J. Hearn 'Writing as intimate friends … how does writing profeminist research become methodologically challenging?', in M. Livholts (ed.) *Emergent Writing Methodologies in Feminist Studies*, Routledge, New York, 2011, pp. 184-198.

Writing as Intimate Friends … How does Writing Profeminist Research become Methodologically Challenging?

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Abstractions

This piece of writing was originally planned as an Afterword, entitled "How Does Writing Research Become Innovative Forms of Research Writing?", for an earlier and rather different version of this book conceived around the theme of innovativeness in writing research. For this, the proposed abstract read:

"Is this chapter an innovative form(s) of writing research? Are you sure? How can I **convince** you? You know it makes sense. Are the theories used and alluded to (you know I've read and understand some of them, and cited them properly) innovative, or are they used in a cunning, innovative way? IS IT about form?

Is the writing practice innovative? Is that meaning the doing of the writing (I often write really fast and then rewrite 12 times, so does that count?) innovative? Or where it's done, *on an uneven surface* together? Not to mention the outcome, the practice on the page, sorry screen, imagined, dream, study.

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Or an autoethnography, which is not at all self-obsessed and self-indulgent, urghh!

Are you out there, my audience, readership?

Can you please hear/read this in a more innovative way, at least pretend to pay some attention, please?

But this is actually detailed reporting, describing, analysing an empirical study, with a really clever methodology, reflexive, multi-methods, also historically contextualised, total sociology.

And interrogating a theoretical one, o.

And I mustn't forget the Bibliography, some almost dead men, some critical feminist scholars, a few oddities, I even once invented a reference or 2 for a laugh[1] – some people weren't amused. Would you buy a chapter from this man? What counts?"

Then it became "How Does Writing Research Become "Methodologically Challenging" Forms of Research Writing?", after that, "How Does Writing (Pro)Feminist Research Become Methodologically Challenging Forms of Writing Research"?, and later "How Does Writing (Pro)Feminist Research Become Methodologically Challenging, Innovative or to use the Word of the Book 'Emergent' Forms of Writing Research?" Importantly, is the methodological challenge and the challenging for the writer, the reader, or their relation? So, at various points sentences were changed, words were moved, from innovative to feminist,[2] feministic, profeminist.

[1] One favourite example was Roof, P. (1991) *The Reader: Bakhtin to Assiera*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

[2] The question of can men be feminist(s) appears differently in different contexts and countries (see Jardine and Smith 1987; Egeberg Holmgren and Hearn 2009).

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But the answer, the short answer, to these questions is: I don't know.

Finally, the editor wrote: "What I would like is for your chapter to contribute to the Encounters with Audiences section, and I think it is nicely profiled in that way in the abstract. What I am asking is for you to please think about the relationship between author, text, reader, audience."

This is how writing is done, in change, over time, a mixture of shifting higher aspirations reaching beyond the word and shifting practical demands of actually doing the writing in time and space; I think that is something to do with intertextuality.

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About Writing

Does For*m* ~~*matter—*~~*matter*?

To write about writing – or rather to "write" writing – is usually a bit risky. And this is especially so in this case, as I have been asked to write a chapter, having seen the earlier chapters (apart from the Introduction), for this *particular* volume. It is not my job to review them, but reading them has certainly stirred many thoughts and reflections. Some echoes, some disjunctions. There has been so much said that is inspiring and humbling in the other chapters. There is a lot of stuff there! A lot of commitment to writing

differently, to bringing together the personal and the political and the analytical, and that is worth a great deal to readers and writers.

So, writing this is quite difficult, it is not a routine job that I can churn out. For a start, this is a volume with which I have multiple relations: I count three of the contributors as friends, with degrees of close and dear friendship; I know two of the contributors a little; and the others are what I might call 'stranger writers', and all the more intriguing for that. I feel, perhaps and probably quite wrongly, that I know them too in some way, off from the page. Writing this chapter last, after the others are written, is a challenge.

So I am in part an audience to the other chapters, a writing body, out of the other chapters. My text is both audience and a writer writ.

There are of course lurking questions – how and in what ways are these previous chapters (and this?) examples of writing feminist? Is this a matter of degree? Are they all feminist? Does it matter? Can and how can (pro)feminist work learn from non-feminist discussions and debates? This is obvious in, say, learning from anti-racist struggles even when they are not specifically feminist.

There is a worry for me about a certain nostalgia and even a presumed authenticity, and I say this as I am suspicious of myself in that respect. The heroic or the anti-heroic can both work to assist the writer, and the reader … by confession, admitting privilege, or even temptation, frailty, association with Others … it is rather easy to make

oneself/myself (more) credible by invoking certain aspects of one's/my past or present … relations, places, class background, love, sexualities, and so on. In some earlier research on men's violence to known women I found that making oneself credible is a major enterprise of men talking of their own violence (Hearn 1998b).

The problem is that writing about writing can so easily lead you/one to the dreaded path of (even so-called radical??) individualism, a narcissistic seduction so total, it loves itself, like the man and his god/dog/car/football. And how does that really help to push for change, the conceit of the writer. The "First" person: as a problem. The first person is a first problem, for most writing, for the supposedly autonomous male subject.

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Intimate Friends

Yes, all these writings are, to me, written are written in a form of friendship, passionate and intimate, the way some enacted, non-written friendships are, in the flesh – in that ambiguous ground between acquaintanceship, intimacy, love, and desire. Writing as desiring, as friendship, as love, as passion. Writing, as I would like it, is intimate friends.

I once had an idea for a book, a collection of essays based on interviews with others – 'friendships that don't fit' or 'lovers without lust' or 'relationships without reason' or something similar.[3] These writings are like that. They do not fit.

[3] These are not any kind of 'liquid' (Bauman 2003) or 'pure' (Giddens 1991) relationships.

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Clear?

When I was writing my PhD, in the summers of 1984 and 1985, I wrote on a piece of thin cardboard:

“Be clear

Be concise

Be clever”

… and put it in front of me on my desk where I could see it all the time. The last one of the three imperatives was a bit ironic, in my mind at least – but it reminded me to try and be thoughtful and not just write the first thing that came into my head. You have to be both open to writing what you do not understand at first and your own strongest critic.

The first phrase is actually the most important. Please try and write clearly – please don’t hide in obscure language. (It is rather easy to write something that others, and you, don’t understand.). Yes, it IS actually rather easy to write things that are not clear, especially after you have read a few theorists, preferably at least in part obscure. Add a few “discourses”, “agencies” and “performativities”, and oh yes “bodies” too, whisk gently, and there you are. I was taught, or perhaps affirmed in, the importance of clarity by my greatest intellectual inspiration, Mary O’Brien (1978, 1981, 1990). For those who do not know of her, Mary was a great feminist and theorist and former midwife and someone

who left that in her middle years to turn to political theory, and who at the same time also moved country, from Glasgow in Scotland to Toronto in Canada to do so (Hearn 1999). I have often wondered why she is not more acknowledged. I moved from UK to Finland … though I moved for love, this also meant that I had to rethink many other things, including understandings of gender, citizens, state, locationality, and much more (Hearn 2005). I had to start again in many ways.

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Across Places

Some places are the embodiment of feeling. Writing across places, now meaning countries or societies, is very attractive … travelling is modern … the migrant sensibility is very present, on the page, and in the/my body. I live with it every day, even if I am relatively privileged. The migrant sensibility sometimes comes along with privilege, often not at all. This is related but distinct from the minoritized, in contrast to the 'falsely local'. Living with this needs a notion of critical spatiality. That is why it is useful to understand trans(national)patriarchies (transpatriarchies) and transnationalisations more fully (Hearn 2009), and move beyond (local) intersectionalities to transsectionalities (Hearn 2008b). We have moved from private patriarchy to public patriarchies to transpatriarchies.

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Limbo and Vertigo

But “the journey” is such a terrible and weak cliché for writing. More usually, I/we do not know where we are going; we may not even be able to get on the bus in the first place, especially if you are from an oppressed or Othered category.

Meeting is a better term, limbo better still. I first experienced vertigo in Zurich, well actually in the woods outside the city. Jung was present. I came across a wooden watchtower in the woods, and climbed halfway, well actually less than a third of the way, up it. Then I realised I was terrified, frozen, vertigo had arrived. The previous day I had been in Zurich University and had noticed the marble (or so I remember it) of the floor below the balustrade, and fearing jumping headfirst onto it. Back on the wooden watchtower, I tried to calm myself, thought somewhat calmly of my psychotherapist, Kate Carr, with whom I had recently stopped seeing for consultation after four years. The fear went gradually and I continued to the top, not staying there for too long. Courage is one of the most important virtues in doing academic work, but of course false courage is stupid.

I have felt these vertiginous feelings maybe twenty times since, walking up a church tower, on some low lying cliffs, in a hotel mezzanine floor, and so on.

Most recently, … I was descending a long and especially steep moving staircase going to the underground, and then felt the vertigo again. Appropriately, this led me to the “express” train to Stockholm, which is meant to take 20 minutes, and in fact almost

invariably does, except this time it took two hours – there was some problem, or accident, and we passengers were told to await evacuation, which was worrying. So in this time I started writing this.

So, it was in this limbo in the train I (began to) write – in this case from the fairly extensive notes I had prepared – it was in limbo not a journey that made the writing.

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Critique

It is hard for me to avoid saying some thing about a critical (personal-working-political-theoretical) approach to men. This still …

> "… involves a combination of critical theory, critical practice, and critical inquiry, within an emancipatory context. It entails in effect aspects of both ambivalence and alterity men become a "we", a "they" and an "it". Critique thus combines a number of elements: a critical relation to the topic, encompassing a self-reflexivity of the author, an awareness of the social location of both the author and the topic, and the consideration of the social bases of knowledge; a commitment to the political emancipation of both women and men; and, where appropriate, empirical inquiry not just assertion and speculation.
> Sometimes [such a] critical discursive practice is spelt out explicitly …." (Hearn 1998a, 801)

Part of this critique is to be very critical of the social phenomenon called 'men', and to consider the *abolition of the gender category of men* (the bleating hegemony of men), just as it might be useful to consider the abolition of the 'race' category of 'white people' – what a fiction that is. For men, *come out* publicly as profeminist. But how indeed are men to pass as men (cf. Egeberg Holmgren 2011)? You really need an analysis of men, not just that stuff on masculinities that has now become almost mainstream. Men is an odd category – impregnable, defended, solid, a true class.

A wide variety of texts have shown the limitations of both a view of gender as overly dichotomized or in any fixed relation to sex. These include cross-societal analyses of "multiple gender ideologies" (Meigs 1990) and "the third sex/third gender" (Herdt 1990), which represent movements beyond sexual dimorphism. Another set of approaches derive from historical dialectical processes of transformation of men as a gender class (cf. Hearn 2004; Howson 2006). A third derives from practices of undoing gender, genderqueer, transgender, 'gender ambiguity' (Epstein and Straub 1991), 'gender pluralism' (Monro 2005), 'overlapping gender' (Jolly 2007), refusing to be a man (Stoltenberg 1989), effeminism (Dansky et al. 1977), and non-hegemonic queer sexualities, including heterosexualities (Heasley 2005). Indeed women and men, including transmen, can exhibit female masculinity (Halberstam 1998). Andrea Dworkin (1974) recognized that humans are multi-sexual. This says the need for a concept of not just sex, or gender, but gender/sex, or gex.

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4 by 4

A ‘4 by 4’ is a vehicle, but I do not mean that; rather, I mean the simultaneous relations of the personal is work is political is theory. The personal is not only political; the personal is political is theoretical (Hearn 1992); the personal is political is theoretical is intimately linked to the activity of work in the broadest sense (Glucksmann 1995); and the personal/the work/the political is linked to the theoretical. All these affect, construct or *are* people–selves: the social category of power called “men”; feminism/profeminism; and the theoretical of women’s/gender studies, including queer studies and critical studies on men. So, there are four kinds of (spheres of) activity and experience (*the personal, work, the political, the theoretical*), and these operate in and intersect with four social spaces, sites or institutional formations (*selves, “men”, feminism/profeminism, feminist/women’s/gender studies*). While there is some correspondence between the four activities and the four social sites respectively, each social site is also a site for each activity, and each activity forms, constitutes, each social site.

On top of all these there are (critical) spatiality and (critical) historicity: the fifth and sixth dimensions of happening (Hearn 2008a).

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War and Reflexivity

It is so important not to forget that writing, however elegant – or not – is still writing; it does not change the political stage itself, even if reframing discourses does or might do. The political world, the realities of oppression live on, with a life of their own, that is almost certainly worse than you might imagine. This applies whether you are thinking of war, sex trade, mining, sweatshops, child labour, pornography, financial greed, environmental pollution, and many much more. The romanticism of individualism, as exemplified by the strange contemporary crazes for the micro-performative norms and constructions of gender … I thought Garfinkel (1967) and Kessler and McKenna (1978) said so, and how does that affect oppression and the oppressed, or the making, dropping or receipt of bombs in Iraq, Libya, Kosovo, Linköping and many other places, the war-torn, tortured, violated? How is this related to the state of the world, what is this state of denial? Perhaps there could be town-twinning between the makers and receivers. Writing on violence, mainly men’s, makes some things clearer. I guess it is about effects, or imagined or fantasized effects. It is often good to test your theories against the case of violence.

I bet the forces of evil are laughing in their shoes at some current social theory. It is worth being very critical of the in-theory. I bet Talcott Parsons would have had a word or two to say about current word fashions. Instead do d*evelop your own analysis* of society; don’t follow fashion; if it’s fashionable it’s probably already too late anyway. This is a, not the, big picture (cf. Connell 1993); oh, the temptations of politics, and what are to be called politics.

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Do you know that my country of origin, the UK, has, along with France, fought the most international wars since 1946, followed by the US and Soviet Union/Russia (Human Security Centre 2005), as well as being a strong ally of the US which has been involved in many further wars in that period? The UK has the second largest military expenditure in the world, after the US, just above China and France (*SIPRI yearbook 2008* 2008). The UK is also probably also the second largest spender on military science, engineering and technology. The UK is a large international actor in the broad field of militarism, both in its direct military machinery and production and supply of weapons for others. In 2007 the UK became the world's largest arms exporter last year, according to government figures, overtaking the US which has often led in this respect (Fidler 2008).

Writing reflexively does not in itself make an ounce of difference; being reflexive, especially for the powerful. It creates some more space, to occupy and take, elaborate. Writing reflexively is necessary for political work, but it is not enough in itself. For men to write reflexively does not necessarily mean any political change, and can mean more space to extend into.

One must remember that *almost everything is politics*.

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Silence

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How is it possible to be a (male) scientist? That is really difficult. "Our" (male) standpoint is so limited, inhibited, partial, uninformed, inaccurate. That is what one might reasonably call the **pre-scientific.** The theme of silence is raised in many feminist texts in terms of challenging the silencing of women. Linking the question of silence to men is not about increasing men's voice but turning attention to those aspects of men and men's experience that are generally not subjected to critical scrutiny.

Silence is like secrets, once spoken of, it does not exist. There is an enduring philosophical challenge in how to know and how to talk about that which is silent. John Cage's famous silent musical composition *4'33"* says something that is difficult to explain fully in words. As reported from the Judaic Biblical commentaries called "Midrash" from c. 600 (EE, 2003) the phrase "silence is golden" is preceded by the clause "If speech is silvern". Thus in the original sentence, "If words are silvern, silence is golden", there is not just a double or treble but at least a quadruple (or more) meaning. Silence may indicate a greater truth than what is available from mere words. Or as Mary Daly put is: "For the invasive presence and the intent are both audible and inaudible, visible and invisible." (1978, 323). Without this, there is the pre-scientific.

Mentioning so many things, thought unimportant or irrelevant, is part of that silence. Try sexuality, or the production of knowledge, or men's relations with men, or the ageing male body, or the experience of our (male world) leaders – try them all for size – do they

fit? There a cacophony of silences. So, how to write silence? The woman/man writes self, in and through the thinking body, and embodied writing. But how to put the body on the page. And that includes desire. Naming men, deconstructing men, men are not only men. All things and people are themselves and not-themselves.[4] Materiality, materiality, materiality. And that includes embodiment, in this case mine, men's, male (Hearn 2011a, 2011b). This is what might constitute a more scientific enterprise. For men this is not a simple exercise of trying to do or imitate *écriture féminine* (Cixous 1980) or some supposed *écriture masculine* (see Jardine and Smith 1987), but a complex subversion of the self, and of Man, through some possible, improbable *écriture proféminine*. Such writing needs enfleshing (Kirby 1997; Thomas 2002).

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Writing (and) the/my Body

My body changes, back and my stomach. In 1981 my back collapsed. It was a combination of high stress, from unrequited love, and from carrying very heavy suitcases when visiting my parents, with three children. Being laid down flat for six weeks, crawling to the toilet, showed me the body, my body, was bigger than the earlier damaged shoulder damages from sport, rugby of course. It was the whole of me. During the six weeks my unrequited love came to visit and we held each others' finger tips as we talked about the dire situation. I had to accept and do what I can, gently and if possibly

[4] This is a feature of the linguistic and cosmological world of some hunter-gatherer societies (see, for example, Brody 2001, on the Inuit).

firmly. After lots of years of exercise and changing my posture and relaxing, my back is now generally fine, is a friend, a respected friend.

For the last 15 years or more I have been noticing my waist. It grows slowly, defeats older trousers, and invites me to defy it and reduce it. It also comes and goes, I imagine I can exercise it to be under control and occasionally do so. It sits on me, a small bump, curved but not fully wanted or part of the younger me than I know so much better. It tells me everyday I am older, and not so sleek as I should be. The stomach winks at my shoulder and back, cheekily, poking fun at the more obvious mechanical functions and malfunctions. I would like to run my stomach off; it sets a small identifiable body target to aim at.

It is the ageing body that writes. An ageing body with a fear of war, of violence, of some other men, without being heroic, without paranoia (with thanks to Ann Kosofsky Sedgwick [1991] for raising paranoid readings, and to Linn Sandberg [2011] for using them to rethink and reinterpret men's actions and words as oppressive, whilst alongside that also engaging in other more generous readings). It is good to keep focus on the relation of writing, the virtual and the body, the bodies, ageing, disability.

I, this body, like(s) writing. I love to write, I write to love. And then there is what we do with writing, trying to write what cannot be written, the elusive last catch: writing, rewriting, for aesthetics, understanding, power, self-education, challenge, politics, for other people, calmness.

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Reading the Signs

The writer is a reader – of their own words, and the words of others. Writing involves continuous (re)readings, in the multiple rewritings. I once heard of a person who said they wrote their text once only. I (re)write mine many many times, however it may appear to readers. My other readers are imagined, they are scattered, a few friends perhaps, myself of course, unknown people, some hardly known intellectual acquaintances, even a few men, others still in the future, they are perhaps most important, after all what one writes isn't seen for a year or two, then distributed slowly, then received maybe five years later. My best writing, so I think, has been written before its time. *'Sex' at 'Work'* (Hearn and Parkin, 1987/1995) was fairly timely; *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in Organizations* (Hearn and Parkin, 2001) was perhaps a bit soon.

I like writing with other people. For a long time I had a rule that I would write, critically, on men and masculinities on my own, or with other men, such as David Collinson, and write on gender and sexuality with women co-authors, principally Wendy Parkin, but also others such as Jalna Hanmer and Elizabeth Harlow. This rule has now begun to break down a bit, life has got more confused, not least from how Women's Studies and Gender Studies appear in different countries, and also working more fully within institutional Gender Studies.

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I can trace my own interest in writing comes from a long concern with space and class. I recently rediscovered my first published "work". It was in my school magazine, *The Colfeian*, of July 1965: a slightly satirical report of a school Geography field trip to Snowdonia in North Wales. It poked some little fun at teachers and the system, whilst being written in a formal, even pompous style (that I thought some readers would not see through as mischievous). This use of writing was and in some ways still is a vehicle for my oppositional class position – a working class cultural sensibility in a middle class academic world (to which I do not fully belong).

> Looking back, my education was a series of age/class/gender ''traumas''. At infant school, which I joined at five, my best friends were girls: Judith, Mavis, and Gillian. The last I saw them was when I left that school at seven to the all-boys school, with about 220 boys in my year—the post-war baby boom! I wasn't so keen on the way the ''big boys'' played. Amongst these there were very few recognizably middle-class boys. At 11 years old, I went to grammar school, where most boys were, or seemed to me to be, middle class. … At just 18, I went to Oxford where most of the young men were middle or even upper class. This was the third of my minor educational traumas. There I struggled to make sense of the class privilege of Oxford and my own working-class cultural background. Perhaps not surprisingly Marxism replaced religion, and I became a ''closet'' Marxist. At Oxford I discovered anti-racism, Irish republicanism, and (anti-)imperialist political history and geography of Africa. I did my final university exams in May

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1968 when there were more important events in Paris and elsewhere. (Hearn, 2008, 242-243).

I am still using writing to disrupt or so I imagine.

Some of this I owe to my mother, who, when I was a child, stressed how she had had to leave school prematurely to go and earn money for the family finances. When I was young I remember her often mentioning that it was a major regret of hers that she missed out on her full education, which girls who had done worse but were from better off families were able to afford. That was/is a great inspiration to me and my own education. As I write this my mother has died just recently, and I dedicate this piece of writing to her.

One particular memory of space and class I vividly retain is travelling by train from Charlton into central London through the masses of mass working class terrace housing, much since much gentrified, spread across South-east London, where I lived until 18. This is what provoked writing.

Becoming/Emergence(y)

This volume is, apparently, emergent. Emergence is a long long established idea, emerging from, amongst many others, Heraclitus and the notion of perpetual flux,[5] Hegel,

[5] See Clyde de L. Ryals' (1988) fascinating analysis of becoming in Walter Pater's (1885) novel *Marius the Epicurean*.

Marx, various Rogerians, many social constructionsist, Deleuze, so fashionable now, so x is becoming y, z, anything, oh come on!

For me, I came to engage with the idea of emergence via Peter McHugh's (1968) work, on defining the situation and who borrowed it from George Herbert Mead (1932) who wrote that emergence is a patterning of knowledge in which "the social present is formed by both the current meaning of the past and the current meaning of the future." In a way we can be trapped in such a sense of emergence. For McHugh, emergence is distinct from its antidotes of powerlessness, innovation, and meaninglessness. I then applied this to the idea to careers some while ago, and to three other forms of career: uncareer, careerlessness, non-career (Hearn 1977). This was all a way of making sense of relations to time, work and careers, that still continues. A related approach to time and (auto)biography is Brian Roberts' (2004) discussions of the complexities of variations in forms of time: how the past, present and future can be multiple permutations in how people speak about themselves, others and their 'community'.

In such ways I have liked to **disrupt** the linear (heroic) male (auto)biography, just as **disrupting** the pure career – now *there* is a continuity (cf. Hearn 2010).

Mead's and McHugh's uses of emergence are rather different to that by James Taylor and Elizabeth van Every (2000), who use it as a shorthand for seeing organization(s) as a communication, as *becoming* not being.

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And this is different again from Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Levy (2006) who write of emergent methods that question – how closely the researcher is bound to their "own" discipline, if conflict and tension is experienced in seeking to occupy multidisciplinary positions, is research conducted as a disciplinary insider/outsider, and so on.

Or Mats Alversson and Stanley Deetz (1996: 197) on the 'local/emergent' characterized as comparative communities, multiple language games, particularistic, non-ethnocentric, atheoretical, situational or structural (rather than methodological) determinism, nonfoundational, local narratives, sensuality and meaning as central, situated practical knowledge, tending to be 'feminine' in attitude, seeing the strange, proceeding from the other, and based in an ontology of 'otherness' over method.

Literature review or literature search or search for literature can come out of the writing too, and not just be a context for finding the gaps.

But there are some problems, or the so popular 'challenges' … how does emergence and emergent writing materialize, emerge, in, within and as **emergency**? Does emergence help to deal with the urgent dire realities of multiple overwhelming emergencies now? And what is *the* most urgent current emergency, with so many many possibles to choose from?

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Then, with all this emergence, it is still also worth trying to remember to finish things, to finish writing, like (almost) now. At the very least, it is worth trying to interrupt, finish, the always unfinished, within whatever time available. Materializing on the screen and page is simply necessary. Emergence has to appear to stop at some point.

And there is always an unfinished relation between men and feminism – always a *gap*, even with and for profeminism and profeminist men. This gap applies even with moves to multiple standpoints, situated knowledges, naming/deconstructing men, recognizing knowledge's embodiment, subversion of the self and Man: "… when a theory is transformed into an ideology, it begins to destroy the self and self-knowledge" (Griffin 1982, 648). It applies with(in) the "finished article".

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