

PREFACE

With this issue, *Feminist Studies* enters the second decade of its publication. Of necessity, we celebrate our tenth anniversary with some wry self-criticisms, for you will note that we are announcing our second decade of publication by issuing our eighth volume. This discrepancy alone should indicate that our short life has not been a routine or an easy one, and yet we have endured and have constructed an identity through a decade of changes. The first issue and the first four volumes of *Feminist Studies* were the work of Ann Calderwood who, in the ebullience of the early women's movement, created a forum where activists and scholars could come together. Although Ann is no longer affiliated with the journal, her commitment to feminist politics and exacting standards of scholarship remains at the heart of *Feminist Studies*.

Like many of those remarkable and energetic products of the new women's movement in the late sixties and early seventies, *Feminist Studies* weathered the difficult transition from feminist awakening, in all its elation, to the more prosaic demands of building a movement, or in this case, printing, editing, and distributing a journal. Thus during 1976 and 1977, when Ann Calderwood initiated a reorganization of the journal, groups of feminist activists and academics met regularly in New York while publication of *Feminist Studies* was suspended. From these wide-ranging discussions about the philosophy, politics, goals, and methods of a feminist periodical, there emerged a newly organized and rededicated journal.

The change was immediately apparent in volume 4 number 1 with its new cover, a display of women's art. On the inside of that cover were the names of an expanded editorial board and the announcement of a new affiliation with the University of Maryland. This affiliation proved ideal, for it provided *Feminist Studies* the financial support and staffing necessary to the production of the journal, a step which left the editors free to chart new political and intellectual directions. These directions of course inevitably shifted as the board expanded and as veterans and newcomers articulated their collective politics and feminist objectives — commitment to feminist politics above academic interests, commitment to being explicit about the broad tenets of socialist feminism to which most of the editors subscribe, commitment to publishing work written from feminist perspectives of many different kinds, commitment to serving and participating in the contemporary women's movement. Our major strategy for implementing these goals through the late seventies was to broaden our appeal and

to reach an audience which was larger than the narrow peer group of the editors, most of whom were white, heterosexual veterans of the student movements, faculty members in the seventies. We strove in particular to open up our board and the pages of the journal to Third World women, lesbians, and women younger and older than ourselves. We talked seriously and repeatedly of reaching beyond the university to activists, and to the women's community. We have moved more slowly than we would have liked toward reaching these objectives, but the signs of our commitment are visible and will become more visible in the issues ahead.

As our first decade draws to a close, *Feminist Studies* enjoys a relatively comfortable status: our subscription list is growing, our budget is in the black, and, thanks to the superlative abilities of our managing editor, Claire Moses, production is running smoothly, if not quite on schedule. Most importantly, the U.S. mail brings us more and better manuscripts than ever.

But the nineteen eighties and the presidential election that ushered them in have eliminated the risk that we would enter a complacent middle age. The shifts in political climate and economic conditions have forced us to ponder whether our readers, our writers, our own energies will dissipate in hard times ahead. To our dismay we have watched several feminist journals suspend publication; we worry about the fragility of the National Women's Studies Association, and we fear that women's groups in the community might be decimated by budget cuts.

Our sobering discussions about feminism in the eighties have been punctuated by calls for two strategic reactions: to build institutions and to form alliances. After a decade of experience we realize that a magic sisterhood cannot sustain a women's movement, especially through hostile and shifting circumstances. We have acquired, therefore, a new respect for institutional strength and structure, and we have determined at *Feminist Studies* to become an institution — to shore up foundations, to dig in, to become entrenched in the service of the women's movement. At the same time, we feel it essential that our ties to the "movement" acquire the solidity and specificity of alliances. Accordingly, we once again invite women's organizations and publications to use our Notes and Letters section as their bulletin board, and we welcome articles and essays which report on the activities and urgent concerns of all sectors of the movement.

We face the second decade and the eighties without the ebullient expectations of the sixties, and with the realization that the task

before us is not merely to survive, but to reproduce the women's movement, to create a succession of feminist generations. This goal has proved a difficult one for American feminists, especially in this century. Indeed, the eighties seem haunted by the spectre of the twenties when the baton first held by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton was not accepted by a young and modern generation. Will the eighties usher in once again a newly quiescent womanhood followed by a feminine mystique? Although this history is unlikely to repeat itself, it does offer a timely warning — feminism does not take root and flourish in any and every soil. We cannot expect the young women who come of age in the eighties to fall in step behind our own history or to enroll in our courses in search of advice from veterans of past campaigns. If feminism is to reproduce itself and acquire the depth of a second generation, we must examine thoroughly the social and economic conditions of women's lives and listen to the women who enter these uncertain times with a history that may be shorter, and different, from our own. We invite your essays and ideas about this project, and in this spirit, we determine not just to endure through the eighties, but to help construct a feminism of and for the late twentieth century.

Mary Ryan,
for the editors