

Editorial

It is a privilege to be part of the Editorial Group at this auspicious moment in the *Women's Studies Journal's* herstory, as we dedicate this issue to an acknowledgement and celebration of twenty volumes of the *Journal*. Produced under the umbrella of the Women's Studies Association (WSA), the first issue of *WSJ* appeared in 1984 and proudly introduced itself as 'the first such publication with a totally made-in-New Zealand label'. Contributors to that first issue now read like a page from a New Zealand feminist research Who's Who, with Jan Robinson writing on female criminality, Helen Cook on childcare workers, Jenny Phillips on mothering, Viv Porszolt on the domestic labour debate, Sue Middleton on sex-role stereotyping, Anne Else on Alpers' *Life of Katherine Mansfield* and Hilary Haines reviewing Ann Oakley's *Taking it Like a Woman*. In the Editorial, Margot Roth expressed the hope that the *Journal* 'may go some way towards providing an alternative to popular culture' by providing opportunities 'to debate, enlarge upon and present more topics that concern women in this part of the Pacific'.

The first issue was a complete success. Not only did it sell out very quickly, but the Auckland-based editorial collective was encouraged by the numbers of subscriptions that followed. The themes of the early issues offer a glimpse of the concerns and language of the time: Race, Religion, Reformers (*WSJ* 2:1, 1985); Scouting, Socialism, Separatism (*WSJ* 2:2, 1986); Distort, Demystify, Domesticate (*WSJ* 3:1, 1987); and Paradox, Pregnancy, Policy-Making, Pre-School (*WSJ* 3:2, 1988).

By the seventh issue, the *Journal* was being edited by a Wellington-based collective. Restating the aims of the *Journal*, Anne Else emphasised that it was an essential complement to *Broadsheet*, the WSA newsletter and the annual WSA Conference Papers. Each shift of the editorial collective has left its own stamp on the *Journal*, either by introducing new features or in the selection of theme issues. Reading through the editorials reveals an abiding energy and commitment to interdisciplinary feminist scholarship despite frequent references to limited resources.

Celebrating its ten year milestone in 1994, Barbara Brookes

stressed that the feminist community in New Zealand would be impoverished without the *Journal* (*WSJ* 10:2, 1994). The current editorial collective wholeheartedly agree. So congratulations! Despite increased academic pressures and administrative overload on the part of contributors and editors alike, *WSJ* has gained its majority. To celebrate we have invited some of the past editors of the *Journal* to offer their reflections and comments on their time at the helm, and on the significance of the *Journal* as a venue for feminist scholarship. As Margot Roth, founding editor of the *Journal* observes in her piece, the *Journal* has, from its beginnings, embraced feminist debate, both within the articles published and in relation to editorial policy. In her usual indomitable style, she takes a self-indulgent romp through the earlier years of *WSJ*, commenting on articles of particular interest and identifying persistent themes and developments within the *Journal*'s first twenty volumes. Coincidentally, one of her favourite pieces singled out for comment, 'Breastfeeding and the Body Politic' (*WSJ* 14:, 1998) was written by Annette Beasley, a contributor to the present issue.

As Margot Roth observes, early issues of the *Journal* were frequently concerned with uncovering facts, demolishing myths, and retrieving and validating women's experience – agendas and concepts which have and continue to be interrogated and problematised within feminist theory. But there are also continuities. Domesticity, motherhood, paid and unpaid work, and media representations of women continue to be addressed within the pages of the *Journal* even if the theoretical terrain has shifted towards multiple and competing discourses, the social construction of gender, and a proliferation of pluralities. Jacqui Matthews' 1992 reflections on the hostile rhetoric from outside and inside the university (*WSJ* 8:1, 1992) were revisited a decade later in the light of institutional disciplining of women's studies (*WSJ* 17:2, 2001), and special issues devoted to a single theme, once a novelty, are now published annually.

The ongoing challenges of the Women's Studies Association and the *WSJ* to attend to the politics of Biculturalism are also addressed in 'The *Journal*'s Success Story'. Tangata whenua and other indigenous voices have been privileged in special issues: in 1995 the *Journal* took the form of a double issue entitled 'Aotearoa/New Zealand and their Others – Feminism and Postcoloniality' (*WSJ* 11: 1/2, 1995), and two years later, 'Indigenous Women in the Pacific' (*WSJ* 13: 2,

1997). This year's special issue is 'Matauranga Maori' (*WSJ* 21:2, 2007, forthcoming) and next year's will again centre on Pacific Women (*WSJ* 22:2, 2008, forthcoming). Although the *Journal* has a specific focus on perspectives and issues of concern for New Zealand and the Pacific, a scan through the Index to Volumes 11–20 reveals contributions from and about the perspectives of migrant women as well as women from other nationalities and cultures.

In 1992, the *Journal* 'went academic' as the editorship shifted to the University of Otago. In their contribution Annabel Cooper, Maud Cahill and Barbara Brookes reflect on where those 'academics with real jobs, academics with temporary jobs, and postgraduates' who made up the editorial collective at the time are now. That all have continued to make contributions to feminist academic scholarship in various professional occupations is a testimony both to the calibre of the *Journal's* editors and to the important opportunities the editorship of *WSJ* provides for the mentoring of emerging academics. This period of the *Journal's* life also saw a shift to publication by Otago University Press, and it is timely to acknowledge and thank Wendy Harrex in particular, along with her production team, for the high professional standards that have been set in the physical production of *WSJ*. Shifting priorities at Otago University Press meant that 2006 was to be the final year of their association with *WSJ* as publishers. The Women's Studies Association is very grateful that a desire to share in the achievement of *WSJ* reaching its twenty-first volume of publication resulted in the Press agreeing to publish Volume 21. This has provided the WSA with some much appreciated time to pursue alternative publishing arrangements.

The imperative to secure alternative publishing arrangements has provided the opportunity for *WSJ* to pursue a serious coming of age, by entering the electronic age. In a world increasingly dominated by, and reliant upon, electronic media and the internet, lack of an electronic presence places academic journals at risk of plunging into obscurity. The benefits of inclusion on searchable electronic databases cannot be overstated. The WSA is currently exploring the option of the *WSJ* 'going electronic'. Financial viability will, no doubt, be the deciding factor on whether a limited print run of the *Journal* can be supported and whether an electronic version will be available for subscribers only, or free-to-all. Readers will be informed of the outcome of these discussions in the next issue (21:2, Spring 2007).

In 'Looking back, looking ahead', Anne Else notes the continued relevance of articles published in the *Journal* in the late 1980s, and that these offer a rich source of material for comparative studies. She also observes that, while feminist perspectives are now evident in every field of scholarship, a great deal of feminist work 'does not stand easily within disciplinary boundaries which were never designed to accommodate it'. Sufficient justification for the indispensable nature of stand-alone Women's Studies and Gender Studies programmes within universities, it also testifies to the need not simply to celebrate the achievements of *WSJ* but also to actively support the only feminist interdisciplinary academic journal in New Zealand. Encouraging individual and institutional subscriptions, submitting articles and book reviews, acting as peer reviewers and citing work published in the *Journal* in teaching materials and academic publications are important ways we can demonstrate our commitment to feminist research and scholarship.

As part of our celebration of twenty volumes of *WSJ*, we are pleased to include a comprehensive Index to Volumes 11–20 in this issue. It is interesting to note that many of the names associated with the first ten years of the *Journal* are largely absent from this last decade. While it is always encouraging to see new generations of feminist scholars emerge, there is some regret that *WSJ* does appear to be overlooked by many feminist academics as an important avenue for dissemination of their scholarship, whether in the form of articles or in forwarding copies of their major publications for review.

Although publication of the Index has resulted in the inclusion of fewer articles and book reviews in this issue, we have selected material that fits with the general theme of acknowledging and supporting feminist process and the dissemination of feminist scholarship. Over the last two decades, the *Journal* has published a number of articles relating to the impact of medical models on women's understanding and experiences of their bodies. Annette Beasley's article offers another contribution to this field as it documents the reaction of a group of New Zealand women to the promotion and management of menopause as a disease of oestrogen deficiency. Her research revealed that a climate of taboo and an ethic of stoicism dominate women's experience and perceptions of menopause. The numerous first hand accounts of women's experiences of menopause found within the article make for interesting reading. Far from being passive consumers

manipulated by medical discourse, the women in her study were active agents, whose decision making processes were most influenced by their own common sense views.

‘Writing a thesis? How to make a writing group work for postgraduate women’ documents a peer process created by a group of women experiencing the to-and-fro of writing a PhD. An encouraging reflexive piece, it will be of great interest to women considering enrolling in a doctoral degree and to supervisors of such projects. Set against a backdrop of the daily lives and the events that inevitably impact on the time/space for producing text, it shares information about the success of a writing group. Lesley Patterson, Heather Barnett and Vicki Culling convincingly interweave their voices through examples of their lived experiences, moving from early assumptions to questioning the emerging tensions across the requirements of the individualism required of producing a PhD and the need for a community to write in.

So please do enjoy this celebration of twenty volumes of the *Journal*.

Jenny Coleman, Leigh Coombes,
Michelle Lunn and Mandy Morgan

Apology

In our last issue, *Women's Studies Journal* 20:2 Special Issue: Women and Spirituality, we omitted to include the biographical details for the authors of the article 'Women readers on spiritual quest'. We would like to offer our sincere apologies to Patricia Rose and Elizabeth Moores for this oversight, and to the Guest Editors Mary Nash and Kathryn Rountree. The biographical details are printed below:

PATRICIA ROSE *is an independent writer, researcher and facilitator, whose work includes studies of women's spirituality, medieval romance texts, contemporary women's writings, and spiritual feminist myth and ritual. Patricia's PhD thesis (University of Queensland) was entitled 'The Role of Medieval and Matristic Romance Literature in Spiritual Feminism'. Her MA thesis (University of Leeds) explored the spirituality of elderly women.*

ELIZABETH MOORES *lectured in English Literature at The University of Queensland for 30 years. Now retired, she retains a connection with the University as an Honorary Research Adviser. Her PhD was in Medieval Studies, and this was her primary teaching and research focus. Her publications are mainly in the area of medieval sermon studies. She also holds a Diploma in Studies in Theology (University of Queensland) and co-ordinated and taught in an interdisciplinary feminist theology subject, in conjunction with the Department of Studies in Religion, at The University of Queensland.*