Becoming Feminist

Narratives and Memories

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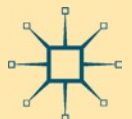
Citizenship, Gender and Diversity

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*For my grandparents Gwladys and Humphrey Cook and
my parents Jenny and Rob Guest*

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Introduction

> I can remember thinking in the early 1970s, when I was writing *Women, Resistance and Revolution*, that if you were part of history you could write a full account. In retrospect this appears naïve. For, however much material you collect and read, you are going to select. In ordering chaos to create shape and structure, we inevitably ignore and exclude. To remember is an advantage because it gives an understanding of the context in which ideas and actions developed. But memory can also play tricks with perspective, because you are distanced from some lines of argument and embroiled still in others. (Rowbotham 1989: xi–xii)

Sheila Rowbotham's reflections on writing *Women, Resistance and Revolution* remind us of how historical events are retold in the form of incomplete and particular narratives. These narratives are always shaped through capricious and specific personal and collective memories. The personal and political entanglements of the teller offer different perspectives of an event or period, as they bring specific details into view to a greater or lesser extent. Whilst multiple threads form the stories told about feminism and its histories, attempts to trace and gather these threads have all too often, and perhaps unsurprisingly, offered overarch-

ing and reductive accounts that risk the erasure and invalidation of the very events they attempt to represent.

The very familiar frameworks for discussing feminist histories in terms of waves or generations, and the linear, progressive temporalities upon which they are often founded, have been subject to much critical attention. Numerous thinkers remind us that these well-worn accounts often struggle to express the multitude of feminist thought and activity, or to accommodate diversity and differences, as they find the range of feminist thought, experience and relationships difficult to convey (e.g. Hemmings 2005, 2011; Roof 1997). Lynne Segal (1999) has noted that dominant accounts of feminism and its histories often offer 'sobering examples of how the past is read through the concerns of the present: invalidating earlier meanings and projects as well as erasing their heterogeneity' (1999:11). Such accounts are saturated with the difficulties of attending to feminism's diversities and accounting for its actors' various personal and political investments. Holding on to the specificity and heterogeneity of the stories from which a picture of feminism and its histories are woven, whilst being able to convey something of the interconnection and convergence of these accounts, is one of the challenges of writing feminist history that both Rowbotham and Segal discuss.

It is these intricate, specific, personal and political moments in women's narratives and memories of becoming feminist that I am concerned with in this book. I take feminist women's stories as a starting point for understanding the complexity of their investments in feminism and the various accounts of its pasts, presents and futures. I am not attempting to remap feminist histories to offer an alternative yet equally static account. Neither do I claim to offer a comprehensive picture of the fast-moving and ever-changing landscape of contemporary feminist theory, politics and activism. This is something others have done in recent years in relation to Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa (e.g. Hernández Castillo 2010; Nyhagen Predelli and Halsaa 2012; Redfern and Aune 2010; Roces and Edwards 2010). Rather, this book looks to the voices of some UK-based feminist women to understand how a feminist political consciousness is formed, felt, experienced and remembered.

These women, aged between 20 and 35, are unlikely to have been independently active in the UK-based feminist movements of the 1970s and

1980s. I therefore also ask how the dominant narratives generated about recent feminist histories are taken up, negotiated, accepted, resisted or ignored in these personal accounts. Considering the function and inter-relation of personal and collective narratives of feminism, this work goes some way to understanding the ways in which dominant narratives are (re)produced and sustained.

This book emerges amidst a wealth of fascinating and important work that rethinks and challenges how we think, write and speak about femi-nism, its histories and temporalities (Browne 2014; E. Freeman 2010; Hesford 2013; Hemmings 2005, 2011; McBean 2015; Wiegman 2000, 2004; Withers 2014, 2015), and it will be evident in the following chapter that the work of Victoria Hesford, Clare Hemmings and Robyn Wiegman in particular has been influential on my thinking. I offer a distinct contri-bution to these conversations in my return to women's voices. The stories we tell about our lives are fundamental to the processes of identity for-mation and negotiation. These stories are never formed in a vacuum but interwoven with numerous accounts that we adopt, resist and rework as part of the process of making sense of our place in the world. It is through the narratives and memories shared by the women I spoke to that I seek to trouble and disrupt overarching narratives by looking at the diversity and differences, as well as points of continuity and convergence, amongst them. I therefore take women's stories as my starting point for under-standing how they develop a feminist consciousness. Although this might be considered a problematic approach that requires the negotiation of the tension between the feminist commitment to ensuring women's voices are heard and the critique of the privileging of certain voices (Hesford 2013; Wiegman 2000), I believe that that personal narratives are crucial to understanding the formation and articulation of identities.

I am drawing therefore on a narrative tradition that has been fore-grounded in much feminist work as a means of contesting and disrupting accepted historical 'knowledge' (Cosslett et al. 2002) and that contributed to the destabilisation of and departure from a realist tradition (Riessman 2008). This book is a continuation of this narrative work and, in particular, a defence of its usefulness for thinking about feminism and its histories in the face of important critique (e.g. Hesford 2013; Wiegman 2000). In par-ticular, I see narrative theory and methodology and the related attention

given to memory as offering a means of understanding how people make sense of and order the different experiences, feelings and relationships. Barbara Misztal (2003) places a concern with memory at the centre of sociological enquiry when she says:

> [I]f the role of sociology is to investigate the different ways in which humans give meaning to the world […], and if memory is crucial to our ability to make sense of our present circumstances, researching collective memory should be one of its most important tasks.' (2003:1, cited in Smart 2007:38).

The processes of narrative and memory are formative of our experience of the present. Methodologies that attend to these processes offer ways of exploring how we make sense of the world and so enable us to consider the various and complex ways in which feminism and its histories are received and processed. This challenges any tendency to depend upon dominant and homogenising accounts when talking about feminism.

My methodological choices were guided by the conviction that narrative and memory are central to human experience and that, in highly varied and complex ways, these processes act as a means of making sense of the world and our place in it. Multiple methodological approaches that attend to this ontological position have been explored and developed over recent decades (as discussed by Elliott 2005; Radstone 2000, 2008; Radstone and Schwarz 2010; Riessman 1993, 2008). Each places value on listening to the accounts individuals give about their lives as a valid means of sociological inquiry, taking this seriously as a means of exploring the relationship between the personal and social. The cases I discuss in the following chapters were selected firstly from a number gathered via narrative interviews[1] (Wengraf 2001) that incorporated a discussion

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[1] The interviewing technique was broadly based on the Biographical Narrative Interviewing Method (BNIM) (Wengraf 2001). The BNIM views narrative expression as both a manifestation of conscious concerns and societal, cultural and individual processes. It provides a means of exploring both psychodynamics and sociodynamics and so is particularly suited to psychosocial research and its concern with understanding the relationship between the personal and social at work in individual narratives. Tom Wengraf advises that it is possible to adopt the BNIM interviewing technique without utilising its interpretive method. In order to incorporate visual methods into the research, which I saw as crucial because of the photograph's particular ability to evoke and transmit memories, this is the approach I adopted.

of photographs selected by the women themselves, and secondly, a memory-work group (Haug et al. 1987).

The interviews were deliberately loosely structured, with each of the women given ample opportunity to talk about any experiences, events, people or places that were important to their story of becoming feminist. To begin, they were asked simply to tell their story. Following this, they shared and discussed the images they brought to the interview. These included personal photographs and public images, and for some of the women, books, jewellery and other objects. Finally, I asked some further questions based on notes taken during the interview up until that point to encourage expansion upon the topic.

Photographs have particular significance to narrative, memory and identity, and many thinkers have explored the ways in which they shape, reproduce and conflict with dominant narratives and mythologies (Finch 2007; Hirsch 1997; Kuhn 2002; Spence and Holland 1991). For this reason, researchers across disciplines are increasingly using visual methodologies to explore issues of memory and identity (Del Busso 2011; Gillies et al. 2004; Mannay 2015; Reavey 2012; Silver and Reavey 2010; Warr et al. forthcoming). The photograph for Marianne Hirsch (1997) and Jo Spence and Patricia Holland (1991) offers the opportunity to explore the juncture between the personal and social, recognising that even these very intimate possessions are never fully personal. As Spence and Holland write:

> Family photography can operate at this junction between personal memory and social history, between public myth and personal unconscious. Our memory is never fully 'ours', nor are the pictures ever unmediated representations of our past (1991:13–14).

Photographs form part of socially and culturally inscribed processes of collective remembering. One example of this comes from the work of Janet Finch (2007), who argues that photographs operate as a way of 'doing family', or performing actions that are socially and culturally understood as constituting family practice. Taking and keeping family photographs is a means of displaying family at a personal and social level. The personally significant photograph of a child's birthday party,

for example, is given meaning through repetition and social endorsement and so understood on both a personal and collective level.

It is Annette Kuhn's (2002) work that has been particularly influential on my inclusion and interpretation of the photographs in the research. Kuhn views the photograph, and its production, organisation and display, as a form of narrative expression. She argues that photographs and our readings of them tell personal, social and cultural stories. The organisation of photographs reveals how we might wish to reorder, retell or repair the past in the present, and so they negotiate the relationship between each. The incorporation of the photograph into social research, therefore, acknowledges its significance to the construction of identity and attends to the multiple ways in which narratives and memories are formed and expressed.

In her guidelines for analysing photographs (Appendix 4), Kuhn asks the viewer to consider the feelings they associate with the image and to explore its content, context, means of production and audience. Kuhn is concerned with the relationship between personal and social meanings of the image, and this process explores the link between them. The generation of memories during the exercise is seen as central to the interpretive work:

> Memories and associations generated in the course of this exercise can stand on their own as discoveries, or may feed into reflections, interpretive or analytical phases of memory-work. They also help the practitioner move beyond a purely personal response towards a consideration of the photograph's cultural and historical embeddedness, its broader meanings, and – very importantly – the responses that it generates (Kuhn 2002:8–9).

Considering the importance of the collective to the history of feminist organising and the theoretical focus on the collective nature narrative and memory, it felt important to explore feminist identities using a group method. Memory-work—a method devised by Frigga Haug et al. (1987)—has been used extensively to explore memory, emotion and identity (Crawford et al. 1992; McGrath et al. 2008). It was developed with explicitly feminist concerns, borne out of a critique of mainstream methodologies that failed to attend to the importance of experience.

Memory-work requires participants to share and collectively analyse memories written in response to a trigger word. For this research, four women wrote memories of 'becoming feminist'. The memories are written and analysed following guidelines outlined by Haug et al. (1987) (Appendices 3 and 4), which suggest memories are written in third person and include as much detail as possible, without importing interpretation, explanation or biography. The memory-work group then follows a structured analysis, during which each member offers opinions on the memory and considers the similarities and differences, clichés, generalisations, contradictions and metaphors across the memories. They then offer explanations for the social meanings of the memory's topic. Finally the group discusses the silences in the memories. Here the focus is on what the group might expect the memory to include, but that remains absent.

Participants

I am concerned with how women who were not active in the so-called second-wave talk about becoming feminist. Therefore, the women I spoke to were aged between 20 and 35 (further details and short biographies of the interviewees can be found in Appendices 1 and 2). They were recruited online via social media, blogs and email lists. Twenty-five women were interviewed, and efforts were made to ensure that they were representative of the group of women who had expressed an interest in being interviewed in terms of self-defined ethnicity, sexuality, socio-economic status and educational background. The memory-work group was self-selecting as only five people volunteered to take part, with four able to meet on the required date; further details are given in Chap. 6.

The majority of the women I interviewed were 25 to 30 years old and identified as middle class (18), white (18) and heterosexual (16). All were university educated, although to varying levels. Although the sample is broadly representative of the women who volunteered to participate across all categories, this bias may suggest that the Internet-based recruitment strategy, or the focus of the research on women who name themselves 'feminist', may have excluded some women. That all the volunteers and eventual participants were educated to at least undergraduate level also

strongly suggests that women who did not enter higher education were either overlooked during the recruitment stage or excluded by the topic. In contrast, the bias towards heterosexuality appears less stark when it is observed that 3 of the 16 heterosexual women interviewed describe their sexuality in terms that challenge heterosexual/non-heterosexual binaries ('open-minded heterosexual', 'queer heterosexual' and 'largely straight'). All the women I interviewed were living in Britain, whilst most had been born and grown up in Britain, five of the women had moved to Britain as a young adult. So whilst this research has an anglophone focus by speaking to women living in Britain, the women's backgrounds and feminist influences are far more diverse and wide-ranging.

Conclusions

Across the following chapters, I explore the narratives of a number of the women I interviewed and the four women who took part in the memory-work group. In the process of looking across the interviews, the individual women form a sort of collective, with points of friction and familiarity emerging across the group. To attend to my concern with narrative, memory and the details of lived experience, I discuss these through individual stories that mobilise key themes from across the interviews. Each of the women I discuss here are, in some way, negotiating idea of generations and inheritance, engaging with different moments in feminism's pasts and presents. Each illustrates the emotional dimensions and challenges of becoming feminist and the various intersections from which their experiences are formed.

It is important to state that using one story to look at a particular aspect of becoming feminist does not define that story or instate clear boundaries around it. This illustrates one of the key themes of this book, that in looking to the particular, the patterns and connections between feminist stories are drawn out, without homogenising the diversity and differences between them. It is because of my concern with the particular that I decided to discuss this research through case studies, rather than presenting examples from across the interviews to explore key themes. My use of extended quotations from my participants is deliberate and accords with

this position. I want us to become immersed in these women's stories to fully appreciate the significance and value of their intricacies and particularities to the task of diversifying dominant narratives of feminism, its subjects and histories.

In the following chapter, I consider some of the conversations around the articulation of feminist histories in terms of generations and waves. I discuss the value of looking to narrative and memories as a means of understanding identities and questioning overarching accounts of feminist histories. In Chap. 3, we meet Rebecca, whose story of becoming feminist invokes the sounds, sights and politics of Britain in the early 1980s and in particular her memories of the 1984–1985 UK miners' strikes. Through Rebecca's case, I ask how familial and, in particular, maternal identifications are woven through women's narratives of feminism. I argue that, when explored through the complexity of personal stories, the generational narrative is more complex than that it might at first appear. In Chap. 4, Aaliyah's story of her African-Swedish heritage demonstrates how feminism offers her one means of negotiating the tensions and contradictions she experienced as a black Muslim girl and young woman growing up in Sweden. Aaliyah's story sits in conversation and contrast with Jenny. Jenny grew up in the UK and was encouraged to engage with feminist ideas by her mother. The tension in Jenny's account lies in the promise and hope she invested in feminism as a child and the disappointment she experienced as an adult when this was not realised. Chapter 5 uses the stories of a number of women, most prominently Richa, Ruby and Beth. It is through Richa's experience of living across continents, Ruby's emotional attachment to the Greenham women's peace camp and Beth's evocative photographs of feminist protest that I trace the deeply felt and emotive experience of becoming feminist. Each of these women offers ways of resisting the demarcation of emotion as internal and private and illustrates how it is an entirely social entity. In Chap. 6, I turn to the memory-work group and in particular the processes through which the groups form a sense of feminist belonging. Their discussion demonstrates how the boundaries of feminism and the feminist subject are drawn when the feminism is felt to be under threat. This becomes evident through their discussion of arguing. It is interesting to note that even in this chapter exploring the

group data, it is the story of one of the group's members—Alexandra—
that comes to the fore. This focus on an individual perhaps reflects the
challenges of fully representing feminist networks. In Chap. 6, I draw my
conclusions and consider some aspects of the global and British political
landscape of 2011, the year in which the interviews and memory-work
group took place. I then reflect on the idea of research as a story-telling
practice (Lewis 2011), considering the moments across the interviews
and memory-work group where my own feminist story converged with
the women's. I conclude then with a reflection on the multiple stories
that are told through this work and how this can contribute to an under-
standing of the many diverse and yet often strangely familiar ways in
which women become feminist.

2

Narratives and Memories of Feminism

The retelling of feminism's story in both the UK and USA often follows a path from simplicity to complexity (Hemmings 2011; Hesford 2013). It is a trajectory that limits the possibilities for certain stories of the movement to be told or heard. Consequently, certain subjects appear out of place and time within particular narratives (Hemmings 2011; E. Freeman 2010; Wiegman 2000). The 'three waves' of feminism and the articulation of feminist histories in generational, inheritance and familial terms are familiar and recurring metaphors in this progressive account of Western feminist history. Critics have observed that the language of waves and generations abound in both popular and academic retellings of feminist histories and the articulation of relationships between feminists (e.g. Hemmings 2011; Roof 1997). They moreover signal the significance of story-telling and history-making in articulations of feminism and, to differing extents, form significant reference points for the women involved in this research. They therefore require rehearsing from the outset. I begin with the debates around the wave metaphor that form part of the feminist landscape towards the close of the twentieth century, the period during which the women whose stories I discuss in this book were beginning to engage with feminist ideas.

Feminist Waves

Astrid Henry has stated that '[f]rom the vantage point of late-twentieth-century feminism, it is almost impossible even to think about feminism's history without describing its ebbs and flows in terms of waves, so entrenched has this metaphor become within feminist discourse' (2004:58). Henry points to the US feminist writings of the very late 1960s and early 1970s as marking the emergence the 'wave' terminology, something Olive Banks (1981) also observed in a British context. Prior to this period, Henry suggests that the leftist movements of the 1960s did not conceive of earlier periods of feminism as predecessors to their own activity. It was later writings that began to speak of early twentieth-century feminist activists as historical and political forerunners. Certainly, the wave terminology has sustained within a UK and US context since its appearance during this period, although not without interrogation and criticism from both academic and activist voices.

Using the writings of Shulamith Firestone (1970) and Germaine Greer (1970) as exemplars, Henry teases out the varied usages of the wave metaphor, highlighting its diversity and contradictions. She notes Firestone's emphasis on a continued and ongoing fight for women's rights, describing the 'second wave' of 'the most important revolution in history' (1970: 15, cited in Henry 2004: 58). In contrast, Greer's use of the term describes a new and refreshed 'wave', able and willing to call for revolution. In *The Female Eunuch,* she characterises the first and second waves as follows:

> The old suffragettes, who served their prison term and lived on through the years of gradual admission of women in professions which they declined to follow, into parliamentary freedoms which they declined to exercise…now see their spirit revive in younger women with a new and vital cast (Greer 1970: 11, cited in Henry 2004:59).

Firestone and Greer respectively stress continuity and overhaul. Henry suggests that the wave metaphor creates both a sense of continuity and connection to a feminist history, offering legitimisation and validation, whilst also positioning preceding waves as the forerunners of a 'new' movement.

The application of the wave metaphor by so-called third-wave feminism is similarly wide-ranging. Writing during the period of much debate around it usage—the late 1990s—Catherine Orr (1997) observed the term was first used in the late 1980s in an unpublished anthology entitled 'The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism'. As the title suggests, the volume was concerned questions of race and racism, rather than age or generation with which third-wave politics became more readily associated during the late 1990s. This misremembered origin story is highlighted by Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake (1997) who argue that it was a concern with race during the 1980s and early 1990s, rather than with age or generation, from which the language of the third wave emerged. They observe that it was the writings of feminist women of colour that initially had the most influence over the shaping of the character of the third wave, with its emphasis on contradiction and contestations (e.g. Moraga and Anzuldúa 1981; hooks 1981, 1984; and Lorde 1984).

The origin of the term 'third wave' is more readily attributed to Rebecca Walker, following her 1992 article 'Becoming the Third Wave', published in Ms. magazine in the same year she co-founded US activist network 'The Third Wave Fund'. Like writers before her, Walker does draw attention to the intersection between race and gender in this short article and does not stress overhaul of one wave by another. However, her later use of the wave metaphor does situate the 'new' wave as an improvement upon the past, drawing lines between the 'old' and 'new' (Walker 1995). In this later work, Walker not only depicts second-wave feminism as one-dimensional and unified, but also as restrictive. She writes, 'to be a feminist in the way that we have seen or understood feminism is to conform to an identity and way of living that doesn't allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories' (1995: xxxii–xxxiii). Walker categorises second-wave feminism as a movement that enforced binary understandings of identity, appearing to claim that multiple and complex identities are the specific experience of the third-wave generation.

Differing social and political conditions will always give rise to new sets of challenges and questions for different generations (in the variety of ways that 'generation' might be defined [Corsten 1999]). However, Greer (1970) and Walker's (1992, 1995) use of the wave metaphor had the effect of homogenising feminist generations, depicting each 'wave'

as representative of a single set of values and politics where the latter improves upon the former. These writers use the metaphor to control and construct the character of their own and previous feminisms, often in ways that ignore the variety both within and across generations. They also deployed the metaphor in ways that fail to account for overlapping generations, for whilst previous waves are used to describe past moments in feminist history, it is certainly not the case that actors in that moment are also past. So-called second-wave feminists are very much present in the pictures of contemporary feminism.

In her analysis of a number of third-wave anthologies during the late 1990s, Deborah Siegel (1997) suggested that the 'historiographic dilemmas' (61) that arise from the application of the wave metaphor evidence the tension it evokes between a linear, progressive trajectory and the foundation of many third-wave concerns in the practice of earlier feminisms. Consequently, the metaphor risks obscuring the connections that it has the potential to describe. Ironically, articulating feminist histories through the wave metaphor risks stalling the wave's movement. Gillian Howie and Ashley Tauchert have similarly argued that 'to perceive a wave at all, we artificially arrest the movement by which it is constituted and separate out *one* of a *myriad* manifestations of that movement' (2004:46). They claim that the wave metaphor, alongside the language of generation, renders disagreement as the product of difference between generations, enabling feminists to disregard rather than engage with the points at which tension and conflict arise.

It is this application of the metaphor of which Nancy Hewitt (2010) is also critical, arguing that 'the script of feminist history—that each wave overwhelms and exceeds its predecessor—lends itself all too easily to whiggish interpretations of ever more radical, all-encompassing, and ideologically sophisticated movements' (Hewitt 2010:5). For Hewitt, this 'script' has the effect of isolating particular periods of activity from one another, of homogenising the history of women's movements and of ignoring multiplicity and diversity. It also maps feminist histories onto a narrative of temporal progression in which each wave builds upon, develops and ultimately exceeds the previous. Hewitt advocates the notion of 'radio waves' for capturing the sense of 'everyone talking at once—and remind us that feminist ideas are "in the air" even when people are not

actively listening' (2010:8). This addresses one of the problems with the wave metaphor—that it remembers the history of feminism as periods of activity followed by periods of inactivity. The depiction of feminist ideas as 'radio waves' can capture the different ways in which feminism is active and present across time, even if given more attention or made more visible during different periods.

In contrast to Hewitt, some have argued that the wave metaphor does have the potential to describe feminism as being in a state of continuous movement and connection through time, with swells of visible activity. This is something Cathryn Bailey (1997) emphasised in earlier discussions, arguing that the metaphor could encompass continuities as well as discontinuities and, rather than instil divisions or conflict, can foster intergenerational dialogue. Despite offering a more supportive account of the metaphor, Bailey agrees that the ways in which it has been utilised in discussions attempting to define the character of the third wave means that it has had an altogether different effect.

Jonathan Dean (2009) has charted the usage of 'third wave' in both US and UK contexts and argues that it cannot be considered a singular, discreet entity, but is a signifier adopted and utilised by feminist academics and activists in numerous ways. It has been deployed, as many of its critics contend, to denote a specific generational cohort set in combative opposition to the second wave, but has also signified a call for openness and diversity within feminism through an engagement with post-colonial and post-structuralist theories (although this remains a problematic position, akin to Clare Hemmings' identification of the 'progress narrative' [2005, 2011] whereby feminist thought becomes more 'sophisticated' across time). Dean argues that whilst the wave metaphor could inject openness into the discussion, it has become subsumed by the generational paradigm during the last 10 to 15 years and consequently contributes to reinscribing the 'hegemony of a specifically Anglo-American reading of feminist history' (2009:348). Dean calls for a more open debate and recognition of the term's multiple meanings and usage in contemporary feminist discourse.

Howie (2010) observes that whilst some thinkers offer defined age brackets for the third-wave feminist, others more usefully situate the third wave in a specific social and political context. It is a context 'articulated in terms of new technologies, global capitalism, multiple models

of sexuality, changing national demographics and economic decline' (2010:1), many of the changes often characterised as post-modernity. Howie's approach moves beyond a sole focus on defined and static generations demarcated by age to a consideration of the social, political and historical contexts through which these identities are formed. In emphasising the distinctive social conditions that contribute to the formation of third-wave identities, a more nuanced understanding of the social and political context emerges. Given its somewhat ambiguous temporality and contested content, the third wave has thus been heavily critiqued over the past two decades, and it has been argued that attention should be paid to the contestations, challenges and contradictions in its usage (Bailey 1997; Dean 2009; Howie and Tauchert 2004; Shapiro Sanders 2004). Nevertheless, it has also been used widely to describe a moment in feminist theory and practice that emerges from and responds to the prior contestations of feminist waves. Regardless of the exploration of the third wave as complex, fluid and nuanced, the wave metaphor continues to be critiqued for providing a short-hand, identifiable reference to distinct periods of feminist activity and, in doing so, curtailing and homogenising feminist histories.

Interestingly, although it has been the focus of much critique within academic feminist discussion, the wave metaphor did not have considerable purchase for the women I spoke to. None of the women labelled their feminisms 'third-wave' (or indeed, anything other than 'feminism'). If the wave metaphor was used to mark a particular moment in time, it was infrequent and with reluctance, hesitation or dismissal. So, despite a preoccupation with its critique in academic feminist discussion, the wave metaphor did not appear to offer the women I spoke to an adequate means of articulating their feminist identities. This is in contrast to the frequent use of the language of generations or inheritance, across the interviews at least, which perhaps offers a claim to a more concrete and naturalised identity. In contrast, the wave metaphor, with all its contestations and ambiguities, may offer less promise to solidify what is at times an identity that can be difficult to secure and articulate, or one that is frequently experienced as under attack.

Feminist Generations

Generational, inheritance and familial narratives have also come to dominate the discussion of Western feminist histories. These narratives are of course often bound up with and articulated through the wave metaphor. Some usages of 'third wave', when subsumed under a generational discourse, not only define it in terms of a political generation distinct from the second wave, but frequently in opposition to it (Bailey 1997). It is through this account of opposition that the trope of feminist mother/daughter conflict emerges, which has, argue Henry (2004) and Howie (2010), become overdetermined in contemporary feminism. Howie writes that the focus on the maternal establishes 'psychodrama as the condition of the feminist historical narrative' (Howie 2010:3), effectively establishing the political identity of one generation through the negation of another. This 'psychodrama' is strikingly apparent in discussions around the development and positioning of the 'third-wave' in the late 1990s and early 2000s—the period during which many of the women I interviewed were beginning to engage more explicitly with feminist ideas.

One particular way in which this opposition is achieved is through the reinforcement of the image of the second-wave feminist as 'unfeminine', humourless and dogmatically policing sexuality and morality. This is a familiar depiction of the second-wave feminist. The figure operates as a spectre that haunts narratives of feminist history and is an organising feature of women's responses to it (Hesford 2005, 2013; Scharff 2013). The threat that feminism is seen to pose to femininity and heteronormativity is one of the barriers to adopting a feminist identity that Christina Scharff (2013) observed in the British and German women she interviewed. This stereotype is part of a generalised and sweeping history of Western feminism, at least in the USA, always very influential in the UK and further afield. This particular method of remembering the women's movement and its impact reduces political agency to clichéd and easily read stereotypes to produce an easily digestible history of feminism (Henry 2004; Aikau et al. 2007). These generational mother/daughter stereotypes are cemented by and reinforce the depiction of second-wave feminism as homogeneous, lacking sophistication, naively optimistic and

focused on equality, and of third-wave feminism as preoccupied with language, deconstruction, individualism and difference.

Segal (2013a) argues that sustained attention should be given to the particularities of economic and other social and cultural shifts impacting upon intergenerational relationships and that the use of generational and familial metaphors is limited when they are deployed without doing so. Writing with reference to the American context, Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake (2004) situate the conflict narrative within some of the particular economic consequences of globalisation that have shaped the experiences of people born post-1970. They propose that the experience of relative equality alongside downward economic mobility is likely to foster solidarity within generations, rather than along gender lines.

The prevalence of the broader generational or inheritance narratives in the retelling of feminist histories may reflect the more general dominance of such narratives as a means of thinking about relationships between age groups and of plotting groups and individuals across historical time. Jane Pilcher (1994) has observed how widely the generational trope is used within popular culture, where phrases such as 'my generation', 'the sixties generation' or 'the generation gap' are commonplace. These generational demarcations may be prevalent in post-war Britain, where the inception of youth culture marked generational divides in particularly stark terms (Clarke et al. 2006). It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that the language of generation is used to describe feminism across time. Similarly, the maternal and familial expression of the narrative may reflect a more general reliance on the language of kinship ties, for example, referring to mother and father figures or surrogate daughters and sons when describing non-familial relationship between generations.

The desire to forge connections and dialogue between generations through the maternal metaphor could offer opportunities to confront a broader cultural legacy of disdain for motherhood by offering the opportunity both to forge positive generational ties and to value older women (Segal 2013a). However, generational language can restrict the possibilities of positive and productive intergenerational relationships when the impact of one generation upon another is characterised primarily by negativity and conflict (Segal 2013a). Whilst these relationships of course contain complexities and difficulties—neither the women's movement

nor the responses to it were ever unified at any of its stages (Segal 1999, 2007, 2013a)—mother/daughter retellings often fail to comprehensively explore these diverse and multiple trajectories. The generational shifts and nuances, which are always internally divided, ambiguous and contradictory, can therefore be hard to encompass within these familial narratives.

Generational narratives are not only deployed to convey intergenerational conflict. Much like some usages of the wave metaphor (indeed, often articulated through this metaphor), notions of generation and inheritance are used to highlight the continuity of feminism across time. Jennifer Eisenhauer has suggested that this concern with the feminist future is evident in a third-wave feminist investment in the figure of the girl as one that will carry feminism forward into the future (Eisenhauer 2004). Eisenhauer argues that within feminist discourse, the girl has come to represent a place from which women emerge and so one that needs to be protected in order to ensure feminism's future. The girl as a future-orientated figure imbued with hope, alongside the description of feminism as a process of maturation and awakening, is bound up with the generational narrative that denotes an unfolding of feminism across time. Eisenhauer critiques the notion that, via this narrative, the second wave is viewed as reproducing itself in the third and that the feminist 'legacy' is continued through this reproduction. The wave metaphor is utilised to emphasise the generational and reproductive replication of feminist subjects and knowledge across time, leaving little room for dissent or diversity.

Lee Edelman (2004) has critiqued the pervasiveness of the political investment in the child as a figure of futurity. Edelman calls for a queer rejection of 'reproductive futurism' that resists any orientation towards a 'better' future. Unlike Edelman's rejection of the child, Eisenhauer does not wish to leave behind the girl in feminist politics, but hopes for her transformation into a 'young feminist'. This would mark a shift, she argues, away from a narrative of the replication of the feminist subject across time, to the construction of the 'young feminist' as site of contestation. The 'young feminist' can resist the 'definition of feminism as the growing up and awakening of women' (2004:82). Eisenhauer challenges both the generational language of feminist histories and the wave metaphor for foreclosing the 'critical potential of a contradictory, multiple, and layered understanding of feminisms' subjects' (2004:82).

Robyn Wiegman (2000) similarly discusses the prevalence of generational narratives within US academic feminist discourse. She suggests that such narratives illustrate academic feminism's anxieties about the relationship between past and present and the (im)possibility of securing feminism's future. Wiegman argues that academic feminism's political attachment to an apparently 'more feminist' past, and disappointment in the present's failure to reproduce this past, is framed by an apocalyptic narrative that locates the end of feminism in academic feminism itself. She posits that it is the equation of feminism's political time with continuous histories that generates a feminist origin story of maternal order and generational succession. Consequently, the possibilities for non-identical feminist futures are foreclosed. The feminist subject subsumed by this generational narrative is she who is required to be identical across time in order to reproduce a feminist past and guarantee a feminist future (Wiegman 2000). This reliance upon the reproduction of feminist past assumes a continuous historical consciousness. Wiegman claims that the fear for the feminist future is provoked by the interruption to this continuity by non-identical feminist subjects. Generational and inheritance narratives, Wiegman argues, are attempts to discipline these non-identical feminist subjects and re-establish a linear temporality and secure a feminist future.

Telling Stories Differently

The dominance of the language of waves and generations illustrates how, in order to tell a coherent story about feminist histories, lines are drawn and caricatures emerge. Whilst these provide short-hand, bounded accounts, they are invariably simplified, unitary and exclusionary. The often inadequate exploration of the complexities of feminist activity perhaps suggests that feminism as praxis will always evade comprehensive retellings. These will often employ familiar metaphors and narratives as a means of telling a story that can be easily understood. Any attempt to use overarching narratives to encapsulate the distinctive emotional, personal and political encounters, both fleeting and long lasting, that feminist thought and activity encompasses will inevitably fail to com-

municate fully their complex specificities. Perhaps it is the moments of contestation, in both academic and activist accounts, the points at which dominant narratives are challenged or troubled, which contribute to a more contradictory and complex (but always incomplete) account of feminism and the feminist subject.

Various methodological interventions posit ways of rethinking feminist histories, attempting to mark moments without reducing and freezing their meaning. By looking at feminism's mobile trajectories—the very many different ways it has been articulated, understood and manifest—a more nuanced history can emerge (Roseneil 1995, 2000; Segal 2007). It is often at the points of interruption and disruption that these histories become visible, be it, at times, ever so momentarily. Several thinkers have drawn on a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives as a means of disrupting and reworking dominant accounts of feminist histories (e.g. Griffin & Braidotti 2002; Haraway 1991; Hesford 2005, 2013; Hemmings 2011; Withers and Chidgey 2010). I explore some of these in the following discussion.

Hesford reads the archive of the US women's liberation movement as both an access point for understanding its origins and illustrative of its embeddedness within a particular social and cultural context. She traces the repeated phrases and images of the early years of the movement in mainstream press and feminist writings. In so doing, she conducts a reading of the feminist past that does not seek to establish its success or failure, but to understand how a series of rhetorical strategies produced a movement that certain actors could identify with and participate in, whilst others felt alienated. Hesford uses the archive to consider how the movement became marked in certain ways, significantly as white, middle class and lesbian. These markers were both produced by the rhetoric of the movement and also act as an 'image-memory' of it—a dominant way of remembering the movement that conceals the 'multiplicity and possibilities of the early years of the second wave era' (Hesford 2013:17). Hesford argues that the desire to 'recover' the histories of the women's liberation movement, and to ensure that it is awarded its place in American history, has meant that accounts of it produce a familiar history that struggles to account for its complexity. She considers how media, activism and academic representations of feminism produce a form of collective cultural memory of the second wave.

The 'feminist-as-lesbian' is a central figure through which feminism is remembered and who structures present-day understandings and negotiations of feminism. In describing her, Hesford writes:

> She's a monster, she's ridiculous, she's laughable, contemptuous, shameful, or she's joyful and full of a proud anger. As a repository for a complex array of affect and emotion, the figure draws us to a sense of the second wave movement that is unacknowledged, that is not 'cold knowledge' (Hesford 2005:6).

The feminist-as-lesbian is, as Hesford describes it, 'everywhere and nowhere' (15). As a figure, she comes to represent the second wave's perceived essentialism, classicism and racism. Through her close reading of the archive, Hesford seeks to trace the histories that are concealed by the feminist-as-lesbian's presence, thereby asking questions about the particular ways that feminist histories come to be told.

Sasha Roseneil returns to another moment in feminist history when she revisits the 'queer feminisms of Greenham' (2000: 6) as a means of rethinking the dominant media and academic account of the UK women's peace camp at Greenham Common. The Greenham Roseneil describes is 'unwieldy and untidy, anarchic, spontaneous, constantly innovative and in flux' (2000:3). It evades static retellings and so is 'impossible to pin down into pre-existing feminist categories' (Roseneil 2000:3). Roseneil illustrates that the narrow retellings of Greenham offered a means of managing the challenges it posed to feminism's 'straight tendencies' (2000:4) as a feminist practice that destabilised the category 'woman' and offered a site for the reworking of sexual identities. Like Hesford's (2005, 2013) feminist ghosts, the women of Greenham trouble and disrupt feminist histories and in doing so highlight alternative feminisms. Considered together, Hesford and Roseneil's work perhaps illustrate that whilst the domineering trope of the feminist-as-lesbian is how feminism has come to be *remembered*, it could often be *experienced* as oppressively straight. In highlighting how the fluid, specific and troublesome histories of Greenham are managed via narrow retellings, Roseneil offers an alternative means of researching such histories that attend to these disruptive and queer feminist practices. She demonstrates that it is in these

specificities of time and place that feminist subjectivities, identities and relationships are formed.

Withers and Chidgey (2010) explore lesser known feminist moments through archival work. They seek to 'queer the historical record' to explore the archival materials and oral histories of women involved in the 1970s Bristol-based feminist theatre and art troupe *Sistershow*. They embrace the apparent anachronism of using queer theory to explore the activities of second-wave feminism as a means of disrupting and troubling the dominant narratives of the second-wave and inviting subversive inhabitants of the past to occupy the present. Wither's (2015) more recent work draws again on her experience as a curator of the feminist archive to consider how technologies are active in the transmission of knowledge across feminist generations. She argues that feminist generations are composed of these processes of transmission, claiming that we cannot speak outside of generations, but must consider how they are formed in order to fully explore feminist belonging. The ways in which the feminist archive is organised and disseminated and so given cultural value through museums, libraries, the internet and universities, and how it is taken up by individuals and groups, are all part of the processes of transmission that Wither's seeks to explore. Elsewhere, Withers (2014) has proposed that we look for 'strategic affinities' across different groups of women as a means of forging links between feminists differently located across space and time. This way of looking draws into view everyday feminist practices that enact resistance, but that are often absent from the stories told about them. Wither's writes that in the attention she gives to strategic affinities, she seeks to get closer to the unseen event of feminist activism. She writes:

> [T]hese are the events that circulate but may not have been captured themselves in the practice of narrative or monumental history making. These are the gestures, the touches, the preparatory conversations, the silences and hesitations that are central to experience but are seldom recorded in the drive for narrative coherence. (2014:133)

In tracing the strategies that connect different groups of feminist women, as she does in her consideration of *Sistershow* and Jamaican theatre collective *Sistren*, Withers seeks to highlight the affinities between the

strategies of feminist activism without homogenising or decontextualising them. She offers a detailed and sensitive approach to holding on to these connections and differences across different spatial and temporal contexts.

Each of these interventions into the retellings of feminist histories draws attention, in various ways, to the multiplicity of thought, feeling and activity that is encompassed by the term 'feminism'. In attending to these complexities, they contribute to the destabilisation of linear temporalities, unitary feminist histories and subjects. Such work draws attention to how feminist histories are not a neutral, uncontested series of facts waiting to be uncovered and presented, but are shaped by the means and politics of the retelling. The ways in which these dominant retellings have been reproduced within academic feminism have also been given critical attention and have been taken up as a point of intervention in a variety of ways. For example, Gabriele Griffin and Rosie Braidotti (2002) have observed that the circulation of knowledge within feminist thought has been dominated by US and UK writers. Consequently, other feminist thinkers struggle to achieve widespread circulation of their work in Anglophone contexts. It is through the authorised circulation of certain texts that the dominance of Anglophone feminist work is established. They write:

> What is therefore at stake in the realization that English-language feminism has a hegemonic hold over Women's and Gender Studies is, rather, the desire to broaden this common heritage, insert more diversity into it, and move it along the road of a two-way exchange with a number of 'minority' languages and cultures within the kaleidoscope of Europe (2002:3).

Griffin and Braidotti attempted to challenge this "hegemonic hold" by giving space in their collection to a range of non-English-language feminist thinkers. This illustrates the diversity of academic feminist thought and draws attention to the voices that are absent in much academic discourse. Indeed, it is important to note here that, owing to the British focus of this research, my focus has been on the discussion of Western feminist histories. In the stories I share across the following chapters, however, a wider spectrum of influences and experience become apparent.

Claire Hemmings (2005, 2011) adopts a strategy similarly designed to challenge dominant narratives by directly disrupting citation practices that, in part, produce and sustain them. She argues:

> Citation practices internal to Western feminist narratives of progress, loss and return are partly what enable a combined chronology across the strands, and that these similarities go a long way to producing a shared vision of both what has happened in the past and what needs to happen in the future. (2011:161)

Hemmings disrupts conventional citation practices firstly by citing the journal name and date, rather than author, of the articles that form the basis of her enquiry. This emphasises the role of journal conventions in the production of knowledge and encourages the detection of patterns across a journal set, rather than attributing them to individual authors. Secondly, Hemmings proposes the practice of 'recitation' through which she makes visible figures overlooked by common citation practices. Recitation, would, for example, replace the common pairing of Foucault and Butler with Wittig and Butler. The intention of this is not to offer an equally singular account, but to expose the impact of citation on the production of stories about feminist histories. Hemmings' interventions seek to expose and disrupt the practices that form and sustain singular narratives of feminism. In doing so, space is made for the feminist pasts that are rendered invisible by dominant retellings, and the presumed linear relationship between past and present is shattered, thereby facilitating a renarration of the same story from a different perspective.

The concept of intersectionality is one salient example of how citation practices and the use of theoretical concepts and ideas are active in the production of stories about feminist histories. Hemmings (2011) observes that narratives of 'progress' from a feminism of naiveté to one of sophistication are invested in the depiction of '70s feminism' as a white middle-class movement. This positioning of the '70s feminist' allows the teller committed to these narratives to produce a particular story about themselves that positions them, the modern feminist subject, as anti-racist, inclusive and, above all, 'intersectional' in their approach. So, the depiction of the 1970s feminist as white and middle class, and

of feminism as historically neglectful of the concerns of black and eth-
nic minority women, is an integral part of the progress narrative. Such
accounts often eliminate the work of women of colour from feminist
histories, as well as rendering racism as a problem of the feminist past,
thereby allowing it to be overlooked in the present.

Such narratives problematically credit feminist engagement with post-
structuralism as the point at which attention was given to 'intersection-
ality'. The progress narrative posits that feminist theorising during the
1990s developed understandings of intersectionality and problematised
the category of race and its place within feminist theory through an
engagement with post-structuralism, post-colonial perspectives and criti-
cal race studies. In particular, the work of Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw
(1991) is cited as introducing 'intersectionality' as a conceptual tool dur-
ing this period. However, Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix (2004), alongside
others (e.g. Carby 1999), observe that it was through the writings of
feminist women of colour, prior to the 1990s, that the intersections of
'race', class and gender were first theorised. Although Crenshaw (1991) is
credited with introducing the term during the 1990s, and was no doubt
highly influential in the discussion of it, feminists have long grappled
with the idea of 'simultaneously interlocking oppressions' (Brah and
Phoenix, 2004:78).

As Brah and Phoenix document, the feminist analysis of intersectional-
ity contributed to a '"decentring" of the "normative" subject of feminism'
(2004:78). They observe that this analysis was driven by the theorising
and political work of black women, for example, late 1970s projects such
as the Boston-based black, lesbian feminist organisation 'Combahee River
Collective' and the London-based 'Organisation of Women of Asian and
African Descent' (OWAAD). These women deconstructed the privileg-
ing of one aspect of experience as representative of the whole (Brah and
Phoenix 2004). The work of black feminist theorists explored the inter-
sections of gender, 'race' and class in women's everyday lives (Anthias
and Yuval-Davis 1983; Anthias 1998; Collins 2000). Precursors to the
concept of intersectionality are also seen in nineteenth-century African-
American women's writings, for example, in Sojourner Truth's 'Ain't I a
Woman?' (Truth 1851/2004), in the work of abolitionist Harriet Jacobs
(1861/2001) and Anna Julia Cooper (1892/1988).

Sara Ahmed (2012) argues that the depiction of third-wave, post-structuralist feminists as those that embraced and enacted intersectionality silences the many black and ethnic minority women who were thinking through these issues prior to feminism's engagement with post-structuralism. In attributing intersectionality to a third-wave response to post-structuralism, this particular retelling of feminist history ignores the emergence of the concept from the earlier writings and activities of women of colour. The term 'intersectionality' has therefore been used to tell a new story that awards its emergence and popularity as a term to post-structuralism (with a white, male heritage) rather than a black feminist genealogy (Ahmed 2012; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Carby 1999). In doing so, it depicts the contemporary, third-wave or post-structuralist feminist subject as non-racist, critical and intersectional in her approach, in contrast to the supposedly universalist, exclusionary and non-critical second-wave feminist (Hemmings 2011). Retracing the genealogy of such terms can expose how terminology forms part of our understanding of feminism and is active in the construction of the feminist subject (Ahmed 2012).

The debates around the circulation of knowledge, and the endorsement of certain texts over others, emerged in a wider setting following the 2012 'twitter confession' of American gender studies academic Hugo Schwyzer. Schwyzer acknowledged that he had undermined and silenced the voices of some feminist women of colour through a range of citation practices. These included omitting the writings of black feminist women from his course reading lists, whilst promoting the work of white feminist writers, offering favourable reviews to white writers, whilst deleting or dismissing the criticisms of those writers by black feminists on the numerous feminist blogs he contributed to. Writer Mikki Kendall responded to the 'confession' (a term used by Schwyzer himself) with the Twitter hashtag *#solidarityisforwhitewomen*, asking women of colour to share experiences of racism within feminism. Whilst the details of the debate are extensive and numerous voices contributed to it through social media, the event illustrated neatly the ways in which the circulation of knowledge is a political act that (re)produces various inclusions and exclusions. It also illustrated the various interventions into such practices that social media platforms can facilitate, beyond the formalised academic approach of Griffin and Braidotti (2002) and Hemmings (2005, 2011).

Finally, the use of narrative accounts has a long feminist history that has emphasised the political power of listening to women's experiences. This emphasis often finds its expression in the production of narrative texts, such as memoirs, autobiography, testimony and oral history. As Tess Cosslett et al. (2002) argue, these narrative practices unite the personal and political by offering insight into the personal moments that forge a political movement. The feminist engagement with narrative practices had radical beginnings as a political act against the amnesia of women's history, an amnesia Nancy Cott (1987) referred to as 'disremembering' by which feminism is 'aborted and repressed' (1987:274). In 1985, Dale Spender expressed the anxiety over forgetting when she wrote that 'unless we keep reminding each other of our heritage we endanger it, we risk losing it as we contribute to our own amnesia' (1985:2). This anxiety is evidenced by the feminist memoirs and autobiographies of the second wave that were already emerging during the early 1980s (e.g. Oakley 1984; Steedman 1987; Wilson 1982).

Edited collections such as *The Feminist Memoir Project* (DuPlessis and Snitow 2007), *Generations: Academic Feminists in Dialogue* (Looser and Kaplan 1997) and *Feminist Waves Feminist Generations: Life Stories from the Academy* (Aikau et al. 2007) use personal narratives in their attempt to explore in more detail, or explicitly challenge, unitary histories. These volumes use memoir to trace the development and experience of a collective movement through personal accounts. In presenting the voices of feminist women active during the 1970s and 1980s US women's liberation movements, varied and multiple accounts emerge that challenge the homogenising tendencies of the wave metaphor and often directly address and challenge the narrative of intergenerational conflict. They explore the uneven development of feminist theory and practice across time and institutions and challenge the notion of a feminist 'generation' and the theoretical positioning of the second wave against the third, emphasising instead the intersections between feminist thinkers of different ages. However, Hesford (2013) notes that some of these volumes reinscribe the dominance of white women's voices and so, despite citing a commitment to representing the diversity of a movement, contributes to the erasure of the activities of non-white women from feminist histories. In a UK context, the oral history project 'Sisterhood and After'

led by Margaretta Jolly produced an oral history archive of 1970s and 1980s feminist activists. The project demonstrates the multiplicity of the voices of the movement and considers its impact and legacy. 'Sisterhood and After' challenges any unified depiction of the UK women's liberation movement (e.g. Cohen 2012, Jolly 2012, Russell 2012). Indeed, its focus on 'sisterhood' highlights the horizontal relationships between feminists, both disrupting and expanding the mother/daughter trope observed in many retellings.

Kath Woodward and Sophie Woodward (2009) directly challenge the narrative of generational conflict in their work by drawing upon the voices of feminist women. They do so as a means of counteracting what they see as the disconnection of feminist theory from lived experience. Woodward and Woodward are mother and daughter, and their express desire to rethink the relationship between feminist generations and challenge narratives of generational conflict is borne in part through a reflection on their own relationship to one another and to feminism. The work brings young women's voices to the centre of their argument that the dominant academic conceptualisation of feminism does not reflect young women's experiences. They also use writing strategies that challenge narratives of conflict and seek to illustrate the convergence and differences in their accounts, as they explain here:

> We are attempting to buck the trend of much writing that can be categorised as 'third wave', which would entail positioning Kath's experiences in opposition to Sophie's. In contrast, through a series of conversations, we aim to chart both the commonalities and the divergences in different historical moments of feminism. We are not attempting to elide the difference between us, and this is evidence in how the book is written. When the example or experience arises from one of us individually we write as I-Sophie or I-Kath; when it is something we both argue and write together, we write as 'we'. We are therefore attempting to situate the 'we' and to explore the possibilities of cross-generational authorship. Thus our co-authorship is constitutive of the dialogue in which we are engaged, and the point of convergence as well as difference, ambiguities and contradictions which are part of the genealogy of feminist ideas and practices' (2009:1)

Using auto/biographical writing practices, Woodward and Woodward situate their own voices in their discussion. The use of pronouns that emphasise either the collective or individual voice means that any differences between them are situated in their experiences and do not need to become representative of generational positionings. This narrative writing practice exposes the processes through which stories are told and so does the political work of highlighting the mechanics of the production of feminist knowledge.

Narrative texts can enable women's voices and experiences to be articulated and offer a form of counter-memory to the orthodox histories that exclude these voices (Greene 1991; Hirsch and Smith 2002). However, the use of narrative methods presents an ongoing challenge to feminist thinkers as they struggle with a tension between the desire to represent and account for women's history, whilst challenging and critiquing the production of this history (Wiegman 2000). In addition, they risk reproducing some of the problematic depictions of feminist histories that they attempt to counteract (Hesford 2013). Reliance on narrative is always potentially problematic, narratives are always partial and the processes by which certain narratives come to be heard are by no means innocuous or neutral. It is, in part, the reasons that certain scholars caution against narrative methodologies as a means of producing 'knowledge' about feminism.

Wiegman (2004), for example, resists what she perceives as the canonical assumption that feminist knowledge formation and feminist subject formation can be conflated. She argues that feminism cannot come to be defined by the political work of women or the 'continuities in the identity of women across both time and geopolitical space' (Wiegman 2004:163). For Wiegman, this conflation of feminist knowledge and feminist subjects is, in part, developed via the range of narrative methodologies that place an emphasis on hearing women's voices. Wiegman questions whether feminism as a knowledge project should be defined by the subjectivities of 'historically present' women. She challenges the tendency she perceives in feminist historiography that takes 'the political work that women do as central to the production and demonstration of feminism's existence as a historical force' and illustrative of its consistency (Wiegman 2004:163). Drawing on the

work of Joan Scott (2001), Wiegman argues that this approach imposes order on what is otherwise chaotic, what Scott refers to as the 'fantasy of feminist history' (Scott 2001:290, cited in Wiegman 2004:164) and repeats a basic narrative, albeit varying in its detail. It is an account of a collective history that, Wiegman suggests, soothes anxieties about the feminist future by establishing a notion of the past that guarantees its reproduction.

Wiegman's critique clearly has implications for this book, which is founded precisely upon the accounts of 'historically present' women. In part, her claim that the dominance of particular narratives is a means of ensuring a feminist future is explored through the case studies presented in the following chapters. Albeit through the methods she critiques, the function of the concepts of generation, inheritance, waves and relationships to the feminist past, present and future are each explored through the narratives the women produce. Wiegman's concern for the foreclosure of possibilities for non-identical feminisms is certainly evidenced in some of these cases. Jenny's story, which I explore in Chap. 4, expresses hope for a feminist future in part through the reproduction of the feminist subject she remembers from her childhood. Jenny's certainty that the optimism and potential of the feminist past can be harnessed, and so hope for the feminist future regained, is reliant upon the figure of the feminist 'girl'. Her narrative is challenged by others, presented in the same chapter, but, if Wiegman's comments are critiquing any claim that we can know feminism by knowing feminists, the disruption of Jenny's narrative via others is still dependent only on the account of another feminist woman.

I defend the narrative approach upon which the book is based on two grounds. Firstly, looking at personal narratives does have the potential to attend to, highlight and expose what Wiegman suggests the generational narratives in particular overlook, that is, that there is 'no temporally singular or coherently knowable—and knowing—feminism' (Wiegman 2004:165). They do this not only in demonstrating the multiplicity of feminisms, both within and across accounts, as this only partly addresses the critique, but also by paying attention to the particularities of becoming feminist. These particularities are evident in the moments and encounters through which the women I worked with

seek to explain, defend or question their understanding of themselves as 'feminist'. Attending to these points in their accounts highlights how the framing of these moments in a coherent, recognisable narrative, such as the generational narrative, is an illusionary and momentary means of coming to 'know' feminism. These overarching narratives are used to order a series of perhaps disconnected and disparate experiences. The empirical exploration of these women's accounts offers some understanding of how these dominant narratives operate. Secondly, I am not claiming here to have produced a complete 'knowledge' of feminism, in terms of making claims that feminism in its entirety can be known. This would imagine feminism as a static and clearly bounded entity. These women's specific and situated experiences offer a lens on feminism as a site of fluidity and transformation. Where they might interrupt or challenge dominant narratives, they serve to reinforce and reproduce them equally in other places. I agree with Wiegman that what we can claim to know about these women's feminisms should not be taken to offer any full knowledge of feminism itself, as if it were a static and unchanging entity. What these women's accounts illustrate, however, is that just as feminism is a political and historical project, transforming across time, so are the relationships we forge to it.

Wiegman comments upon the difficulty of 'being in time' with feminism precisely because of its incoherence, arguing that 'feminism's historical, theoretical, political, and epistemological dimensions do not operate together in the same sphere of articulation and hence do not cohere as a singular (or even collectivised) discourse' (2004:164). This is evident in the ways in which the women negotiate their feminism in different contexts. Becoming feminist is a relational, dynamic process, understood and articulated in relation to existing stories told about feminism. So the stories told here are encounters that do perhaps provide some insight into how some feminist identities might be formulated and experienced through narrative and memory, but they are always specific and temporally situated and produced. In this way, understanding how these women narrate and remember 'becoming feminist' can offer a means of envisaging non-identical feminisms. It also perhaps highlights that the distinction between identical and non-identical feminisms is temporary and changeable.

Conversations in Narratives and Memories

This book places a concern with narrative and memory at its centre, adopting a narrative ontology that posits that we are 'storied selves' (Andrews et al. 2004) who come to understand and create ourselves and the world around us through story-telling in a multitude of forms and the interpretive process of remembering. I draw upon a sociological tradition of attending to narrative as a means of understanding lived experience (discussed from a US perspective by Susan Chase [2013] and from a UK perspective by Catherine Riessman [2008]) and a developing interest in the processes of remembering and forgetting as central to experience and identity (Middleton and Brown 2005; Misztal 2003; Smart 2007). This book embraces the nature of story-telling as a means of exploring feminist identities and subjectivities. I am therefore investing the everyday practices, relationships, memories and experiences that are woven in to the stories we tell about our lives. These are the crucial details of identity formation that can be overlooked when adopting a broader approach to finding patterns in contemporary feminist theory and practice.

Steph Lawler (2013) expresses the pervasive nature of story-telling in a way that I think illustrates its usefulness as a theoretical and methodological approach to exploring the development of a political identity:

> We wake to fragments of dream-stories, we go to sleep after retelling much of the day to ourselves, and at various points in between we are engaged in processes of recounting and telling, to ourselves and to others, what has passed and what we hope will pass. We endlessly tell stories about our lives, both to ourselves and to others; and it is through such stories that we make sense of the world, of our relationship to that world and of the relationship between ourselves and other selves (Lawler 2013:25)

So, we make sense of ourselves, our relationships and our place in the world through story-telling. Our identities are configured as we interpret and reinterpret experience through this narrative process. This approach accords with a general consensus that has emerged from the interdisciplinary terrain across which understandings of identity have been debated of the rejection of any static, complete or 'true' identity that individuals

adopt, or are born into (Brah 2005; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Hall 1996; Wetherell 2010). The multiple layers of relationality that form our own memories, and the entanglement of these memories and stories, told and received both individually and collectively, blur the boundaries of the individual, social and collective and see identity formation as shifting. As Mark Freeman writes:

> Much of what we remember about the personal past is suffused with others' memories—which are themselves suffused with other others' memories. Consider as well the fact that much of what we remember is also suffused with stories we have read and images we have seen, in books and movies and beyond. (2010:263)

Placing narrative and memory at the centre of identity formation, positions identity as a process embedded in relationships with others (Lawler 2013; Smart 2007). Lawler argues that this sociality of narrative identities—the ways in which narratives draw upon and are expected to mesh with social and cultural narratives and memories—presents a challenge to the notion of the 'atomized individual' (2013: 43). The production of identities through the processes of narrative and memory reminds us instead that identities are formed through relationships with those around us.

A narrative approach views identities as constructed through the stories we tell about our lives and the ways in which these align (or not) with the social and cultural narratives made available to us. Through alignment, identities can come to appear stabilised, but, despite this apparent stability, identity remains an ongoing, changeable process (Brah 2007; Phoenix 2010). Avtar Brah writes that 'at any given time we are positioned across multiple processes of identification which shift and configure into a specific pattern in a designated set of circumstances' (2007:144). Identity formation shifts across time and context, but can certainly feel and be experienced as stable. From a narrative perspective, the impulse to tell stories about our lives offers a means of producing a self that persists through time, giving meaning to a set of disparate events through story-telling (Ricoeur 1991).

Molly Andrews et al. (2004) use the term 'storied selves' to express the compulsion to tell stories about our lives. Stories that, although often

experienced as deeply personal, are always collectively and relationally formed. In offering a sense of continuity, narrative processes have the capacity to enable individuals and collectives to experience fragmentary and conflicted events, as socially and culturally recognisable (Bruner 1987; Salmon and Riessman 2008). We see this narrative impulse in popular and academic accounts of feminism, in which familiar characters and narrative structures recur, often to the exclusion of others (Douglas 1994; Hemmings 2011; Hesford 2005, 2013). In dividing the feminist past into decades characterised by distinct feminist subjects, activities and theoretical concerns, the retelling of feminist histories can have the effect of ordering and containing its complexities. This imposes one particularly culturally specific account onto a multitude of histories. Whilst, of course, the complexity and diversity of feminism's history are apparent in the feminist archive, the ways in which it has been organised and read often enforces coherence, fixing in place the association of theoretical and ideological standpoints with particular feminist generations. It is in this production of an organised narrative of feminist history that its complexities are lost.

Clare Hemmings' (2005, 2011) influential and important work draws attention to the temporal structures at work in the academic remembering of feminism and its histories. Hemmings identifies a narratisation of Western feminist histories, in both feminist and cultural theory journals, that relies on the clear division of the recent feminist past into the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Each decade is distinctively marked by particular feminist subjects, activities and theoretical concerns. Hemmings detects a developmental temporality in this narrative, feminism's history, when mapped onto these decades, travels from the apparent naïve essentialism of the 1970s, to a concern with difference following contributions from women of colour and lesbian women during the 1980s, and arrives at the influence of post-structuralism during the 1990s. Dependent on the temporal, political and theoretical positioning of the teller, this linear account is characterised by a celebration of the 'progress' of feminist theory from essentialism to destabilisation, a lament for the 'loss' of feminism as a unified social movement, or a desire for a 'return' to an earlier feminist theory and politics to counter what is perceived as a theoretical and political stagnation of the feminist present.

Hemmings explores how the multiplicities of feminism are ordered into coherent accounts that map onto developmental narrative structures. She has developed creative ways to destabilise the logic of such accounts and to draw attention to the complexity of feminist thought and activity, its trajectories and influences. In intervening into dominant citation practices (Hemmings 2011), Hemmings does not seek to offer a new and improved account of feminist histories, but instead to expose and question the structures that underpin the dominant retellings, and to understand its production and effects.

The capacity for narrative to fix in place people, ideas, origins and identities, across often linear and developmental temporalities, is evident in the dominant accounts of feminist histories. However, both narrative theory and method offer ways of thinking through and exploring narrative as *process*, rather than as static retelling (Tamboukou 2008). Maria Tamboukou proposes that we move beyond an understanding of narrative as sequential, to think of narratives as processes without clear beginnings or endings, as 'entities open to constant becomings, stories in becoming' (2008: 3). Conceiving of narrative as a process posits it not as something that fixes feminist identities in place, but that can expose the ways in which identities are produced, felt and changeable.

I use the narrative accounts of feminist women in this book not to offer a complete picture of contemporary British feminism, but to understand how feminism is received, felt and experienced by the women I spoke to. In viewing narrative as a process, it is seen as something that has an effect and is affected by the conditions through which it is produced. This offers an understanding of accounts of feminism, feminists and their histories as active and mobile and, importantly, produced through and productive of power relations. The cases presented in this book demonstrate how dominant narratives of feminist histories serve particular functions in the women's accounts of and relationship to feminism. Similarly, the stories they (and I) tell of their feminist becomings have certain effects and possibilities. In part, the women tell stories that draw on narratives made available to them—the generational and inheritance narrative is particularly salient— but in questioning, reworking and filtering these accounts through their own personal histories and biographies, these dominant narratives shift and change, even slightly, and so cannot be seen as entirely stable.

Tamboukou shifts focus onto the power relations that create certain narrative possibilities, in which the stories that emerge are always formed by those left unspoken. Certain narratives become authorised, appear and can be experienced as durable throughout this process. This is evident in the dominance of the language of waves and generations in the discussion of feminist histories. But such narratives always offer an incomplete account. Approaching narrative, not as a fixed representation of an experience or event, but as a dynamic and changeable process in which some voices are heard and others silenced, suggests that, in any retelling, certain narratives hold dominance, not because of a necessarily more accurate representation, but because of the forces through which they are produced. This includes the dominance of white women's voices in the authorised accounts of feminist histories that is established in part through a series of citation practices and retellings that can elevate certain voices.

So, narratives are partly produced through what is left unsaid; just as some moments of being are actualised, others are silenced and remain, in those instances at least, unarticulated. As Tamboukou describes it, narratives are 'discursive events that express only a limited set of lines of thought interwoven around *moments of being* temporarily crystallized into narrative forms' (2008:4, emphasis in original). These unarticulated moments are part of the force that directs the narrative process, and indeed has the potential to disrupt and redirect it:

> The silenced, the non-said, still inheres in what has been said, expressed or articulated, creating within the narrative itself a depository of forces that can take it elsewhere, divert it from its initial aim or meaning, create bifurcations, sudden and unexpected changes, discontinuities and ruptures in the sequential structure (Tamboukou 2008:4).

Narrative is a process of concealment, withdrawal and silence, just as it is one of articulation. As much as what is said, narratives of feminism are produced through what is not articulated and the possibilities that are created, or not, for certain accounts to be told and heard. This fluid, shifting narrative production can result in interruptions to dominant narrative forms (Tamboukou 2008). Paying attention to personal narratives

can illustrate the ways in which the linear temporal structure of the dominant narratives of feminist history is shaped through the processes that allow some voices to be heard louder than others.

As a collective and relational practice, narratives are formed, told and received in the context of the relationships between listener and teller and the personal and social. We produce narratives for particular audiences through our own biographical perspective and rework, retell and reimagine narratives that we are audience to. Throughout this book, I discuss examples of how the women who took part in this research tell their own feminist stories that draw on those of other personal, social and historical accounts of feminism. These accounts always feature the stories of others; people, places and objects all form parts of the accounts we give of ourselves. As Kenneth Plummer states: 'isolated individuals and abstracted stories there are none' (1995:20), meaning that stories are intrinsically and necessarily social as we constantly narrate our experience of the world through interaction with others. There is an element here of narratives being required to 'mesh' with authorised narratives of the social world, in order to be considered intelligible. We tell stories that are part of a 'community of life stories' (Bruner 1987: 9); in order to be understood and to belong, our personal narratives are required to accord with these communal accounts.

The imperative to tell feminist stories that conform to the narratives of generation and inheritance that I observe in the accounts collected here accord with the prevalence of generational and inheritance narratives as a means of thinking about relationships between age groups and plotting individuals across historical time more generally (Pilcher 1994). In addition, they reflect the tendency within Westernised notion of the self to look to our childhoods, and in particular relationships with parents, for an explanation of the self (Lawler 2000). So, when individual feminist women locate their feminism becomings in the context of their familial, particularly maternal, relationships, they align their narratives not only with dominant accounts of feminist histories, but also with the particular authorised narratives of the social world they occupy. Whilst this integration of personal and social narratives affords a certain amount of belonging and intelligibility for the teller (Salmon and Riessman 2008), it also has the effect of naturalising these socially, culturally and historically spe-

cific accounts, privileging dominant voices and foreclosing the opportunities, or making it more challenging, for alternative narratives to emerge.

Narrative cannot be understood outside of its relationship to memory. Barbara Misztal's discussion of memory, taken up by Carol Smart (2007), highlights the profoundly emotional dimension of remembering, in which events and experiences are remembered through the emotions invested in them. It is, Smart comments, this emotional element that makes looking back and thinking about our own histories so compelling. Activities such as looking through family photographs are compulsive for many because of its emotional dimension: '[w]hether the feelings evoked are good or bad, they hold a peculiarly alluring and nostalgic significance' (Smart 2007: 39). In exploring any aspect of an individual's personal and political identifications, understanding that they are developed, articulated and remembered through emotion is imperative. The emotional power of memories contributes to their circulation and endurance in personal and collective imaginaries.

Smart's discussion of family memories offers some insight into why the generational and maternal tropes that are so often used to talk about the history of Western feminism are established and retain power. In discussing the power of family memories and the foregrounding of the family in Western culture, Smart argues that the emotional investment in family memories and the powerful and emotive experience of remembering early experiences result in an individual and collective investment in the notion of 'the family', attributing particular significance to it when we tell stories about our lives. This is a cyclical process: '[t]hus the more work we do in Western cultures on family memories and tracing lines of heritage, the more we contribute to the increasingly iconic status of families in our cultural imaginary' (Smart 2007: 39). That the narratives of the history of Western feminism are often structured around notions of generation, inheritance, familial and maternal relationships, in which feminist 'mothers' and 'daughters' take centre stage, reflects the significance of family when tracing our personal histories. As the women in this book remember their own feminist becomings, they draw upon the collective memories of the recent feminist past that are articulated and formed through narratives produced about it. Some of these narratives are themselves formed through the significance and emotional investment in notions of family and heritage in Western culture.

Observing that the understanding of 'collective memory' is varied and has been left largely uninterrogated, James Wertsch (2002) defines it as something that occurs in collective and social interactions and is performed 'instrumentally' through various tools of memory, of which narrative is one. Notions of the past are shared and shaped by group members—how and what we remember is formed through interactions with narratives already being produced about and by the communities we live in. Practices of collective remembering afford belonging to individuals who, through remembering, create a 'suitable past and a believable future' (Misztal 2003:17) that relies upon a sense of continuity across time.

These collective memories are often underpinned by linear and progressive temporalities. Recent feminist work on the linear temporalities of the dominant narratives of feminist histories has sought to question, trouble and disrupt this particular understanding of feminist time (Browne 2014; Felski 2000; E. Freeman 2010; Hesford 2013; McBean 2015). This work asks for an understanding of time that moves beyond linear accounts in which one feminism is superseded by another (Felski 2000), to attend to the 'lived time' of feminist consciousness (Browne 2014) and offer a means of articulating and understanding the feminist past as both active in, and produced through, its present (Freeman 2010a, b; Hesford 2013). The contributions to these conversations, wide-ranging and varied themselves, all aim to disrupt, question and destabilise unitary and linear accounts of feminist histories and politics. Approaching temporality as dynamic and transformative, multi-layered and affectively experienced offers a means of understanding how the remembering of the feminist past is active in the production of its present. This push and pull of feminist time challenges any demarcation between past, present and future. However, when memories are articulated in narrative form, they often find expression through these linear and progressive temporalities. The case studies discussed throughout this book illustrate the multiple temporalities at work in the women's articulation of their personal memories of their feminist becomings. Jenny's story in Chap. 4 in particular illustrates the pull of the linear and progressive as a means of articulating stories about our lives.

As we shall see across the cases discussed in this book, attending to the affective dimension of memory can draw attention to activity of the past in the women's present feminist identifications. Drawing attention to affective histories is an approach advocated by E. Freeman 2010 in her queer engagement with the feminist past. She adheres to an understanding of multiple temporalities and of the past as an active force in the present and future. Social and cultural belonging becomes a matter of timing, and belonging is dependent upon an individual's ability to manage the cultural norms of temporality. Freeman argues that in attending to affective histories, that is, physical sensations and emotional responses, authorised temporalities can be interrupted. She calls for a more sensitive, sensory means of historical enquiry that pays attention to affect and suggests that 'social change can be felt as well as cognitively apprehended' (2010:10). This 'felt' relationship to social change appears in the form of the persistent and apparently obsolete remnants of the past, and she declares an interest in the banal and embarrassing prior moments and failed transformations of the past that are dragged around in the present. These moments are 'signs of undetonated energy from past revolution' (E. Freeman 2010: xvi) and signifiers of the lost possibilities of the feminist past. This pull of the past on the present is described as 'temporal drag'[1] (E. Freeman 2010: xvi) and illustrated by the lesbian feminist[2] who, Freeman argues, appears as an anachronistic figure in both queer politics and academic scholarship. In these contexts, she represents essentialised bodies, binary sexualities and exclusionary identity politics. Instead, Freeman argues that anachronistic figures such as the lesbian feminist act as a 'productive obstacle to progress, a usefully distorting pull backward, a necessary pressure on the present tense' (2010:64). Operating as a means of disrupting linear, progressive temporalities, such figures can produce

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[1] Freeman's use of the term 'drag' is reminiscent of Butler's seminal work *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990), although she is critical of Butler's understanding of time as progressive and any reference to the past as merely citational.

[2] Like Hesford's (2013) use of the term 'feminist-as-lesbian', Freeman refers to the 'lesbian feminist' as a particular cultural signifier of feminism, rather than referring to lesbian feminist women, of whom there are far more diverse and shifting representations, both within feminism and beyond (Ciasullo 2001; Faderman 1999).

new possibilities by harnessing the energy of the past in the present and offering a tactile relationship to it.

Freeman develops a 'queer historiographical' approach that works with the feminist archive, approaching it as a depository of feeling. As with Hesford, Freeman's methodological and theoretical approaches differ from those that form the basis of this book; however, there are points of connection and influence. Throughout the discussion of the case studies in this book, I adopt a method of interpretation that is concerned with the affective dimension of the women's narratives and memories. Doing so does not erase the narratives they produce that adhere to linear and progressive temporalities, or that accord with the dominant narratives of feminist histories, but it offers a means of exploring the function of these accounts. A concern with affective dimension of the women's narratives and memories marks an intersection between this queer archival work and the narrative turn in sociology that pinpoints memory and narrative as a means of exploring personal experience (Misztal 2003; Smart 2007).

This focus on the histories of feminism, and the positioning of feminist subjects, theories and politics, as processes of narrating, remembering and forgetting, returns us to the quotation from Rowbotham in the introduction to this book. Using a reflection on writing history to introduce this work on the development of feminist identities is an attempt to draw links, as Rowbotham does, between the writing of 'history' and the personal accounts of its actors through which it is produced. Accounts of historical events cannot be separated from the intimate and personal narratives and memories of the teller. Recent work on the narratives of feminist histories emphasises this point and in doing so destabilises dominant accounts of Western feminist histories and the erasures enacted by them. In paying attention to the stories women tell about becoming feminist and bringing the processes of narrative and memory to the centre of thinking about the development of feminist identities and subjectivities, this book illustrates the interconnectedness of personal and collective understandings of feminism and the ways in which feminist histories are reworked, negotiated, adopted and resisted through story-telling.

Questioning the Death of Feminism

Whilst the opportunities available for British women in education, employment and the private sphere increased towards the end of the twentieth century, inequalities of gender, as well as class, ethnicity and more, are still embedded in society. Young women during the 1990s and 2000s negotiated their relationship to feminism in the context of these increased opportunities and varying inequalities, as well as being confronted by the complexities of processes of individualisation and detraditionalisation that characterised the political climate from the closing decades of the twentieth century (Budgeon 2001, 2011; McRobbie 2009; Scharff 2013). It is in this context that questions have increasingly been asked about what identities women are producing in what has been referred to as the late modern age, and what relationship, if any, they now have to the feminist project and the repercussions of second-wave feminism (e.g.: Budgeon 2001; Jowett 2004; Scharff 2011a, b, 2013). This is the context in which the women I spoke to were negotiating their relationship to feminism.

Angela McRobbie refers to the 1990s as the point at which both popular culture and government engaged with feminism and, to a certain extent, incorporated its values across civil society and institutional practices in education, employment and the media (McRobbie 2004a). Earlier, Andrea Stuart (1990) similarly observed the ways in which feminism found expression in mainstream popular culture, particularly magazines, bringing feminist issues to a vast readership (Stuart 1990). Whilst McRobbie and Stuart's analysis illustrates how elements of the feminism of the 1970s and 1980s have been positively invoked by political and popular culture, it also identifies a simultaneous, if superficially paradoxical, rejection of feminism as outdated and unnecessary. Extending the backlash thesis that describes a conservative and condemnatory reaction to feminism (Faludi 1993), McRobbie names this celebration and dismissal of feminist values in UK consumer, popular and political culture 'post-feminism'. In response, Shelley Budgeon (2011) describes a tension between the expectation for women to fulfil the cultural ideal of the self-governing individual, but also embody traditional feminine traits of

beauty, heterosexuality and emotionality. Consequently, post-feminism obliges women to reject feminism in order to be perceived as successful, independent and desirable.

Post-feminist discourse is propelled by an understanding of feminism as outdated and anachronistic. This depiction is compounded by and contributes to media proclamations of the 'death' of feminism, identified by Mary Hawkesworth (2004) as a phenomenon that paradoxically accompanied the exponential growth of feminist organisations internationally, between 1989 and 2001. Hawkesworth suggests that the 'premature burial of feminism' (2004:963) operates as means of undermining feminist struggles for social justice. It is something that Griffin (1995) also observed in the specific context of 1990s Britain. Griffin's edited collection documents the range of feminist activism and concerns during the 1990s, but notes that this diversity and expanse of activity was not reflected in the period's 'despair about feminist activism', here from feminist academic voices rather than the media (Griffin 1995:1).

The proclamations of feminism's death are, in part, made possible by the singular accounts of feminism as a unified social movement, which lend themselves to linear and progressive temporalities, in which feminism is born, identifies and accomplishes its goals and so dies (Hawkesworth 2004). Hawkesworth argues that, in facilitating a linear temporality, the social movement framework 'has the unsavoury effect of allowing death proclamations to ensue when women are no longer in the streets' (2004:972). That is to say it defines feminism as a specific set of practices (often mass demonstration) whose absence signals its 'death'. In contrast to social movement understanding of feminist mobilisation, which posit the existence of leaders who raise consciousness and motivate individuals to action, Hawkesworth conceptualises feminism as praxis. The notion of praxis suggests that feminism arises autonomously within individuals as they grapple with the contradictions of their lives (2004:973). Such an understanding shifts focus from the visible events labelled as 'activism' to the politics of everyday life. Approaching feminism as praxis renders it multiple, overlapping, transformative and never fixed or static.

So, the women whose stories I consider in this book negotiate a relationship to feminism in the context of these post-feminist narratives of redundancy and death, despite evidence of the proliferation of feminist

activism in various forms (Griffin 1995; Hawkesworth 2004; Redfern & Aune 2010). McRobbie (2004a) argues that, whilst the post-feminist and third-wave contestations that took place during the 1990s had the potential to produce a dialogue about how feminism could develop, a decade later ambivalence turned to repudiation and consequently many young women 'recoil in horror at the very idea of the feminist' (2004b:258). This repudiation has been the focus of much empirical work as feminist academics have attempted to explore young women's relationship to feminism. Recent UK studies indicate that even though many young women identify with feminist ideals and are concerned with issues of gender equality, they distance themselves from feminism (e.g. Budgeon 2001; Jowett 2004; Scharff 2009, 2011a, b).[3] Scharff, who conducted interviews with British and German women and observed patterns of dis-identification, describes a 'contested and fraught territory of young women's attitudes towards feminism that is increasingly marked by repudiation' (Scharff 2009:21). Significantly, her participants considered feminism to be historically justified, but anachronistic (Scharff 2009). Madeleine Jowett (2004) similarly observes that feminism is rendered anachronistic, relating this to the millennial moment in British history, characterised by reflective celebration alongside the futuristic rhetoric of New Labour that drew upon discourses of power, progress, achievement and optimism. This forward-looking moment rendered feminism an outdated politics for the twenty-first century (Jowett 2004).

Scharff (2013) claims this repudiation of feminism is also sustained by the stereotype of the unfeminine, man-hating, lesbian feminist, whose presence highlights a tension between feminism and femininity. Young women viewed identification with feminism as putting their femininity at risk, something also discussed by McRobbie (2004a). The risk of association with this 'negative' figure is often managed using the phrase 'I'm not a feminist but...', enabling alignment with feminist politics without the speaker being labelled 'feminist' and so be associated with the 'unfeminine'

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[3] All these studies are concerned with young women's relationship to feminism, albeit working with quite different samples. Budgeon (2001) spoke to 16–20-year-olds living in Northern England as they made decisions following compulsory education. Jowett (2004) ran focus groups with 16–28-year-old British white and British Asian women from various backgrounds. Scharff (2009, 2011a, 2011b) interviewed British and German women aged 18–35.

(Aronson 2003; Pilcher 1993). Notably, a similar sentiment was already being expressed by women discussing feminism in the late 1980s (Griffin 1989), before the advent of New Labour, even if some writers might argue that New Labour entrenched the discourse and its affect.

Some theorists have argued that what is often described as a 'neo-liberal' political agenda, with its emphasis on the individual, has distanced young women from engaging with any form of collective political struggle (Budgeon 2001, 2003; Hughes 2005; Rich 2005). This is evident in the narratives of individualism and choice observed in young women's talk about their own lives and identities. For example, Emma Rich's (2005) exploration of the ways in which young women negotiate various intersecting subject positions in relation to gender, equality and feminism found that they utilised a rhetoric of individualism to construct narratives that described gender inequality as past and feminism as unnecessary. Kate Hughes (2005) found that the term 'feminism' was resisted by young Australian women's studies students because it was viewed as 'synonymous with analysing the systemic structural constraints which limit "choice", "individual freedom" and "rights"' (Hughes 2005:12). Whilst, when interviewed again at the end of their course, many of the participants did identify as feminists, any discussion of structural constraints was obscured from their politics, which maintained a focus on individual rights and freedoms. Similarly, Budgeon (2001) interviewed young British women who expressed a strong sense that individualism offered a means of countering the inequalities that restricted their choices and opportunities. Budgeon argues that processes of individualisation and detraditionalisation, which have been observed by Ulrich Beck (1992) and Anthony Giddens (1991), mean that there are, or certainly appear to be, a wider range of options available to most, but by no means all, young women. This enables the active negotiation of a variety of intersecting and potentially contradictory positions.

Although this frequent repudiation of feminism as outdated, unfeminine and exclusionary is seen to impact on women's relationship to it, some of the empirical work also revealed more complex negotiations of feminism by some young women. Jowett (2004), for instance, argues that, when given the space, young women rearticulate their lives and experiences in relation to feminism and so forge new identifications with

it. In particular, the focus-group setting of Jowett's research enabled her participants to negotiate the various narratives of feminism and rearticulate their ideas about it. The women were able to challenge the neoliberal and post-feminist discourses of female power that limited their identification with feminism and, consequently, began to 'desire feminism for themselves' (Jowett 2004:99). Jowett argues for the importance of illuminating the discourses available to young women in order to understand 'the ways in which inequality is perpetuated and resisted, and the novel relationships with feminism that young British women are forging for themselves' (Jowett 2004:99).

Julia Downes (2008) challenges any claim that organised and autonomous UK women's movements no longer exist, that contemporary feminists are isolated (e.g. Byrne 1997; Lister 2005) or feminism is in abeyance (discussed fully by sociologist Paul Bagguley 2002), as well as popular media's repeated proclamations of the 'death' of feminism (Hawkesworth 2004). She exposes the problematic definitions of organised feminist activism and, following Roseneil (2000), stresses the importance of broadening the definition of 'activism' to make visible 'queer feminist protest forms' (Downes 2008:1). Thinking in particular about feminist engagement with art, film and music cultures, Downes argues for the acknowledgement of and engagement with 'a plethora of cultural, performative and discursive forms of resistance' (Downes 2008:1). Her argument reflects Hawkesworth's (2004) advocacy of the feminist-as-praxis model and highlights the problems with narrow definitions of 'activism'. Indeed, the effect of such narrow definitions was evident in the memory-work study in this research. The women who participated measured their feminist credentials against a notion of the 'proper feminist' who engages in specific types of activism (e.g. attending feminist marches). The diversity of feminist practice provides the opportunity for feminist academics to rethink the sites of knowledge production and dissemination is important.

This shift in understanding of what counts as feminist activity has challenged accounts of feminism's death or abeyance. In both a UK and global context, there are numerous examples of feminist activity across that suggest there is a disjuncture between the narratives of feminism's demise and the proliferation of feminist activity across the past two

decades. Certainly during the last decade, this activity has been supported by, but by no means restricted to, the internet. Advances in technology have made virtual spaces more accessible and convenient. The increase in UK feminist websites, such as *The F Word* (founded in 2001) and *UK Feminista* (founded in 2010), and similar sites is indicative of the importance of technology in mediating women's engagement with feminism. In their 2010 survey of the attitudes and experiences of 'self-defined feminists', almost 75 % of whom were under 35, Redfern and Aune found that 70 % agreed that 'the internet has been instrumental in today's feminist movement' (Redfern and Aune 2010:15). Andi Zeisler (2013) suggests that there is a connection between contemporary feminism's engagement with and shaping of new media (e.g. blogs, videoblogging, podcasts and social media) by suggesting that it echoes second-wave feminism's consciousness raising, which she describes as its most 'indelible legacy' (2013:179). Zeisler argues that through new media, contemporary feminists are counteracting narratives of feminism's death and abeyance circulated in mainstream media (as discussed by Hawkesworth 2004 and Bagguley 2002, respectively). The proliferation of feminist activity suggests that there is a disjuncture between the narratives produced about feminism's demise and the proliferation of feminist activity apparent in Britain, across various sites. Scharff (2013) suggests that it is important to consider the reason women both identify and dis-identify with feminism. Across the chapters that follow, I want to consider the accounts of avowedly feminist women to explore how they forge relationships to feminism in the midst of the very many stories that are told about it.

3

Rebecca: Class, Politics and Family

Introduction

This chapter explores the significance of the generational, familial and maternal to feminist identifications through the story of Rebecca, a 32-year-old, white, middle-class, heterosexual woman. At the time of being interviewed, Rebecca lived with her husband, with whom she had been in a relationship since she was 16 years old, in the county in which they both grew up. Like many of the other women interviewed, Rebecca's story drew on generational, familial and, in particular, maternal tropes. Her political identification was also intricately bound to a particular time and place—1980s Britain. Rebecca invokes the sights and sounds of the political, social and cultural landscape of this period as she tells her feminist story and, in doing so, illustrates the fundamental relationality and social embeddedness of her feminism. This is amidst a particular narrative strategy seen in many of the interviews that highlights the importance of personal choice, personality and experience in the development of a political identity. Rebecca's account invites us to consider 'the ways in which the traces of the lives of others are experienced as permeating everyday life and subjectivity under conditions of individualization'

(Roseneil 2009:412). That is, it demonstrates the intrinsically relational and social nature of identity, despite what may appear to be an individualised narrative of a feminism developed through personal success or failure, choice and determination.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the generational narratives that are used to articulate feminist history and the relationships between feminists of different ages have been criticised for being linear, progressive and one-dimensional. The telling and retelling of feminism's stories as familial and generational dramas bring with it the representation of feminism as a baton to be passed on from the old and ageing generation to the new and youthful one. This may be articulated as a nostalgic attachment to a feminist past, or as a source of conflict and desire to break with this past (explored in various ways by Aikau et al. 2007; Bailey 1997; Henry 2004; Howie 2010; Roof 1997). This articulation of feminist histories through the generational narrative carries with it the danger of foreclosing possibilities for a diverse feminist past, present or future, because of its reliance on the reproduction of an identical feminist subject (Wiegman 2000).

Of course, these narratives of feminist history are figurative, but these accounts are active in the ways in which women tell stories of and understand their own feminist identities (Henry 2004). The prominence of the mother, or of mother figures, in my interviewees' stories, although, interestingly, not in the memory-work group, demands attention. I am not arguing that this prominence is solely the effect of the generational and maternal narrative of feminism upon women's personal accounts. The tendency to look to our parents and in particular our mothers in seeking understandings and explanations of self is not unusual in Western understandings of the self (Lawler 1999). We can nevertheless see how these relationships are active in the formation of Rebecca's political identifications by paying close attention to the stories she tells of her feminism. Her account challenges the idea of the development of an individualised feminist subject, but illustrates how she becomes feminist in relationship to people, places and through different periods of time.

I present Rebecca's story here as a means of exploring how this narrative operates in personal accounts, the ways in which it is adopted, resisted and formed in a specific social and cultural context. I also argue that there are multiple temporalities at work in this account that can subvert or trouble the linear, progressive temporality that generational

accounts often depend upon and reproduce. Rebecca offers an account of the development of a feminist identity that is dependent on a female, feminist and maternal heritage, but one that conveys the convergence, overlap and cyclical nature of generational time.

'It's My Feminism and No One Else's'

One aspect of Rebecca's narrative depicts a linear, progressive journey of personal growth whereby, as a result of academic attainment and increased confidence, she becomes feminist. She was reluctant to call herself feminist as a young woman at university, but came to adopt the name once she was:

> Comfortable enough in my skin and in who I was to be able to deal with other people's perceptions (of what a feminist is or should be) and my knowledge that it's my feminism and no one else's.

Rebecca locates her political identity in the context of her personal development—growing in confidence and feeling at ease with herself allow her to call herself 'feminist'. She later comments this occurred as a result of her academic achievements at university. However, in the short extract above, it is already evident that Rebecca's feminist becoming is deeply relational, albeit expressed through a narrative of individualisation. Rebecca constructs an idea of herself and of what feminism is or 'should' be, through others' perceptions. The impact of expectations of the 'perfect feminist'—discussed in detail in Chap. 6—or of the risk of being viewed as a feminist in some contexts meant that many of the women interviewed had, at some point, found it difficult to name themselves feminist.

Rebecca's, albeit brief, distancing of herself from feminism reflects patterns of dis-identification seen amongst some young women (e.g. Budgeon 2001; Jowett 2004; Scharff 2009, 2011a, b, 2013) where stereotypes and preconceptions about what feminism is impact upon their desire to identify with it. However, despite the challenge, Rebecca is ultimately able to identify with and make feminism her own. She is able to see feminism as something she can possess as she grows in confidence. In contrast to structural challenges experienced by some women of colour or working-class women who experience exclusion from feminism as a white, middle-class

movement (Aronson 2003; Skeggs 1997), Rebecca locates the barriers to naming herself 'feminist' in her own personal development.

Ultimately, Rebecca adopts her feminism as a means of resisting the judgements or expectations of those around her. Feminism becomes something that Rebecca is in ownership of, a possession that is individualised as a means of protecting it and herself from the judgement and expectations of others. This individualised narrative divorces both feminism and the feminist from its wider network of social and historical relations, as feminism is positioned as something that individual women can be in possession of. It is an account that appears to accord with the 'new' or 'third-wave' feminist identities discussed by Scharff (2013) and Budgeon (2011), which are characterised by individualism, choice and empowerment, as well as a lack of intergenerational identification. This is a feminism formed in the neoliberal context of late modernity that posits the project of self-hood as a form of feminist activism (Budgeon 2011; Scharff 2013).

However, the centrality of the generational narrative to Rebecca's account complicates this positioning of her feminism as an individualised project of selfhood. When paying attention to the ways in which Rebecca draws on the generational in her account, a web of historically, politically and geographically located relations emerge that are central to her feminist politics. Rebecca demonstrates a temporal and affective investment in a feminist politics transmitted across female and familial lines. She does so through the memories of her home and family during the 1980s and, in particular, her relationship to her mother. It is a story that disrupts a simplistic linear and progressive narrative of becoming feminist.

Remembering Family, Class and Politics

Rebecca's mother died when Rebecca was 10 years old. Her memories of the period before her mother's death provide the context for her narrative. She describes her early home environment here:

> I mean, I was brought up in a proper hippy household, erm, and my parents, before I started school, actually took it in turns to work and not work. So I had long periods of time where my dad was a stay-home-dad, but I

also had periods of time where my mum was stay-at-home. So there was nothing that wasn't equal in our household, there wasn't any perception to me that there was a difference between men and women, or prescribed roles, or anything like that. It was just, you know, everyone was equal, erm, and so, it just, it wasn't an issue.

In Rebecca's memories of her early childhood, her mother and father share childcare responsibilities and subvert or reject any notion of prescribed gender roles. She remembers her family unit as unaffected by, or resistant to, any gender inequalities of the society it existed in. The description of the family home as a 'hippy household' positions it as counter-cultural and different from or critical of mainstream society. This difference in both practice and values is further cemented through Rebecca's description of the town she grew up in and her family's position within it. She describes the town as 'dead posh', whilst clarifying 'we weren't posh, but the place is well snooty, erm, something like more sports cars per capita than anywhere else in the country.'

Material and spatial markers of class further mark out Rebecca and her family from her home town's other residents. This is an important distinction in Rebecca's memories of a burgeoning political identity that aligns with socialist, working-class politics and retains this amidst, or indeed defines, her parent's own class mobility. She describes the importance of politics in her family home:

It was quite a political household so erm…miners' strike was a massive issue in our house erm…and it was the era, I grew up in the Thatcher[1] era erm, and we were a very left-wing household so there was a lot of stuff going on all the time against the very right-wing world that we were living in and, you know, various erm inequalities.

In returning to her childhood memories, Rebecca's account of her feminist becoming is closely associated with a particular political, social, historical and geographical moment. This complicates the individualised narrative that aligns her feminism with her personal development.

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[1] Margaret Thatcher was the British Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, and leader of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1990.

 Rebecca's childhood memories of the 1984–1985 UK miners' strikes were discussed in detail in her interview and represented in the photographs she brought with her. Describing the importance of the strikes to her own family history, Rebecca says:

> So it was just a really, really, big deal in my house and then later on through my life and what that meant, and also because it signified erm, I suppose the loss on both sides of my family. It's a really good erm, indicator of the loss of that kind of working-class and my parents were both first-generation university goers, you know, they were that whole baby boomer new, new middle-class thing.

For Rebecca, the miners' strikes speak to the changes in class identity that occurred, in part, as a result of her parents' access to higher education. These were changes felt by Rebecca as a loss on both sides of her family. This is reflected in the slightly dismissive language she uses to describes her parents as part of the 'new middle-class thing', in comparison to the emphasis she places on the importance of the miners' strikes.

 The strikes tell a very personal and familial story for Rebecca and illustrate the complexities of class identifications (Savage 2015). Her 'baby boomer'[2] parents are likely to have been the beneficiaries of the still uneven expansion of higher education in the UK that followed the Robbins Report of 1963 (Robbins 1963).[3] The expansion of higher education responded to the changing nature of industry and work in the UK. Ann-Marie Bathmaker (2003) observes that technological innovation and

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[2] 'Baby boomers' describes the generation born during the period that birth rates rose across a range of industrialised countries following the Second World War. The dates for the UK 'baby boom' generation are contested. Chris Phillipson, for example, defines the 'first wave baby boomers' as those born roughly between 1945 and 1954 (Phillipson et al. 2008). James Harkin and Julia Huber define baby boomers as those born between 1945 and 1965 (Harkin and Huber 2004). Jane Falkingham observes that the UK witnessed a distinctive peak in birth rates in both 1947 and again in 1964 (Falkingham 1987).

[3] The UK Robbins Report recommended that a place in higher education should be made available to all those who qualified by attainment and ability and wished to attend. As a consequence of the report's recommendations, the number of students in higher education approximately doubled between 1963 and 1970 (Walford 1991) before levelling off during the 1970s as a result of reduced government spending and the UK Conservative government's challenges to the concept of state-funded higher education (Bathmaker 2003).

cheaper transportation led to the transfer of production to countries where costs were cheaper. This change, in conjunction with the development of a 'knowledge economy', developed a need for education and training as central to economic policy-making (Bathmaker 2003). Rebecca's parents' access to higher education is therefore intricately linked to the decline in industry and changing socio-economic circumstances that affected her grandparents' occupation and their own class histories. Rebecca associates her parents with a forward-looking generation that benefited from the post-industrial climate and the loss of industry that affected their own parents.

Rebecca's attachment to the 1980s and the working-class politics of her childhood forms an account of a political identity that incorporates the complexities and shifts in changing socio-economic positions and the educational resources her family has access to. (Walkerdine and Jimnez 2012) These shifts are set in the context of changes in the social and political landscape of the time. Her narrative reflects Valerie Walkerdine and Luis Jimenez's explorations of the effects of the closure of steel works in a South Wales town they name 'Steel Town'. Walkerdine and Jimenez explore the effects of the closure of the works on both the workers and following generations. Their participants still lived in Steel Town, and the closure of the steel works had a very real effect on their employment opportunities, in a way that the closure of the coal mines did not have on Rebecca or her parents, who were not directly employed by the mining industry. However, the affective connection to the steel industry and the intergenerational transmission of a sense of loss and collective grief demonstrated by Walkerdine and Jimenez's participants is something echoed in Rebecca's relationship to the mining industry. For Rebecca, the miners' strike was felt as a 'big deal' because of the changes and what she frequently refers to as 'losses' for her own family. The processes of deindustrialisation are felt as very personal and familial losses and as having a very direct impact upon the class identifications of her own family.

Rebecca's return and attachment to the politics of 1980s Britain locate her feminism in the wider context of political change, socialist politics and opposition to the policies of the Thatcher government. It is through a network of kinship ties, characterised by particular political affiliations and class identities, that Rebecca's personal and political identity is

formed. The association in her memories between the social and political context of her childhood and the affective remembering of her family history is established and strengthened through emphasising a familial difference from the 'snooty' residents of her home town and the various material possessions she associates with the middle classes. Rebecca's school memories reveal her difficulties in negotiating these differences:

> I had Kickers which, you know, I'd kill for a pair now but at the time all the girls had patent leather strip swivel strap shoes and I wasn't allowed any erm… so there were things like that, which, at the time, I used to grumble and groan about you know, erm, and as I got older coming to terms with things like, you know, my dad's viewpoint that wages should be capped, you know, it was wrong that certain people earn ridiculous amounts of money and I didn't get that and everyone, you know, around us, you know, our school trip in the sixth form used to always be to Russia, the sixth formers who were doing sociology, and my dad kind of saved and said 'I'll be able to afford for you to do that' and then the year that I could've gone they decided to go to China so, you know, that's what it was like where we grew up, a school trip to China, you're talking about two grand a person, it's just ridiculous, they go skiing and all that kind of thing, so it was a real dichotomy for me of, but then again maybe part of me just revelled in being a bit different as well.

Rebecca's description reveals the conflicts she felt as a child or teenager whose own family background, class and politics differed from those of her peers. She reveals not only a desire for the possessions that signify the 'snootiness' of her fellow residents, but also a pleasure in being different from her peers. Rebecca forged a personal and political identity through the experience of being different from her peers because of a working-class, socialist heritage.

In Rebecca's memories, material possessions stand out as both illustrative of her family's political and class differences, and also of the changes in their class identity that place Rebecca in line with the middle classes. She shifts between orientating herself towards these objects and revelling in the difference that they mark out between herself and her peers. Through these shifting orientations, she is developing both a personal and political identity that reconciles her family's changing class identity with a politics that is so rooted in her working-class heritage.

Rebecca's conflicted relationship to her family's class history echoes Beverly Skeggs' (1997) work with working-class women and, to a greater extent, Lawler's (1999) work with women born to working-class families, who come to define themselves as middle class. Both Skeggs and Lawler found that the women they interviewed distanced themselves from the material possessions they viewed as the markers of the middle class. These are what Skeggs refers to as 'the whole package of dispositions' associated with the middle classes (Skeggs 1997:95). These material possessions stand out in Rebecca's account of her childhood as the objects through which she remembers her family's transition from working class to the 'new' middle class. At times, in common with Skeggs' participants, Rebecca does distance herself from these possessions- evidenced by her dismissive attitude towards the 'sports car' driving residents of her home town. However, she also describes a desire for the shoes and holidays that she sees her peers in possession of. Lawler's work holds further relevance here as she explores the affect of shame and pain she witnesses in her participants' accounts of not being able to 'do' middle class properly. This sense of shame is echoed in Rebecca's accounts of her school experiences, of not fitting in or having the money to afford the 'dispositions' of the middle classes.

Rebecca's narrative is, however, distinct from Skegg's interviewees' in terms of political and class consciousness. Whilst Skeggs suggests her interviewees' affective response to being named a certain class (marked by fear, desire, resentment and humiliation) makes it unlikely they would engage in any kind of class politics or organising, Rebecca's politics is, by contrast, closely connected to her class identifications. Rebecca is perhaps able to identify with a working-class heritage without this identification being marked by negative affects because of the mobility of her family's class identifications.

Rebecca's story reflects shifts in class identities in post-war Britain. In particular, Mike Savage's (2007) argument that these changes are marked by a reworking of the ways in which class identities are articulated, rather than a decline in class per se. Drawing on Mass Observation data from 1948 to 1990, Savage suggests that that, in 1990, class was no longer viewed as simply determined by birth and upbringing, nor was discussion of it taken as a 'sign of vulgarity' (2007:5.6) as the 1948 respondents

indicated. In contrast, for Mass Observers in the 1990s, the relationship between family and class was marked by mobility and change. Reference to family members with different class backgrounds meant the writer could position their class identities as 'liminal' or 'ambivalent' (5.7), and reflexive 'class-talk' (5.6) was a sign of sophistication and a 'powerful hook for hanging stories on' (5.4). It is precisely this liminality and in-betweeness through which Rebecca is able to establish a political and feminist identity. She marks out the difference between the working-class family background and her middle-class peers and town that she had close proximity to as a result of her parents' occupation of the 'new middle-class'. This liminality means that Rebecca is able to identify with her working-class heritage, whilst occupying the spaces of the middle classes.

So Rebecca, in part, establishes her political and feminist identity through difference. Despite locating her parents in the 'new middle class' as a consequence of their access to higher education, Rebecca ensures that they are not 'too' middle class by marking out their differences in terms of material possessions, financial resources and political viewpoints. This enables her to negotiate the demands of her changing family circum-stances that are such a prominent moment in her story of developing a political identity. Her celebration of difference is part of her negotiation of her family's changing class identifications and the consolidation of the 'new middle class' with their working-class heritage. Despite the very per-sonal disappointments Rebecca felt as a teenager because of the material and economic differences between herself and her peers, her story also cements a difference that is celebrated and enjoyed.

In retaining a boundary between the middle-class residents of her home town and her own family, Rebecca's narrative maintains and privi-leges an identification with this working-class heritage, whilst accounting for its fluidity and movability. This aspect of Rebecca's narrative provides a working-class, socialist, familial and political foundation for her femi-nist becoming. Her present-day feminist identity is rooted in her memo-ries of a working-class, socialist family history. Across Rebecca's interview, this account of a generational, familial, political becoming is remembered along female lines, bringing women and ultimately her mother into the foreground of her story.

Remembering Women Against Pit Closure

In Rebecca's memories of her childhood, women are the political actors. Rebecca constructs this female-led, feminist history through her memories of the miners' strikes, her mother's activism and in family stories of her great maternal aunt, a prominent British suffragette. She conveys her childhood memories through songs, photographs and stories that bring women to the fore and, in doing so, develops and sustains a narrative of a feminist becoming that draws upon a history of female political activism. The links that Rebecca draws between her own feminist identity and a history of female-led activism go back in time to the British campaign for women's right by suffragettes in the early twentieth century. During the interview, Rebecca shared a photograph of her suffragette aunt and draws a connection between this familial past and her professional identity in the present:

> I picked her because of the kind of familial history but also, erm, it linked quite nicely 'cause the other week I had an experience, we've got lots of stuff going on here, as everyone has in terms of funding and I was explaining to staff what was going on before the staff meeting and one of them said to me 'oh you are our Emmeline Pankhurst' (laughter) and that was just about the most amazing thing anyone's ever said to me.

Through this comparison, Rebecca's family history of feminist women is realised in her own professional life. In this moment, she draws links between her familial, feminist heritage and her present-day feminist and professional identity.

The women in Rebecca's account are described in vivid detail. It is through this detail that Rebecca forms her ideas about what feminism is. When asked how she knew her mother was a feminist, Rebecca responded by saying:

> I thought my mum was weird because she drank pints of bitter and my perception as a small child was that men drank pints of bitter and smoked roll ups and women drank halves of lager and smoked proper cigarettes and so, you know, I knew, I knew that she was a bit different because she drank

pints of bitter (laughter) erm, so I don't know. But I think she was like me in a lot of ways because, yeah she wasn't a stiletto wearer or anything but she could make she was amazing at sewing and knitting and so she could see something in the shop and then she would just go home and draw a pattern on some newspaper and make it.

And here, Rebecca relays family stories about her suffragette aunt:

My grandma used to say, and I don't know if this was her memory or her mum's memory, that erm, she would come to the house, the family house, and sit, she always wore black and she'd sit on the back step smoking this kind of clay pipe and then the relatives would kind of go to her (laughter), she wouldn't come to them, type thing.

Both these 'memories' focus on the material—the cigarettes, pipes, pints of bitter and clothing mark, both women out as different in Rebecca's mind. In particular, they eschew traditional notions of femininity in both behaviour and dress and it is this that, at least in Rebecca's memory of her mother signals that she was a feminist. The generational transmission of ideas about what feminism is and who feminists are, are articulated through the embodied and the material. Rebecca comes to know feminism through stories of her mother and her suffragette aunt in a very personal, intimate and specific way. It also, of course, draws on the often perceived conflict between feminism and femininity that is often cited as a reason for women's dis-identification with feminism (Scharff 2013). But the material and embodied aspects of her mother and great aunt's feminism offer Rebecca a way of identifying and remembering them in the present.

In constructing a feminist, familial heritage as a means of understanding her feminist becoming, Rebecca draws in multiple actors, places and times. It is, however, her mother that comes to the fore in her narrative, and so Rebecca, in one sense, offers a generational account of becoming feminist in one of the most literal sense—depicting her feminist politics as something she developed and adopted because of her mother and, more generally, a female-led family history of political activism that facilitated her political awareness. In particular, this is established through her memo-

ries of the 1984–1985 UK miners' strikes and the activities of the 'Women against Pit Closures' groups that saw women organising in support of the strike, autonomously of the NUM. I want to explore here how Rebecca forms a memory of this period through songs, images and family stories that bring women to centre of her account. In doing so, her generational narrative of becoming feminist, in which her politics are received from her family history, is one that evades any dominant generational narrative of feminist history and the linear, progressive temporalities that often underpin it.

The song 'No Going Back', by Sandra Kerr, folk singer and member of *Sisters Unlimited*, is one that Rebecca sang as a teenager. It describes the legacy of women's involvement in the miners' strikes, conveying the profound sense of change in women's experiences as a result of the strikes. The chorus goes:

> For there is no going, back
> There is no limit now, No going back,
> We're too deep in it now, No going back,
> We're different women now, No going back.

Singing the song as a teenager, some years after it was written and after the 1984–1984 miners' strikes, the song offers Rebecca a connection to numerous pasts. She explains the song's significance here:

> It was a brilliant, brilliant song called 'No Going Back' and is now for me it's really got a reminiscent of wartime, you know, and what the whole Rosie the Riveter thing and what women did during wartime and then when men came back from war suddenly there were being put back in place and I think, even though it was the eighties, there was something very similar that happened after the miners' strike.

The song offers Rebecca a connection between women's collective strength, struggle and solidarity across time, forging continuities between the work women performed during the world wars and women's collective organising during the strikes. Through the song, Rebecca forges 'strategic affinities' (Withers 2014) between these periods of activity.

Rebecca's memories of the miners' strikes, and the politics of the 1980s that provide its context, are formed through these fragments of song, images and family stories. Her account of her mother's involvement in the strikes, illustrates the collective nature of remembering as it draws upon her father's memories and are anchored by objects from her childhood. In turn, these memories contribute to the collective accounts of women's involvement in the strikes:

> It wasn't my dad who was out, we weren't, my parents weren't miners but their parents were, and it wasn't erm, my dad who was out on the picket line, it was my mum and I went with her a few times. I mean I was only little erm, but also I remember, you know, the Christmas time my toybox was raided and all my toys went, you know, to be given away and it was just erm, such a, I remember being quite upset about that bit, but the rest of it, you know, it was such a big deal in our household and erm…the fact that women, you know, who weren't miners, were really, really doing more than their bit at the time…had quite a big impact on me, more so later when I talked to my dad about it erm, and he was telling me, you know, what was going on and reminding me of things, because all I could remember was the toys.

Rebecca's childhood toys dominant this memory. Whilst her memories of her mother's participation on the picket lines are formed through conversations with her father, she clearly remembers her toy box 'being raided' for donations to mining families. Her memories are made up of traces of stories passed down through the family, illustrating the deeply social process of remembering and the ways in which our memories are enmeshed within social networks. In particular, they are often located within familial networks, where who and what is to be remembered is endorsed, transmitted and circulated by family members and stories (Hirsch 1997; Kuhn 2002, Misztal 2003).

Here, it is both the familial network that structures Rebecca's memories and the collective memory of women's roles in the miners' strikes, which emphasises the domestic in women's participation. As Jean Spence and Carol Stephenson comment: 'the practical, personal responses of women (to the strikes) were consonant with traditional female domestic responsibilities and perhaps inevitably, they thereby came to take major responsibility for the interpersonal and emotional work of the strike' (2007:5).

The emphasis on the toys in Rebecca's memories not only reveals a child's focus and priorities, but also indicates that her mother's activism, and women's involvement in the miners' strikes more generally, are remembered through the domain of the domestic as the organisers and providers of interpersonal and emotional work. The dominant media depiction of the women's involvement in the strikes was of an extension of domestic responsibilities undertaken in the home, through the provision of food parcels, organising communal kitchens and similar activities. However, whilst women's initial involvement may have centred on these roles, they became more involved across time in a wider range of activities (Shaw and Mundy 2005).

The photograph Rebecca brought to the interview to represent the miners' strikes speaks to this more diverse and complex nature of women's involvement, it moves beyond the focus on the domestic in the dominant media portrayal (Shaw and Mundy 2005). The picture depicts what looks like an amateur dramatics group performing a play about the strikes. Six women stand on a picket line with placards that read 'Unite not Fight', 'Cole not Dole' and 'Women Against Pit Closure'. Rebecca found the image on the internet and explains that she chose this over a personal image because she did not want to make her father 'rummage through' their family photographs. It is a comment that both signifies the inconvenience of having to physically 'rummage', but also the emotional 'rummaging' that looking through old photographs requires. The image also reflects her own memories of the events—as borrowed stories or handed down memories through which Rebecca forms a narrative of her own feminist becoming. This snapshot of women standing on the picket lines, as Rebecca remembers her mother doing, holding placards and, it appears, singing or chanting, challenges the perception of the women's role during the strikes as being restricted to the provision of interpersonal and emotional care. The multiple dimensions of Rebecca's account draw out the complexities and diversity of this particular moment of women's collective action.

Rebecca's memories of 'Women Against Pit Closures' are important to her story of becoming feminist for various reasons. They mark a turning point in her own family history, but they also bring women to the

centre of political activism. Whilst Rebecca does not explicitly mention feminism as a salient feature of her childhood, she draws on these familial memories to create a female-led, familial political history and closely connects this to an explicit feminist identity. Reflecting again on her mother's involvement in activism, Rebecca comments on its significance to her present-day feminist identity:

> Another one of the kind of political things that was going on in my household when I was little erm, going on the CND[4] marches was something that, that was a family day out and again I think it was that, it's that thing of activism and it was a lot of women who were organising these things and making them happen and erm…you know, I remember we used we used to have badges and I had one on my school jumper and I was only like six erm, and there were people in our house and, you know, all that sort of thing. So again to me, and my mum was in control of that, so it just, for me that's kind of activism and it's along with the miners' strike stuff, one of the first memories I have of kind of being powerful and doing something about what you don't like, I think which links into kind of my views of feminism.

Rebecca's understanding of what feminist is was formed through the sense of power that her own early political engagement affords, coupled with the prominence of her mother in these experiences. Her memories and experiences of women's organising are formative of her understanding of feminism and an essential part of her own feminist history. It is not one, however, that easily fits into narratives of feminism that demarcate its history into 'waves'. The significance of the miners' strikes to Rebecca's account brings a period of women's activism to the fore that is not incorporated into the wave metaphor and one that has a more complex relationship to feminism. In interviews with women active in the strikes, Karen Beckwith observed that they developed a strong collective identity as 'women of the working-class' (Beckwith 1998:163), but not necessarily as feminists. Beckwith writes:

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[4] The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is a UK-based organisation that calls for complete nuclear disarmament. During the 1980s, it saw a surge in membership and activity.

> Women active in the British Coal strike were willing to identify themselves as women, with a distinctive style of activism and organizing, at the same time they were reluctant to identify themselves as feminist, even as some recognized the importance of feminist ideas in shaping the possibilities for their active involvement in the strike (1998:164)

In bringing to the fore a period of women's activism that has a complicated relationship to feminism Rebecca's account draws into question what 'counts' as feminist activism or forms part of a feminist history. Although the women's involvement in the miners' strikes may not be part of the dominant narratives of feminist history, indeed, for the women involved in the strikes a feminist framing of their activism may be resisted, the strikes are most certainly part of Rebecca's own feminist history.

Rebecca's story draws attention to the intersecting concerns and personal and political identities that converged during the miners' strikes. As Diarmaid Kelliher remarks 'the miners' strike was an important moment in which radical activists from diverse backgrounds coalesced behind an 'old-fashioned' industrial dispute' (2014:241). Miner support groups included 'Woman Against Pit Closures', 'Black Delegation to the Miners', 'Greenham Women for a Miners Victory' and 'Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners' (Kelliher 2015), whose story was recently brought to a wider audience through Matthew Warchus' 2014 film *Pride*. Rebecca draws the miners' strikes into her feminist story through her memories and discussion of 'Women Against Pit Closures'. It is a way of remembering the period through a decidedly female, if not feminist, lens.

Skeggs (1997) has argued that women's involvement in the miners' strikes offered a discourse that was distinct from, and stood in contrast to, the individualistic feminist discourse that was being made marketable during the period. For the working-class women Skegg interviewed, the miners' strikes offered a more complex picture and 'these contradictions and multiple-feminist representations are picked up by the women when they try and position themselves in relation to feminism and to understand what feminism means' (Skeggs 1997:145). Echoing the importance of the strikes for providing an alternative feminist discourse to Skegg's interviewees, the significance of the miners' strikes and more generally the oppositional politics of the 1980s to Rebecca is one that nuances

her narrative of becoming feminist through personal development. It is a point in history with which she has a familial connection, but it is also one that forges a connection to her working-class heritage that is so important to the development of a political consciousness.

'And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other'

The presence of Rebecca's mother can also be traced in Rebecca's discussion of her education choices. The attribution of understandings of the self to early childhood experience, and particularly relationships with mothers, was a narrative repeated across the interviews, with many of the women telling stories that foreground the influence of their mother. It is also familiar in both literal and figurative retellings of feminist histories, where a multitude of actual or metaphorical relationships between women of different ages come to be conceived of as mother–daughter relationships (Henry 2004).

In many ways this is unsurprising, as Lawler (2000) comments, this scrutiny of the self, the search for an explanation of what kind of person we are and the choices we make, often leads us to reflect on our childhood, our relationship with our parents and in particular our mothers. However, Rebecca's account highlights the multiple temporalities and relationships active in this narrative. She does not simply receive feminism from her mother as something to be passed on, embraced or rejected, but places herself in time with her mother and draws her mother into the present, through an identification with her. This temporal aspect of her feminist becoming is made apparent in two distinct ways. Firstly, her discussion of reading Luce Irigaray's 1981 essay 'And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other' at university and, secondly, through her encounter (and my own) with a photograph of her mother.

One way that Rebecca framed her identification as a feminist during the interview was in terms of educational attainment. She explains how, although resistant to the label 'feminist' as a teenager, she discovered an aptitude for feminist theory during her Women's Studies degree. This gave her faith in her academic abilities and the confidence to call herself a feminist:

I realised actually I was quite bright, whereas before I was always doing okay, and so that had a big impact on me in terms of labelling myself as a feminist and from that point I would say, so from probably the age of 19/20, I would have labelled myself as a feminist.

Rebecca's comments develop the narrative of personal achievement discussed at the beginning of this chapter, which associates becoming feminist with personal development, confidence and, here, academic ability. This is only one aspect of Rebecca's account, when considered in detail, it is evident that Rebecca's feminist becoming is a deeply relational one that is founded in familial, social, historical and political networks of influence. Her discussion of her family's class and political identifications, realised in her affective attachment to the socialist politics of early 1980s Britain and epitomised in her memories of the miners' strikes, challenges this more individualistic account. When considering the significance of Rebecca's relationship with her mother to her educational choices, the relational embeddedness of these choices becomes apparent. It is a perspective that shifts focus from education as an individual endeavour, to a collective experience (Finn 2015).

Rebecca was one of only three students on her women's studies course who went to university at 18 years old, the rest of her cohort were mature students. Rebecca reflects that 'given what the course is, it's no great surprise' and describes herself as not being old enough to have had the 'life experience' that would prompt someone to pursue women's studies. Looking for an explanation for her choice Rebecca returns to her relationship with her mother and the 'life experience' she acquired as a result of her mother's death:

If I look back on it and I tried to psychoanalyse myself, I think initially I did women's studies because it subconsciously made me think of her [her mother]. Because you know as I said at the time I wasn't identifying myself as feminist I had a, you know, I was, you know, seventeen when I applied to university so I hadn't had, although, you know, some life experience because of losing my mum young, I hadn't had those levels of experience that mature women who were on the course, so what would make me want to do it, you know? Erm so, I think I kind of have to put that down to her

and the influence that she'd had on me when I was younger and kind of maybe my need to link, or feel a link with her, particularly as a teenager.

Rebecca makes an explicit connection between the death of her mother and her decision to take women's studies. She draws on a psychoanalytic discourse to explain her educational choices as a means of forging a link with her mother. Rebecca views her decision to pursue a course of study that has explicitly feminist foundations as a means of connecting with her feminist mother. In highlighting the age difference between herself and the majority of her fellow students, she places herself in time with her mother and occupies a place and politics that could have been occupied by her mother, had she been alive. Rebecca places herself in time with her mother's feminism more implicitly through her discussion of reading the essay 'And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other' (Irigaray 1981).
  She describes her attachment to it here:

> That piece of writing affected me not in the way erm…you know, other moving pieces of writing have affected me and stayed with me 'till today and I could quote bits of them, but in the way that feminism and me kind of clicked as a, as a you know, 'I'm out and proud' type of thing.

The essay offers Rebecca a connection point with feminism through which she feels able to be 'out and proud'. In the context of Rebecca's loss of her mother, her affective attachment to Irigaray's text as the piece of writing through which she becomes feminist is significant. Irigaray's essay is a powerful and poetic monologue by the daughter, to the mother. It describes the daughter's first, intimate relationship with the mother, that is both nurturing and destructive.
  In the opening lines, Irigaray writes:

> With your milk, Mother, I swallowed ice. And here I am now, my insides frozen. And I walk with even more difficulty than you do, and I move even less. You flowed into me, and that hot liquid became poison, paralyzing me. (Irigaray 1981:60).

The essay laments women's lack of subjectivity and personhood outside the roles of mother's daughter and daughter's mother. As the essay's trans-

lator Hélène Vivienne Wenzel (1981) observes in her introduction to the essay, Irigaray explores the mother and daughter's loss of separate identities and 'grief over the lost possibility for a real relationship between two separate, whole women' (Wenzel 1981). It is a lament for the difficulties of the mother–daughter relationship in patriarchal culture and of the narrow possibilities for differing relationships between women of different ages. Marianne Hirsch (1989) similarly observes that Irigaray mourns the separation between the mother and daughter, whilst at the same time revealing the daughter's anxieties about losing herself in the mother.

As Rebecca's attachment to the essay suggests, its themes are reflected in her account of her own relationship with her mother. She reflects during the interview on the rupture in her own relationship with her mother:

> I was only ten when she died so, you know, obviously I remember her and I remember the whole experience, but we never got to know each other as, you know, as you do as a teenage girl with your mum, or as a young woman.

Irigaray concludes the essay with an expression of her desire for the possibilities of a narrative in which both the mother and daughter remain alive:

> And the one doesn't stir without the other. But we do not move together. When one of us comes into the world, the other goes underground. When the one carries life, the other dies. And what I wanted from you, Mother, was this: that in giving me life, you still remain alive (Irigaray 1981:67).

That Rebecca pinpoints her ability to speak as a feminist at the time she read a text exploring the complicated and often anguished mother–daughter relationship signals that her feminist becoming is intimately linked to her mother, and in particular her early death. Whilst her identification with the politics of her childhood revives a working-class heritage for Rebecca and works to keep her mother alive in the narrative, this affective response to Irigaray's work brings her mother's death into focus and narrates her struggle to form a relationship with her. The generational narrative Rebecca draws upon, in which her feminist becoming is intimately linked to the politics of her childhood, could be viewed as a

response to the insecure but loving relationship with her mother that her attachment to Irigaray's (1981) work speaks to.

The timing of the essay's publication is also important—born in the late 1970s, Rebecca went to university aged 18 in the mid-1990s. This was over 10 years after the piece was translated in 1981 and following, as Hirsch (1989) observes, a proliferation in writing on the mother–daughter relationship that filled a void the essay speaks to. Rebecca was therefore reading a text that was already 14 years old. More significant than the age of the piece is its lament for the lack of space given to a relationship that was in fact being addressed in more contemporary feminist writing. Like much of her narrative, Rebecca's affective and political identification with the past could be viewed as a means of being in time with her lost mother, or as indicative of the impact of her mother's time on her own. In both her identification with Irigaray's writing and her narrative focus on the influence of the politics of the 1980s, Rebecca locates her feminist politics in the period before time was punctured by her mother's death.

Rebecca's reflection on her decision to study women's studies similarly signifies a temporal and theoretical positioning of her own feminism that accords with the 'old' rather than the 'new'. Referring to women's studies, she comments that:

> It doesn't exist anymore, you know. You, you will struggle to find any women's studies degrees now because it's all gender studies and that's to me, I think is a really sad thing. It will be interesting to see if we go full circle again.

As Hemmings (2006) discusses, the distinction between women's studies and gender studies and the various debates around their usage have mapped out a chronology of academic feminist theory and political intervention (Hemmings 2006, 2011). Depending on the position of the teller, gender studies might be considered to be expansive, marking important theoretical and political shifts in feminist thinking, whereas women's studies is seen as anachronistic and associated with a different political generation. Or, as reflected in Rebecca's comments, the demise of women's studies courses is viewed as a regretful loss of women's activism, coupled with an unwelcome shift to feminist theory.

Women's studies courses started to emerge at the end of the 1970s, and, by the mid-1990s, shifts were already being made away from it, towards gender studies, with various voices contributing to the debates surrounding this shift. Evans, for example, who in 1982 was writing about the 'establishment of a new academic subject: that of women's studies' (Evans 1982:61) was, only eight years later, lamenting its demise (Evans 1990, also contributing to the discussion: Brown 1997, Griffin 1998; Richardson and Robinson 1994). Reflecting on the status of women's studies in the UK during the 1990s, Griffin (1998) questions the narratives of progress and 'achievement' that accompanied discussion of it. Viewing women's studies as a site of insecurity and ambiguity, she argues that such narratives mask the more uneven developments of women's studies: the limited opportunities or reluctance to work within women's studies and concerns about its marginalisation, invisibility and limited institutional support. Over the past decade, the discussion of the viability, credibility and history of women's studies has been given renewed attention in both the UK and USA (e.g. Hemmings 2011; Levin 2007; Wiegman 2002; Zalewski 2003).

Hemmings (2011) suggests that the shift in naming from Women's studies to gender studies, which can arguably be mapped onto a linear change within academic institutions, masks a complex crossover of ideas and theoretical positions in both disciplines and their mutual influence. Rather than attending to its complexity, the institutional narrative produced about the shift posits that feminism became incorporated into academic institutions under the guise of women's studies and, following post-structuralist theoretical shifts, emerged as gender studies (Hemmings 2011). This narrative firmly situates women's studies with the 'old' and gender studies with the 'new'. In her comments about the shift, Rebecca draws upon a narrative that positions them as temporally and theoretically distinct when mourns the loss of women's studies as something of another time and place. It is not necessarily a permanent loss however, as she recognises the cyclical nature of time and the recycling of trends, patterns and fashions of theoretical and disciplinary positions. Rebecca's lament for women's studies may also illustrate her desire for the resurrection of lost objects and an attachment to what is perceived as no

longer existing, reflecting the association of women's studies with her mother's time.

Rebecca does offer a generational narrative of becoming feminist that positions her own feminism as inherited from her mother through her memories of activism, her educational choices and her engagement with Irigaray's work. However, it is not one that relies upon a linear, progressive temporality, at least not solely. Through her memories of her childhood, her reflections on her educational choices and her engagement with 'And the One Doesn't Stir Without Another', Rebecca creates a liminal space that is neither past nor present, but between, in which both Rebecca and her mother can exist. This space between the feminist past and present that Rebecca forges through her narrative is one that is consolidated by the viewing of a photograph of her mother during her interview.

'And then the Last One Is my Mum…'

Rebecca does not reveal her mother's death until more than halfway through the interview, at the point she shared her photographs. The image of her mother was the last of her seven images, it was introduced by her with the comment 'then the last one is my mum'. If, as this chapter argues, Rebecca's identification with the British socialist politics of the 1980s and her reflection on her educational choices allows her to sustain a relationship with her mother, then announcing her death before this point would perhaps risk disrupting this narrative. However, although Rebecca's mother's death is not revealed until approximately 40 minutes into the hour-long interview, the shortest of all the interviews, I felt her absence from the beginning. When asked to tell her story of becoming feminist, Rebecca responds:

> Okay, well that's an interesting question, because I did women's studies for my degree and erm, when I went to university I remember in the first week or so speaking to a friend of my mum's on the phone, saying 'oh the course is great', you know, and talking about various things but saying 'but I'm not feminist', even though I'd chosen that degree.

Speaking to a 'friend of (her) mum's' rather than her mother suggested to me that her mother was in some way absent. Although Rebecca had not mentioned her mother's death at this point, this oblique reference to her mother created a present-absence in the interview. Indeed, looking back on my own interview notes I had written 'mum?' in response to her relaying this conversation, indicative of my sense that the mother is missing in some way, or perhaps the expectation that she should be present. This is an expectation based partly on the presence of the mother in other interviews and so reveals some of the assumptions I brought to the interview. Interestingly, later in the interview—after Rebecca had revealed her mother's death—I asked again about this conversation with her mother's friend but remember it as being with her father, asking: 'when you went to university and you said….was it to your dad? That you're not a feminist'. This question perhaps, again, reveals my own desire to establish a familial link in this conversation: if not her mother, then surely her father?

Jacqui Gabb (2010) has argued that when we research individuals' intimate lives, we become embedded in those lives. All lives are haunted by the past and so, inevitably, as researchers, we encounter these ghosts. Both Rebecca's narrative and my own response to it are shaped around an encounter with her mother. This is illustrated most starkly by our discussion of a photograph of her (Fig. 3.1). Rebecca refers to two photographs of her mother during the interview. The first one, reproduced above, is of her mother, outside, alone, leaning against a stone wall, with dry stone walling in the background. The setting echoes the geographical and political framing of Rebecca's story. Rebecca's mother is central to the image. The pose she adopts and her make-up-free face, trousers and plain jumper eschew traditional markers of femininity, just as Rebecca remembers her earlier in the interview. The content and style of the photograph is also attributable to a particular period of time: the clothing and weather suggest an autumnal or perhaps early spring day, and the clothing, age and hairstyle indicate that the image is from the late 1970s. The rounded corners of the photograph itself also signify that it was processed during this period.

Fig. 3.1 *Rebecca's mother, blurred at Rebecca's request* (Date unknown)

Rebecca's mother is animated in this image, she smiles, but has her eyes closed, perhaps not unaware of the camera, but unconcerned by it.[5] She appears disengaged from the process of being photographed, although of course it could be a photograph taken too soon or too late, after the pose has been relaxed and the eyes closed. There is little clue, either in the photograph or Rebecca's discussion of it, of its context. That her mother is dressed casually, is posing unselfconsciously and looks relaxed indicate that it is a family photograph rather than, for example, a work setting. However, both Rebecca's parents were youth workers and would lead youth club trips that Rebecca would also attend and so this could in fact be a picture of Rebecca's mother in her work persona. There is then, little clue as to the photographer —if this is a family photograph of a family day out, it might be assumed that Rebecca's father was behind the camera. However if, as Rebecca indicates, the photograph was taken 'probably not that long after' Rebecca was born, Rebecca as an infant is missing from the image. It is possible then that the picture is of a new mother, but she stands alone in the image and is not presented as a mother. Her child is not in the photograph, and the photograph does not follow the conventions of family photography where the family portrait of the new mother might be expected to foreground the child (Hirsch 1997). The absence of the child on the family day out (if the father is holding the camera, who is holding the baby?) might be read as the child being silenced, or, as is explored in 'As the One Doesn't Stir without the Other', the impossibility of the mother and daughter existing in the same space.

This reading is, however, challenged by Rebecca's own discussion of the photograph, which she places herself in her mother's image, not as a child, but as a woman with the same age, outfit, mannerisms and personality. When asked if there were a particular reason she chose this image of her mother, as opposed to one in which they might appear together for example, Rebecca responds:

> I like that one because I think when I was about twenty-odd I had virtually the same outfit (laughter), you know, so to me it was a link, because I was only ten when she died so you know, obviously I remember her and I

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[5] These details are not visible here as the photograph has been blurred at Rebecca's request.

remember the whole experience but we never got to know each other as, you know, as you do as a teenage girl with your mum, or as a young woman, and also because I look like her, but I have the same kind of mannerisms as her and that reminds me of me, so that, that's why I chose it I think, it's one of my favourites.

Unlike the majority of interviewees, Rebecca did not bring an image of herself to the interview; her comments indicate why this might be. In this image of her mother, Rebecca sees a family resemblance, she sees herself in her mother's clothing, her looks and mannerisms. The two women, in one sense, both appear in the photograph. Jennifer Mason's (2008, 2011) concern with the sensory and material affinities of kinship, in particular with family resemblance, emphasises that bodies forge connections through resemblance that are transmitted across generations. Rebecca's earlier description of her mother as pint-drinking and cigarette-smoking is offered as a signifier of her feminism, suggesting that, for Rebecca, the maternal body transmits the feminist subject across generations. In recognising herself in the embodied aspects of her mother, the photograph allows Rebecca to also see herself as feminist.

Rebecca's feminism is one that is in time and space with her mother, and Mason's (2011) work is useful in understanding how this collapse of spatial and temporal divides occurs through the act of recognition and so through Rebecca's encounter with the photograph. Mason rethinks the boundaries between tangible and intangible through resemblance. She argues that whilst kinship affinities, such as those that occur when we see a family resemblance, might be considered intangible, they in fact feel very 'vivid, real, palpable (or almost) and resonant in lived experience. Even where affinities are ethereal, they have a tangible or even sometimes an evidential quality' (Mason 2008:42). I am suggesting here that through the resemblance between herself and her mother, Rebecca makes tangible that which appears intangible (both her mother and the past time and space that she occupies). In doing so, the apparently impermeable boundary between the past and present, dead and living, is destabilised. Rebecca's relationship with her mother, that at times appears difficult for her to hold on to, becomes tangible through the recognition of herself and identification with her mother through the photograph.

There is a temporal disjuncture in our viewing of this image, which occurs through the knowledge that the healthy, happy young woman in the photograph is, as Sontag (1977) describes all photographs demonstrate, vulnerable and heading towards destruction. Roland Barthes (1981) similarly and poignantly emphasises the link between family, photography and loss, reflecting on the present-absence of the photograph's subject. The image shows the subject to be where they once were, but are no longer. This image of Rebecca's mother freezes in time both the moment it was taken and the time that she was alive. It is reminiscent of Barthes' reading of the photograph of his late mother in *Camera Lucida*—referred to as the winter-garden image. Barthes emphasises the power of the image to resurrect the object. In viewing the image of her mother as well, young and happy, Rebecca chooses to remember her as the new, healthy mother and might be seen to execute an unburial of her absent mother and her politics, bringing her back to life and into the present with herself.

The spatial and temporal alignment with her mother that Rebecca enacts through the viewing of the photograph is reminiscent of Sontag's assertion that '[p]hotographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure' (1977:9). The image of her mother perhaps allows Rebecca to possess the feminist past in her feminist present and 'take possession' of the space of her insecure mother–daughter relationship. Rebecca looks and acts like her mother in this image, enabling her to establish a connection with her mother that, as Rebecca reflected upon, was made impossible as a teenager due to her early death. It therefore goes some way to easing the struggle that Rebecca has in maintaining a relationship with her mother as a teenage girl or young woman might. It also illustrates the ways in which Rebecca's story of becoming feminist is a generational one that does not conform to a linear, progressive temporality, but that enables her to occupy the same time and space as her mother. Coming to know feminism through, rather than receiving it from, her mother's politics, dress and mannerisms.

Spence and Holland (1991), amongst others (e.g. Finch 2007; Hirsch 1997; Kuhn 2002), highlight the ability of family photographs to move

beyond their personal, familial context and contribute to a collective memory.

Thinking about the significance of Rebecca's photograph, or her presentation of it in the context of an interview about 'becoming feminist', to the collective memory of feminist history, it might also illustrate feminism's own struggle with the maternal and the mother–daughter relationship. In representing her relationship with her mother, Rebecca chooses not to produce a conventional maternal image of, for example, a mother holding a young child in her arms, but an image that could be the mother or the daughter, or both. In fact, out of the context of Rebecca's description of it, the photograph is not a maternal image at all. This photograph could be seen as an attempt to realise the daughter's plea to the mother that 'in giving me life, you still remain alive' (Irigaray 1981:67). That is the ability to connect to and with the mother without reducing her solely to the maternal.

The image tells a complicated story of a daughter's attempts to connect with the present-absence of the mother. It also speaks to Rebecca's temporal relationship to feminist politics, forcefully uniting the past and the present, the mother and the daughter. In doing so, it offers an alternative maternal and familial, feminist narrative, marked by identification rather than conflict. The disruption of the maternal through the image—both in its refusal to adhere to a traditional maternal image and in Rebecca's identification of herself within in—troubles any linear, unilateral notions of generation within narratives of feminist becomings. The generations co-exist and overlap, rather than one being superseded by another.

That Rebecca's feminist becoming occurs through, but is not limited by, an identification with her feminist mother is demonstrated by her understanding that this image of her mother reaches beyond the maternal to represent 'woman', 'father', 'stepmother', 'husband' and 'family'. When she produces the photograph, she comments: 'I could have brought pictures of loads of women.' She then goes on to say:

> You know, equally I could have a picture of my dad there, or I could have a picture of my stepmum there, who is not a staunch enough feminist for my liking, but I love her to bits. Anyway, I could have a picture of my husband there who doesn't care that I haven't changed my name and would

be quite happy for my children to have my name and not his, you know, so I suppose she represents, you know, there's that representation but she also represents family.

Just as in her memories of her childhood and political upbringing, it is her mother who was the protagonist in the family's political activism, here the mother comes to represent 'family', 'woman' and a feminist, political consciousness. Whilst other figures do feature briefly in Rebecca's narrative (her father, in particular, but also her partner, stepmother, grandmother and aunt), it is her mother who plays the most significant role. However, in seeing her mother, herself, and numerous others, in the image, Rebecca offers an expansive notion of maternal identification, without dismissing or sidelining it. Rebecca's photograph of her mother, and the significance of her mother in her narrative more generally, enacts a cyclical motion that frames the family and its politics in the image of the mother, whilst then going beyond the maternal—she could in fact be 'loads of women'.

My own response to this image also located it in the familial and illustrates my identification with Rebecca's account, which inevitably impacted upon my choice to discuss it here. When Rebecca produced the photograph, I saw the woman in it not as her mother, but my own (feminist) aunt. I saw a resemblance that at the time was so strong I recognised the photograph as my own and read the image into my own female/familial/feminist history. This familial looking of my own not only demonstrated my reading of the image through details of my own feminist story, but also indicates how I might want, wish and expect Rebecca to read the image herself—as positive evidence of a feminist/familial history. It also marks a temporal affiliation suggesting that, whether or not Rebecca's mother looks like my aunt, the style of the clothing and image production would have been reminiscent of photographs of her at this age. In addition to its style, the image is dated by Rebecca's birth in the late 1970s. Interestingly then, the image is evocative not only of mine and Rebecca's familial history, but of a feminist history also, in which this particular aesthetic is familiar in images of 1970s British feminism and feminists.

Rebecca's story of becoming feminist is marked by changes across time in industry, education reforms and work patterns. Her relationship with

her feminist mother and feminism itself is located temporally and geographically as well as across changing class and industrial structures. That she tells her story of her relationship with her mother across various temporal perspectives challenges the oft criticised linear history that generational and familial accounts of feminism are thought to reproduce (Roof 1997). Rebecca rearticulates and reworks her family narrative to tell a maternal and generational story of feminism that brings her closer to her feminist mother. Her story of becoming feminist is one that allows her to reclaim a lost connection with her mother, as well as with her middle-class family's lost connection with their working-class history. The familial and generational become important markers in Rebecca's story, but not as a means of producing a linear and uncomplicated history. Rather she tells a cyclical story that both pulls her mother's politics into the present and connects with her feminism in the past.

Conclusions

Through remembering, forgetting and story-telling, Rebecca creates an account that protects her family, her mother's place in it and her own place in their working-class histories. This narrative strategy allows Rebecca to foreground both her mother and working-class heritage in her account of developing a feminist identity. It has the effect of maintaining a relationship with her mother through time and place and possibly attempting to repair her loss of a working-class family history. It is through her mother's death, rather than her life, that Rebecca comes to know feminism; in telling this story, Rebecca explores the complicated relationship between feminism, feminist history and the maternal. Rebecca's experience suggests that the maternal and generational should not be discarded as entirely unhelpful when considering narratives of feminist histories. Certainly on the level of Rebecca's lived experience, it is central to her feminism and the focus on it demonstrates that her becoming feminist occurs across multiple, non-linear temporalities.

So Rebecca deploys a generational narrative that troubles linear and progressive temporalities. Whilst generational and inheritance tropes recurred across the interviews, they did not mean the same or were used in the same

way for all of the women. One distinct way the narrative was deployed was in the discussion of a feminist personality that the women suggested they had inherited or been born with. I want to conclude this chapter with a consideration of this particular articulation of a feminist inheritance.

Many of the women interviewed began their account of becoming feminist with a description of feminism as having been ever present in their lives. Some described feminism as something received from their mothers. Alice, for example, commented that 'to a certain extent actually with me it's a case of I think I always have [been a feminist]….erm, my mum would see herself as a feminist'. Feminism might, on the other hand, be experienced as already part of them, even if not named as such. Emma says: 'there was something that was kind of in me already that that I didn't realise as feminism.' These two women convey a sense of their feminism as something that is received and already known. Even if not fully understood or named, feminism has always been there. Another notable expression of the omnipresence of feminism was of the assertion of a feminist personality type, illustrated here by Edel, Nancy and Catherine:

> Edel: I was just born a feminist, there was no … it's, it's my absolute personality. It's like obviously influenced by social whatever, but I'm just that type of person, I'm like, you know "no that's … unfair!"

> Nancy: I've always been an opinionated…obnoxious bolshie cow and erm, and I've always kind of thought, I grew up in a very male kind of environment, I've got three older brothers and a dad so it was, and then, so it was just like me and my mum, but my mum's also quite opinionated and tomboyish and what have you, I'm quite tomboyish and….

> Catherine: Well I suppose right from being a right little brat of a small child who's very precocious and doing very well at school and all the rest of it, rather a bit like Karen from Outnumbered[6] my parents say now, erm, I never had any sense that I was any less than because I was a girl. I was always very determined that I could do whatever I wanted to do and it

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[6] Outnumbered is a BBC sitcom that ran from 2007 to 2014. It was a comedy that charted the daily life of the Pete and Sue Brockman and their three children. Karen, the youngest of the three children, is clever, witty, inquisitive and precocious.

made absolutely no difference to the fact that I was girl, there was no sense that I was less than the boys

Here, Edel describes herself as having been 'born a feminist'. Whilst acknowledging the effect of social conditions on the development of personality, her feminism is fundamental and absolute. It is intricately connected to a sense of justice and fairness, but crucially it is speaking out about unfairness, rather than simply awareness of it, that is key evidence of her feminist personality. Nancy and Catherine, whilst still associating feminism with particular characteristics (opinionated, bolshie, determined), do set this in the context of gendered relationships. For Nancy, her assessment of herself as opinionated, obnoxious and bolshie is connected to both the 'male-dominated' environment of her family and her mother's shared characteristics. For Catherine, her precociousness, academic ability and determination offers a form of resistance to gender stereotypes that she might face as a young girl.

This 'feminist personality' perhaps offers a sense of stability and inevitability to the women's feminism. In remembering their childhood selves, these women offer particular childhood characteristics—outspokenness, fearlessness, intelligence and determination—as evidence of their feminist credentials. This is 'proof' that they have 'always been' feminist, even if unaware of it. These accounts of a feminist consciousness that has been present from a young age or even, as Alice, Emma and Edel suggest, inherited at birth, is one that is made possible in a cultural and historical context in which (certain manifestations of) feminism is available to be inherited. To draw upon an inheritance narrative, something must be available and in place to inherit. The dominance of white, middle-class voices in the retelling of feminist histories may mean that the inheritance narrative is made available to white, middle-class women in particular (Henry 2004). In their accounts of becoming feminist, feminism or the feminist subject is something that is so recognisable to these women that it is awarded the status of having been present from birth or early childhood in their narrative. Feminism is a discourse that is available to the women I interviewed as something that can be received and inherited, albeit, as Budgeon (2001) has argued, it is a feminism set within rather narrow parameters.

The feminist personality that the women describe is, tellingly, reminiscent of the empowered, confident and individualised subject of third-wave feminist discourse (Scharff 2011a, b). In this sense, the women's development of feminist identities appears individualised and adheres to Giddens' (1991) notion of identity development in the 'neo-liberal' context. Here, the notion of the 'self' is sustained not through traditional community ties, but as an individualised 'reflexive project' (Giddens 1991:180). This resonates with Rebecca's account of becoming feminist as she gains in self-confidence whilst at university. It is one that perhaps reflects and draws upon post-feminist discourse of the individualised, empowered and confident feminist subject (Budgeon 2011; Scharff 2011a, b). However, this is only one way of telling the story of becoming feminist, and one that is troubled through a close reading of Rebecca interview, demonstrating how multiple narratives can co-exist in one person's account of their life. Rebecca's story illustrates that individualised accounts are always situated within relationships to family members, communities and histories. She develops a political and feminist consciousness not simply through a process of personal development, but in relation to social, cultural, economic and political shifts across time, experienced through her more personal and intimate familial and particularly maternal relationships.

4

Aaliyah and Jenny: Feminist Hope

The image overleaf (Fig. 4.1) is of African-American civil and women's rights activist, writer and teacher Mary Church Terrell was brought to an interview by a white middle-class British woman.[1] It is a formal portrait thought to have been taken in the late nineteenth century, between 1880 and 1900. Church Terrell was the daughter of former slaves Robert Reed Church and Louisa Ayers and was one of the first African-American women to obtain a college degree (Fradin and Fradin 2003). The participant shared a surname with Church Terrell, and so the portrait spoke to her of her own history. In particular, the possibility of a family history of slavery:

> The fact that she has my surname is a reminder of erm, the world we live in that, and that, what, that, what that means and it struck me, what that means about the history of my family and presumably the history of slave ownership, erm…which, I don't know, but that's the assumption.

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[1] The participant's pseudonym has been omitted here because she shares a surname with Church Terrell. This ensures that she cannot be connected to any discussion of her interview elsewhere. This approach has been adopted in discussion and agreement with the participant.

Fig. 4.1 *Mary Church Terrell* (1880–1900) The Library of Congress

The possible connection between herself and Church Terrell influenced the way this participant engaged with feminist histories. Reflecting on the image's significance, she describes a complex interaction of histories of oppression:

> You just you can't begin to separate all of those things in any meaningful
> way, the fact that…we human beings oppress each other in all sorts of dif-
> ferent ways erm, and I think that's something we all have to come to terms
> with like everyone, everyone… it's not something that women have to
> come to terms with sexism or erm, or black people have to come to terms
> with, like, post-colonialism, colonialism, without all of us addressing what
> that means to us in our lives and what that means to the people in our lives
> and without us addressing our own, our own privileges and our own
> oppression and talking about it and working together, nothing is going to
> change and we can't just sit back and hope that eventually everything will
> even out, because that's just not how that works, we're not on, we're not on
> a kind of a nice line upwards, we're on a complicated kind of history.

The image highlighted for her the intersectionality of oppression and the
instability of any notion of progressive, linear histories. It draws out the
complexities of her own familial and political histories and so tells mul-
tiple stories of the convergence of feminist, civil rights, public, private and
familial histories. It speaks to Church Terrell's own biography, in particular,
the formal portrait and clothing indicate the social position she occupied
in the late nineteenth century. It also tells a complicated story about the
participant's family history, her relationship to and continued discovery of
it and of a feminist history of complex and overlapping concerns.

My own immediate reading of this image during the interview tells yet
another story. When the participant produced this black-and-white image,
I saw not an African-American civil rights activist, but a white British
suffragette. My looking made Church Terrell's race and politics invisible.
Like the participant, on observing the shared surname, I also assumed a
familial connection; however, instead of seeing the possibility of the par-
ticipant's complex and diverse familial and feminist history, I constructed
a white British feminist lineage, effectively 'whiting out'[2] Church Terrell's
significance, not only in the participant's feminist story, but in feminist
histories more widely. My misreading of the image could be explained
by the effects of previous interviews on my assumptions about this one:

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[2] Borrowing Castle's (1995) use of the term to mean not only erasure, but also the lost possibilities
that are the consequence of this erasure. In this instance, the lost possibilities of non-white feminist
histories.

numerous other participants brought images of white British suffragettes, some of whom were relatives, including the photograph Rebecca shared of her suffragette aunt. However, I would argue that, perhaps in addition to this, my reading of the image reveals presumptions about the participant's feminist story—that it will have a white middle-class linear history. I constructed, in this moment, a memory of the British suffrage movement as white and middle class, thereby making invisible the involvement of women of colour, in particular the connections with the Indian suffrage movement (Mukherjee 2012) and working-class women's involvement in the movement (Crawford 2013; Smith 2014).

My viewing of the image not only betrays assumptions about the stories my white participants would tell about their own lives and about white familial feminist histories, but also reflects the history of race and racism within the retelling of feminist history. Writing in the mid-1990s, Hazel Carby (1999) notes that it was not only the absence of women of colour from feminist theorising that was of concern, but also the problematic depiction of women of colour when included (Carby 1999:61). It is partially through the writing of feminist histories that the erasure and/or misrepresentation of women of colour can occur. Carby writes that 'different herstories, different struggles of black women against systems that oppress them, are buried beneath Eurocentric conceptions of their position' (Carby 1999:67). As is perhaps illustrated by my initial viewing of the image of Church Terrell, it is through the retelling of stories about feminism that such erasures or misrepresentations can continue to be reproduced within feminist thought.

My misreading of the image was prompted by the familial context in which I was viewing the participant's relationship to Church Terrell. Ahmed's (2007) consideration of the phenomenology of whiteness explores the interconnections between race and family. Drawing upon Steve Fenton (2003), Ahmed argues that race has been understood through familial metaphors and as indicative of a shared ancestry. The familial comes to be defined in racial terms, based upon inherited shared attributes or 'likenesses'. Offering an alternative understanding of the relationship between inheritance and likeness, Ahmed suggests that rather than being a sign of inheritance, 'likeness' should be thought of as an effect of proximity to something that is then assumed to be inher-

ited. Ahmed comments that 'we would say that bodies come to be seen as "alike", as for instance "sharing whiteness" as a "characteristic", as an effect of such proximities, where certain "things" are already "in place"' (2007:155). The reproduction of whiteness in my retelling of the participant's story through the image of Church Terrell suggests that my proximity to a narrative of feminist history already 'in place' and available to both the participant and myself as white women prompts an interpretation of the image as indicative of the inheritance and reproduction of a white middle-class feminism. This model is disrupted by not only the participant, who signals alternative feminist histories in her own account, but also through the figure of Church Terrell who forced me to consider the meaning of my mis-viewing.

This moment of viewing illustrates ways in which we reconstruct, remember and view the past in order to create a present that we know and understand. Katie King asserts that 'origin stories about the women's movement are interested stories, all of them' (1986:137). The stories we tell about the past are told with purpose and constructed through our experiences and memories in the present. The decision of the participant to bring the image to the interview, and my own reading of that image, are illustrative of the ways in which intersecting identities form our understanding and remembering of the past, experience of our present and imagining of our futures. The cases I discuss through this book each illustrate the intersections through which these women come to know, experience, remember and become feminist and how different aspects of feminist stories are drawn in and out of focus in their accounts.

In her discussion of Church Terrell's image, my interviewee suggests that feminism cannot 'sit back and hope' for a future free from oppression. The image disrupts for her any notion of feminist histories as linear and progressive. Aaliyah and Jenny, whose stories I discuss in this chapter, also conceive of feminist futures and feminism as a container for hope in different ways. Aaliyah and Jenny tell stories of becoming feminist that have very different origins and yet are both characterised by tensions and contradictions in their own lives. In both cases, feminism offers hope for change, but is articulated in different ways. As Rebecca Coleman and Debra Ferreday (2010) writes, hope is central to feminist politics. However, in the context of the progressive and generational model, feminist hope is considered

past or to have failed. Nevertheless, both the women I discuss in this chapter look to feminism as something that provides hope for change. Hope continues to operate in their lives in various ways.

Aaliyah was one of the women I interviewed who had only recently begun to name herself 'feminist'. Her feminism was fully articulated following a move away from her family and in many ways formed through the tensions she experienced in being a Swedish African Muslim woman. Consciously reflecting on these tensions was part of the process of becoming feminist for Aaliyah, and the narrative she constructs conforms to a linear, progressive temporality whereby, through a process of self-reflection and identity work, and a statement of independence from her family life, she becomes feminist. Feminism is both a response to and means of negotiating tension and for offering hope for change.

Jenny, in contrast, remembered her feminism as something that was transmitted to her from her mother and grandmother. The shelves in her family home were filled with feminist books that her mother encouraged her to consume. The tensions in Jenny's narratives are between her feminist past and present. As a child, Jenny had faith that the gender inequalities she witnessed in the world around her would be transformed. As an adult, she sees that gender-equal future has not been realised. Whilst Aaliyah depicts a move forward towards feminism, Jenny negotiates the tension between the hopes of the past and the disappointments of the present though an investment in the *more* feminist future. Aaliyah and Jenny tell stories of a lived feminism that are very different, yet both marked by tensions, contradictions and identifications that shape their feminisms in the present.

Aaliyah's Story

Aaliyah was 26 at the time of being interviewed. She was one of five women I spoke to who did not grow up in Britain; she grew up in Sweden and moved to the UK when she was 19, having left home to study for a degree in African Studies. She described herself as working-class, bisexual and Black African—both her mother and father were from Zanzibar in East Africa. Aaliyah's account of becoming feminist is one that reflects on

the tension she perceived between her, as she described it, 'quite conservative' Muslim upbringing and the expectation she felt Swedish culture placed upon young people to be experimental, rebellious and independent, as part of an accepted transition to responsible adulthood (Cook and Furstenberg 2002). Aaliyah's feminist identity is one that is born out of this tension and forms part of her response to and management of it.

Before considering more explicitly Aaliyah's feminism, I want to discuss her memories of growing up in Sweden as it is this experience that she returns to throughout her interview and one that was characterised by a series of tensions through which her feminist identity was formed. Near the beginning of her interview, she describes this experience as such:

> I was born and raised in Sweden, but my parents are from Zanzibar, which is really conflicting in a weird way because Sweden is such a very like, liberal country that really works with, you know, there is such a strong emphasis on equality, erm, between the sexes and everyone basically, at the same time I come from, not very conservative, but quite conservative Muslim family, so I had two very strong expectations on me, on the one hand from my family to be a certain way, so I wasn't allowed to have any boyfriends, erm, I wasn't allowed to go out very much when I was young, but then more so when I became a teenager, but under some sort of supervision. At the same time I was living in Sweden and in Sweden I was like, you know, almost expected to be really experimental sexually and I would be doing all these thing that, you know, in Swedish way of thinking, people would say that all teenagers do, so I was expected to go out, I was expected to rebel, I was expected to have, you know, partners when I was quite young, so like I was working with both these things.

Aaliyah remembers a growing frustration and anger at the restrictions placed upon her by her parents. In particular, she reflected on the gendered dimension of their expectations. Aaliyah had twin brothers who were four years younger than her; when they became teenagers, they were afforded more freedoms than she had been at the same age, and she would argue with her mother in particular about this. The expectation of teenage experimentation in Swedish society is something Thomas Cook and Frank Furstenberg (2002) observe in their cross-cultural comparison of the transition to adulthood in Italy, Sweden, Germany and the USA. Writing during the period Aaliyah was a teenager in Sweden,

they suggest that there is recognition within Swedish society that young people may not know what they want as adults and need to experiment with different jobs, education and relationships. They note that, rather uniquely, 'the state actively sponsors such experimentation and also acts to support rather than undermine individual initiative' (Cook and Furstenberg 2002:272). For Aaliyah therefore, the restrictions her parents placed upon such experimentation and personal expression were experienced as the antithesis to the messages she received about what she should be doing as a young woman growing up in Sweden.

Up until the age of 17, Aaliyah took yearly trips with her parents and younger twin brothers to visit her family in Zanzibar. During the trips, the group would stay with Aaliyah's mother's family. This was, she notes, unusual in Zanzibar, where common practice would be for the visiting family to stay with the paternal relatives. She describes her mother as coming from a family of 'only women'—her mother's father had died when she was a child and she and her brothers had been raised in Zanzibar by her mother and grandmother. Aaliyah's experience of Zanzibar was therefore one in which women were in control and the decision-makers in the family and community. It provided a contrast to the restraints placed upon Aaliyah as a young girl in Sweden. She comments:

> Whenever I thought of my family in Zanzibar, even though it was a Muslim family that was fairly traditional, it was still this idea of the family where women decided everything, if that make sense, and…I remember having this image about 'oh, in Zanzibar', growing up in Sweden, that, you know, women are the ones who decide and men, you know, were kind of in the background a little bit. Then growing up and realising that, oh, maybe that wasn't how it was for everyone, it was just a bit of a contradiction in our family.

As a child, Aaliyah experienced life in Zanzibar as a place where women were the decision-makers. This view was formed, in part, through the divorce of both her maternal grandparents and great-grandparents.

> My great-grandmother, my mum's grandmother, divorced her husband because she didn't like him anymore (laughter), which was like radical for

the time, you know, erm, my grandmother got divorced from my grandad because it just wasn't working and, even though divorce is not something that is really frowned upon that much, it's okay, you can get divorced, but she still then had to support herself, which she did.

Aaliyah remembers her grandmother and great-grandmother as the initiators of their divorces and, subsequently, as the providers for their families.[3] She describes 'focusing in' on this part of her family as an example of women who had choice and autonomy and acted as role models. She reflects on the contrast between her mother and father's families here:

When I was younger I really chose to focus on only this tiny family on my mum's side. There were lots of women around otherwise, like on my father's side for example, who, you know, they were getting married when they were young, they weren't going to uni, they were having lots of children and that was everything they were doing, you know, not that I really, maybe, think that there's anything wrong with that, but it felt like they didn't have a choice in it, this is what they were expected to do and this is what they did, but I kind of ignored it altogether and just went for my mum's side, and I was like 'oh, but like, they do what they want', so maybe I think I felt more, more like part of that side of the family, or I felt more like that was the kind of person I was going to be.

Aaliyah's attachment to her mother's family places her father's in the background of her childhood memories of Zanzibar. In doing so, she creates a memory of Zanzibar that attributes choice, autonomy and power to women, ignoring examples of women's lives that she does not identify with, nor aspire to. Her memories of Zanzibar eliminate the kind of conflicts she experienced as a Muslim girl growing up in Sweden.

Just as she looks to Zanzibar for an example of the freedoms that she felt her parents' restricted, she notes the centrality of 'jämställdhet', or 'equality', to Swedish society:

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[3] As Aaliyah comments, divorce is not uncommon in Zanzibar; however, whilst women can seek divorce through the legal system, the majority of divorces take place outside of the court, initiated by men who can make a written or spoken divorce statement. Divorce proceedings through the court are often initiated by women, following this divorce statement (Stiles, 2005). It is more unusual, as Aaliyah suggests, that divorce was sought by Aaliyah's grandmother and great-grandmother.

> In Sweden it's everywhere and really in relation to everything, but I thought, when I think about it myself I thought, it was quite interesting that it's not, it's not like, it's not as widespread here (in the UK), people are aware of it but in Sweden it's almost, you can't really have any discussion if you don't look at whether it will, erm, promote equality or not, so if you don't have that in your agenda it's quite, maybe not frowned upon, but it feels like you haven't really thought everything through

Sweden is considered to be one of the most gender-equal countries in the world in terms of legislation, women's participation in the work place and a child-positive welfare state. However, it has been argued that this perception of Sweden can make it more difficult to address gender inequality where it does occur (Sandberg and Rönnblom 2013). In Aaliyah account, both Zanzibar and Sweden provide opportunities for the kinds of equality, freedoms and choices that her perceived her parents restricted for her.

In her recollection of arguments with her parents, in particular her mother, as a teenager, Zanzibar and Sweden become significant point of tension:

> I did always think with my parents the reason they were so strict about it was because I think they were always scared that we were going to become too Swedish so there was a lot of emphasis on 'oh you're not Swedish, you're not Swedish, you have to, you know this is how you need be because this is the kind of people that we are' erm….so I think that that's why in a way they were as strict as they are, because I find it interesting when I go to Zanzibar and I see my cousins there and I'm like 'look at them they can do lots of stuff that I wasn't allowed to do' but it's because no one there is worried about it in the same way

Aaliyah understands her parents' strictness as a response to their fear of their daughter becoming 'too Swedish'. Both Aaliyah and her parents invoke their Zanzibar heritage in different ways. For her parents being the 'kind of people' that are from Zanzibar and not Sweden is prescriptive of behaviour that is the antithesis of Swedish culture. However, Aaliyah's experience of Zanzibar is as a place that affords her cousins the kinds of freedoms that are unavailable to her. In addition, Aaliyah remembers Zanzibar as a place that affords women power, choice and autonomy,

undermining her parent's perspective. Being from Zanzibar (an identity that Aaliyah also foregrounds in her description of her ethnicity as 'Black African') has different meanings and implications for both Aaliyah and her parents.

Roald (2012) has noted the patterns of religiosity amongst the diverse Muslim communities in Sweden. From the 1970s, Muslim immigrants and refugees increasingly identified with a specifically Muslim community and practised the cultural traditions of their country of origin. This coincided with the point at which the Muslim community became a large minority in Sweden and was accompanied by an increasing stigmatisation of Islam. Muslim communities in Sweden are diverse, with immigration from the Balkans, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, and so this expression takes various forms and was privatised to various extents. But it is their identification with Zanzibar and not Sweden to which Aaliyah attributes her mother and father's approach to parenting. Aaliyah's frustration and, as she describes it, anger at her parents' approach is compounded by her own relationship to Zanzibar and the contrast between her own and her cousins' experiences, as well as between her own and her brothers'.

The conflict Aaliyah perceived between her parents' expectations and those of Swedish society meant that she felt compelled to do the things that 'all teenagers do'—she would go out with friends, had a boyfriend and was sexually active. She nevertheless hid this from her parents, and describes the emotional challenge of doing so:

> You know obviously didn't feel good because I did feel like I was hiding so much from them and there was this panic all the time of 'oh my God what if they find out' you know erm so yeah it wasn't it wasn't very nice and it was almost very almost embarrassing towards my Swedish friends 'cause I had always explain I was like 'yeah but you know what my parents like I can't do that or I can't do that or if I do we're going to have to sort out this whole back story about where I'm going to be.

Managing and reflecting upon this tension and the different, intersecting facets of her identity formed a key part of Aaliyah's narrative of becoming feminist. There are two key sites through which Aaliyah begins to reflect

upon and question this tension and, in doing so, begins to articulate her feminist identity. The first is her discussion of the popular music she enjoyed as a young teenager. The second, her move to the UK, aged 19.

Music

Four of the twelve images Aaliyah brought to the interview were of music artists she listened to as a teenager. She described their importance to her teenage years as she increasingly challenged her parents and reflected on her own identity and sense of self. The first of the images was of the British-manufactured all-female pop group the Spice Girls. The Spice Girls released their first single 'Wannabe' in 1997. Its central message prioritised female friendship over romantic, always heterosexual, relationships, something that the Spice Girls emphasised in many of their songs, interviews and public appearances (Lemish 2003). During the interview, Aaliyah paraphrased the most recognisable line from the song's chorus:

> I'm going to quote a Spice Girls song which is just so wrong but literally 'if you want to be with me then you have to get along my friends'

It was this message of the sanctity of female friendship that was so important for Aaliyah as a young teenager:

> I was in sixth grade and I was twelve and suddenly it was, there was this revolutionary idea that, not that men weren't needed, but that your friends were much more important and up until then I think all the images that I had around me were of kind of romantic love, if this makes sense, and this is interesting because it was very such an emphasis on love for your friends erm that hadn't been there before and I just remember being in school and people…suddenly all the girls were like 'right don't, don't look at the boys anymore' and the boys were like 'what just happened?'

As a young teenage girl, the Spice Girls offered Aaliyah an alternative to the dominant messages of romantic love that she encountered

in popular culture. In her account, this resulted in a shift from a focus on romantic relationships with boys to sustaining close friendships with girls. This shift in gender dynamics had the effect of disorientating and confusing her male peers. In addition to the picture of the Spice Girls, Aaliyah brought a photograph of herself and four female friends as young teenagers. The girls are sitting side by side on a small sofa, Aaliyah is in the centre with her arms stretched out and smiling. She views the photograph and her own friendship group through the message of the importance of female friendship that she received from the Spice Girls saying, 'This is the picture of me and my friends and we were like "we're going to be best friends forever just like the Spice Girls" (laughter).' Indeed, she comments that she is still friends with most of them.

Stacy Gillis and Rebecca Munford (2004) note that the Spice Girls received widespread criticism from second- and third-wave feminists for offering a individualistic, media-friendly version of 'girl power' that co-opted and depoliticised third-wave feminism's 'girl culture'. It is a criticism made by Gayle Wald (1998) who argued that the message of female empowerment the Spice Girls offer is one that tells young women that they have a place in society only if they adopt childlike behaviours. However, despite these criticisms and the problematic ways in which the Spice Girls offer narrowly defined notions of female power (Lemish 2003), the significance of the group in promoting and giving value to friendship for many young girls should not be underestimated. Indeed, Aaliyah was one of three women interviewed who discussed their significance and the importance of their 'girl power' message in their early teenage years.

Bettina Fritzsche (2004) has argued that discussions around whether or not the Spice Girls were empowering for their fans should consider how fans consume popular culture. In her interviews with Spice Girls fans, Fritzsche asked them how they expressed their fandom, rather than why, focusing therefore on the expression of fandom in daily life. Her approach acknowledges the agency of the fan as the consumer and interpreter of popular culture. Fritzsche demonstrates the complex and varied ways in which the group was taken up by their fans and how their enactment of fandom offered them a site to explore and negotiate aspects of their own identity. Fritzsche saw the expression of fandom

as a 'very common, playful and body-centred ways that girls cope with society's scripts of identity' (2004: 161). This renegotiation of identity through the act of being a Spice Girls fan is evident in Aaliyah's narrative. In particular, it was through her identification with Scary Spice, the only woman of colour in the group, that Aaliyah was able, in subtle ways, to question and challenge some of her parents' expectations of her behaviour.

The five members of the Spice Girls each adopted monikers supposedly illustrative of their individual personalities. Dafna Lemish (2003) notes that these each offered different, yet socially acceptable and recognisable versions of femininity. Emma Bunton's 'Baby Spice' was cute and girlish, Geri Halliwell's 'Ginger Spice' was the 'sexy' exhibitionist, Victoria Brown's 'Posh Spice' was elegant and sophisticated, Melanie Brown's 'Scary Spice' was 'wild' and spontaneous and, finally, Melanie Chisholm's 'Sporty Spice' was the cheerful and sporty 'girl next door'. When asked which of the Spice Girls her favourite was, Aaliyah responded:

> Obviously Mel B (laughter) obviously…and like I think really in my mind only because she with like, like half black, it was the only reason I think I did.

For Aaliyah, her identification with Mel B is 'obvious' to her because she is a woman of colour, emphasising her ethnicity as the primary aspect of her identity and identification with her. Alongside 'Ginger Spice', 'Scary Spice' was portrayed as one of the loudest and most rebellious of the Spice Girls. She often took on the role of rule-breaker, wore animal prints, cat-suits and had a tongue piercing. Lemish (2003) suggests that the depiction of Mel B as 'the untamed wild creature' (27) draws upon stereotypical and racist depictions of black women as overtly sexualised, fearful and unruly. It was, however, Mel B's 'Scary Spice' persona that offered Aaliyah means of imaging herself as a black woman who could be non-conforming, outspoken and have autonomy, choice and freedom—just as her grandmother and great-grandmother did. She explains this here when talking about getting a tongue piercing as a teenager without her parent's knowledge:

My friend…she always said the reason I got a tongue piercing was because of Mel B, she's like ''subliminally it just went into your mind and you're like 'right, tongue piercing is the one''' (laughs) I don't know if that's true but it's almost a little bit, and I did, I got my tongue pierced without telling my parents. I was like 'I can do what I want'. I really, like I don't know how to explain it because I think sometimes I think I don't know if my, my idea of doing what I want wasn't because I was a teenager, but because I thought, you know, as a girl I can do what I want, you can't tell me what I'm allowed to do…I maybe that was with all of them though, but with her especially I just really liked her, her rowdiness almost, erm, even though I, I was definitely not like that, I was like just very quiet and very conforming kind of person when I was younger, I mean now maybe I guess but…but yeah, I know, I think she really, really, she really spoke to me, spoke volumes, erm, yeah kind of, I can't think of anything any other reason why (laughter) it was just like 'yeah I'm going to be like her'.

The tongue piercing was a way for Aaliyah to assert her autonomy and freedom, not only as a teenager but as a girl. It is her friend that points out to her the 'subliminal' influence of Mel B, whose tongue piercing was often referenced in the media as a marker of her 'rebellious' personality. Aaliyah also suggests that she was drawn to Mel B's 'rowdiness' precisely because, as a teenager, she was the opposite—quiet and conforming. She saw her as a role model, someone that she aspired to be like. Being a fan of the Spice Girls offered Aaliyah a site for the negotiation of her identity (Fritzsche 2004). Her admiration of Mel B is realised in her tongue piercing, which might be seen as an embodied act of fandom that Aaliyah performed as one means of coping with 'society's scripts of identity' (Fritzsche 2004:161). It was one that allowed her to imagine who she might be in the future and both express and go some way to negotiating the tension she describes at the beginning of her interview between the expectations of her parents for her to not be 'too Swedish', and of Swedish society for her to be a teenager that partially expresses herself through rebellion.

The Spice Girls, and Mel B in particular, marked a point in Aaliyah's early teenage years that she started to ask explicit questions about her identity. She remembers her engagement with their music as joyful and celebratory. In her interview, Aaliyah signals a shift from this celebratory

yet questioning moment of her early teens to her feelings of anger in her discussion of listening to the British band Skunk Anansie, fronted by Skin, the American band No Doubt, fronted by Gwen Stefani and the work of American artist Madonna. Interestingly, Aaliyah remembers listening to these artists as an older teenager, after the Spice Girls, this is despite the singles she references being released before the Spice Girls 1997 Wannabe. It may be that Aaliyah did in fact encounter these artists later on, or her remembering may indicate that she associates the angrier lyrics of these artists, in contrast to the uplifting pop songs of the Spice Girls, with increasingly articulating her anger and frustration at her parents as she became older.

Skunk Anasie were formed in 1994, they disbanded in 2001, before reforming in 2009. The band is fronted by Deborah Anne Dyer, known by the stage name Skin. It was 'Weak', the band's fourth single from their first album, released in 1996, which was so important to Aaliyah. She explains its significance here:

> I was just feeling quite angry about having to…to be a girl, or having… Angry at having to feel like I had to conform to what my parents wanted me to be like and thinking that 'No, I grew up in Sweden and I'm a woman, I can do what I want, you can't tell me that I have to be a certain way'. I felt that they had done me wrong in a way, at, I, like it was unfair because I, I could do so much more than they believed that I could in a way, does that make sense? I remember listening to this song so much, just thinking 'oh, do you really think I'm so like that, just because I'm a woman, I'm basically not as good and not as worthy?'.

The song allowed Aaliyah to articulate some of her anger towards her parents. It is through this anger that she begins to question various facets of her identity, drawing links between being Swedish and being a particular kind of woman and challenging her feelings of being underestimated because she was a girl. She expresses a similar process of thinking, challenging and questioning when listening to No Doubt's 1995 'Just a Girl' and Madonna's 1994 'Human Nature'. Speaking about Human Nature, she comments that 'it was the first time, I think, that I really actively thought about what it meant to be a woman and for then to be criticised

for being a woman and to being separate from men'. And referring to 'Just a Girl':

> It came after the Madonna song came out but it kind of reinforced that same feeling where she was saying that well obviously you don't think I can do anything else just because I'm a girl and it's the only thing you think I am basically erm….I don't know if it's repetitive saying that it did the same thing but it really…hit home with the message that…that there was something wrong about…being expected to be a certain way and then that you didn't actually have to follow it.

This engagement with popular music offered Aaliyah a way of rebelling against her parents—for example, she knew her mother would disapprove of the lyrics of Madonna's 'Human Nature'—as well as offering role models and possibilities for who she could be as a girl and a woman. She remembers feeling admiration for Madonna's unapologetic attitude and feeling both drawn to and identifying with Gwen Stefani, about whom she remembers thinking 'oh this girl's crazy' but 'I really, really understand her'. Just as Aaliyah reimagined herself as the figure of Scary Spice as a young teenager, the questions that Weak, Human Nature and Just a Girl prompted her to ask also allowed herself to imagine and hope for a time in the future where she could be like the women that sang the songs:

> I remember listening to these songs and…and almost in a way thinking like 'oh I'll just wait until I'm old enough then this is how I'm going to be erm I can't do it now because I basically can't get away from you in that way I'm living in your house and I do have to follow what you say but as soon as I don't have to do any more it's all going to go out the window.

The female singers and the song lyrics gave Aaliyah a language for questioning her parents' expectations of her behaviour as a young, Muslim girl. As she suggests in the extract above, asking these questions prompted her to think increasingly about who she could be upon leaving home. Her engagement with the music of her teenage years opened up the possibilities of doing so. It also offered her a means of imagining a future in which her lived life could be different. It was a future that necessitated a

move beyond and away from not only her family life, but also the tensions and contradictions between the expectations of her parents and of Swedish society that were played out in her daily life.

Leaving Home

At the age of 19, Aaliyah left her family home and moved to the UK to study for a BA in African Studies. Finn (2015) observes that the emphasis placed upon 'leaving home' as a site for the construction of new identities and freedoms from family spaces is part of the project of modernity, whereby this transition marks a shift from childhood to independent adulthood. This is certainly reflected in Cook and Furstenberg's (2002) account of this transitional period for young Swedes. Finn argues that the process of leaving home and moving to university must be explored from a relational rather than individualised perspective, something that Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) illustrate in their comparative study of young people's decisions about leaving home in Norway, Spain and the UK. They suggest that whilst leaving home and establishing distance from the family is viewed as a crucial part of becoming independent, these decisions are always located in shifts and changes within the family.

This is evident in Aaliyah's account, where moving away, and in particular the decision to move countries, is coupled with a desire to 'get away from' the rules and expectations of her family home. Aaliyah talked about her experience of the degree and of moving to the UK in this extended extract:

> I did a BA in African Studies and I thought that was really interesting because I was almost kind of, re-discovering my idea of Africa, if that makes sense, because my only experience I had of it was Zanzibar, which is really set, and I thought maybe, maybe I didn't really understand that either, so I just wanted to see from an outsider's perspective and just study it a bit more academically. I moved here and I thought it was great, I was just like 'oh my god, I can, I can go out where I want, I can come back any time I want' and really I can do whatever I want and it is just my responsibility, which was amazing, but scary all at the same time. But I was really happy that I did move here I think. The first, the first few years I was here I was just kind of,

you know, getting used to, just different ways of thinking about things and, erm, by then I think once, once I felt settled about living here it was then easier for me to start thinking 'okay, who am I? What kind of person do I want to be?' and dealing with stuff that was maybe quite, quite difficult, like who am I supposed to be as a woman? Who am I supposed to be as a Muslim? Like I remember when I first moved here it was strange, like for the first three months that I was here I was going out partying every, every single day and then, and then it was Ramadan and, I've never even worn the hijab in my life, for some reason I decided that the right, doing Ramadan I really out to wear hijab and I was like 'where did that come from?'. But I think I was trying to deal with that idea about who should I be, you know, and also, who should I be as a woman. What is right for me to do in a way, you know, but I think the more I kind of lived here, the more I kind of thought about 'okay, what do I want to do and how am I going to live my life, and I just came to the conclusions, but don't know if that's, I don't think that's because I was living in the UK, I think it's because I was living sufficiently far away from my parents so I didn't have to think about what they thought about it, I could just take time myself to think about what I wanted to do.

This was a crucial time for Aaliyah as she began to ask questions about what it meant to her to be a woman, to be Muslim, African and Swedish. These questions are perhaps not uncommon for young people who might view leaving home as a key point of transition and opportunity for change. Indeed, in work published just two years before Aaliyah left her family home to move to the UK, Cook and Furstenberg (2002) commented that most Swedes leave home soon after finishing high school, either to pursue further study, training schemes or employment, or to travel. They note that, owing to a culture that celebrates independence, personal autonomy and self-reliance, leaving home is often viewed as an adventure by young Swedes and they are supported in doing so. 'The Swedish story', write Cook and Furstenberg, 'is one of individuals being supported after high school to study at a university or to learn to work, with the clear expectation that this support is for promoting self-reliant individuals and active citizens' (2002: 272). Within Sweden, therefore, the process of leaving home is one through which individuals are able to develop the skills of 'responsible' citizenship. Considering the restric-

tions that Aaliyah felt her parents placed on her to resist Swedish culture, the move from Sweden to the UK and the leaving of her family home perhaps felt more urgent to Aaliyah in order to have the time and space to herself to ask questions about who she was and who she wants to be.

The focus on experimentation and self-exploration that Cook and Furstenberg (2002) identify is one that created a conflict for Aaliyah, and leaving home was seen as a necessary step for managing this. The extract above suggests that Aaliyah responded to these identity questions through day-to-day embodied practices. She embraced the freedoms that she had sought in moving away from her family home through her daily partying, but began to explore what her religion meant to her by wearing the hijab—something she had not done before—during Ramadan. Aaliyah explored who she 'should be as a Muslim' not by rejecting Islam, but by literally trying on aspects of her faith that were not necessarily associated with her parents' interpretation, illustrating the ways in which identity narratives are not only verbal, but embodied (Yuval-Davis 2011). Indeed, Aaliyah only begins to verbalise these aspects of her move to the UK as a form of identity work upon reflection.

Aaliyah's move away from Sweden also marked a shift in her relationship to Zanzibar, particularly, as she suggests, through her BA in African Studies. As a child, Aaliyah had experienced Zanzibar through her mother's largely female family, through which she associated women with power, autonomy and control. As she grew older and through her studies, she began to question the position of women and this changed her experience of visiting the country:

> When I go there I can get quite angry, you have to cover because otherwise your family will think that's wrong, or, you know, if you get pregnant when you're really young and you're not married this is a really bad thing. But then it's interesting, when I speak to women there and they're like, you know, sometimes obviously they may see it as a problem, but sometimes they're like 'what are you talking about? I am a woman and this is the kind of framework I work with' and I find, I find it quite hard. But then I also find sometimes I'm imposing my views on how you should be as a woman onto other women, erm, by saying that you should be able to have an abortion if you want to, you should be able to have a boyfriend…

> I find it quite hard when I go there because I see the difference between maybe, because I think like, how would my life be if my parents just stayed there and I grew up there, versus how obviously it is now when I've grown up here.

Here, Aaliyah grapples once again with conflict. She feels frustrated and angry with what she sees as the position of women in Zanzibar, feelings perhaps made more intense by imaging her parallel life had her parents not decided to move from Zanzibar to Sweden. However, she is also concerned that she is undermining the autonomy of Zanzibar women and imposing her values upon them. This is part of the process of reflecting upon and renegotiating the meaning of 'woman' and developing a political consciousness through personal experiences. It is through this process of reflection, on her own life, the lives of women in the places that are so familiar to her that she had idealised as a child, that Aaliyah becomes feminist.

Through the music of her teenage years and the experience of leaving home and moving to the UK, Aaliyah challenges and questions the various aspects of her social locations that she, at times, experiences as being in conflict. Through these questions, she increasingly articulates the sites of conflict as feminist concerns. As she explains here:

> My best friend came out as a lesbian when we were sixteen, I think, fifteen or sixteen, and my parents were like 'oh, that's really bad' and I was like, 'mmm, but why is it bad? Why are you so bothered?' There was just so much contradiction with these things and I think all of this got me maybe thinking in feminist terms at that time.

The intimate and personal aspects of Aaliyah's life as a teenager are echoed in the issues she discusses as her feminist concerns later in the interview. She discusses abortion, contraception and sexual politics as central issues to her feminism. She tells a story of becoming feminist through an interrogation of her own identity and the complexities, contradictions and tensions of lived experience. It is through these very personal questions that her politics are founded and situated. She begins to ask political questions about her very personal experiences.

Aaliyah started to name herself feminist just a few years prior to the interview. She described a resistance to the term here:

> I think I thought about inequalities between men and women but I didn't think about that term because…I think…you know this whole idea about oh feminists are just like hairy people who sleep with each other and not with men and I was like 'hmmm I'm not hairy' you know (laughter) you know and I was like, I really felt like I didn't want to identify with that and then also, I don't know, I have this feeling of like if, if you ever said anything that was…even the slightest bit feminist it'd be like 'oh well are you some kind of feminist or something' and it was just like…I wasn't, I didn't feel ready to deal with that

She refers here to the familiar stereotype of the feminist-as-lesbian (Hesford 2013) who threatens heteronormativity, femininity and beauty norms. The stereotype acted as a barrier to Aaliyah adopting the name 'feminist', and she hints at the emotional challenges of becoming feminist in stating that the hostility to feminism was not something she was 'ready to deal with'. Her comments indicate that her feminist becoming is one that unfolded across time and was able to find expression when she felt emotionally able.

Towards the end of her interview, Aaliyah relays a conversation she had with her boyfriend, who was also Black African, during which she tried to explain to him the experience of sexism:

> I said it's like trying to explain to the blondest, most blue-eyed Swedish person that there are people who are racist, you know, it's not that they don't understand it as a concept, but you can't feel it because you're not experiencing it.

Aaliyah's comments indicated that both racism and sexism are felt and understood at the level of lived experience. She develops a feminist identity through the tensions she experienced between the various facets of her identity, which led her to consciously reflect on these different aspects of her life. She negotiates these tensions through music, travel and education, and her feminist identity is shaped by and emerges through each.

Aaliyah's story gestures forwards to a future she imagines through the music she listens to and realises in her move away from home. She renegotiates her identity through these various experiences and, in doing so, increasingly comes to see herself as a feminist and to view tensions she felt in her own life as feminist concerns. Her story sits in contrast to Jenny, to whose account I now turn. Whilst Jenny's feminism might also be viewed as a means of managing tensions and conflicts in her own life, it is conflict between a feminist past and present that comes to the fore in her narrative. Unlike Aaliyah, who had only recently come to see herself as a feminist, Jenny had been taught about feminism and called herself a feminist since she was a child. As a child, the feminist future—one where gender equality had been realised—was considered a certainty for Jenny. As an adult, looking back upon this childhood optimism and contrasting it with her lived experience of gender inequality, she expresses loss and disappointment. She manages this by investing in the feminist future by ensuring her own daughter learns about feminism. For Aaliyah, her feminism is one that emerges through conflicts she experience in her daily life. For Jenny, it is one that she has always known and in which she invests hope, but that, perhaps inevitably, it is a hope that struggles to be realised in her daily life.

Jenny's Story

Jenny described herself as a white working-class heterosexual woman. At the time of the interview, she was 33 and living with her husband and seven-year-old daughter, Poppy. Jenny's interview was emotionally charged; she was tearful or crying throughout and at one point left the room for a short break. I was aware of feeling unsure about whether to intervene and offer breaks or whether to ask further questions on topics that had made her cry previously. Although enthusiastic about being interviewed and declining offers to terminate it when she became upset, it was evident that the process was difficult for her.

Jenny grew up with her mother and father, older sister and younger brother. As a child, Jenny's mother exposed her to feminist ideas and encouraged her to read books from feminist publishing house *The Women's*

Press and *Livewire*—its imprint publishing for children and young people—and various other feminist publications. Jenny embraced her mother's interest in feminism. However, whilst her childhood memories are of a feminism that felt certain and reassuring, Jenny described her unhappiness and discomfort at university, where she felt out of place amidst the wealth, privilege and apolitical attitudes of her peers. Eventually withdrawing from university, she went on to work in various jobs before marrying and having her daughter when she was 25. Nine months after the birth of her daughter, Jenny returned to college to retrain. It was whilst at college and meeting other women that she started to re-engage with feminism, largely through blogs, and began attending local feminist meetings.

Domestic and Emotional Labours

Jenny's childhood afforded her access to the cultural artefacts of feminism, whilst also being characterised by gender inequalities in the home. It is the gendered negotiations of domestic labour, both in her life and that of her mother's, to which Jenny returns frequently during her interview. This sense of repetition is apparent in this description of both her parents' and her own marriage:

> I can't remember my mum ever explicitly saying 'your dad should be doing half the housework' or 'your dad should be washing the pots' or, or anything like that erm, but…I was…like I knew that my mum did all the housework and everything and that it wasn't fair and erm, and I mean my dad, my dad works shifts […] so he was working, he'd be working twelve-hour shifts but…even still…you know…looking back on it as an adult, you know, he could have done more erm…and I think, I, when I, when I, I think when I was little I always thought 'well I'm not' you know, 'I'm not going to live like that' you know, 'when I'm, when I'm grown-up and', you know, 'if I'm, when I'm married then' erm…you know, 'everything'll be equal' and er' somehow over time it kind of you…seem to have crept backwards into the old stereotype roles and, like I say, I mean we (Jenny and her husband) have so many arguments about, like I said, the washing-up is the bane of my life, I hate it, if I could get rid of one job that would be it and erm…(5)….he, he just doesn't see.

Jenny's father frequently worked long and irregular shift patterns, and consequently her mother largely took responsibility for the domestic labour and childcare. Jenny remembers her childhood hope and belief that she would not experience the same inequalities she perceived in her parents' relationship and more generally the sexism she observed in society. However, like her father, Jenny's husband worked long and irregular shift patterns during the early years of their marriage. As a result, Jenny took responsibility for the majority of domestic work and childcare. Unlike Aaliyah, the family home of Jenny's childhood was not one that she escaped from. Rather, it was reproduced in her adult life and was a site of frustration and disappointment for her. The extract above indicates something of the pivots of time and space and the interaction between them. In the time of her childhood, the gender inequalities of the domestic space are considered to be unfair, but do not evoke the same disappointment as when they are reproduced in the present day, which represent the failure to realise a future that promised so much.

Jenny brought an image of a pile of washing-up to the interview, taken from an Internet search, to represent this domestic scene (Fig. 4.2) The dishes, saucepans and plates, all piled precariously on top of each other, threaten to fall and break. They reflect not only the enormity of the task, but also its impact on Jenny. The image reflects her demeanour during the interview during which she was frequently teetering on the edge of tears, often dissolving into them. Significantly, one of the items upon which the others are balanced appears to be a child's plastic, wide-rimmed bowl, bringing the gendered and still uneven distribution of childcare within heterosexual relationships to the centre of this domestic scene.

Jenny describes the gendered division of emotional and domestic labour as an 'old-fashioned' feminist issue, overlooked in her feminist meetings. She refers to *The Second Shift* (Hochschild and Machung 2012), which emphasised the endurance of such inequalities:

There's a book called *The Second Shift*, which I think was, I think it might have been written in the seventies and erm, like updated in the nineties, er, that looks at these things, it was erm, looking at er, like gender roles and

how like housework and childcare and like, they kind of call all that 'emotional labour', like how that's shared and erm…and yeah, you kind of think that, you know, 'oh since the seventies things have changed, haven't they' (laughter) maybe not (laughter).

For Jenny, this book bridged any gap between the gender inequalities of the 1970s and of the 1990s, challenging any notion of a linear progress in gender equality, at least within the heterosexual, monogamous relationships by which Jenny's discussion is framed. Whilst she remembers it as being published in the 1970s, it was actually first published in 1989 and updated in 1997. It is interesting that she associates the issues the book addresses with an earlier past. This misremembering perhaps indicates her expectations that these inequalities should be even more firmly rooted in the past, so heightening the disappointment and frustration that in fact they are characteristic of her own daily experience.

Fig. 4.2 *Washing-up* (2009) c. Ant Kutschera

As a child, Jenny was determined that such inequalities would not be repeated in her own life:

> I think it kind it fits in with what I've been saying, doesn't, about erm, things, like I said, like in the eighties you think 'oh God erm, you know, 'when I'm big erm all this will've been fixed" and it seems to have got worse, I think things have gone backwards.

Jenny cries as she reflects on the lack of change, the failure to 'fix' the future and the sense of decline rather than progress. She finds herself swept up in the repetition and monotony of domestic labour, epitomised by the washing-up. This daily repetition is also part of a wider repetition of the roles her mother and father adopted and, wider still, of stubbornly ingrained societal gender roles.

E. Freeman (2010) concept of 'chrononormativity'[4]—the naturalisation of temporal experience that synchronises individual lives to the temporality of entire populations—conveys some of the ordering of Jenny's life into the repetitious, ongoing patterns of heteronormative gender relations. Her own life is marked by the various temporalities of giving birth, getting married, negotiating her career, childcare and domestic routines, determined largely by her husband's work patterns. Jenny's words convey how the division of emotional and domestic work exerts a drag on her feminist present, any notions of 'change' or 'progress' that she may have had are swept back by the pull of the re-enactment and recycling of the gender inequalities she observed as a child. Her reading of *The Second Shift* highlights that the place she thought of as 'past', the 1970s, is active in the present. Through the repetitious, ongoing labours of the present, she is returned to the past gender inequalities she observed in her parents' marriage. The 1970s serve as an example for Jenny of lost opportunities for change, both in the past and in the feminism of the present, where, as she later comments, she feels such issues are low on the feminist agenda.

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[4] Using Dana Luciano's (2007) concept of chronobiopolitics—the temporal organisation of entire populations through the connection of individuals to social narratives of progress and change (e.g. marriage, childbearing and death)—chrononormativity manages the tempos of individual lives to synchronise them with the temporality of entire populations.

Failed Transformations

As a child, Jenny depended upon a linear temporality that offered 'change' and 'progress', one that would deliver her, via feminism, to a life markedly different from her mother's. Instead, she describes a pattern of continual return to the inequalities she observed as a child. Reading *The Second Shift* evidenced a lack of change that is felt in her own daily life. Jenny does not implicate the men in her life in the recycling of inequality that has such a daily impact on her. As she says of her husband:

> I don't think for a minute that he, he's erm consciously set, he would never think that I should do it because I'm the mum or I'm the wife and erm, he hasn't got a malicious bone in his body, he would never think 'oh sod it, she can do it' you know what I mean, we've, I think we just got…different priorities…and like I said there's kind of mess and stuff just, he just doesn't see it, doesn't bother him..

Although Jenny speaks of her husband in positive terms, whilst he is not implicated in the gender inequalities of her daily routine, neither is he presented as offering any potential for change. Jenny cannot quite accommodate her husband in her feminism. Like her father, he is portrayed as kind, hard-working, supportive, but still not fully engaged with or understanding of her frustrations. Jenny looks back on a childhood, where feminism gave her hope and a vision of the future where inequalities 'will've been fixed'. Feminism simultaneously serves as a container for all Jenny's hopes and disappointments. Nonetheless, she does not disidentify with it. Indeed, she turned to feminism to 'feel like me again' when she was losing herself in motherhood. However, despite finding refuge in the feminist meetings, Jenny felt that her deeply personal feminist preoccupations were overlooked and displaced by the other women in the group, who focused instead, she comments, on issues of race and sex trafficking.

> The other women who go to, I mean this might be my prejudice and stereotypes, they're younger than me and erm, they're not married and they

don't have children and a lot of the like femin…like feminism that they focus on erm, is erm…like sex trafficking and erm, looking at erm, the, although there aren't any, like, black women who come to the group erm, they're very conscious of looking at like racism and sexism and things like that and I think nobody ever mentions erm…

The meetings emphasise for Jenny her difference from the younger women in the group, none of whom were living with partners or have children. Jenny sees issues of race and racism as distinct from her own concerns, and she does not reflect upon her whiteness. Jenny's comments on her feminist group's focus on racism instead of motherhood and domestic labour mark these out as separate issues. She feels like her own life is not represented in the discussion.

This absence of whiteness illustrates Ahmed's (2007) observation that whiteness 'goes unnoticed', and white bodies 'do not get "stressed" in their encounters with objects or others' (2007:156). As Aaliyah describes it, her experience of race and ethnicity is felt in her day-to-day life in ways in which it is not by white people. Jenny's whiteness is an absence; race is a concern distinct from her daily life. Indeed, her feminist group's preoccupation with race is experienced by Jenny as a barrier to addressing the inequalities in her own life. Race gets in the way of enabling her to talk about her own experiences.

Age is an aspect of Jenny's identity that comes to the fore in her account of her feminism meetings. Notably, she deems her concern with house-work, parenting and childcare as being 'out of fashion' and relegated to the 'old'. It is ignored or unaddressed in the group discussions:

Like I said, the old-fashioned things of house work and parenting and childcare erm…we (the feminist group) never talk about that 'cause I think, I don't know if they kind of think 'oh, oh yeah when, you know, if I decide to live with a man it'll be different'.

Jenny locates her concerns in the past. Indeed, she expected them to be so. They still exist only as a result of failures of transformation. Although only 33, as the oldest woman at her feminist meetings, Jenny adopts the

role of the older, perhaps jaded feminist. Her dissatisfaction and dismay at the day-to-day reality of motherhood is exacerbated by the fact that, as a child, she never believed this would happen to her.

Jenny's memory of the problematic past (one in which women were expected to bear the brunt of emotional and domestic labour) and her younger, optimistic self that had faith that it 'will've all been fixed' by the time she is 'big' results in an experience of the present (where things have stayed the same, or even deteriorated) as a sorrowful disappointment. She occupies the position of the wife and mother who bears responsibility for the household chores and of the older woman looking at her younger self, both through her memory of herself as a child and in the younger women in her feminist meetings. Both these versions of her younger self confront Jenny with her childhood optimism and compound her loss and disappointment. To use E. Freeman (2010) concept of temporal drag, Jenny's narrative suggests that the gender inequalities she observed in her past exert a drag on her feminist present. E. Freeman (2010) is interested in that which is left behind, this 'debris' that is dragged around and, particularly relevant to Jenny's narrative, the traces of failed transformations. In her feminist present, Jenny 'drags' along the 'old-fashioned things', the 'debris' of a series of relations that were 'supposed' to be 'past' as a result of feminism but that refuse to be left behind. Her account reflects the uneven development of change in the inequalities she observed in her childhood.

In Jenny's account, it is evident that her childhood self, who envisaged a future in which she escaped the gender roles her parents occupied, failed to transform her future. As she says, 'When I'm big erm, all this will've been fixed.' Although it is not explicitly articulated, a sense of disappointment and loss (of optimism, opportunities and potential for change) is palpable in Jenny's interview through her tears, trembling voice and long pauses. Jenny illustrates the affective relationship to remnants of the past that Freeman emphasises, demonstrating a relationship to social change (or lack of it) that is *felt* as well as cognitively understood.

Throughout her interview, Jenny frequently cried when referring to her mother and grandmother, often alternating between past and present tense. It was unclear whether she had, euphemistically, 'lost' them. A

telephone call Jenny received from her mother at the end of the interview clarified that she had not, in fact, 'lost' her through death. Still, in her narrative, her mother and grandmother might represent lost possibilities for change. Despite their encouragement of the Jenny as a child to challenge sexism, her gender-equal future was not realised. Speaking of her grandmother, Jenny remembered that '(crying) she always erm, like, same as my mum, she encouraged me to challenge things and…', as a child, this is what Jenny did:

> I felt more comfortable (as a child), like I say, challenging somebody who was sexist and it got to the point where, you know, like all the idiot lads at school, they knew what not to say, they'd say all crap to other people but they wouldn't say it because they knew that I'd challenge 'em, I used to, every single time somebody said something I would always challenge them, even just like if it were just choice of language, you know what I mean? I'd challenge 'em about it.

The confidence that Jenny had as a child was lost at university:

> When you, you know, when I came to university erm, you know, you meet all different people from completely different backgrounds and I think sometimes as well, you know, you do kind of think 'oh well surely', you know, knowing what's right and what's wrong or what's sexist and what isn't, you kind of, you, you think that everyone's the same, or I thought that everyone was the same as me, I thought what I thought was right and wrong erm, I thought that was normal and so to come and be like mixing with people from different backgrounds who p'rhaps seem to be, as well like people who had a lot more money than me who, I don't know, you, I'd been expecting more that I, I don't know, I'd been expecting more and then sometimes it was those people who were erm, prejudiced…

Jenny's unhappy time at university was followed by an unhappy job, an unexpected pregnancy and a sense of isolation and confusion as a new mother. This unhappiness is exacerbated by the belief that things could and were supposed to have been different—the failed transformations of her childhood. Although on the edge of tears for much of the interview, the moments that Jenny actually cried or struggled to speak are the points

she recalled her childhood optimism, often articulated through her relationship with her grandmother, mother and daughter. It is this childhood optimism that not only highlights the failed transformations, but also, in her return to it, offers potential to redress and retell her story.

Possibilities of Return

Echoing Aaliyah's discussion of popular music, cultural artefacts were very important to Jenny's story. During the interview, the feminist books she had access to as a child and teenager offered her a point of return, at least during the interview, to this previous moment when feminism promised change. As with many of the women interviewed, books carried a huge significance for Jenny as a means of connecting to and understanding the feminist past. In Jenny's narrative, the books also allow her to return to place of possibility and so enable her to envisage a feminist future. She brought examples of *The Women's Press* and *Livewire* publications to the interview, as well as the work of comic artist Jackie Fleming.

As a child, Jenny was an avid reader, and this was encouraged by her parents, particularly her mother who introduced her to feminist literature. Speaking about the books, Jenny remembers:

> This whole book of Jackie Fleming cartoons erm, at the time, I mean now they seem a bit twee but then they were completely different and something new..erm…and I think, like I said to you before, when I kind of grew up thinking about these things and then p'rhaps when I was erm, like erm, actually you think, I think lots of people say that they kind of become more aware when they go to university and think I was expecting that, and I came to (name of city) when I was 19 and like said I, it seems to have gone a fashion, it was, that was like the 90s and it was all like Britpop and the ladette culture and, you know, like Denise Van Outen saying 'if you can drink ten pints of lager you're one of the guys' you know, and nobody talked about, like, so it was kind of 'oh yeah you're all equal now' ohh, you know, pat on the head 'what you kicking up a fuss about?' and it seemed to have gone out of fashion.

The books offer a point of return to a time, pre-university, where Jenny felt encouraged in 'thinking about these things', in contrast to being accused of 'kicking up a fuss' when objecting to sexism during the 1990s. Her account reflects the post-feminist discourse of feminism as outdated and unnecessary. That the Fleming cartoons appear 'twee' and her feminist views seemed 'out of fashion' amidst the 'ladette culture' of the 1990s again illustrates that it is an apparently 'past' moment that exerts a 'drag' on Jenny's feminism in the present (E Freeman 2010). There is an interesting resonance here with the apologetic tone with which Aaliyah paraphrases Spice Girls' lyrics. Both convey a sense of the objects or points of reference that mark significant moment in their feminist stories that are somehow inadequate, embarrassing or unsophisticated.

Middleton and Brown (2005) argue that objects provide a 'relative stability' in our engagement with the past. Apparently durable over time, they offer a point of reference amidst changeable relationships and the instability of remembering. In particular, they remark that objects give access to affective relationships. The books Jenny brought to the interview were worn, having been read and reread, and were a testament to the long and enduring relationship she had with feminism. They had sat on the bookshelves of her childhood home and, having been passed onto her by her mother, now sat on Jenny's shelves in her own home. These objects, which were such an important part of her 'becoming feminist', offer a point of return for Jenny, perhaps providing stability amidst the disappointment and confusion at the failures to realise a gender-equal future. They may also signal her attempts to stabilise a feminist identity, by anchoring her feminism in a past that appears more secure, certain and has the potential for the realisation of her childhood feminist ideals. In contrast, Jenny's account of her daily life, which details her frustration and disappointments with the daily gender inequalities she experiences, exposes the limitations of claiming a feminist identity. I am not suggesting that Jenny cannot call herself 'feminist' without living a particular 'feminist life', as if that could be defined, but that her dependence on and hope for a particular kind of life as a signifier of feminism (one in which the gender inequalities of her childhood have been eradicated and that reproduces the ideal feminist subject) propel her to return to her childhood self for evidence of the 'feminist girl' she once was.

The books return Jenny to Jenny-as-child, a figure who had the potential to live a different future. Just as Jenny drags around the gender inequalities she observed in her childhood, this drag returns her to a place that has the potential for change. Unlike Aaliyah, who looks to a feminist future as a means of managing the gender inequalities she experienced as a child and teenager, Jenny relies upon the reproduction of the feminist past as a means of securing a positive feminist future. Jenny looks to her daughter to realise this potential.

Just as Jenny's mother introduced her to feminism, Jenny emphasises the importance of doing the same for her daughter. It is through her daughter that Jenny is able to again envisage a gender-equal future. Explaining why she cried when looking at the images that she brought to the interview of herself and her daughter at a feminist march, Jenny says:

> Because I think it's really important that she understands as well, because, like I say, I've spent the first ten minute tellin' ya it was my mum who was really important erm…*getting me interested in things and er…(7)…(whispers) I don't know why am crying it's so silly.*

And discussing how motherhood changed her relationship to feminism:

> I think you must realise that my mum's a really big influence on me erm… and I think the erm…I think that p'rhaps now I've got a daughter erm…I want, I want her to understand and I want it to be as important to her as it has been for me.

In the context of her narrative, Jenny's commitment to introducing her daughter to feminism could be viewed as not only wanting to create a positive feminist future for her daughter, but also a positive future for herself and for feminism. In Jenny's account, she grows up to find her childhood optimism misplaced and her expectations unrealised. In educating her daughter about feminism, Jenny is investing in both her daughter's and feminism's future.

This hope is evident again in the images that Jenny brought to the interview, in particular a series that depicts Jenny and Poppy at a 2011 International Women's Day march in her home city. By bringing images

of her daughter in an explicitly feminist setting, Jenny moves her concern for a feminist future beyond her daughter's individual future to a political one. In the image, it is Jenny's daughter that carries the feminist flag and political message that 'girls are powerful', one that is in stark contrast to the sense of powerlessness that Jenny at times conveys in her own domestic situation. Through her daughter, Jenny is able to envisage a means of moving towards a 'better' political future.

The 'child as future' trope was present in much early, popular feminist literature, for example, Fay Weldon's *Down Among the Women* (1971), and identified within feminist discourse of the 'third-wave' (Eisenhauer 2004). Within this trope, feminism is depicted as the result of a process of maturation, enlightenment and awakening where the feminist subject develops from 'girl' to 'woman'. This is certainly evident across many of the interviews, in which the women depict themselves as more mature, knowing and sophisticated, but also more cynical, than their younger selves. For example:

> (Referring to a graffitied advert) I just, I just saw it and thought it was absolutely fantastic that like, I liked, I liked that somebody was sort of you know sharp enough to question the adverts, obviously I was younger, I was yet to really get into being a cynical bastard (Ruby, 20).

> (Referring to Germaine Greer) I loved her and read the book and thought 'oh this is fantastic' but I was too shy and nervous then because I wasn't as old and…withered and cynical erm, so (whispers) I couldn't go and talk to her then, but I wanted to (Nancy, 33).

> I properly do look back my 16-year-old self and think 'yes, bless, no idea about it' (Catherine, 22).

The women's comments are delivered with a perhaps humorous positioning of themselves as 'old', being aware that they would not only be considered 'young' by society (particularly Evie and Catherine) but also aligned with the 'third-wave' of feminism, frequently characterised by 'youth' (Eisenhauer 2004). However, they do map their feminist 'becoming' onto a linear trajectory that Eisenhauer documents in 'third-wave' discourses: as the feminists age, they become more cynical, but also more knowing. Their accounts are dismissive of their younger selves, as if their

feminist idealism and hope are embarrassing or twee, reflecting both Aaliyah and Jenny's embarrassed attachment to the Spice Girls and the Fleming cartoons.

The transformation from young, naïve, optimistic girls to, in Nancy's words, 'withered' and 'cynical' women is implicitly a positive one, in which they (problematically) develop a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of feminist issues. Even so, the 'girl' they look back to continues to represent the hope and possibility that they lose as cynical feminist women. Evie, Nancy and Catherine's accounts have similarities with Jenny's, in that they all look back upon their younger selves as more optimistic and idealistic, but less aware and knowing feminist subjects. However, Jenny becomes stuck in her narrative when the future she envisaged as a child is unrealised, and so she invests in her own daughter as an attempt to move beyond the 'failures' of feminism in her present.

Jenny's narrative illustrates some of Wiegman' (2000) criticisms of feminist investments in feminist histories as reproductive and generational. Wiegman argues that feminism has a political attachment to a 'more feminist' past and an expectation for the feminist subject to be identical across time in order to reproduce the feminist past and guarantee a feminist future. Although Wiegman is concerned with these trends within academic feminism, they are evident in Jenny's personal narrative of becoming feminist as she continues to return to a feminist past that offered hope and possibility and invests in her own daughter as offering the potential for a feminist future. This echoes a tendency within academic feminist discourse to rely on the figure of the girl to secure feminism's future (Eisenhauer 2004).

It is significant that Jenny brought to the interview a copy of science fiction writer Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Piercy 1976). In the novel, the protagonist Consuelo (Connie) Ramos has recently been released from enforced detention in a psychiatric ward and is faced with the possibility of two world futures. One is utopian in which the goals of the 1960s and 1970s radical movements have been achieved, and the other, dystopian, where a wealthy elite control the majority of the population with psychotropic drugs and surgery and where women are valued only for their sexuality and appearance. The two futures are engaged in war with one another in an attempt to control the past, specifically the

era in which Connie is present, in order to ensure the realisation of their own futures. The novel follows Connie as she comes to realise that her actions will have a profound impact on the future and she is ultimately responsible for determining the course of history.

Although Jenny did not discuss the novel—it was brought to the interview only as an example of the books she remembers from her childhood—the novel's themes are echoed in her narrative. Jenny adopts various perspectives in the interview: of the young girl who imagines a utopian future; of the older woman who despairs at her young feminist counterpart's naïveté and of the mother who hopes to do for her own daughter what her mother did for her. In her narrative of becoming feminist, Jenny is positioned, like Connie, on the 'edge of time' looking to the past, present and future with various levels of understanding and knowledge. It is in her return to her childhood both through the books she remembers reading and in passing on feminism to her daughter that she is offered a moment in time where the utopian future was a real possibility; she continues to invest in the reproduction of the feminist subject across time as a means of ensuring this future.

Conclusion

All the cases I present in this book illustrate how what feminism is and how it is experienced are always inflected through personal biographies and constructed through the particular social positioning of the teller. Segal (2007), in *Making Trouble*, articulates the ways in which reflections on the past and stories told about any life are always inflected through our own biographies, as we select elements of the past that help us construct the story we want to tell:

> It is easy to trace out threads running through a life, our own or another's, easy, that is, once we are working backwards, selecting out (or placing in) precisely what we are seeking (Segal 2007:253).

In this chapter, Aaliyah and Jenny illustrate how the stories they tell of becoming feminist and their concerns in their feminist present are shaped

through the various tensions and conflicts between different aspects of their identity and experiences. They each mediate these conflicts in various ways; for Aaliyah, her engagement with popular music and the transition of leaving home were part of a process consciously reflecting on the various facets of her identity. For Jenny, a return to the objects of her childhood and a commitment to transmitting feminist ideas and beliefs to her daughter helped her to manage the tension between her feminist past and present.

Both Aaliyah and Jenny invest hope in feminism in different ways. Aaliyah constructs her story of becoming feminist as forward looking, through the music she discussed during her interview she saw possibilities for her future that countered the restrictions she experienced as a young girl. Aaliyah's forward-looking politics is not one that seeks to reproduce a feminist past, but shapes a future that feminism is a part of. Jenny's investment in hope is in some ways more tainted by disappointed and failed transformations. As a child, she was abundantly hopeful, even assured, that her own future would be different. As an adult who has seen that her childhood hope has not been fulfilled, she has invested hope in her own daughter's future and so the reproduction of feminism for a more gender-equal future. Jenny invests hope in a transformation via generational transmission that failed for her, but has the potential to succeed for her daughter.

Speaking of the place of hope in feminist theory and practice, Claire Colebrook writes that

[hope] is structural to feminism [...]. In this supposedly "post-feminist" world, we either suffer from hope because we are one of those young women who assume that there is no impediment to their future and who now only hope for a successful place in the status quo, or, we remain attached to the hope of radical feminism, strangely at odds with this world of contentment, wishing that the desire for something other would make itself felt. Hope, then, seems to be the orientation beyond the present that splits the present. Hope can be intoxicating in its capacity to disorient and to open a world beyond the given, beyond who "we" are. Or, hope can be toxic, precluding us from acting and living in the now, directing our attention to an imagined future that will render the present (inauthentically) tolerable.' (2010:324)

Aaliyah's and Jenny's stories each resonate with Colebrook's conceptualisation of feminist hope in different ways. For Aaliyah, hope is not embodied by feminism itself, but in the projections of her future self in a different time and place that allow her to manage the tensions in her less-than-perfect present. As a teenager, she invests hope in a place, time and selfhood beyond the present. Feminism offers her a way of theorising these tensions and articulating the concerns she has with the world. In contrast, Jenny observes the young women in her feminist group 'suffering' from a false hope, whilst herself remaining attached to the hope of her own feminist past. It would be, I think, presumptuous to suggest that Jenny's hope in an imagined feminist future is toxic, or that it precludes her from acting in the now. But it is undoubtedly an important means of securing a future for her daughter, if not herself, that does not recycle the gender inequalities observed in her own life.

5

Richa, Ruby and Beth: Feeling Feminism

Introduction

When Kenneth Gergen writes 'emotions do not have an impact on social life; they constitute social life itself' (Gergen 1997: 222), he places emotion at the centre of social and personal life, conceiving of emotion as socio-cultural processes that are movable rather than static. Such approaches challenge realist notions of emotional experiences as internal and private, or pre-existing, pre-social and static entities. Ian Burkitt (1999), Gergen (1997) and Smart (2007), each emphasises the relational dimension of emotions, arguing that emotions are not individually formed responses to the world, but are processes embedded within relationships and social networks. They are recognised and legitimised (or not) within a social and relational context. Emotions give form and meaning to these contexts and become associated with or attached to certain practices, bodies and values (Ahmed 2004a, b).

This is evident in the construction of the feminist subject, whose association with anger, humourlessness and 'man-hating' is longstanding (Douglas 1994; Hercus 1999; Tomlinson 2010). Barbara Tomlinson (2010) traces

the trope of the 'angry feminist' as it appears in both feminist and anti-feminist writing in US academic and popular culture. The angry feminist is the 'bad' feminist, the extreme and unreasonable, man-hating feminist (Tomlinson 2010). Melissa Harris-Perry (2011) observes that the stereotype of the 'angry black woman' is used as a tool for silencing and delegitimising the concerns of black women in particular. Tomlinson argues that the trope serves to undermine feminist politics and foreclose feminist futures by making the subject position 'feminist' distasteful to young women. Following Butler's (1997) discussion of the power of the trope, Tomlinson observes that no evidence is required for the 'truth' of the 'angry feminist'—the trope gains its power and 'truth' in its discursive repetition.

Tomlinson's account of anger as aligned with the feminist reflects Sara Ahmed's (2004a, b, 2013) conceptualisation of affect as emotions that align with bodies, objects and signs. Rather than being attached to a specific body or object, Ahmed describes emotions as non-resident—circulating and reattaching to things and producing affects at this point of contact. This point of contact is always 'shaped by past histories of contact' (Ahmed 2004b:31), and it is these associations that cement the attachment. Again, echoed in Tomlinson's (2010) discussion, Ahmed argues that the alignment of particular emotions with particular bodies occurs through repetition. Her treatment of affect challenges the idea that emotions are static and individual, but places their production at the heart of social interactions. Emotions are always mediated—they involve the interpretation of sensation and feeling 'not only in the sense that we interpret what we feel, but also in what we feel might be dependent on past interpretations that are not necessarily made by us, but that come before us' (Ahmed 2013:171). Emotions are, therefore, embedded in histories and collective understanding of their meaning.

When the women I interviewed express or attempt to supress emotion, they do so in relation to and with an awareness of past histories, of the association between anger and feminism and of the enduring risk of being silenced or dismissed when this association is invoked by those around them. By attending to the feelings of feminism, and in tracing the emotional attachments that fuel political identifications, this chapter explores the challenges that the women face in expressing emotion and how these challenges are resisted and countered.

I firstly consider the ways in which emotion—anger in particular—is depicted as something in need of control and containment, often associated with a younger feminist self. This might be viewed as a response to the expectation that emotions need to be managed in order for women to be heard, recognised or taken seriously as a feminist. This self-restraint (Hercus 1999) is a response to an encounter with the expectation that emotion is individual, private and unreasonable (Harding and Pribram 2002). However, this does not mean that emotion is absent from the women's accounts. In the second half of this chapter, I explore examples of ways in which three women claim and validate emotion. Firstly, Richa places emotion in its socio-cultural context and refuses to see it as an internalised or private entity. Secondly, Ruby and Beth harness and embrace emotion through, or as a form of, feminist protest.

Angry Feminists

Of all the aspects of the women's emotional entanglements with feminism, 'anger' appeared repeatedly throughout the interviews. The close association between feminism and anger is embodied in the 'angry feminist' (Hercus 1999; Tomlinson 2010) who both regulates and offers opportunities for harnessing anger. The angry feminist is incorporated into Hesford's 'feminist-as-lesbian' who is described as being 'full of proud anger' (2005: 6). The complexity of the 'feminist-as-lesbian's' legacy is evident in the women's emotional engagement with feminism. Anger is both a productive force and something the women experience anxiety in expressing because of a risk of being dismissed or silenced. This is illustrated in Emma's account of discussing feminist ideas with her family:

> I think when I, I, first got into feminism I was really, I was probably too much. I was in your face and I think when I was, when they [Emma's sisters] were younger I think they were a bit like 'oh Emma, here she goes again' kind of thing and my dad, my mum and dad, we used to have really heated discussions where I would end up crying because I was really like 'why don't you understand' and just being really kind of passionate and

kind of angry and probably not dealing with it the right way. So I think I've kind of reduced those sort of conversations, I'll just maybe occasionally say 'oh why do you think these things? Where's that come from?', rather than being like 'no you shouldn't be doing this and why are you doing this?' and being angry, because I realise it's not the way to do things.

Emma 'reduced' the 'passionate' and 'angry' conversations she had with her family, not because her anger had subsided, but as a means of making herself heard. In her encounters with her mother and father, Emma's emotions are deemed inappropriate or overdramatic ('oh Emma, here she goes again'). Her anger is unwanted, at least by those around her and so the suppression of it enables her to become an 'acceptable' feminist, one that makes occasional, enquiring remarks, rather than asks forceful, demanding questions. For her feminist concerns to be heard, Emma is forced to 'reduce' them, to quieten down and avoid disruption. Part of Emma's feminist becoming, therefore, involves the suppression of her feminist feeling. Emma has to negotiate the tension between the productive potential of embracing anger and the silencing tactic of being named the 'angry feminist' (Tomlinson 2010).

Emma's anger is designated as an internal and personal problem that she expects herself to contain. The depiction of emotion as originating from within the individual and expected to be managed by them to prevent leakage into public space was also evident in Beth's and Aaliyah's accounts. Beth describes the way in which her initial engagement with feminism was experienced through anger:

Like I'd just get really, really angry and like start, just shouting all the time, like literally shouting and screaming like in my room or yeah, never like at people.

And Aaliyah remembers her reaction to an anti-abortion demonstration:

When I saw that I just, I got so angry and I really just went up and screamed at the people, which wasn't maybe a very good thing to do, but I was like 'what are you doing you can't stand here and judge people like this, like it's not any of your business what somebody does with their body'

Beth's and Aaliyah's comments acknowledge that there is an expectation that they contain or privatise emotion. Beth shouts and screams alone in her room, whilst Aaliyah suggests that her public expression of anger was misguided. Their perception of what is 'appropriate' emotion shapes their experience of its expression. Aaliyah's comments in particular draw attention to the emotional force that fuels her feminism, but the self-regulation in the expression of that emotion.

Beth and Aaliyah draw upon a model of emotion that maps reason/emotion onto the public/private divide and presents emotion as a pre-social, static entity (Harding and Pribram 2002). This model is heavily gendered; when women express anger, they encounter a history of representation of both 'the angry feminist' and of women as (over)emotional (Jaggar 1989). In her research with feminist women, Cheryl Hercus (1999) observed that women engaged in the 'emotion work' of self-restraint in relation to their feminism. That is, aware of the negative response to their feminism or 'deviant emotions' (1999:45), in particular, anger, Hercus' interviewees were selective in who they spoke to about their beliefs and how they were expressed. This is a strategy evident in the accounts here, and illustrative of the social, rather than individual formation of emotion. This self-restraint is evident in Emma's, Beth's and Aaliyah's accounts where their anger is depicted as something in need of containment, a discrete entity that can be managed and hidden away. In addition, Emma and Beth, each attributes the expression of their anger to their younger feminist selves—as the feminist matures she learns to 'deal with', as Beth expresses it, her anger.

In their accounts, Emma, Beth and Aaliyah each express or contain their anger in relation to others. From this perspective, the delegitimisation of emotion is not an inevitable aspect of the maturation of the feminist, from angry, emotional girl to controlled and reasoned woman, but is a means of responding to and managing relationships. As Smart (2007) argues, incorporating the concept of relationality into the discussion of emotions is important for:

> [R]ecognizing that emotions do not spring from the self-contained individual but are produced and given meaning in a socio-cultural (or self-reflexive) context. It is in part through emotions that we communicate and emotions give meaning to our communications. (Smart 2007:58).

Although Emma, for example, draws on an individualised narrative of becoming feminist, it is one that is located in a series of networks. The familial context that compels her to 'manage' and 'contain' her emotions is itself part of broader societal expectations of emotion as private, internal and individualised. Her devaluing of emotion accords with this. Approaching emotion as collective, relational and mobile (Ahmed 2004a, b; Harding and Pribram 2002; Lupton 1998; Smart 2007) draws attention to the ways in which the apparently individualised accounts offered by some of the women discussed here are always relationally formed.

I now want to turn to the narratives of Richa, Ruby and finally Beth to explore how they found ways to validate and harness feminist feeling. Richa spoke about the feelings of fear and anger that propelled her feminism. Her experience of moving between India, where she spent her childhood, and the USA, Scotland and England is integral to her feminist becoming. She shifts her fear and anger from an internal 'problem' to a problem with the world around her. It is a shift that allows her to validate her emotion. Ruby offers an understanding of how activism can be a site for feminist women to express and harness emotion. She reflects on her attachment to the UK women's peace camp at Greenham Common and how its legacy was so important to the development of her feminist consciousness. In doing so she offers another means of keeping hold of feminist feeling through an attachment to another feminist moment. Finally, I consider some of the images of protest that Beth brought to the interview. In contrast to her discussion of feeling compelled to manage and reduce her anger, Beth uses a performative, theatrical and visceral form of protest that both expresses and elicits emotion to make political statements. Her images resonate with a history of protest within feminism and other radical movements. This is a history that allows Beth to find a means of expressing the emotions she, at other times, felt obliged to supress.

Richa's Story

The conflict between the fear of being silenced and the desire to express very real or 'proud anger' is evident in Richa's narrative. Richa was 26 at the time of being interviewed, describing herself as Indian, upper middle-class

and her sexuality as 'undetermined'. Richa grew up in India, moving to the USA to study for an undergraduate degree. Following the completion of her first degree, she returned to India for two years to complete a master's degree. She then went to study in Scotland, returning briefly to complete her dissertation. At the time of her interview, Richa was living and studying in England, with an expectation of remaining there for the mid to long term. Her experience of movement across different places and cultural contexts echoes that of Aaliyah's in the previous chapter, but here I focus on the affective dimensions of Richa's story. In contrast to the narratives that delegitimise feeling, Richa explicitly brings emotion to the fore of her story of becoming feminist, which she characterised by fear and anger. Her narrative illustrates the relational formation of emotion as time, space, place and history mediate her experience of fear and anger.

Richa's story unfolds across this chapter as I trace her feminist becoming through her emotional experience of movement. I take this approach to give a sense of this becoming as it emerged during her interview. I begin towards the end of her studies in Scotland, when Richa returned again to her family home in India for three months to complete her dissertation. In her interview, Richa described her changing experience of her home city, during the periods in which she moved between countries:

> Em when I went back to India after my undergraduate, after getting my undergraduate degree in the US, I went back to India for 2 years to get my masters, and at that time I wasn't consciously thinking about women's issues, *not really*. Em I went, after that I went to Scotland to do an MLit and then I came back to India for 3 months to write up my dissertation, that's when I def., I … actually seriously started identifying myself as a feminist, I mean that was, that is the time that I can clearly point to and clearly think of as, as a kind of turning point for me, because the first time that I've come back to India from the US there were things that bothered me… but … my response was not to sort of face what I felt about them, but to relegate it to the, the margins of my mind, because, maybe because I was concentrating on my masters. I did my undergraduate degree in Economics and then I went back to India to do my masters in English, so it was a very big change and, you know I had been in an international school before that and then undergraduate in the US and now I was back in India and everything was very different, there was a lot to deal with, so

possibly because of that. But when I came back from Scotland everything grated, every, everything grated on me, so em, I mean … even now when I, when I think, and I think about it, even now, it, it, em the, the effect that, that, for instance newspaper articles, the way that women were talked about in newspapers, the way that the, the things that I saw em, I mean just the, the casualness of the anti-feminism in India is, is what, it, it almost makes me speechless actually, I'm quite incoherent about it, because I still feel very, very angry about it, and I'd been in London for a year after that, em but that, those three months still … it's, it's very hard to, for me to articulate.

Richa becomes feminist through her experience of migration and remigration. Although her identification as 'feminist' coincides with her entry into higher education, she does not explicitly connect the two. It is the crossing of geographical, social and cultural boarders that her pursuit of education affords that changes Richa's relationship to and experience of her country of origin. This movement is an integral part of her narrative of becoming feminist. Richa describes a visceral reaction to her home city in the three months she spent there following her time in Scotland. Everything about life in India 'grated' on her, following her return; she describes a heightened awareness of the social position of women and anti-feminist rhetoric. Her increasing identification as a feminist positioned her as an outsider to, and subject of, the dominant anti-feminist discourse she saw in mainstream media. Her feminist becoming involved a changing and intensified relationship to India.

A discomfort and shift or revision of identity in returning to a country of origin is not uncommon in narratives of migration. Ralph and Staeheli (2011) suggest that the difference between the memories of 'home' and the reality of return can result in a shift in feelings of belonging, as individuals negotiate an insider/outsider status. However, Richa's feelings of discomfort are not provoked by the contrast between an idealised 'home' and a less than perfect reality. She describes instead a changing *emotional* experience of the sexism she was always aware of, but chose out of necessity to 'relegate' to the back of her mind. Richa does not idealise her home city, but experiences it differently upon her return from Scotland. It was this period, the second of her two 'returns', that precipitated a

marked shift in Richa's emotional engagement with her surroundings, as she became angry at the fear that she felt as a woman occupying public space. It was through this shift in emotion that she started 'seriously identifying' herself as feminist. Richa is already reading her fear as something to feel angry about and so recognises her emotion as a legitimate reason for critique of the world around her (Ahmed 2013). This, crucially, enables her to hold onto and validate her anger.

Richa names herself as 'angry' repeatedly throughout the interview. In fact, at its close she explained that her motivation for participating was to discover if other women's feminism was also characterised by fear and anger. Her experience of living in India for those three months following her studies in Scotland had a lasting, emotional effect—during the interview, over a year later, she still found it difficult to fully articulate her experience, but emphasised the depth of anger she felt at the treatment and depiction of women in Indian society. It is a lasting anger that continues to propel Richa's feminist identification and one that is key to understanding how her feminist becoming is fundamentally emotional.

Richa illustrates the connection between the changes in place and her fear and anger through a story of driving her car alone after dark:

> And part of it (becoming feminist) is, a lot of it is anger and a lot of it is fear because I was, I felt constantly threatened by, by the things that were expected of me by the way that people responded, men responded to me as a woman driving along in my car. The fact that after it started getting dark, I, I started getting scared, I don't like being afraid. There was no reason for me to be afraid, no and I wasn't doing anything dangerous, it's, I'm driving in my car and it gets dark and I feel afraid, that's … and, and chronic fear, fear that went on and on and on and this is … when I come back from Scotland I, I thought about it more, but it had, this fear had been there throughout the 2 years that I had been there, before as well, during my masters, I just hadn't thought about it, I just sort of pushed it aside and not thought about it, but when I came back and I was doing it all over again, then it started to sort of, then it sort of just … it was like an avalanche, so yeah fear and anger are the two things actually, which is kind of ridiculous, but that's what makes me definitely identify as feminist, the fact that I feel afraid and that I feel angry.

Richa's account of driving through her home city after dark illustrates the ways in which space plays an essential role in the constitution and reproduction of identities (Massey 2013; Valentine 2014). Her occupation of what is perceived by the men around her as 'male space' (in public, driving a car, alone, after dark) reproduces the positioning of women in public space as vulnerable. This embodied, material and relational experience of driving her car at night leads Richa to experience herself as vulnerable, in danger and afraid. The borders of her own private space—the car—are experienced as penetrable and place her at risk. This is something she also vividly conveys through another example of a man leaning into her open car window to castigate her for smoking.

This fear of the invasion into her private space is contrary to Richa's 'objective' assessment of the situation as she reflects 'there was no reason for me to be afraid, no and I wasn't doing anything dangerous'. Richa's fear emerges through an encounter between herself and the men around her as she drives her car. Her anger is a response to her fear that is produced through the reactions of others to her occupation of this particular space—or her activity as a woman in this space. By transforming her unwanted fear ('I don't like being afraid') into anger, Richa attempts to resist the reproduction of herself as vulnerable. In her account, although it does not fully dissipate the fear, anger is a productive force and perhaps the only possible response to it. In naming herself 'angry', therefore, Richa moves beyond merely articulating the 'chronic fear' and daily injustices she experiences, towards challenging the forces that make her fear a reality. In the extract below, anger is inextricably linked to fear—Richa is angry that she has to feel fearful when in her daily life. The recurrence of these instances and the undercurrent of fear that characterised this period for Richa means that harnessing anger is an ongoing repetitive daily activity.

Richa's feminism is formed through such encounters. As she becomes angry at the fear she experiences, she begins to name herself 'feminist'. This is despite a resistance to adopting similar labels:

> If, if it, I'm identifying myself as an, and theoretically I don't like "ist" words and "ism" words, because they're, they, they're, they, they "pigeon hole" em issues, so theoretically I don't, but about this I feel that there is a … a certain

lack of objectivity which I accept …em I, I just, I, I feel that my lack of objectivity in this instance is justified because I do feel afraid, I do feel threatened, and I do feel angry, so and that becomes in a certain kind of way part of the argument, so yeah, that's why, I mean I would hesitate before calling me, myself any other "ist", but I don't hesitate to call myself a feminist.

Richa adopt this particular 'ism', despite an 'objective' and 'theoretical' resistance to labels. In doing so she furthers the association between her feminist identity and her emotional engagement with the world, albeit through an apparent separation of 'emotion' and 'reason'. The anger Richa feels at the fear she experiences as a woman propels her to embrace a feminist identity without questioning the 'ist' or 'ism' labels she ordinarily finds so problematic. This is very resonant with Shweta Singh's (2012) work with Indian women, which considers how experiences of migration propel shifts in relationships and identity. Singh writes: 'As a migrant woman encounters the changing roles and expectations in the host society—in intimate relationships, with immediate family members, ethnic group, and with the larger community—the conception of womanhood changes as well; it does not remain static in one's life' (2012: 123). Richa's account of living across various borders accords with this. She uses her movement between India and Scotland in particular as a marker in changes in her identity. These are changes in which the adoption of a previously resisted 'ism' becomes an inevitability or necessity. Later in the interview Richa expresses frustrations with what she perceives in contemporary Indian feminism as a tendency to view 'womanhood' and 'identity' as separable. Although she doesn't expand on this point, it signals that her woman hood is so central to her identity, or is made central because of her awareness of the restrictions placed upon her as a woman, that it cannot be disentangled in any feminist analysis.

Richa's feminist becoming is one that emerges through her emotions; in contrast to Alice and Emma, Richa does not delegitimise emotion in her narrative, but explicitly and repeatedly describes her feminist becoming in terms of emotion. In locating her feminist feelings in a socio-cultural context, she is able to acknowledge and harness a productive anger, rather than distance herself from it as something that is

produced internally and should be managed or dampened. She does this through discussion of her experience of migration—Richa's experience of moving across geographical, social and cultural boundaries changes her experience of her home country and her position within it upon her return.

In telling a story of a feminism that is developed across and founded in specific temporal and spatial contexts, Richa is able to hold on to her emotional becoming, and foreground both fear and anger in her narrative. However, in identifying herself as a feminist and expressing this anger, Richa is aware that she becomes the subject of dismissal, ridicule and 'anti-feminist' rhetoric. She describes the reception of 'Richa's feminism' at her family dinner table:

> She's the fly you want to bat away, and I identify with it also because when I go back home, right now I'm in London, and you know I'm having a conversation with you about my feminism. When I go back to India it will be, it will be eh … an excellent and very, and recurring joke at the dinner table, 'Richa and her feminism' and that, that's exactly like it, isn't it, it's being, it's like a fly, it'll pass.

Richa's account is reminiscent of Ahmed's (2010) 'feminist killjoy' who disrupts the domestic scene of the family dinner table by speaking out and highlighting disharmony. In doing so, the feminist killjoy refuses to 'reflect the image of the happy family back to itself' (Ahmed 2010: 2). By highlighting what is problematic, the feminist killjoy becomes the problem. It is a problem that is managed using jokes. The joke has a particular significance to the feminist subject, the 'angry feminist' is depicted as a humourless figure who cannot take a joke (Tomlinson 2010). The positioning of the feminist *as* the joke depends on the depiction of the feminist as humourless. Hercus (1999) has argued that jokes that take the form of teasing and questioning feminist beliefs function as a means of social control and are frequently utilised in response to women's anger. Anger is an affect that marks feminism out as a deviant identity, in need of restraint and turning feminist anger into a joke is one means of enforcing this (Hercus 1999).

A significant aspect of the emotions of becoming feminist involves encounters with others' feelings about feminism. This is something Hesford (2013) considers a necessary part of understanding the women's liberation movement as an effect of the circulation of emotion. She writes:

> To think about the production of women's liberation as an effect of the circulation of emotions at the time of the movement's arising is to also realize the difficulty feminists face in changing their own and other's perceptions—feelings—about a movement like women's liberation (2013: 21).

Richa is very aware of the feelings of others regarding her feminism, because they were once her own. She is received by those around her as 'the feminist', a figure she remembers once having derision for. She offers an example of who the feminist is and how they are received in her memory of a fellow student from her time studying in the USA:

> She was a final-year undergrad student, and she was gay, she wore her hair extremely short. She wore combat boots and she called herself a feminist, talked about feminism, had, I don't remember whether she was reading, whatever she was, I mean whatever it was that she was doing, whether her work was about feminism as well, or not, but she was very vocal about it… and the, that was her, that was the woman that…I mean that I felt derision for, like, you know…the kind of feeling that, that I suspect most people of having toward me, now…Yeah, which is that, 'all right, fine, you believe in women's rights, why do you have to talk about it so much?', that kind of thing.

The woman Richa describes in this extract challenges both heteronormativity and femininity. She is a figure of derision for Richa, someone whose forceful repetition of her support for women's rights is an irritation, echoing Jenny's experience of expressing feminist views when at university. In this extract, the figure (and at this point Richa herself) is also connected to the feminist past. In Richa's paraphrasing 'all right, fine, you believe in women's right, why do you have to talk about it so much?', feminist views are positioned as self-explanatory or obvious, the validity of women's rights have already been established. This echoes the

post-feminist discourse that positions feminism as something that is past, unnecessary and mis-placed in the present.

Richa's memory of the feminist is reminiscent of Hesford's 'feminist-as-lesbian', the 'laughable', 'contemptuous', 'angry' and 'monstrous' figure that haunts feminism's present. The 'feminist-as-lesbian' argues Hesford (2013), become an image-memory of the women's liberations movement. So dominant is she in the remembering of the movement that she subsumes its heterogeneous beginnings and the possibilities for these narratives to emerge, whilst simultaneously drawing attention to these lost possibilities (Hesford 2013). Richa's own encounter with this particular figure of the US women's liberation movement occurs during her undergraduate degree in the USA. She remembers her own derision and dismissal of this figure; but following her return to India, where she begins to 'seriously identify' herself as feminist, she becomes the recipient of such feelings of derision and so becomes aligned with the figure she once dismissed. It is in India at her family dinner table that Richa forges an emotional connection and identification with this student, through an encounter with the feelings of others about her feminism.

Richa's experiences of migration and remigration propel the feelings of anger that she places at the centre of her feminism. But it is important that it was when she returned to India that Richa identified as a feminist and here that her fear and anger were located. She experiences feminism differently when in the UK:

> It influences my daily life less here than it did in India, but even here it's just, it influences me a lot more when I, when I'm brought up against a situation that requires me to make a choice. I mean that requires me to either say something or not say something for instance. Before I would never, I would usually have not said something, now I usually say it, so, I think that's the biggest difference.

Richa suggests that feminism is part of her everyday life when in India, in ways that it is not in the UK. When in the UK, her feminism is manifest in situations when she has to assert herself and speak out about something; she presents it as a more individualised aspect of the self.

However, when in India, feminism is a daily, lived and necessary practice for Richa, embedded in her familial, societal and historical background. Richa's feminist concerns centre around issues of ownership, space, autonomy and independence and are very much located in her experience of growing up in India. They reflect the concerns of Indian feminist activists interviewed as part of the 'Global Feminisms Project' in which the importance of women being able to occupy the same spaces as men were key concerns (Stewart et al. 2011).

 Richa's discussion of Barbara Kruger's 1989 art work 'Untitled (Your body is a battleground)' draws these issues into view, illustrating that her feminist concerns are very much connected to her experience of being a girl and a woman in India:

> So in India in your body, body is your battleground and also, it's also a battleground in a lot of very practical ways which is that the, the system of dowry still exists which means that when a women gets married, more often than not her parents are required to send her off with a lot of money and send her off with a lot eh, either property or, either you know a house or just a lot of jewellery, whatever I mean it, and in a lot, in a number of way, in of, in, in a number of cases it's disguised but you know as a present to the daughter, they give her an enor., a huge amount of gold and diamond jewellery, but it doesn't belong to her…because her husband can invade her, that ownership at any time, especially if she doesn't have financial independence, if she doesn't, she, she doesn't have a job of her own, you know she can't walk or she can't afford to walk out, then it doesn't, nothing belongs to her and, and which means that a lot of the times what also happens is that if her in-laws, her parents-in-law or her husband's side, after a while that, the dowry wasn't enough then they harass her a great deal and there's still cases of "bride burning", which is that after a while they'll, they'll torture her, I mean you know mentally and emotionally torture her but they'll also burn her, they'll burn her alive sometimes and that exists and that's a, a different level of your body being the battleground.

Richa brings the ownership, control and abuse of the female body to the centre of her feminism. Her interpretation of Kruger's work highlights issues that have been addressed by Indian woman's movements, includ-

ing the control and ownership of women's bodies by familial and caste systems, practices such as sati[1] and dowry payments[2] (Kumar 1995; Mani 1998; Stewart et al. 2011). Such issues have been the focus of public protests and performance within Indian women's movements (Stewart et al. 2011).

Questions of ownership, invasion, property and space are embedded in this discussion and are at the heart of what it is that makes Richa so fearful and angry in Indian society. These are themes that are repeated throughout her narrative, in particular through the discussion of her mother's position in the family:

> My mother has never had a space of her own, which is, my father has, in his house, in our house, but my mother doesn't have any space and it's, and when, for instance they are having a fight or, or you know that's one of the ways that … I, I mean he, he … and I think men tend to do this, they, it's a … invasion of privacy, invasion of something that you have for yourself,

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[1] Sati is a Hindu funeral custom of the immolation of the widow on the funeral pyre of her husband. It was predominantly practiced by high-caste Hindus. It was outlawed in 1829 whilst India was under colonial rule. In *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India*, Lata Mani (1998) notes that the prevailing historical narrative of the abolition of sati as a result of the colonial horror at the practice and so an important step forward in women's emancipation. Conversely, argues Mani, the subject of sati was approached as one of a debate of religious tradition and its status in scriptures. The debate gave little real concern to the material hardships of widowhood and so contributed to women's further. It is important to note that occurrences of Sati have been extremely rare in the last 30-40 years and were localised in Rajasthan. Thank you to Amrit Wilson for her comments here.

[2] Dowry is the practice of a bride's family giving money and other assets to the groom's family. Although it was traditionally an upper-caste practice, since the beginning of the twentieth century, it has been common to all classes and castes (Sen 2000). It was prohibited in 1961. As Radha Kumar (1995) discusses in full, the payment of dowry and dowry-related violence and murder (often recorded as suicide) was one of the key issues for the Indian women's movement of the 1970s. Awareness was raised through both heightened media reporting and the 1974 Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) report 'Towards Equality' (Subramaniam 2004). The first campaigns were organised by the Progressive Organization of Women in Hyderabad in 1975, but were stalled by the declaration of a 'state of emergency' between 1975 and 1977 by the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the work of feminist groups such as Stri Sangharsh and the feminist journal *Manushi* once again raised awareness of dowry-related abuses. Their demonstrations, performances and public meetings were instrumental in making the government implement a series of laws and amendments during the 1980s, legislating against dowry-related crime. However, Indian feminist organisations have questioned the efficiency of the changes in legislation because, as Samita Sen comments, 'the more the law changed, the more things stayed the same' (Sen 2000: 27). By the mid-1980s, the focus of feminist activists shifted to providing advocacy services to women to inform them of their rights (Sen 2000).

that you have somehow claimed ownership of, if someone invades it, if someone reclaims it then that is, I think, I mean it's debilitating and there are things, there are things, like for instance my father will own a, a space that my father will have which, but it has never been there for my mother and … but I think, and that frightens me as well, that possibility of not having a space or ownership over the things that make up my life. (Sharing a photograph) That is my mother, em I cannot think of a, you know any aspect of my identity without somehow it being about her, in some way or another, but especially as regards my feminism, because she is in some ways an embodiment of the things that make me, I mean the things, she is not, she doesn't represent the things that make me angry and make, things that frighten me, but a lot of the things that make me angry and the things that frighten me are things I have learnt from seeing her, so … *I don't want her life*, but also she is the one who has shown me that I don't want her life, and it isn't just a question of just showing me through actions etc., either, she's always been very vocal.

Richa's emotional engagement with feminism, her fear and anger, is embedded in the gender relations she observed in her own family life and Indian society more broadly. Her mother's position in the home—her lack of space, ownership or privacy—is an embodiment of Richa's fears for her own future. It is her mother, who encourages Richa and her sister to pursue education and be financially independent in ways that she was unable, and who offers them an opportunity to have their own space and sense of ownership:

My mother is in a certain kind of way a feminist, but she doesn't, I mean she never calls herself that but, she is, you know constantly reiterated to both me and my sister that, she got married when she was very young and she didn't have a career and she didn't have any financial independence, and this is the one thing that we grew up with, I mean she would sit us down and give us lectures periodically about how it is absolutely *essential* for us to have financial independence, and our education and our careers come first, after that you get married.

Again, Richa places issues of ownership, independence and space at the centre of her feminism. Like Rebecca and Jenny, her mother is crucial in transmitting ideas that are central to her feminism. The education her

mother insisted Richa pursue afforded her physical and intellectual space to a certain extent. However, being financially dependent on her father, who funded her studies, left Richa feeling she has only partial ownership over this space:

> I'm dependent on my father, not on my mother…because my mother doesn't have an income, and that is quite awful, so in that sense my room is not mine, it's his, but I do have, I mean … I mean in the most, in the most fundamental sense I do have room of my own, and … I don't know, I don't think it, it's not just the physical room either, it's mental space for, for instance I'm, I'm thinking of the fact that most of the time I work in the library and when I have a table and a chair and somewhere to plug my computer in and put my books, and I can put my bag there, or I can put my bag in my locker, that is, in a sense, and then that table becomes my room for the day, and I feel perfectly, I mean there is not a hint of feeling … you know uncomfortable with that space, but I can see how someone, some other, someone else might, but I, I don't because, I mean I live in my head in any case, but it, it is extremely important to me, I should say this, that it is extremely important to me how to have my own room which I don't share with anyone, and that to me is, is unthinkable, I can't, I can't do that, I don't want to do that ever.

Richa has to work hard to forge her own space, to claim what her father is financing as her own. But it is when she makes this space and is able to occupy it, whether it be head-space, her library desk or her own room that she feels entirely comfortable in herself. This sits in contrast to the times that her space is invaded or at risk—her experience of being in public space in her car, or of her feminist identity being threatened or dismissed at the family dinner table. Richa's feminist politics respond to manifestation in her own life of the issues of ownership, space and control that have concerned the Indian women's movements historically.

Richa's conception of emotion in her narrative is not an internalised, personalised one. Her fear and anger is rooted in the very social, cultural and biographical details of her life, highlighting the legacy of

colonialism[3], experiences of migration and the various priorities of the Indian women's movements. This fore-grounding of emotion makes feminism a necessity for Richa, especially felt in her daily life when in India. Unlike the women introduced at the beginning of this chapter, Richa does not, indeed cannot, restrain her emotion in order to 'know feminism'. It can only be *known* through an unsettled emotional engagement with the world, as she suggests here:

> I mean, and you know a certain kind of way perhaps it's the unsettled feeling that, perhaps the unsettled feeling helped cement my feminism as well, because anything that made me feel unequivocally, em in the right, I would be suspicious of …but there is the constant self-questioning and … that, that is I think that … I think that's in a certain kind of way inherent in feminist discourse, because I mean you can't keep questioning the status quo and leave yourself out of it, you have to be questioning yourself within the status quo as well, so I, and I think that is a very productive thing.

For Richa, becoming feminist is defined through emotion. The interconnection between pain and anger in Richa's narrative is crucial (her fear is certainly painful). Brown, Wendy (1995) has suggested that this connection in feminism between pain and anger is a form of reactive and revengeful, rather than active, politics. It can therefore only reinscribe pain and offer no means of moving past it. Ahmed responds to Brown by speaking in defence of anger, arguing that there is no politics that 'acts without reaction' (2013: 174) and that such a politics would require the erasure of histories that it is shaped against. Ahmed argues thus:

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[3] Many of the concerns Richa expressed reflect the focus of the various manifestations of the Indian women's movements. See Sen (2000) for a detailed discussion of the legal and judicial system instated during British colonial rule in India, in particular the establishment of personal laws and their lasting legacy on modern Indian society. Sen writes that '[T]he new personal laws were the bedrock of the new patriarchy. The colonial state and elite Indian men were concerned with legally buttressing familial authority. Personal laws and a 'flexible' approach to customary law were used to that end. To enhance patriarchal control over property and labour, the family was consigned to the amorphous domain of religion, community, and custom (rather than of a law that admitted some measure of individualization)—all three of which could be manipulated at many levels' (2000:29).

> [F]eminism is shaped by what it is against, just as women's bodies and lives may be shaped by histories of violence that bring them to a feminist consciousness. If feminism is an emotion as well as ethical and political response to what it is against, then what feminism is against cannot be seen as 'exterior' to feminism. Indeed, 'what' feminism is against is 'what *gives feminist politics its edge*. If anger is a form of 'against-ness', then it is precisely about the impossibility of moving beyond the history of injuries to a pure or innocent position.' (2013: 174, emphasis in original)

Anger is a positioning against what is unjust in the world. It signals the ways in which histories of past violence are still felt in the present and cannot be discarded to create a new 'pure and innocent position' from which to work. This has particular significance for women of colour for whom, Ahmed suggests, anger is a crucial tool for reacting to deeply ingrained sexism and racism. Citing Audre Lorde (1984), she suggests that anger is both a means of naming racism and imaging a world without it. Anger, therefore, is a productive force, rather than something upon which feminism becomes stuck.

Richa's feminism and her concerns with women's ownership and control of space, possessions and bodies are shaped by the histories of violence against women in Indian society, which are, of course, marked by the history and legacy of British colonial rule. Richa's anger positions her against these histories of violence and the traces of these in her and her mother's lives. The 'unsettled' feeling that Richa holds onto, despite the discomfort of doing so, is a productive force that is future orientated—she names it a 'very productive thing'. She does not get stuck upon past violence because of her anger, but is propelled forward by it. In positioning her anger in this way, Richa is able to hold onto it, despite the derision she experiences because of it. Richa recognises that her anger cannot be dismissed as an individual and internal problem, but that it is borne out of a problematic world in which she has to feel fearful. In placing her emotion in a social, cultural and historical context, Richa is able to resist the demarcation of anger and fear as *her* problem. I turn now to the stories of Ruby and then Beth, who each demonstrates how they managed, like Richa, to hold onto emotion in their refusal to see it as an internal, problematic entity in need of control. Ruby and Beth award emotion value and recognition through sites of protest.

Ruby's Story

In Chap. 2 the UK miners' strikes were so intertwined with Rebecca's memories of her childhood that they became a significant reference point for how she understood and articulated her feminist identity. The strikes had such affective power that the memories of them stayed with Rebecca and were ones through which she forged an identification with her lost feminist mother. One of the ways through which the strikes are remembered by Rebecca is song. Songs and music have always played an important part in protest and social movements (Lynskey 2011). The power of song as a means of political expression has been seen in, for example, the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, the US civil rights movement, the 'Arab Spring' protests (in which internet-based song was an important element [Lynskey 2011]), and across feminist movements (Roseneil 2000). Song is one of the elements of protest spaces that create 'atmosphere' and has the power to evoke intense emotions (Eesuola 2015; Rosenberg 2013).

Songs appeared in many of the women's interviews, perhaps most memorably Ruby's. At 20 years old, Ruby was the youngest of all the interviewees. She described herself as white-British, lower middle-class and 'heterosexual with an open mind'. During the interview, she discussed the importance of the Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common to her feminist becoming, recalling how she became 'completely, completely, utterly obsessed' with Greenham as an 18-year-old art student. The women-only camp, in Berkshire, UK, began in 1981 and was active for 19 years as a protest against the UK government's decision to house US cruise missiles on the site. Ruby came to know Greenham through the multi-media online archive created by Beeban Kidron and Lindsay Poultan for *Guardian* Film.[4]

In 2006 Kindron and Poultan invited the public to contribute their memories of Greenham; the resulting online archive has a scrapbook aesthetic, with photographs, news clippings, maps, letters, songs, interviews and films for the viewer to explore. Under a section entitled 'Protest Now', the site invites people to contribute with accounts of contemporary protest

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[4] http://www.yourgreenham.co.uk/

through comments and weblinks. In inviting narratives of protest, and housing these narratives on the Greenham archive, the site draws links between the anti-nuclear campaigns of the past and present. The title 'Protest Now' could also be read as a demand, invitation or call to future action, asking the reader to continue the work of the women of Greenham in the political future. The viewer is positioned as active rather than passive. By inviting them to engage with this particular moment in feminist history, the site illustrates its ongoing relevance. They are considered to be able to contribute and is able to interact and engage with the history of Greenham. Its history is seen as lively, dynamic and productive as it draws connections between past, present and future protests.

During the interview, Ruby played an extract of Tim Knock's 2001 short film 'And the Fence Came Tumbling Down', from the website. The film includes footage of the peace camp as well as scenes of the dismantling of the fence around the missile base in April 2000, when Greenham was returned to use as common land. During the film, the song 'Like a Mountain' is playing. Originally a peace song written by Columbia singer-songwriter Naomi Littlebear Morena, 'Like a Mountain' was adopted by the women of Greenham. The 'mountain' acts as a metaphor for the endurance, strength and indestructability of womanhood. As we watched the film clip and listened to the song together, Ruby remarked that she and others sang the song at 'Reclaim the Night'.[5] The song forges a connection between Ruby's own protest spaces and those of the women of Greenham.

'The Fabric of Greenham' is another 'Your Greenham' film that was very important to Ruby, she explained that she cried whenever she watched it. The film documents the creative and emotional protests embraced by some of the Greenham women. It includes interviews with some of the women and video footage of women and children weaving webs, rainbows and snakes—all important imagery for Greenham. Roseneil, speaking on the film, remarks that this form of protest created not only stark contrast between the domesticity of the camp and the militarism of the

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[5] *Reclaim the Night* is an annual march against rape and violence against women. It has been organised since 2004 by the London Feminist Network, but started in 1977, organised by the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group.

missile base, but also a different kind of anti-nuclear discourse that communicated with people on an emotional level. It is at this level that the story of Greenham is felt by Ruby, often through the power of the song. Speaking about the video, she says:

> Groups of people singing I don't know what it is but I will be in tears like it's when people sing passionately and especially in groups…I guess when they when they're singing it's absolutely everything that can get me get me crying altogether like, like when I think about amazing things that women have done in the past…I get really teary, I do, because it's, it just, it just makes me proud and so there I am, I'm being teary because it's Greenham and I'm being teary because they're singing songs with passion and all together and then erm it ends when they're they're walking along carrying this huge banner that they've all stitched together like lots of different bits of banner that they've all stitched together and they're all walking along.

Ruby emphasises the significance of the collective voice; it is women singing *together* that holds such emotional power for her. This is something Roseneil, again speaking on the film, describes as the 'the stuff of life at Greenham'. Music forged communities and lifted the women's spirits. These songs convey the passion that sustained the peace camps, and it is a passion that is transferred to Ruby and one that compelled her to be 'part of a movement'. As she describes here:

> I just find them completely inspiring basically I just, I don't know, it just, it just seems like one of the best protests to have ever existed, you know, and one of the most passionate as well. That's, that's really what it is I think. It's the passion because like in every aspect of my life the things that I like are things that been made, or whatever, with passion and, and, that, that's really, that's the end of that, you know, there's…I can't. I can't give you a better reason for saying that I like something other than it was clearly made with passion and I really I think these women are completely amazing and totally inspirational and actually, erm, at Million Women Rise in 2010 yeah I met a woman that's on one of these videos and, and I was I was just completely star-struck and I don't get star-struck with people but I was like I couldn't speak and she had no idea why but that's how that's how much in awe I am of these women erm yeah (laughter) and I think that was really

one of the main things that made me really sort of concretely decide that I want to be a part of a movement that has history like that…really I mean like I think because obviously I like I really respect the suffragettes and stuff but because it was so far away it's harder to empathise with you know it feels like a battle that was won a million years ago or something it's so far away and you know I love 'em (laughter) full respect to them but it's really it's the Greenham women that mean more to me just because I can empathise with them more I can understand it…erm I guess…yeah…I don't really know what much there is to say otherwise I just start crying.

In looking back at feminist history, Ruby seeks out people and protests that are fuelled by passion. The women of Greenham, whom Ruby encounters both through the 'Your Greenham' archive and face to face at 'Million Women Rise', offer Ruby access to an inspirational and passionate event in the history of feminist activism. She indicates that her own feminism and the connections she forges with feminist activism require an empathetic exchange, rather than absolute understanding. She aligns herself with the creative and emotional protests that took place at Greenham. In doing so, she celebrates the creativity and emotion that she sees in both her own and the Greenham women's protests. She comments:

I can't sit and talk about stuff as much as I can get out and do it. Like, I like to go to all the meetings and stuff about how we can sort out the next big Tory fuck up or whatever but I really, I sort of go kind of prepared to say 'I can't do that but I can do this' you know. I'm a creative person. I'm an active person. I can go out and I can shout as much you like you know, and I can, I can put stuff into motion, but I can't or at least I don't feel comfortable erm I don't know going on to Newsnight and talking to Jeremy Paxman about it or whatever I just, I don't feel comfortable in my ability to do that but things like that you know things that every single person can do I feel much more okay with and, and full respect to everyone doing it for other reasons, you know, if you can go on and do the Jeremy Paxman thing do it (laughter) but I can't and that's why I sort of, I look at the women of Greenham and I think these are women like me and and these women have done something amazing you know what's stopping me?

Ruby does not diminish or feel she has to excuse the creative and emotional protest she aligns herself with. She does not consider it to be less valuable than the 'Jeremy Paxman thing'—referring to the UK political broadcaster, renowned for a hard-hitting interview style—but both approaches are awarded value. The women of Greenham validate the forms of protest that Ruby feels a desire to participate in. It is the passion, energy, creativity and emotion of Greenham that conveys to Ruby that she, too, is able to 'do something amazing'. The legacy of Greenham is very much active in Ruby's political present.

Roseneil (2000) argues that the style of protest cultivated at Greenham was not only a form of opposition, but also a practice through which the women of Greenham forged relationships, reworked identities and challenged gender roles. She writes:

> Greenham's distinctive style of protest—an emotional, anarchic, irreverent, disorderly and queer way of doing politics—was not just the public face of challenge offered by the camp and the movement to the threat of nuclear militarism. It was also the glue that bound Greenham together. The pleasures and excitements of actions energized the women who took part and were part of the process by which women reinvented themselves. They threw off many of the trappings of their gender-as-normal, of traditional feminine behaviour, and experienced themselves as wild and rebellious in ways beyond the imagination of childhood adventure tales. Greenham women became the stars in their own action stories, their own and each other's heroines (2000: 225).

For Ruby, the Greenham protests also allowed her to imagine herself as adventurer and the 'heroine' of her own story. The emotions of protest are not only about positioning the self and the group *against* something, but also the shifts and changes in understandings of the self that take place through protest. It is perhaps for these reasons that assessing the 'success' of a protest, by whether it could be judged to have stopped the thing it is against, ignores the multiple elements of what a protest is and does (Roseneil 2000). There are ripple effects when, as in the example of Greenham Common, protestors are able to rethink and reinvent themselves by challenging roles and expectations placed upon them. When

the risk of being silenced or dismissed when expressing emotion is ever present for women in particular, protests that deliberately evoke emotion might be seen as a powerful and defiant act (Ahmed 2004a). Protest sites can harness collective emotions and energise and allow women to use emotion to speak *against* something. As Ruby demonstrates, these are emotions transmitted and felt across time and generations.

Emotion can be both a means of explaining *why* people join protests and the emotional *responses* to participating (Jasper 1998, 2011). Protest cannot be understood as being outside of emotion, indeed, as James Jasper notes, within the history of feminism, feeling and shifts in emotion have been part of the aims of the movement. Jasper cites Arlie Hochschild (1975), who argued that, within the US women's consciousness-raising groups of the late 1960s, anger in particular was considered both a positive and necessary emotion. Hochschild writes that 'Social movements for change made 'bad' feelings okay, and they make them useful. Depending on one's point of view, they make bad feelings 'rational'. They make them visible' (1975: 298, cited in Jasper 1998). However, the focus on emotion can risk dismissal, as actors are branded 'irrational'. Jasper (2011) and Jeff Goodwin et al. (2000) observe that the study of protest from the 1960s to the 1990s tended to deny the emotions of the protestors as a means of demonstrating their rationality. Feminist work that challenged the dichotomies of reason/emotion, thinking/feeling and public/private influenced an increased focus upon and valuing of the emotions of protest (e.g. Ahmed 2013; Jaggar 1989).

Ahmed (2013) argues that the rendering of feminist protest as 'emotional' has the effect of making feminist speech illegitimate, by suggesting that its motivation is irrational. Protests are sites of collaboration and interaction when personal and collective emotions are produced, expressed and elicited in others and, in doing so, can create possibilities for the feelings of feminism to be received by others. It is a space in which anger, and other feminist feelings, have the opportunity to be heard and acknowledged, and the distinction between reason and emotion can be challenged. Ahmed imbues hope in the protest site when she writes that:

> The challenge for feminism is to accept that the conditions in which we speak are not of our making. Such a recognition would not signal the futil-

ity of naming our anger—but it would mean recognising that the reception of that act might sustain the conditions that compelled the act in the first place. We must persist in explaining why our anger is reasonable, even in the face of others who use this anger as evidence of poor reason. Making public statements, getting heard, writing banners: these remain crucial strategies for feminism, even when they fail to get uptake (2013: 177).

So I now want to turn to the ways in which the emotion is expressed and produced through sites of activism and protest and the receipt of this protest. In particular, how anger and other emotions are expressed through public display and performance, such as the protest banner. These are sites that, as Ahmed suggests, are invested with hope for change, recognition and expression. They are also sites upon which the objects of feminist feeling are written and, as we shall see, the notions, expectations, adoption and receipt of a feminist identity are played out and played with.

Visualising Feminist Feeling

Protests are a form of embodied ritual performances through which subjectivities are communicated and emotions expressed and generated (Juris 2008). Collective emotion fosters solidarity, even if temporarily and somewhat conflating the differences across apparently shared aims. To conclude this chapter, I want to look at some examples of protest banners shared by 22-year-old Beth to illustrate how they offer another means of harnessing and validating feminist feeling. These banners were from a number of protests that Beth had attended and organised with her university feminist society. The images are strong, powerful and arresting statements of Beth's feminist politics and are a site for reworking or questioning identities, as well as posing opposition. These images demonstrate how Beth takes hold of her feelings about the world around her and so, as Richa does, positions emotion as a social product rather than an internalised experience. Beth's images convey the power and emotion in contemporary protest sites that Ruby connects with through the Greenham archive.

Fig. 5.1   *Queer and Loving It* (Date unknown) Taken by Beth

'Queer and Loving It' (Fig. 5.1) was created for a protest against an invitation by the university to a speaker who advocated 'conversion therapy' for homosexuality. In this context, it acts as a speech act directed at a particular audience, with a message that may or may not be fully accepted and received (Ahmed 2013). But it also expresses something of Beth's identity—not just that she is queer, but that her queerness is joyful. The sign undermines the premise of conversion therapy by challenging the idea that queerness is something that she would want to be converted *from*. The protest banner strategically emphasises an aspect of her identity and couples it with emotion (love, joy) as a means of stating opposition. Beth does not seek to define, explain or justify 'queer' to the intended audience (the invited speaker, the university and wider society), nor she does not attempt to engage with the speaker's position directly. Instead, by making a statement about herself 'I am queer and I am loving it', Beth uses emotion to undermine the premise of the speaker's position. It is a

Fig. 5.2   *Anti-cuts demonstration* (2011) Taken by Beth

playful, defiant form of protest that questions, challenges and disrupts through emotional expression.

This second image (Fig. 5.2) was taken by Beth at one of the anti-cuts demonstrations that took place across the UK in 2010. The protest was

one of a series against the austerity programme of the UK conservative and liberal democrat coalition government. It shows four coffins with the words 'Education', 'Immigration', 'Arts', 'NHS' and 'Welfare' written on them. Flowers have been placed next to the coffins and people can be seen in the background observing the scene. The protest might be viewed as an 'ethical spectacle' that uses signs, symbols and myths as a means of provoking questions through protests (Boyd and Duncombe 2004; Duncombe 2007). Ethical spectacles strive to be participatory, to use fantasy as a means of communicating power dynamics and relationships and are imbued with the hope that change is possible (Duncombe 2007). They embrace the emotional and theatrical in politics, an approach that is utilised in many feminist protests (Kutz-Flamenbaum 2007; Roseneil 2000; Withers and Chidgey 2010; Withers 2015). In Beth's image, the use of the coffin—a familiar symbol of loss and grief—both expresses and evokes these feelings in others. The placement of the coffins in an open public space also invites the participation of passers-by, inviting them to adopt the role of 'mourner' at the funeral. Beth documents a creative form of protest that aims to generate a strength of feeling in others in order to make a political point.

Part of the power of the image is its familiarity, not only as a social and cultural practice and a symbol of loss and grief, but also as a form of protest. The photograph is reminiscent of protests against the Vietnam War and the Iraq War, and ACT UP's protests against the US Clinton administration's AIDS-related policies[6]. Most recently, in November 2015, UK-based group 'Sisters Uncut' organised a funeral march in central London to campaign

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[6] On 15 November 1969, a demonstration organised by the Merseyside Committee for Peace in Vietnam laid a black coffin outside of the American Consulate in London. On one side the coffin was inscribed with '2,000,000 Vietnamese dead' and on the other '40,000 American war dead'. Almost 40 years later, in March 2015, the 12-year anniversary of the start of the Iraq War was marked by a US protest march from the White House to the Capitol. As part of the protest, coffins were laid in front of the White House and at the offices of various defence contractors along the route. The political funerals organised by ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) are perhaps the most striking example of this particular form of protest. These included the 1992 Ashes Action, which saw activists place the ashes of people who had died from HIV/AIDS on the White House Lawn. In 1998, the body of ACT UP member Steve Michael, who died of complications from AIDS on 25th May that year, was taken in a coffin to the White House by fellow protestors, including his partner and mother. Jayson A. Morrison (2012) suggests that the political funerals were a response to activist Douglas Crimp's call for protestors to attend to both personal losses and political aims through activism.

against funding cuts to domestic violence services. The group's Facebook page implored attendees to 'bring your grief', a direct and powerful request that conveys how such protests serve to make the personal political by positioning personal losses as the consequence of political policy.

This theatrical and visceral form of protest, which seeks to both express and elicit powerful emotion and make political statements through feeling, echoes the type of protest to which Ruby is so drawn in her discussion of Greenham. Beth does not evade emotion in her protests, but harnesses it precisely as a means of making a political statement. She offers a way of taking hold of emotion, of bringing it to the centre of her feminism. This is in contrast to the withdrawal into her own room and the redirecting of her anger away from others that she described in the quote at the beginning of this chapter.

The final image I discuss here (Fig. 5.3) is powerfully evocative of histories of this theatrical and embodied protest in radical politics (Faderman 1999; Morrison 2012). It is an image that illustrates how feminist feeling can have power when it is harnessed and enacted in everyday life. In this photograph, Beth is at a Halloween party and is clearly depicted as menstruating, with fake blood covering her inner thighs, hands and breasts. As she poses for the photograph Beth pulls up her dress, threatening perhaps to reveal more of herself to the viewer. Rather than being contained and managed, the 'menstrual blood' has been played with, smeared and made visible. The image overtly and deliberately defies the expectation that menstruation should be contained, sanitised and made 'private'. Beth's explanation of the image reveals a deliberate and joyful use of her body to provoke fear and disgust in others:

> Oh this is me at erm, at a Halloween party, yeah, and it's just really like gruesome, that's me pretending to menstruate erm, yeah, and I think that, I don't know, I just, I like being like shocking, or I don't think, I don't see like periods and stuff as shocking. Like I just like playing around with people's, like, expectations, yeah, and that's, I guess me and a few of my feminist friends would like to, yeah, just try to play around with people's expectations and yeah, because like, especially because we both look kind of, you know, like typically girly, we're both kind of slim and like fashionable so we like to do stuff that says we don't, you know, we don't have to act

Fig. 5.3 *Halloween* (Date unknown) Taken by Beth

a certain way, we're not this person just because we dress this way, we love to do like crazy things [..] I think this is like really queer, like same as the other one, I think that like, like I'd say my saying 'I'm a feminist' is a lot to do with, yeah, like queering things, like making things disruptive.

Beth describes how she and her feminist friends 'play around' with the expectations of a, presumably (or presumed by Beth to be), non-feminist audience. She conveys joy through her body not only in the celebration and demystification of menstruation, but also in the explicit attempt to elicit uncomfortable emotions in those around her: shock, confusion, perhaps horror and disgust. Beth plays with the viewer through her body, aware of the shock and disgust it provokes. As she leans forward into the camera, half her face is out of the frame, and the viewer is faced with her snarling mouth as she lifts her skirt, threatening to expose more of her bloody body. Here, in her confrontation of the viewer with her representation of menstrual blood, Beth disrupts and subverts expectations through her body. It is the embodiment of her understanding of feminism: 'to be a feminist is to interrupt expectations, to 'queer(ing) things'. This might be conceived of as a momentary, spontaneous protest. It is an encounter with a viewer, a camera lens and, in bringing it to the interview, with myself during a research interview. In including this moment of resistance in her account of feminist protest, Beth diversifies what it is that is included in the concept of protest and activism (Downes 2008).

Beth's Halloween costume evokes historical representations of the 'disgusting', 'monstrous' or 'grotesque' female body (Creed 1993; Mulvey 1991; Russo 1995) and a history of feminist art that plays upon the female body as abject with the intention of destabilising this representation (e.g. the work of US artist Cindy Sherman, discussed by Mulvey 1991). It is through her encounter with these historical and social representations, as well as the understanding that her own body is both desirable and disgusting to those around her, that she becomes feminist. Removed from her interaction with those around her, her choice of costume could be seen as a reinforcement or recognition of the menstruating female body as a horrifying subject. However, in presenting it in a queer context, with the deliberate aim of being disruptive by eliciting shock and disgust, Beth asks the viewer to consider *why* the female body is seen as such and *how* it provokes such emotions in others. As she confronts the photographer and its viewer with her 'threat' to reveal more she acknowledges the fear her body provokes and refuses to let it be contained, cleaned or hidden. She juxtaposes her 'typically girly', 'slim' and 'fashionable' body with the 'crazy', 'queer' and 'disruptive' embodied act to invoke shock and ask

why, in one guise, her body is considered acceptable and desirable, yet in another it is frightening and in need of control. In doing so, she transfers the responsibility for the fear and disgust from the women's body to the audience who view her as such. Beth uses her body as a relational, embodied form of protest that confronts, questions and queers the societal expectations placed upon it.

Crucial to the production of Beth's feminism in this instance is the understanding that the female body can create disgust, revulsion, shock and fear. It is through Beth's joyful engagement with this particular embodiment of the female, with her emphasis on creating discomfort in those around her through forcing them to also engage with their own disgust, that Beth makes her feminism visible. In this moment, she becomes the disruptive and queer feminist subject through her embodiment of the encounter between the desiring and disgusting female body. She confronts, challenges and exposes the depiction of the female body as, in certain manifestations, fearful, unclean or unattractive. Through the use of her body she expresses emotion and provokes it in others, revealing the relational and embodied experience of becoming the feminist subject. These interpersonal encounters are formative of her feminist identity. It is through the embodied negotiation of these relations (the feminine, heteronormativity, the expectation of the audiences) that Beth, in that moment, becomes feminist.

Butler (1993) has discussed how the use of performative protest strategies such as kiss-ins and die-ins in queer activism in a US context offers a strategic decoupling the concept of 'queer' from notions of shame. Beth's performance of the menstruating female body might be seeking the same effect: she uses confrontational, visually striking and theatrical tactics to force the viewer to question the representation and signification of the female body as grotesque. Feminist history is littered with examples of this style of embodied, confrontational and theatrical protest that enable forms of political engagement that resist and interrupt institutional political practices. These range from the window-smashing tactics of the suffragettes, theatre performances in the UK and Indian women's liberation movement (Nagar 2002; Withers and Chidgey 2010; Withers 2015), the musical and topless protests of Russian group Pussy Riot and Ukrainian group Femen (Channell 2014) to Charlie Edge's 2015 protest

against the British government's decision to uphold a 5 % VAT on feminine hygiene products—the so-called tampon tax. Edge stood outside parliament whilst menstruating without wearing sanitary products, her blood-stained white trousers make a stark and unashamed political protest. Edge draws upon the representation of the female body a shameful and grotesque to confront the political decisions of the conservative UK government, just as Beth does in her Halloween costume.

In her consideration of British suffragette Mary Leigh, Wendy Parkins (2000) suggests that the embodied and performative protests of the British suffragette movement refigured political agency. Women used tactics such as window smashing, climbing onto rooftops and hunger strikes to intervene in the political arena when they were not recognised as subjects with a right to political participation. She writes, 'Suffragettes did not simply *become* citizens or act *like* citizens, rather they *acted* citizenship' (2000:63, emphasis in original). It was through these methods that Leigh's body has the capacity to 'communicate dissent' (68). Embodied practices carry various meanings and effects in different social, cultural and historical contexts. Parkins rightly questions whether the window-smashing tactics of the suffragettes would have the same impact or meaning in contemporary Britain. Deepti Misri (2011)[7] similarly draws attention to the specificity of such protests tactics. She considers when she asks why naked protest has particular purchase as a form of feminist protest in India against state violence against women. Drawing on Butler's 'theatricalization of political rage' (Butler 1993:232, cited in Misri: 131), Misri suggests that in an Indian context the naked protest recontextualised the naked female body from one of vulnerability to one of resistance. It sits in contrast to the colonial discourses adopted by Femen, who have used naked protest outside mosques and Islamic cultural centres as a means of arguing for women's 'liberation' (Gheno 2015).

One common factor across these protests is the deliberate provocation of emotion in the observer as a political tactic. It is a form of protest that

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[7] Misri draws on two examples, the first a naked protest by a group of Meitei women against the torture, rape and murder of Thangjam Manorama whilst being held in custody by the Indian Army. The second, of Pooja Chauhan, who walked through the streets in her underwear, carrying a baseball bat, in 2007, to protest at the police inaction over her complaints of emotional and physical abuse by her in-laws—an image of whom Richa brought to her interview.

relies upon an emotional response for it to have effect, it does not seek to persuade through convincing the viewing of its argument, but by creating a shift by making them feel something, be it discomfort, anger, sympathy, loss or regret. Beth's performance might be seen to have a 'strategic affinity' (Withers 2015) with this particular history of feminist protest. It is an everyday moment of resistance that carries with it the traces of these other events. As Withers suggests, these momentary snapshots rarely find a place in the dominant narratives of feminist activism, in bringing the image to the interview Beth ensures it has a place in her story and, in doing so, marks the connections between her strategies of resistance and protest and those of others across time.

Conclusions: Emotional Subjects

When feminism or feminists are read as being angry, they are liable to being dismissed. Indeed, Ahmed observes that feminism is often marked out as a 'form of anger' (2013:177). Reiterating the hierarchy upon which this dismissal of emotion is produced, Ahmed writes:

> Feminists who speak out against established 'truths' are often constructed as emotional, as failing at the very standards of reason and impartiality that are assumed to form the basis of 'good judgement'. Such a designation of feminism as 'hostile' and emotional, whereby feminism becomes an extension of the already pathological 'emotionality' of femininity, exercises the hierarchy between thought/emotion…This hierarchy clearly translates into a hierarchy between subject: whilst thought and reason are identified with the masculine and Western subject, emotions and bodies are associated with femininity and racial others. This projection of 'emotion' onto the bodies of others not only works to exclude others from the realms of thought and rationality, but also works to conceal the emotional and embodied aspects of thought and reason (2013: 170).

The association of 'emotional' with certain gendered and raced bodies not only serves to silence and dismiss voices, but also reinforces the illusionary reason/emotion binary. The response to this, argues Ahmed, should

not be to make claims to the rationality of feminism, thereby reinforcing the dichotomy, but to blur the boundaries between emotions and reason that renders the first 'unthought' and the second 'unemotional' (Ahmed 2013). Ahmed wants to view anger as a 'speech act' (2013: 177), something that is directed towards an audience. This risks the anger being blocked or silenced by the recipient, both beyond and within feminism, as Ahmed demonstrates in her discussion of how the anger of black feminists can be blocked by white feminists. However, there is also the potential for the anger to be to heard and hope that it will be (Ahmed 2013).

For many of the women I interviewed, the expression of emotion carried with it the risk of being silenced and dismissed. This is something that was also evident in the memory-work group, which I explore in the following chapter. However, Richa, Ruby and Beth, each offers ways of embracing and validating emotion. Richa makes her anger a 'reasonable' response to the fear she experiences as a woman in public space. In doing so, she challenges the distinction between reason and emotion that is set in place when the accusation of 'irrationality' is used to silence women's emotions. She also refuses to make emotion an individual problem for her to manage. For Ruby, the emotional dimension of the Greenham protest is one that offers her a means of connecting to a history of feminist activism and being able to realise this form of activism in her own life. Ruby is able to form a point of connection to feminist protest through emotion; she develops a feminist politics founded on empathetic understanding and feeling with feminist protests across time. Finally, Beth's images of protest banners illustrate how emotion is used to communicate in the protest space. She is creative and provocative in her use of emotion as a means of challenging what she positions herself against. Her visual narrative evokes the history of performative, theatrical and embodied protest and illustrates how emotion is a social rather than internal product. The women are each able to find ways to validate and embrace emotion. However, as the shifting positions in both Richa's and Beth's stories demonstrate, this is a daily practice that is context-specific and the threat of being dismissed and silenced when they express emotion is ever present.

6

The Memory-Work Group: Feminist Belonging

The photograph overleaf is another that was shared by Beth (Fig. 6.1). The loudspeaker was signed by members of her feminist university society, as a gift to another member, and was used by Beth during a 'Reclaim the Night' march. The central message emblazoned on it, 'This is what a feminist sounds like!' reworks the UK's Fawcett Society's slogan 'This is What a Feminist Looks Like'. The collection of feminist slogans and messages of support and thanks is testament to Beth's feminist community and acts as a reminder of the collective effort and emotion of feminist activism. The affective ties between the group members are written onto and formed through the messages, and these are reinforced and solidified through further use; as Beth uses the loudspeaker on the march, she reiterates and vocalises the feelings that were written onto it.

For all the women I spoke to, the relationships they had with other feminist women were crucial, and these were often forged through feminist activism. For Edel, referring in the following extract to a photograph of herself and other women counting donations for a feminist event, this feminist community is the essence of feminism:
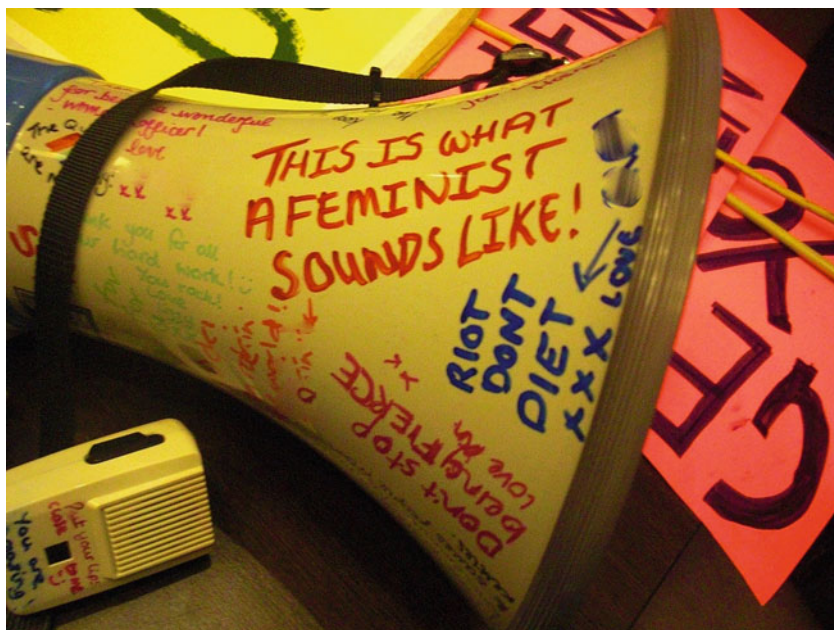
Fig. 6.1   *This is what a feminist sounds like* (Date unknown) Taken by Beth

> I love it, this is it, this is like, this is feminism for me, this is just, it's, it's all meetings, it's all organising and it's all, you know it's not just the proselytizing and the, it's, this is it, like sitting around in little shitty rooms, trying to find someone who'll let you have a feminist meeting there, counting up the money, and like … that's dedication to me, like that's going out every Wednesday in the fucking snow and rain and dark when you don't want to go out is like, and these amazing people coming out and being there with you and sharing that with you, and also being dedicated to that is, it keeps you going and like it's so important to have those … the organisation with other people in the community.

Elsewhere, Edel refers to this kind of scene as the 'bread and butter of feminism'. Her description evokes the dedication of her feminist community, the detailed work of feminist activism (the counting of the donations) and the difficult conditions it is often performed in (the 'shitty

rooms' and the bad weather). All of these aspects of Edel's feminism are bound by other people. It is the shared experience—the feminist collective—that is so important here. Through the collective, Edel creates a sense of belonging—she is one of the dedicated people that make a commitment to feminist activism by being involved in the detail of the work.

The question of how feminist women come to feel that they belong to feminism—and that feminism belongs to them—has been an implicit one throughout this book. The generational and inheritance narratives facilitate belonging by creating the sense of a feminism that may be received as a birth right, which is perhaps a particular experience of women born post-1970. The preceding chapters have highlighted the affective ties that forge feminist identities. In each of these examples, boundaries are drawn around both what feminism is and who it is that feels able to identify themselves as a feminist. This chapter considers this notion of feminist belonging, group dynamics and collectivity in more detail through the memory-work group. To decide who the feminist is, is to draw boundaries around what 'counts' as feminism and the feminist. It is to make claims about what feminism is, or should be, and so inevitably enacts inclusions and exclusions around these borders.

Four women participated in the memory-work group[1]. During the discussion, the women forge an understanding of feminism and of their own feminist identities through a feminist collective, which allows them to achieve a sense of belonging. The women create feminist belonging through the experiences of arguing and speaking out amidst the threat of being silenced. Through this discussion, they negotiate feminist sameness and difference, and produce ideas about what feminism is and who they feel they should be as feminists. This is measured against a proper feminist—a figure who, at crucial moments, regulates the women's understanding of themselves and others as feminist.

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[1] Thirty-four-year-old Nina and thirty-five-year-old Vicky, who both described themselves as white British middle class and straight. Twenty-nine-year-old Alexandra described herself as white middle class, and when asked to describe her sexuality, responded 'in a long-term monogamous relationship with a cis hetero man but previously have had same-sex experiences/attractions—so I guess I pass as heterosexual but would not call myself 100% straight - ugh, complicated!'. Finally, 31-year-old Sam described her ethnicity, social class and sexuality as multi-heritage Indian-English, lower-middle class and bisexual.

The women's affective, social and political investments in feminism demarcate the ever shifting boundaries of feminist belonging, in the face of a series of threats. I explore the negotiation of belonging here across three sites. Firstly, the personal memories of becoming feminist—specifically two written by Alexandra that resonated strongly with the group and elicited much discussion. Secondly, the experience of arguing in online spaces and the accompanying fear of being silenced. Finally, through the women's political work, which incorporates difference to varying degrees. The boundaries they establish between feminist and non-feminist, or their occupation of them, are shifting, as they each describe instances where they downplay their feminist belonging in order to be heard by others and to 'belong' in the mainstream political arena.

Throughout these sites, the proper feminist monitors and regulates what it means for the women to belong to feminism. She is a figure who not only validates the women's privileging of activism, but also, in her capacity as a regulatory figure, draws attention to feminisms that are perhaps not given space in the group discussion, or feminist histories more broadly. In the women's discussion, the proper feminist' has acquired the 'required' knowledge and adopts the 'correct' behaviours to be able to name herself 'feminist'. The women are not only aware of the exclusions this figure enacts, but also measure themselves against it. The women themselves draw attention to who and what is left out of this account, but their experience of 'becoming feminist' is still structured by it.

Firstly, I consider the work of Michaela Fay (2008) and Nira Yuval-Davis (2011), which offer a framework for understanding the concept of belonging. Reflecting on belonging is crucial to feminism, as a theory and practice that has a commitment to the collective, it is essential that it reflects on the politics of the formation of this collective.

Feminist Belonging

In the history of feminist organising collective identities have been considered problematic for failing to incorporate difference and attend to differently experienced and intersectional oppressions. The 'collective' risks employing a static notion of identity that fixes in place political and

personal positionings based upon certain categories. Collectives always have boundaries that demarcate belonging, and the notions of 'womanhood' or 'sisterhood' have been treated with suspicion for homogenising the experience of women. In doing so, the application of such terms can appear blind to the exclusions that are put in place when the experiences of white, middle-class women are taken as the experiences of all.

Intersectional perspectives have challenged any unitary notion of 'womanhood' as an identity or state of being that can be considered universal and have criticised a lack of attention to the intersections of gender, race, class, age and other categorisations in the location of 'woman' as the subject of feminist politics (Moraga and Anzaldúa [1981]; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2000; Hooks [1984] 2000; Lorde 1984; Yuval-Davis 2011). Such work interrogates the category 'woman' as a means of deconstructing its position as the supposed subject of feminist politics. The questioning and interrogation of the assumptions implicit in the feminist 'we' raises questions about what the feminist collective and feminist belonging can be, how we can create a shared feminist collective, without assuming a collective identity and how we attend to intersecting oppressions, differences in power and privilege and diversities of groups and individuals (Elomäki 2012). One way of doing so is to explore the ways in which the boundaries of belonging are established within feminist collectives and how it is invoked or diminished as a means of being heard in the political arena. This occurs, in part, through exploring the affective attachments through which individuals form both lasting and fleeting collectives. In doing so, the negotiations of boundaries of belonging can be explored at the level of the intimate and affective.

Fay (2008) explores the affective dimensions of feminist belonging within *vifu*, an online community of female academics from a wide range of geographical and disciplinary locations. The platform was designed to facilitate interaction and exchange between users and thereby establish an online community of learning, research and networking. The site provided Fay with a case study for exploring the negotiation and practice of belonging across transnational feminisms, which draws attention to the ways in which feminist networks are increasingly mobile. The movement of both theories and people is taken as the basis for knowledge production and the formation of alliances. Subjectivities, formed through the

shifting intersections of gender, race, class and sexuality, are also always mobile and impact upon location and belonging (Fa*y* 2008). Drawing on Ahmed's suggestion that mobility and belonging are intimately connected, because it is through movement that connections are made and attachments formed, and Elspeth Probyn's (1996) emphasis on the affective elements of belonging, Fay conceives of belonging as an affective process and of mobility as multi-layered, and not simply geographic. She describes the differing layers of mobility here:

> Belonging includes affective dimensions and mobility also happens 'within'. The layers of meaning of mobility are not merely a question of movement but of the making of particular identities, relations to the world and affective attachments with which subjects are implicated in the world. Belonging in the context of feminist networks can take a number of different meanings; as issues of dissonance and togetherness; addressing questions of solidarity and its fraught relationship with difference (Fay 2008: 77)

Fay's work is useful here for understanding the different notions of mobility—and its significance to creating belonging—in feminist collectives. The shifts that occur through the interactions between women might be conceived as a form of mobility. These are shifts in identity, in feminist attachments and from feminist unbelonging to belonging.

Fay's interviewees discuss the experience of forging belonging in online spaces. In the memory-work group I discuss here, online spaces and the relationships and identities that are formed through them are very important. All the women who participated in the group were active social media users. Twitter was particularly important as a tool for forging political relationships with other feminist and 'left-thinking' users. It was also a key site for negotiating, defending and reflecting upon a feminist identity. As will be explored in full, the experience of arguing online was one that was central to creating a sustaining a sense of feminist belonging, but also an arena in which the women felt their feminism came under threat.

It is the work of Yuval-Davis' (2006, 2011) that offers guidance for exploring the ways in which the conditions for belonging are constructed. Drawing out the distinction between belonging and the politics of belonging, Yuval-Davis describes belonging as an emotional

attachment to the feeling of being 'at home'. It is an everyday practice that has become naturalised, but is always dynamic and multi-layered. In considering the ways in which social and political belonging is constructed, Yuval-Davis identifies three interrelated facets of belonging. Each is at play in the women's discussion and construction of a feminist collective in the memory-work group. The first being the social locations through which individuals are positioned. Yuval-Davis works from an intersectional perspective that views these locations as interrelated, rather than additive. Each carries different meaning, power and status at different historical moments. The intersectional approach is important for paying attention to social locations, without fixing people in place according to these locations.

Secondly, Yuval-Davis is concerned with individuals' identifications and emotional attachments to the collectives to which they belong, or seek belonging. Adopting a narrative approach to identities, she describes identities as 'narratives, stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)' (2011: 202). These narratives are both personally and collectively produced, each informing and drawing upon the other. Crucially, it is important to consider how narratives are formed in group encounters as a means of understanding how intersectional power relations operate within the group. The collective narrative risks subsuming the different identifications of group members into one account, this is something that happens here in the very fleeting group encounter of the memory-work group. Finally, Yuval-Davis highlights the importance of considering the criteria by which people judge their own belonging and that of others. We can see this in the women's discussion here through the figure of the 'proper feminist', who often demarcates what it is the women perceive they have to do and be in order to belong.

Yuval-Davis argues that it is when an individual or group's sense of belonging comes under threat that it become politicised. It is at this point that the politics of belonging is made explicit and the conditions for belonging to a particular group are actively constructed. The politics of belonging is concerned with who is 'in' or 'out' of communities. Belonging is, therefore, both about how people form attachments to a place, object or group and how these attachments become policed by the

demarcation of boundaries. Crucially, belonging is not just a question of the construction of collective identities and attachments, but should be an exploration of how individuals come to understand themselves as belonging to collectives. In using an intersectional framework for approaching the concept of belonging, Yuval-Davis emphasises the different ways in which individuals are located within boundaries of belonging.

Each of these aspects of creating belonging is at play in the memory-work group. Each of the women contributes to a construction of the boundaries of belonging to their own, newly formed and fleeting, feminist collective. Their discussion draws out boundaries of belonging to feminism. They also describe the various strategies they adopt in order to 'belong' in various political arenas. Significantly, the women's discussion suggests that belonging is closely connected to being heard. The women's struggle for their voices to be heard across various settings and the threat of being silenced when speaking from a position of belonging to feminism is emphasised throughout their discussion.

Memories of (un)belonging

The memory I focus on here is the one that sets the tone for the memory-work group. It was written by 29-year-old Alexandra and was the first to be discussed in the group. That it was the first to be discussed—when the women were perhaps most enthusiastic and least tired—perhaps contributed to the extensive discussion of it. However, this memory and another shared later in this chapter clearly resonated with the group, as they kept returning to it throughout. This is something commented upon by Vicky:

> I think in a way it felt like we discussed that, I don't know what, we'd have to check the timing, but we discussed that for such a long time because it felt like there were so many things that came up from that.

Alexandra's memories offer an opportunity for considering how the affective memories of past encounters are played out in the women's discussion and own experiences of (un)belonging. Here, she writes about

her experience of her first feminist march. The memory is written in the third person, as per Haug et al.'s (1987) guidelines:

> She has signed up to be a steward at Slutwalk London—her first ever feminist protest. It is a hot day, unexpectedly so. She wishes she had thought to bring a bottle of water. She is holding onto many, many red heart-shaped helium balloons with "Slutwalk Steward" printed on them, and has had to decline requests from many children (and their parents) for balloons, which made her feel like a bit of a meanie. She has read lots and lots about the Slutwalk movement, including many criticisms of it, but has a strong feeling that participation is a right and meaningful thing for her to do. She feels very heartened by the strong turnout, and the friendliness of the other marchers. There are slogans being chanted, and she cries a little behind her sunglasses as she calls out, with the other marchers, "whatever we wear, wherever we go, yes means yes and no means no". This is just before the march reaches Trafalgar Square, its end point. The march feels like a culmination of sorts—she has called herself a feminist since an early age, but didn't really think about what that meant until a couple of years ago, when she started exploring feminist blogs, and realised how many times and in how many ways she had not lived up to the ideals of feminism. Slutwalk feels like a crystallising moment, and she is heartened by it—she resolves to be more active as a feminist in future, not just calling herself a feminist, but trying to act like one, too (emphasis in original).

SlutWalk is a march against sexual harassment and rape culture. The first took place in 2011 in Toronto, Canada. It was organised in response to police officer Michael Sanguinetti's advice to a group of female students at Toronto's Osgoode Hall Law School that to prevent being sexually assaulted, they should avoid dressing like 'sluts'. Two of the students, Heather Jarvis and Sonya Barnett organised the march in protest at the comments. The first march was attended by thousands of people, and similar events under the same name followed in over 50 countries across the world (Lim and Fanghanel 2013).

Alexandra's memory of stewarding at London SlutWalk is evocative of the power of the march as a form of feminist activism. She writes powerfully about her experience of the space of feminist activism—the hot day, the crowds, her thirst—creating a sense of feminism as an active, living,

material entity. The interactions with the other marchers and the collective chanting of feminist slogans create a sense of togetherness that echoes the power of feminist protest songs discussed by Ruby. There is dichotomy in the memory between 'naming' and 'action'. Alexandra's feminism is portrayed as a linear transition from one state to another with a greater value and worth placed upon 'action'. She creates a sense of a collective feminist space that facilitates this transition, as the crowds and chants described in the memory propel her not only from the march's beginning to its end point in Trafalgar Square, but also from the inaction (in Alexandra's account) of naming, to the action of marching. The completion of this journey is achieved in spite of the various discomforts: the unexpectedly hot day, the lack of water and guilt at turning down requests for balloons, which are all secondary to the power of the collective.

Alexandra conveys a sense of belonging here, her position as 'steward' marks her out as very much belonging to the protest, particularly able to police its boundaries. But she also achieves a sense of belonging to feminism through her transformation from 'calling' herself a feminist, to 'act[ing] like one'. Alexandra's memory constructs an idea of a feminism to which belonging is achieved through certain actions—namely, partaking in particular types of activism. Her feeling of belonging, as achieved through the march, suggests that there are certain behaviours that she feels she needs to adopt in order to justify her naming of herself as 'feminist'. It is the experience of belonging to this collective that allows Alexandra to put these 'ideals' of feminism into practice and complete the linear transition from calling herself a feminist, to acting like one.

However, the context of London SlutWalk highlights in stark ways how this sense of belonging is situated. It is achieved through Alexandra's social positioning as a white, middle-class, western woman. As Alexandra indicates in her memory, the marches triggered extensive debate across the feminist community. Much of the contestation centred on the naming of the march and the 'reclaiming' of the term 'slut'. It was seen as a misdirected appropriation of the term, which indicated a reproduction of the 'semantics of rape culture' as a means of protesting against the very thing it was positioning itself against. For Kathy Miriam (2012), SlutWalk was the manifestation of an individualistic feminism founded in the concepts of empowerment and choice, which did not attend to

the social structures and power relations that facilitate or delimit 'choice'. SlutWalk was also criticised for being exclusionary to women of colour. As an open letter signed by black women activists, academics and organisations stated, for women with different gendered and raced histories of oppression, reclaiming the term 'slut' validates 'the already historically entrenched ideology and recurring messages about what and who the Black woman is' (Black Women's Blueprint 2011/2015).

The nuances of this debate have been extensively explored (e.g., Carr 2013; Borah and Nandi 2012; Kapur 2012; Lim and Fanghanel 2013; Mendes 2015; Miriam 2012; Mitra 2012), with some contributors suggesting that women of colour should engage with SlutWalk as a means of creating a 'SlutWalk with black women front and centre' (Hobson 2011, cited in Carr 2013: 34). The debate raised important questions about how feminist communities can be formed through a commitment to intersectionality and the many levels at which exclusions are enacted, beginning, in this instance, with the very naming a protest. In one case at least, discussion within the feminist community led to the organisers changing the name, asking 'how could we claim to be creating an intersectional and safe feminist community with such a privileged name?' (NYC SlutWalk facebook page, cited in Carr 2013: 34).

The politics of belonging—the factors that allow Alexandra to see herself and others as feminist and the implications this has on how she defines feminism as a discrete entity—is marked out in various ways in her memory. In the memory, 'feminism' is positioned as a defined set of principles or ideals that should be adhered to in order to call oneself 'feminist' and so gain feminist belonging. She places emphasis on action—epitomised by the feminist march—as a marker of being a 'proper' feminist. But this is also, as she herself points out, a belonging that is achieved through her own privilege. She is able to identify herself as someone who belongs to the SlutWalk collective, without much deliberation or contestation about the term 'slut'. As a white woman, she is not faced with the histories of oppression outlined in the open letter as histories that belong to her and so shape her participation and belonging to certain feminist arenas.

What the discussion around SlutWalk highlights is the ways in which Alexandra's sense of belonging to feminism through participation in this march is formed through her own location as a white middle-class western

woman. This is something she acknowledges and reflects upon, both in the memory itself, by indicating that she has listened to the critiques, and later in the discussion, where she states:

> I just wanted to say something in particular about the memories and I don't know if other people want to chip in, it, it's a bit of a thorny topic erm, I'm a privileged person you know middle-class, white, heterosexual, brought up by a loving family who did everything they could to encourage my academic success and emotionally nurture me. I have a very good relationship with them so I've not really come up against the coal face of sex-based discrimination, kind of direct[…]I think my memory is probably related to my privilege which is multi-layered and I'm you know trying to be aware of it and stuff so I guess it's worth bringing up here as well.

Alexandra's description of the issue of privilege as a 'thorny topic' may show awareness and apprehension that her comments could be perceived as a criticism of the other members of the group for their, perhaps unacknowledged, privilege, or of myself, the researcher responsible for the recruitment of a largely, although not entirely, homogenous group[2]. Her discussion of privilege and the situatedness (Haraway 1988) of her memories also forms part of this becoming; in trying to be increasingly aware of the markers and impact of privilege, Alexandra indicates that her feminist becoming is ongoing and dynamic, as she attempts to adopt an intersectional perspective.

The Proper Feminist

It is in Alexandra's memory of SlutWalk that she encounters the proper feminist, a figure who is active in the women's discussion and through which they draw the boundaries of feminist belonging in the group. In Alexandra's account, the proper feminist is one that joins marches and other protests, one who looks beyond naming as an act of feminism.

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[2] Sam defined herself as multi-heritage Indian-English, lower-middle class and bisexual, whilst the other women defined themselves as white middle class and either straight or, for Alexandra, passing as heterosexual but not '100% straight'. The possibilities for heterogeneity both within and beyond these categories are, of course, in many ways limitless.

As discussed by Wiegman (2000) and Griffin and Braidotti (2002), the 'ideals' of feminism are disseminated via various mechanisms awarded by the authority to define feminism. For Alexandra, it is feminist blogs that establish the parameters of feminist knowledge and behaviour and are how she comes to 'know' the 'ideals' of feminism against which to judge herself. Again, this is one of the markers of privilege that Alexandra points to whilst reflecting on her memory. Not only in having access to resources that enable her to read and engage with the blogs (computer, Internet access, etc.) but also being able to see herself as the subject and intended audience of these blogs, as well as seeing the concerns of white, middle-class feminism well represented.

Blogs were referred to throughout the interviews and memory-work group and emerged as authorised texts that acquire authority within particular feminist communities. For example, UK- and US-based feminist sites such as *The F Word, Feministing, Tiger Beatdown, Feminist Frequency* and *Jezabel* were repeatedly mentioned by the women. Through their increased popularity and circulation within feminist communities, such texts become authorised by their members and are awarded a privileged status as *the* feminist resource to consume. At least in these interviews and memories, engagement with or just reference to these blogs acts as one of the markers of becoming a 'proper' feminist.

Other women in the group also encounter the 'proper feminist' in Alexandra's memory, perhaps perceiving a sense of self-doubt or fear of not being a 'good enough feminist' in her account. For example, Nina responds to the memory by saying:

> Nina: But for me reading the last line I was like 'well she's been a steward at Slutwalk, she is being like a proper feminist' (laughter).
>
> Alexandra: [That was one of the first things that was].
>
> Nina: [That is being good, active and feminist].[3]

Nina affirms Alexandra's emphasis on 'action' by explicitly stating what a 'proper feminist' is, 'that is being good, active and feminist'. Although her laughter indicates that the 'proper feminist' is an illusionary fig-

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[3] [ ] Indicates overlapping speech.

ure, she is still present in the women's discussion. Nina's comment and Alexandra's memory suggest that the 'proper feminist' is one who takes on a prominent role in certain forms of activism, rather than someone who is, in Alexandra's words, is 'just *calling* herself a feminist'. This validation encourages Alexandra to further evidence her claim and possibly to 'prove' to the rest of the group that she is now acting 'like a feminist':

> Like, since then I've gone on to volunteer at a feminist charity and stuff, so I kind of feel like I'm, I've also started calling out people for sort of saying things which I consider sexist around me, which is a bit difficult and bit scary but something I feel I ought to do, because you can't just let these things slide, because if everyone does you never get anywhere. So I'm sort of trying to act on it and not just call myself one, sort of think about it, trying to sort of engage with it I guess, so that's why I put that bit in there about doing it rather than just saying I am one, because that seems to be acting in bad faith a little bit.

Crucially, in this extract, it is by engaging in arguments and in 'calling out' sexism that Alexandra is able to act like a 'proper feminist'. As we shall see, the importance of having a voice and the arguments to challenge sexism is central to how the women establish a feminist/non-feminist boundary and a fleeting, but meaningful feminist collective during the memory-work group.

Although Alexandra still finds the encounters 'a bit difficult and a bit scary', the process of confronting sexism and speaking as a feminist allows her to view and portray herself as a 'proper feminist'. Her comment that 'just saying I am one…seems to be acting in bad faith a little bit' suggests that simply naming herself a feminist is not good enough and necessitates a degree of deception or dishonesty. In contrast, her participation in the march, a large part of which was speaking collectively with others, does allow her to feel like a 'more active feminist', or at least demonstrate a determination to be one in the future.

The 'proper feminist' exposes the boundaries that are imposed upon the women by themselves and by others to establish feminist belonging. But these boundaries are shifting and dynamic, revealing the instability of the 'proper feminist'. For example, the strength of the dichotomy between

naming and action is later undermined in a discussion of a memory written by Sam. Sam's memory, presented in part below, details her time at university as a theatre studies student. Sam chose to study a module entitled 'An introduction to feminist theory' and remembers in particular the influence of the course tutor:

> Fuelled with the (pseudo) over-confidence of the young and overly dramatic, we speculate about the tutor. Rumour has it that she caused a ruckus last year when she found out the male and female professors in the department were paid different amounts. Even more scandalously, someone has heard that she doesn't shave her legs OR her armpits. Such things strike us as being of grave importance. She arrives, and as she sits, 20 pairs of eyes intently gaze at the hem of her trousers, waiting to see the monstrous spectacle of a leg hair. "So who here's a feminist?" she asks. There is an awkward silence. 20 pairs of eyes search the ceilings and corners of the room. She begins to educate us. And she changes my life, forever.

In comparison to Alexandra's, Sam's memory affords power and significance to the 'act' of naming. Whereas the teacher's protestations about equal pay and her rebellion against the socially endorsed presentation of the female body arouse speculation and interest amongst her students, asking the students to name themselves 'feminist' instils awkwardness and silence. Sam's memory suggests that the dichotomy between action and naming enforced by the group in response to Alexandra's memory is not as clearly defined as previously suggested. Just as the tutor's actions trouble and disrupt, so does her invitation to the students to name themselves feminist. In the context of familiar anxieties about the label 'feminist', similar to those expressed by Scharff's (2013) participants in her work on feminist dis-identification, the boundaries of feminist belonging shift and change. Now the act of naming is scary, dangerous and political. It is an act that risks being aligned with this embodiment of feminism—the woman with the 'monstrous spectacle of leg hair'. In Sam's memory, naming is a statement of feminist belonging that is a difficult step to take.

In response to the memory, the group expresses their identification with the difficulties of naming and their admiration for the tutor:

> Vicky: I really identified with it I guess, it's, the whole sort of, it sounds obvious, I've kind of called myself a feminist from a young age but there's still that kind of fear in group settings to say 'yes that's me' so in some ways that, that really is something that really chimed for me.

> Nina: Yeah I just can't, I would imagine trying, not only teaching but trying, trying to be, to do something like that myself and how incredibly, and it shouldn't be, you know, a big deal but how incredibly brave it would be to say something like that as openly, to be so open as a feminist and that is really, bosh, there is no shame anywhere in that all, there is no politeness or considering of other people's, you know, feelings or perceptions it's really important.

Here, the women speak of naming themselves 'feminist' as a scary and brave declaration that has an impact and effect on others. In the women's comments, the naming can be viewed as a feminist act itself, as something that is difficult and provocative, requiring the speaker to disregard or be resistant to others' responses. This conversation troubles this earlier discussion of the 'proper feminist' and brings into question what it means to be 'active' as a feminist. The difficulties and fears Alexandra describes in naming herself feminist in a group setting suggest that there is more power invested in the naming than she allows in the earlier discussion of her memory.

In the context of the memory-work group, the boundaries of belonging to feminism define a 'proper feminist' in terms of particular actions, specifically, attending marches, volunteering and confronting sexism. This could be seen as an attempt to legitimise her place, not only within feminism, but also within this particular group. Her 'curriculum vitae' of feminist activity might be viewed as an offering of 'proof' to the other members that she is feminist 'enough' to belong. In this circumstance, encountering other feminists, just naming herself 'feminist' is not good enough for Alexandra. In contrast, when the women discuss such naming in non-feminist encounters, naming is presented as an action, one that instils fear and requires bravery.

The proper feminist is therefore a context-specific and changeable figure. She is used to evidence a naming/action binary in the earlier discussion, but

when reflecting on the actions of a respected feminist tutor, the boundaries between the two are blurred. The feminist identity that is dependent upon the emulation of the 'proper feminist' is therefore also changeable, fragile and ambiguous. The women's discussions highlight a difficulty with determining what the 'proper feminist' is and therefore the impossibility of living up to her standards. This also exposes her as an illusionary figure created through and dependent on the context of encounters with others. The proper feminist not only establishes the boundaries of feminist belonging, but also illustrates how they shift and change across place, time and social location.

Insiders and Outsiders: Becoming Feminist Through Arguing

Alexandra's second memory was also one that preoccupied the group for some time, and was returned to throughout the discussion. It set the tone for a topic that dominated the group discussion—arguing. Throughout the discussion, the women returned again and again to their experience of arguing, relaying recent arguments and remembering past experiences allowed the women to validate and reassure one another, whilst marking out the boundaries of feminist belonging by establishing a distinction between the feminist and non-feminist.

Here, Alexandra describes her childhood self in her written memory, faced with a group of her male peers, arguing about women in history:

> She is in the playground at her primary school, aged 10. It must be a cooler part of the year, as she is wearing her dark blue coat. She is surrounded by half a dozen the boys in her class, and arguing about the position of women in history. "If women and men are equal, then why aren't there more women rulers in history?" she is asked. "Why were all the greatest leaders men?" She tries to riposte, citing Egyptian Pharaohs Nefertiti and Hatshepsut (she's going through an Egyptology phase), but is drowned out by the volume of 'men men men' which her classmates throw at her. She wants to cry in frustration. She knows in her heart that men and women are equal, that women have the same talents that men do, that women can

be just as effective as leaders as men can if only they are given the chance. But she doesn't have the words to rebut the boys' taunts, and so she feels the tears on their way, and the vast unfairness of the situation. By saying that women and girls are *less than*, the boys are saying that *she* is *less than*, too, and she is hurt. She *knows* the boys are wrong—she feels the truth of it inside her. But she doesn't have the arguments to make them see that they are wrong. She resolves to seek out those arguments. But she still feels deeply hurt and on the edge of tears. (Emphasis in original).

Alexandra's sense of isolation in this memory is palpable. The imagery of being 'surrounded' and 'drowned out' by the boys positions her as hunted and under threat, emphasising her feelings of frustration and ineffectiveness in the face of the boys' arguments. The situation here is not a collective and supportive space that holds Alexandra. Hers is a lone voice struggling to counter the 'volume' of the boys', in stark contrast to her memory of SlutWalk, where she speaks in unison with her peers. Consequently, Alexandra is portrayed as powerless and frustrated, and her experience of being overwhelmed and silenced echoes the silencing of the women's history that the boys take advantage of. The encounter limits not only Alexandra's ability to speak, but also to hold on to an understanding of herself as anything other than 'less than' the boys. As Alexandra struggles to find a voice to counter their arguments and offer evidence for the feeling she has that the boys are wrong, she also struggles to see herself as their equal. That is, she internalises the narrative she is presented with, and it begins to structure the ways in which she sees herself. In finding herself unable to be heard, she see the boys' narrative of women's lack of presence in leadership reproduced in her own lack of presence in the debate.

Whilst Alexandra presents this childhood encounter as an 'argument', it in fact appears more aggressive, one-sided and frightening than the word conveys. She is not an equal contender in the 'argument'. The boys dominate in number and volume, and they overwhelm Alexandra, who struggles to refute their argument. Referring to 'the boys' as a group, rather than as individuals, reinforces the sense of a threatening, aggressive pack and highlights that, in Alexandra's account, this is a battle between boys and girls, men and women. Alexandra is depicted as powerless,

voiceless and physically intimidated; paralysed by both the boys' aggressive and intimidating form of argument and by the lack of history available to her to counter their claims.

The memory illustrates how the interaction between communities, here the school and the informal and temporary peer group of the 'boys', shapes collective memories by guiding which memories are endorsed and what events and figures are to be forgotten or remembered (Misztal 2003). In referencing authorised histories disseminated within educational communities, all characters in the memory draw upon and rework these histories in order to support their own perspectives. Alexandra is disadvantaged in her ability to do this due to both the silencing of her own voice and the lack of historical resources available for her to draw upon. Her sense of (un)belonging is negotiated through this encounter. She struggles to hold on to a sense that, as a girl, she has any place in the histories that the boys are constructing. Similarly, unable to refute their assertions, she is an outsider in this interaction with her peer group, in which she is an unequal participant. This memory, which was discussed following her memory of SlutWalk, perhaps indicates why belonging to the feminist collective in the first memory—being a leader in her position as steward—was such an important aspect of Alexandra's memories of becoming feminist.

Alexandra's childhood memory illustrates the impact of growing up as a girl with few visible feminist role models or histories to draw upon. As a child faced with the crowd of boys shouting 'men, men, men', she struggles to provide an adequate response to their argument. As she describes it, she 'just didn't have the history to back (her) up'. Whilst, as an adult, Alexandra understands that 'history was written by men', the inadequacy of the arguments available to her still impacts on her ability and confidence to argue as an adult. Reflecting on this, she says:

And the arguments back are theoretical, even if we do know them to be true and we do know that women haven't had the opportunity to do those things and haven't had the historical backing to do those things, saying that doesn't prove it. That's the trouble we don't really have a way of saying, well there are obviously, you can use some examples but, I don't know, is a really difficult conversation to have.

Here, Alexandra struggles to articulate what makes the conversation 'difficult'. Her problems in making herself understood echo the difficulties and self-doubt in her memory. However, the other women are available to support and validate her argument. Both Sam and Vicky expand Alexandra's point. Sam comments:

> It does lead me to doubt myself a bit even now, which is just stupid I guess, well, not stupid, but an indication of the power of this kind of narrative that women aren't equally talented has, and I suppose that is what feminism is about, that swimming against the tide. It's really, really difficult sometimes.

Sam encounters the narratives as a barrier to her own ability to speak and be heard as a woman and a feminist. Gender relations, where women are silenced and rendered invisible in the writing of history, are embodied in their present-day interactions with men and, for Alexandra, in her childhood 'argument' with the boys at her school. The stories told about women as incapable, absent and lesser than men are played out in Alexandra's encounters with the boys in the playground and her own experience as an adult.

Alexandra's childhood memory prompts a discussion of the women's experience of antagonistic encounters, and, echoing the themes of Alexandra's memory of SlutWalk, their discussion highlights the importance of the collective voice in managing these encounters. A number of the arguments described by the women took place in online contexts. In particular, social networking sites Twitter and Facebook provided the platform for frustrating encounters with a non-feminist audience. In all these encounters discussed, the adversaries were men who were known to the women in some capacity. The women describe their frustration with a sense of missed communication with these men, emphasised by their repeated use of the term 'feminism 101'[4] to describe the 'basic' arguments encountered whenever discussing feminist issues online.

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[4] The phrase adopts the colloquial use of '101' to refer to the most basic and introductory knowledge of a subject.

For example, here Sam and Alexandra discuss the predictability of the commentators' online responses to feminism.

> Sam: Someone posted something yesterday or the day before and I just knew, I could rehearse exactly what the below the line misogynists were going to say and it's like 'bang-bang-bang, there we go' all those arguments; 'but have you thought about how this effects men?' 'have you thought about…'

> Alexandra: They should just have shorthand 'press one for 'men too' argument

Sam and Alexandra destabilise the 'below the line misogynists' by ridiculing and dismissing them as automated and predictable, presenting them as an irritation rather than threat. Sam describes her ability to predict the arguments in a wearied tone and, whilst she may not be able to stop the comments, positions herself as dismissive of them and in control. However, Alexandra and Nina's initial advice to ignore the 'bottom half of the internet' indicates that the misogynists' arguments do, in fact, impact upon them.

This potential threat resounds throughout the women's discussion, and in response to the exchange above, Vicky describes a recent encounter with an online acquaintance who joked about the term 'historic sexual offence'. The argument initially took place on Twitter:

> He said 'isn't the phrase "historic sexual offence", isn't that quite funny?' and I was like 'no, it actually is quite horrific, it makes me think of a child abuse victim who has now just summoned up the courage, or DNA evidence which has come to light or something' and he was just like 'it was just a joke' and I thought I can't believe I'm having to do this with someone who would identify as a progressive left-winger, who probably says 'well I'm anti-rape, I'm anti-sexual assault, I really value women, I love women, I'm a feminist', you know. I had to do this 101 style education with him, took it to e-mail, sent a massive e-mail today about it, waiting to hear back, little bit sort of apprehensive because I've not, I took the risk because I don't know him that well. I guess I know him well enough to hope that he'll be able to get past the fact that he, that what he said was offensive.

Like Alexandra and Cat, Vicky undermines the male antagonist, firstly by mimicking his status as a 'progressive left-winger' and then by parroting his presumed claims to a feminist identity, which has the effect of rendering the claims hollow and insincere. However, despite positioning herself as the authority in the encounter and the person who is able, and required, to educate (in contrast to Alexandra's struggle to offer counter arguments in her childhood memory), her description reveals her anxieties and the threat encompassed in such antagonistic encounters. She feels apprehensive after sending the email because of the 'risk' she perceives herself as having taken in confronting someone that she does not know well. At the time the memory-group took place (2011), there was extensive discussion in the media, on blogs and on Twitter about the experience and impact of 'trolling', particularly directed against women writing online. As a frequent Twitter user, Vicky is likely to have been aware of this discussion, and so the threat of being 'ganged up on' and the feeling of vulnerability may have been even more salient for her.

Vicky does not look to the network of mutual online friends for support in the argument, but to the women in the memory-work group. She continues:

> Vicky: He said 'oh, no offence, you know, there was no offence intended or caused' and I said 'it's not up to you to say whether there was offence caused' and, I can show you the thread it was, it was, it was just, it was so frustrating. So yes, sorry, on the topic of picking your battles I picked that battle because I thought he is probably someone who thinks of himself as pro-feminist, if not an actual feminist, so it's kind of worth educating him about this stuff. Even though it shouldn't be my job to educate and it should be his job if, if someone says 'this is out of order' he should go away and look it up. I said 'you know I think it's your privilege here' and he said 'I think we should drop this conversation, next thing I know you'll be accusing me of being a rapist and oppressor' and I was just like 'oh God'.

> Nina: Oh for goodness sake.

> Vicky: Yeah actually that and I was just like, that is such a silencing tactic.

> Sam: It's back to the playground isn't it.

Vicky presents her anxieties to the group as a way of eliciting support. She perhaps assumes their agreement and shared experience will elicit care and reassurance. Indeed, throughout the women agree with and validate each other, particularly when someone is relaying an argument. In this instance, both Nina and Sam are dismissive of the man in Vicky's account and draw a parallel between his responses and the behaviour of the boys in Alexandra's childhood memory (Sam: 'it's back to the playground isn't it?').

In contrast to their encounters with 'below the line misogynists' and Alexandra's with her childhood peers, in their discussions, the women emphasise agreement and comprehension. In sharing her encounter with these feminist women, Vicky receives support and agreement that she does not anticipate from her online networks. In looking for reassurance, Vicky retreats to a feminist encounter, even one that is newly formed, and discovers a collective understanding of the issues and the experience she describes. The other women do not challenge or disagree with her account and Vicky is not expected to justify her anger at the man's comments. This shared understanding and ease of communication is expressed by Alexandra when reflecting on her memory of SlutWalk:

> Just the contrast to being at Slutwalk with everyone, just thinking these are people who I agree with, who would agree with me if I were to say something, even simple like, erm, I guess that wouldn't be controversial to feminists but would be controversial to some. Something like, you know, 'don't compare me to property and say like if a rich man goes into a ghetto at night wearing a Rolex he should expect to be mugged' it's like, that's just so wrong in so many ways but I just, you know, it's, it's not having to do that groundwork and not having to explain to people from the ground up that, you know, 'this is why slut shaming is wrong', 'this is why victim blaming is wrong', it's like, 'we all know this and now we want to do something about it', so that was really cool.

This comment, and Vicky's previously, indicates that these online encounters contribute to a sense of exasperation and futility with the repetition of the same arguments and the frustration at having to combat them with '101' style education, preventing any productive engagement with

the issues under discussion. In contrast, Alexandra suggests that there is a shared understanding and uncontested knowledge when talking with other feminist women, which needs no explanation. In her reflections above, she describes the level of agreement she encounters at SlutWalk as enabling rather than foreclosing the possibility for action: 'We all know this and now we want to do something about it.'

An emphasis on shared agreement and collectivity is evident in Alexandra's account of SlutWalk, in Vicky's reliance on support from a group of feminists she has only just met and in the group's repeated affirmation of each other's opinions and ideas. The ways in which they establish 'feminism' as unified and 'feminists' as in agreement with one another gloss over any histories of conflict or differences within feminism and between feminists. Of course, feminist organising is not only defined by conflict, indeed conflict is often over-ascribed (Howie, 2010). However, the point here is that the women emphasise their agreement and unity partially as a means of retaining a secure feminist identity. In doing so, the language of collectivity dominates the discussion, and any focus on conflict is of that between a unified feminism and its adversaries. Even in this very fleeting and newly formed group, the women begin to draw out the boundaries of feminist belonging through shared agreement, validation and unity of the experience of arguing with men.

Discussing again their experience of arguments, the group observes that appeals to logic and accusations of being 'too emotional' were all 'silencing tactics' used to stifle the expression of their feminist views. Again, this is something that the women all identify with and are in agreement with each other about:

> Alexandra: Because I guess we've all been told to stop being so emotional and use logic and 'why can't we just use logic because that's the proper way'.

> Vicky: And if you use logic you're being told that you should be worrying more about working-class people and northerners and.

> Alexandra: Can't you see that logically we should all just give up all our possessions and give it starving children in Africa.

Sam: Basically what they are trying to say so much of the time is 'stop being so feminist'.

Nina: Yes 'shut up'.

Vicky: Yea.

Nina: 'Shut up'.

Alexandra: Silencing then, or refusal to be silent, this thread that links them all (the memories).

The group agrees with Sam when she asserts that appeals to logic and against emotion are a means of telling women to 'stop being so feminist'. Nina's forceful repetition of the phrase 'shut up' emphasises her agreement and paraphrases Sam's comment to create an even stronger directive and aggressive mimic of the men's attempts to silence feminist women. This exchange demonstrates the difficulties in destabilising the arguments of their antagonists whilst being shouted down and silenced, echoing Alexandra's memory of the schoolyard. Her concerns with being silenced echo the groups' ongoing preoccupation with their ability to speak and be heard as 'feminist' in encounters online.

The exaggerated examples used by the women also convey something of the frustration and futility of arguing: when they are accused of being 'too emotional', they are told to use logic, but when they use logic, they are accused of not caring enough about other marginalised groups. As in Alexandra's childhood memory and in Vicky's account of her Twitter argument, there is a sense of a missed communication that forestalls comprehensive or engaged debate. This discussion clearly voices the difficulties and apprehensions of becoming feminist. It is their interactions with the men they encounter online, but also the histories of emotion that render women as overemotional and irrational (Jaggar 1989), through which the women negotiate their feminist identities. Crucially, it is through their encounter with one another that they are able to challenge and disrupt the depiction of themselves in this way and refuse the silencing of their feminism.

The women experienced silencing and minimisation of their concerns and felt isolated and vulnerable to attack when expressing them. These experiences were founded in historical gendered power dynamics that rendered women's views as 'too emotional', something all the women remember being labelled, and men as the voices of moderation and reason. Again, this is resonant with the discussion of anger in the previous chapter. This silencing is exacerbated when the women express views from an explicitly feminist position, where naming themselves 'feminist' or using feminist language threatens to further negate their arguments in the eyes of their 'enemies'. They are not, however, passive, dispassionate or powerless in these arguments, and their difficulties in being heard is not solely the result of the power dynamics that silence them. Indeed, as in any interaction, there are multiple forces at work here, and the women themselves view the men they encounter as less knowledgeable or equipped to comment on the issues they are discussing.

One response to the frustrations at being silenced when speaking as a feminist is to create a collective voice and so establish a sense of belonging. As each of the women gives her account of being 'silenced' or shouted down when expressing feminist views, the others in the group lend support, affirmation and validation. During the discussion of Alexandra's memory of the playground, the group depicts feminist spaces as places of unity and agreement, and they work together to establish and maintain this in their own newly formed feminist space. The importance of a collective voice is apparent in both the memories and the discussion. This is emphasised in Alexandra's memory of SlutWalk:

> There are slogans being chanted, and she cries a little behind her sunglasses as she calls out, with the other marchers, 'whatever we wear, wherever we go, yes means yes and no means no'.

The memory prompts an interesting exchange between Nina and Sam. Discussing her experience of feminist marches, Nina comments:

> I used to go on Million Women Rise and while I always had a massive sense of frustration when I left because they would be saying 'we can end male violence against women' and I thought 'well tell me, tell me how, there is a

hundred, there is fifty thousand people here, tell them what to do next' and they never do, so I sort of got quite, even though I really enjoyed them, I got quite jaded about it, but actually it (Alexandra's memory) really made me think 'oh of course, don't be stupid, of course there is a point'.

Here, Nina validates Alexandra's memory by explaining its effect on her. Just as the experience allows Alexandra to 'progress' from calling herself a feminist to acting like a feminist, it also turns Nina from jaded to enthusiastic about the power of the march. Nina demonstrates here the power of the collective discussion, which has its emphasis on the power and strength of the collective voice. She attempts to illustrate to the group that, not only is she in agreement with them, but also that she has been persuaded by the power of Alexandra's memory.

Sam responds to Nina's comment by further emphasising the importance of 'collective togetherness':

> I guess I could almost go the other way, going to things like this (the march) and reading about the turnout, it gives me a prickly feeling on my arms, that feeling of collective togetherness becomes like a fuel for the work for me, it's like you draw on it, you go 'yeah we're not just here by ourselves, we not just screaming into the silence, we are here, we are together, we can, we can scream a bit louder'.

Sam further solidifies the group's quickly established position on the value of marches and 'collective togetherness'. In contrast, Sam emphasises the collective and the power of speaking as one: 'yeah *we're* not just here by ourselves, *we're* not just screaming into the silence, *we* are here with together, *we* can, *we* can scream a bit louder' (emphasis added).

Nina's reservations centre on the lack of power the collective voice has to instigate action, in that just saying 'we can end violence against women' does not result in changing anything or providing any constructive means of actually ending violence against women. In contrast, Sam places power in the voice alone, stressing that the benefit of screaming with others is that together 'we can scream a bit louder'. In Sam's account, the collective scream is powerful enough in itself. Her comments echo the group's abiding concern with having a voice and being heard. In Sam's

account, there is power in refusing to be silenced and it is possible to resist silencing when screaming together.

This conversation took place at the beginning of the group discussion and had the effect of establishing a group that is in agreement and that, even at this early stage, had the power to persuade. It suggests a deep investment in collectivity; the power of the group identity is particularly important considering that they are a group of feminist women discussing the power of feminist collectives. It is therefore essential that their feminist group, although newly formed and made up of strangers (although perhaps the necessity for agreement is because of, rather in spite of, this fragile and new collective), is illustrative of this power and strength.

The women are very quick to develop a group identity and do so through sharing stories, validation and agreement and, importantly, establishing a clearly identified 'enemy'—the male misogynist. They illustrate the importance of telling stories and assigning roles in the development of individual and collective identities discussed in the first chapter. The misogynist in this discussion often appears online and is depicted as aggressive, antagonistic and lacking an understanding of feminism. Their online encounters with misogynists are, however, complicated by the fact that they are often acquaintances or colleagues, or people with whom they shared political views. Whilst the misogynist might be someone known to the women, often an acquaintance rather than close friend, the online encounter decontextualises and disembodies these personal relationships, and so the men are seen as expressing views that would not be voiced if speaking directly to the women.

As seen in Nina's account below, the online context has the effect of flattening out these more complex relationships:

> I've discovered that someone who I used to really like, who probably wouldn't ever dare say any of the stupid shit that he says to my face, but I've seen him posting on sexualisation of children, of girls, groups and also other feminist groups. He's clearly a kind of men's rights person and I've known him for years and he's like 'yeah women don't know, I can't get a job' and I'm like 'yeah I know why you can't get a job, because you're lazy and it's not women's fault that your life is a disaster'. And you just suddenly

think 'I'm not friends with you anymore, we are not friends' and the fact that I have never heard anything like that from him, not even a tiny glimpse of it, shows that he knows that it's wrong, either he knows that it's wrong or he's afraid to say anything like that around me.

In contrast to Alexandra's childhood memory, there is a shift in the power relations during this exchange. Rather than Nina feeling silenced or 'shouted down' by the remarks in this example, it is the men's comments that are not considered worthy of response. Nina disregards the man's comments as 'stupid shit' and depicts him as the one that is intimidated by her. It is a response that is perhaps made more possible by the virtual context. She then makes a leap from the specifics of one encounter, to a generalised statement about men's attitudes towards women. She says:

But it's frightening how prevalent those sort of attitudes are. I used to discount hugely when Germaine Greer said 'women have no idea how much men hate them'. I used to think 'oh come on that's extreme' but I think, I think there is a real truth to that, a real, real truth to that.

Citing Greer, a feminist figure who appeared throughout the interviews and served as representative of the recent feminist past, Nina declares the 'truth' of men's hatred for women. Here, Nina locates her encounter with the online misogynist in the apparently fixed gender relations. It also establishes a fixed gender relation for the women to rely on in their formation of a group identity, clearly demarcating the boundaries of group belonging. Nina generalises her encounter and uses it as evidence that *all* men hate *all* women, a view given credence by its association with Greer. This perhaps has the effect of explaining for Nina the seemingly out of character behaviour of someone who she 'used to really like'.

The accounts of their arguments with 'the misogynist' are central to the development of the group's collective identity. Distinguishing between the feminist and non-feminist is one way of establishing boundaries of belonging. This suggests that the women's return to the topic of arguing, and their engagement in the arguments themselves, served a purpose beyond convincing others of their point of view, but in fact contributed to a feeling

of belonging. As Alexandra remarks: 'If you fight for something maybe it belongs more fiercely to you, if you had to sort of defend it against people attacking it.' The point at which a feeling of belonging comes under attack, in this case from the experience of being silenced, is the point at which the women fight to defend themselves and so draw out boundaries of belonging. Here, the politics of belonging and the 'dirty work of boundary maintenance' is exposed (Yuval-Davis 2011). In their online encounters, these boundaries are made between the feminist and non-feminist, yet neither are static categories. The boundaries of the feminist, although shifting, are established and maintained by the 'proper feminist'.

Shifting Boundaries of Belonging

This negotiation of feminist belonging is something that is made particularly evident in the women's discussion of speaking in the political arena. In addition to their discussion of the 'proper feminist', the women express anxiety about and an awareness of the various risks of engaging in arguments and of the policing effects of the hairy/radical/lesbian feminist, terms used both separately and together to evoke a familiar feminist ghost (Hesford 2005, 2013). Kate illustrates the women's engagement with this particular ghost and the moderating effect she has on the women's ability to argue:

> I think it is that if you argue back then you're being a strident militant feminist and obviously all your opinions are invalid so sometimes you have to pick your argument.

Speaking out and arguing as a feminist risks being dismissed as militant. The women are acutely aware of this risk and reflect on its impact on their political voice. As with the interview participants' encounters with the 'angry feminist', the 'militant feminist' is as a figure that structures the women's relationship to feminism. In particular for this group, she signifies what can or cannot be said and done when arguing as a feminist. Firstly, the women demonstrate their awareness of a certain type of feminist they did not, or should not, want to be. Both Vicky and Sam reflect back on their attitudes to feminism when they were younger:

Vicky: I remembered as a child, when I must've been at primary school at that point saying to my mum 'you're not a feminist are you?'….I had obviously got into my head that this was a terrible thing to be….She kind of said, 'well yeah, I guess I am, but, you know' and I really can't remember the rest of the conversation but I did suddenly, I do kind of occasionally have guilt about feeling like that, even though I didn't really know better at the time. It took quite a long time to me to grow into my beliefs, but certainly that kind of that monstrous spectacle of leg hair.

Sam: I think at university I was right in with the sort of 'fun feminist' stage sort of 'oh I'm friends with boys, but it's okay because I'm not like those girls' type of thing. It was just another look back and cringe thing.

Vicky associates the feminist figure of her childhood with 'that monstrous spectacle of leg hair', referenced in Sam's memory. Both Sam's memory and Vicky's comments echo the focus on the feminist body in the interview data, in which the signifiers of 'feminist' are embodied. In Sam's reflection on her time at university, she remembers herself as the 'fun feminist', a position that poses no threat to her friendship with 'boys'. She positions herself, precariously, as the type of feminist who can be friends with boys, whilst not 'too feminist' (and so possibly 'man-hating') to risk alienating them. Whilst Vicky and Sam look back on their younger selves with a sense of guilt or embarrassment, the women's discussion of speaking out as a feminist indicates that this figure still polices how they express their views.

This policing was particularly evident when the women discussed their political work. Three of the four women in the group worked in some capacity for political organisations, Nina as a political lobbyist and Alexandra and Sam for feminist charities. Nina and Cat in particular had extensive experience of campaigning and fundraising for 'women's' or 'feminist' projects. Nina remembers developing a funding bid that, in the planning stages, emphasised the numbers of rape and sexual assaults in its tag line. Talking about the campaign, she said:

It was all very nice and it was all very good and then I thought 'no, this is too feminist', and I know it sounds like dreadful thing to say, and I almost felt like a traitor thinking it, but I thought it…

She goes on to describe her strategies for ensuring that her voice is heard in this context:

> Being really strict with yourself about not using feminist language, not using feminist words, not, not, trying almost, and this is a horrendous thing to say, but not to be too confrontational about it, not being angry, not letting my anger appear on the page.

Nina is aware that, in order to be heard, she should not appear 'too feminist' in the way she presents what many might consider to be an issue at the heart of feminism, one that is certainly the focus of much contemporary feminist organising. In Nina's account, 'feminist language' and 'feminist words' suggest confrontation and anger, and she demonstrates a similar negotiation of anger as Beth and Aaliyah in the previous chapter. In avoiding the use of feminist language, she avoids both appearing confrontational and inviting confrontation. However, forever negotiating the line between being 'too feminist' and being a 'proper feminist', Nina feels like a 'traitor' for watering down the feminist perspective of the campaign.

A later comment made by Sam suggests that this feeling of being 'traitor' is exacerbated, or created, in encounters with other feminists:

> But then you get stabbed in the back by other feminists; 'you're not using feminist language and you're saying that and you're saying this' and you think 'for god's sake, if you spent as much time fighting patriarchy as you are fighting me, we'd be in a much better place.

The women's discussion suggests that a crucial part of not being 'too feminist' is to avoid embodying the hairy/lesbian/angry feminist stereotype and present the feminist self, as Sam remembers doing at university, as fun, approachable and non-threatening. This negotiation of such stereotypes is a very resonant account across these cases, in particular Aaliyah and Richa's resistance to the label 'feminist'. It also reflects the strategies of self-restraint enacted by some of the women in the previous chapter. In the following extract, the women are reluctantly resigned to this approach:

Vicky: I think in some ways you're depressingly right. Politics is the art of the possible.

Nina: I like that (laughter).

Sam: You have to depoliticise to re-politicise, so you go in, you put your lipstick and heels on actually.

Nina: Oh god.

Sam: And, and you make nice noises and you make them think you like them and then you wham them.

Nina: You do not, you're not one of those, you not one of those hairy legged…

Sam: Yeah, I'm not the woman that you think.

Nina: I used to send my partner, who is a huge man with a big voice, to speak, to speak at, there were some places where I would send him to speak rather than me because he was much more, because he was a man and a well-spoken kind of booming large man who takes up space in a male way, I would send him to speak because…

Sam: They would listen to him.

Nina: Yes.

Sam: You use what you have.

Here, the women discuss the strategies they use to be heard. These necessitate banishing any trace of the 'hairy legged' feminist, embodying instead the stereotypical markers of femininity: 'lipstick and heels'. Sam is aware of the feminist woman people expect her to embody and deliberately attempts to subvert and destabilise her opponents' expectations, even if this requires her to distance herself from her feminist identity in order to be heard. In fact, her subversion of expectations requires an adherence to

the gendered relations that the women have attempted to resist in their discussion of silencing.

Sam and Nina's discussion suggests that the women's earlier concern with calling oneself a feminist and acting as a feminist is compromised in certain situations and particular encounters. In this instance, they feel that political action in certain arenas requires them to depoliticise their physical appearance (indicating that the hairy female body is already a politicised body) and their voice, in marked contrast to the screaming and shouting at the feminist marches the women celebrate earlier in the discussion. Sam makes 'nice noises' and flatters her opponent, creating a false sense of security before she 'wham(s) them'. Nina's awareness of which gendered bodies are able to demand and receive attention results in her removing and silencing herself completely. She sends her partner to speak instead of herself as he is a 'big man' who is able to occupy space and make himself heard.

When speaking in political arenas the women draw on a number of strategies that affording them access, belonging and an audience. These include removing 'feminist' language, conforming to westernised beauty standards and making strategic choices about how to present themselves when speaking, or, indeed, if to speak at all. They are, therefore, negotiations that take places across gender, sexuality and race and illustrate how achieving belonging involves the interplay of these social locations. For Sam, for example, being heard is at times contingent on her ability to adopt the 'lipstick and heels', even if as a self-conscious performance. This is of course dependant on her being able to play this role and be recognised as conventionally attractive. These accounts of their political work are resonant with the contemporary political landscape, in the UK at least, in which shifting strategy and positions is key to playing the political 'game' (Moffitt and Tormey 2014). Populism as a political style was exemplified by Tony Blair, UK Prime Minister from 1997 to 2007, and its place as a mainstream political discourse is perhaps one of the reasons the 2015 election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party, whose political presence and style is the antithesis of Blairite politics, has been such a shock to the UK political and media establishment.

Despite, in other contexts, resisting and fighting against their experience of being silenced, here both Sam and Nina reluctantly adhere to what they believe is necessary for their cause to be given attention. Both women hide their feminist views from sight as they are acutely aware of the risk of being dismissed when speaking and presenting as feminist. As the women try to position themselves in the public sphere and attempt to be heard in political encounters, their feminist politics are manipulated or even subsumed by the demands of achieving their political aims. This illustrates the problem with relying upon a particular feminist action as the signifier of the feminist subject. The context-dependent, changeable nature of the former exposes the instability of the latter.

Remembering second-wave feminism's engagement with the state, Segal describes feminist women as working 'in and against the state' (2013b:73) as they sought to work with the state, often at the level of local government, whilst remaining critical of the hierarchies upon which it operated. Feminists had to grapple, as the women in this group do, with how to best make demands upon the state to achieve change whilst walking the line between 'resistance and incorporation' (Segal 2013b:74). This is perhaps the basis of the discussions Sam, Nina and Vicky have about their involvement in working with state or political organisations. They each engage in practices that offer them some belonging in these arenas, but at times have to forego or temporarily suspend a commitment to their feminist principles. Janet Newman has similarly explored how women '"worked the spaces of power" in order to bring about social and political change' (Newman 2013:101) and considered the dilemmas such engagement with the state creates for activists. In their discussion of their political work, the women speak about the compromises they enact in order to belong and so be heard. This, at times, means compromising a sense of feminist belonging.

Conclusions

This interpretation of the memory-work group considers the ways in which the women create a sense of belonging to feminism. As the women share their stories and memories of arguing, it becomes clear that the

social, historical and culture narratives produced about women in history and in particular the historical silencing of women's voices are played out in these women's own experience of making themselves heard. In response to feeling silenced, compromised and frustrated by and with these experiences, the women look to the newly formed feminist group for validation and support, privileging collectivity and agreement over division and argument.

As they share their stories of online and offline encounters, the women's discussion reveals the extensive and exhausting emotional work of becoming feminist. Their accounts are filled with frustrations, anger, insecurities and resolutions and detail the various factors that influence and sometimes determine the ways in which they engage in arguments. Whilst the women have an emotional investment in emulating a 'proper feminist', a figure who is difficult to clearly define but who consistently speaks out as a feminist, they are also acutely aware of having to sacrifice their feminist voice in order to be heard in certain arenas. In doing so, they are forced to occupy a conflicting and ambiguous position in which they disguise their feminist selves in order to achieve their feminist aims. Their experience demonstrates the difficulty of solidifying a feminist identity that is reliant on emulating any notion of a 'proper feminist'.

The 'proper feminist' is both an aspirational and restrictive figure for the women, offering a model of how feminists 'should' behave and therefore critical of behaviour that does not meet her standards. Nina and Sam's discussion of failing to use enough 'feminist language' in campaign material and consequently being 'stabbed in the back' by other feminists illustrates this. The proper feminist is a crucial figure in establishing the boundaries of belonging to feminism. Echoing the themes of the previous chapter, the women's focus on arguments revealed the affective aspects or emotional work of politics. The group's preoccupation with arguing highlights the importance of a collective identity and the support it can potentially provide. Whilst arguments threaten the feminist stance, through silencing tactics in particular, they also allow the women in this group to develop a collective identity and a perceived, although privileged, collective voice.

7

Becoming Feminist

These women shared their stories with me in 2011, a year in which oppositional political movements saw a proliferation of activity and increased attention. The Arab Springs that originated in Tunisia in December 2010 and saw demonstrations, protests and riots across Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere were gaining momentum and attention. Women had an active role in the organisation and implementation of the protests and in using social media to ensure that protestors' voices were heard across the world. Segal (in Rowbotham et al. 2013) observes that the Arab Springs—a term that encompasses a variety of movements, events and the work of many individuals and collectives across different countries—and the ongoing struggles that followed had an important influence on the surge of grassroots activity across the world. Prominently, the Occupy movement has seen global protests, demonstrations and occupation of buildings and public spaces drawing attention to social and economic inequalities across the world and the devastating impact of

neoliberal political ideologies.[1] Occupy and, in a UK context, anti-austerity groups, such as UK Uncut and Sisters Uncut, operate on the basis of participatory democracies and horizontal organisation and operate outside of formalised political systems, reminiscent of the practices of the Women's Liberation Movement (Wainwright in Rowbotham et al. 2013).

It is this global and UK political landscape that provided points of context, influence, identification and engagement for the women I spoke to. For Amira, a British Muslim woman, the images of women from Arab Springs protests were incredibly important, and she shared 17 of these images with me during her interview. Resistance was central to Amira's feminism, and these images of Muslim women offered her a means of challenging the narrative of the 'Muslim Other' as simultaneously oppressed and threatening, a narrative that she encountered in her everyday lived experience. Amira's account echoed Heidi Mirza's (2013) conclusion drawn from interviews with Muslim women of diverse backgrounds who described that they experienced a disconnect between how they saw themselves as Muslim women and how they were constructed as the 'Muslim Other'. It is an experience articulated by Lata Mani (1989) who writes that 'the disjuncture between how I saw myself and the kind of knowledge about me that I kept bumping into in the West opened up new questions for social and political inquiry' (11, cited in Mirza 2013). Amira's account is one example of the convergence between the personal and political. Her encounter with the images of

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[1] Both within a UK context and across the world, the impact and influence of these political movements on political institutions, practices and governments have been felt in various ways. In the UK, the context for this book, Hilary Wainwright (in Rowbotham *et al.*, 2013) has noted the shift in public discourse and increased popular critique of the, at this point, coalition government's austerity agenda. The recent 2015 UK general election, which saw a Conservative government elected by a very narrow majority, also saw the Scottish National Party, who campaigned on an anti-austerity platform, win 56 of the 59 Scottish constituencies. Following the election and the resignation of the Labour Party leader Ed Miliband, the leadership campaign saw a surge of support for its eventual winner and current Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn's victory has meant that the main UK opposition party now leads with an anti-austerity voice, albeit one facing divisions and opposition within the party itself. Corbyn's leadership campaign was facilitated by a swell of grassroots support from non-party member and has seen a surge in Labour membership following his election. Indeed, it was an email and social media campaign for Corbyn to receive the required number of nominations to be included on the ballot paper that meant he was a contender in the race at all. These recent developments in UK politics illustrate the influence of political campaigns that operate outside of and independent of political parties, and their interaction with political parties and systems themselves.

Muslim women protestors is enveloped into her counter-narrative to dominant tropes of the Muslim Other that she encounters in her daily life. In seeing these images, Amira draws connections between her own daily practices of resistance and those of the women active in the Arab Springs. It is through these multiple narratives of resistance that her feminism is formed.

In *Getting Medieval,* Carolyn Dinshaw (1999) conceives of an affective relationship to the past that she describes as 'touches across time'. She seeks to attend to the particularities of people's lives, whilst drawing out connections between different places and times. Although applied differently, I think the stories I have shared in this book demonstrate the touches across time and place through which the women's feminist identities are formed. As Amira's connection to the women of the Arab Spring illustrates, it is an affinity with feminist and other political protests, people and events in different temporal and spatial contexts that the women I spoke to draw upon and incorporate into their own feminist identities. These points of connection are evident across the stories discussed in this book. For example, Beth's anti-austerity activism resonates with Rebecca's work in the charity sector, that sees her contend with the impact of government cuts on a daily basis. Elsewhere, as in Ruby's account of Greenham, the energy and emotion of past protest is drawn into the political present through these women's stories. These relationships forged across place and time are so often now mediated and facilitated by technological advances and new media, illustrative of the various ways in which pasts and parallel presents converge.

During the 1990s, American artist Kiki Smith produced a series of screen-printed works entitled *Lucy's Daughters*[2]. It is an image that I think visualises Dinshaw's concept of touches across time. The works depict a number of human figures positioned to form an inverted triangle. Each figure varies in shade, tone, shape, size and position—whilst some are prominent amongst the group, others are barely visible. *Lucy's Daughters* offers a counter-history to understanding of human evolution as linear, patriarchal and frequently Caucasian. Smith advances a matrilineal, non-linear notion of evolution that resists the erasure of one stage by another as popularly

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[2] 'Lucy' refers to the 3.5-million-year-old hominid discovered in Ethiopia in 1974.

imagined. Whilst some of Lucy's daughters might appear more prominent and visible, they are surrounded, shaped and held by the traces of the others, some barely there. These traces might be less discernible to the viewer, but are no less present or significant in the image. Smith beautifully utilises the qualities of screen-printing to create this effect. She underprints, overprints, obscures and misaligns the image to produce a variety of tones. In doing so, each figure is formed of the imprints of others, not replacing or obscuring previous incarnations, but constituted by them. Although visible in different ways, Lucy's daughters co-exist in and across time and space, alongside and formed of one another—foundational to their very conception and production is the notion of relationality. Both Smith and Dinshaw express something of the ways in which 'becoming feminist' is a process of continual movement that does not turn away from or leave the past behind, but, like *Lucy's Daughters*, lives alongside it, in relation to it, and is formed of it.

Smith's image also speaks to the number of different women's feminisms that this research encompasses. In this book, some of these stories from the women I interviewed come to the fore, and others sit in the background. In adopting a case study approach—a decision I made because of my particular concern with the looking at the details of the women's narratives—there are necessarily women's voices who have not been considered in detail here. When I first started working with the interviews, I looked across all of them to identity themes; this process provided the foundation for the exploration of the cases I have presented here. But there are many more stories that I could have chosen to talk about and that, like those I have written about, draw connections across time and place, develop 'strategic affinities' (Withers) with a multitude of feminisms and have points of convergence and departure from the other stories in this fleeting and changeable collective.

For example, Edel and her account of how generations of conflict and peace process in Ireland informed her work in the Irish pro-choice movement. Hers was a story that draws links with the inconsistent and under-threat reproductive rights of women across the world. Alice's story of becoming feminist had similarities with Rebecca's story in the significance of early 1980s UK politics, but it also draws attention to the very personal and political embodiment of feminism as she discusses

her transforming relationship to her body as a means of resisting and challenging dominant notions of beauty. Andee and Beatrix who, like Jenny, were both mothers discussed their experience of motherhood and its entanglement with their feminism. Rowen, whose sexual identity and celebration of 'families of choice' illustrated in different ways to Aaliyah how a feminist identity is entangled with the renegotiation and reflection on relationships and identities. Some of these stories I have written about elsewhere (Guest, 2016 and forthcoming) and they have surfaced in conference papers, teaching and ongoing writing. But they are also present here in the stories of Rebecca, Aaliyah, Jenny, Richa, Ruby and Beth whose accounts I have presented to tell the story of a group of women through individual accounts.

Dinshaw observes that when forging 'touches across time' through the particularities of individual lives, there is a risk of focusing on the detail of individual at the cost of understanding the collective. She states:

> I was concerned that this approach be not taken up with the individual and idiosyncratic that it would cease altogether to function as a method of coming to terms with phenomena in the past and of creating something collective, and that it would become, rather, only a way of writing personal autobiography (Dinshaw 2001: 203).

This reflects some of the concerns regarding the place of narrative and auto/biography as methods for producing feminist histories. However, looking at the specifics of the everyday can uncover the points of connection and convergence across accounts in order to consider that the women's stories have particular meanings individually, but when considered together form a collective through which social and cultural patterns can be discerned. In adopting a fine-grained narrative analysis, this collective can be seen as one that houses difference as well as similarities. That patterns emerge across the women's situated, particular stories—the repetition of generational tropes, the investment in a form of feminist hope, the challenges of harnessing and validating emotion, and the continual negotiation of belonging and feeling 'good enough' as feminist—takes these stories from the individual to the collective and says something about how feminist politics is developed, lived and grounded

in the everyday. This approach also challenges any homogenisation of 'the feminist', as looking closely at the stories these women tell about their lives makes it difficult to discuss their experience as a whole without drawing out their differences. For example, each of the women engages in some way with the generational, but Jenny's investment in the inheritance of feminism from her mother and grandmother, and the passing of it on to her daughter, is very different to the sense of female strength and power that Aaliyah received from her maternal grandmother, but that was problematised as part of her feminist becoming.

Looking to the specific in order to understand the collective illustrates that generations do not always work in the same way or mean the same thing for individual women, regardless of the repetition of the trope. Indeed, I wonder how each of these women would have worked out and articulated these different manifestations of their feminisms in conversation with one another. It also demonstrates that, whilst the generational narrative certainly had an important place in these stories, it is so entirely situated in the detail of their personal biographies that the monolithic application of it in the articulation of feminist histories does not reflect its meaning in women's lived lives.

In this book, I focus on the everyday to highlight how the framing of the moments and encounters through which the women become feminist are ordered in a coherent, recognisable narrative. These overarching narratives are often inadequate—something of which the women to whom I spoke were often aware—but they are used to order a series of frequently disparate experiences and offer a momentary means of coming to know feminism. Rather than imagining feminism to be a static and clearly boundaried entity, narrative methods enable exploration of the ways in which becoming feminist is a relational and dynamic process. They offer a means of formulating an understanding of how political identities are lived and formed through everyday moments and encounters. I have approached the narratives and memories shared across this book with an ethic of kindness, meaning that I am not offering a critique or judgement of these individual women's subject positions or feminist politics, but I have been concerned with exploring the ways their feminist ethic is played out, developed and negotiated in day-to-day lived experiences.

I cannot claim to have produced an absolute knowledge of these women's feminisms. I hope that they recognise and are content with my interpretation of their accounts, even if it cannot encompass the very many ways feminist identities play out and are felt in complex lives. It is an interruption (Frosh and Willig 2012) rather than interpretation of their story that I have presented here. By this, I mean that my engagement with the interviews and memory-work group prompts a change and new understanding of their story, bringing it into conversation with a body of theoretical and empirical work on feminist histories and temporalities and the processes of narrative and memory.

The points of interruption also tell something of my own feminist story. The moments in this book where I highlight the points of recognition and identification serve to demonstrate that research is always an auto/biographical process that requires a reflexive approach to ensure validity and rigour (Letherby 2012). I have reflected upon these women's stories from particular theoretical, epistemological and ontological vantage points, and this impacts upon how I present them here. Researching, writing and theorising are political endeavours that cannot be considered neutral. For this reason, it is crucial to consider the processes of knowledge production and consider the power dynamics that exist in the research process, where the researcher has control of the interpretation of the participants' accounts. I have considered the ethical and methodological challenges, complexities and opportunities for reflexivity that this project afforded elsewhere (Guest, forthcoming). Here, as part of this process of reflexivity, I want to think about research as a story-telling practice and consider how my own story of becoming feminist emerges through my engagement with those of my participants.

In approaching research as a story-telling practice (Lewis 2011), I am suggesting that in reading and interpreting others' stories, we create and tell stories of our own. The term 'stories' does not diminish the value of the research; I am not suggesting that the accounts I present here are in anyway 'untrue'. I use the term here and throughout this book to emphasise that in any account of a life, events and experiences are selected, organised and retold in the form of a coherent narrative. The ways in which this is done are political and formative of which accounts are heard

and which are ignored. Stories can offer a strategic method of interrupting dominant histories. This is a point made by Norman Denzin (2008, cited in Lewis 2011) when he writes: '[W]e need to re-narrate the past. We need to tell the past and its stories in ways that allow us to disrupt conventional narratives and conventional history.' In turn, viewing the research process and the production of knowledge as a story-telling practice disrupts and interrupts this process of knowledge production, forcing us to reflect upon the ways in which we are producing 'knowledge' through story-telling practices themselves.

Across this book there have been moments where my identification with the women's stories has been clear—my recognition of the photograph of Rebecca's mother and my mis-viewing of the photograph of Church Terrell were both moments through which my own story of becoming feminist surfaced in my interviewees. Importantly, what these two moments reveal is how the dominant narratives of feminist histories and the prominence of certain figures can come to be naturalised and circulated. My mis-viewing of Mary Church Terrell as a white British suffragette signalled the availability of this particular history to me as a white woman. In contrast, during her interview, Amira talked about the barriers that this particular history posed to her engagement with feminism. She remembered learning about the suffragettes in school as white, middle class, boring and off-putting. Instead, Amira looked to Black feminism, which she associated with American feminism, and later Islamic feminism, to find a feminism she could identify with. As a mixed-race Muslim woman, Amira did not see herself reflected in the feminist histories she was offered in school. She looked beyond this dominant feminist history and, like Aaliyah, forged a relationship to feminism through the work of Black artists, writers and activists, such as Alice Walker and Angela Davis. This is important to note here as an example of how the stories told about feminism and its past make it available or unavailable, inclusionary or exclusionary to different individuals and so are not neutral retellings of feminism's past, but have repercussions in its present. This book cannot stand outside those story-telling practices, but I hope that the narrative approach adopted here draws attention to how feminist stories are formed through numerous moments and encounters with the feminist

past, present and future and are always inflected through personal and political investments, experiences and histories.

My own story of becoming feminist emerged at different points throughout this research. If I were asked to tell it here, I would, like Rebecca, Alice and Andee, remember the 1980s as a pivotal political moment. It was a period that I came to know and feel politics as a child through family conversations and the Labour Party meetings my grandparents hosted in their home. My role as a six-year-old was to stick raffle tickets on the tombola prizes and to take the coats of the stream of party supporters. I would perhaps share 'Discarded' by my great uncle, Keith Moore, which hung in my grandparents' home and now my parents'. The picture shows a miners lamp, helmet and boots, piled on top of a newspaper whose headline announces mine closures. My grandfather and his brother-in-law, my Uncle Keith, were both mining engineers; the miner strikes and mine closures were deeply felt, and the strikes form part of the blurred memories of my early childhood. I might talk about the time my dad shared a book of poetry with me as a young teenager, saying I would probably enjoy it because I was 'turning into a bit of a feminist'. I remember being unsure of what 'feminism' meant exactly, whether it was a good or bad thing, but it felt important to know. I would talk about the women around me I admired, who spoke their minds and their feelings. I would think about the time my mum talked about abortion and choice and autonomy. Or remember pulling a *Virago or Women's Press* book from my grandmother's bookshelf and reading, the bottle green and black and white striped spines such a familiar and enduring signifier of feminist writing. In the light of recent protests against the UK's 'tampon tax', I might recall that my grandfather believed that sanitary products should be provided to women free of charge, and so made sure that they were freely available in the offices he managed. My feminism does not end with these stories and memories, but those experiences, and many more beside, shaped a particular way of looking at the world as one of various inequalities.

I might gather all of these memories, stories and images together to tell a story of feminist inheritance, that is perhaps what these moments and encounters point to. But to do so tells only a partial story, one that does not encompass other people, relationships, times and places, past, present

and future, which are part of the ongoing and relational process of becoming feminist. It freezes a feminist becoming that is felt and mobile and that occurs in daily interactions and resistances taking place across the spheres of the personal and political. These are sometimes recognisable as 'political action', other times as a shift in a way of relating to or reading the world and our place in it. It is through these personal experiences that we can understand and develop a political engagement with the world. One of the legacies of the Women's Liberation Movement is the value it placed on experience. As Wainwright writes:

> Many of the initial organisational forms of the women's movement, for instance, were about women sharing and reflecting on each other's experiences to get to the roots of their subordination, including the ways in which they had been complicit. Much of the personal experiences that women shared at this time would have been dismissed as 'gossip' and never previously been considered a legitimate source of knowledge. Yet they contributed to an explosion of profound and grounded criticism of existing public services and economic policies.' (Wainwright, in Rowbothem et al. 2013:42–43).

Focusing on experience as a valuable source of 'knowledge' draws into question any clear distinction between the personal and political. As the rallying cry of the Women's Liberation Movement asserts 'the personal is political', I turn to the personal and intimate aspect of feminist women's lives in this book to understand how they came to see themselves as feminist. The various ways in which they practise feminism are intimately linked to these narrative and memories of their feminist becomings. I offer one way of charting the terrain of contemporary feminism, not by making claims about what feminism is, but about how it is experienced, felt and remembered by some feminist women today. I have focused on the particularities and intricacies of personal narratives and memories of 'becoming feminist' as a means of destabilising the hegemonic accounts of feminist history and of rethinking women's relationships to them.

Appendix A: Interviewee Summaries

Aaliyah is 26 and lives in with housemates. She describes her ethnicity as black African (parents from Zanzibar), her class as working-class and her sexuality as bisexual.

Alice is 35 and lives with her husband. She described herself as white British, middle-class and bisexual.

Aoife is 22, lives with house mates and describes herself as British-Irish (white), her family as working class and herself as middle class and her sexuality as straight.

Amira is 29 and lives with her parents and her daughter. She describes her ethnicity as mixed (Arab and white), her social class as working class and her sexuality as heterosexual.

Andee is 34 and lives with her two daughters and her partner. She describes her ethnicity as white British, her social class as working class and her sexuality as heterosexual.

Anna is 32 and lives in London. She lives with her partner. She describes herself as British, middle class and heterosexual.

Beatrix is 35 and lives with her husband and two young daughters. She describes her ethnicity as white, her social class as middle class and her sexuality as heterosexual.

Beth is 22 and lives with housemates. She describes herself as white, working class and queer heterosexual.

Catherine is 22 and lives in with housemates. She describes herself as white, middle class and bisexual.

Edel is 27 and lives with her husband. She is white Irish, middle class and a cis straight queer woman

Elizabeth is 22 and lives with housemates. She describes herself as white British, middle class and heterosexual.

Emma is 25 and lives with housemates. She describes her ethnicity as white British, her social class as middle class and her sexuality as open.

Ruby is 20 and lives with housemates. She is white British/European, lower-middle class and heterosexual, but with an open mind.

Hannah is 35 and lives with her partner. She describes herself as white British Jewish, middle class and heterosexual.

Jean is 22 and lives in with housemates. She describes herself as white, middle class and lesbian.

Jenny is 33 and lives with her husband and seven-year-old daughter. She describes herself as white British, working class and heterosexual.

Lisa is 20 and lives with her mum and two sisters and describes herself as white British, working class and bisexual.

Mair is 26 and lives with housemates. She is white, welsh, British, lower-middle class and queer.

Nancy is 33 and lives with her husband. She describes herself as white, middle class and straight.

Poppy is 26 and lives with her fiancé. She describes herself as white British, middle class and heterosexual.

Priya is 26 and lives with housemates. She describes her ethnicity as British-Indian, her social class as middle class and her sexuality as straight.

Rebecca is 32 and lives with her husband. She describes herself as white British, middle class and heterosexual.

Richa is 26 and describes herself as Indian, upper-middle class and her sexuality as undetermined.

Rowen is 25 and lives with housemates. Rowen is German/Italian and describes her class as 'working-class parents, first in family to study' and her sexuality as lesbian.

Sally is 27 and lives with her partner. She describes herself as white (British/Australian), middle class and straight.

Appendix B: Memory-Work Participant Summaries

Alexandra is 29. She is white, middle class and describes her sexuality as 'in a long-term monogamous relationship with a cis hetero man but previously have had same-sex experiences/attractions—so I guess I pass as heterosexual but would not call myself 100 % straight—ugh, complicated!'

Sam is 30 and describes herself as multi-heritage Indian-English, middle class and bisexual.

Nina is 34 and describes herself as white British, middle class and straight.

Vicky is 35 and describes herself as white, middle class and straight.

Appendix C: Guidelines for Writing Memories (Haug et al. 1987)

1. Write a memory.
2. Of a particular episode, action, person or event.
3. In the third person.
4. In as much detail as is possible, including even 'inconsequential' or trivial detail (it may be helpful to think of a key image, sound, taste, smell and touch).
5. But without importing interpretation, explanation or biography.

The memories should be as detailed as possible; they can also be accompanied by a photograph. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' memories, just write about whatever the trigger phrase provokes.

Appendix D: Memory-Work Analysis Guidelines (Haug et al. 1987)

1. Each group member expresses opinions and ideas about each written memory in turn.
2. The collective looks for similarities and differences between the memories. The group members look for continuous elements among the memories whose relation to each other is not immediately apparent. Each member should question particularly those aspects of the events that do not appear to be amenable to comparison, without resorting to biography.
3. Each member identifies clichés, generalisations, contradictions, cultural imperatives, metaphor, etc. This is one way of identifying the markers of the 'taken-for-granted' social explication of the meaning of recurring events.
4. The group discusses theories, popular conceptions, sayings and images about the topic, again as a way of identifying the common social explication of meaning around the topic.
5. The group also examines what is not written in the memories (but that might be expected to be). Silences are sometimes eloquent pointers to issues of deep significance, but are painful or particularly problematic to the author (Haug et al. 1987).

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