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WSQ: The 1970s Editor's Note

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Editors' Note

The 1970s was a foundational decade for women's studies. In the first issue of the *Women's Studies Newsletter*, published in the fall of 1972, Florence Howe surveyed the burgeoning field, writing, "Two years ago . . . there were two women's studies programs at Cornell and at San Diego. There are now, as of yesterday's mail, 46 programs, most of which are located up and down the west coast; in New Mexico and Arizona; north of Maryland on the east coast and as far west as Buffalo and Pittsburgh" (Howe 1972, 2).¹ "Yesterday's mail" would have been delivered to the Feminist Press, which Howe had founded in 1970 and which continues today as one of the oldest feminist publishers in the world.² Howe, who would later describe herself as "the historian and record keeper of women's studies," was uniquely qualified to receive "yesterday's mail" and to comment on the state of the field under construction (2011, 265). She had been tracking personnel and curricula associated with women's studies (a.k.a. "female" studies) since 1969, both as the administrator of the Clearinghouse on Women's Studies and as chair of the Modern Language Association's Commission on the Status and Education of Women. In her introduction to the first installment of *Who's Who and Where in Women's Studies*, published by the Feminist Press in 1974, Howe wrote, "In scope and in the rapidity of its extension across the country, it would be difficult to find an historical parallel to 'women's studies'" (1974, VI). That unparalleled expansion needed good record keepers, to be sure. But as *A Life in Motion*, Howe's memoir and personal history of the Feminist Press, beautifully demonstrates, keeping track of women's studies required a lot of hustle. Women's studies was moving faster than the post.

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The *Women's Studies Newsletter* was originally conceived, at least in part, as a vehicle that might speedily trace the many vectors of women's studies in those formative years of the 1970s. Notably, the *Newsletter* positioned itself as "a forum throughout the country for the women's studies movement—in higher education, continuing education, secondary and elementary schools, and in community liberation centers" (Howe 1972, 1; emphasis added). That first issue contained not only Howe's assessment of women's studies on college and university campuses but also a case study of a progressive feminist elementary school in Brooklyn, the Woodward School, and an overview of some fifty high school feminist courses. As a social, political, and intellectual *movement*, women's studies relied on bridge building across institutional registers, and the *Newsletter* clearly intended to connect various educational communities.

In fact, feminist publishing was a key element that allowed the early women's studies movement to emerge, and the 1970s were, without a doubt, a groundbreaking time for feminist publishing. Preceding the launch of the *Women's Studies Newsletter* by several months, *Feminist Studies*, the first academic journal in women's studies, was established in 1972, joining a nascent feminist periodical scene that already included the popular magazines *off our backs*, launched in 1970, and *Ms.*, whose first issue came out in 1972. These new publications were quickly followed by other interdisciplinary sites for publishing women's studies scholarship, such as *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, founded in 1975; *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1975; *Women's Studies International Forum*, 1978; and *Feminist Review*, 1979. As the field grew, discipline-specific journals emerged as well, including *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture and Media Studies* and *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, both of which were founded in 1976. Related fields of study also launched new journals, such as *Journal of Homosexuality*, which was founded in 1976 as well.³

Though the *Women's Studies Newsletter* would become *Women's Studies Quarterly* in 1981 and then *WSQ* in 2005, the journal continues to work in the same spirit that animated its earliest incarnation: building, connecting, moving. As the content of this issue shows, the foundational work undertaken not only at the Feminist Press and through *WSQ* but also by a diverse array of activists, artists, scholars, and others was radically new in many respects. Today, *WSQ* publishes essays at the cutting edge of scholarship in women's, gender, and sexuality studies and also maintains a resolute com-

mitment to publishing poetry and short fiction, as well as book reviews, reflections on classics in the field, and provocations toward new directions in women's studies. This particular issue contains remarkable poetry and prose by Kristina Bicher, Debra Bruce, Melanie Maria Goodreaux, Jennifer L. Knox, Stella Padnos-Shea, Amy Pence, Elizabeth Pérez, and Lise Weil. And the Feminist Press, whose original goal was to bring out-of-print classics back into circulation and to launch a line of feminist biographies, continues to provide a unique home for *WSQ* as an academic journal. Our issues sit proudly on the Feminist Press shelves next to and in conversation with canonical feminist texts, such as the newly rereleased *But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, as well as groundbreaking new books that reflect the many faces of feminism, seek social justice for all races, classes, and genders, and continue Howe's early work of indexing the status of women around the world.

As we open this issue, then, we remember our beginnings even as we anticipate the future-making work that composes *The 1970s*, edited by Shelly Eversley and Michelle Habell-Pallán. We extend our gratitude and admiration to both of them for their wonderful work on this issue. We also mark the transition of Kathleen Ossip from her position as poetry editor of *WSQ*. It has long been *WSQ*'s incredible fortune to have Kathy as poetry editor. She has served in this role for ten years (!) and has been responsible for publishing high-quality poetry that has been an integral part of each issue. Now Kathy is starting a new venture, a poetry review website called SCOUT (scoutpoetry.com) that will publish three reviews per week and that will also, sadly for us, take her away from *WSQ*. On behalf of past *WSQ* editors and the board, we thank Kathy for all she has done for the journal.

The wonderful news is that Patricia Smith has agreed to serve as the next poetry editor of *WSQ*. A 2014 Guggenheim Fellow, Patricia is associate professor of English at the College of Staten Island, CUNY. Her book of poems *Shoulda Been Jimi Savannah* won the 2014 Bobbitt Prize from the Library of Congress for the most distinguished book of poetry published by an American in the previous two years, the Academy of American Poets 2013 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize for the most outstanding book of poetry published in the previous year, and the 2013 Phillis Wheatley Book Award in poetry. Additionally, Patricia has won four National Poetry Slam individual championships—more than any slammer in the competition's

history. We are thrilled to have Patricia join *WSQ*. Her experience and deep ties to poetry communities will surely enable the journal to continue to attract outstanding poets and poetry.

We thank the *WSQ* Editorial Board and the College of Staten Island for their ongoing support, the anonymous peer reviewers who contribute invaluable feedback to each issue of the journal, and, as always, Asali Solomon, our astute fiction/nonfiction/prose editor. We also thank the Feminist Press, including Executive Director and Publisher Jennifer Baumgardner, Editors Julia Berner-Tobin and Clarissa Wong, Marketing and Sales Manager Jisu Kim, Art Director Drew Stevens, and Senior Designer Suki Boynton, with a special welcome and thanks to Lauren Rosemary Hook, who recently joined the Press as an editorial assistant and *WSQ* copy editor. Lindsey Eckenroth, *WSQ* editorial assistant, provided indispensable support for this issue. Finally, we extend our appreciation to Lucas Hilderbrand, whose contribution to the Alerts and Provocations section closes this issue of the journal with a lovely essay on history, memory, and futurity.

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Notes

1. The women's studies program at San Diego State College (now San Diego State University) launched with ten courses in the 1970–71 academic year (Salper 2011). University of Washington's program (now the Department of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies) also opened in 1970. The program at the State University of New York at Buffalo was founded in 1971, emerging from the Buffalo Women's Liberation Group and the efforts of faculty members to bring together courses offered since 1969 in American studies, English, and social work (see University at Buffalo Libraries 2015). The program at Cornell University was officially approved in 1972 but had been running on an ad hoc basis since 1970 (Ju 2009).
2. The Feminist Press relocated with Howe from Goucher College to SUNY/College of Old Westbury when she was hired as a professor to help build the

women's studies program there in 1971. The Press took up residency at its current home, the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, in 1985. First Jean Casella and then Gloria Jacobs followed Howe at the helm, and since 2013 Jennifer Baumgardner has been the executive director and publisher of the Feminist Press.

3. These trends continued in the 1980s and 1990s as academic interest in women's, gender, sexuality, and queer studies diversified; see, for example, *Gender & Society*, founded in 1987; *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1993; *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 1996; *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 1997; and *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 2014. Currently, the fields are so vast that we could not possibly represent its scope in this short note.

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