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Speaking of my experiences, as an artist, an organiser, and as a “voice from the field” implies putting myself at the centre of this narrative and speaking with some authority. My authoritative position, however, doesn’t come from status, success or expertise but from being a participant.

— Jude Adams¹

AS REBECCA L. BORDT has argued, there have been almost no successful feminist movements that did not also begin, in some shape or form, as collectives.² This special volume of *Philament* draws together selected papers from the University of Sydney Feminist Theory Reading Group (FTRG), one of the only postgraduate women’s collectives at the University. Founded in early 2016 by a small group of writers and postgraduate students, FTRG began with a two-pronged intention. Many of us were motivated not only to explore and promote the foundations of feminist theory but to meet other inspired and progressive thinkers. Though the academic environment encourages rigorous research, we felt that opportunities for peer-to-peer support were rare in the postgraduate setting, which limited the dissemination of ideas and opportunities. I myself also noticed how the competitive nature of academia seemed to divide us, promoting isolation and paranoia. I started to think about how demoralis-

ing the situation was for early-career researchers, especially as I met newer generations of feminist scholars who had experienced the same age-old frustrations inspired by isolating environments. Friends had stopped supporting and celebrating each other's achievements and had instead adopted an attitude well expressed by Gore Vidal, who said "Every time a friend succeeds something inside me dies."³ And once again, individualism seemed to reign over collectivism.

After a fairly lacklustre beginning, FTRG grew exponentially (our Facebook group now has over 50 members), with a core group assembling regularly in the University of Sydney's Department of English. There we tried to understand feminism, to evolve as feminists, and to implement feminist ideas into our own lives. I was curious to find out whether our interrogations into various foundational feminist principles, including those that have been manipulated, dismissed, and celebrated in the decades since the early nineteenth century, might reinforce feminism in this allegedly postfeminist age.⁴ The conversations at FTRG began to focus on relearning and reinforcing the importance of solidarity and support, and to celebrate the founders of the movement. Amid conversations about K-Pop, we debated the merits of cyborgs; soon thereafter, visual texts became a major focus, as the group slowly developed its own identity. Two years and many weekly meetings later, FTRG has consumed and argued over many feminist theorists, extracting meaning from an array of texts published more than a half-century ago—texts now given new life within the pages of this volume. Last year, FTRG received funding from the University of Sydney and voted to use it to support local feminist artists. The group sponsored a range of low-SES students to attend festivals and conferences, all with the aim of producing this publication. We wanted to share what we had learned. This volume, at least in the group's opinion, is perhaps the most crucial product to emerge from our many successful and productive meetings.

This special volume of *Philament*, which we have titled "New Waves: Twenty-First-Century Feminisms," explores the feminisms discussed in our weekly seminars, and promotes

a diverse range of emergent thinkers and new conceptions of feminism and its foundations. For me, the group's discussions of the variety of feminisms inherent in modern thought only confirmed the importance and necessity of intellectual clutter, where older ideas serve to feed new ones. Our discussions began to interlink across the semesters as we drew dots between theorists like Luce Irigaray, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Jack Halberstam, and as we discovered the desperate need to recognise the pluralities of feminism—or of “feminisms,” as this volume has it. As such, the papers collected here present divergent approaches to feminist critique and expression.

While rereading the essays in this volume, I was struck by how much currency there is in the idea that language can change, progress, and shape culture. Though there are many varied expressions of feminism within these pages, the three essays together seem to affirm the power of language as a force of change.⁵ In “The Importance of Transpoetics,” Oliver Moore examines experimentations in poetic form as a refuge for and affirmation of trans folks' experiences; Stella Ktenis's essay seeks to recuperate the critical dismissal of scatological imagery and the feminine body in Jonathan Swift's famous poem “The Lady's Dressing Room.” Similarly, Sabina Rahman's article, which focuses on female speakers in the Grimm brothers' fairy tales, provides fresh insights into the way in which these tales shape children's assumptions about women's gender role.

Rahman, Ktenis, and Moore treat language as a tangible object, turning it this way and that so as to undertake a range of innovative critical readings. But dominant narratives about gender and sexuality are questioned in this volume's creative works too; however, there is an additional vector running across these Excursions, typified by a whimsical, playful attitude toward language. Cecily Niemeitolu's collection of short stories unfolds elegantly into vivid and sprawling vignettes that provoke nostalgia, while Emma Rayward's “The Consumption of(You)” is a playful experiment with language that leads us not only to question the topology of the body but to ask how we might rethink the borderlines that delineate our insides and outsides,

interiors and exteriors. The volume's reviews introduce questions of historical memory and narrative to respond to feminist authors, filmmakers, and academics, highlighting various modes of feminist thought and expression. Artists Josephine Mead and Olivia Louella contribute the wonderful images to this volume, with the latter providing the illustration for the cover. By engaging multiple perspectives and forms of art, this special volume of *Philament* has sought to provide a space for scholars and artists from various disciplines to exchange knowledge, collaborate, and strengthen bonds.

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Notes

1. See Jude Adams, "Looking from With/In: Feminist Art Projects of the 70s," *Outskirts Journal* 29 (2013): <http://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-29/adams-jude-looking-with-in>.
2. Rebecca L. Bort, "How Alternative Ideas Become Institutions: The Case of Feminist Collectives," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (1997): 132–55.
3. Jay Parini, *Every Time a Friend Succeeds Something Inside Me Dies: The Life of Gore Vidal* (London: Little Brown Books Group, 2015).
4. Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 14.
5. Howard S. Schwartz, "Introduction" in *Political Correctness and the Destruction of Social Order: Chronicling the Rise of the Pristine Self* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1.