

The Return to Auckland

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The *Women's Studies Journal* began its twelfth year in 1996 with a new editorial collective, based in Auckland. The creation of the new collective coincided with an expansion of the Women's Studies Programme at the University of Auckland. The mid 1990s were generally a time of growth for Women/Feminist/Gender Studies departments and programmes at tertiary institutions in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It was a return to Auckland, as the *Journal* began in 1984 with Margot Roth and the Auckland Women's Studies collective. The commitment of the second Auckland collective was to continue the *Journal's* focus on scholarly debate concerning Women's Studies, feminist research and gendered knowledges in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the wider Pacific region. The eight issues of the *Journal* covered a wide range of feminist positions and disciplinary backgrounds during the *Journal's* four years with the second Auckland collective (1996–1999).

The number of women in the second Auckland collective swelled and diminished over the years with the following women forming the core of the working collective (in alphabetical order) Caroline Daley, Raewyn Dalziel, Phyllis Herda, Linda Hill, Judith Huntsman, Alison Jones, Claire Louise McCurdy, Aorewa McLeod, Deborah Montgomerie, Julie Park, Judith Pringle and Lane West-Newman. Two members of the collective, Claire Louise McCurdy and Aorewa McLeod, were also members of the original Auckland collective.

1996 was also the first year of production and distribution of the *Journal* by Otago University Press. Wendy Harrex and her team managed subscriptions and advertising, as well as the physical production of the *Journal*. The commitment of the Press to the *Women's Studies Journal* has meant its survival even during times of economic difficulties.

A *Journal* innovation with the return to Auckland was the establishment of a student essay competition for Stage III undergraduate and first-year (BA Hons or MA) graduate students. The members of the collective involved in judging the competition

were always impressed with the enthusiastic response from students, as well as the high quality of the entries. Each year the winning essay was published in the *Journal*. The winning essays and their authors were: Judith van Trigt, 'Reflecting on the Pacific: Representations of the Pacific and Pacific Island Women in Five Dominant Cinematic Texts' (1996), Paulette Benton, 'Feminist Ethnography: On the Politics of Doing Research on Women' (1997), Sacha Wallace, 'A Defence for the Battered Woman? Assessing the Adequacy of Legal Defences Available to Battered Women Who Kill' (1998), and Amy Jamgochian, 'The Eventually Untrue Adventures of Two Girls in Felicity: The Problem with Truth in *Dare*, *Truth* or *Promise*' (1999).

Another innovation was the selection of artwork by women artists for the cover of the *Journal*. Work by Kirsten Mitchell, Karyn Dempsey, Alexis Louise Neal, Dagmar Dyck, Ngahiraka Mason, Carole Shephard, Yuk King Tam and Victoria Martinez Azaro were reproduced for the striking covers which were frequently commented upon by the readers of the *Journal*.

The collective, in consultation with the Press, decided to continue with the publication of two issues per year (Autumn and Spring) and, where possible, one of these issues would be devoted to a special topic. These included: 'Educating Sexuality', edited by Alison Jones and Sue Middleton (12:2, 1996) which brought together a range of local studies which considered how women and girls learn, through formal and informal educational settings, normative values and practices of sexuality. The publication of this issue brought up an often reoccurring debate for the collective to consider: the inclusion of male authors. Originally, the editors planned to include the work of three male authors writing on gay students and teachers and the construction of adolescent male sexuality at school. The collective was divided in its support for the continuation of the policy which prevents males from contributing to the *Journal* and asked that the issue be discussed at the WSA conference in Palmerston North. The outcome was a very close vote in favour of retaining a female-born only publication. 'Indigenous Women in the Pacific', edited by Phyllis Herda and Alison Jones (13:2, 1997), which gathered together diverse and important articles primarily by and about Maori and Pacific Island women. All the papers were connected by their sharp view of women's lives in this complex region and considered issues of belonging, struggle, representation and identity. 'Literature', edited by Aorewa McLeod

(14:2, 1998) broke the sociological/human sciences/history trend of the articles appearing in the *Women's Studies Journal*. The seven papers focused on feminist literary studies – most concerned with Aotearoa/New Zealand. This volume also presented original poetry by Briar Wood, Tracey Slaughter and Janet Charman. *Girl Trouble? Feminist Inquiry Into The Lives of Young Women*, edited by Phyllis Herda (15:2, 1999) was selected papers presented at a conference of the same name at the University of Waikato in November 1998. The papers in this special issue examined the experiences of, as well as the social normative forces on, young women in several western societies. In the West, adolescence is considered a time when sexual behaviours and the formation of a sexual identity are paramount, and many of the papers reflected these issues.

While the *Women's Studies Journal* thrived during its time at Auckland, the same cannot be said for the country's Women's Studies departments and programmes. A new funding regime based on a competitive market model of equivalent full-time student enrolments (efTs) was implemented at tertiary institutions in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the mid-1990s. Its effects have been detrimental and, in some cases devastating, to Women's Studies programmes and departments in Aotearoa/New Zealand. All programmes and departments have suffered under the new regime (as have many other departments and programmes in each of the universities) with restructuring and redundancies having become increasingly common. The effect on the *Journal* of this restructuring and, in some cases, disestablishment, has been profound. As a scholarly journal, the *Women's Studies Journal* has often found a home and support from academic staff based at tertiary institutions around the country. That Women's/Gender Studies remains as part of the curriculum in the six universities at all is due to the dedication and strong determination of scholars from Women's/Gender Studies departments and programmes, as well as the support of colleagues from other disciplines. The same can be said for the continuation of the *Journal*. It survives because individuals care and believe in it and, in this economic and academic climate, that is heartening.