introduction
the wherewithal of feminist methods

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Concepts, devices and practices have proliferated considerably since the signifier 'feminist' was first attached to 'method' and 'methodology', most prominently in the 1980s. Early discussions suggested that feminist research and knowledge-making demanded a distinct approach to empirical inquiry: one that recognised and overturned systemic gender disparities, validated women's 'experience', rejected hierarchies between the researcher and research participant, and had emancipation and social change as its purpose. Some of these early defining aspirations have been used to experiment with method and continue to incite lively debate about the politics of knowledge production and even what might be the best feminist method (Wilkinson, 1999). Others have been recast by new technologies and the greater attention given to non-human modes of relating in areas such as science and technology studies, epigenomics and climatology. Yet, a commitment to make feminism mean something in the doing of research, cultural analysis, teaching, artistic practice and in activism, has continued to complicate and supplement the idea of a distinct feminist methodological imperative.

It was from this point of enduring attachment, 'returns' as 'products of repetition, of coming back to persistent troublings' (Hughes and Lury, 2013, p. 787), and curiosity that our call for papers for this themed issue asked: 'Where are we with feminist methods?'

'*Where*?' as it turns out is an apt question. For method at its European root is all about terrain, emplacement and venturing forth. In the modern Western tradition Ulmer (1994, p. 30) reminds us—'beginning with Plato and his Academy'—geometry was a morality, 'everything in its *right* place, related to the doctrine of the *route* as a right way to proceed'. The word method comes from the Greek *meta* (higher, beyond) and *hodus* (route); with 'route' connoting a highly prescribed and gendered mode of travel and expedition. By way of illustration, Ulmer draws from Eugene Victor Walter's *Placeways*:

> To go the right way, one made a journey to a proper destination, and after the journey out, sought a return (nostros) or homecoming. The traveller followed instructions, looked for tidings of the route, and depended upon escorts, guides, and hosts to help him on his way. Advancing upon the route, he was said to 'accomplish' the journey, which was understood as a round-trip back to his proper place. The opposite of going the right way was to wander or to go astray. (Walter, 1988, p. 186)

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A quest narrative full of colonial tropes (see also Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), method-as-route, bespeaks a world that all the time stays in place and is wandered across, mapped, extracted from and calibrated by privileged groups of men. Clearly, such an idealised view is also far removed from the doing of contemporary research, where methodology is always an in *media res* wandering, if not a bewildering getting lost, as well as a retrospective retelling—and oftentimes irrespective of how standardising and 'scientific' a methodology aspires to be. In her ethnographic memoir *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*, Ruth Behar (1996) offers a very different take on method. Behar speaks of the impossible tensions of the anthropological method of participant observation, including the fraught ethics of getting close to the lives of others, only to leave when the funding runs out or the summer vacation period comes to an end. Then it is a case of 'please stand up, dust yourself off, go to your desk, and write down what you saw and heard' (*ibid.*, p. 5). And what of research that is more emotionally entangled, fleshy, not quite so sure of itself? Behar's rendering of research as voyage is rather different from the Platonic version. With Behar we meet:

> Loss, mourning, the longing for memory, the desire to enter into the world around you and having no idea how to do it, the fear of observing too coldly or distractedly or too raggedly, the rage of cowardice, the insight that is always arriving too late, as defiant hindsight, a sense of the utter uselessness of writing anything and yet the burning desire to write something, are the stopping places along the way. At the end of the voyage, if you are lucky, you catch a glimpse of a lighthouse, and you are grateful. Life, after all, is bountiful. (*ibid.*, p. 3)

That life is bountiful gestures to another element of the method/route metaphor of more recent feminist discussions that have turned to the liveliness of the social and material world that the researcher moves through—the life and agency of the route itself. There is a diversity of feminist interventions here. Grace Cho's (2008) *Haunting the Korean Diaspora* is a stunning example of a shift to hauntological methodologies, concerned with tracing traumatic affects (see also de Alwis, 2009; Karavanta, 2013) as they circulate across place and time. Cho's multi-method approach—working with autoethnography, hallucinations, fantasies, historical and artistic archives—is an unsparing, restless search for the haunted sociality and disavowed histories of the sexual coercion and trauma entailed in the Korean partition and diaspora. Because trauma is unspoken and scattered across bodies through distributed perception (see also Blackman, 2015), researchers must develop methods, including textual experimentation, that are sensitive and hospitable to emotional residues, excess and 'schizophrenic multiplicity' (Cho, 2008, pp. 181–187). Throughout Cho's monograph, text boxes flare up from the page with archival fragments, dreams and autobiography, disturbing an orderly linearity of reading and attention. It is telling that Cho's (*ibid.*, p. 128) dreams so often involve journeys—walking, running, 'wandering in circles'—movements that rehearse exilic trajectories as well as the research process, moving with trepidation and curiosity towards what is blocked en route. 'In every direction there is a closed door. I am terrified of finding what is on the other side, but by now I am also quite curious' (*ibid.*). Perhaps research (and analysis in particular) is always this way, a little crazy and feverish, overshadowed by ephemera too oblique or wispy to make it into the final text. The methodological question that Cho's work raises is what form a research endeavour might take that moves between social structures and the patterning of what is 'virtual', the latter described by Fraser (2009, p. 77), via Whitehead, as 'the distribution of singularities' in which research methods participate.

Different ligatures of affect and materiality run through the collection *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social,* edited by the feminist sociologists Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford (2012). 'Our hope is that

the methods collected here will variously enable *the happening* of the social world', Lury and Wakeford (*ibid.*, p. 2) write, 'its ongoingness, relationality, contingency and sensuousness'. Method from this perspective is always already entangled with the 'objects' of research, so that space, time, scale and measurement are necessarily located and emergent. They cannot be pre-known. One of the most compelling observations from the science studies and new materialisms literature, which infuses the Lury and Wakeford volume, is how research entities—whether storied lives, algorithms, screens or proteins—are assembled, pressed and lured into some temporary form by methodological activities and tools and in ways that change the research problem. 'The inventiveness of methods', Lury and Wakeford (*ibid.*, p. 7) contend, 'is to be found in the relation between two moments: the addressing of a method—an anecdote, a probe, a category—to a specific problem, and the capacity of what emerges in the use of that method to change the problem'.

For Mariam Motamedi Fraser (2012) such radical relationality is inseparable from the openness of the researcher to learn how she is transformed by the methods and materials she uses and encounters. 'Relationality', she writes, 'is a helpful concept ... because it implies that the problem is distributed across the research assemblage as a 'whole' rather than being located in the researcher, in the subject of research, in society, or even in their (methodological, epistemological, affective etc.) relations' (*ibid.*, p. 86). Drawing from her research on the Irradiant archive, 'a story ... written by a tribesman from Lorestan in World War II occupied Iran', Motamedi Fraser (*ibid.*, p. 86) suggests that archival objects and those who work with them are always in the process of transforming each other. Each is working on and moving the other, so that as researchers we are, 'learning, in part from the materials, what kind of relation we are in. How do I open this letter? How does this letter open me?' (*ibid.*, p. 88).

'Opening' is the perfect word to describe the relationality of research and method. There is also a more sinister side to such 'openings' under 'surveillance capitalism' (Zuboff, 2015), where new technologies and their exploitation to generate 'big data' and smart databanks are being used to monitor, archive and anticipate all sorts of consumer and networking behaviours. How we open an email or our click-through patterns do indeed 'open' us, and not just affectively. We are prised apart as individuals embedded in networks and transactions from which social and geodemographic data can be extracted, 'crawled' and captured, producing new configurations in the politics of method (see Savage and Burrows, 2007), not least in the increasing divide between those with computational skills and those without. At the same time, what we might think of as research and where research is located and produced is transforming with new technologies. Journals such as *Feminist Review* are now able to use social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to engage more diverse audiences with feminist research, campaigns and debates. Citizen witnesses are documenting, live streaming and archiving violent and unjust events through spontaneous methods of the everyday, producing materials—particularly images—supportive of the social justice claims of movements such as #*BlackLivesMatter* and #*SayHerName*, founded by women of colour.

All of which sounds pretty revolutionary, if not full of methodological potential. Yet, new devices and platforms do not lessen the political and ethical challenges of longstanding feminist concerns with the chronopolitics of research, from a critique of the linear time of causation and the demands of simultaneously negotiating discrepant audiences (Farahani, 2010; Mani, 1990), to a more fundamental interest in 'coeval' relationships: what it is to live with Others in the same time (Bastian, 2011). This concern with temporality meshes with feminist discussions that have sought to displace the hegemony of

clock time through the recognition that 'temporality no longer stands outside phenomena … but unfolds *with* phenomena' (Adkins, 2009, p. 336). 'Event time' as it has been dubbed, is thought to be a product of contemporary transformations in the social field from a territory to a contingent circulation.

If our methods *are* a form of temporality, many researchers have also recognised that they are a time when the linear and quantifiable is queered by a breaching of space/time relationships and not only because of digital technologies. Breaches in space-time occur at a large scale, such as in the uneven encounters between histories of slavery, empire and settler colonialism and newer transnational forces (Grewal and Kaplan, 2002) that have led to the advocating of multisited, cartographic research methods (Gunaratnam, 2003). There are also smaller breaches of space and time in research that can be difficult to capture: sensual experiences of fieldwork, smells and sounds, that intrude upon the researcher at her desk (see Okely, 2007), or where the traces of events and people in the researcher's past—what Avtar Brah (2012 [1999]) calls the 'scent of memory' and Grace Cho (2008) names as 'diasporic vision'—stretch the spatio-temporal, affective and conceptual boundaries of a research project (see also Doucet, 2007; McMahon, 1996).

'Every day I try to lose them in the streets, leave them behind in a bend in the road and keep on walking' writes Choman Hardi (2015) in her poem 'Researcher's blues', a powerful meditation on her research with Iraqi-Kurdish peoples. Hardi's 'blues' are animated by faces and harrowing voices that trouble her day and night in flashbacks and disturbing questions. She can not forget her interlocutors, and although she tries to leave them behind, they follow her. 'The pleading voice of the woman who was raped echoes in my head: 'I only wanted bread for my son'; 'What was the dead woman's name? Why didn't I try to find her family? I keep walking away' (*ibid.*, p. 42).

What this diverse range of examples share is the crucial ethical, political and methodological challenge of coevalness: how to recognise a simultaneity of different histories while not subsuming them into a commensurable spatial and temporal moment of encounter. While real-time and other digital methods have the potential to better record and show how differences can be lived and unfold in the same space and time, they risk eliding simultaneity of presence with commensurability (see Gunaratnam and Back, 2014). Drawing from the ideas of the feminist activist and poet Gloria Anzaldúa, Michelle Bastian offers an astute, rigorous analysis of the dangers of the allure of a seamless, democratic present:

> …while time can be thought of as that which divides or separates, insofar as we are thought to share time with others, this shared time has primarily been thought in terms of a homogeneous present or presence … What is important to note, however, is that this commensurability is dependent on ignoring difference and focusing, instead, on what can be made homogenous and uniform. (Bastian, 2011, p. 153)

So while the pencil and notebook might be in the process of being replaced, or at least supplemented, by smartphones and algorithms and the filing cabinet by the digital cloud, new devices, processes and platforms do not necessarily provide a means to enable feminist research to better recognise and convey heterogeneity nor to interrogate how sameness and alterity are brought into being and are inflected by our methods and methodologies. Furthermore, we are in the midst of more complicated research temporalities, where the generation and sharing of data can be accelerated for those using digital methods, while methodological theorisation and traditional academic publication is still relatively slow (see Carrigan, 2016).

Alongside these novel fabrications and rearrangements in the tempo of research, discussions about method as a participant rather than an externalised, pre-existing route (although methods are also an adventure and a journey) have been further enlivened by the posthuman ontologies of those working with feminist new materialisms (discussed above). For these researchers, 'the human no longer assumes priority as the knowing eye/I organizing inquiry' and consideration is given to 'what participates in knowledge-making practices (not only who)...' (Hinton and Treusch, 2015, p. 3). The reference to a 'not only who' is a much needed critique of anthropocentrism. At the same time, the 'what' in all of its fabulous relationality can sidestep the politics and content of knowledge production evoked by the 'who': how the 'what' arrives and is welcomed, what is turned away *from* in the turning *to*, and at what cost.

Indeed there is something indomitable in the whiteness that is convened by the feminist methods literature more generally (try assembling a reading list for an undergraduate methods course) and that struck us in the submissions to our call for papers. This is despite increasing numbers of a new generation of politically engaged scholars of colour (Twine, 2000). Just what is it about feminist methods, we found ourselves wondering, that lends itself so readily to whiteness?

The efforts to decolonise and diversify methods and knowledge by researchers like Olive Malvary, Zora Neale Hurston, Ella Cara Deloria, and more recently by those such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (1997), seem to have made slow progress and incursions into feminist epistemologies and the methodological literature, citation practices and pedagogy (see Ahmed, 2013 on feminist citation). As Behar and Gordon (1995, p. 18) note, the work of early women of colour anthropologists in North America has been historically and institutionally marginalised: '... Hurston, an African American woman, and Deloria, a Native American woman, were treated more as "native informants" than as scholars in their own right. Neither obtained an academic position or, until recently, had much of an impact on anthropology'. Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 175), a Māori researcher, working in the field of education, has described how the dominance of individuating, human-centred Western epistemologies has 'made it extremely difficult for Māori forms of knowledge to be accepted as legitimate'. Posing a series of questions for researchers, including 'For whom is this study worthy and relevant? Who says so?' What knowledge will the community gain from this study? ... To whom is the researcher accountable?', Tuhiwai Smith's (*ibid.*, p. 172) work warns of the enduring suspicion of, and antipathy to, social research among indigenous communities.

Tuhiwai Smith's critique of the suppression of diverse ontologies is one that plays out across disciplines. Describing her work to put together a bibliography of Caribbean women novelists, Paravisini-Gebert (1997, p. 5), diagnoses the perils of the neglect of localised epistemology and ontology: 'The evaluation of a differing reality from the theoretical standpoint of other women's praxes comes dangerously close in many cases to continued colonization'. For Toni Morrison (1993), it is also the manner of inclusion of Africanist knowledge and ontology that is problematic. In *Playing the Dark*, Morrison urges us to scrutinise literary blackness with the same critical gaze that we might apply to whiteness:

> How does literary utterance arrange itself when it tries to imagine an Africanist other? What are the signs, the codes, the literary strategies designed to accommodate this encounter. What does the inclusion of Africans or African-Americans do to and for the work? (*ibid.*, p. 16)

It would take some effort and labour to ignore these dynamics and questions as they relate to the research methodologies and practices of representation that we use across our feminist work, from organising events, rallies and social media platforms to our classrooms (see Bhambra, 2015). And let us not forget that this is also a time when our youth and students are demanding that 'Rhodes Must Fall', and are asking 'Why is my curriculum white?'

So then....

where are we with feminist methods?

The question of how to produce knowledge differently is a kaleidoscopic theme across the contributions in this issue. For some authors, democratising research through participatory and collaborative methods is key to feminist methodology. From South Africa, 'Participation in practice', by Lillian Artz, Talia Meer, Hayley Galgut and Alex Müller, details one experience of conducting 'social action' participatory research with NGOs working with female survivors of sexual violence in Cape Town, in conditions of extreme, endemic precarity and poverty. The researchers' innovative method—including the use of a 'Z card' to be delivered by NGO practitioners and designed to provide crucial information to survivors of violence, while also operating as a tool for generating research data—was designed to address the need for social action research to avoid harm to vulnerable research subjects while contributing to progressive change. In practice, however, the authors reflect on the numerous barriers thrown up against their feminist aims, from time-strapped NGO workers with priorities more urgent than acting as research 'mediators', to survivors whose lives do not easily lend themselves to data collection, even in the most 'feminist' and 'ethical' of methodologies. How do feminist methods reckon with seemingly banal everyday realities, such as frequently changing phone numbers?

The challenges, practical as well as ethical, of researching women in precarious living and working situations is explored from a different angle by Hsiao-Hung Pai in her Open Space contribution, 'Reporting on the working life of migrant women'. As a journalist, Pai has available to her an investigative method that would undoubtedly be rejected out-of-hand by any university ethics committee: going undercover in order to interact closely with her subjects. Reflecting on her experience of subterfuge as method while researching her book *Invisible: Britain's Migrant Sex Workers* (Pai, 2013), and later for a documentary with Nick Broomfield (*Sex: My British Job,* 2013) on the same topic, Pai highlights the additional access to informants and 'insider' information afforded by undercover work, while acknowledging the physical risks and ethical dilemmas posed by the method—both for her research subjects and for Pai as researcher-reporter. While the use of the 'spy glasses' may shock, even outrage, academic researchers conditioned to equate ethics with maximum transparency, Pai's considerations of the researcher-research subject position are ultimately not dramatically different than those of the academics who write about research ethics 'in the field' in this issue and elsewhere. Moreover, Pai's conclusions about the unsafe and insecure working conditions of many migrant sex workers chime in significant ways with the findings of academic studies on, and activist interventions in, the British sex industry.

What Pai's paper raises more broadly is the matter of danger in the field and its varying personal and institutional spatio-temporalities. Projects under the auspices of an academic institution, regulated by

institutional and professionals codes of ethics, are not necessarily safer than the work that Pai and other journalists do. Research, as we were reminded recently, can cost lives. Cambridge PhD student Giulio Regeni was tortured and murdered while doing fieldwork on street vendor trade unions in Egypt in early 2016. As the investigation into Regeni's murder continues, it is becoming apparent how institutional and global power relations can intersect and play out in complex ways, across different identities, spaces and times. Italy recalled its ambassador from Cairo in April 2016 and, in the aftermath of Regeni's violent murder, it was revealed that Regeni had been under investigation by the Egyptian police for three days (the investigation was said to have been closed when no evidence was found that Regeni's research was a threat to national security) and Cambridge University faced criticism from Italian politicians for not doing enough to protect its students.

At the same time, discussions and adjudications of 'safety' and 'danger' risk encoding and carrying colonial spatial and temporal oppositions, while limiting or preventing research in certain regions marked by human rights abuses, war and sectarian violence. Writing about their research on the impact of the 2003 invasion of Iraq on women, Nadje Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt (2016) make a persuasive case for why gender should be a central concern to transnational projects in situations of violence and war.

There are two other papers in the collection that address the problems of designing methods that are sensitive to women's experiences of sexual violence and harassment. In the context of a wider academic literature that focusses primarily on violence against younger women and girls, Hannah Bows sets out, in the British context, to research sexual violence against older women by using Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. Less directly interventionist than the South African case study, this research recognises that contact with survivors may be impossible for a number of reasons: their fragile health, inaccessibility or death. Outlining the importance in this circumstance of quantitative methods in the context of a feminist research community biased towards the qualitative, and deeply suspicious of the claim to objectivity associated with much empirical research, Bows makes the case for a mixed-method model of qualitative-quantitative research, using data generated through FOI requests as the basis for designing interviews with older survivors of sexual assault. The significant barrier she comes up against, in the first instance, is the state, and specifically the legal clauses cited by various police forces to decline requests for information. In considering the issue of gatekeeping, this paper echoes research by historians and others on the different authorities that guard the keys—literal or metaphorical—to official and unofficial archives. Indeed, FOI requests may be interpreted as a form of feminist archive-building—a search for traces of women whose stories have been overlooked or obscured by the mechanisms of age and gender prejudice among the police, as well as biases within feminist research on VAW itself.

In her article on trolling and violence against women online, Fiona Vera-Gray reflects on how her attempt to use new media to facilitate a collective research project on violence against women rendered her more vulnerable as a researcher to trolling, misogynist abuse and online violence. In common with the papers on 'Participation in practice' and FOI requests, this piece is in part about the ways in which feminist research is subject to disruption—in this case, by misogynist trolls. Drawing on Liz Kelly's notion of 'safety work', the author reflects on the challenges of designing a feminist research method that allows access to a diversity of women's voices through the internet and the hidden emotional labour of the researcher in her attempt to care for both herself and her research participants in the face of abuse.

The papers on 'Feminist online interviewing' and 'Feminist data analysis' offer a more optimistic take on the possibilities of the internet and social media platforms for feminist methods. The authors of 'Feminist online interviewing' reflect upon the ways in which feminist interviewing methods may be translated into 'asynchronous email interviewing' without becoming a disembodied and distancing experience for either the interviewer or research participants. Like all the authors in this volume, Jasmine Linabary and Stephanie Hamel are particularly concerned to address familiar questions of power and inequality in researcher-research participant relationships. While they offer up evidence that women research participants exercise certain levels of agency and empowerment, the hegemony of English as lingua franca among internet communities raises questions of both access and reception. How feminist researchers work not only across time, space and culture, but also across language is an issue largely absent from this volume and which deserves greater attention in discussions of feminist methods.

In the attention given to feminist data analysis by Koen Leurs, we see something of the intricate and skillful ways in which young Londoners, of varying ethnicities and sexuality, move between and negotiate digital and material selves and worlds. Especially fascinating in this paper is the researcher's use of a combination of face-to-face interviews with a participatory method in which young people were invited to create and interpret visualisations of their Facebook friendship networks (using TouchGraph), becoming co-researchers in parts of the study. Drawing from a feminist science studies perspective, what Leurs discovers is that despite the allure of data patterns promised by the scraping and aggregation of digital data, the value of the data are enhanced and revivified when they are situated in their contexts, histories and cultures of meaning-making. The analysis draws on a feminist ethics of care that includes the methodological attention given to the power relationships embedded in and produced by material interfaces and the algorithms of social media platforms, 'dependencies and relationalities' in the research relationships, and on-going monitoring of the benefits and harm of participation. Data does not 'somehow magically operate above and beyond issues of history and cultural difference', Leurs concludes.

Methodologically, we might also speculate about how these online methods and relationships create new conditions for older debates about the role of the transcript in interview analysis, as they move us away from the familiar interview method of speaking, listening and writing, to the terrain of writing and reading/looking/listening. One question we might ask with regard to practices of writing and reading: what kinds of new methods of reading/looking may be required in the age of online interviewing and digital data generation, where real-time synchronicities and the 'eternal present' (Debord, 1998, p. 7) coexist with more explicitly dispersed and incommensurable spatio-temporalities?

With regard to writing more specifically, it is interesting that three of the articles collected here approach the question of feminist methods as one of, at least in part, reading and writing. In her article on 'Archive fanfiction', Holly Pester works with an archive very different from that faced by Hannah Bows in her work on FOI requests. Here the archive in question is already feminist in intent and contents—the Women's Art Library at Goldsmiths, University of London. In her practice-based research, Pester uses a range of feminist theories and artworks to propose a method of feminist research akin to fanfiction. Creative writing for Pester becomes its own form of research, echoing gendered histories of gossip and reclaiming anecdote as a feminist form. Pester's creative methods in the Women's Art Library resonate with the Open Space piece 'The feminists are cackling in the archive', produced by a group of feminists

from the Digital Women's Archive North (DWAN) who came together though their common performance (and) art practice to construct a collective 'Manifesto for feminist archiving'. The resulting text is evocative of a history of feminist activism in which manifestos themselves perform, creating collective feminist subjectivities while interpolating their readers/audiences into co-subjectivity and co-action. As historical documents, manifestos form part of the scattered ephemera that make up so many activist (art) archives. They not only seek to capture the immediacy of a moving present, but also project into an imagined feminist future, anticipating the methods used by researchers to (re)enact women's histories.

In 'Feminist disability studies', Stacy Clifford Simplican argues that the practice of self-writing and autoethnography have been groundbreaking methods for this field. But she argues too for a radical reading strategy that resists the tendency of some of this work to champion certain approaches—namely the celebratory—to disability over others. Similarly to recent research on debility (see *Feminist Review* 111, 2015), Simplican resists the ability/disability binary apparent in some life-writing by disability scholars. She focusses instead on what she calls an 'estranging sensitivity' in some disability life-writing, a sensitivity that estranges the reader from secure and positive notions of disability identity and community. Life-writing here is understood as a form of resistance to ableism that simultaneously resists conformity with a particular (normative) narrative of disability.

Writing as method, and its relationship to writer/reader vulnerability, is at the heart of Tiffany Page's contribution, which describes how the author came to understand her research method as one of 'vulnerable writing'. Page chronicles, in one example, the processes whereby critical attentiveness to her own response to the news reports of Mariam al-Khawli, a Syrian refugee who died following self-immolation outside the United Nations offices in Lebanon, serves as a guide for developing her method of vulnerable reading and writing in which a holding open of interpretation and staying with not-knowing serve as points of susceptibility within the unfolding analysis. The partiality of knowledge production in this regard is simultaneously recognised and respected as an ethical stance, while all the time it is also imposed by conditions outside of the researcher's control. There are resonances here with broader feminist work. We have in mind Patti Lather's (2001, p. 482) praxis of stuck places as 'a praxis of not being so sure, in excess of binary and dialectical logic that disrupts the horizon of already prescribed intelligibility', and Kamala Visweswaran's ethics of a subversive complicity between different modalities and sinews of refusal in her ethnographic research:

> This strategized complicity between unequal subjects in power unfolds into a peculiar form of knowing, one in which the confounding yet tactical junction of disclosure and exposure is dramatized. In interrupting a Western (sometime feminist) project of subject retrieval, recognition of the partially understood is not simply strategy but accountability to my subjects; partial knowledge is not so much choice as necessity. (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 50)

Vulnerability—that of the researcher and others involved in different parts of the research process—is apparent in several of the articles. Indeed, we may want to ask ourselves why a special issue on Methods has attracted so many papers on violence at this time.

Most of the articles in this volume address, implicitly or explicitly, the challenges as well as rewards of collaborative research, without shying away from—indeed, in some cases drawing deliberate attention to—the pitfalls of a naïve investment in collective research as by definition ethical or politically radical—

more 'feminist' perhaps. We insist on this point not to detract from the valuable work of the individual authors in this volume, but to stress that the process of editing has itself involved a feminist methodology, and contributes to our own evolving understanding of and participation in the politics of academic journal infrastructures and editorial practices as involving certain methods. As Kate Eichhorn and Heather Milne (2016) argue, collective editorial endeavours such as the one we engage in here—and indeed, the one that forms the basis of the entire *Feminist Review* project—continue to be undervalued. In the context in which we work—British higher education—research in the humanities and social sciences, as elsewhere, is increasingly quantified as 'outputs' with a ranking of quality and impact. In the world of academic journals, impact is influenced by varying business structures of open access, new sales models such as consortia licensing and an astonishing specialisation and unprecedented proliferation of journals. According to a recent report by Mark Ware and Michael Mabe:

> There were about 28,100 active scholarly peer-reviewed English-language journals in 2014, collectively publishing approaching 2.5 million articles a year (Plume & van Weijen, 2014). [...] More broadly, Google Scholar is estimated to index between 100 and 160 million documents including journal articles, books, and grey literature (Khabsa & Giles, 2014; Orduña-Malea *et al.*, 2014), while the Web of Science database includes about 90 million records. (Ware and Mabe, 2015, p. 27)

The collective and dialogic work of reviewers and editors is largely obscured in such environments, even though, as former *Feminist Review* collective member Clare Hemmings (2011, p. 21) insists, academic journal articles are inevitably the products of collective work involving editorial boards and anonymous readers, as well as individual or groups of named authors. To cite Eichhorn and Milne (2016, p. 190) once again, '... the work of editing [...] is less concerned with meaning and its exhaustion than with relationships and proximities'.

The collective labour of dispersed and proximate reading and editing that has gone into this themed issue is a method that aims to nurture and bring together—ideas, researchers, readers—precisely in order to open up spaces of feminist knowledge production, of thinking and un/knowing differently. While this work is inevitably flawed, it provides another instance of why the question 'Where are we with feminist methods?' is such a significant and provocative one.

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