it's all highly variable. That's one of the kind of rewards and challenges I think of operating as a feminist in these kinds of spaces.

Vera and Julia attempt to locate the sources of contradiction in mainstream discourse. Julia highlights that one of the misunderstood aspects of being a feminist academic is that:

> You spend a lot of time criticising feminism. People from outside the field would be surprised at that. So when you do gender studies yes you're sort

> of saying that feminism is one of if not the most important social movement of the sort of last 150 years; that gender is crucial to the way we think about the world. A lot of what we do is thinking about feminism critically, about issues like race and class and how they may or may not be embedded in feminist politics; criticisms of particular understanding of politics or identity that might shut down other possibilities. I often feel strange that—I feel like I'm an expert on feminist theory in a certain way and on gender studies. In some ways I feel like my voice is often quite a critical one I think in that space.

Similarly, Vera expresses the 'need to put some caveats at the beginning that make me not anti-feminist because a lot of what I am presenting might be like critiques of feminist history and theory and whatever, approaches. At the beginning I kind of have to say you know, we're all feminists here kind of thing.' Leanne says that in terms of the way feminist voices are received in academia, she can write about but she can't always talk about it:

> I'm aware where I am now as at [current institution], I'm aware that there are several academics here who would call themselves feminists. That makes me feel really good but in my day-to-day dealings with people I'm not sure what that means to them. I don't see what that means to them. I guess I have an idea of what it means to act like a feminist I guess and sometimes when I don't see other people acting in that same way I wonder what it is that they think.

Through writing it is still possible to justify your existence through publications, while having these sorts of discussions with colleagues, Ruby believes is much more difficult. What does it mean to be a feminist and an academic? Leanne responds:

> We don't seem to have any time or spaces to have that conversation. If you're going to have that conversation you may as well put it down in a paper and get your points for it so you can justify your existence.

The very question of what it means to be a feminist and/or an academic turns towards the individual to respond, making them responsible for their answer. While this allows us to see the myriad of feminist and academic subjectivities and performativities on display it also deflects attention away from structural issues. Moreover institutions benefit from this focus on the individual, and identity debates around what makes a 'good' or 'bad' feminist. For Leanne even the discussion itself has been coopted by a neoliberal new managerialist agenda, a mere measurement tool to 'justify your existence'.

Silenced Voices

> Recently Leanne's colleague Chloe started this thing called the early career researchers group. It's basically a very informal discussion group just for those early in their careers and positions. It isn't exclusively women-only but the majority are and the way Chloe set up the group felt like a very feminist way of doing things. They get together once a month to share knowledge, anxieties, and to learn from one another. Leanne felt that in this group they could talk about anything. Although, there's one male academic in the group and every time he comes to the meeting he dominates the whole meeting and it really pisses Leanne off. He just can't shut up. He cannot shut up and she wished he wasn't there. Sure, he's a nice enough guy and everyone's very tolerant of him. Leanne feels herself getting hot under the collar and she just tries to keep a lid on it because everyone's very nice with each other. It's a circle of niceness (Mewburn 2013) but Leanne really notices how he dominates. One day Leanne cannot put up with his one-way talk anymore and tells Chloe. She felt incredibly sorry but she just could not do it anymore. She couldn't sit there and listen to this guy. The way he dictated the direction of their conversations, the way he blocked other member's ideas, she just couldn't stand him anymore. Even though she loved what Chloe had created in this space of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and everything they do—it's a great little group—but when he attends she just cannot come.

When someone enters into that space with a different kind of performativity, it disrupts the feminist space that Leanne describes, that has been created and then all of a sudden your voice gets silenced. She describes the after-effects of such experiences, 'you go home and then you kind of self-flagellate because you think I should have stood up, I should have said more, I should have opened my mouth.' We imagine Cixous speaking with Chloe and Leanne, after the fact, providing these words of understanding:

> Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away-that's how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for a woman to speak- even just to open her mouth-in public. A double distress, for even if she transgresses, her words fall almost always upon the deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine. (1976, p. 880–81)

The fallacy of women's inferiority to men in the academy has long been exposed, and yet as Justine McGill argues in the discipline of philosophy—and we would contend that across all disciplines—'few would explicitly defend such ideas…they remain at play as implicit assumptions' (2013, p. 203). The modes of silencing are subtle and multivalent. While Julia notes the importance of creating spaces for different and diverse voices in the academy her concern is about the reception of those voices:

> Which isn't to say that it's not important to have spaces where different kinds of voices can be heard, not just academic women's voices but professional staff. You think about students, professional staff, all these people whose voices are not heard enough or not listened to enough. I would want to say yeah sure let's talk about voice but let's also talk about the reception of that voice, like listening. Listening is a much-underrated quality, skill actually in the university I think, hugely underrated.

Julia makes an important connection between speaking and listening. McGill speaks of etiological deafness: those affected cannot hear women's speech clearly because stereotypical gendered images and understandings of the 'ideal academic', of leaders as male, interfere with their ability to pay attention to what she is actually saying (2013, p. 206). Similarly, McGill explores the role of presuppositions and how when they are invoked regularly are prejudicial to women (McGill 2013, p. 197). McGill describes presuppositions as familiar or unconscious elements of a shared culture (2013, p. 206) and they support a gendered and prejudicial language. They are difficult to locate and challenge because they are not explicit statements. They are implied truths that can be taken for granted. Rather than being directly imposed upon by the speaker explicitly, presuppositions are elucidated by the listener. These presuppositions then mutate in and across conversations that then prevent women from being heard. McGill suggests that women are excluded from participating in conversations where presuppositions govern and dominate the discussion. When a woman is seen to be writing or speaking, presuppositions can interfere; distorting vision and hearing.

What has been described as 'mansplaining' in the popular lexicon is an example of how presuppositions embed themselves in conversations. In Rebecca Solnit's essay 'Men Explain Things to Me' ([2008] 2014), a critique of male arrogance, Solnit describes an occasion where she was caught in a conversation with a commanding man, who upon inviting her to speak about her writing, interrupts her to tell her of a 'very important' book that was just published. If he had been listening to Solnit and had not cut her off, he would have discovered her to be the author of that 'very important' book. Solnit ([2008] 2014, p. 2) writes:

> So caught up was I in my assigned role as ingénue that I was perfectly willing to entertain the possibility that another book on the same subject had come out simultaneously and that I'd somehow missed it. He was already telling me about the very important book-with that smug look I know all so well in a man holding forth, eyes fixed on the fuzzy far horizon of his own authority.

It wasn't until someone else interjected his oration three or four times saying, 'that's her book' did he realise his mistake. His fraudulences exposed, for he hadn't read the book, only a review of it in the *New York Times Book Review*. Solnit's story has such resonance with our own and our interview participants' experiences of working in academia. Indeed many academic women share similar tales, which can be found anonymised on the Tumblr site 'Academic Men Explain Things to Me' a spinoff inspired by Solnit's narrative. This site does not determine what does and does not count as 'mansplaining', but instead functions as a platform for academic women to voice and recount their experiences. For Leanne, 'I think the key of that to me is there's no communication. It's just one-way talk.' It is angering and upsetting for her. 'I get so upset and I'm sure they can see it written all over my face…I get so tired of it and I deal with them so often. I don't want to keep getting upset by them.'

> Sage shares an experience akin to 'academic mansplaining' with a female colleague over coffee. Before doing so she looks around the alfresco university café in fear of prying eyes and burning ears. She had gone for coffee with her colleagues Sally and Michael and they were talking about sound - sonic and audio methodologies and their desires to learn more about such experimental ethnographic research methods, when Michael said, 'Oh I came across this really great article by so-and-so *in one of the better feminist journals.*''He said it just like that. Just like that', Sage repeats to her confidant. In a casual but authoritative voice as if what he had just said was fact. Enshrined in law. *One of the better feminist journals.* Sage thought to herself, how do you know—your research doesn't even touch on feminist theory, you don't know anything about the range of feminist journals out there. Who are you to make that assertion? Are you the arbiter of all the scholarly international feminist journals; who determines good feminist journal and suggest that others are crap? It was just a passing comment but Sage felt totally silenced, even though it wasn't directed at her *per se*, but Michael, he does this, you see. He has this tremendous uber-confidence. Perhaps he is overcompensating for something, Sage wasn't sure, but she felt like he had completely disregarded her own disciplinary specialty of gender and

> feminist theory, her fields of knowledge and her research expertise. He had done what Wise (1997) calls 'deskilling' and Sage felt utterly disrespected. 'Oh my god.' Sage's colleague Tracey laughs in horror but her voice carries with it the weight of a resigned knowing. Tracey asks Sage if she had raised this with him during their conversation. Had she spoken up? 'You slammed him down, though, didn't you?' This was not out of character for Michael to make such statements, but Sage had not reacted aloud. In that moment, she felt completely squashed inside, unable to speak. Instead thinking, who has the audacity to say something like that? It is important to note that this mode of silencing is not just something that men do to women. Ahmed cautions that 'we stop hearing when we are too knowing' (Ahmed 2014, p. 169). Tracey wonders: 'Imagine if you were like, "one of the better male dominated journals"?' She laughs mockingly and then she adds that: 'In life I get annoyed at men…they take up so much space.'

Men's presence is as much about the physical spaces in which they dominate, as it is about the perceptible immaterial spaces. Joy describes the bodily responses to such experiences of silencing as being out-of-body: 'I think what happens is, as women, we tend to sit there and you have an out-of-body experience, where you hover above yourselves going, well, isn't that odd?' How many and how much of these encounters can we excuse as ignorance? What are the knowledge practices of ignorance, the epistemologies of ignorance, that account for the ways in which that not knowing is produced and sustained? This is the question that Suzanne Franzway, Rhonda Sharp, Julie Mills, and Judith Gill (2009) raise when interrogating the persistence of gender inequality in the engineering discipline in Australia. Nancy Tuana (2004, 2006) demonstrates that ignorance is not mere lacking, but can be understood as a complex set of practices integral to the production of knowledge. Ignorance is interrelated with power and politics and ways of not knowing about gender and change are in fact shaped by a politics of gender. Ignorance reveals the role of power in the construction of what is known and the gendered values embedded in our knowledge practices. Franzway et al. (2009) highlight that a denial of gender as a factor in the paucity of women engineers indicates that an epistemology of ignorance is at play, and that such denial involves a conscious not wanting to change. The effects of power in the production of ignorance can be easily obscured and rendered invisible. Despite a strong awareness of ongoing inequality in academia and the lack of diverse voices and the underrepresentation of women in positions of authority and influence what is often forgotten is just how resilient gendered assumptions about women's intellectual capabilities, and societal expectations actually are. That's where universities' gender equity policies fail in that they do not challenge pre-existent gender assumptions. Julia reiterates:

> It's fine to encourage voices but that's the kind of model of consultation in which you're constantly demanding that people respond to stuff and write what they think. Then you sort of fundamentally ignore it and go on with your way. Sure you've done lip service to the notion of consultation but you have in fact wasted people's time.

Such determined ignorance can be understood as a willful ignorance. In that someone may willfully embrace ignorance, 'an active ignoring of the oppression of others and one's role in that exploitation' (Franzway et al. 2009, p. 100).

Being belittled, whether it be in an isolated situation or in front of an audience, direct or indirect silencing should not be an internalised, secret failing; that if only I work harder, read more, win more grants, I will then be given the respect I deserve. As scholars such as Gill (2010) and Margaret Thornton observe, 'one can never do enough, a proposition that the neoliberal academic subject quickly internalises' (2013, p. 132). Even prior to the neoliberal context we see today, Cixous (1976, p. 880) contends that women have:

> Always occupied the place reserved for the guilty (guilty of everything, guilty of every turn: for having desires, for not having any; for being frigid, for being 'too hot'; for not being both at once; for being too motherly and not enough; for having children and for not having any; for nursing and for not nursing).

What these incidences tell us is that it is very difficult for women to be heard and given the space to speak. McGill notes, again referring to the discipline of philosophy, that there is a:

> Tendency to locate personal responsibility for communicative failure with the woman who finds herself silenced, or with other individuals (male or female) who are suspected of personal hostility toward her, turns attention away from the question of collective or cultural responsibility for the silencing and exclusion of women. (McGill 2013, p. 203)

To expand on McGill's theorisations of silencing we assert that it is women's bodies, not just women speaking that is the cause of their systematic exclusion. The universal body and voice of the 'ideal academic' is most often male. 'Man is the model and it is his body which is taken for Reason; his morality which is formulated into a system of ethics' (Gatens 1996, p. 24). The modern body politic is based on an image of the masculine and reflects what Gatens describes as 'imaginaries'; that of the fantasies we hold around the value and capacities of that body and how that body informs our social and political behaviours. This privileging of particular types of bodies is reflected in the way we speak and what we speak about.

McGill observes that women are most often silenced in the academy despite being expected to speak. Many a woman 'may find that she is permitted, even encouraged or required to speak, only to have her speech dismissed or ridiculed as incompetent' (McGill 2013, p. 203). Vera stresses that, 'I feel forced to speak *as a feminist* all the time', and Julia admits that as a female academic:

> You do get asked to be on a lot of things and you know you're being asked because you're a woman. That is an imposition, right, because that's a kind of service work that's usually not very valued; that other men at equivalent levels don't have to do. So if we're on a selection committee, they're always looking for women to be on selection committees. So that's a sort of imposition.

When a woman speaks from her subjugated body, Gatens contends that she is limited in what she can say. If she continues to abide by the body politics of her sex 'she still lives in the body of another: an actress, still a body bit, a mouthpiece' (1996, p. 25). Elsewhere (Lipton 2016) Briony has written about two separate experiences, synthesising them into a fictionalised account where she is both the noiseless committee secretary taking minutes and a vocal committee member, and the difficulties of being heard and the various ways women are silenced in such spaces. Although the minute taker may not speak at the meeting, she records the words of the female academic into the official university record: two individuals and co-conspirators in the articulation and reception of a willful woman's voice. In the masculine academic knowledge economy (Thornton 2013) it is 'never *her* (sic) turn to speak' (Cixous 1976, p. 879). In such spaces as university committee meetings the feminine is neutered and becomes homologous with the masculine (Phillips 2014) and it is only women who endorse 'benchmark masculinity' (Thornton 2013) who are understood. Women are also made liable for their failure to be heard. These failures of speech are not always obvious. They can be subtle. Julia gives an example:

> Various mentoring programs I guess operate on that kind of voice model a little bit in which they're always encouraging women to think about how they speak, how they present themselves, what verbs they use. For example I know I mentioned to you earlier that advice I got when women write their promotion cases they use words like helped and assisted and contributed too much. They don't say lead, discovered. To me that's like okay well that's a sort of voice approach where you're saying you've got to change your voice. To me the question is in part how you interpret those words. Who decided that helping is less valuable than leading?

In Julia's experience women's voices are written out of promotion-based texts and replaced with another more appropriate voice that is in line with more competitive and individualising discourses. Such exercises are designed to empower individuals in the 'discovery' of their skills and competencies and through their own persistence and hard-work they will be able to successfully achieve promotion. Faults, whether they be personal, social, or structural lie with the individual. Wrenn highlights that 'this veneration of the individual and her agency is neatly framed within the neoliberal narrative as the power to change one's situation and station' (2015, p. 1234). However, in reality there is little possibility for change. The hidden contradiction is that there is little individual capacity to changes one's social position in the existing social hierarchy, particularly when many roles and positions, despite equity and diversity, continue to restrict women. Moreover, McGill notes that women may speak but are likely to have their speech misinterpreted or ignored 'in spite (or even because) of the competency she displays' (McGill 2013, p. 203). Such acts of silencing are designed to keep women in check, as neoliberalism is as much about fostering competition as it is about control. Women who dare to speak 'in another voice, of another reason and another ethic' are silenced (Gatens 1996, p. 24). The feminist body is perceived as out of place. 'If woman speaks from her body, with her voice', Gatens questions, who can hear her? 'Who can decipher the language of a hysteric' (Gatens 1996, p. 26)? In speaking in the feminine, as Cixous suggests that it is possible to inscribe the heterogeneous: the diverse, the divergent, and the different.

> Ruby stretched lazily and rolled over. She fumbled for her iPhone under the pillow, hoping to steal just ten minutes more. She hadn't checked her email all weekend and try as she might to resist, Ruby couldn't help but take a quick peek at the new messages that arrived in her inbox. There was one message that took her completely by surprise. The subject line

read: 'Vomitive feminist buns for 0.55c'. Recognition passed across her face as she realised that the news story about the feminist bake sale at her university to raise awareness about the gender pay gap had reached social media. She had been asked to provide commentary on whether charging men $1 for a cupcake, and charging women only 0.55c was discriminatory. Ruby had delighted in providing a passionate response and had argued the contrary. As she read the message, Ruby felt the blood drain rapidly from her face. 'I am not upset dear Ruby', wrote the anonymous sender, 'I am simply disappointed in specimens like you. But you know, I will now try to make YOU upset. How? I will simply come to get you and your "girls". You have violated the anti-discrimination act and YOU will pay. You will hear from us soon my dear, we are going to come, whether you like it or not'. Ruby tried to calm her breathing; she knew that as far as 'e-bile' directed at women was concerned, this message was tame but the affect was immediate. She wanted to crawl under her blankets; Ruby felt afraid. Then she felt angry, very angry. Ruby leapt out of bed. Her feminist voice would not be silenced, not this time; and she went about strategically and systematically making more noise.

Silent Voices

Women's decision to stop speaking might often be a result of repeated experiences of having speech acts fail. McGill is wary that various acts of silencing can render women 'effectively and eventually literally, silent' (McGill 2013, p. 203), and further, that silencing is not just the result of an isolated incident but of a culture that is, to varying degrees, hostile or dismissive to women (McGill 2013, p. 197). Ahmed (2014) explores the difficulties with being dismissed. Willful subjects can become in some ways stuck into a willful subjectivity. What then happens when one has to continually hear one's own dismissal? Liz and Briony can relate to the exhaustive aspects of being misheard. There is an emotional toll of always being in opposition. Staying silent can actually be an act of sustaining a feminist will. Silence can be a liberating act (Lorde 1984). Ahmed states that 'if you have become used to having others oppose your existence, if you are used even to being thought of as oppositional, then those experiences are wearing and directive' (Ahmed 2014, p. 169). She notes that in this way there is a risk of repetition that can in some ways close down possibilities. Constantly correcting and insisting is a daily struggle and exhausting emotional labour, but we must continue otherwise change may just recede from the 'horizon of possibility' (Ahmed 2014, p. 151). We concur with Jane Parapart (2010, p. 16) that it is necessary to critically interrogate notions of silencing and silence in relation to women's voices, agency, and empowerment. In doing so it is possible to reconceptualise silence as a potential strategy for negotiating gender relations. For Cixous, the power of silence lies in its capacity for us to hear the ruptures and spaces it holds (1997, p. 66) so that we might refuse the allure of complacency, and instead, confront the fears we fight (1997, p. 26).

In this way, silence can also be considered subversive. For Leanne, to have a voice and to withhold it is to enact a particular agency:

> Voice to me, giving voice is an active thing. It's such an active thing. If you don't. When you were saying before about when you choose not to say something I suppose that's voice too. It's silent voice but it's your choosing, it's of your choosing.

To remain silent does not have to be interpreted as an act of passivity. Not speaking, then, might be considered a willful act, a form of silent protest. Gal observes that silence can be a subversive form of self-defence and she uses the example of linguistic forms of political protest, 'even the most apparently quiescent, are strategic actions, created as responses to cultural and institutional contexts' (1991, p. 176). Leanne considers that ultimately, 'I have been active and I do try and live out' a feminist identity. In thinking about feminist speech acts, Leanne also notes that for her it is about 'how you overcome a fear and speak up when you know you need to. That's what voice was to me.' Leanne, Cixous, and McGill remind us that a woman speaking is a transgressive woman. Silencing and women's decision not to speak are not isolated incidents but may be part of a culture that to varying degrees is hostile or dismissive to women. Cultural blindness is at work in Australian academia; a collective inability to see beyond prejudicial images of women in order to see women's actual capacities and vulnerabilities (McGill 2013, p. 202). Julia reminds us nevertheless that:

> Privilege is language…It makes sense to me although I think a lot of people would say it's not just about voice. There's a problem in privileging voice over other kinds of encounters, embodied encounters. I also think silence is really important too, that you can actually do things with silences [laughs]; not responding to an email can sometimes be a very powerful thing.

What happens when women 'fail' to speak out on gender inequality either in the voice of a radical dissenter or through formal institutional channels is that women are portrayed as disempowered and seen as having failed the equality project. Until women's voices are respected and the deep cultural values that underpin our institutions are debated women will not be fully seen or heard.

(In)decision

Liz and Briony sat back and looked at one another. Pages of interview transcripts they had just finished reading lay neatly on the table in front of them, yet, they knew that the story each and every word had captured, was quite the opposite. There was nothing tidy about 'voice' when it came to speaking like a feminist in higher education. The silence that engulfed them seemed to grow larger with each passing second as echoes of all that their colleagues and friends had shared with them about experiences of 'coming to voice' filled the pause. Liz and Briony had never expected that a one size fits all approach to speaking and being heard as a feminist in neoliberal universities would emerge, for example, if in situation 'x', then adopt 'y' speaking voice. Feminist speech acts were indeed entangled material, discursive and affective encounters and performances, replete with ethico-onto-epistemological dangers that push women into making particular kinds of 'choices' about whether to 'fight' or 'flee'. The cost of doing both is high. Choosing to speak up might lead to never being counted or accounted for, choosing to remain silent might lead to others not being made to count or be accountable. Perhaps, Liz and Briony thought, one of the most significant strategies speaking/fighting and/or silent-ing/fleeing that had come inter-view through their conversations, was the necessity to becoming 'wide-awake' to the possibilities that their own willfulness might hold.

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Vera could give off a cold vibe. She was as cold as ice, as she would say. Underneath her frosty exterior, however, she was a warm and compassionate colleague and friend and an affectionate lover. She wasn't afraid to share her secrets and to show her vulnerability, but inside she knew she could be mean. In certain moments she just couldn't help herself. She would do arsehole things. She learnt these traits from other academics and now she was doing unto others what she had experienced herself. She didn't want to be *that* kind of academic. She felt pretty bad most of the time. Sipping on a plastic cup of prosecco, pretending to network, Vera feigned interest in the gabble of conversations around her. She found philosophers arrogant even though she was one herself. It came from a place of insecurity. A graduate student approached her. They had met before on occasion and knew that her research touched on her own. The lively young woman began to summarise her research findings to Vera, when suddenly Vera interjected. The words that spilled out of her mouth were both hers but not her own. They were in a language for which she was fluent but did not recognise. They were words that cut, and they directly cut down the student. The young woman made a hasty exit so as not to show her upset just as Vera had done in such situations many times before. She wondered if, like Vera, this PhD student would find a space to be alone and cry about this encounter and then seek out the women to comfort her, listening to her recount the tale. There was a nicer way to say what Vera had said. There was a nicer way to offer critique. Vera's eyes widened at her own nastiness and her mouth curled, unsure whether to smile or to frown. She had realised her mistake, that what she had done was such a dick move and she knew she was being a dick. She knew and yet she felt compelled to put the philosophy student in her place. There you go. Sometimes Vera's actions did not fit who she wanted to be. This left her with deep feelings of anxiety and melancholy. She must kill this false woman inside herself. She was reacting out of both annoyance and insecurity to try and assert some hierarchy with this overly confident young graduate student. It was an awful incident and Vera felt badly about how she spoke. She really didn't want to be like that. She did not want other women, aspiring academics to go through what she had endured. She truly wanted to support people, but in that moment she was exactly who she didn't want to be.

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It is one of many secrets that Ruby holds. She rarely speaks of this secret for then it would no longer be everything and all that it holds. Every so often however, an unexpected moment arises and she recognises that her secret must be shared, for that is the willfulness of secrets themselves. It arrives in the form of a conversation with Leticia, an honours research student. 'I love hearing you speak feminist', she says. 'Why thank you', Ruby replies, her desire to speak feminist with another of the self-same overrides her deep seated awareness that 'everything is dangerous'. 'Can I come to speak feminist with you?' Leticia asks. 'Of course', Ruby replies. 'Let's meet and speak the "f" word together'. Leticia pauses, 'But I'm afraid of what might happen if I dare to speak feminist. There are always those waiting to silence—other students who sit in the back of the lecture hall sneering and sniggering whenever the "f" word is spoken; men in power, the men who benefit from the neoliberalist institution who would send me to the end of the line. What should I do?' Ruby hesitates and there it is, a pause filled with a material and affective knowledge of the fear Leticia voices. It closes quickly in on her and her heart begins to race. The memories of times when Ruby gave in to her fears and chose not to speak like a feminist began to crash around her. She provided lots of excuses for herself—it was *acceptable* to be too tired and exhausted to speak in her feminist voice; it was *appropriate* to silence her feminist voice when she could not be certain how it might be heard; it was her secret alone to make available to others Ruby declared, and that in and of itself gave her secret power. It was this set of secrets she shared with Leticia. 'One way we might sustain ourselves as feminist academics', Ruby suggests, 'is to be equally attentive to those moments when speaking like a feminist provides a location of possibility as to those when it might be just as wise to stay silent'. 'Thank you Ruby', replies Leticia. Sometime later, Ruby sits in the audience waiting to hear Leticia deliver her presentation to her peers on her Honours research project. Tears well in Ruby's eyes as she listens to Leticia speak feminist with pride. 'I have identified as a feminist for many years now,' Leticia begins. 'But if someone was to ask me whether I was a feminist I would never deny it, but I wouldn't go out of my way to reveal it'. Leticia looks directly at Ruby, 'I too fear the consequences of speaking up to and out of patriarchy'. Ruby reaches for her tissues. 'I feel great pride today speaking to you as a feminist. Thank you for applauding not admonishing me as a feminist, thank you for listening to my feminist voice and encouraging me to speak like a feminist. Thank for you showing me a way to be feminist in the academy and for opening the possibilities this might hold'. Ruby reaches for another tissue.

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CHAPTER 4

Speaking into the Silence

Abstract This chapter asks 'when is it safe to reveal our feminist talk and when we might conceal our personal-as-political agendas?' It explores the micropolitics of public and private reprimand for talking feminist and the ways in which such censure of feminist voices elicits a fight or flight response. Further, we also ask, in what spaces are feminist academics 'willing' to reveal their feminist talk and what happens to these voices when they do speak out?

Ruby remembers the situation as if it happened only yesterday. It was meant to be an everyday kind of encounter, an everyday kind of academic activity—the kind of everyday moment that might happen in an everyday kind of day at the university while academics go about doing their everyday kind of work. And yet the way this everyday event happened was quite unkind. You see, Ruby had misjudged how much her feminist talk would get her into trouble and be heard as too troubling for the everyday kind in academia. The moment she raised her voice and mentioned the 'f' word the men at the meeting lost their temper. There were no other women of Ruby's kind there. They shouted *enough*, *enough already*. Faces turned red as clenched fists waved in the air. Pointed fingers directed themselves towards her body and denounced it—the shape of her, the texture of her, the knowledge of her—and the voice it contained as too noisy, too messy, too out of control, and too emotional. Her abject body and voice was ejected from their room. Ruby did not bother returning to her office; she was no longer sure it was her own. She grabbed her bag and left the university for the day. In fact, she left the university for some time, not sure when, how or even why to return

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to a place which seemed to revel in everyday acts of un-kindness. Ruby did not speak to anyone about what had happened in that everyday moment; she felt as if her tongue had been cut out and she did not know how to repair or replace it. Ruby found her own kind of kindness in choosing to remain silent everyday thereafter.

Ruby's reflections remind us that willfulness can be a bodily experience of not being welcome in a space (Ahmed 2014, p. 147) and a moment when feminist academics are at risk of becoming 'wounded' by someone else's words. As Briony reads Ruby's story, her body knows and remembers the sensation it evokes, 'It's akin', she says, 'to having the wind taken out of your chest really quickly. It feels like you can't take in breath and so you can't release your voice'. While all of the women we spoke with were open about their various feminist identifications, proud to claim a feminist language and actively sought out private spaces where they might speak freely as feminists; sometimes, they were unsure about the safety of talking feminist in public. The kind of fear that Ruby alludes to sits uneasily behind such moments of uncertainty and here we find women adopting various strategies for 'fleeing' as feminists without giving away their personal-as-political agendas and 'fighting' for their voices to be heard. What we hope to capture in this chapter is that state of suspension at any given moment when you want to speak. You are waiting in a 'stuck place' (Lather 1998) of hesitation wondering what you are going to do, what your strategy is in this situation. You are confronted with whether you will be on the offensive in the sense of putting forward a feminist position, or on the defence taking a step backwards. Thinking of the ways in which Cixous' writing-as-speaking challenges the gender dualism we also want to problematise the binary state of being on the offensive or defensive—as being, masculine or feminine, aggressive or passive—to consider how fighting and fleeing can encapsulate both states of being at the same time. These are the turning points in a situation when you think to yourself, 'which way am I going to go with my argument, or my approach to this conversation? Which way is this situation going to turn?' Over time we get better at reading these encounters. Although for Briony such moments are not without feelings of guilt. There is a sense of responsibility that her voice may be at times too radical, and at others, not radical enough. She worries over having said the wrong thing at the wrong time. Ahmed suggests that this guilt might stem from not what one does or does not do, 'but in the time taken to do what she did: a will that hesitates in the pursuit of the right action might be guilty, might be responsible for the very faltering nature of how it reaches for a possibility' (2014, p. 59). The morals of good and ill will, that of the will of the way and of those who are willful, has a bearing on how, when and where we find space to talk feminist in the contemporary university and the impact these have on feminist academics.

Behind Closed Doors: Public and Private Reprimand for Talking Feminist

> Ruby arrived at work early to prepare for class, trying to buy time. She was anxious and urgency blanketed everything she did, time was not on her side. Ruby rushed down to the photocopier room to make copies of her handout for the class, her heart and head already five steps ahead and onto the next item she needed to get ready. Ruby walked into the photocopier room and was surprised to find someone else there, an older male colleague whom she knew by name and sight. He was standing staring at the piles of photocopying paper which lay on strewn the floor—there had been a jam and white sheets had flown up and out everywhere. Biting back her annoyance, Ruby asked him if he would like some assistance to pick them up and bent down to quickly collate his papers. The man remained where he was, not moving but looking down and watching her all the same. Ruby became uncomfortable under his silent gaze and stood up in haste to hand him his pile of papers. The man grabbed her and pulled Ruby close to him, his sour breath blowing against her face as he tried to kiss her. Ruby turned her head and his hot rancid lips landed on her cheek. Ruby froze and time seemed to stand still. She pushed him away and stumbled out of the photocopier room to her office. Her hands were shaking violently and she barely managed to insert the key in the door. 'What just happened?' Ruby whispered to herself as she slammed the door and locked herself tightly inside.

What happens behind closed doors and in public spaces triggers our fight or flight responses. Whether it's an epistemological violence, ontological violence, or physical violence, if a woman speaks out of turn there isn't necessarily any obvious repercussion in a public space but privately that's when the ramifications happen. The reprimand for speaking out of turn comes swiftly and often times violently, seeking to place you back behind closed doors where your voice can no longer be heard. A feminist account of gender in the neoliberal university might do well to include an analysis of 'how women willingly agree to situations in which their safety and well-being are compromised' (Ahmed 2014, p. 55). Ahmed goes as far as to remind us that there is a history 'whereby men give themselves permission to hear no as a yes, to assume women are willing, whatever women say' (2014, p. 55). This is a history where consent is 'read off women's own bodies or conduct' (2014, p. 55); what they wear, how they move, the way their bodies are thought to enact a yes even when they say no. The harassment policy at Briony's university defines workplace harassment or bullying as:

> Repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, that a reasonable person would regard as undermining the individual's right to dignity through victimising, harming, humiliating, intimidating or threatening a person or persons, thereby creating a risk to health and safety.

Liz's institution goes as far to list in detail the types of harassment such as abusive and offensive language or shouting; constant unreasonable criticism about work or academic performance, often about petty or insignificant matters, as well as deliberate exclusion, sarcasm, and ridicule, threatening gestures or actual violence, hazing, and inappropriate comments about personal appearance. While such policies appear to offer clarity, Andreas Liefooghe and Kate Mackenzie Davey (2010) highlight how such definitions allow for greater ambiguity. A common trait in many universities' policies is the way such definitions individualise such actions. This individualising of the perpetrators and the victims legitimises managerial authority and reinforces organisational power. Definitions of bullying implicate individuals as the perpetrators of bullying which ignores the role of institutionalised organisational cultures. Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey state, 'because of the moral quest involved in this production, these texts are almost sacred and therefore unchallengeable' (2010, p. 83). Ruby's university policy makes explicit that: 'a single incident of harassing type behaviour', with the exception of sexual harassment, 'does not, of itself, constitute workplace harassment'. This implies that the effect of bullying and harassment must be sustained over a period of time and impacting on victim's self-esteem and confidence, and hinders an individual's success in the future. Liefooghe and Mackenzie Davey (2010) find that if an individual overcomes the experiences of bullying then they are deemed by virtue of the policy not to have been bullied. This presents some significant flaws in the way we talk about gender discrimination and inequality in academia and women's experiences of being silenced.

Joy notes that verbal confrontation, 'it can be aggressive and I think that's the thing that's—it's just not right.' She summarises that in such moments:

> You become the property of somebody else's opinion and that, I find - they either ignore you or objectify you. It doesn't matter whether its etiquette, attire, sexualisation—whatever it is, there is some kind of perception that that's what you're there for and that they're perfectly entitled to do so, often in a public forum, which I find absolutely hilarious.

Vera describes the way she was treated during a meeting with a male senior executive: 'He's one of those people that will talk to the man in the room and treat you like a little girl. You know those people that do that?' Techniques for silencing complaints are subtle and pernicious and neuter resistance through our 'collegial' relations (Gill 2010). We are told to suck it up and keep it to ourselves. It's not derogatory. That's just what they are like. Julia highlights how such infantilisation happens to Asian women in the academy in a way that is distinctly raced as well as gendered. Such encounters are about power and such possessive and domineering behaviour is not uncommon in faculty and school meetings, as Joy recalls:

> I've had one senior male colleague, in an executive meeting, snap at me that I'm not funny so just keep my opinions to myself. So I don't really understand what that was all about. But that hasn't been [dished] to anybody else so I thought, well, this is peculiar. So, yeah, there is that kind of stuff and certainly, I've seen it happen to our professional women staff where this just happens to the women—the professional women, all the time. I suspect, probably, as a senior woman in that school, I've probably copped some of it because I'm the only one they can target because there's only [one of me]. I dare say if you spoke to other senior women they would have [had] similar experiences.

In that public setting, in that moment, Joy is punished for speaking. Ahmed notes that 'you become the problem if you dare to say they are the problem' (Ahmed 2014, p. 154). Joy is berated as if she were a willful child. She is told to sit down and be quiet. Her assertiveness is misinterpreted or read as aggression. Disobedient academic women are made examples of in order to regulate all academic women. After remaining silent for so long during a PhD supervisory panel meeting, of which Leanne and two other male academics are supervisors, Leanne's voice comes out as a roar. Her speech sings 'I am woman' and yet her words are received as those of a dragon/siren/hysteric/feminist killjoy. She makes the men on the postgraduate's panel uncomfortable and unhappy. In her words and in the silence that comes after Leanne speaks her piece 'we can hear what is at stake' for women who speak out. They are heard as too strident, too loud, too harsh, and too grating. For 'some styles of presentation, some points of view, are heard as exclusively and unpleasantly forceful' (Ahmed 2014, p. 153).

The verbal antagonism Leanne, Joy, and Vera experienced is tantamount to violence. To name gender or racial discrimination in the academy 'can be an act of disloyalty' towards the institution, which Ahmed perceives as a form of disobedience; 'an act which refuses the veil of secrecy offered by diversity' (Ahmed 2010, p. xviii). However, while the frequency of such occurrences could perhaps constitute harassment, we do not often name these experiences as such; we do not always call out when our colleagues attempt to silence us in such ways. Vera can also feel vulnerable speaking feminist in particular management committee meetings:

> It all depends on what you're doing. If you're trying to get something done that you know is not going to be popular then you're vulnerable, there's no doubt about it and you need someone there to help you. I think there's certain kinds of gender and race dynamics that can play out in a way that's [really] not very good.

Bullying and harassment are defined by institutions and enshrined in policy, and as such institutions in their role as regulators also determine what constitutes such discrimination. Julia similarly recounts:

> I've been in committee meetings where I am the only woman except for often there's a [female] professional staff member. It's basically me and a group of much more senior men. Various decisions are being made. Yeah it's clear that my voice, my opinions are not seen as valuable in those spaces.

If a woman decides to talk feminist in that public space she may be allowed to speak, later on behind the closed doors, whether it is in a performance appraisal or in more subtle ways that are not visible. Behind closed doors there are other discussions going on that we do not hear. Such private interactions may not necessarily be overtly malicious not something you can point at directly and categorise as discrimination, as Julia describes:

> I've felt at times when for example I have been not encouraged by my supervisors to go for promotion where in fact I think I was ready for promotion

> but I was told by my two different male supervisors that I wasn't ready to go for promotion. I guess I didn't feel silenced but I felt that my actual value was somehow rendered invisible. Then it was very difficult for me to then talk about the actual reasons why I was worthy to go for promotion without it being—it wasn't the sort of encounter that enabled that. So that's a kind of silencing.

A small, seemingly trivial incident can acquire a new significance when analysed in the broader context of the micropolitics of the academy. These interactions can be subtle and elusive and leave individuals uncertain of the validity of their reading of social situations. Micropolitics can be understood as a subtext of organisational life and highlights the minutiae of social life. Micropolitics is about power, and Morley (1999) examines how academics utilise such relational power to influence others as well as to protect themselves. Conflict, tensions, power imbalances, and the everyday transactions of institutions are considered part of the micropolitics of organisational operations and can impact upon the personal and professional lives of academic women. Micropolitics is about the conflict and cooperation that stems from those power relations how people negotiate with one another in order to get what they want. Ruby worries about whether speaking up in a feminist voice will backfire on her:

> You don't always know, you can never quite tell when it could be worse for you… or worse for the issue that you—when you think speaking up is going to empower. Does it actually do more damage in the long run for the cause or the agenda that you're trying to push forward?

Leanne believes that 'if you're around a place long enough and people know you then it all comes out in the wash but when you're in those unexpected situations, they're the more dangerous ones because people might only see you that one and only time and that's all they remember of you. She continues:

> I feel like I've done that for decades and I did it even just last week. I'm co-supervising a Master's student and I'm equal—I have equal split with the co-supervisor who's a male. He sat there, was happy to talk about his opinion about what was going and not ask me what I thought. Then they moved on to the next topic. Of course I look bad because I say hang on, I've got something to say about that last point. I said it and everyone sort of went like that. I look like the dragon because I had to say sorry [Pete] but [your servant here] would actually like to say something.

Leanne becomes the feminist killjoy. She puts her will forward and in doing so makes everybody else feel uncomfortable and unhappy. 'Stop making us feel unhappy', they say. 'Just sit there and shut up':

> I think the thing about that is it comes back to that default position is a lot of men do think they're superior. It's built into the way they're taught on a day-to-day. It's their social learning.

In that situation nobody says anything, the man is allowed to hold the floor and on and on it goes. Leanne observes that when you challenge these embedded institutional practices, 'people think you're trying to take that role, be the most important when all you're trying to do is actually be their equal.' She adds, 'You're not asking for special treatment, you're asking for equal treatment.' Speaking as a feminist and as a female, Leanne notices how others read her assertiveness as aggression. This is a well-worn trope, but Leanne 'can't see any sign of that changing.' This is another example of the pervasiveness of an engineered ignorance.

> Julia had been teaching for twenty years at her institution when she decided to go for a teaching recognition fellowship. Such programs are common in the measured university. Attend a series of workshops, write an application statement and receive a two-ply laser jet printout certificate of attainment. Such 'innovations' in quality assurance can be thought of as a form of control, busywork designed to keep busy academics working. Julia had consistently high teaching evaluations and her courses were well loved by students. Julia had already received a teaching award for her approach to student-centred learning. University management was actively pushing this new teaching fellowship scheme and so Julia made time in her already full schedule to make a submission. She laboured over her application. The task was arduous and while she was critical of the process she saw it as an opportunity to reflect upon her feminist praxis, even if it did mean re-organising her entire weekend and missing her son's soccer game in order to write the damn thing. Sitting down to write her application she explored the challenges and benefits of reflective writing and practices. She critically engaged with the complexities and contradictions of an intersectional approach to teaching and learning, and to designing curriculum, which invites students into the liminal space of troublesome knowledge, and the importance of her feminist pedagogy as part of transforming the academy as well as her students' lives. Julia's mentor thought it was an outstanding application and endorsed it wholeheartedly. Her response from the convenor of the scheme, however, was that Julia was a nobody. The email was patronising: 'I can see you've put a lot of work into

> this, but ...' as if she were a first year undergraduate who had just failed an assignment. The email was most probably well meaning, but the tone was infantalising, particularly since she was a much more senior academic still actively engaged in teaching than the convenor of the fellowship. When Julia pushed back, defending her application the response was short and hostile: 'You have not followed *our* instructions.' When Julia told the women they couldn't believe what had happened. 'How can that be?' they cried. Julia's experience and status as an academic was rendered invisible. The following month Julia was promoted. Success was the best revenge but it didn't negate the fact that the convenor had not had to face her own inadequacies.

Joy tells us that when she joined her institution, 'I came into an existing workplace model…it's very topical.' She summarises the model as being that first year courses and marking were valued less than those at second, third, and fourth year level because as Joy puts it 'they were seen to be the higher [skill ones] and they took longer to mark. Anybody who knows anything, marking a first year essay takes infinitely longer than marking a fourth year essay.' This was the will of the way and academic staff were just 'slotted into things.' Joy notes that:

> There was no attempt to say, what's your career path, what are your skills and abilities, where can you fit into this work and utilise this? They [had] vested interests. So when I made statements like, well, if we've got a rota—and this is another thing, sabbatical leave—my sabbatical leave was dumped twice. [In favour of a male colleague]…it may not have been intentional, but it's that kind of view that you're unimportant. Then, some of the boys—that wouldn't happen to some of the other boys. I could send an email three times to certain colleagues, nothing would happen. I felt voiceless. I would then speak up and say, okay, well, look, we've got a rota for that, perhaps we should think about people's promotion aspirations and think about how we can equitably divide up the administrative roles so everybody gets a tick in the box of service.

Power can be relayed through seemingly trivial incidents and transactions demonstrating how patriarchal power is exercised, not only possessed (Morley 1999). In Vera's experience, 'I reckon the worst of it comes from other women academics [who] are competitive.' The rise of a consumer driven ethos and the increased measurement of academic productivity in Australian higher education accentuates the complexities and anxiety of the feminist predicament of 'how best to unleash ourselves from our central contradiction—being researchers and being active feminists' (Fine 1994 qtd. in Morley 1999, p. 11). Vera contends that:

> It's probably because it's harder for women. There are fewer resources for women and so women have to be more competitive with each other or you know. I would say it's like a function of the neoliberal university. Yes its male dominated but I don't think it's that men are the issue either. I think that obviously there's a system where men benefit and they're going to try and keep that power obviously and those resources, and women are competing for resources, and so it's harder but it's obviously a broader systemic issue.

Power is embedded in social relations and thus does not appear to be in operation, distorting its effects enabling it to operate with impunity and invisibility. A micropolitical perspective recognises how control and conflict are both 'essential and contradictory bases of organisational life' (Morley 1999, p. 2). Vera reflects on the gendered and aged power dynamics such as bullying, bargaining, manipulation, and harassment and how these impact upon the notion of proclaiming a feminist identity and the act of talking feminist:

> There are women out there that say they're feminist and then do all the opposite things to prevent other women from accessing other positions… it's such a stereotype of feminists or of women, that they are competitive and that they hold each other back and that women are the problem. Clearly there are women in academia who are kind of awful to other women, [especially] to younger women or earlier career women that are—they're competitive with, right? They're worried about their positions, but I don't think that's because of women. I don't think that's because women are inherently more competitive.

It isn't that self-professed feminists who do 'un-feminist' things should not call themselves feminists, because the act of naming and using the 'f-word' is one of the ways in which we can normalise feminisms. Instead of policing feminists in this way we need to be more cognisant of the ways in which neoliberal new managerialist practices in the university enable and constrain feminist subjectivities and to better understand the affects that permeate such incidences of intense scrutiny and judgement; such as our own internal grappling with hyper-competitiveness of the academic market and the increased (self-)surveillance that comes with contemporary collegiality and how this impacts on our interaction with colleagues. Vera recognises the imperfection of feminist identifications. There will always be inconsistencies in how we enact our feminist identities. It is how we embrace these faults and flaws that may allow us to move beyond blame and the limits of representation. Vera continues:

> I think it's really an insecurity thing and competitive—I've felt really competitive lately because there's a real sharp sense of very little opportunity. So like that's made me feel really competitive. The other thing—you know what? You get really competitive with people that you respect. So when you think someone's really good is when you feel competitive with them, right? So if you just think other women are really good, which I do because I basically ignore men [laughs], then like you're more competitive with women. I think it is just insecurity and wanting to—also when someone tries to assert themselves over you, you often try and assert yourself back.

Vera wants to emphasise the process of internalised micro-aggressions between and against women to highlight the ways in which they stem from broader structural issues, because 'otherwise there's just like the cat-fighting-woman kind of trope, you know?' She continues:

> When I think about it, the people that have kind of pushed me down and said horrible things or whatever? Women. The ones that have supported me and lifted me up? Women. What are the men doing? They're just sitting over there, enjoying their power in the institution, you know? I haven't had any mentor men at all, like at all. Can't even think of a single one that has been even a referee for me on something at all. So that's important to emphasise as well I think. It's not just that women are the problem or something. I've had some really good experiences.

Morley (1999) observes that in order for feminist academics to be visible and effective change agents they not only need to be able to read the organisational micropolitics but also develop their own micropolitical strategies for intervention and change. Moreover they also need strategies for self-care in order to maintain a willful feminist subjectivity when engaged in neoliberal patriarchal power relations. Vera acknowledges that she is not always successful at this but recognises that sharing her experiences with her female colleagues is one way of talking feminist that is also a form of self-care. 'I'm definitely not one to keep secrets' she adds. Leanne similarly suggests, 'If you're going to value collectivity you've got to be able to talk to people.'

Concealing and Revealing Feminist Talk

The fight-or-flight response is used as a way to articulate the harmful micropolitics of university organisations, and the complexities of feminist academic agency and performativity in the contemporary academy. When do we conceal and when do we reveal our feminist talk? If we understand speaking to be an embodied performativity we see that for Cixous, then, the writing-thinking body can be used as a performative instrument to speak. She uses the metaphor of 'flying' to suggest the ways in which women can 'speak/write' their story and enact their own freedom. 'There is this text and the body takes new flight' (1991, p. 43) she writes in *Coming to writing*. 'Flying' for Cixous, is a woman's gesture (1976, p. 887) and 'it's no accident' that she deliberately plays upon the double meaning of the French word for fly, *voler*, which also translates as 'steal'. For centuries women have been (forced) to fly and steal the language of men in order to speak, Cixous explains,

> It's no accident that women take after birds and robbers…they take pleasure in jumbling the order of space, in disorienting it, in changing around the furniture, dislocating things and values, breaking them all up, emptying structures and turning propriety upside down. (1976, p. 887)

> Stealing and recreating language is a woman's gesture because language has so often been the property of men (1991, p. 19).

Cixous' woman in flight is a woman who is 'dispersible, prodigious, stunning, desirable and capable of others, of the other woman she will be, of the other woman she isn't' (1976, p. 890). The flight is dizzying and takes place between knowledge and invention (1976, p. 893) but there is no doubt that woman comes 'in' without fear of her becoming. Her flight gives voice (Cixous 1997, p. 166); she 'wills' herself into becoming by her own movement and this act is marked by woman's seizing the moment 'to become *at will* the taker and the initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process' (1976, p. 880). Cixous' use of the phrase 'to become at will' is an assertion of women's political right and similar sentiments are echoed in Ahmed's exploration of 'willfulness'. Willfulness can be used to understand the paradoxical nature of speaking as a feminist, of using 'the f word'. Women speak from a state of suspension—between offence/defence, fighting/fleeing. Joy notes that when to talk feminist and when to hold back is kind of a 'conceal and reveal thing':

> I find that really quite hilarious. It's not—because, equally, my male colleagues will conceal the family nature…They're productive in the research economy and the biological economy—your wife is a champion, I don't know how she does it but there we are. I find that difficult.

Willful subjects are imbricated identities, both complicit and resistant. Unwilling obedience; 'subjects might obey a command but do so grudgingly or reluctantly and enact with or through the compartment of their body a withdrawal from the right of the command even as they complete it' (Ahmed 2014, p. 140). Sometimes, 'to loosen our hold on willfulness' is necessary when willfulness is used 'to hold us in place' (Ahmed 2014, p. 170). It might seem like a compromise but Joy reveals that in order to be heard; 'to keep' feminist issues 'alive' in meetings, 'there are tactical things that I've done, where, if the issue needs to be brought up I get a bloke to raise it at the next school meeting.' Sometimes need to 'pass as willing in order to be willful' (Ahmed 2014, p. 152). Willful obedience can also be a form of disobedience in disguise, an unwilling obedience. Ahmed argues that, 'Subjects might obey a command but do so grudgingly or reluctantly and enact with or through the compartment of their body a withdrawal from the right of the command even as they complete it' (2014, p. 140). Even carrying out a task begrudgingly with a smile and a laugh can be willful. Ahmed proposes that, 'Perhaps when obedience is performed willfully, disobedience becomes the end' (Ahmed 2014, p. 141).

Women in academia invariably encounter 'the power of male hegemony that is prepared to accommodate some women, but not have its dominance challenged' (White 2003, p. 46). Women must either pay homage to what Thornton (2013) describes as Benchmark Men or that which constitutes the ideal academic. This normative masculinist standard, Thornton argues, 'favours those who are Anglo-Australian, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle class, not elderly, espouse a right-of-centre politics and a nominal mainstream religion, if any' (Thornton 2013, p. 128). When women and Others are measured against Benchmark Men they are invariably 'found wanting' (2013, p. 128). Mimicry is the only path for those assigned to the feminine (Irigaray 1985). Women may mimic the masculine in the aim that they will achieve subjecthood and so reaffirm the phallocentrism of the symbolic order. However, under such a regime there is no possibility of an autonomous difference or place for women other than as the negative mirror of man (Rozmarin 2011). O'Connor (2000, p. 3–7) suggests that women can challenge hierarchical relations with a range of 'resistance' strategies that include: keeping your head down, challenging the opposition of work and family, confronting the 'enemy' from within the institution, and naming organisational culture that is exclusionary for women.

However, such approaches become somewhat contradictory. Kate White (2003, p. 47) argues that 'none of these strategies effectively seek to redefine an elitist and intransigent management culture'. Those who are marked by difference continue to be constructed as lesser than those who represent sameness. As Thornton (2013) observes, Benchmark Men promote those most like themselves but there is a misguided faith around the pipeline theory that as more women undertake positions of leadership those women will then recruit women in their image. Instead to ensure conformity these 'token' women are rendered ineffectual. Morley is optimistic however, suggesting that there still are 'possibilities for creativity and critical challenge' (Morley 1999, p. 191).

Irigaray (1985) plays with the idea of mimesis as a way 'for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it' (Irigaray 1985, p. 76). Rather than creating a new theory of the feminine as a subject, Irigaray is more interested mimesis as a way of 'jamming the theoretical machinery itself' (Irigaray 1985, p. 78). Mimesis is a subversive and strategic form of repetition. It is a strategic use of language that upsets the canonical dominance of malecentric epistemology and ontology (Rozmarin 2011, p. 13). Irigaray's mimesis shares similarities with Ahmed's willfulness in the ways in which willfulness can adapt and flex in the contemporary academy to the dominant will that of a neoliberal phallocentrism. This is where Ahmed's willfulness can be most productive. Sometimes we must go with the will of the way in order to sustain a feminist, willful subjectivity. Ahmed notes that:

> Willfulness is ordinary stuff. It can be a daily grind. This is also how an experience of willfulness is world creating: willful subjects can recognise each other, can find each other, can create spaces of relief, spaces that might be breathing spaces, spaces in which we can be inventive. (2014, p. 169)

We both consider willful obedience or mimesis to also be a survival strategy. Liz shares:

> I think that idea of being obedient… and being an obedient daughter of the academy is a secret strategy. Secret because you don't show how much you mind and how much it matters, secret because you are playing the game, secret because you conceal yourself, because it's almost like you kind of go [giggles] in by stealth!

There is a type of agency in being secretive, selective, or withholding as it means that is some way you have control because you're the one keeping that secret, you are the one holding on to that silence. Liz also reflects on the secret delight she takes in 'going incognito' as a feminist, revelling in the idea of using words and language to be a mischief-maker, and thereby speaking in a different way through another medium that only certain people know. She sees herself pretending to be subservient on the outside but on the inside always performing and claiming her right to take a subversive turn. Fleeing here might be thought of as Cixousian 'flying'—a woman's gesture by which we have all learnt and lived, 'stealing away, finding when desired, narrow passageways, hidden crossovers' (Cixous 1976, p. 887) to disorient, jumble up, dislocate, and turn 'propriety upside down' (Cixous 1976, p. 887). For after all, what feminist academic amongst us 'hasn't flown/stolen? Who hasn't felt, dreamt, performed the gesture that jams sociality?' (Cixous 1976, p. 887). It is a willful decision, whether to conform and to stay silent. But where does this get you? This is a question that even Julia—who recognises the potentiality of such a discursive strategy, considers with a little scepticism. Can you even differentiate between conformity and obedience and those acts that are willful?

Julia caveats her strategy of asking a male colleague to raise 'unfavourable' gender issues at meetings with a critical reflection that, whether it be from a man or a woman, it is about the reception of a feminist voice, which 'is still a cause for concern'. Joy adds, 'I think some people just don't get it; they may be well intentioned but they just don't get it. It's difficult and you—there's a lot of toxic water under the bridge, my god.' Joy is not afraid to use the 'f-word'. As a teacher she isn't scared to say it to her students. She tells them straight, 'I'm a socialist leftie from way back, so just get over it…' Although she recognises the need to be strategic about the terms she uses and in what institutional setting:

> In meetings, I would say—or gender equity, if I can't—if I'm not prepared to use feminism I'd say gender equity or democratising, so—because it's not just the women who are marginalised in my school, we have no non-white diversity whatsoever.

We cannot always control perception. Joy adds, 'Perception—that's the other thing, you can be who you are but whether your students perceive you to be such…you can never know that or how your colleagues perceive you. Then you play that game, how much you reveal and conceal'. Perception and gendered assumptions also seem to trump gender equity. Joy demonstrates the meritocracy. She uses the example of measuring gender representation of research output; of publications and grants, 'every one of them [colleagues] would have had a tick. If you were just doing it in terms of gender perception, all the men were winners on the grants and publications and the women did nothing. Yet, the reality is different.'

Joy's experience of always being on edge, always self-surveilling, and never being quite sure about your safety as a feminist is not unfamiliar to Liz. The following extract of some 'untimely' writing, written by Liz explores this uncertainty. In this instance, recalling an experience with a senior male professor which ended in tears:

> Too many times now she has raised her voice.
> In a room she naively claimed her own.
> He enters uninvited.
> Look at you, he says.
> You're terrifying, he says.
> Your body is angry, he says.
> Your language is aggressive, he says.
> You are monstrous, he says.
> He pushes her roughly into a room on her own.
> But this chamber is not one of her making.
> In this room she is cast, caught and captured.
> Trapped as an insider without.
> Power authority and intellect.
> Are stripped from her.
> Leaving her bare, naked, exposed.
> No longer an intimidating body.
> He renders her.
> No-body at all.

Liz remembers the moment captured in this poem with a vivid sense of epistemological and ontological terror. She remembers feeling as though something deeply traumatic had just happened, something which had rocked her feminist self, her academic self, and her sense of what it might mean to live a life undivided between them in an academic world. A seemingly routine process of thesis review turned into a site of punishment for talking feminist and being feminist. For Liz, writing became a way for her to reclaim that which was ripped from her. She reflects:

> The revenge and delight I found was being able to write that piece. In writing myself as woman, I saw myself as a beautiful monster laughing—I was Cixous' Medusa laughing at the foolishness and 'yesterday-ness' of the professor and wrenching myself free from the woman *of* yesterday who falls

> into line behind him. I needed to find a way to write my liberation, to try and turn the epistemological and ontological damage upside down so that I might became the mistress of my own revolution. It's not a funny poem but in daring to 'call him out', I found myself using writing-as-laughter-as-liberation to avenge those who would will me into silence. By speaking in a creative and poetic medium, I think I might have come close to finding it. When the professor yelled and screamed at me in that thesis review, I sat 'nice and quietly' and positioned myself as the docile, compliant female academic subject. I felt like the snakes on Medusa's head, curled up, waiting patiently and deceptively for the right moment to strike. Outside of that context, in a 'room of my own', I then used writing to be subversive and to make that incursion. I don't have to feel censored by what I write. I can write whatever I like and who's going to stop me!

Poetry is a way of engaging in the feminine and dislocating the ways in which the category 'woman' has been repressed. For Cixous, 'poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious' it is the 'limitless country' a place 'where the repressed manage to survive: women' (Cixous 1976, p. 879). The poetics of the feminine contrast with the language of masculine rationality (Phillips et al. 2014) from which the senior male professor spoke to Liz, and in this way, Cixous' work models the ways in which 'poetry as theory' might engage and question the fundamental patriarchal assumptions of Western thought and culture (Bagchi 2014, p. 79). Indeed, what Cixous tries to do with poetry and a strategy Liz tries to mimic, is to use poetic theorising to 'subvert the discourse of patriarchy, to open it up to contraction and to difference, while still retaining the possibility of shared recognition which would make a political movement of and for women possible' (Shiach 1991, p. 20).

> Looking through the archives Joy came across a black and white photograph of an official department portrait. This image from 1910 comprised almost entirely of men dressed in academic regalia except for one lone woman. Joy had been tasked with writing a gender equity report for her department. What was she going to write, how was she going to say what needed to be said? Looking at this picture created a deep pit of despair in Joy's stomach. Nothing much had changed in the last one hundred years. Although the old monochrome photo was not a direct rendition of the subject the stark reality was clear to see. Joy hears Cixous as she looks about the resources she has collected for the report. The woman who writes in and for the masculine 'cuts herself out a paper penis' (Cixous 1976, p. 883). Joy took the photo and with a willful smile she transposed all the heads of her current department onto the image.

In exposing the patriarchal hegemony her cutting and cropping neutered the phallic. When she produced her report to the school, she also showed with it the photograph. You could cut the staff meeting with a gendered knife. The women fell about laughing. The blokes just sat there, all completely shocked.

Being Careful in a Careless Place

Leanne walked into her office at the University ready to start the day. Well, she thought she was ready, but when she arrived Leanne felt as though she was missing something. She couldn't quite put her finger on it but the sensation lingered, refusing to leave her in peace. Leanne sat down on her chair and surveyed the room around her, trying to locate the source of her incompleteness. Had she forgotten her laptop? Had she left her mobile phone at home? Or perhaps she had missed a meeting that wasn't in her diary? Without thinking, Leanne's hand strayed to touch her forehead and she felt an unspoken sense of relief to find her head still in place. She stood up and looked outside the window and then she saw it—the lost thing she had been looking for. It was her heart. It lay on the footpath below just outside the door and she raced downstairs to retrieve it. With two hands Leanne carefully picked up her heart and went to carry it inside with her so that she might feel whole again. But each time she tried to walk through the glass doors, they automatically closed shut and refused to allow her entry. Leanne tried again, again and again but to no avail. She took off her shoes, thinking that perhaps they were not walking the talk closely enough. She took off her coat, thinking that perhaps she had been mistaken for a Woolf in sheep's clothing. But still she was denied access. Leanne looked down at heart and wondered. She gently wrapped it in her coat and laid her heart gently on the ground. This time the doors slid open without question. Leanne knew she had no choice. She must separate her heart thinking from her head feeling. She left her heavy heart outside and took her heavy head back to her office to begin the day.

Kathleen Lynch (2010) describes the contemporary neoliberal university as a site where a culture of carelessness is valued and produced. She speaks specifically to the gendered nature of 'care-work' in higher education and suggests that women are:

> Disproportionately encouraged to do the 'domestic' work of the organization (e.g., running courses, teaching, thesis supervision, doing pastoral care) neither of which count much for individual career advancement even though they are valuable to the students and the reputation of the university. (Lynch 2010, p. 56)

Men on the other hand, she argues, are rewarded for engaging in work that is 'care-less' and being 'care-free' is similarly a quality which results in academic advancement. In a culture of such carelessness, emotional work and the ways in which emotional work as an epistemological site might operate, are neglected and negated. Diane Reay similarly suggests that, 'Academia, with its ethos of, at best, mutual instrumentalism, at its worst, individualistic, competitive self-interest and self-promotion lacks any intrinsic ethic of care and this is extremely problematic for female academics committed to feminist ways of working' (2000, p. 19). Being 'care-full' and 'care-less' are positioned as oppositional categories, the first standing in the way of the institutional will and the second in mimicry and abeyance. For many feminist academics however, we are positioned precariously on the edge, trying to find the middle ground between our feminist politics, feminist subjectivities and the ways in which we need to conform and comply in order to sustain such performativities. Julia reflects:

> Being authentic to feminism doesn't always mean supporting a female candidate above all other candidates. It doesn't mean arguing against some form of performance management because we know that performance management is problematic in all sorts of ways. It might be seeking to raise some questions about that performance management or trying to amend it in some way or try at least to have a conversation in place which shows that we know that this is an imperfect tool, that sort of thing. Often times it's quite modest things. For me I'm not an adversarial person. I don't think you can last very long in this kind of institution if your relationships and your encounters are just always adversarial with the power.

Fighting for and Fleeing to Feminist Spaces

Metaphors of marginality insist upon difference and a distance from hegemonic culture (Pratt 1998, p. 14). hooks writes of marginality as a space from where we can imagine alternative ways of existing outside of hegemonic culture and presents an opportunity to create counter-hegemonic cultures. hooks describes the margins as 'to be part of the whole but outside the main body; (hooks 1990, p. 341). Here we are reminded once more of Cixous' insistence that women's writing *will* resist. She writes that 'woman' has seen the ways in which the 'masculine-conjugal subjective economy' in academia works to alienate her and she in return, 'doubly resists':

> On the one hand she has constituted herself necessarily as that 'person' capable of losing a part of herself without losing her integrity. But secretly, silently, deep down inside, she grows and multiplies. (1976, p. 888)

hooks too speaks of silencing and appropriation, but in relation to black women's voices, and she grounds her argument in her lived experience. In creating such spaces willful feminist voices can be listened to and heard by other willful feminist voices. There is a freedom in what Ahmed describes as 'creating worlds'. Spaces where we can 'talk feminist' are often spaces for repair, for healing wounds, for reflection and vulnerability. Behind closed doors it's such a relief to be able to say 'fuck the patriarchy!' Such spaces should not be considered an uncritical bubble or 'safe space' of feminist self-indulgence but a space where we might reflect on our activism 'letting ourselves recognise how we too can be the problem' (Ahmed 2014, p. 170). Transgression as a tactic for resistance relies on the pre-existence of spatial ordering (Cresswell 1996). For hooks marginality is a site of resistance, a position from which to resist colonisation by the dominant white culture: 'that space of refusal, where one can say no to the coloniser, no to the downpressor, is located in the margins' (hooks 1990, p. 341). This is not to say that the margins is a safe space or feminist utopia. hooks acknowledges that the margins can be just as much a site for repression as well as resistance and that the margins are not a space for separatism, but her insistence on choosing the margins are an intervention against being positioned as marginal by oppressive structures highlights how it is possible to move beyond static spatial representations to explore the tenuous position academic women occupy as both insiders and outsiders of the neoliberal university.

Instead of desiring a move towards the centre and towards hegemonic culture, hooks defines marginality as a site of radical possibility. Although she stresses it can be at times difficult to maintain that marginality politic when our lives are entangled with centre. Resistance can often be sounded in the language of the oppressor 'while it may resemble in ways the coloniser's tongue, it has to undergo a transformation. It has to be irrevocably changed' (hooks 1990, p. 342). Similarly Janet Newman's (2012, 2013) theorisation of 'spaces of power' articulates some similar entanglements between dominant and marginal cultures and discourses. Spaces of power relates to the places where women can generate change, whether it be through the implementation of new policies, new pathways, new organisational practices, and new public conversations (Newman 2012, p. 138).

It relates to the liminal spaces between private and public, where personal and political connections are made, spaces that foster feminist politics and perspectives that enable academic women to actively resist hegemonic structures and discourses.

Newman exposes two dominant narratives that we argue strongly limits the status and visibility of feminist academics and of women in the university more broadly, and which are frequently used to define the relationship between feminism and neoliberalism, that of neoliberalism's appropriation of feminist identity politics, and 'of how processes of "mainstreaming" have served to both acknowledge and depoliticise feminist claims' (2013, p. 202). Because of the way in which neoliberalism individualises the social and collective, feminism is made culpable for its depoliticisation, its widening interpretations and broadening political objectives. hooks (1990, p. 143) observes that the language of resistance can be misappropriated by the dominant in a way that silences the lived experiences of the marginalised:

> What I have noticed is that those scholars, most especially those who name themselves radical critical thinkers, feminist thinkers, now fully participate in the construction of a discourse about the 'Other.' I was made 'other' there in that space with them. In that space in the margins, that lived-in segregated world of my past and present, I was not 'other.' They did not meet me there in that space. They met me at the center. They greeted me as colonisers.

In mapping feminist and neoliberal discourses onto space and place, and onto the normative behaviours and the exclusion of others it is possible to understand the significance of willful transgression in all its layers of complexity. For hooks marginality nourishes her capacity to resist. Understanding marginality as a position and place of resistance, hooks argues, is crucial for oppressed, exploited and colonised peoples; she writes:

> When I left that concrete space in the margins, I kept alive in my heart a way of knowing reality which affirms continually not only the primacy of resistance but the necessity of a resistance that is sustained by my remembrance of the past, which includes recollections of broken tongues, giving us ways to speak that de-colonise our minds, our very beings. (hooks 1990, p. 342)

Here hooks describes how in some respects she is being made to remain in the margins whilst also claiming the creative power that comes from such a space 'an inclusive space where we recover ourselves' (hooks 1990, p. 343). This oscillation between centre and margin is what Kathy Ferguson describes as 'mobile subjectivities'. Understanding how individuals move between and across boundaries we can destabilise those underexamined dualisms and see the connection between inside/outside, centre/margin (Pratt 1998, p. 15). There is a need to rethink the relationship between feminism and neoliberalism in terms of reciprocal appropriations where there is space for new discourses and new articulations. It is necessary to explore the contradictions in neoliberalism and of its competing projects since they require different agents, and occur in different temporalities and spatialities. Newman urges us to ask, 'what is happening in particular spaces of power in a particular political-cultural moment' (2013, p. 206). For Leanne one of her earliest recollections of feminist spaces was as an undergraduate:

> I was really aware that women had to establish—I mean women activists were the norm. That's how I remember it. But thinking of theoretical spaces and reading through the books and literature of that day there were a lot of different branches. Reconciling all of those didn't come easily. There were some that didn't appeal to me, there were others that did and then there were the big debates about clashes and where they fit and where you fit within that spectrum.

Leanne explores the temporal dimension of being 'with' something or someone. It may signal 'I am with you' or 'I support you' but it can also be a demand. Ahmed observes that we also inherent those for whom we are 'with', and sometimes those we are forced to be 'with', whether we like it or not. To be 'with' can also become a form of imposition, 'to become "with" willingly'. As Ahmed writes (2014, p. 51):

> The experience of not willing with others can be understood as part of social experience. It might be the difficulty of 'not willing' that is how we come to be willing with others: willing together as a way of avoiding difficulty. It is not necessarily that willing together becomes an injunction, though it can become so. An injunction can be implicit even in the seemingly innocent word 'with'.

This notion of being 'with' in relation to willfulness complicates the collective as much as the individual. Leanne describes the present as 'dark times'. As academic institutions become more neoliberal in terms of their policies and practices this impacts upon the spaces where women can collectivise:

> It's left activism in a very difficult position. I think it's harder to be an activist now, much harder. The places where women used to meet and the demonstrations and the discussions and the activities we did, I think it's hard for women to do that now, much harder. To me it feels like quite dark times. I don't think it's any easier for women and some things I think are much harder. Even though we've made some gains I don't think the space to make more gains is available.

Playing Out in Open Spaces

> Julia recounts a meeting with her faculty's dean where her academic expertise was not visible. This male academic had never until this point shown an interest in Julia and she had been working in the faculty for fourteen years. Executives like him were a dime a dozen. You need a club and balls to play the game he's playing. He was dressed in polo shirt and camel suit pants that screamed networking luncheons - *G*entlemen *O*nly, *L*adies *F*orbidden and he instructed Julia that: 'You must become known for something.' Not realising she was renowned in her field both nationally as well as internationally. The way he spoke to her was like she had absolutely no research profile whatsoever. He hadn't even read her work. He hadn't even bothered to Google her! Their meeting was an informal attempt to groom Julia for taking a management position within the faculty. When she did finally get an opportunity to tell him about her recent research he then proceeded to talk about his own work. It made her feel invisible.

Academia has historically been a man's world and yet while it can no longer be described as an antiquated ivory tower of patriarchal hegemony, neoliberalism has in many ways adopted and incorporated elements of hegemonic masculinity as a chosen means by which subjects accumulate capital. What Morley (2013) depicts as the 'rules of the game', the continual change and contradiction that lurks beneath the surface rationality of academic meritocracy, enables, as Fletcher narrates, the 'non-cunts to keep cunts in their place' (Fletcher [1991] 2002, p. 224). It also poses questions about the relentless misrecognition of women's capacities as leaders and knowledge producers. Moreover, in terms of university operations and governance, it continues to be a game played and refereed, by men, for men. A game, whereas Morley (2014) observes, the rules are constantly changing. Despite discourses of diversity, equity, merit, and blind peer-review, academia continues to be dominated by men and male voices (Lipton 2015; McGill 2013; Thornton 2013). When navigating the field of play Joy describes her feminist interdisciplinary approach as 'split'. She states:

> We know the rules of the game are that you do one thing, you plough that furrow repeatedly. So to plough across the furrows is a dangerous game, because they don't get interdisciplinary.

This splitting of the self that Joy describes is due in part to the fact that academic women are constantly assessing and mediating the encounters and spaces they are in. Joy continues:

> It's always an act of arbitration, because you can't—you could win a battle but lose a war…where acts of bullying have occurred and you're not there, what can you do to stop that? I think, actually, being able to say to people, well, look, you don't have to be there by yourself. You can take an advocate with you, you can take a union rep with you, but—and you need to tell people what's happened. So I think that then gets rid of one of the crucial things that I find crippling is—which is what I call UN peacekeeper force syndrome, where you watch it and you can't do a damn thing about it.

Speaking into the space where you or someone else has been silenced is crucial Joy argues, but it is important to recognise the various degrees to which we are heard in that space, what tactics we use and when we retreat. With mirth, Joy describes how to conceal and reveal feminist talk is part of the art of persuasion:

> I realised the power of [laughs] persuasion, let us say. I think that's always been my issue, I've had a sense that it's not a level playing field and it doesn't matter whether you are a woman, have a disability, are of a different ethnic group, whatever [others view], it really irritates me that there's not that level playing field. So I have a strong sense of looking at the marginalised and the disenfranchised and actually giving them a voice. So, as a historian, that was something that I could do, because I could actually say, well, I can actually look at this and ask questions.

Liz reflects on the complex decision-making process especially when faced with these questions:

In that moment of indecision, you find yourself in a 'stuck place' forever asking, 'should I speak? Should I stay silent? What happens if I do? What happens if I don't?' I think the stuck place actually becomes a place of agency, for enacting change and transformation—without being stuck we wouldn't even begin to question or to think otherwise because it would be too comfortable; and there is a danger in such complacency. What *really* happens then is you get better at reading the situation while also becoming stronger in your feminist standpoint. Reading the situation in this sense is not so much about fighting at all costs because of a deep seated frustration with being forced into silence; but rather, it's an awareness which grows and grows about the need to constantly look for those little spaces—stuck or otherwise—where you can flee to and know that someone's going to be there with a hot chocolate and a warm blanket saying come in, it's alright.

(In)decision

The silence sat heavily between Liz and Briony. Now was their moment to speak into this pause—in a chapter titled 'Speaking into the silence', surely they had some-thing salient to say about all of the some-things that others had said to them about speaking? The truth of it was that Liz and Briony felt out of breath, they felt 'their lovely mouths gagged with pollen, the wind knocked out of [them]' (Cixous 1976, p. 878) and they were tired of being in the trampled space and of being trampled on in Australian higher education. Their exhaustion manifested itself in that moment as a mixture of fatigue, frustration and furiousness. It was draining to always be monitoring your speech, watching your words, waiting for something dark and heavy to fall upon your head to squash the voice that spoke. It was annoying to speak when no-one wanted to listen, or worse, when words spoken were simply patted on the head that might have previously been squashed and praised for being those of a 'good girl'. It was becoming increasingly boring to have to say the same some-things over and over again, the echoes of the past in the present and finding themselves already spoken for in the future. Liz and Briony felt these some-things right down to their very bones, the flesh of such embodied epistemologies stretching tightly across the skeleton of their speaking-as-writing-as-thinking. The skin of their experience however spoke its own language—a language of persistence, a language of persuasion, a language which knew how to play on their own terms, a language which reverberated as more than one. 'Such is the strength of women', they heard Cixous (1976, p. 886) remind them, and they would 'get beyond...the one who that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word "silence", the one that, aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word "impossible" and writes it as "the end" ' (1976, p. 886). Indeed, Liz and Briony and the women who had spoken into silence and who had silently spoken on so many some-things, were not finished yet and they would remain forever on the way to making their 'staggering return' (Cixous 1976, p. 886).

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Leanne waited outside the office of her Head of Department. She sat in a little chair and her feet tapped on the floor as she nervously crossed and uncrossed her legs. Leanne was not quite sure why she had been summoned to see him but she had a hunch it might have something to do with the way she spoke at luncheon with the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor earlier in the week. The two male executives had asked Leanne and her colleagues to share their experiences of working in the department, and Leanne had taken them at their word. She remembered feeling scared to speak up but her teaching load was so horrendous she felt that someone outside of her department needed to know what it was really like as a foot soldier in a care-less university. The clock above her ticked loudly as she waited and with each passing second, Leanne felt more and more like a naughty school girl who had been asked to report to the Principal. The Head of Department abruptly opened the door, 'I'll see you now Leanne, he said. She sat down across the desk, her hands clasped on her lap. 'What did you want to see me about?' she asked. Then it began. 'I was very disappointed with your behaviour at the luncheon Leanne', he said. 'We don't speak like that here', he explained. 'You are never to speak like that again'. Leanne began to shake. She looked across at him as he paced around the room, preaching to her like a king about the rights and wrongs of her actions, and felt nauseous. It was the most patriarchal, misogynistic, anti-feminist moment she had ever experienced. On the outside Leanne remained calm, but on the inside she felt as though she just might not survive; her situation was unwinnable. She left his office afraid; very afraid.

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The women encircle the glass jar and in doing so excrete a black bile of foul smelling words; I am *just* a lecturer. It's *only* a small grant. I'm *not really* an expert. I just helped / assisted / supported. It's nothing. I am nothing. They fill the jar with their self-deprecating verses until they begin to feel lighter. Why do we hurt / hate ourselves so much? The women now dance around the jar chanting in a new voice as their old deprecatory language turns to gold. The women hadn't even made it a week and they had sixty dollars. It was a valuable lesson, the women said. In committing fifty cents to the cause every time they made an apologetic or self-effacing comment. The women would no longer play the supporting role in the lives of the male academics.

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Sage enjoys going to academic conferences. They are an integral part of academics' working lives. Conferences are a necessity for professional development, building networks across institutions, and for sharing in ideas and the production of knowledge (Bell and King 2010; Ford and Harding 2008, 2010; Henderson 2015). With all the talk of collegiality at conferences, Sage is shocked—although perhaps she shouldn't be—that men hardly ever say the word thank you at these events. Collegiality is not just about getting along with colleagues but rather it means understanding how to successfully 'get on' in the social life of the university and about understanding how routinised daily practices reproduce values and cultures of the institution and how these practices then feed into a system of valuation. Sage just cannot put away her feminist lens at times like these. She notices how uncommon it is for male academics to say to female academics, 'thank you for that paper.' In her observations of the 'body pedagogics' (Bell and King 2010) of the academic conference; that being, the way conference delegates acquire various skills and dispositions that allow them to demonstrate their proficiency as academics and members of a specific culture, Sage notices that 'no one hears her: the question of silence is in this moment not a question of not speaking but of not being heard' (Ahmed 2014, p. 155). It is not uncommon for a male academic to then make a comment, 'other men turning to him, congratulating him for being constructive' (Ahmed 2014, p. 155). When this happens, as it most invariably does, Sage might widen her face with cynicism, or she may catch another woman roll her eyes. Their gaze meets from across the room, their bodies registering willfulness in each other. In such moments, even if these two women have never met, there is a shared knowing. Through their bodies they speak in a feminist language. After the seminar, Sage and the women hover around the room waiting to speak to the presenter, to acknowledge the woman for her contribution, to say thank you for a great paper. It's a point of connection that also speaks 'I am here and I support you'.

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CHAPTER 5

A Final (In)decision: Talking Feminist

Abstract We conclude this book with further provocations about what it means to 'only talk feminist here' in contemporary Australian higher education that raise much broader methodological, epistemological, and ontological issues. This chapter emphasises why it is still so important to continue to talk feminist, examining the ways in which feminist academics talk back in their daily working lives and inspire a sense of collective solidarity in a highly competitive and individualistic neoliberal university.

> Saying 'no' doesn't come 'naturally' to Sage so when she is accosted in the corridor by a male colleague asking for her to show him how to add an attachment to an email, despite knowing she has to go to a meeting in five minutes, she kindly obliges to help. Just as she is about to re-route her steps from her office to his, Anne, a more senior colleague overhearing their conversation interjects. 'I can help you with that Brian', she says. 'You should have just come to me,' she adds. Sage is relieved and also shocked that such a polite altercation between professors would help her to resign from these frequent trips to Brian's office to help with PowerPoint formatting, or PDF conversions. For Sage, Anne's arrival formed a shared willful action.

As we bring this book to an end, we realise that coming to a conclusion was always already going to be difficult—perhaps, as Cixous (1994, p. 73) suggests, it is very possible that the crucial scene, such as an ending, had already been set up for us in a previous or as yet unknown story, outside

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us and yet so much is inside the rooms and spaces we occupy in higher education. In this moment of (in)decision, the door opens and we decide to walk inside, knowing that there are further provocations we would like to make about what it means to 'only talk feminist here' in contemporary Australian higher education, that raise broad and entangled methodological, epistemological, and ontological issues. In the last part of our discussion, we want to emphasise why it is still so important to continue to talk feminist, examine the ways in which feminist academics talk back in their daily working lives and inspire a sense of collective solidarity in a highly competitive and individualistic neoliberal university environment. 'You cannot do it on your own', Leanne points out. 'You tend to try as much as you can to limit your contact with men who look like cavemen; who act like cavemen. You can't avoid them but you can try'. In the final chapter of this book, we move towards highlighting the importance of methods of collective resistance, and for what it means to fight for feminist voices and spaces in the neoliberal university. As hooks points out, voice must be found before we can truely speak for ourselves, and so too do we look at the various ways feminist academics find their voices and talk back in their professional lives.

In writing this book, we have sought to bring to light the complexities around what it means to 'talk feminist' in the neoliberal university and to offer new ways of thinking about the relationship between feminism and neoliberalism in contemporary Australian higher education. As much as this book has been about reconceptualising voice and speech acts, the focus has also been on listening. Sharing the stories and experiences of Leanne, Joy, Julia, Ruby, Sage, Vera, and others has been purposeful in that their telling forges connections between women and creates spaces for women in academia and challenges the status quo of the neoliberal university. Tanya Fitzgerald argues that 'power lies in the collective force of women to agitate for change and their refusal to accept the status quo' (Fitzgerald 2014, p. 116), but more than this, we insist that to focus solely on women's capacities and responsibilities deflects the broader systemic issues—we must put that onus back onto our institutions. This book aimed to challenge the singularity of feminism and neoliberalism and demonstrate how they are entangled in our performativities as feminists and academics.

> Ruby sat quietly in her professional development session. As she sat and listened to the importance of being aware of unconscious gender bias in the university promotion process, the irony of the location she was in was not

> lost on her. She looked around the Senate Room and saw the faces of white men looking back at her from their gold-framed oil paintings, the white men who had served as the Vice-Chancellors. Ruby had dutifully attended this professional development session as part of her role on the Faculty local promotion and confirmations committee but she soon found herself becoming agitated and not quite content anymore to sit quietly. The discussion had turned to how important it was to consider gender in terms of 'relative to opportunity' and career profession, yet she knew from experience how often this was given lip service. She bravely raised her hand. 'I'm just wondering,' she began. 'How many academic papers is a baby worth then?' There was an immediate hush before the room erupted in raucous laughter.

The collision between public and private domains, societal expectations around gender norms, and the need for feminism is experienced most acutely, Julia observes 'when women become older, in particular when they have children', and she cites recent research on the subject:

> In particular when they have children that they suddenly become more interested in feminism again because those structures, once you have children even if you're both entirely committed to gender equity and you both have careers it's really phenomenal how those gender structures just really start to impose on your life.

Julia highlights that work-life balance 'is far too benign a term' to describe the ways we as individuals prioritise 'work' with 'lifestyle' because as she argues 'there's this constant tension' between an academic career and family, health, and pleasure.

Whose Response-*ability*?

Our interview participants spoke about the responsibility they felt as academics to speak up and speak out as feminists about sex and race discrimination to avoid particular colleagues and confrontations and retreat to 'safe' spaces. Responsibility rests on individuals as well as communities and so it is important to be wary of the ways neoliberal notions of responsibility ensnare us in our working lives making women and feminists responsible for the continued inequalities they experience. 'Talking feminist' is a becoming and performative process of 'dialling up or dialling down' our personal-as-political agendas. It is akin to being in a state of suspension, waiting with baited breath in a temporary space of uncertainty—a location which Lather (1998, p. 487) might call a 'praxis of stuck places' where doubt and not being so sure work as an attempt to ensure 'something other than the return of the same old'. Liz reflects,

> In that moment we're all assessing our response-*ability* [and asking ourselves], what is our ability to respond as feminists? In this moment, what is my game play? Am I going to offend in the sense of putting forward a feminist position or am I going to be on the defence and step backward? You make a calculated decision that, okay, this issue is too important for me not to say something about. And yet no matter how often it happens, the backhanded slap that follows for daring to speak is always an assault.

Daring to speak as a feminist sometimes feels like being given a backhanded slap from the will of the oppressor that is beating us into submission and compliance. Talking feminist then is at once an offensive and defensive performative response-ability and imperative. Responsibility is an obligation. It is a state of being responsible that is also conditional. Fleeing in order to fight, and fighting to be able to flee is part of that response-ability. These are strategies and positions that we find ourselves in on a daily basis. The capacity to speak feminist in the contemporary neoliberal university has become more threatening. Women may stay silent and find other mechanisms for creating change and promoting equity or go incognito, distancing themselves from a feminist identity. Despite all of the gains and changes that we might think in a neoliberal environment the capacity to speak feminist has become more dangerous. The practical constraints and the ways in which academic labour is gendered both constrain and enable feminist-academic-activist voices to be heard. We hear the impassioned words of Cixous when we consider the future of feminisms in academia:

> The new history is coming; it's not a dream, though it does extend beyond men's imagination, and for good reason. It's going to deprive them of their conceptual orthopedics, beginning with the deconstruction of their enticement machine. (Cixous 1976, p. 883)

In 'The laugh of the Medusa' Cixous is calling to our attention our own collusion in the language of phallogocentrism if we do not write our bodies, but more than this her writing forces us to confront the structures and institutions that position ourselves as complicit, and to laugh in the face of our own subjugation; to say no to our own capitulation. Julia reflects on her career as a feminist academic in the changing Australian higher education landscape:

> I haven't cut my identity in this institution. It's kind of quite multiple. I think that people don't necessarily expect me to do that actually. I think partly there are quite a few women at [my institution] in my area who are feminists and who are also piping up, right. So it's not something that's solely my responsibility.

The sight of the Medusa is neither terrifying nor suggestive of a lack of phallus. The beautiful, laughing Medusa is multiple. She stands to represent all those who shrug off the old lies, who dare to speak out. As hooks (1990) reminds us, language is a place of struggle. Our words are action and resistance and sometimes it can feel like a struggle. We internalise our feelings of failure, of guilt, and of inadequacy as much as we do our feelings of pleasure in the work that we do, of happiness, and of our desires. Our hearts sing out when we have an article accepted for publication, when a student arrives at a new way of thinking or receives a scholarship to further their study, or when we receive a promotion, and yet many of us hide these feelings away. Drawing on hooks' phrase 'talking back' we understand this to be a collaborative and relational act.

Pleasurable Talk

Talking feminist with other feminists, Cixous notes, 'we're stormy, and that which is ours breaks loose from us without any fear of debilitation… we never hold back our thoughts, our signs, our writing; and we're not afraid of lacking' (1976, p. 878). Julia feels very confident in relation to education matters and does not shy away from the successes in her teaching career. 'I get very high student evaluations. I've worked with brilliant tutors. So that's a space in which I feel very confident' and this 'empowers' Julia to 'speak out more':

> It's kind of amazing because I'll see in a big committee meeting heads will turn around and they'll look at me and they'll be nodding. That didn't used to happen to me. I don't know whether it's because I've changed my presentation. I think the university cares more about teaching now. I think there are more people higher up who have an interest in teaching. I think it's sort of over determined how these things happened. It's really amazing to sort of say - express my authentic, feeling like I'm expressing authentic important points; to have people I respect around the table look at me and nod and saying things like 'oh I just want to reinforce what Julia said' or 'I just want to build on what Julia said'.

Although Julia is cognisant that 'I also think it depends on who's chairing a meeting. I think a chair can make a big difference in how those things emerge'. Joy talks 'frank, because if you don't, they just walk into the same trap. I can be frank with female colleagues'. She feels that particularly with postgraduate students because 'you're often in a much more detailed discussion. It will be to do with literature related to their work. A lot of the kids who come to study are studying gender studies or feminist studies'. Joy describes it as her pedagogic responsibility to students to talk feminist and support feminist talk in others, particularly she observes, when you are the only visible and audible feminist in the department. Students notice how Joy is 'more open to alternate sorts of views and approaches' and this creates a connection between her and her students. Similarly Julia also finds time with research higher degree students and undergraduates to be an extremely rewarding part of her job as an academic:

> Not in the space of managing a course or anything but just conversations and that I find that incredibly sustaining, really sustaining. You feel like it's a meaningful encounter; that you can actually talk about ideas; that you're building a kind of productive relationship; that you're helping someone but they're also helping you; also different colleagues who I really admire, just spending a bit of time [with those around you].

She also cites her role in the publishing process as making an important contribution to future feminist voices:

> The fact that I am now on the editorial board of [a prominent feminist journal] which has also been a very important journal for me throughout my career; that's made me feel better about that. I feel like I'm back and really helping contribute to a feminist scholarship agenda.

Julia also reminds us that it is 'important to talk different versions of feminist', because in a post-feminist neoliberalist society:

> It's all too easy to forget the contributions that feminism has made to make this kind of place possible. I think for women of my generation for whom feminism was incredibly important just in getting us here. For younger women they need to hear that this stuff is still relevant because otherwise it becomes invisible. So then you end up with young women saying 'oh but we don't need feminism because we're all equal'. I think particularly in universities, I think that some young women feel like they don't need feminism and feel like the battle for gender equity has been won because

> they are in a space which is in some ways the most gender equitable they will ever experience.

For those of us speaking and teaching and learning in-to feminist spaces in higher education, perhaps one of the response-abilities we hold it is to make it possible for those feminists yet to come to understand where they are positioned in the sea of feminist waves, and to make it possible to have a conversation with the (ir)relevance of feminist movements for the ways in which their feminist voices may or may not be spoken and listened to.

> Joy walked out of her office and closed the door on the day. She had been multi-tasking from sun-up to sun-down to count and clean up the costs of working in a careless institution—students tossed by the wayside by careless lecturers, the collateral damage her report on *gender* in her School had brought to her and others like her, and the plea she had been asked to write to be released from teaching to take up a prestigious Fellowship in an overseas institution—had taken their toll. Joy was exhausted but she decided to walk down the stairs instead of taking the lift anyway. Soon her feet were pacing their own kind of rhythm on the lino covered steps as she descended outside. Joy began to hum, a song she had almost forgotten about, it was Kate Bush's 'Rubberband Girl'. The lyrics played about in her head, 'I'm a rubberband bouncing back to life, a rubberband bend the beat, if I could lean to give like a rubberband, I'd be back on my feet.' Listening to herself sing these words, Joy began to feel and see herself coming alive again. Damn it, they could try all they liked to hammer her right down into the ground with their carelessness but she was tough, in fact, Joy knew she had a disgustingly high level of resilience. Her flexibility meant she was quick to recover, could roll with the punches and had developed an awesome capacity to snap herself back into place ready to fight again. Joy truly was a rubberband girl.

Joy's resilience, her ability to bounce back might fall under what Dympna Devine, Bernie Grummell, and Kathleen Lynch (2011) call 'crafting the elastic self'. They posit a danger in this flexibility in that we stretch ourselves out of shape and out of place so much so that we may become unrecognisable to ourselves in an environment where we are measured against our ability to fit in. This is one of the intrinsic contradictions of being a feminist academic in a neoliberal institution. When we try to be careful we present feminism as a comfortable space when a 'praxis of stuck places' is where we should be. There is a need for more discomfort to be able to raise these problematic questions around the affective and embodied dimensions of speaking like a feminist. As Julia asserts:

> So it's just really important I think to keep those issues visible. If you look at a [Sandstone] university, as you very well know, Briony. You look around you, who are in positions of leadership? Who gets promoted first? Whose work is flaunted as brilliant? Yes women's work [is recognised] but it's certainly not equitable. There are still places I think at [my institution] that operate basically on a patriarchal basis. So it's really important to keep talking about these things.

Julia makes clear to us to remember that higher education is 'a very privileged space. It's a privileged space. It's a very, very particular space in which there's a kind of culture of gender equity'

A Final Movement Forward

This is a *bent* story. It's not neat and tidy. It's complex, contradictory, and contextual. It is also incomplete. As feminists and academics we are still 'talking feminist' and still meeting with feminist academics in our working lives even after the formal aspects of this project draw to a close. The challenges, confusions, concerns, and contradictions in relation to speaking-writing-thinking as feminists in higher education remain with us; and perhaps this is as it should be. They remind us that there is still work to be done for our feminist speaking voices to be heard. How then might we continue to do this work? How do we move forward? Is *forward* even the way we want to move, for what kinds of wards/words/worlds might trap and/or transform ourselves as feminist academics in that movement? Speaking-writing-thinking as feminist academics in the way that we have in this text may not be a straight way, or the right way. But we find some hope that the wrong way might just be the right way, as Ahmed might say. In concluding this book we want to do quite the opposite of what is expected of us. We want to resist ending and rather inspire the conversation to continue. This text, like so many others, is but a delicious fragment of all there is to be said about speaking and talking like a feminist in higher education in neoliberal times. Following Cixous, we insist however, that this text has a 'particular urgency, an individual force, a necessity' (1994, p. 231) to inspire a collective and willful transformation in our fellow academics. We hope, that like us, you/they/we feel spurred on by Cixous:

> Let nothing stop you: not man; not the imbecilic capitalist machinery, in which publishing houses are the crafty, obsequious relayers of imperatives handed down by an economy that works against us and off our backs; and

not *yourself* (sic). Smug-faced readers, managing editors, and big bosses don't like the true texts of women—female-sexed texts. That kind scares them. I write woman: woman must write woman. (Cixous 1976, p. 877)

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At 10:30am approximately 4,000 women, over half of all university staff marched out of their offices in mass exodus. It was a gendered work stoppage caused by the mass refusal of female workers, both academic and professional on university campus. The strike destabilised the rule of order. All who remained in their buildings were those who identified with the old patriarchal and neoliberal masculine establishment. Old man academic wasn't able to open his email attachments and there wasn't a woman in sight to ask for help. Executives sat in committee meetings wondering where the coffee and biscuits were. Offices were empty and doors locked so that those who remained couldn't even get to Maureen's desk to use her stapler while the women were all gone. 'Who will do my credit card reconciliation?' one male professor said to his colleague. Security officers were in a panic, unsure of how to control the crowd spilling out of lecture theatres and classrooms, libraries, labs, and open-plan offices, but the sheer volume of people forming in the lacuna was impossible to control. At the time of the protest, women in academia still did not enjoy many of the same freedoms and rights as their male colleagues. Despite the passage of the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Act and the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace (EOWW) Act (2012) and Affirmative Action (AA) and the introduction of Equity and Diversity Week across campuses, women continued to be subjugated by the neoliberal patriarchy of the Westernised university. The gathering was the largest of its kind. The women had sought permission to protest but were refused by the university administration. Despite the setback, the women congregated on the manicured lawn of the central campus courtyard. Thousands of politically and satirically charged signs and a chorus of willful voices filled the space. Their bodies and their words could not be contained. The women knew that if all the female staff went on strike literally nothing would get done. The women dressed in grey business suits and white wigs. The women laughed at themselves in such ill-fitting attire and the absurdity that they might somehow fit in. Some of the women staged silent vigils, while others ran impromptu workshops listing all the pejorative comments the women had received throughout their careers at the university writing them onto a large strip of canvas. Phrases like '... but you are just better at taking the minutes than I am' and 'but students always respond better when you tell them they've failed *my* course'. They set ablaze these words; they 'set fire to the old hypocrisies' (Woolf [1938]

1993). It was in a language that, in this moment, they decided not to speak in nor respond to. They only spoke feminist here.

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"Academic men explain things to me" (http://mansplained.tumblr.com/)

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