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Remembering Academic Feminism

Megan D. Jones

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Abstract

This critical genealogy of 1970s academic feminism in Australia crosses the disciplinary boundaries of history and feminism. It is an analysis of the positions that have come to structure historical narratives of academic feminism, positions that are often reduced to a series of oppositions, and of the deployment of such oppositions in contemporary feminist theory's conception of itself.

Focusing on the way academic feminism came to negotiate specific institutional contexts, I devote my analysis to countering the received mythologies of 1970s academic feminism. Configured in one of two ways, such retellings construct a narrative either of an unsophisticated feminism at its inception in the 1970s, progressing to a complex present-day feminism, or of a "moral" feminism, pure and virtuous in its 1970s beginning, corrupted in its later form. Neither of these, I argue, is adequate.

The thesis begins with an examination of academic feminism in the context of the wider intellectual and cultural conditions which informed its engagement with the academy. I then explore the politicisation of knowledge that accompanied academic feminism's refiguring of intellectual and institutional practice. The central chapters of my thesis are a detailed analysis of the modes by which academic feminism mediated the academy. I critically examine the positions employed by academic feminism's participants in their negotiation of the category of "woman", in particular via their demands for and practice of women's space. I demonstrate that such positions were in turn problematised by contemporary critical commentary. I contest present-day normative assumptions that 1970s academic feminism was indifferent to race and sexuality, demonstrating the significance of contemporaneous criticism of the exclusions inherent in the conception of the subject of feminism.

In the final part of the thesis I suggest how an imagined 1970s feminism is pivotal both to present-day conceptions of feminism's recent past and to the possibilities of feminism's future.

Abbreviations

ANU	Australian National University
ALR	<i>Australian Left Review</i>
AUS	Australian Union of Students
FTYC	First Ten Years Collection, Sydney
HWAG	Hobart Women's Action Group
NLA	National Library of Australia
NLF	National Liberation Front
NLR	<i>New Left Review</i>
NUS	National Union of Students
RG	<i>Refractory Girl</i>
SAFA	Student Action for Aborigines
SMH	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UQ	University of Queensland
WDA	Students' Association of Flinders University, Women's Department Archive

Introduction — Feminism, Discomfort, Knowledge

*"[I]n the culture I live in history is the name of
the space where we define what matters".*
- Meaghan Morris (1992)¹

*"It was as if not one single thing that had been taken for
granted could be taken for granted. [The 1970s were] difficult
[and] most uncomfortable times as well as exciting times".*
- Rosemary Pringle (1998)²

This thesis is a critical genealogy of 1970s academic feminism in Australia.³ I contend that an imagined 1970s feminism is central both to present-day conceptions of that moment and to the possibilities of feminism's future. I am fascinated by the pronounced trend within contemporary feminist thought and writing to return to 1970s feminism as a designated point of departure and as an epistemology of origins. My readings of the 1970s engage with a number of the positions that in recent years have shaped cultural criticisms of academic feminism's past. "Then" and "now" are often collapsed into a series of binaries: empiricism versus theory, crudity versus sophistication, oppositional political engagement versus complicit elitism, the "monolith" versus the multiple, radicalism versus conformity. Also important are the implications of this past and its constitution for the future. I seek to contest the production of 1970s feminism as a self-evident ground of which we in the present may unhesitatingly speak, and I unravel this origin in an effort to resist the collapsing of the intricacies of that moment. Framed in terms of the present, this thesis is motivated by the concerns of now — of what it means to consider the academy as a site of feminist intervention at this moment. It is feminism's discomfort with the past, with 1970s feminism and indeed with itself that figures my analysis throughout. I make unfamiliar many of the concepts and ideas through which we understand and remember 1970s academic feminism in an effort to set out positions rather than origins, making space for endless beginnings and conditions of possibility. My central concern is not only 1970s academic feminism as such, but also the deployment of 1970s academic feminism in present-day narratives of the past.

¹ Meaghan Morris in discussion following Carolyn Steedman's "Culture, Cultural Studies & the Historians" in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson & Paula A. Treichler (eds), *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York, 1992: p. 622.

² Rosemary Pringle, "Interview", Sydney, 23 March 1998.

³ Each of the women I interviewed for this project noted that "feminism" was not a word that was used in the early moments of the Women's Liberation Movement; it was against the feminism of

History in Academic Feminism

Although histories of Australian academic feminism have appeared in a limited capacity and only in recent times, historical narratives have been inscribed within various forms of feminist scholarship since the earliest moments of "Women's Studies" in Australia.⁴ Since its beginnings in the 1970s, certain figures — Ann Curthoys, Susan Magarey, Susan Sheridan, Jean Curthoys, Liz Jacka, Rosemary Pringle — have served as central (if relentlessly contested) characters in Australian academic feminism's narrativisation of its own past. Moreover, these women's professional and personal lives have themselves provided occasion for fascinating commentary on the cultural history of intellectual feminism.⁵ In an academic community as small as Australia's, the relation between academic feminism's history and the narratives of these women's lives is highly significant, especially since many of them continue to be central figures in the academy, and specifically in the field of academic feminism. I have interviewed each of these women as well as Barbara Caine, Marilyn Lake, Jill Julius Matthews, Margaret Power, Lyndall Ryan, Anne Summers and Bob Connell and Terry Irving.⁶

There are certain conventions that have been formalised within the historical narratives of 1970s feminism. This thesis both uncovers and examines the set of received mythologies

their foremothers precisely that Women's Liberationists aimed to define themselves. Nonetheless, I use the term advisedly throughout the thesis.

⁴ Recent theses that engage with these historical narratives include Ann Genovese, "The Battered Body: A Feminist Legal History", PhD Thesis, University of Technology, Sydney, 1998; Julie Deblaquiere, "A Study of the Impact of Aboriginal Women's Life Writing on Women's Studies Programs in Australian Universities", PhD Thesis, LaTrobe University, Forthcoming; Judith Ion, "She Gave Me That Look': Narratives of Same Sex Desire (And the Impact of Feminism) in Canberra, 1965-1984", PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 2001; Sarah Maddison, "Collective Identity & Australian Feminist Activism: Conceptualising A Third Wave", PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, Forthcoming; Adele Murdolo, "Contesting Feminist Spaces: Immigrant & Refugee Women Write History", PhD Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1999; Zora Simic, "Beyond the Waves: Feminism & Time, 1919-1969", PhD Thesis, Department of History, University of Sydney, Forthcoming.

⁵ See for example, Ann Curthoys, *For & Against Feminism: A Personal Journey into Feminist Theory & History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988. More recently, her essay, "Adventures of Feminism: Simone de Beauvoir's Autobiographies, Women's Liberation and Self-Fashioning", *Feminist Review*, no. 64, Spring 2000: pp. 3-18 and that of Jill Julius Matthews, "Simone de Beauvoir's Third Sex", *Hecate*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2000: pp. 139-143 are both highly autobiographical. See also Bain Attwood & Joy Damousi (eds), *Feminist Histories — Jill Julius Matthews, Patricia Grimshaw, Ann Curthoys, Marilyn Lake*, History Institute, Carlton, 1991. Chilla Bulbeck notes in *Living Feminism: The Impact of the Women's Movement on Three Generations of Australian Feminism*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1997, that the tale of second-wave feminism in Australia comes mainly from "those who made it happen": p. 2.

⁶ Ethics approval for each of these interviews was granted by the Human Ethics Committee, University of Sydney. See Appendix A for an account of the questions asked of each interviewee.

embedded in these conventions. Most notably, such narratives have assumed the shape of a progress tale: a naïve and unrefined “experiential” feminism in its 1970s beginnings, advancing to the sophisticated and complex “theoretical” moment of the present and beyond.⁷ In *Feminist Amnesia* (1997), Jean Curthoys remarks on Australian academic feminism’s tendency to cast its own history in precisely these terms: the “almost universal” description of 1970s feminism is one distinguished by its reliance on the monolithic categorisation of “woman”. 1970s feminism, she argues, is set up as a “feminism of equality” or “feminism of sameness”.⁸ Drawing a direct contrast between the ideas of those early years and the “purportedly more sophisticated and appropriate” ideas of the present — and dependant on the assurance of the superiority of the later “feminism of difference” — the more recent moment employs a figuring impelled by the instability and diversity at work in the category of “woman”.⁹

My point is that amidst these variations the defining historical polarity remains intact, providing not only a point of departure in the dominant contemporary understanding of the development of academic feminist thought, but also a way of authorising present-day feminist theoretical work.¹⁰ As Ann Curthoys asserts, many characterisations of 1970s

⁷ The idea of the “progress” narrative is drawn from Jane Gallop’s *Around 1981*, in which she recognises the prominence of a narrative wherein the “simplistic” methodological emphases of 1970s “women’s studies” is surpassed by a nuanced, more theoretically sophisticated mode of “feminist theory”. See Jane Gallop, *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Thought*, Routledge, New York & London, 1992. On the resilience of narratives of “theory as progress” in other intellectual fields, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender & Sexuality in the Imperial Context*, Routledge, New York & London, 1995: pp. 9-15.

⁸ Jean Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia: The Wake of Women’s Liberation*, Routledge, London & New York, 1997: p. 4.

⁹ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 4.

¹⁰ Much of the most recent work reflecting on the beginnings of academic feminism in Australia frames itself distinctly in opposition to such reductive readings of that moment. See for example the literature, written primarily by those who were participants in academic feminism’s early years in this country, collected in an issue of *Australian Feminist Studies* focusing on the conference convened by Alison Bashford and Glenda Sluga, “Return of the Repressed”, held at the University of Sydney in November 1996. Articles appearing in (Guest Editor: Alison Bashford), *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 27, April 1998 are: Alison Bashford, “The Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad”: pp. 47-54; Jean Curthoys, “Memoirs of a Feminist Dinosaur”: pp. 55-62; Sue Wills, “The Philosophy Strike: The View from the Department of Government”: pp. 63-66; Susan Sheridan, “‘Transcending Tauromachy’: The Beginnings of Women’s Studies in Adelaide”: pp. 67-74; Ann Curthoys, “Women’s Studies at the Australian National University: The Early Years”: pp. 75-80; Susan Magarey, “Setting up the First Research Centre for Women’s Studies in Australia, 1983-1986”: pp. 81-90; Gretchen Poiner, “The Women’s Research Unit: Being There”: pp. 91-98; Barbara Caine, “Women’s Studies at the University of Sydney”: pp. 99-106; Judith Ion, “Unravelling Our Past: Questions of Feminism, History & Memory”: pp. 107-116; Megan Jones, “Historicising Feminist Knowledge: Notes Toward a Genealogy of Academic Feminism of the 1970s”: pp. 117-128; and Elspeth Probyn, “Re: Generation. Women’s Studies & the Disciplining of *Ressentiment*”: pp. 129-136. For a review of the conference proceedings see Judith Ion, “Return of

feminism have developed in the context of present-day attempts to define the shifts and changes within feminist theory itself, rather than as the product of close examinations of 1970s feminist theory and practice.¹¹ In the light of this, the close and critical investigation of 1970s academic feminism I carry out here is vitally important in countering what I contend are the received mythologies of 1970s academic feminism. In stressing the prevalence of this narrative, I do not mean to suggest that much of the most innovative recent feminist commentary on Australian academic feminism is anything but consistently self-critical in its interrogation of the ascendancy of a polarised “experiential” versus “theoretical” feminism. Despite such self-awareness, however, as I contend throughout this thesis, many of these same commentaries work to reinforce rather than to interrogate the historiographical fixities I noted above.¹² By making these claims I do not mean to enforce a new kind of homogeneity within the extremely diverse field of recent feminist commentary. Rather, I suggest that it is vital to recognise that the meanings assigned to each of these feminist moments are continually shifting and transforming, in remarkable and often unexpected ways.

What troubles me about much of the work that deals specifically with 1970s academic feminism in Australia is that it typically accounts for its own development through a narrative figured around a move from institutional and intellectual margin to centre.¹³

the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad — Embarrassment & Amnesia: A Conference Report of Sorts”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 12, no. 25, 1997: pp. 141-144.

¹¹ Ann Curthoys, “Doing It For Themselves: The Women’s Movement Since 1970” in Kay Saunders & Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination & Negotiation*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1992: p. 425.

¹² One articulation figured precisely as Jean Curthoys describes, appears in Australian feminist Wei Leng Kwok’s “New Australian Feminism: Towards a Discursive Politics of Australian Feminist Thought”, *Antithesis* (Melbourne), vol. 7, no. 1, 1995: pp. 76-93, in which she tells of the shift in feminist thought over the past two decades “from a belief that the absence of women and women’s experiences can be corrected by the ‘add women and stir’ formula, to a more thoroughly rigorous textual practice of questioning the assumptions and methodologies of systems of thought themselves”: p. 54. Similarly exemplary in this regard, although more recent, is Rosi Braidotti’s “Remembering Fitzroy High” in Jenna Mead’s 1997 edited collection, *Bodyjamming: Sexual Harassment, Feminism & Public Life*, Vintage, Sydney, 1997: pp. 121-147. I deal with Braidotti’s essay in some detail in chapter six.

¹³ For accounts of the history of academic feminism in Australia see papers in *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 27, April 1998; Lyndall Ryan, “Women’s Studies”, Barbara Caine et al., *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998: pp. 365-369; Margaret Power, “21 Years of Political Economy of Women”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, no. 21, Autumn 1995: pp. 177-185; Susan Sheridan, “Women’s Studies” in *Refracting Voices: Feminist Perspectives From Refractory Girl, Refractory Girl* Feminist Journal, Sydney, 1993: pp. 39-45; Lyndall Ryan, “Women’s Studies in Australian Higher Education: Introduction & Brief History”, *The Australian Universities’ Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1991: pp. 2-7; Judith Allen, “Women’s Studies in the 1990s: Problems & Prospects” [Keynote address at the Second Annual Conference of the Australian Women’s Studies Association, 25 September 1990], *The Australian Universities’ Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1991: pp. 8-11; Jill Julius Matthews & Dorothy Broom, “Orphans of the Storm: The

More often than not, a descriptive chronology of the development of academic feminism begins with an examination of the first models of feminist courses taught in Australian universities during the 1970s.¹⁴ Invariably, feminist and Women's Studies courses are configured in terms of their relation to the Women's Liberation Movement.¹⁵ Or, similarly, it is suggested that the intervention of such courses into the existing academy was never intended to have any longevity, just "in case they [Women's Studies] lost their revolutionary potential and became disloyal to the Women's Movement".¹⁶ Thus, while "From Margin to Mainstream" is the title of an early essay by Susan Sheridan on Australian academic feminism, it is also the configuration through which histories of Australian academic feminism are most often organised.¹⁷ The difficulty I have with

Attrition of the ANU Women's Studies Program", *The Australian Universities' Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1991: pp. 12-14; Susan Sheridan, "Feminist Knowledge, Women's Liberation, and Women's Studies" in Sneja Gunew (ed), *Feminist Knowledge: Critique & Construct*, Routledge, London, 1990: pp. 36-55; Robyn Rowland, "Women's Studies in Australia: State & Status", *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 10, no. 5, 1987: pp. 517-523; Susan Magarey, Lyndall Ryan & Susan Sheridan, "Women's Studies in Australia" in Norma Grieve and Ailsa Burns (eds), *Australian Women: New Feminist Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986: pp. 285-295 & 341-342; Susan Sheridan, "From Margin to Mainstream: Situating Women's Studies", *Australian Feminist Studies*, no. 2, Autumn 1986: pp. 1-13; Susan Magarey, "Women's Studies in Australia – Towards Trans-Disciplinary Learning?", *The Journal of Educational Thought*, vol. 17, no. 2, August 1983: pp. 162-171; Rita Helling, "The Personal is Political", *The Journal of Educational Thought*, vol. 17, no. 2, August 1983: pp. 172-181.

¹⁴ There are, of course, exceptions. In *Feminist Amnesia*, Jean Curthoys examines the ways of knowing which regulate or govern the discourses of contemporary feminist knowledge. By "reconstructing the conceptual moves involved in prevailing patterns of thinking", Curthoys refuses the "taken-for-grantedness" of contemporary feminist thought. See J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. viii. In "Doing Theory or Using Theory", Jill Julius Matthews highlights the implications of such knowligness prevailing in conceptions of contemporary Australian feminist theory. Referring to what Meaghan Morris and Stephen Muecke have called "a moralising genre of 'theory' — socially groundless, history-free, weighted down by a mass of references to a 'world' composed of other theoretical writings", Matthews examines the implications and significance of the rise of theory that, for her, "in general is lacking (if not explicitly refusing) historical consciousness". She argues that "against two decades of an incredibly rich multiplicity of theorising, feminist theory is now increasingly becoming a singular entity". See Jill Julius Matthews, "Doing Theory or Using Theory: Australian Feminist/Women's History in the 1990s", *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 106, April 1996: pp. 53-54. See also Meaghan Morris & Stephen Muecke, "Editorial", *The UTS Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, July 1995: pp. 1-4. In the international context, by asserting the value of interrogating the theoretical moves authorised by established foundations, Judith Butler highlights the importance of interrogating precisely what such foundations exclude and foreclose. See her influential essay, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism & the Question of Postmodernism" in her jointly edited (with Joan W. Scott) collection, *Feminists Theorise the Political*, Routledge, New York, 1992: pp. 3-21.

¹⁵ Susan Magarey's early article, "Towards Trans-disciplinary": pp. 162-171 relies on a framing of the relation between Women's Liberation and Women's Studies. Women's Studies, according to Magarey, represents "the continuing impact made upon the academy by the Women's Movement". She argues that "[w]hether they began amid uproar or peaceful negotiation, all such courses have sprung, however indirectly, from the present Women's Movement": p. 162 & p. 164.

¹⁶ For discussion of this point, see Magarey, Ryan & Sheridan, "Women's Studies in Australia" in Grieve & Burns (eds), *Australian Women*: pp. 287-288.

¹⁷ For Sheridan's account see "From Margin": pp. 1-13. For an account that argues that academic feminism's marginal status causes its own set of problems, see Matthews & Broom, "Orphans of

accounts which frame the institutionalisation of academic feminism as a moment in which feminism shifted from margin to centre is that they attribute to academic feminism an initial set of qualities that are anti-institutional, or (most often) institutionally marginal. Although aspects of academic feminism certainly demonstrate this, what is omitted is any sense of those initiating the project of academic feminism as intellectuals always implicated in the day-to-day operations of tertiary institutions themselves. As Tony Bennett has argued of the history of cultural studies, it is necessarily told as a history "in which, whether it succumbs to it or not, it is forever faced by the prospect that the radical potential inherent in its originating conditions will be curtailed".¹⁸ Alongside Bennett, I argue that the history of academic feminism, in these terms ever-confronted by the threat of cooption and the fear of compromise, is likewise always already compelled to concede the radical promise intrinsic to its initial critical stance.

Crucial to Bennett's analysis of cultural studies (another principally political and interdisciplinary project) are the implications of how institutional conditions and relations are taken account of and incorporated into histories of the field. Bennett's careful detailing of the operations of institutional processes in his treatment of cultural studies has strong resonances with my treatment of the institutional project that is academic feminism. His assertion that to attend to the operations of institutional processes requires conceiving of cultural studies "as having been a wholly institutionalised set of practices from the very outset" applies equally, I argue, to academic feminism in Australia.¹⁹ Like cultural studies, the activities of academic feminism and the changes to intellectual culture that accompanied its intervention into the academy have some relation to the underlying conditions of the changing circumstances of tertiary education in post-war Australia. Like Bennett, I argue that it is imperative to identify the connections between the trajectories of projects such as academic feminism and the changes that have occurred in (and have been driven by) higher education. I further contend that in the absence of this imperative, accounts of academic feminism's past are incapable of addressing the educational and institutional

the Storm": pp. 12-14. This article by Matthews and Broom is unusual in the detail it devotes to the institutional negotiations and materiality that constitute academic feminism's interaction with the academy. For a most recent example of the margins to mainstream characterisation of academic feminism's institutionalisation, see Ryan, "Women's Studies" in Caine et al., *Australian Feminism*: pp. 365-369.

¹⁸ Tony Bennett, "Out in the Open: Reflections on the History and Practice of Cultural Studies", *Cultural Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1996: p. 136.

¹⁹ Bennett, "Out in the Open": p. 136.

contexts in which the majority of its future work will conceivably be located.²⁰ Certainly, this is an omission in literature to date. I second Bennett's assertion that the myths embedded in such narratives of margin to centre well deserve "a dry-eyed farewell", especially in view of the degree to which they incapacitate those in the present from thinking about what the purposes of feminist teaching can be in the institutional contexts presently available.²¹

The problem with much of the literature that deals specifically with the history of feminism in Australia, and in particular that which focuses on the Women's Liberation Movement, is its inclination not to differentiate between, but rather to equate, academic feminism and the women's movement. *Getting Equal* (1999), in which Marilyn Lake recounts the beginnings of academic feminism in Australia, is exemplary in this regard.²² Academic feminism, Lake asserts, was a matter of women's movement "reading lists [being] lengthened and discussion groups [becoming] more formalised in new courses established" in universities. For Lake, academic feminism was the direct product of Women's Liberation. "Women's Liberationists", Lake writes, "extended their emphasis on analysis, explanation and the generation of new knowledge into the intellectual project that became Women's Studies".²³ More so than in the literature focusing on academic feminism in Australia, there is a tendency amongst much of the Women's Liberation literature to make direct connections between the academy and the women's movement, namely through the insistence on the connections between the New Left and Women's Liberation. Such literature maintains that the New Left was principally located in universities, yet tells of feminists "entering" the academy.²⁴

²⁰ Bennett, "Out in the Open": p. 136.

²¹ Bennett, "Out in the Open": p. 136.

²² Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Feminism in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999.

²³ Lake, *Getting Equal*: p. 251. Susan Sheridan reiterates the importance of the relation between Women's Studies and the Women's Movement in "Feminist Knowledge" in Gunew (ed), *Feminist Knowledge*: pp. 36-55.

²⁴ For analysis of the Women's Liberation Movement see Lake, *Getting Equal*; Bulbeck, *Living Feminism*; Gisela Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement 1950s-1990s*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996; Katy Reade, "Recognising & Constructing an Identity: The Beginnings of the Women's Liberation Movement in Melbourne", *Melbourne Historical Journal*, vol. 24, 1996: pp. 125-145; Ann Curthoys, "Visions, Nightmares, Dreams; Women's History, 1975", *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 106, April 1996: pp. 1-13; Ann Genovese, "Unravelling Identities: Performance & Criticism in Australian Feminisms", (Ann Curthoys, Jeannie Martin & Helen Irving (eds), "Feminism in the Antipodes"), *Feminist Review*, no. 52, Spring 1996: pp. 135-153; Ann Curthoys, "Shut Up, You Bourgeois Bitch: Sexual Identity & Political Action in the Anti-Vietnam Movement" in Joy Damousi & Marilyn Lake (eds), *Gender & War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1995: pp. 311-341; Katy Reade, "'Struggling to be Heard': Tensions Between Different Voices in the Australian Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s & 1980s" in Kate Pritchard Hughes (ed), *Contemporary Australian*

Of consequence here is the preeminence accorded to accounts of academic feminism as an arm of the women's movement. This is not to dispute the important connections between academic feminism and the women's movement during that period. It is, however, to advocate the value of a position which avoids an account of the institutionalisation of academic feminism as structured by a move away from the "radical" edge of the women's movement; a move necessarily towards cooption; a frame which both privileges the practices of Women's Liberation and reinforces the idea of engagement with the academy as always already compromised. In conceiving the kinds of critical pedagogical practices and critical thinking in operation in academic feminist classrooms as marginal, such accounts posit that the institutionalisation of academic feminism was a unique accomplishment made possible only by virtue of the characteristics of the women's movement. The deficiency of such accounts is that they detract attention from the institutional circumstances of academic feminism, and other radical education initiatives contemporaneous with it. This is not to underestimate the achievements of academic feminism in its beginnings, nor to suggest that there were not critical connections with Women's Liberation. Rather, the point is to dispute the notion that the institutionalisation of academic feminism can be taken to characterise a distinctive phase of the development of academic feminism that can no longer be emulated.²⁵ Part of the aim of the thesis is to locate the development of academic feminism at least as much within the history of the academy, as within the history of feminism.

My history of 1970s academic feminism is not so concerned with the move from margin to centre, but with the concept of academic feminism as an institutionalised negotiation whose operations have to be, in part, assessed in terms of its role in organising a new set of relations within educational institutions. With this in mind, I refute the notion that the institutionalisation of academic feminism has occurred only as a result of its success in forcing other disciplinary modes to rethink their own practices and methodologies.²⁶

Feminism, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1994: pp. 198-222; Ann Curthoys, "Australian Feminism Since 1970" in Grieve & Burns (eds), *Australian Women*: pp. 14-28 & pp. 296-298; A. Curthoys, "Doing It" in Saunders & Evans (eds), *Gender Relations*: pp. 425-447; Ann Curthoys, "Mobilising Dissent: The Later Stages of Protest" in Gregory Pemberton (ed), *Vietnam Remembered*, Weldon, Sydney, 1990: pp. 138-163; Ann Curthoys, "A Short History of Feminism, 1970-1984" in her *For & Against*: pp. 79-94.

²⁵ See Bennett, "Out in the Open": pp. 141-2.

²⁶ See Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies & Its Theoretical Legacies" in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson & Paula A. Treichler (eds), *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York & London, 1992: p. 284 & Bennett, "Out in the Open": p. 146.

In reading 1970s feminism as a critical genealogy of contemporary feminist debates, I situate feminist courses taught in Australian universities during the period within a complex historical and cultural field. In following Michel Foucault's genealogical methods, this thesis is "a history of the present".²⁷ By considering the genealogical burden of my discipline, its discourses, its institutional forms and my place within it, I seek to illuminate the constituents of feminist intellectual activity that have defined academic feminism from its founding moments. Thus, crucial to my analysis is Foucault's question of "what is history given there is continually being produced within it a separation of true and false?"²⁸ Like Foucault, I seek to problematise the historical "truths" that govern the production of knowledge (in this case, feminist knowledge). In doing so, I employ a method of critical genealogy, a term which references what Foucault, following Nietzsche, called "effective history".²⁹ In this, I aim to interrogate both the uses of history and the necessity to which it answers.

In his reading, Mitchell Dean characterises Foucault's genealogical methodology as a critical practice that exercises "a perpetual vigilance and scepticism toward the claims of various philosophies to prescribe the meaning of history"; it is suspicious of reconstructions of the past and the "discovery" of new realities.³⁰ For Dean, it is precisely in refusing "the standards of validity" of established knowledge as the "filter or framework" for the organisation of history that Foucault questions that which is taken for granted in historical reality. According to Dean, in shifting its critical capacity from the past to the subject of knowledge, genealogy effectively denies that subject any secure foundation. In Foucault's terms then, genealogy reveals "the heterogeneity masked by [a]

²⁷ See Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures" in Colin Gordon (ed), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Harvester, Brighton, 1980: pp. 78-108 and Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in James D. Faubion (ed), *Aesthetics, Method & Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume Two* (translated by Robert Hurley & others), Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 2000: pp. 369-392. For a useful discussion of Foucault's notion of histories of the present, see Mitchell Dean, *Critical & Effective Histories: Foucault's Methods & Historical Sociology*, Routledge, London & New York, 1994: pp. 23-42.

²⁸ In a round-table discussion with a group of historians published in English as "Questions of Method", Foucault asserted that this was the question which animated his approach across the body of his work. See his "Questions of Method" in James D. Faubion (ed), *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume Three* (translated by Robert Hurley & others), Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 2000: p. 233.

²⁹ The term "critical genealogy" draws on a vast array of work, which includes Foucault's own treatment of Nietzsche as genealogist. See Foucault, "Nietzsche": especially pp. 369-379. Alice Gambrell is one who employs the term in interesting ways in relation to academic feminism. See her *Women Intellectuals, Modernism & Difference: Transatlantic Culture, 1919-1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 1997.

presumed continuity of identity”.³¹ As Dean suggests, it is in exploring the implicatedness of power and knowledge that genealogy engages with the configurations and the historical specificities of time and place, which hold at any moment for “saying the true”.³² This thesis is likewise an exercise in problematising the uses of history, and in interrogating the historically contingent truths of feminism as they are constituted in the present. As well, it is an intellectual history of 1970s feminist thought in Australia.

In this thesis I attempt to locate how and why a conception of 1970s feminism as the simplistic and homogeneous precursor to the complex and variegated feminism of the present has come about. As a history of the present, this thesis suspends contemporary norms of validity and meaning at the same time as it reveals their multiple conditions of formation. I am interested in an understanding of feminist knowledge as temporal and historical, but I also allow for the contradictions and complexities of located knowledge. In reifying a feminist moment of binary opposition, the narratives I critique speak more to contemporary political agendas than to ambiguous feminist pasts and presents. Neglected in such accounts is recognition of the historically contingent nature of much of the basis of contemporary feminism. In turn the partiality and the historical situatedness of the very way we know is largely ignored. To acknowledge and interrogate how feminism’s epistemological practices are located is to privilege contestation, contradiction and complexity, and to recognise historical context, time and place.

The history of 1970s academic feminism brings to the fore questions of how we know what we know in the present. For Elizabeth Grosz, feminism’s “past endures, not in itself, but in its capacity to become something other”, and in her recent essay on feminist futures it is the relation between past and present that she invokes in order to demonstrate feminism’s potential for “being otherwise”.³³ Grosz insists that “the past is the virtual that coexists with the present” and in feminism’s past she locates the resources to create “futures beyond the present”.³⁴ For Grosz, what counts as history, “what is regarded as constituting the past”, is written in the present; it is what in the present serves to reinvigorate the past. Feminist history, Grosz argues, occupies here a position of crucial importance, “[n]ot simply because it informs our present but more so because it

³⁰ Dean, *Critical & Effective*: p. 4.

³¹ See Dean, *Critical & Effective*: p. 19.

³² Dean, *Critical & Effective*: p. 215.

³³ Elizabeth Grosz, “Histories of a Feminist Future”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2000: pp. 1019-1020.

³⁴ Grosz, “Histories”: p. 1019.

enables other virtual futures to be conceived, other perspectives to be developed, than those that currently prevail".³⁵ It is in the folding of the past into the future, "beyond the control or limit of the present", that I locate this thesis.³⁶

If, as Grosz contends, it is the detailing of the multiplicities of the past that provide complexity, then it is what the past enables that renders the picture more complex again; that allows possibilities for alternatives. For Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, what is problematic about much contemporary cultural theory is that it is afflicted by the sense of "what it thinks it knows". In their critique of the role of difference in theory, Sedgwick and Frank note the cost of contemporary theory's "knowingness", namely "how expensively theories turn into Theory".³⁷ I draw on them for their argument about affect. For Sedgwick and Frank, the way contemporary theory works — structured around a "hypervigilant antiessentialism and antinaturalism", demanding the sacrifice of all qualitative differences among, in this case, different affects — means that it cannot ask certain questions.³⁸ As they note, "insofar as they are 'theorised', affects must turn into Affect".³⁹ My work is informed by the ideas of Sedgwick and Frank to the extent that I examine the absence of multiple understandings of how contemporary feminist theory "knows what it knows in the present". I argue that this absence is not an oversight. Instead, it represents a theoretical decision and it entails a cost; as if feminism's past could not finally be "theory", theoretically sophisticated, if it left any space for struggle, variation or contradiction within and amongst its present; as if such space would negate the "knowing" of the present. In highlighting the loss or expense involved in presenting contemporary feminist scholarship as "smoothed" over, as having mastered the techniques for putting the ruses of such considerations firmly out of bounds, I turn to Sedgwick and Frank's question:

What was it possible to think or do at a certain moment of the past, that it no longer is? And how are those possibilities to be found, unfolded, allowed to move and draw air and seek new voices and uses, in the very different disciplinary ecology of even a few decades' distance?⁴⁰

³⁵ Grosz, "Histories": pp. 1018-1019.

³⁶ Grosz, "Histories": pp. 1020.

³⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick & Adam Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins" in their edited collection, *Shame & Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, Duke University Press, Durham & London, 1995: p. 23.

³⁸ Sedgwick & Frank, "Shame": pp. 17-18.

³⁹ Sedgwick & Frank, "Shame": p. 18.

⁴⁰ Sedgwick & Frank, "Shame": p. 23.

Academic feminism's recent past is frequently figured as that mistaken thing that happened before contemporary academic feminism but which fortunately led directly to it. However, my aim is to demonstrate that it was part of a rich intellectual moment. I maintain that 1970s academic feminism meant far more different and more provocative things than have survived the commonsense consensus of contemporary feminist theory.

In conceptualising my own position in the thesis, I have found Teresa de Lauretis' use of the "space-off" particularly valuable. In "The Technology of Gender", de Lauretis argues that the position of the subject of feminism is an uncomfortable one. She marks the "space-off" — "the space not visible in the frame but inferable from what the frame makes visible" — as "both the historical condition of [the] existence of feminism and its theoretical condition of possibility" and thus, as a vital location for feminist criticism.⁴¹ For de Lauretis, the subject of feminism is engendered in the "space-off". In related terms, this thesis insists on the discomfort entailed in remembering our own disciplinary history and of the subject of feminism itself.⁴² One of the perils of contemporary academic feminism's conception of itself as always of the present is its discomfort with its own recent past — with a "naïve" and "simplistic" 1970s feminism. I argue that the distinctions between remembering the past and inventing possible futures for feminism are often obscured in the articulation of feminism's present. Thus, this thesis has been motivated by the concerns of the present time, and I take seriously the institutional location of my own work for the subject of my analysis is one in which I am also a figure. Indeed, throughout I insist on the discomfort of my own position; producing a thesis on the history of the discipline within which I work, and a history whose central characters are those most senior in the field with which it (and I) engage, producing a thesis on Women's Studies in what is now a department of Gender Studies at a prestigious university.

Elspeth Probyn's notion of event as "a tangled discursive skein, a multilevel production in which strata of truth, representation, history, science, and experience compete", informs my own understanding of 1970s academic feminism.⁴³ I analyse academic feminism according to the multiple processes that have constituted it over time, which in turn enables me to juxtapose disparate and related material. In conceiving of 1970s

⁴¹ Teresa de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender" in her *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film & Fiction*, Macmillan Press, London, 1987: p. 26.

⁴² de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender": p. 26.

⁴³ See Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, Routledge, New York & London, 1996: p. 95.

academic feminism as event I turn my attention to the modes in which it is articulated: as originary, as nostalgic, as anecdotal, as myth, as biographical, as self-promoting. Against the trend to posit academic feminism's past as a point of departure in the constitution of feminist thought, I consider 1970s academic feminism as the point from which to turn identity inside out; the point from which, in Nietzsche's terms, we can "laugh at the solemnities of origin".⁴⁴ For Foucault, as for Deleuze, events oppose essence.⁴⁵ In my reading of 1970s academic feminism, I resist taking for granted what it took up, how it was and is articulated and what sorts of effects it produced and produces now. I intervene in the present in the expectancy of opening out feminism's future.

This thesis focuses on the development of feminist knowledge in Australian universities in the 1970s. Throughout, I am careful to distinguish between Women's Studies courses on the one hand, and feminist courses taught from existing disciplines on the other. Women's Studies is the domain that first named the imperative toward interdisciplinary feminist analysis. Institutionalised in the Australian academy during the early 1970s, it is a field that both established "woman" as a legitimate object of study, and demonstrated the epistemological validity and significance of "woman" in knowledge production more widely. Feminist courses taught from existing disciplines, and thus from existing institutional spheres named the imperative toward disciplinary feminist critique proliferating in the Australian academy during the 1970s. Such courses authorised the refiguring both of the object of disciplinary knowledge and its very constitution. It is important to differentiate between the two since it is the institutional conditions — the disciplinary affiliations, the administrative processes — inscribed in the relation each had to the institution that defined their configuration in the academy. My desire to distinguish between the two is driven in part in response to the slippage common to articulations of the institutional configurations of Women's Studies versus feminist courses taught from existing disciplines. I aim to be meticulous in my analysis of this slippage, for it is the slippage itself, I argue, that is immensely interesting. At the same time, throughout the thesis I refer to academic feminism, a term that composes and encompasses both these historical projects, to refer to the wider challenge represented by

⁴⁴ See Foucault, "Nietzsche": p. 372.

⁴⁵ For Michel Foucault on event see his "Nietzsche": especially pp. 380-381. See also Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (translated by Hugh Tomlinson & Graham Burchill), Verso, London, 1994: pp. 156-160. For further discussion of event see Lawrence Grossberg's "Cultural Studies Theory, Power & the Popular: Articulation & Culture" in his *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism & Postmodern Culture*, Routledge, New York & London, 1992: pp. 37-67.

feminism's institutionalising of new knowledge formations.⁴⁶ Inscribed in each term is the tension, the discomfort, that propels the thesis and its analysis — the discomfort of “woman” itself.

Much of the thesis is written on the basis of extensive archival research from across Australia, including correspondence, conference papers and newsletters from the Women's Liberation Movement, feminist journals and newspapers such as *Refractory Girl*, *Hecate*, *Mejane*, *Scarlet Woman*, as well as those from the wider intellectual milieu of the time, such as *Arena*, *Dissent*, *Vestes*, *Quadrant*, university newspapers such as *Woroni*, *Honi Soit*, *On Dit*, *Farrago* and *National U*, university archives and records, and the popular press. Also crucial to the thesis are the texts of 1970s feminism, which my archival research shows were extensively used in courses: including Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969) and Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate* (1971), and those of contemporaneous movements, such as Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) and Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972). Interviews with many of the women who were involved in teaching feminist courses in Australia during the 1970s complement this research, and correspond with a renewed urgency to add the story of these women's lives to the public record.⁴⁷ In figuring these women's memories I draw in part on American feminist Nancy K. Miller's treatment of the academic memoirs of a group of American women contemporary to those crucial to this thesis.⁴⁸ For Miller, the memories of those academic women are positioned by the institutional frame of the university; the lifeline of such memoirs is “the canonical chronology of the curriculum vitae: the life course of an education”.⁴⁹ In effect, private and public are neither opposed nor even juxtaposed in these women's memories. As Miller asserts, this point is especially important given that the very public nature of these women's lives is a direct consequence of 1970s feminism

⁴⁶ For discussion on defining Women's Studies in the Australian context, see Magarey, Ryan & Sheridan, “Women's Studies in Australia” in Grieve & Burns (eds), *Australian Women*: p. 286. For more contemporary discussion of academic feminism in the international context, see Robyn Wiegman's “Feminism, Institutionalism & the Idiom of Failure”, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, Fall 1999: p. 107 and Alice Gambrell's “Remembering Women's Studies” in Krzysztof Ziarek & Seamus Deane (eds), *Future Crossings: Literature Between Philosophy & Cultural Studies*, North Western University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 2000: p.76.

⁴⁷ For a list of those I interviewed for this project see Appendix A (which includes a template of the questions asked in interview). On calls for these women's lives to be added to the public record see for instance, Bashford, “The Return of the Repressed”: p. 48. In relation to second-wave feminism more generally, see most famously, Anne Summers, “Letter to the Next Generation” in her *Damned Whores & God's Police*, Rev. Ed., Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1994: pp. 505-528.

⁴⁸ Nancy K. Miller, “Public Statements, Private Lives: Academic Memoirs for the Nineties”, *Signs*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1997: pp. 981-1015.

⁴⁹ Miller, “Public Statements, Private Lives”: p. 983.

— of women's presence in new institutional and intellectual contexts.⁵⁰ In similar ways, all of the women interviewed for this thesis are acutely aware of how the public spaces of their institutional lives, both in the past and present, are imbricated in the history of academic feminism. Indeed this is sometimes the subject of their own academic production.

This thesis is made up of six chapters. In chapters one and two, I think beyond the conditions specific to academic feminism to consider the wider context of its constitution. I focus on the University of Sydney's Free University and philosophy strikes as two sites that were exemplary in their articulation of a broader social and intellectual challenge to institutions, hierarchy and authority. Situating academic feminism within a complex social and cultural field, I present the ramifications of how it was taken up and developed within the institution. I contend that from its very beginnings, academic feminism was always already concerned with knowledge and with institutions. In the three substantive chapters that follow, I focus specifically on 1970s academic feminism. In chapter three, I examine feminism's interventions into existing forms of knowledge and institutions, asking how it engaged with the contradictions of the category of "woman", the tension and discomfort between the specificities of "woman" and the hazards of its constraints, in its day-to-day interaction with the academy. I argue that while at times identity served productively to isolate woman's difference and to generate a collective identification in the face of that difference, the imperative toward differences such as race, class and sexuality among women from the outset unsettled any easy collapse of women into a monolithic or unified construction. In chapter four, I am concerned with the internal workings of Australian academic feminism's formulation of the subjectivity of the oppressed as it was understood and mobilised in the 1970s, specifically in relation to the question of race. I contend that an assumption that underpins virtually every contemporary narrativisation of Australian academic feminism's recent past is that it was not until a decade after its beginnings that questions of race finally confronted the unexamined privilege of white Australian feminism. My analysis interrogates the now normative assumption that early second-wave feminism was indifferent to race, class and sexuality; it is an assumption that disturbingly casts both non-Anglo women and lesbians as belated arrivals to feminist critical practice. This is an argument against forgetting the history of contemporary feminist thought's early and vibrant discussion of race, class and sexuality.

⁵⁰ Miller, "Public Statements, Private Lives": p. 983.

In chapter five, I turn to an examination of pedagogical practice in the feminist classroom, in order to explore how 1970s academic feminism questioned the way in which knowledge circulated and functioned, as well as its relations to power. I examine how feminist courses were taught, mapping the historical specificities of the production of feminist knowledge. Impelled by the desire to bring a new code of ethics and practice to the university and to its modes of knowing, academic feminism enacted a set of pedagogical techniques aimed at articulating a new kind of subjectivity and subjectification. Focusing on the principles of feminist pedagogy on which 1970s academic feminism was premised, I resituate these principles within the context of some of the current preoccupations of academic feminism, in order to interrogate not only how power was thought of at that moment, but also how it was practiced.

In chapter six, I reflect exclusively on present-day academic feminism, since my primary concern is not just how we remember the past, but also the implications of that remembering for feminism's future. Framed by the change of name from Women's Studies to Gender Studies undertaken in recent times in various Australian institutions, I conduct a close reading of two compelling contemporary accounts of Australian academic feminism's history and I explore the concept of gender, as articulated by a group of academic feminism's present-day students. Crucial here, is the figure of feminism's past, and the resilience of feminism's founding narratives. The point I return to throughout the thesis and one that is vital to the thesis as a whole, is that an imagined 1970s feminism is pivotal both to present-day conceptions of that moment and to the possibilities of feminism's future.

Chapter One — The Politics of Knowledge: Authority and the Academy

Introduction

The late 1960s and early 1970s was a period characterised by social unrest around the world. Women, students, intellectuals, blacks, workers — all expressed their alienation in a broad challenge to established values and social ideals. Critical of the very supposition of the ideas of equality and freedom, their critique exhibited a profound scepticism of authority and its consequences — hierarchy and bureaucracy. Not only was this critique embodied in the rise of social movements such as women's liberation and black liberation, it was also articulated through anti-imperialist sentiment, particularly in relation to the Vietnam War. Since universities were one forum in which demands for democratisation were especially influential, it was here that the politicisation of knowledge became acute. In Australia as elsewhere, the modes of governance practised in universities — what was taught and how — were contested. Embedded in such critique was the idea that university hierarchies replicated social hierarchies, and that the very ways universities were organised with specialist, isolated disciplines of study prevented them from addressing the fundamental ethical and moral concerns of contemporary society.

In this chapter, I examine the struggle over the production of knowledge in the university and the way in which authority itself was problematised in the context of that struggle. I hope to complicate my own history, as well as other histories of academic feminism by mapping the cultural and intellectual context that informed feminism's engagement with the academy. Here I focus on one major national event — Free University, or Free U as it was known, which predated feminism's engagement with the academy — taking into account broad demand for the democratisation of universities, both within Australia and overseas. Free U was exemplary in the way that it came to problematise authority. In challenging existing university structures and their practices, Free U's critique was premised upon ideas of social change, expressed through concepts of liberation, freedom and power. In focusing on the specifics of how those involved in Free U positioned themselves in relation to the academy, I examine how they in turn positioned the

academy. At that moment, how did they define themselves as intellectuals aligned with the university?

In thinking through this moment as one in which the history of ideas was entwined with the social production of space, it is Michel Foucault's formulation of space as fundamental to any exercise of power that guides my analysis. In "Space, Power, Knowledge", Foucault writes of the history of ideas as referring neither simply to ideas nor to practices but to "sets of complex exchanges between the two".¹ For Foucault, the two are "indivisible" where what is always interesting is "interconnection, not the primacy of this over that".² Defining space as the form of relations among sites, Foucault focuses his critique on what he calls "heterotopias" or "counter-sites", that is, "those singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others" and yet always in relation with those other spaces.³ Following Foucault, I argue that those at the forefront of struggles over the production of knowledge represented, contested and inverted the existing spaces of the institution by negotiating their own "liberated" spaces. Such spaces were mediated through "a simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space" in which they operated.⁴ As Foucault insists, heterotopias function either "to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space" or in contrary fashion "to create a space that is other, another real space".⁵ In the day-to-day operations of the academy such spaces gave rise to a new set of questions regarding institutions, some of which, as later chapters show, were specifically feminist questions.

What also concerns me here is how institutional conditions and relations negotiated in the everyday are rarely taken account of and incorporated into histories of academic feminism. I take up the broader factors of academic feminism in Australia, locating academic feminism intellectually, culturally, socially and in terms of the academy. In carefully detailing the operations and the interconnections of intellectual and cultural practices embedded in the refiguring of institutional processes, I argue that the activities of academic feminism and concurrent developments such as the reconceptualisation of

¹ Michel Foucault, "Space, Power, Knowledge" in Simon During (ed), *The Cultural Studies Reader*, Routledge, London & New York, 1993: pp. 140-141.

² Foucault, "Space, Power": pp. 140-141.

³ Foucault, "Space, Power": p. 120. In "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics*, no. 16, Spring, 1986, he describes such spaces as operating in "such a way as to suspect, neutralise, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect": p. 24.

⁴ Foucault, "Of Other": p. 24.

⁵ Foucault, "Of Other": p. 27.

the intellectual culture per se (part of a broader challenge to institutions, hierarchy and authority) were interrelated. Underlying each were the changing dynamics of tertiary education during that period. If, as I posit in the introduction, academic feminism's success in forcing other disciplinary modes to rethink their own practices and methodologies had little to do with the cooption of its "radical" potential, in this chapter and in chapter two I examine how academic feminism was taken up and used in a distinct intellectual and educational context. At issue here is academic feminism's negotiation of specific institutional contexts both in the present and the past.

Important to the culture of critique that characterised the late 1960s and early 1970s, were academic staff and, in particular, young and junior academics. I use the term "radicals" throughout this chapter to refer to both students and staff involved in the challenge of existing institutions and practices. In complicating any straightforward separation of students and staff, I hope to unsettle the common framing of the period as one characterised by student unrest alone; a framing that silences the complexities of staff-student relations, the day-to-day materiality of universities and ultimately, the intricacies of ideas of power, liberation and freedom in currency at that point.⁶ The late 1960s and early 1970s was a period in which intellectuals began to frame themselves in the context not only of socially progressive ideals, but also in the context of social activism. In Australia, what occurred was a refiguring of practice, especially of intellectual practice, that is, what it meant to be an intellectual. It was in the culture of the radicals' call for the democratisation of universities that such activism was established (and came to be practised) in the academy. The wider community's rising disaffection with Australia's role in the Vietnam War created a context in which activism within the academy was strongly implicated with activism outside it. Any notion of activism in opposition to academia became increasingly inappropriate. In particular, by the late 1960s and early 1970s many of those who had previously been student radicals were themselves established in the institution as academics. My use of the term radicals is therefore an acknowledgment of the generational dispute that constituted the New Left's emergence in Australia and overseas.⁷

⁶ Examples of those important in activist circles and members of staff in the Department of Government at the University of Sydney in the early 1970s include Sue Wills, Dennis Altman, Lex Watson, Bob Connell, Carole Pateman.

⁷ See Andrew Wells, "The Old Left Intelligentsia 1930 to 1960" in Brian Head & James Walter (eds), *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1988: pp. 214-234 & especially p. 229 where he asserts that the journals of the young left, such as *Arena* and *Intervention*, and even the Communist Party of Australia's (CPA) own theoretical journal, *Australian Left Review (ALR)* provided a forum in which the Old Left were the subject of persistent

In the first part of this chapter, "Radicalising Campus", I trace the activities of the radical student movement on campuses across the country, both in relation to anti-conscription debates and in the context of battles over the democratisation of universities. Situating this culture of radicalism in its international as well as national context, I argue that such action was indicative of a fundamental problematisation of authority, played out in the university context in terms of a struggle over the production of knowledge. In part two, "Contesting Theory and Practice", I focus on one specific instance where university radicals set up an alternative institution. Free U made the very concept of the institution problematic. Contesting existing notions of who could produce knowledge and what counted as knowledge, Free U explicitly challenged both what was taught and how. In confronting authority in intellectual pursuit, Free U deployed a set of tactics designed to circumvent the kinds of struggles over the production of knowledge taking place in existing institutions. The very structure and day-to-day running of Free U, moreover, was founded in opposition to the principles aligned with and identified as the cause of student alienation from "mass" universities.

Part One — Radicalising Campus: Historical and Cultural Contexts

Dennis Altman, an Australian academic and activist who spent time as a graduate student in the United States, and who was heavily involved in the early gay liberation movement both in the US and in Australia, wrote important analyses of the period.⁸ Altman's piece, "Students in the Electric Age", was one of the first attempts made in Australia to explain the agenda of the American Left.⁹ Published in *Arena*, a Melbourne-

criticism; John Docker, "'Those Halcyon Days': The Moment of the New Left" in Head & Walter (eds), *Intellectual Movements*: pp. 289-307, especially p. 296. See also Brian Aarons (for the ALR editorial committee), "The Australian Left: Theory, Strategy & Practice", *Australian Left Review*, May 1972: pp. 3-7 where he discusses the "fragmentation" and "renewal" of the Left, noting the links between the reformation of the Australian Left and that occurring internationally; and "The Comprehension Gap", *Outlook: An Independent Socialist Journal*, June 1968: pp. 1-2.

⁸ Dennis Altman's autobiography *Defying Gravity: A Political Life*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997 provides valuable historical insight into the gay liberation movement in Australia. Altman was author of an early and important Gay Liberation text, *Homosexual: Oppression & Liberation*, Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, New York, 1971.

⁹ Altman, "Students In The Electric Age", *Arena* (Melbourne), no. 21, 1970. Reprinted in Gordon (ed), *The Australian New Left*: pp. 126-47. See also Altman, "The Personal is the Political: Social Movements & Cultural Change" in Head & Walter, *Intellectual Movements*: pp. 308-321. For discussion of the Australian New Left at the time, see S. D'urso (ed), *Counterpoints: Critical Writings on Australian Education*, John Wiley & Sons, Sydney, 1971. See also Richard Gordon (ed), *The Australian New Left: Critical Essays & Strategy*, William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne, 1970 &

based magazine well known for its insistence on the centrality of intellectuals in post-war society, Altman's 1970 article provided valuable insight into the philosophies underpinning the rising student movement.¹⁰ According to Altman, student unrest was "symptomatic of the crisis of authority brought about by rapid change", one that generated demand for a completely new set of values proposed in direct opposition to the prevailing societal consensus.¹¹ As such, ideas of frugality, competition and diligence were deemed superfluous where affluence was the norm and society could provide for all; knowledge and its control, the new economic base of society, rendered universities central and the concerns of the Old Left meaningless.¹² Thus, as far as the internal contradictions of contemporary society were concerned with a crisis of values and consciousness rather than economics, "intellectuals" were deemed the principal social base for the New Left's ideas.

In stressing that universities functioned merely to mould students and the knowledge they produced to fit the hierarchy, bureaucracy and order of existing society, student protesters articulated their primary concern with university independence and engagement against the status quo. While emphasising the supreme importance of the individual, they also prioritised participation and community. And while sharing the philosophical underpinnings of liberalism, freedom and individual rights, they rejected its institutional effects, like hierarchy and bureaucracy.¹³ In arguing that the existing social order denied the possibility of participation and collective decision-making, they turned to the over-bureaucratisation of the university, the "exam culture" and its impact on the way knowledge was produced in and by universities to illustrate their underlying concern with freedom and individual rights.

Head & Walter (eds), *Intellectual Movements*. Head's "Introduction: Intellectuals in Australian Society": pp. 1-44 provides a valuable historical overview.

¹⁰ Altman, "Students": pp. 126-47. Docker discusses Kevin Rowley's response to Altman, "Ideology in the Electric Age: A Critique of Altman", *Arena* (Melbourne), no. 22, 1970, in "Those Halcyon Days": pp. 289-296. Rowley's piece was reproduced alongside Altman's in Gordon (ed), *The Australian New Left*: pp. 148-161.

¹¹ Altman, "Students": p. 128.

¹² One of the earliest articles to deal with the emergence of the New Left in Australia was Alan Barcan's, "The New Left in Australia", published in *Outlook*, vol. 4, no. 3, June 1960: pp. 8-9. *Outlook* also published a number of early articles on the New Left in Britain, including E.P. Thompson's "The New Left", *Outlook*, vol. 3, no. 6, December 1959 (reprinted from *The New Reasoner*, Summer, 1959), which played a formative part in the beginnings of the New Left in Britain in 1957. Thompson was the Editor of *The New Reasoner*. Also, Alan Barcan, "The New Left in England", *Outlook*, vol. 3, no. 3, May 1959: pp. 13-14, in which he discussed the revival of English Socialism.

¹³ Docker, "Those Halcyon Days": p. 293.

Crucial to Altman's conception of "Students in the Electric Age" were the ideas of social theorist Herbert Marcuse, particularly those in his book *One Dimensional Man* (1964). Although influential in the young Left internationally, Marcuse was less well-known in Australia. In an international article on Marcuse reprinted in *Australian Left Review* (ALR) in 1968, the editors of ALR noted Marcuse's increasing profile in Australia as his work received wider circulation amongst the student population.¹⁴ Marcuse's popularity lay in his explanation of how many of those benefiting from the affluence prevalent in advanced industrial society actually felt unfree. Through his concept of alienation, developed through Marx, Marcuse encompassed much of the disaffection so many felt with existing society.¹⁵ Placated by affluence and efficiency, Marcuse argued society had lost the very ability to think or speak in terms of opposition. He further argued that freedom was not necessarily signified by the wide variety of goods and services offered in affluent society, stating: "[i]f these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear... it only testifies to the efficacy of the controls".¹⁶ For Marcuse, "the system", totalitarian to the extent to which it determined not only societal needs and aspirations but also those of the individual extended to all spheres of private and public life, rendering all contradiction irrational and all counteraction impossible on the basis of an overwhelming efficiency and an increased standard of living.¹⁷ For Marcuse, although social cohesion appeared to be for the benefit of all in society, it precluded the very possibility of qualitative social change.¹⁸

In *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse examined the alliance between the intelligentsia — those with "the most advanced consciousness of humanity" — and the most exploited — society's marginalised groups.¹⁹ Such an alliance, he argued, would formulate "the abandonment of repressive satisfaction", and lead the way to "true consciousness".²⁰ He

¹⁴ See the Editorial introduction to Franz Morek, "Marcuse: An Assessment", *ALR*, August-September 1968: pp. 54-65. The article first appeared in *Weg und Ziel*, no. 10, 1967, the theoretical journal of the Austrian Communist Party. In December 1969, *ALR* also reprinted an article, "Interview with Marcuse", which first appeared in *Der Spiegel* on 28 July 1969 under the title "Revolution Out of Disgust": pp. 36-47. See also Robin Gollan's, "One Dimensional Man — A Note on Herbert Marcuse", *Outlook*, October 1968: pp. 21-23.

¹⁵ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964: p. 1.

¹⁶ Marcuse, *One Dimensional*: p. 8.

¹⁷ He goes on to say that "[n]o matter how much such needs may have become the individual's own, reproduced and fortified by the conditions of his existence; no matter how much he identifies himself with them and finds himself in their satisfaction, they continue to be what they were from the beginning — products of a society whose dominant interest demands repression": p. 5.

¹⁸ Marcuse, *One Dimensional*: p. 31 & p. 32.

¹⁹ Marcuse, *One Dimensional*: p. 7.

²⁰ Marcuse, *One Dimensional*: p. 7.

suggested that freedom from the prevailing modes of society would entail not only a rethinking of society itself, but ultimately new modes of human existence. Marcuse saw great potential in the use of the university to prepare a radical change in thinking and in practice. In an interview reprinted in *ALR* in December 1969, he was described as one of the “fathers of the New Left”, a title he rejected, while noting the strong affinity between his ideas and those of the student movement, particularly in the US. He spoke of the New Left as “perhaps [the] most important, if not the only, chance of a future radical transformation”.²¹ Highlighting the crucial importance of universities as the place where “the technical intelligentsia” were trained, he described “the politicisation of this intelligentsia” as an “urgent task”.²² Identifying a number of contradictions engendered in liberalism, he predicted that radical social change would occur in response to “an unbearable disgust with the way and means in which the so-called consumer society misuses and wastes social wealth [in the First World], while it intensively continues to foster poverty and oppression outside [it]”.²³ Radicals overseas and in Australia took up these ideas, turning their attention to “imperialism” as the articulation of liberal hypocrisy. Placing Australia’s role in the Vietnam War under intense scrutiny, radicals looked to what imperialism abroad was doing to society at home, noting that members of the Establishment — those who were enforcing imperial control overseas — were also suppressing freedom and dissent domestically.²⁴

Numerous scholars have noted that Australia’s involvement in the war in Vietnam from 1965 brought its left-wing intellectuals into close affinity with the American Left.²⁵ The Australian antiwar movement borrowed ideas, slogans and organisational practices from its counterparts in the US, even adopting language derivative of the US movement such as “Moratoriums”, “Days of Protest”, “teach-ins” and the use of the term “draft” instead

²¹ Marcuse, “Interview”: p. 43.

²² Marcuse, “Interview”: p. 43.

²³ Marcuse, “Interview”: p. 47.

²⁴ See for example Phillip Law’s article “Education for the Individual in a Technological Society”, *Vestes*, vol. 8, no. 2, July 1970, where he writes that “many young students today feel intuitively that, somehow, the educational system is wrongly oriented and that, with little regard for their own inclinations, they are being channelled along lines that have been designed according to the needs of industry rather than to their needs as human beings. They have found in the writings of Marcuse a philosophy for their dissatisfaction and their demands for “relevance” in education have a certain amount of justification”: p. 125. See also Docker, “Those Halcyon Days”: pp. 289-307.

²⁵ See for example, Ann Curthoys, “Cosmopolitan Radicals” in Barbara Caine et al., *Oxford Companion to Australian Feminism*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1998: pp. 39-48; Docker, “Those Halcyon Days”: pp. 289-307; Barry York, “The Australian Anti-Vietnam Movement: 1965-1973”, *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, vol. 15, 1983/4: pp. 24-41.

of "conscription" in its campaigns.²⁶ In her essay "Cosmopolitan Radicals", Ann Curthoys indicates that American left-wing magazines were freely available in Australia during this period, including publications such as *Ramparts*, *Radical America*, *Win*, *Leviathan* and *Monthly Review*, while *The Australian* newspaper, described by Curthoys, as then a "new, liberal, national and independent-minded" broadsheet, reprinted many American articles and debates.²⁷

Radical unrest in the US began with students holding teach-ins and sit-ins in opposition to the war in Vietnam and as part of campaigns for civil rights.²⁸ Students at the University of California, Berkeley took the lead, beginning with their demands for the removal of prohibitions on Communists speaking on any University of California campus. From this campaign the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, one of the most celebrated organisations of the student movement, was formed.²⁹ In response to

²⁶ For discussion of the international derivation of the Australian movement at the time, see for example, Gerard Henderson's "The Derived Nature of the Australian New Left", *Quadrant*, December 1969: pp. 66-70. Henderson asserts that the "fundamental inauthenticity [*sic*]" of the Australian New Left is apparent in the "purely derivative" nature of the critique of society that it offered. He goes on to identify the main sources of this critique, writing: "From Marcuse they have derived the idea that our society is 'one-dimensional' and 'totalitarian' — a society in which 'repressive tolerance' keeps everyone in check". From C. Wright Mills they have derived the notion that our society is ruled by an interlocking 'power elite.' And from the early works of the young Marx... they have taken the concept of alienation": p. 168. See also transcripts of the main papers given to the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom's conference on Student Power, most of which expressed a general scepticism about student power. See *Quadrant*, July-August 1968.

²⁷ A. Curthoys, "Cosmopolitan": p. 41. She also notes the importance of the British left-wing journal *New Left Review* (NLR) in Australia from 1960, asserting that the Australian left followed debates published in NLR closely, often subscribing to the NLR, although rarely contributing to it. Journals of a similar political bent emerged in Australia — *Outlook* from 1956 and *Arena* in 1963.

²⁸ "Teach-ins" provided an open forum for discussion of issues absent from everyday university courses, but which radicals deemed important, such as discussions about the purpose of the University, its role in society, or ethical and social issues such as the Vietnam War. "Sit-ins" were a form of civil disobedience that involved a non-violent occupation of a space such as university administration buildings, in order to highlight the arbitrary or discriminatory nature of specific decrees/laws (sit-ins were used extensively in civil rights protests). At the University of California's Berkeley campus in November 1962, students held a sit-in against racial discrimination and in May 1965 a national teach-in took place in Washington DC which was broadcast nationwide on radio and television. For discussion see Rhodri Jeffrey-Jones, *Peace Now! American Society & the Ending of the Vietnam War*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1999: p. 61. The development of military research facilities on some university campuses was a focal point of student protest, particularly at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (dubbed "Pentagon East") and Stanford ("Pentagon West").

²⁹ See for example, Mark Kitchell's 1990 documentary *Berkeley in the Sixties*. Sheldon Wolin, a participant in the disruptions that took place on campus at Berkeley in 1964 and 1970 notes, however, that "although their tactics, such as sit-ins, demonstrations and mass rallies, struck many as outrageous in their disrespect for authority, the name the students chose, the Free Speech Movement, was an accurate indicator of the limited and conventional nature of their aims: to have the right to hold political rallies on campus, solicit contributions for political causes, choose speakers for their own events, and not be subject to academic punishment for illegal actions

disciplinary action taken against a number of high-profile students, a group of 6000 joined a sit-in at the main administrative offices at Berkeley in December 1964. The police were called in and eight hundred students were arrested, their fellow students at once went on strike in support, and all teaching was brought to a halt. Most of the academic staff, aghast at the massive police intervention, supported the students. Within the next few months over one hundred similar events took place on campuses across the US.³⁰ The more militant initiatives of the radicals concluded with some of the most dramatic incidents of the period, including the Kent State University incident in 1970, where four students were killed and nine wounded after the national guard opened fire on protestors.³¹

In his account of this period, *The Movement and the Sixties* (1995), Terry H. Anderson argued that "by 1968, more activists were thinking that the purpose of any issue was ultimately to create a confrontation with authority".³² He points out how radicals believed that their action would force the Establishment to respond, either with a disciplinary crackdown on students or with police intervention. Demonstrators would

committed off campus". See Sheldon Wolin, "The Destructive Sixties & Postmodern Conservatism" in Stephen Macedo (ed), *Reassessing the Sixties: Debating the Political and Cultural Legacy*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York & London, 1997: pp. 129-156.

³⁰ See for example, Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy and the United States, 1958-1974*, Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 1998: pp. 536-41; Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement & The Sixties*, Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York, 1995: pp. 100-108.

³¹ William F. Fine and Nancy S. Love, authors of "Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism and Postmodernism", a survey of historiographical trends in current historical literature on the sixties, write of the prevalence of a "death of the sixties narrative" in leftist retellings of the moment, quoting Australian scholar Julie Stephens' description of these efforts as a tracing of "failed attempts to realise the potential for radical change". Fine and Love identify the retellings of conservatives as concerned with the "repairing" of the "moral subversion" of the counter culture. They argue, however, that recent sixties histories explicitly seek to move beyond this polarisation, employing instead what they define as a "cultural turn" in their analyses. Through the cultural lens, radicalism is perceived as an expression of the "quest for personal freedom and authentic identity", where culture is understood as an expression of agency, and material aspirations and anxieties yield to a search for meaning and identity. "Even the most oppositional and seemingly subversive features of sixties movements are viewed more as reflections of society than challenges to it". See *Polity*, vol. 32, no. 2, Winter, 1999: pp. 285-300. Some of the most recent work on sixties radicalism and student unrest — and there is an huge amount — includes: Paul Berman, *A Tale of Two Utopias: The Political Journey of the Generation of 1968*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York & London, 1996; Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, Bantam Books, New York, 1987; James J. Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties: The Making of Postwar Radicalism*, Routledge, New York, 1997; Julie Stephens, *Anti-Disciplinary Protest: Sixties Radicalism & Postmodernism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge & New York, 1998; Jeffrey-Jones, *Peace Now!*; Anderson, *The Movement*; Stephen Macedo (ed), *Reassessing the Sixties: Debating the Political and Cultural Legacy*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York & London, 1997; T. Roszak, *The Making of a Counter-Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition*, Anchor Books, 1969. Also specific texts such as, Donald Alexander Downs, *Cornell '69: Liberalism and the Crisis of the American University*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London, 1999.

get hurt, expelled or arrested, thereby attracting attention amongst the student body and from the media. Like many, Anderson concludes that the protesters' aim was to radicalise the wider student body and to garner community support for their cause. Anderson's observations were borne out by Bill Sales, who as a black militant, protesting at Columbia in the spring of 1968, declared:

If you're talking about revolution, if you're talking about identifying with the Vietnamese struggle, you don't need to go to Rockefeller [sic] Center, dig? There's one oppressor — in the White House, in Low Library, in Albany, New York. You strike a blow at the gym, you strike a blow for the Vietnamese people. You strike a blow at Low Library, you strike a blow for the freedom fighters in Angola, Mozambique, Portugese Guinea, Zimbabwe, South Africa.³³

The idea of revolution seemed increasingly realistic as similar student revolts broke out across the world. French students were demanding an end to the antiquated state of their universities. English students held sit-ins and called for student power at their universities. In Japan students clashed with police. The Czechoslovakian public took to the streets calling for an end to Soviet rule. German radicals revolted in Berlin.³⁴

In Paris in the spring of 1968, what had begun as student protests over United States involvement in Vietnam and gender segregation in university dormitories rapidly transformed into a potentially revolutionary situation.³⁵ From 2 to 10 May various government ministers called for the closure of universities and for the police to suppress student unrest. The police entered campuses, violating the autonomy of the university, and arresting hundreds of protesters. Thousands took to the streets in support of

³² Anderson, *The Movement*: p. 201.

³³ Cited in Anderson, *The Movement*: p. 195, as well as almost every other US scholarly analysis of the events of 1968.

³⁴ For reference to international events see Marwick, *The Sixties*: especially pp. 584-675. For detailed treatment of the situation in the United Kingdom see *NLR*, no. 43, 1967 for discussion of the events at the London School of Economics, and in the Australian context *Vestes*, July 1968: p. 148. An article by radical Anthony Barnett, "A Revolutionary Student Movement", published in *NLR*, no. 53, 1969: pp. 43-53 provides further insight into student unrest in the UK during this period. Barnett makes a crucial point in his discussion of the effectiveness of occupying university buildings. He writes that, "the ruling class uses institutions as one of its main agencies of domination. Institutions are both *weapons*, instruments of repression and demobilisation, and at the same time they are also *areas*, strategic sociological space": p. 49. Barnett mentions the Bristol sit-in, where students from more than a dozen colleges in addition to the university, occupied the central administrative building of the institution and demanded that the university union be opened to all students in the city, forcing the vice-chancellor to call in the police.

³⁵ My account of events in Paris in May 1968 is drawn from George Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968*, South End Press, Boston, 1987: pp. 87-11.

students and in opposition to police brutality, building barricades against the police and refusing to submit. On 13 May, approximately 800 000 workers and students took to the streets of Paris, marching in solidarity with the student revolt. At the conclusion of the march the Sorbonne was seized and a student soviet declared. The occupation of the Sorbonne lasted a month, functioning as a meeting place for students and workers during that time.³⁶

In his analysis of the student movements of 1968, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (1987), George Katsiaficas argues, in line with many others that the events in Paris were internationally significant because they brought together students and workers in solidarity with one another. Without the participation of the working class, the strike, which shut down France for almost a month, would never have occurred and would never have had such a powerful influence in terms of wider society.³⁷ In contrast to the "ultra-centralisation" of France, self-reliance and self-management were championed as new modes of social organisation. Leaflets from the protest called for the formation of autonomous action committees in schools, workplaces, universities and communities. The May 1968 protests in France made feasible the possibility of a future where not only the material but also the cultural needs of the population would be a primary concern; where liberation would be achieved by an "activated population", not

³⁶ The occupation of the Sorbonne was managed by a general assembly that had ultimate power in decision-making, while medical service, food, allocation of space and all other function of the liberated buildings were the responsibility of the occupiers. See Katsiaficas, "The New Left in France: May 1968" in his *The Imagination*: pp. 87-11. And for discussion at the time, Angelo Quattrocchi & Tom Nairn, *The Beginning of the End: France, May 1968*, Verso, London & New York, 1998 [1968] and special edition of *NLR*, no. 52, November-December 1968 which included an Editorial Introduction by its Editor Perry Anderson, discussing the implications internationally. This edition of *NLR* also contained articles by Ernest Mandel, "Lessons of May": pp. 9-32; Andre Gorz, "The Way Forward": pp. 47-66; and Andre Glucksmann, "Strategy & Revolution in France 1968": pp. 67-121. Glucksmann was author of *Strategie et Revolution en France, 1968*, described in the November-December edition of *NLR* as "the fundamental theoretical document of the younger generation of students and intellectuals who launched the movement of May": p. 8. For Australian discussion of the unrest in France in 1968, see for example, Helen G. Palmer, "The Comprehension Gap", Editorial, *Outlook*, August 1968: pp. 1-2. This article neatly draws together the events in Paris and actions occurring around the world. Palmer wrote: "Human needs are the same in capitalist and socialist societies, and these questions are as valid in environments as diverse as China and the USA, Czechoslovakia and Vietnam, Ghana and Sydney": p. 2. R.J. Cahill, Director of Student Publications at the University of Sydney, discussed the Australian press' reaction to events in France in the same edition of *Outlook*. "Every major [Australian] newspaper had something to say in editorials and pirated or reprinted articles", he wrote. "Everybody began talking about 'student power': the majority feared it; some applauded cautiously, others were gleeful". *The Australian* ran an ultimately derisive series titled 'The Student Revolution' and commenced with the questions 'Will Paris be repeated here? Do Australian students really want to take over the universities?' Throughout May the *Sydney Morning Herald* carried a succession of editorials on students, student power, France, academics, youth, demonstrations": p. 6. Some discussion also took place in *Arena*, no. 16, 1968: pp. 3-4.

decreed from above.³⁸ The student soviet at the Sorbonne, for example, “developed a comprehensive plan for restructuring the goals and methods of the university system”.³⁹ The concept of self-management from which this plan was derived, although primarily an initiative of those in the universities, quickly became a fundamental aspiration of both the workers and students involved in the May uprising.⁴⁰

In a special edition devoted to the events in France in 1968, the editors of the British journal *New Left Review* (NLR) boldly declared that the French uprising had “made indisputable the vital role of intellectuals” in the struggle for the transformation of society internationally.⁴¹ At the very beginning of the 1960s, NLR had published C. Wright Mills’ “Letter to the New Left”, in which Mills argued against those in the English Left who still believed that the working class could be a revolutionary force.⁴² Mills wrote of his confusion at the tendency of some leftist writers to “cling so mightily to ‘the working class’”, asserting instead that it would be the intellectuals of society who would make possible radical social change.⁴³ He declared: “Who is it that is getting fed up? Who is it that is getting disgusted with what Marx called ‘all the old crap’? Who is it that is thinking and acting in radical ways? All over the world... the answer’s the same: it is the young intelligentsia”.⁴⁴ Internationally the young Left was not in sympathy with its own ideological inheritance, and in the Australian context the situation was no different.

Alongside Mills and Marcuse, many on the Left in Australia invested their hopes for radical change in the intelligentsia rather than the working class, pointing to events around the world to support their claims.⁴⁵ For Terry Irving, a leading figure in the

³⁷ Katsiaficas, *The Imagination*: p. 93.

³⁸ Katsiaficas, *The Imagination*: p. 102.

³⁹ Katsiaficas, *The Imagination*: p. 107.

⁴⁰ Katsiaficas, *The Imagination*: p. 107. Following 1968, a host of reforms was instituted across France, giving a semblance of participation to students and workers and providing a considerable reduction in hierarchical structures both in universities and the workplace. This relaxation in the formality characteristic of classrooms and factories in France prior to 1968 resulted in the establishment of councils, which included students, to consider university issues; the reorganisation of the university system on the basis of co-governance, with a multidisciplinary focus for each school and the redefinition and subsequent transformation of academic disciplines as they were taught within universities.

⁴¹ “Editorial Introduction”, NLR, no. 52, November-December 1968: p. 7. See also in Australia’s *Arena*, no. 16, 1968: pp. 3-4 on France 1968.

⁴² C. Wright Mills, “Letter to the New Left”, NLR, no. 5, September-October 1960: pp. 18-23.

⁴³ Mills, “Letter”: p. 22.

⁴⁴ Mills, “Letter”: p. 22.

⁴⁵ *Arena* published a number of analyses of the work of Mills, such as Geoff Sharp’s “Sociologists & the New Strata”, *Arena*, no. 1, September 1963: pp. 12-19 and a response to Sharp by Rex Mortimer, “The Sociology of C. Wright Mills”, *Arena*, no. 2, December 1963: pp. 17-19. See Rex Mortimer,

young Left in Australia at the time, it was during this period that Australian intellectuals became "internationalised".⁴⁶ He recalls how crucial international events and scholarship were to the way Australian intellectuals approached their critique of universities and society, and in terms of their thinking through of what being an intellectual meant.⁴⁷

At a May 1964 conference on the Australian "Professional Intelligentsia", one of the editors of *Arena*, Geoff Sharp, insisted that "intellectuals were a distinct stratum associated with a new stage of modern industry".⁴⁸ International events, and the renewal of the Left internationally, prompted reflection in the Australian context on the intellectual culture of society and on the distinctiveness of Australian intellectual culture itself. Sharp and another editor of *Arena*, Doug White, developed a theory of the location and character of intellectuals that greatly influenced the New Left in Australia at the time. In "Toward Self-Awareness", Warren Osmond gave Sharp and White's work the title of "the *Arena* thesis", declaring that it was premised on the idea that "in the intellectual culture there are embryonically embodied ethical standards and social relations which are implicitly socialist".⁴⁹ In an interview "Marxism in the *Arena*" in *Outlook* in 1963, the founders of *Arena* were asked why there was a need to "re-assert" the claims of Marxism

"The New Left", *Arena*, no. 13, 1967: pp. 16-28. Sol Encel's discussion of Mills' influence around the world, "Who's In the Room at the Top? The Top Men", published in *Outlook*, vol. 4, no. 6, December 1960: pp. 6-8, was an early article that discussed the applicability of his ideas in Australia. Encel asserted that "any discussion of the power elite in Australia is bound to take place within the context of Mills' work": p. 6. At the same time, it is important to note that although the ideas of Marcuse and Mills influenced debate in Australia, it would be hard to demonstrate they directly led to the analysis of imperialism by Australian intellectuals. There was a long tradition of such analysis within the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and the Left more generally. I am grateful to Sean Scalmer for drawing my attention to this point.

⁴⁶ Terry Irving, "Interview", Sydney, 31 March 2000.

⁴⁷ Irving, "Interview", 31 March 2000. A. Curthoys' "Cosmopolitan Radicals" supports Irving on this point, as does her "Adventures of Feminism: Simone de Beauvoir's Autobiographies, Women's Liberation & Self-Fashioning", *Feminist Review*, no. 64, Spring, 2000: pp. 3-18.

⁴⁸ Papers given at the conference were published in *Arena*, no. 5, 1964. See Terry Irving, "Intellectuals & Class in Australia in the 1960s & 1970s: A Working Paper & Bibliography" in Laurie Hergenhan (ed), *Australian Studies Centre, Seminar Papers — Nationalism & Class in Australia, 1920-1980*, Australian Studies Centre, University of Queensland, St Lucia, 1982: pp. 47-54. See also Stephen Alomes, "Cultural Radicalism in the 60s", *Arena*, no. 62, 1983: pp. 28-54; John Docker, "Sydney Intellectual History & Sydney Libertarianism", *Politics*, no. 7, May 1972: pp. 40-47; Warren Osmond, "Towards an Intellectual History: Melbourne, Sydney & Docker's Elites", *Meanjin*, vol. 32, no. 2, June 1975: pp. 198-202; Jack Lindsay, "The Alienated Australian Intellectual", *Meanjin*, vol. 26, no. 1, November 1967: pp. 5-18; David Martin, "The Mind Industry: A New Machine, A New Purpose", *Meanjin*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1969: pp. 365-71.

⁴⁹ See Warren Osmond, "Towards Self-Awareness" in Gordon (ed), *The Australian New Left*: p. 166; Richard Gordon & Warren Osmond, "An Overview of the Australian New Left" in Gordon (ed), *The Australian New Left*: pp. 3-39; Head, "Introduction": p. 29 & p. 196. Most recently, Sean Scalmer devotes a chapter to discussing the significance of the *Arena* thesis in his book *Dissent Events: Protest, the Media & the Political Gimmick in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2001: especially pp. 109-136.

as a guide to social comment and analysis. They responded by noting that there had been very little analysis in Australia of "the realities of the Australian scene" in recent years. "The result", they argued, "is that a flood of generalisations based on cultural interpretation of the USA and of Great Britain are washing over Australian experience and tending to submerge it".⁵⁰ They asserted that in Australia in recent times the "Right" had managed to dominate intellectual debate, and to recruit the intelligentsia to its cause. *Arena's* aim was to "forward a left response to the rightist intellectuals" through a Marxist framework, thereby speaking to the "expanding intellectual and technical strata" of Australian society.⁵¹

Summarising the key points of the *Arena* thesis in his "Intellectuals & Class in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s", Irving suggested that for Sharp and White, technical and scientific advances in postwar Australian society had meant that intellectuals were beginning to play an important role in the education of a new strata of highly educated workers.⁵² As the production of goods and services had diminished, knowledge had begun to play an increased role in economic growth. This proposition was not in itself any different to what others here and overseas were arguing.⁵³ However, Irving suggested that Sharp and White's critique was distinctive because of its interest in "intellectual technique, a cultural

⁵⁰ "Marxism in the Arena", *Outlook*, vol. 7, no. 5, October 1963: p. 18.

⁵¹ "Marxism in the Arena": p. 18. *Arena* was also representative of an attempt to challenge the ossified Marxism of the CPA, made up of a collection of people from both the CPA, but also from elsewhere. Thanks to Sean Scalmer for drawing my attention to this point. Interestingly, in "Intellectuals & Class in Australia in the 1960s & 1970s", Irving argues that apart from those writing about intellectuals in traditional Marxist terms, there was a marked commitment on both Left and Right in Australia to the liberal notion of the intellectual. Although Sharp and White were not particularly specific about just *how* "the ideology of the intellectually trained" would arise, Irving writes that they were explicit about the values of that ideology, and those values were "identical to the values attributed to intellectuals by Enlightenment liberals: 'rational, universalist, humane and autonomous'": see pp. 50-51.

⁵² Irving, "Intellectuals & Class": p. 50.

⁵³ Brian Abbey & Bob Catley, "Universities: The Neo-Capitalist Context", *Arena*, no. 21, 1970: p. 35. See also John Playford, "Big Business & the Australian University", *Arena*, no. 17, Summer, 1968-9: pp. 30-38. Referring to a symposium published in *Vestes* in 1969 on the issue of university autonomy, Abbey & Castley wrote of the significance of an anonymous contributor who wrote: "I take autonomy to mean the ability of the university community to determine for itself the method and content of its teaching and research. I take the community to be staff and students, assisted by administrators". S/he then argued that any attempts by "this community" to achieve the latter had been frustrated by a number of "internal forces" which included: "(a) The ultimate control of academic policy by an inner group of committee-minded professors...; (b) The conservatism and apathy of the bulk of the staff; the ignorance and dullness of the bulk of the students; (c) The natural tendency of administrators to obey and buttress the small group in which power resides; (d) The inability of the Senate to behave other than as rubber stamps". The contributor concluded by noting that in his/her opinion, it would be very difficult to find any academics who would publicly support such a view, and in light of this requested that his/her identity be withheld from publication. See Abbey & Castley, "Universities": p. 38.

phenomenon with the potential to radicalise politics and social relations".⁵⁴ More than this, Irving asserted that Sharp and White saw intellectuals as "a distinct social stratum, with their own cohesiveness and interest (the protection of their "technique"), and performing a common social function (the articulation and dissemination of ideas)".⁵⁵ The core of the *Arena* thesis was the relationship between intellectually based practice and the formation of a new social consciousness — the call for a new relationship of theory to practice. In a 1970 editorial, "Beginnings of a New Practice", events that had occurred on campuses across Australia since the late 1960s were labelled as "a phase of the development of an intellectually-based consciousness".⁵⁶ In line with the *Arena* thesis, this consciousness was best understood as an articulation of the realisation increasingly apparent to the university population. For Sharp, the contradiction lay between the liberal rhetoric of a community of scholars and the day-to-day operations of universities.⁵⁷

Beginning in the mid-1960s, Australian universities were the site of serious and ongoing unrest for a number of years.⁵⁸ Universities established in the 1960s such as Monash and Flinders, as well as the established institutions like the University of Queensland were all witness to dramatic scenes on campus.⁵⁹ Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War was the catalyst for much of the early unrest, but it was the issue of conscription in particular, which brought the implications of the war into direct focus for many university

⁵⁴ Irving, "Intellectuals & Class": p. 50.

⁵⁵ Irving, "Intellectuals & Class": p. 50.

⁵⁶ Geoff Sharp, "Beginnings of a New Practice", Editorial, *Arena*, no. 23, 1970: p. 1.

⁵⁷ See Sharp, "Beginnings": pp. 1-6.

⁵⁸ See Warren Osmond, "Student Revolutionary Left", *Arena*, no. 19, 1969: pp. 22-27. *Vestes: The Australian Universities' Review*, the journal of the Federation of Australian University Staff Associations, invited submissions for a symposium on Student Activism, and published a number of articles including, James Spigelman, "Student Activism in Australia": pp. 107-118; Bertram R. Wyllie, Deputy Chancellor of Sydney University, "When Students Speak, Suppose We Listen": pp. 120-123; Richard Walsh, National Union of Australian University Students, "Australian Protest: Odious International Comparisons": pp. 126-130; John Iremonger, ANU student, "Activism at the ANU — The Status of Involvement": pp. 140-144; H. Tarlo, University of Queensland Law School, "Crisis on the Campus?": pp. 144-152.

⁵⁹ In *Student Revolt: LaTrobe University 1967-1973*, Nicholas Press, Canberra, 1989, Barry York argues that *National U*, the publication of NUAUS was particularly important in its efforts at achieving a truly national sense of the student movement. *National U* "brought to the most isolated campuses reports of what their fellow students elsewhere in Australia (and overseas) were doing". According to York, in 1968 and 1969 *National U* appeared more frequently than before, becoming "a virtual encyclopedia of student unrest in Australia": p. 72. In an effort to combat some of the problems that had arisen in older established institutions, new universities such as Flinders and Macquarie were established with a more flexible structure both in terms of the kinds of disciplinary formations possible for its students and in terms of the geographical set up of the campus itself. See *Vestes*, June 1964 & December 1964.

students.⁶⁰ The profound and immediate implications for a large portion of the university population became increasingly apparent with the introduction of conscription in Australia in 1964.⁶¹ In his article "Radicals and Intellectuals: Campus Politics and the Student Left", Barry York wrote of an increased politicisation of Australia's campuses during 1968, as a direct response to proposed amendments to the National Service Act.⁶² In particular, it was Clause 22 of those amendments that caused tension since it proposed to make it "a criminal offence for principal officers of educational institutions to decline to provide confidential information concerning students liable for registration".⁶³ Although the Bill was not passed without amendment, the fact that the government had tried to introduce a Bill which would give them such extensive powers was enough to spark student action.⁶⁴ Such a proposal was perceived by students as indicative of the authorities' alienation from them and as a grave threat to the autonomy of universities.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ One example of earlier student protest initiatives was Student Action For Aborigines or SAFA, an organisation formed by students at the University of Sydney in September 1964. SAFA's aim was to investigate and publicise the living conditions of Aboriginal people in rural Australia, most famously, via its "freedom ride" through New South Wales country towns in February 1965. See Scalmer, *Dissent Events*: especially pp. 21-27.

⁶¹ All 20 year old males were compelled to register for the national service ballot, facing a possible two years in prison if they refused to comply.

⁶² Barry York, "Radicals and Intellectuals: Campus Politics and the Student Left" in Barry York and Richard Nile (eds), *Workers & Intellectuals: Essays on Twentieth-Century Australians from Ten Urban Hunters and Gatherers*, Edward Blackwood, London, 1992: pp. 176-191. York was himself involved in the anti-war movement at Monash University. See "'There's no good time to be arrested': Incident on Plenty Road, Bundoora, 1972", *Overland*, no. 157, 1999: pp. 26-29 for his account of his arrest and subsequent time in prison for violating a university disciplinary committee's edict that he was not allowed within the confines of the campus. See also Ann Curthoys, "Mobilising Dissent: The Later Stages of Protest" in Gregory Pemberton (ed), *Vietnam Remembered*, Weldon, Sydney, 1990. For an interview with seven student leaders from Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane, see "Student Activism: Interviews with Kirsner, Hannan, Cahill, Aarons, Thompson, Duncan and O'Brien — July 1968", *ALR*, no. 7, August-September 1968: pp. 30-39. Each of the student leaders nominated the war in Vietnam as a main cause of student unrest.

⁶³ York, "Radicals and Intellectuals": p. 180. See also Michael E. Hamel-Green, "The Resisters: A History of the Anti-Conscription Movement, 1964-1972" in Peter King (ed) *Australia's Vietnam: Australia in the Second Indo-China War*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1983: pp. 100-128.

⁶⁴ See R.J. Cahill, "Student Power", *Outlook*, August 1968: pp. 6-9.

⁶⁵ At several universities, including LaTrobe, Flinders and Sydney, student unions and offices were offered as sanctuaries for those who were called up for service. In September 1971, several underground resisters took up residence in the building of the Melbourne University Union, publicly taking part in actions on campus opposing conscription. One of those participating in the campaign, Michael Hamel-Green, has argued that whereas previously the anti-conscription movement had contested the *right* of the government to enforce conscription, then it began to contest the *power* of the government to enforce conscription. For the resisters, "the point in appearing publicly was not to invite arrest but to challenge the power of the police to arrest them". A few days later efforts to capture the resisters were frustrated, when police raided the building only to find that they were unable to locate, let alone arrest them. Hidden away in prearranged locations, the men had escaped capture while their supporters, offering no resistance to police, had staged a sit-down protest in support of their cause. See Hamel-Green, "The Resisters": pp. 123-124.

At the University of Queensland student political action reached its peak in opposition to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. When the First Secretary of the South Vietnamese Embassy in Australia visited the University in September 1970, violent scenes erupted as students clashed with police, leading the *Courier Mail* to describe the incident as a "near riot".⁶⁶ Responding in exasperation to this and numerous related incidents that had taken place during the previous few years, the University's then Vice Chancellor, Sir Zelman Cowen made a personal appeal to students and staff of the University for "a campus free from violence, ugly and intemperate language, and march and countermarch".⁶⁷ Condemning the University's "failure to uphold the much vaunted traditions of free speech and academic freedom", the local press declared it a "day of shame".⁶⁸ At Flinders University, it was not so much mass collective action, but rather the action of certain individuals that attracted the attention of university authorities. Professor of Philosophy, Brian Medlin was the most visible figure on the Left at Flinders during this period. Medlin and three of his four colleagues in the Philosophy Discipline had converted to revolutionary socialism in 1970 — an identification that saw them turn away from the rarefied fields of analytic and linguistic philosophy to an applied philosophy advocating programs for action.⁶⁹ Motivated by their belief that universities had a duty to instigate progressive change in Australian society, they introduced into the curriculum courses such as "Marxism" and "Applied Philosophy: Vietnam, Imperialism and the Nature of Man".⁷⁰

At Monash, it was students who led the unrest with the University's Labor Club heading a high-profile campaign directed primarily against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. According to Monash's Vice-Chancellor at the time, Louis Matheson, the fervour with which the Labor Club conducted this campaign was partly as a result of their strong ideological commitment "to supporting North Vietnam, the National

⁶⁶ See Malcolm I. Thomis, *A Place of Light and Learning: The University of Queensland's First Seventy-Five Years*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1985: pp. 320-321.

⁶⁷ Cited in Thomis, *A Place*: p. 325.

⁶⁸ See Thomis, *A Place*: pp. 320-321. The next event to provoke mass student action at the University of Queensland was the South African Rugby Union team's visit to Queensland in July 1971, which saw the State government declare a state of emergency. In response, students occupied the University Union, calling for a strike and encouraging their fellow students and staff to boycott lectures for the duration of the Springboks' visit. See Thomis, *A Place*: p. 323.

⁶⁹ See David Hilliard, *Flinders University: The First 25 Years, 1966-1991*, Flinders University of South Australia, Adelaide, 1991, especially pp. 57-58.

⁷⁰ See Hilliard, *Flinders University*: p. 57. Hilliard quotes Medlin on the philosophy behind his approach to teaching: "The practice of concealing one's views for teaching purposes strikes us as odious. Objectivity is most likely to result from frank and explicit advocacy. For this reason, we do not claim a right to teach as we do. We acknowledge it as a duty": p. 58.

Liberation Front and the Viet Cong".⁷¹ Although heavily involved in a number of high-profile demonstrations during this period, the incident that drew most attention to the Monash campus was the Labor Club's initiative to solicit contributions for Medical Aid to the NLF Red Cross in 1967. In light of rising concerns over the Labor Club's activities in support of the National Liberation Front (NLF) prior to this initiative, Matheson instigated a decree designed to prevent the raising of funds intended for the NLF by any organisation on campus. The Labor Club ignored the decree. During the Disciplinary Committee hearings six months later, Albert Langer explained the Club's actions:

It certainly was a premeditated decision to set up this fund. It was done consciously in the knowledge that the Vice-Chancellor had prohibited it. It was done because we thought that the Vice-Chancellor's direction was invalid and we knew that the press would be there.⁷²

In openly flouting their opposition to Matheson's decree, the students challenged the University's authority both to prevent such protests and to punish students for expressing opposition. The Labor Club's actions were a response to the University's silence on the issue of war, which for the Labor Club was paramount to tacit support. They argued that the role of any university was to engage in open discussion of the ethical and moral issues rising out of events such as the Vietnam War.

In their criticism of the liberal consensus that had defined the function of the university until that moment as the pursuit and transmission of knowledge for its own sake amongst a community of scholars which discussed and examined differing views in a dispassionate and rational manner, radicals argued that the university was neither neutral nor value-free.⁷³ Important to the role and function of tertiary education during this time was the report of the Menzies' appointed Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education established by the Commonwealth Government in 1961 and released in 1964, known as the *Martin Report*.⁷⁴ The Committee was set up to consider "the pattern of

⁷¹ Louis Matheson, *Still Learning: Louis Matheson*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1980: p. 122.

⁷² From "Transcript of the Discipline Committee Meeting", 19 September 1967 cited in Matheson, *Still Learning*: p. 29.

⁷³ See for example D.H. Monro, "The University & The Community", *Vestes*, July 1968: pp. 133-138; an early articulation of such ideas came in the form of a Letter to the Editor entitled "The Hungry Sheep Look Up, And Are Not Fed..." in *Vestes*, September 1965: p. 195. Also most famously, the comments of University of California, Berkeley's Clark Kerr on the "multiversity", were repeatedly reproduced in much of the Australian literature. Docker also notes the character of this critique in his article "Those Halcyon Days": pp. 294-295.

⁷⁴ See *Tertiary Education in Australia: Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia to the Australian Universities Commission*, The Committee, Melbourne, 1964.

tertiary education in relation to the needs and resources of Australia" and to make recommendations "to the Australian Universities Commission on the future development of tertiary education".⁷⁵ It proposed that it was "both realistic and useful to regard education as a form of national investment in human capital".⁷⁶ In *Overland* in 1965, Ian Turner commented on the contradictions engendered by postwar expansion in tertiary education. Turner asserted that university expansion "created institutional situations for creative thought — and stifled it as the universities were transformed more and more into trade-training institutions".⁷⁷ In another article, Turner noted that the challenge that industrial society represented to "the traditional conception of a university as a community of scholars concerned with the advancement of learning and 'the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake'", was one that demanded "that universities 'serve the interests of the community'".⁷⁸ For Turner, this challenge left universities with a troublesome dilemma: were they there to provide "technicians" for the new technical society or to explore knowledge in a detached and rational manner? He also questioned how students were to serve the "interests of the community" when a university education seemed "to involve a contradiction between the pursuit of learning and the need to equip [themselves] for a career".⁷⁹

The most radical critics of changes to tertiary education during this time included the editors of *Arena*. In a 1967 editorial, *Arena* argued that the publication of the *Martin Report* had brought to a head the tension between those who supported university expansion as a matter of course and those increasingly concerned by the consequences of such expansion.⁸⁰ While acknowledging that the use of the intellectually-trained to perform key functions in industrial and commercial initiatives was not new, the critical issue was whether or not an intellectual culture could be maintained, once universities became primarily concerned with the vocational.⁸¹ The Editors argued that the rise of

⁷⁵ Cited in E.L. Wheelwright (ed), *Higher Education in Australia*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965: p. xii. A detailed review of the *Martin Report* appeared in the June 1965 issue of *Vestes*.

⁷⁶ Cited in Geoff Sharp, Editorial, *Arena* (Melbourne), no. 19, 1969: p. 2.

⁷⁷ Ian Turner, "Intellectuals in Australian Life", *Overland*, no. 3, December 1965: pp. 30-32.

⁷⁸ This critique was common at this moment amongst those both on the Left and Right. See for example, Osmond, "Toward Self-Awareness" in Gordon (ed), *The Australian New Left*: pp. 166-216; Abbey & Catley, "Universities": pp. 26-38.

⁷⁹ Ian Turner, "Conflicting Conceptions of a University", *Arena*, no. 3, Autumn, 1964: pp. 4-7.

⁸⁰ See also Bob Connell in *Vestes*, July 1969: pp. 141-149.

⁸¹ Geoff Sharp, Editorial, *Arena*, no. 12, 1967: pp. 2-4. See also John Playford, "Big Business & the Australian University", *Arena*, no. 17, Summer, 1968-9: pp. 30-39. *Vestes*, vol. xii, no. 2, July 1969, published a symposium on University Autonomy. The Editorial to the edition began: "When the Editorial Advisory Board a year ago, chose University Autonomy as the topic of this symposium, the subject appeared less controversial than it has become. Everybody agreed that the universities could not survive without government support, and that the acceptance of public money involved

bureaucratic modes of organisation and decision-making would bring about the destruction of the university's autonomy.⁸² While there were those on the right in Australia, like James McAuley, the editor of *Quadrant*, who believed the "normal" state of the university was "one where abstract truths are pursued in scholarly calm by distinguished persons who extend to students the privilege of clinging to the nether end of a master-servant relationship", Sharp affirmed that such ideas served only to obscure the implications of the transformation of universities into centres for the formation of human capital.⁸³ But for McAuley, student protest was destructive of this ideal of the university. In *Quadrant* in 1969, McAuley asserted that student protest was beginning "to convert the university from a seat of scholarship into a privileged sanctuary for the prosecution of guerilla warfare against the community and the government".⁸⁴ Responding to McAuley, Sharp declared that such comments were incapable of recognising that the status quo in universities essentially represented the interests of those who ran the "industrial system", and that the structure of knowledge developed in universities, as well as "the character students assume through exposure to it", were likewise instrumental to the requirements of "the system".⁸⁵ For Sharp and other radicals, reform was not enough; universities needed a thorough shake-up of their ideas and practices.

In the face of student unrest on his campus, the Vice-Chancellor of LaTrobe declared in 1969: "If the University is so passive that there are no student protests and complaints then it is a very poor university".⁸⁶ Open to expressions of dissent, but not willing to make room for real change in the form of student participation in any of the areas traditionally conceived as the prerogative of academic staff, his view of campus unrest was viewed by students as classically liberal. In his history of the University of Queensland, *A Place of Light and Learning* (1985), Malcolm I. Thomis argues that such comments were "the classic pattern and language of accommodating reformists".⁸⁷ Designed to "undermine revolutionaries", they planned for "a gradual integration of the

some measure of financial control. There were differences of opinion on the extent of control that was necessary and acceptable; however, few people doubted that Australian universities were autonomous, and ought to be so. Recent events have thrown doubt on both assumptions... [T]here remain two questions: 'Who constitutes the university?' and 'Against whom should it guard its autonomy?': p. 101.

⁸² Sharp, "In Defence", *Arena*, no. 19, 1969: p. 2.

⁸³ Sharp, "In Defence": p. 1.

⁸⁴ James McAuley, "Admirable Jeunesse?", *Quadrant*, no. 57, 1969: p. 50.

⁸⁵ Sharp, "In Defence": p. 2.

⁸⁶ *The Australian*, 25 August 1969: n.p.

⁸⁷ Thomis, *A Place*: p. 319.

students into the established machinery of the institution".⁸⁸ In an expression of their dissatisfaction with the piecemeal policies of the University of Queensland's governing body, members of the more radical faction of the student movement participated in a sit-in in June 1969 during a Senate meeting, and were eventually successful in having three of their members address the meeting. University of Queensland student leader, Brian Laver, spoke on the question of "What is the role of the University within society?"⁸⁹ Hoping to highlight the hypocrisy of University authorities, he argued that the University's assumed accommodation of criticism was essentially undermined by its persistence in cracking down on dissent.⁹⁰ Radicals wanted more than just conciliatory change or minimal representation.

Demands for democratisation were not only concerned with university authority in the form of bureaucracy, but also with the ways it manifested itself in teacher-student relations. Reviewing contemporary philosophies of education, M. J. Charlesworth wrote in 1973 of "a good deal of discussion about the possibility of 'education without schools'" in Australia and around the world.⁹¹ Charlesworth referred specifically to Paul Goodman's *Community of Scholars* (1962), Ivan Illich's *Education Without Schools* (1973) and Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), describing the three as "the chief agents-provocateurs" in anti-institutional debate.⁹² Although different in their ideas, according to Charlesworth, all three agreed that "the schooling system as we know it has become an anti-educational instrumentality".⁹³ They asserted that in their very essence educational institutions were breeding authoritarianism, inequality, elitism and a stifling bureaucracy. Like Illich and Goodman, intellectuals in Australia made declarations of the "incurably authoritarian, elitist and paternalistic" character of institutions, particularly tertiary institutions.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Thomis, *A Place*: p. 319.

⁸⁹ Cited in Thomis, *A Place*: p. 315.

⁹⁰ University radicals were supported by comments such as those made in a 1970 Editorial in *Arena* which asserted that the politics of confrontation being practised by radicals had brought about a situation where "arbitrary power in the university now begins to appear as such". Articulating a position many agreed with, the Editorial declared that "as the spell of their hegemony is broken, the commitments to university ideals claimed by the 'professional-conciliatory-administrative mandarins' emerge as a rhetorical foil". See Geoff Sharp, "Authority & the University", Editorial, *Arena*, no. 21, 1970: p. 1.

⁹¹ M. J. Charlesworth, "The Free University" (the text of a talk given in an ABC series of broadcasts entitled "Images of Authority"), *Dialogue*, vol. 7, no. 1, April 1973: pp. 7-15.

⁹² Paul Goodman, *Community of Scholars*, Vintage Books, New York, (1962) 1964; Peter Buckman (ed) with contributions from Ivan Illich, *Education Without Schools*, Souvenir Press, London, 1973; Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, (1972) 1990.

⁹³ Charlesworth, "The Free University": p. 8.

⁹⁴ Charlesworth, "The Free University": p. 10.

Premised on a Platonic conception of education prior to the postwar influx of large numbers of students, Australian universities had been reserved for the privileged. In the maintenance of a clear hierarchical distinction between those deemed "experts" in knowledge and those deemed "non-experts", such a conception was largely sustained through to the 1970s. Highlighting the contradictions apparent in such a model of learning, Charlesworth asked what many had asked before him: "How is it in a democratic society, committed to the sacred principle of equality, that we can tolerate, and even rejoice in, elitist institutions of education such as our universities are?"⁹⁵ For Charlesworth, the elitism and authority assigned to the university in its relation to society, was matched by the "strongly authoritarian" and "paternalistic" nature of the relationship between academic staff and students characteristic of Australian universities.⁹⁶

During this period, the ideas of Paulo Freire became increasingly prominent, since he proposed an alternative model to such a conception of education.⁹⁷ In *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), Freire gave explicit attention to the teacher-student relationship, arguing that education should be conceived as "the practice of freedom".⁹⁸ Unlike Illich and Goodman, Freire was concerned with the type of education practiced in institutions. For those in the Australian context who focused their critique on the process of learning and on knowledge itself as an agent of social change, Freire's work was especially informative. And for those at the forefront of feminist incursions into existing institutions, Freire was important since he addressed the ways in which power operated in pedagogical practice and, in particular, the ways in which university hierarchies replicated social hierarchies.

⁹⁵ Charlesworth, "The Free University": p. 10.

⁹⁶ Charlesworth, "The Free University": p. 10.

⁹⁷ One of the places in which Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was widely discussed in Australia was in the Melbourne journal *Dialogue*. His work was often considered in relation to that of other radical educationists such as Ivan Illich and Paul Goodman. See for example, Garry Eastman, "Freire, Illich and Revolutionary Pedagogy", *Dialogue*, vol. 6, no. 1, May-June 1972: pp. 17-29; Rowan Ireland, "Paulo Freire in Context", *Dialogue*, vol. 6, no. 2, September 1972: pp. 28-32; Charlesworth, "The Free": pp. 7-15; J.A.B. Duffy, "Deschooling, Illich, Freire, et al.", *Dialogue*, vol. 8, no. 1, April 1974: pp. 15-18; and Max Charlesworth, "What Do We Mean By De-Schooling?", (Special Edition: Di Heath (ed), "The Educational Power Game"), *Dissent*, no. 30, Spring, 1973: pp. 24-31. On Freire in Australia, see also "Talking with Freire", *Farrago*, 26 April 1974: p. 21; Thomas G. Sanders, "The Educational Method of Paulo Freire", (Special Edition: Di Heath (ed), "The Educational Power Game"), *Dissent*, no. 30, Spring, 1973: pp. 16-23; and an article echoing many of Freire's ideas in the Australian context, Glenn Martin's "Authority & Experience", *Honi Soit*, no. 9, 1974: pp. 6-7. Martin writes: "the Experts are happy because they Know & the listeners are happy because they know that the Experts know": p. 6.

In order to overcome the situation of oppression, Freire argued, it was the oppressed themselves who would have to come to a critical recognition of the causes of their own oppression. Through "praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it", the oppressed would create a new situation, one that would make possible "the pursuit of a fuller humanity".⁹⁹ It was through the very process "of fighting for the restoration of their humanity", Freire contended, that the oppressed would be empowered to realise their own freedom.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the pedagogy of the oppressed was the pedagogy of those engaged in their own fight for liberation: it was education as the practice of freedom, as the "awakening of critical consciousness".¹⁰¹

According to Freire, the relationship between teacher and student characteristic of existing educational institutions was one necessarily devoid of this consciousness. Operating wholly in a mode in which the teacher as narrating subject would lead the students as patient, listening objects, the teacher considered him/herself the necessary opposite to the student. For Freire, such a relationship negated the very possibility of "partnership" between teacher and student. Indeed, the contradiction between teacher and student, maintained and even stimulated through such a conception of education, he argued, mirrored the oppressive character of society as a whole:

1) The teacher teaches and the students are taught; 2) The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; 3) The teacher thinks and the students are thought about; 4) The teacher talks and the students listen — meekly; 5) The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined; 6) The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply; 7) The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher; 8) The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it; 9) The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students; 10) The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Freire, *The Pedagogy*: p. 21.

⁹⁹ Freire, *The Pedagogy*: p. 28 & p. 24.

¹⁰⁰ Freire, *The Pedagogy*: p. 22.

¹⁰¹ Freire, *The Pedagogy*: p. 16.

¹⁰² Freire, *The Pedagogy*: pp. 46-47.

Here knowledge is “a gift bestowed” upon those who are considered knowledge-less by those who consider themselves knowledgeable.¹⁰³ According to Freire, this resulted in a situation in which students would “describe themselves as ignorant and say the ‘professor’ is the one who has knowledge”.¹⁰⁴ He wrote of the rarity of students who were not alienated from their own decision-making, realising that they also “‘know things’”. In the final analysis, Freire predicted, it was the students themselves who would be “filed away”, their creativity inhibited and their ability to think and act as conscious beings denied.¹⁰⁵

According to Freire an alternative lay in the reconciliation of student-teacher hierarchy so that each could be both teacher *and* learner simultaneously. Insisting that through dialogue “the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher” would cease to exist, Freire predicted that a new term would emerge: “teacher-student with students-teachers”.¹⁰⁶ Here, both teacher and student would be jointly responsible, arguments based on “authority” would have no validity and students would be what Freire described as “critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher”.¹⁰⁷ The practice of education for Freire was one imbued with power, rather than one free of values.¹⁰⁸ In an interview with the University of Melbourne’s student newspaper *Farrago* in 1974, Freire remarked: “when we think of education, we have to think of power: education is a political event and also education implies a certain theory of knowledge put into practice”.¹⁰⁹ Drawing on Freire, radicals in Australian universities challenged the premise fundamental to the very constitution of the university.

¹⁰³ Freire, *The Pedagogy*: p. 39.

¹⁰⁴ Freire, *The Pedagogy*: p. 39.

¹⁰⁵ Freire, *The Pedagogy*: p. 39. Freire argued that “banking” education, with its “verbalistic [*sic*] lessons, reading requirements, the methods for evaluating ‘knowledge,’ the distance between the teacher and the taught, the criteria for promotion: everything in this ready-to-wear approach serves to obviate thinking”: p. 50.

¹⁰⁶ Freire, *The Pedagogy*: p. 53

¹⁰⁷ Freire, *The Pedagogy*: pp. 53-54.

¹⁰⁸ Freire, *The Pedagogy*: p. 52.

¹⁰⁹ “Talking with Freire”: p. 21. In an interview with Melbourne University’s student newspaper *Farrago* on 26 April 1974, Freire was asked about the relevance of his work to the Australian context. He replied, “You as students are receiving knowledge. In my point of view, knowledge cannot be given; it is not a gift. In order for me to know, I have to create knowledge, by *acting*, by having *praxis*... According to my ideas, practice and experience... I cannot think about what to do in Australia. It is a task for Australians and not for me”. He continued, “I don’t have real praxis if I only speak”, and warned that “one of the risks of institutions is to become institutionalised, that is to stop at the level of *blah, blah, blah*”. Speaking of knowledge not as something static or something only those “in the know” can impart, he described “a process which implies the praxis

Writing in an Editorial in *Arena* in 1970, Sharp noted that radicals were preoccupied with the everyday in their challenge to universities. At one level, he noted:

all this may be seen as a question of institutional structures and of the way in which power is held within them. But for the individual student and staff member the answers given at that level have a directly personal meaning. They define the terms — the conditions — of his life situation.¹¹⁰

Expressing their concern with the predominance of university courses in prescribed specialist areas, radicals argued that such courses offered little to the quality of personal and social life, and merely acted to fulfil the demands of the economy. Methods of assessment and in particular exams as a form of assessment were subject to intense criticism. At Monash, in the midst of an occupation of the University's Administration Building in 1974, the University's student newspaper *Lot's Wife* wrote:

the roots of domination, the locus of repression in the university, reside in the activity and consciousness that constitute the everyday life of its members: activity and consciousness that consistently and ceaselessly undermine the capacity for self-determination, creativity and free critical thought.¹¹¹

Echoing sentiments expressed throughout the national student press, the ANU student newspaper *Woroni*, wrote of the effect of exam-based assessment on "the mind of the learner":

Instead of following his or her own line of interests the student is forced to study only those things which are examinable, in order to succeed within the system. The spirit of competition which arises from the nature of the exam system, in which people are herded into halls where fellow students become a threat to individual success, alienates students from the products of their labour as well as from their peers.¹¹²

As an alternative, students were urged to choose a method of assessment consistent with the specific course they were enrolled in, rather than one imposed uniformly on all

of human beings on the reality". In this sense then, "knowledge cannot be transferred; it has to be made and remade": p. 21.

¹¹⁰ Sharp, "Authority & the University": p. 2.

¹¹¹ "Editorial", *Lot's Wife*, 7 October 1974: p. 2.

¹¹² The first quote is from Phil O'Carroll, "God Is An Exam", *Woroni*, n.d. [1974], n.p.; and the second, "Fact & Fancy", *Woroni*, 4 April 1974: p. 4.

courses. Echoing the ideas of Freire, amongst others, they proclaimed "participation is in itself education".¹¹³ They endorsed assessment that would be part of the learning process not contradictory to it.¹¹⁴ In 1974 as part of their protests against exam-based assessment, the ANU Students' Association distributed stickers to attach to exam papers, one of which began with the statement, "I am sitting this exam in 1974 only under protest, because no creative alternatives have been allowed for those students who desire them".¹¹⁵ A similar confrontation took place between students and staff at Monash in 1972 as part of ongoing attempts to give students a role in determining their own course content and assessment. *Lot's Wife* wrote:

Of course Matheson and his cronies are scared that Monash as a respectable production plant for graduates will decline in status if its previous quality-control methods are taken away. Of course they are nervous of the increased unrest that would follow from removing the social control inherent in examinations... [W]hat petrifies them beyond fear is the spectre that students should gain mastery over their own existence.¹¹⁶

Concern at the rise of "efficiency" as a criterion of university purpose, and "results" or "assessment" being the only matter of importance for those completing a degree, led radicals to focus their attention on the necessity for participatory learning and for "a belief in the transmission and extension of human culture by education".¹¹⁷

Much of the protest by radicals focused on university bureaucracy. Its visibility in the day-to-day running of the university was perceived by students as typical of the disparity between students and staff and the increasingly hierarchical nature of the university's very structure. At ANU in 1974, students occupied the Chancelry as part of their demands for a more democratic decision-making structure for the university. University authorities and their perceived preoccupation with inane procedure and detail rather than ideas were taken to be symbolic of what students found frustrating in their daily interaction with the institution. *Woroni* reported that the Vice-Chancellor and members of the standing committee had caused a "fuss" over the student occupation of the tea room on the fourth floor of the Chancelry building, and had subsequently refused to continue

¹¹³ *Woroni*, 24 July 1974: p. 2.

¹¹⁴ *Woroni*, 24 July 1974: p. 2.

¹¹⁵ *Woroni*, 30 October 1974: p. 2.

¹¹⁶ *Lot's Wife*, 23 October 1972: p. 3.

¹¹⁷ "Proposal for Prospectus of the Free University", 1967: p. 1, Terry Irving Papers.

negotiations with the protesters until the issue was resolved. According to *Woroni*, protesters found it

incredible that a group of senior academics could put a meeting of such seriousness at stake over a tea room, particularly when the tea room in question was not the only one in the building, and in fact there was only one administration official working on the fourth floor. Students offered to make tea for that official, or to let her into the tea room to make her own tea, but were not prepared to give in to petty requests by petty-minded officials who refused to recognise that the students representing the occupiers had made any compromise at all in agreeing to give up most of the Chancelry building.¹¹⁸

Such incidents were deemed indicative of the University's inability and unwillingness to take student concerns seriously.

Students were not the only actors to feel disempowered by the internal organisation of universities. Junior members of staff similarly argued that they were held in check by the hierarchical structure of institutions as well as by individual departments. As early as 1962, J.R. Wilson, Senior Lecturer in Economics at the University of Sydney, wrote in *Outlook* of "the pressure of student numbers", arguing that "the size of the academic community rapidly passes the point where it could with any truth be described as a 'close and intimate community in which scholars wish to support one another at every point'".¹¹⁹ Wilson asserted that the "bureaucratic revolution" was as much a problem within the University as in any institution, drawing particular attention to its implications for younger members of academic staff.¹²⁰ He described the University as an institution organised on "a hierarchical basis with a definite line of command", arguing that junior members of staff who did "the bulk of teaching and a large part of the really new research [had] little or no say in the determination of university policy".¹²¹ For Wilson, this absence of proper communication threatened the cohesive structure of the university community.¹²²

¹¹⁸ *Woroni*, 10 September 1974: p. 1.

¹¹⁹ J.R. Wilson, "Tradition & Change", *Outlook*, vol. 6, no. 5, October 1962: pp. 5-7. Wilson's article was part of a collection of papers published in this edition of *Outlook* under the title "What is a University?"

¹²⁰ Wilson, "Tradition": p. 7.

¹²¹ Wilson, "Tradition": p. 7.

¹²² Wilson, "Tradition": p. 7.

In the same way that ideas of social change and a broad challenge to hierarchy and bureaucracy were crucial to the way radicals came to argue that they were disenfranchised by existing institutional practices, a set of ideas not just about the institution, but about the moral and ethical concerns of contemporary society itself were reflected in feminism's intervention into existing knowledge. In what follows, I draw together the discontent expressed in feminist critiques of knowledge and in the reconceptualisation of the intellectual culture per se.

**Part Two —
Contesting Theory and Practice:
Free University¹²³**

Founded in 1967 in opposition to the principles aligned with and identified as the cause of student alienation from "mass" universities, Sydney's Free University (Free U) endeavoured to create a forum free from the institutional effects and the hierarchy and bureaucracy engendered by the academy in its existing form.¹²⁴ Crucial to Free U's formulation was the way it came to problematise authority. Contesting existing notions of who could produce knowledge and what counted as knowledge, Free U provided a direct provocation to the modes of governance at work in the academy — what was taught and how. Its critique exhibited a profound scepticism of institutional processes. Here, I examine how Free U came to problematise institutionalised knowledge, exploring the modes of engagement that it utilised in questioning authority, bureaucracy and power. I contend that many of the same concepts were rendered problematic and a similar critical pedagogy adopted in the teaching of academic feminism in Australian

¹²³ Many thanks to Bob Connell and Terry Irving, both of whom provided me with access to their personal collections relating to Sydney's Free University.

¹²⁴ Sydney was not the only place in Australia where a Free University was at least proposed. In "Resistance to the System", an article published in *Quadrant*, July-August 1968: pp. 19-22, Paul Comrie-Thomson, then editor of the University of New South Wales' student newspaper *Tharunka*, made mention of "a sort of a free university within the university" at the University of Queensland. A memorandum to all staff members at UQ [n.d.], located amongst archival material relating to Sydney's Free U (in Terry Irving's possession), proposed the establishment of a scheme called *Genesis* and similar in philosophy to that set up in Sydney. Its convenor, Michael Kelly, wrote, "*Genesis* is the name given to a genuine attempt by students and staff to involve students at this University in the total university process". *Genesis* "calls for individual staff members to allow their classes to accommodate interested students from other faculties, who might be interested in the course but not willing or able to take the subject as a unit. It also requests that staff and students combine in setting up informal discussion groups (related or unrelated to the subject matter being taught by the lecturer) which would run regularly for the whole of second term on an experimental basis". Also contained in Irving's archive are letters addressed to Sydney's Free U from an Adelaide group expressing interest in setting up their own version of a free university, and a small amount of literature referring to an alternative learning initiative that was taught through the University of New England (n.d) in approximately the same period. As far as I can

universities from the early 1970s. Where Free U and 1970s academic feminism intersect is in their mutual concern with institutionalised knowledge, and the way in which each problematised authority in the context of that concern. While Free U attempted to separate itself from the university by establishing itself outside existing institutions and in opposition to their practices, academic feminism was situated inside the university, and sometimes inside existing departments. By thinking through a nuanced understanding of what institutionalised knowledge meant during the 1960s and 1970s, I hope to demonstrate that Free U was neither a precondition of academic feminism, nor that academic feminism was derivative of Free U, but that both were expressions of similar discontent. Here, I further contend that part of the aim of this thesis is to locate the development of academic feminism at least as much within the history of the academy, as within the history of feminism.

Established by a number of young staff and students drawn predominantly from the University of Sydney, and also involving participants from the University of New South Wales, Sydney's Free U was founded on the principle of self-directed learning.¹²⁵

Established at the end of 1967 in a house in Darlington, just down the hill from Sydney University, Free U later expanded to encompass an old pub in Redfern and a house in Paddington. At its peak in the summer of 1968/9, it taught a wide variety of courses including, "The Radical Tradition in Australia", "Atrocities Examined", "Equality and Human Society", "Mass Media", "The Enjoyment of Poetry", "The Brain", "Male-Female Relationships", "Chemical and Biological Warfare" and "Morality and Moral Sense".¹²⁶

According to the Committee for a Free University, the body responsible for launching the initiative, Free U was "free in spirit, not in cash", since it did not receive government grants, and it had no scholarship scheme:

It grants no degrees and offers no status. It is a small group of students and teachers who come together outside the established university system because they find that system inadequate. It takes on the major tasks of a university — advanced research and advanced-level teaching related to its research — but extends its interests to issues

surmise, however, Sydney's Free University was the only initiative of its kind to get up and running.

¹²⁵ See Goodman, *Community*, and Goodman & Alvin Duskin, "Dialogue: How to Make A College" in Paul Jacobs & Saul Landau, *The New Radicals*, Penguin Books, 1967. For an account of the beginnings of Sydney's Free U see W.F. Connell et al., *Australia's First: A History of the University of Sydney, Volume 2, 1940-1990*, University of Sydney in association with Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1991-1995: pp. 360-361.

and subject matters frozen out of the regular university courses. It is based on cooperation instead of competition; it breaks down the formal role-division of student and staff, inferior and superior; and experiments with teaching methods.¹²⁷

Framing itself as an alternative university, Free U represented, contested, and inverted existing institutional spaces by negotiating its own liberated spaces, and with the aim of exposing the inadequacies of existing practice and ideas, created a space that was “other” to the existing academy.

Describing existing universities as “profoundly conservative”, Free U argued that they were “unconscious agencies of the preservation of the structure of conformity and privilege” dominant in Australian society.¹²⁸ Similarly, contemporary critical Left writings had “little direction or certainty” and a profound lack of solid intellectual basis in protest, according to Free U.¹²⁹ The alternative, exemplified in the concept of a Free University, was “an experiment in education”:

informal courses convened and kept going by individual enthusiasm, more intense interpersonal relations and hence, a greater involvement in the actual subjects of study: a heightened sense of discovery, of probing exploration — of stretching mind and self.¹³⁰

Embedded in this ideal was a direct critique of what Free U’s practitioners diagnosed as absent from existing conceptions of learning and knowing, expressed via “a strong sense that knowledge was for sharing”.¹³¹ With this in mind, Free U asserted that through participatory teaching and learning, equal student representation, flexible assessment and course content, non-hierarchical teaching and the joining of theory and action, the acquisition and production of knowledge and the process of learning would become

¹²⁶ “First list of courses and plans for research and action projects”, *Free University: Summer Session, December–March 1968-9*: n.p., Bob Connell Papers.

¹²⁷ Rowan Cahill, Bob Connell, Brian Freeman, Terry Irving & Bob Scribner for the Committee for a Free University, “The Lost Ideal”, in Lesley Johnson (ed), *The Journal of the Free University: Sources, Articles, & Documents on the Free University*, no. 1, 1968: pp. 5-6, and reprinted from *Honi Soit*, 3 October 1967: n.p.

¹²⁸ Cahill et al, “The Lost Ideal”: p. 6.

¹²⁹ Ann Curthoys notes the wholly intellectual approach taken by Free U in “The End of the Free U?”, *Arena*, no. 20, 1969: pp. 35-40, as does Bob Connell in his reflective piece on Free U, “Free Uni & the Student Movement” in Johnson (ed), *The Journal of the Free University*, no. 1, 1968: p. 18.

¹³⁰ Margret [sic] Jolly, “Trying To” in Johnson (ed), *The Journal of the Free University*, no. 1, 1968: p. 20.

¹³¹ Bob Connell, “Interview”, Sydney, 11 February 1999.

relevant, engaging, creative, “cooperative rather than competitive and responsible rather than detached”.¹³²

The establishment of Free U in Sydney, at least in its beginnings, was deeply influenced by the writings of Paul Goodman, author of *The Community of Scholars* (1962) and *Compulsory Mis-Education* (1971).¹³³ Goodman, a well-known US anarchist and social theorist, argued in *The Community of Scholars* that universities as they were constituted in postwar America were institutions of conformity, harmonious in their relations with the state and passive in the face of fundamental societal ills. According to Goodman, it was administration and the spread of the “administrative mentality” amongst teachers and students in universities that was the source of such passivity.¹³⁴ For Goodman, education existed “to bring up the young to be centres of initiative”, not merely trainees, and a community of scholars was formed not to conform to the values of society, but to confront it.¹³⁵ It was the values that this framework prevented — “revolutionary products like free spirit, individual identity, vocation, community, the advancement of humanity” — that Goodman most resented.¹³⁶ “Modern administration”, he wrote, “isolates the individuals, the groups and the studies and, by standardising and coordinating them, reconstructs a social machine”.¹³⁷ He proposed a transformation of the university, in which “the external control, administration, bureaucratic machinery, and other excrescences that have swamped our communities of scholars” would be dispensed with in the hope that the result would be a university that belonged to teachers and students.¹³⁸

¹³² The first quote is from Connell, “Interview”, 11 February 1999. Writing in *Vestes* in July 1968, John Burnheim, then Rector of St John’s College at the University of Sydney, argued that Free U “reflects a concern for the lack of involvement of the university community in the application of intelligence and moral sensibility to the social and cultural questions of the day”. See John Burnheim, “The Death of Student Politics”, *Vestes*, vol. xi, no. 2, July 1968: p. 132.

¹³³ Goodman, *Community & Goodman*, *Compulsory Mis-Education*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971. See Irving, “Interview”, 31 March 2000 and A. Curthoys, “The End”: p. 40. For discussion of Goodman’s work in Australia, see Ian Bedford, “What Paul Goodman is Saying”, *Outlook*, December 1968: pp. 19-20 and Ian Morrison (under the same title and in the same edition of *Outlook*), where he discusses Goodman’s thinking on science and technology and their relation to the progress of man: pp. 20-21.

¹³⁴ Goodman, *Community*: p. 292.

¹³⁵ Goodman, *Community*: p. 292.

¹³⁶ Goodman, *Community*: p. 227.

¹³⁷ Goodman, *Community*: p. 227.

¹³⁸ The first quote is from Goodman, *Community*: p. 323 and the second p. 373. He wrote, “it is the genius of strong administration to weaken the community by keeping the teachers out of contact with the students, the teachers out of contact with one another and with the world, and the students imprisoned in their adolescent subculture and otherwise obediently conformist”: p. 222.

Following Goodman, Sydney's Free U structured itself around the principles of access for all and active engagement by all, in all aspects of learning: academic, social and organisational. Driven by the utopian impulse of a "true community of scholars", Free U aimed "to create change by setting up a working model of what the institution should be".¹³⁹ Impelled by the uncertainty of what that would be, it distanced itself from "the constraints of the established structure" and tried "to work out what a university should be by being one".¹⁴⁰ Drawn from the ideas of Goodman, Free U's utopian account of the "true" university asserted that "mass" universities were geared to the wrong function and committed to the wrong perspectives. In his essay "The Case For A Free University", Bruce McLennan declared that "a university should provide a learning situation where those involved seek out knowledge and understanding of what is beauty, truth and goodness and the further extension of their own personalities".¹⁴¹ For Free U, it was the lack of contact between staff and students and a "deficient" curriculum that prevented contemporary universities from fulfilling their proper role: "the atmosphere of the university increasingly discourages it", Irving declared.¹⁴² Operating on the philosophy that all those affected by decisions should have a part in making them, Free U initiated a monthly Sunday night barbecue or "general meeting" and a weekly meeting of a seven-member working committee to facilitate its running.¹⁴³ At Free U, any member could propose a new course of their own choosing to be designed and carried out in a collective manner by students and teachers together. As Connell remembers, participants "would sit around on the floor because there wasn't much furniture in the house and nut out a program of study".¹⁴⁴ Striving for a situation without a rigid bureaucracy or fixed structure of established disciplines, Free U aimed for flexibility in its curriculum, in the hope that it would allow for courses that tackled the issues and questions relevant to students' lives.¹⁴⁵

The key to living an engaged and responsible life was to abandon all pretensions regarding the separation of personal and intellectual. It was an idea that was embedded

¹³⁹ Connell, "Free Uni & the Student Movement": p. 18.

¹⁴⁰ Connell, "Free Uni & the Student Movement": p. 18.

¹⁴¹ Bruce McLennan, "The Case for a Free University" in Johnson (ed), *The Journal of the Free University*, no. 1, 1968: p. 9.

¹⁴² Irving, "The Mass University" in Johnson (ed), *The Journal of the Free University*, no. 1, 1968: p. 10 & reprinted from *Outlook*, vol. 12, no. 1, February 1968, pp. 6-8. See also his "The Free University as Utopia" in Johnson (ed), *The Journal of the Free University*, no. 1, 1968: pp. 12-15 & reprinted from "The Free University as Utopia", *Outlook*, vol. 12, no. 2, April 1968, pp. 8-10.

¹⁴³ Connell, "Inside the Free U" in Johnson (ed), *The Journal of the Free University*, no. 1, 1968: pp. 15-16.

¹⁴⁴ Connell, "Interview", 11 February 1999.

in the expectation that contemporary social issues should be part of the university curriculum. Self-directed learning, flexibility and equality in negotiations around course content, non-hierarchical staff-student relations and individual rather than bureaucratic decision-making were all essential to the operations of Free U. "Relevance" emerged as a key criterion of the value of knowledge and a measure by which the success or failure of universities was to be judged, in part responding to the important idea that "the conventional university was largely about producing non-useful knowledge".¹⁴⁶

In addressing the notion of a true university, Free U asserted that the self-fulfilment of its participants should be essential to any true university, as should the idea that such an institution should act as a catalyst for social, economic and political change. Formulated around a primary concern with and structured by the necessity for both theory and action in intellectual work and everyday practice, it was primarily concerned with knowledge as an agent of social change.¹⁴⁷ It insisted that self-fulfilment arose through participation in all aspects of the learning process, which meant not merely learning about but also active involvement in social change. Related to a wider argument that university hierarchies replicated social hierarchies, this idea was premised on the belief that pro-active individuals could (and should) make changes in society. Connell has insisted on the importance to Free U of the idea of "living your politics", a phrase he has described as very New Left in its language.¹⁴⁸ In its advocacy of unity in theory and action, Free U aligned itself with New Left philosophy, arguing that knowledge, and thus universities, should doubt and question all power. The expectation was that "by continual survey, revision and criticism of accepted values", universities would "be able to point out absurdities and inconsistencies" in the order of existing society.¹⁴⁹ Free U initiated a number of ongoing projects engaged with the community outside of the university, calling them Research and Action Projects. Locating the principles motivating such initiatives, the *Free U Newsletter* stated: "between nihilist bomb-thrower and armchair strategist lies the research and action project".¹⁵⁰ In the immediate community surrounding their institution, Free U members identified issues of poverty and race relations as of particular concern. They set up a program with a local school, Darlington Primary where they would interact with the most disadvantaged of students by taking

¹⁴⁵ Cahill et al, for the Committee for a Free University, "The Lost Ideal": p. 6.

¹⁴⁶ Cahill et al, for the Committee for a Free University, "The Lost Ideal": p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ See A. Curthoys, "The End", in which she argued that Free U's radical quality lay in the way it confronted authority.

¹⁴⁸ Connell, "Interview", 11 February 1999.

¹⁴⁹ McLennan, "The Case for a Free University": p. 9.

them on "cultural outings" or helping them with their homework.¹⁵¹ Meeting with Redfern locals, attending local dances and drinking at key pubs in order to meet people was one way, as one participant phrased it, for Free U members to "discover issues ourselves".¹⁵²

Free U's anti-authoritarian principles were crucial to its very constitution. In 1969 Ann Curthoys asserted in her essay "The End of Free U?" that it was Free U's confronting of "authority in intellectual pursuit" that made it "important and original".¹⁵³ Comparing Free U to the political groups on campus at the University of Sydney, Curthoys argued that although such groups could have "offered an alternative centre of intellectual discussion", they were "unexpansive and authoritarian", and thus, incapable of employing "intellectual tools of university sophistication".¹⁵⁴ "Their answers were never thought to depend on research, and their questions were limited" and they focused on issues off campus.¹⁵⁵ Political activists on campus were in turn critical of Free U and its methods of operating. Connell noted that such critique often took the form of claims that Free U was "losing their [sic] impact by opting out of the established structures".¹⁵⁶ Critics charged Free U with "irrelevance", or with drawing off radicals from the existing student movement, and thus with "substituting an isolated community for revolutionary attack".¹⁵⁷

While noting the "cross-fertilisation" between campus activists and participants of Free U, Curthoys also drew attention to the differences between the two. "The [University] radicals", she wrote, "were interested in conscription, university administration... and the third world"; Free U "was concerned with course method and content".¹⁵⁸ As radicals "built up demonstrations as a highly experienced political form, extending their bookshops and their community life... Free U talked".¹⁵⁹ Connell, however, refused to

¹⁵⁰ "Editorial", *Free U Newsletter*, vol. 2, no. 1, January 1969: p. 1, Bob Connell Papers.

¹⁵¹ "Editorial", *Free U Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 3, April-May 1968: p. 1, Bob Connell Papers.

¹⁵² "Editorial", *Free U Newsletter*, vol. 2, no. 1, January 1969: p. 1, Bob Connell Papers.

¹⁵³ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 37. Describing the level of her involvement in Free U, Ann Curthoys wrote "The writer's involvement in Free U was partial — in abstinence from the organising side of the venture, and in fluctuating commitment to the courses attended". Giving some sense of the ways Free U operated for many of those involved she then asserted, "[b]ut this experience of the Free U would be all the more typical for that": p. 35.

¹⁵⁴ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 37.

¹⁵⁵ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 37.

¹⁵⁶ Connell, "Free Uni & the Student Movement": p. 18.

¹⁵⁷ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 39.

¹⁵⁸ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 39.

¹⁵⁹ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 39.

acknowledge those who claimed that Free U had abandoned the radical cause. Instead, he argued, that Free U's withdrawal from engagement with existing universities had "not yet gone far enough". Expressing his scepticism of those critical of Free U, Connell contended: "if the [student] movement is really working towards a social transformation it must have some way of working through the problems involved in reconstruction: and for this, it needs pilot projects for the new society".¹⁶⁰ For Connell, Free U was precisely such a project.

Like other student-centred initiatives of the period, the shift from the notion of knowledge produced in and by universities as objective, specialised and disseminated by a privileged few to that of knowledge as existing to deal explicitly with those outside the university, to merge theory and practice and to be accessible to all, was crucial to Free U. In particular, Free U was formulated around the idea that "the individual as a centre, a focal point of creativity, intensity, of self-direction creates his own purpose and his own freedom".¹⁶¹ From the Free U preamble came the declaration:

No longer shall universities be mere assembly lines for industrial cogs, no longer shall courses be designed to reveal only accepted truths or irrelevant questions, no longer shall the realms of thought and action be bracketed apart.¹⁶²

Mobilising more than merely a new set of concepts by which to think of the learner and of knowledge itself, Free U also activated a comprehensive rethinking of the learning subject. With the learning subject as fundamental to knowledge, it rendered a vast array of institutional practices and processes problematic, especially those that inhibited the individual. One participant described Free U's approach in terms of its stance:

- against the rigidity of an impersonal administration
- against the guntoting [*sic*] guards
- against the lack of any close involvement of staff and students
- against "Staff Club - No Dogs or Students Allowed"
- against the sullen remoteness, even hostility between students caught in the exam race
- against the neurotic burying of books in the library bowels, hidden from the others, enemies.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Connell, "Free Uni & the Student Movement": p. 18.

¹⁶¹ "First list of courses & plans for research & action projects", *Free University: Summer Session*, December-March 1968-1969: p. 1, Bob Connell Papers.

The very notion of a Free University precluded a formal hierarchy and especially a formalised teacher-pupil relationship through its emphasis on communal rather than bureaucratic or authoritarian responsibility. This was essential both within the classroom and in the wider running of the Free U. Writing in 1969, Connell described how such methods of learning functioned in practice:

The subjects of discussion, the objects of inquiry, are decided collectively by all the people in the group. The group studies what the people in it decide they want to study, what they consider interesting, or relevant to themselves, or important. The way they tackle it is decided by themselves on the spot, not by someone else beforehand. The "course" is what the people in the course group make of themselves.¹⁶⁴

With each member of a Free U course responsible for initiating the course's program of study, the learning process was wholly reliant on the enthusiasm and activity of each participant. It was crucial that Free U's curriculum be able to engage with issues of contemporary interest, and issues that did not correspond to a strict set of disciplinary criteria. Arguing that the "tardy introduction of new subjects or the failure to develop existing disciplines to include new subjects" was characteristic of contemporary universities, Free U adopted a deliberate cross-disciplinary approach which was flexible in content and structure, and it argued, thereby relevant to the experience of students.¹⁶⁵

Free U's flexibility and renegotiation of existing disciplinary boundaries and curriculum was of particular importance to those students and staff involved from the University of Sydney. Sydney was one university that remained at this stage steadfast in its refusal to allow interdisciplinary scholarship.¹⁶⁶ Noting the importance of the "sociological strand"

¹⁶² "Prospectuses", *Free U Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 3, April-May 1968: p. 5, Terry Irving Papers.

¹⁶³ Jolly, "Trying To": p. 20.

¹⁶⁴ Connell, "Inside the Free U": p. 15.

¹⁶⁵ Irving, "The Mass University": p. 11.

¹⁶⁶ Reflecting on the Australian context at this moment in a personal interview, Terry Irving — a leading member of the young Left in Australia — raised this point. He spoke of a sense amongst young humanities academics, newly appointed to university positions, that they were coming into an exciting and expanding intellectual area, although one which, particularly in Australia, had been the subject of "very little disciplinary discussion". Irving described the humanities disciplines in Australian universities at this moment as "not self-aware" and as having "no sense of what a specifically *Australian* approach to individual disciplines would be". He mentioned the difficulties that arose, for example, when younger members of the academic staff proposed courses that focused on issues of class or race. More senior staff members in departments often dismissed

of Free U's curriculum, Ann Curthoys argued that its courses were reflective of "a lag in the development of sociology in Australian universities".¹⁶⁷ "In a more literal sense than the manifestos had recognised", she wrote, Free U "filled the gaps in traditional university education".¹⁶⁸ The University of New South Wales and a number of other new and less established institutions had already moved away from the confines of traditional disciplinary boundaries to teach courses such as sociology at the time Free U was established.¹⁶⁹ Discussing the significance of Free U's interdisciplinary approach, Terry Irving has argued that new universities in Australia during the period were both able to escape the restrictions of rigid disciplinary boundaries, as well as the added benefit of a less stringent connection to traditional elites.¹⁷⁰ According to Irving, the older universities, such as Sydney and Queensland, were at a decided disadvantage in their attempts to instigate internal reform because of their close links with those of the establishment, most often through the institution's governing body, the University Senate.¹⁷¹

Free U's founders claimed that Australian universities had "reached the stage of hardened arteries", and that internal reform was impossible.¹⁷² In positioning itself as a radical initiative, Free U framed its intervention as one of "a counter-community providing a conscience for the mass university rather than a way to reform it".¹⁷³ As I noted above, the principles embedded in its intervention into the ideas and practices of existing universities and its positioning of itself in relation to such institutions was "radical". And yet, as Connell has conceded, despite Free U's talk of absolute opposition to existing universities, many of those involved in the initiative "needed the conventional

such suggestions as inappropriate to university teaching, or as "a social and political issue" and therefore "unsuitable". He spoke of a particular instance in which his colleague Bob Connell proposed a new course to be taught in Government at the University of Sydney. Noting that there were "no departmental meetings" and "no communication from the top-down," according to Irving, the very notion of Connell suggesting a course was "so heretical" that "no-one paid attention". Irving, "Interview", 31 March 2000.

¹⁶⁷ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 37.

¹⁶⁸ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 37.

¹⁶⁹ Newer universities were being built with this very issue in mind. New universities such as Flinders University in Adelaide (see *Vestes* December 1964) and Macquarie University in Sydney (see *Vestes* June 1964) were established with a more flexible structure, both in terms of the kinds of disciplinary formations possible for their students and in terms of the geographical set up of the campus itself, in an effort to combat some of the problems that had arisen in older established institutions.

¹⁷⁰ Irving, "Interview", 31 March 2000.

¹⁷¹ Irving, "Interview", 31 March 2000. See also Cahill, "Student Power": pp. 6-9.

¹⁷² "Proposals for the Prospectus of the Free University", 1967: n.p., Bob Connell Papers.

¹⁷³ Irving, "The Mass University": p. 11.

university to help with the daily bread".¹⁷⁴ For one, Free U appeared to set any reservations aside when it came to recruiting participants from existing institutions in times of financial scarcity. In a letter appealing to the staff of conventional universities for practical support and financial assistance, the Executive of Free University acknowledged the contradictions of its position in relation to existing institutions, admitting there was a "possibility" that it had "exaggerated the antagonism too easily assumed to be present between a Free University and its established counterparts".¹⁷⁵ Eager to ensure that the paradoxical nature of such an appeal would not stand in the way of potential support, and cognisant of the contradictions of its own positioning, Free U was willing to concede the importance of the academy's support for its endeavours.¹⁷⁶ Thus, as much as Free U provided a dynamic critique of existing universities and their practices, it was invariably dependent on them for its very existence. At the same time, it was highly critical of the knowledge and ways of knowing that those participating in its courses brought with them. The majority of Free U's members were drawn from the "more radical and discontented students within the Unis".¹⁷⁷ Outside, but adjacent to the University of Sydney, geographically and metaphorically, Free U acknowledged its incapacity to distance itself entirely from existing institutions. "Although there is, in principle, nothing wrong with this", an Editorial in the *Free U Newsletter* wrote, "there are many dangers involved".¹⁷⁸ Observing the proximity of its relation to existing academic institutions, the *Newsletter* made mention of a tendency among participants "mainly [to] contribute what they have had ground into them at the Universities".¹⁷⁹

Yet in the tension between Free U's desire to maintain an intellectual approach and its desire for community lay an inability to acknowledge that its own methodologies and practices were, similarly, potentially problematic. Much of the literature produced by Free U drew attention to the importance of the community that had developed around it. One participant, Dave Taylor, argued in his essay "It's the People You Bump Into Who Count", that "the success or failure of Free U is pretty much unrelated to whether the courses we offer succeed or not."¹⁸⁰ For Taylor, it was more important for Free U:

¹⁷⁴ Connell, "Interview", 11 February 1999.

¹⁷⁵ Letter headed "Appeal to Staff" dated 2 June 1968, Terry Irving Papers.

¹⁷⁶ Letter headed "Appeal to Staff" dated 2 June 1968, Terry Irving Papers.

¹⁷⁷ "Editorial," *Free U Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 3, April-May 1968: p. 1, Terry Irving Papers.

¹⁷⁸ "Editorial," *Free U Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 3, April-May 1968: p. 1, Terry Irving Papers.

¹⁷⁹ "Editorial," *Free U Newsletter*, vol. 1, no. 3, April-May 1968: p. 1, Terry Irving Papers.

¹⁸⁰ Dave Taylor, "It's The People You Bump Into Who Count" in Johnson (ed), *The Journal of the Free University*, no. 1, 1968: p. 21.

to place much more emphasis on developing a warm and creative and tolerant and stimulating culture, and on developing friendships and communications between the universities, and between all sorts of odd and interesting people, rather than worrying too much about whether our courses are desperately profound, or highly articulate, or stunningly analytical or wretchedly rigorous or whether at the end a paper comes out of it all.¹⁸¹

For Taylor at least, Free U's success was more appropriately measured in terms of "the personal exploration and articulation and actualisation that occurs at Free U" and "the culture and friendships that have developed."¹⁸² Yet, as Curthoys argued, while for some students the notion of a Free U community "may have been real enough... essentially it was a university clique, one among many."¹⁸³

It soon became apparent to those involved in Free U that despite the best of intentions the educational methodologies adopted and practiced in the courses and day-to-day running of Free U exhibited their own set of problems.¹⁸⁴ Curthoys began her essay, "The End of Free U?" with the declaration: "Free U generally, must be considered in terms of the community it failed to build, at least as much as the one it did."¹⁸⁵ She suggested that of those participating in Free U, "many felt the courses were a failure", and "nearly all petered out after two or three months." In her experience, Free U's courses had been "flat, unenthusiastic, lacking in initiative or original thinking". In no uncertain terms, she contended that "questions were not pursued, little real thinking was done."¹⁸⁶ The ideal of university level research or group research, was rarely attained. Conclusions as a basis for action were never reached — the discussion always remained a discussion", she

¹⁸¹ Taylor, "It's The People": p. 22.

¹⁸² Taylor, "It's The People": p. 22.

¹⁸³ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 39. Taylor drew attention to one particular instance in which Free U's community had gone wrong. He wrote: "All sorts of odd and unpleasant, and certainly non-creative things are happening. For instance, (and I am going to be quite blunt about what I am going to say now) I find it absolutely deplorable that in our Free U, a very good young scholar whom I respect very much, and whom I consider a very good friend, a man who has worked his heart out outside Free U to help others to articulate their feelings, was so criticised that he was eventually forced to break off most of his contact with Free U... That incident, almost completely neglected at the time, has shown me that an awful lot of us have still got an awful lot of pretty solid thinking to do. We're just playing games at present. Nice romantic revolutionary games, middle-class games, "in" games, other-directed games, safe games, piddling games. That guy, in case you have forgotten it, was forced to leave because he didn't have time to paint walls or dig pubic hairs out of plugholes. As if it bloody well mattered". See Taylor, "It's The People": p. 23.

¹⁸⁴ Both Terry Irving and Bob Connell noted this in their contemporary reflections on Free U. See Irving, "Interview", 31 March 2000 and Connell, "Interview", 11 February 1999.

¹⁸⁵ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 37.

¹⁸⁶ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 37.

wrote.¹⁸⁷ Frustrated with what she described as Free U's "destructive dilettantism", Curthoys earnestly declared that "a question asked when the answer does not matter cannot yield serious discussion."¹⁸⁸

Curthoys was not the only participant disillusioned with Free U's day-to-day operations. In a notice announcing a meeting for the beginning of 1969, participants were asked to consider: "a) what they want the place to be and b) how much time and effort people [are] prepared to put into it".¹⁸⁹ The notice included a list of comments from those who had participated in its most recent session and their experience of Free U.¹⁹⁰ In an expression of tensions ongoing in Free U's day-to-day operations, one participant spoke with exasperation: "You don't feel like being warm and friendly when most of your time and energy is absorbed in physically looking after the place. You're on call at any hour of the day or night to answer the phone or show people round the place and explain what Free U is".¹⁹¹ Another participant explained that they had reduced the level of their involvement after having attended several courses: "I found them disappointing because discussion isn't at university level and I can have this sort of thing in a coffee lounge or at a party. I just drop in on Sunday nights now".¹⁹² In a manner best described as sincere frustration, another participant declared, "You're all talking about what you want to get out of the place. No one's mentioned putting anything *into* it".¹⁹³

Conclusion

While principles of equality and inclusiveness were fundamental to the formulation of Free U's operations, there was a notable absence of women amongst those initiating courses and of courses on women included in Free U's curriculum. Such absences were indicative of a set of orthodoxies embedded in the methodologies and principles of Free U — orthodoxies about what counted as knowledge. Bob Connell framed his assessment of the absence of courses on women in the Free U curriculum in clear terms when he remarked that "if anyone had wanted to, they would have run [one]".¹⁹⁴ Connell's comments are remarkable in their refusal to acknowledge even the possibility of men's privilege in Free U's operations. While Free U framed its approach as one preoccupied

¹⁸⁷ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 37.

¹⁸⁸ A. Curthoys, "The End": p. 37.

¹⁸⁹ "Free U", December 1968 – mid March 1969: n.p., Terry Irving Papers.

¹⁹⁰ "Free U", December 1968 – mid March 1969: n.p., Terry Irving Papers.

¹⁹¹ "Free U", December 1968 – mid March 1969: n.p., Terry Irving Papers.

¹⁹² "Free U", December 1968 – mid March 1969: n.p., Terry Irving Papers.

¹⁹³ "Free U", December 1968 – mid March 1969: n.p., Terry Irving Papers (emphasis in original).

with refiguring existing knowledge, and with being a catalyst for social change, the only courses listed on Free U's curriculum that attempted to address women in any capacity were either of an anthropological bent, or explicitly belittled the very notion of the study of women and of women's issues.¹⁹⁵ The course outline of "Women", convened by Free U participant Wayne Hall, was marked by a trivialising of the very concept of a course on women.¹⁹⁶ Hall begins: "Being a dilettante both practically and theoretically speaking, I could well be accused of intrusion into a domain that should be left either to the gynaecologist or anthropologist or to the jaded debauchee".¹⁹⁷ Self-conscious in his figuring of the course (and himself), Hall played on the controversial nature of the course he proposed. Using the language of liberation and freedom crucial to Free U's own critique of existing institutions, Hall declared:

accepting as I do the democratic policies of the Free U, objecting to the hierarchical structure of traditional scholarship, I defend myself with a fundamental tenet of its rumoured constitution, namely that in a democratic organisation the dullest dolt may speak on any subject with as much authority as the "expert" which in less enlightened circles might be ignorantly construed as ignorance... Please direct all comments, inquiries, scorn or advice to: Wayne Hall.¹⁹⁸

Hall's course is perhaps best understood as one that engaged with the contradictions apparent in Free U's own position. Evident in Hall's proposal for a course on women and embedded in Free U's declarations of the privilege of existing academic practice and process was the paradox of Free U's own privilege (and that of its participants).

¹⁹⁴ Connell, "Interview", 11 February 1998.

¹⁹⁵ Ann Curthoys noted in 1970, that "for most, a consideration of women in history would appear trivial. Moreover, historians themselves are still bound within the rigidly defined sex roles of this society: male historians see 'women's matters' as trivial and not the stuff of history. They tend to see the behaviour of women as biologically rather than largely, if not wholly, socially determined and so see no reason to understand or analyse that behaviour". See "Historiography & Women's Liberation", *Arena*, no. 22, 1970: p. 37.

¹⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that only a few years later there was a great deal of controversy on the question of whether a man could teach a course on women. See chapter three.

¹⁹⁷ See *Free University: Summer Session*, December–March 1968-1969: p. 10, Bob Connell Papers. Also listed as on offer in this session was a course called "Male-Female Relationships", convened by John Fisher. "A course on relations between the sexes has to be much more than a conventional discussion group", wrote Fisher. He proposed the course discuss "comparative male-female relations, pop culture, a critique of *The Feminine Mystique*... We could do fieldwork on people's ideas on beauty, 'girl talk', 'man talk'". But mostly, his aim for the course was to "develop a new experimental approach to the study of human relations in small groups where people can know each other well enough to talk honestly about these subject and have confidence to open themselves to each other's reactions". See *Free University: Summer Session*, December–March 1968-1969: pp. 9-10, Bob Connell Papers.

¹⁹⁸ See *Free University: Summer Session*, December–March 1968-1969: p. 10, Bob Connell Papers.

Fundamental to Free U's problematisation of authority — played out in its struggle over the production of knowledge — was the question of what counted as knowledge and who could produce knowledge. Like the critique formulated by radicals in their engagement with the academy I have described above, the new set of power relations initiated by academic feminism via its politicising of knowledge was embodied in the mode of its intervention into existing institutional practice.

Chapter Two — The Politics of Knowledge: Feminism and the Academy

Introduction

At the forefront of the critique formulated by those contesting the production of knowledge in the academy was the question of who could produce knowledge and what counted as knowledge. Crucial in the context of that question was the problematising of authority. Like Free U, the University of Sydney's 1973 philosophy strikes exemplified radicals' continuing struggles to gain control of the operations constituting the academy and their daily interaction with it. The strikes explicitly engaged with institutionalised knowledge as it operated in the lives of students and staff and in the way decisions were made concerning what and how they could teach and learn in the University. By examining the modes of analysis that such critique utilised in its questioning of authority and power, I explore how those initiating the philosophy strikes politicised knowledge and how they in turn made the academy problematic. Crucial to the thesis as a whole, I argue that the philosophy strikes were a site where the concerns of radicals intersected with those of academic feminism. Academic feminism forced the academy and radicals alike to rethink their own practices and methodologies by institutionalising a set of new knowledge formations, via its organisation of a new set of relations within the institution itself. In mapping academic feminism and the ideas that informed feminism's critique of existing knowledge, I explore the ideas upon which its methodology and analysis were premised.

I begin this chapter with "The Woman Intellectual", in which I note the character of women's lives in Australia during the late 1960s and early 1970s while attending university, and in their lives beyond the academy. For many women, university offered the promise — often only for a short period of time — of a life free from the expectations and restrictions indicative of a society characterised by inequality between women and men.¹ At the same time, the influx of women into universities during the 1960s and 1970s drew attention to a set of inequalities fundamental to the structure of existing knowledge,

¹ See for example, Norman MacKenzie, *Women in Australia*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1962, as well as his *Women & Society: An Australian Study*, co-edited with Sol Encel & Margaret Tebbitt, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1974. For information specifically on women at university in Australia during this

and to the academy itself. In the second part of the chapter, "A Chronicle of Academic Feminism", I survey the feminist courses taught in Australian universities during the 1970s, providing a map of the courses on offer across the country and those who taught such courses from academic feminism's very beginnings. These courses were the intellectual and institutional product of the questioning of knowledge and authority that prevailed amongst those contesting the academy at that moment. The chapter concludes with "Authority and Knowledge", a close analysis of the philosophy strikes at the University of Sydney in 1973. I examine how feminism specifically problematised the ideas of both the established institutional hierarchy and those critical of that hierarchy by revealing the assumptions of women's inequality which so often underpinned intellectual practice and thus men's privilege.

Part One — The Woman Intellectual

Simone de Beauvoir's work was highly influential in the lives of many women intellectuals in Australia during this period. Reflecting on the importance of de Beauvoir's work, especially her novels and autobiographies, on her own concept of what it meant to be and how to be an intellectual woman, Ann Curthoys recently observed:

In them, the details of a life — as an intellectual, a writer and a woman — were spelt out in painstaking and fascinating detail. For us, the young women in the 1960s who became the Women's Liberationists of the 1970s, her life was truly exemplary, to be pondered and explored for clues as to how we might live differently from our parents' generation and from most of the society around us.²

period, see Madge Dawson, *Graduate & Married: A Report of a Survey of 1070 Married Women Graduates of The University of Sydney*, Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney, 1965.

² Ann Curthoys, "Adventures of Feminism: Simone de Beauvoir's Autobiographies, Women's Liberation and Self-Fashioning", *Feminist Review*, no. 64, Spring 2000: p. 4. Curthoys first presented this paper at a conference to commemorate the 50th anniversary of *The Second Sex* organised by Charles Sowerwine & Joy Damousi, held by the History Department & Women's Studies at the University of Melbourne, 13 August 1999. The volumes of Simone de Beauvoir's autobiographies that Curthoys refers to are *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, Andre Deutsch & Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, London 1961; *The Prime of Life*, Andre Deutsch & Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, London, 1962; *Force of Circumstance*, Andre Deutsch & Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, London 1965 and *All Said and Done*, Andre Deutsch & Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1974. According to Curthoys, "As a young woman in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s, de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* meant very little to me, while the autobiographies, and indeed, some of the novels meant everything": p. 4. See also Jill Julius Matthews "Simone de Beauvoir's Third Sex", *Hecate*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2000: pp. 139-143. Some of the papers from the Melbourne conference were published in *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 15, no. 33, December 2000 with an introduction by Joy Damousi, "The Second Sex Fifty Years On": pp. 315-316. A number of other conferences were held around the country commemorating the anniversary of *The Second Sex*, including one organised by

In emphasising the care and specificity of de Beauvoir's writings, Curthoys underscores the far-reaching implications for women's lives of a comprehensively alternative mode of living such as that depicted by de Beauvoir. Curthoys' recollections are marked both by her own dissatisfaction with the opportunities offered by existing society, and society's own anxiety at women's increasing desire for self-determination.³ While women were achieving greater access to higher levels of education, there was no commensurate expansion in opportunities to deploy their knowledge and ambition. The sense of displacement in existing society characteristic of the lives of women with intellectual aspirations in particular was fuelled by a belief in the existence of a world in which they would belong, and a longing to escape.⁴ In accentuating the possibilities for independence and freedom glimpsed through de Beauvoir's writing, Curthoys stresses the rarity of such a way of living in Australia, and the strength of desire many Australian women felt for such change.

For Curthoys, most important was de Beauvoir's insistence on the necessity for profound transformation in women's day-to-day lives. Moreover, it was de Beauvoir's novels and autobiographies that first indicated to Curthoys that "it was possible to forge an alternative to the narrow options then facing women, and to live according to a different conception of femininity, intellectuality, independence, sexuality and friendship".⁵

the Centre for Women, Ideology and Culture Research at the University of Queensland in October 1999, the papers from which were published in *Hecate*: Chilla Bulbeck's "Simone de Beauvoir & Generations of Feminists" appeared in *Hecate*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1999: pp. 5-21 as a preview to the full publication of the papers in *Hecate*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2000.

³ As Ann Curthoys noted in "Mobilising Dissent: The Later Stages of Protest" in Gregory Pemberton (ed), *Vietnam Remembered*, Weldon, Sydney, 1990, her involvement in the women's movement, especially in the early years, was one characterised by a profound "sense of being out of step with the society": p. 163.

⁴ As Ros Pesman has argued, for many Australian women, it was overseas travel that provided an opportunity to escape the confines of existing Australian society during the 1960s and 1970s. They travelled to London or Europe often via Asia in search of a life that was freer, more tolerant and less repressive. See Ros Pesman, *Duty Free: Australian Women Abroad*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1996. Many of those interviewed for this project took such trips. For instance, Ann Curthoys spent a year travelling through Asia and then onto London between 1973 and 1974. See Ann Curthoys, "Interview", Canberra, 23 April 1998. For Susan Sheridan, who was overseas during 1970-1971, it was in London that she was first exposed to the ideas of Women's Liberation, indeed she attended the first Women's Liberation March in London. See Susan Sheridan, "Interview", Sydney, 8 July 1998, and Colleen Chesterman, "Reminiscences" in Refractory Girl Collective, *Refracting Voices: Feminist Perspectives From Refractory Girl*, Refractory Girl Feminist Journal, Sydney, 1993: pp. 37-38. Jill Julius Matthews missed the beginnings of Women's Liberation in Adelaide in 1969 because she was travelling in India during the summer break. See Jill Julius Matthews, "Interview", Canberra, 24 April 1998. And Barbara Caine travelled to the UK after finishing her undergraduate degree to undertake postgraduate study at the University of Sussex. See Barbara Caine, "Interview", Sydney, 10 July 1998.

⁵ A. Curthoys "Adventures of Feminism": pp. 12-13.

Alluding to her own moment of identification with de Beauvoir, Curthoys emphasises the radical potential and significance of a unification of self and intellect engendered in the lives of those who read de Beauvoir's novels and autobiographies. For Curthoys, it was de Beauvoir's refusal of particular identities — mother, wife, carer, dependent — that was intimately connected to her life as an intellectual and writer.⁶

Yet the disjuncture between de Beauvoir's life and that of Curthoys' and her peers was substantial. How could de Beauvoir's world possibly relate to that of university students and graduate life in 1960s Australia? As Curthoys maintains, their lives could have been no further apart: "We, who had never been to Paris, could barely imagine the café society she described". "I had never met anyone... who *had* been to Paris, who could describe life there in any kind of way at all".⁷ Life in 1960s Sydney, a city she describes as "struggling to become cosmopolitan",

was one of shared households, eating in Chinese restaurants, drinking in a small number of woman-friendly hotels, living on the edge of the Sydney Push, involvement in intense political activity such as opposition to the war in Vietnam, studying for examinations, or working on a thesis.⁸

⁶ According to Karen Vintges, the "widespread reading of de Beauvoir as an exemplar of the self-determining intellectual woman was in accord with de Beauvoir's own expressed intentions: she *wanted* to be an exemplary woman, wanted to prove a woman could live as subject, wanted 'to give us an image that had formerly been inconceivable: a woman who lives a successful life as intellectual and who experiences herself positively as both woman and intellectual". See Vintges, *Philosophy as Passion: The Thinking of Simone de Beauvoir*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1996 cited in A. Curthoys, "Adventures of Feminism": p. 14. This is not to say, Curthoys writes, that "de Beauvoir wanted other women to be like her... But she saw a focus on her own life as a way of addressing other people with their singular lives". For Curthoys, this was an aim successfully achieved thanks to her ability to write "about her life in a way that enabled the rest of us to think differently about what our own life might be": p. 14.

⁷ A. Curthoys, "Adventures of Feminism": p. 13 (emphasis in original).

⁸ A. Curthoys, "Adventures of Feminism": p. 13. Like Curthoys, Jill Julius Matthews' recollections of reading *The Second Sex* in her article "Simone de Beauvoir's Third Sex", highlight the myriad meanings de Beauvoir's work had for a vast number of women both in Australia and around the world. For Matthews, it was *The Second Sex* rather than de Beauvoir's novels and autobiographies that were most significant. She notes: "I read a very different book from that read by sophisticated and intellectual readers who were adults in France in the 1950s. I read a different book from that read by American feminists who tell of reading it in its first translation, in 1953. Mine was a book read by a white middle-class Australian adolescent who felt a little bit different": p. 141. Emphasising the distance between her life and that of Beauvoir's, she describes *The Second Sex* as a text "crafted in a sophisticated culture of which I had no knowledge and from an intellectual tradition that was and remains quite alien to me". By the time Matthews read *The Second Sex* in Adelaide in 1965 it was an old book, published in the year she was born. Thus, what *The Second Sex* "named and consolidated" for her, was "a politics of outrage and indignation at the limitations imposed on women by our sex. Additionally, it provided me with a guarded sense of legitimacy for the process of the personal and social creation of myself as a lesbian": p. 141. For Matthews, *The Second Sex* offered a "foundational matrix" for a new personal politics as well as a

For many women who attended university in Australia, tertiary education made possible a degree of autonomy not permissible in existing society. In its promise of independence and a reprieve from the confines of societal expectation, alignment with the academy generated privilege and a set of new possibilities for individual women.⁹ Yet, as Curthoys recalls, such autonomy was not without contradiction:

It was hard to know how to be a woman at university and beyond — there were few models, and there was a marked contradiction between the freedom we experienced in our education and the strong social conventions that threatened to pull us back into traditional female roles after graduation. Were we to be ‘as good as the men’ and pursue a life of economic independence, dedicated to intellectual activity and pursuits? Or were we to reject our education for marriage and motherhood? ... Or were we to forge something else altogether?¹⁰

In the blurring of any easy distinction between woman’s status inside the academy and her status outside, lay the provisional status of woman’s freedom inside the university, and in turn a discomfort characteristic of the relation between academy and woman intellectual.

A similar ambivalence marked the first editorial of *Refractory Girl*, a Sydney-based journal founded in 1972 by a group of women teachers, students and researchers, most of whom were attached in some formal capacity to tertiary institutions.¹¹ Reflecting on their own experience of the academy, the collective remarked: “[O]ur entire education had instilled in us a respect for these hallowed halls of learning, and most of us retain some residual respect”, yet such respect was “objectively almost impossible to reconcile with our

way of making sense of the world. As an introduction to a set of ideas she would encounter in greater depth upon reaching university, *The Second Sex* was a book which “authenticated the choice of lesbian subjectivity and desire”: p. 143.

⁹ Both secondary and tertiary education were the subject of substantial discussion in feminist journals. Sylvia Kinder in her *Herstory of Adelaide Women’s Liberation, 1969-1974*, Adelaide, 1980 emphasises this point. Reading lists were published regularly in all of the Women’s Liberation Newsletters across the country, and were an important feature of *Refractory Girl* (RG) in particular, which devoted a section to information on “Women’s Studies Courses” in almost every edition during this period. RG produced a special issue on “Women & Education”. See RG, no. 16, May 1978.

¹⁰ A. Curthoys, “Adventures of Feminism”: p. 11.

¹¹ Ann Curthoys was a member of the original editorial collective of RG, as were Sue Bellamy, Jean Curthoys, Lesley Gray, Eileen Haley, Dany Humphreys, Mary Murnane, Lyndall Ryan, Anne Summers, Sue Wills, and Anne Winkler. Susan Sheridan notes the “personal dilemma” the RG collective faced as women intellectuals in “Women’s Studies”, her contribution to *Refracting Voices*: pp. 40-42.

experiences". Universities in Australia had been open to women for nearly 90 years, yet according to the collective, universities had "never thought it necessary to acknowledge this female presence by any concomitant re-evaluation of existing intellectual traditions". Thus, despite women's inclusion in the academy, for those attempting to challenge and reshape the prevailing ideas and concepts of contemporary knowledge, the polarity between woman and intellectual remained. The discomfort typical of many women's experience of university was mirrored in the discomfort engendered in the academy by feminism itself: "Most of us find ourselves now working in environments which, if not actively hostile to what we are trying to do, are at least blandly nonchalant", they wrote.¹² What soon became clear to the women was that the academy was not going to make space for feminist questions, instead it would be necessary for feminism to initiate its own intervention into the academy.

Part Two — A Chronicle of Academic Feminism¹³

Feminist courses were initiated across the country from the early 1970s, often in response to student demand or at the initiative of junior members of staff. Such courses were taught both from existing disciplines and as independent, interdisciplinary units of study. A vast array of feminist courses was taught in Australia during the 1970s, some of which have been well-documented in histories of the period, and others which have not received such substantive attention.

In 1973, the year in which feminist courses first commenced in Australian universities, a course taught through the Philosophy Department at Flinders University in South Australia began under the rubric Women's Studies. Proposed too late to be an official interdisciplinary course in that year, it was treated as a "special topic" for Philosophy II and III. In the following year, after a lengthy battle with members of the University's Academic Board, and with a strong commitment to participation from women not

¹² All references above to *RG*'s first editorial are from "Editorial", *RG*, Summer 1972-1973: p. 3.

¹³ In recent times, there has been a remarkable increase in accounts of the establishment of academic feminist courses that make claims of being the "first" course taught in Australia. See for example, Merle Thornton's recent claims that the course she taught was the first of its kind: "When my Women's Studies course in the University of Queensland Sociology Department was given in 1973 there had not been a Women's Studies course taught in an Australian university. I did afterwards discover that there had been an equal first course at Flinders in the same year". See Merle Thornton, "Scenes From a Life in Feminism" (Transcript of her address at Queensland's 70th International Women's Day Celebration, Parliament House, Brisbane, 8 March 1999), *Hecate*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1999: pp. 32-33.

enrolled at university and an emphasis on challenging existing pedagogical methodologies, the Flinders course went ahead as a separate course.¹⁴ Also in Adelaide in 1973, a group of postgraduate and undergraduate students at the University of Adelaide including Susan Higgins [Sheridan] and Jill [Julius] Matthews initiated the teaching of a feminist course offered as an alternative stream within Politics I.¹⁵ The students had devised an entire year's program of lectures, seminars and tutorials. Although students who did the Women's Studies stream (as it was known) were required to complete some other component of Politics I as well, they could follow a Women's Studies tutorial and go to a weekly Women's Studies class throughout the year.¹⁶ Thanks to pressure from the Politics Department for someone to take responsibility for assessment in the course, the Adelaide course, as taught on a collective basis by that group of students, lasted only a year.¹⁷

With the appointment of Rosemary Pringle as a general tutor in the Politics Department at the University of Adelaide in 1975, the course took on a different form again, becoming simply a run of tutorials that students could choose to take while enrolled in Politics I.¹⁸

¹⁴ See "Women's Studies Courses", *RG*, Autumn 1973: p. 39. Philosophy was the radical department at Flinders. In 1971, Brian Medlin Professor of Philosophy, taught a course entitled "Applied Philosophy: Vietnam, Imperialism & the Nature of Man" and in the same year there were a number of interdisciplinary courses on offer, including one entitled "Racialism, with Special Reference to Race Relations in Australia" and "Imperialism: An Interdisciplinary Approach". See *Flinders Calendar*, 1972, Flinders University, Bedford Park, SA, December 1971: pp. 439-446.

¹⁵ See "Women's Studies Courses", *RG*, Autumn 1973: p. 39. Susan Higgins [Sheridan] and Jill [Julius] Matthews were both postgraduate students at the time, Matthews in History and Sheridan in English. Helen Bannister was the student responsible for assessment and administration of the course in its first year. Politics was the radical department at Adelaide, teaching courses such as "Industrial Society & Theories of Community", "Political Theory & American Politics" and "Marxism & Third World Ideologies", a course which began with an examination of "classical and contemporary theories of imperialism and neo-colonialism" and then moved to analysis of the "ideas of the revolutionary theorists of the Third World, such as Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Che Guevara, Regis Debray, Ho Chi Minh, Mao Tse-tung. Other social theories of the Third World will also be considered such as the Negritude tradition, African socialism and African democracy". See *Calendar of the University of Adelaide, Volume II - Details of Courses*, The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 1974: p. 648.

¹⁶ An article published in the local paper, *The Advertiser*, titled "'Women' is the Subject of a New Course", announced the beginning of the Adelaide course: "At the beginning of the year, nine female students at the Adelaide University took the first few shaky steps towards establishing a "women's studies" course. About 70 people applied for enrolment. Five months later, 20 full-time students are doing the course — four of them males". The course was described as an "informal" part of the Politics I course, quoting Bannister saying, "that because the politics course was interdisciplinary, the women's study [sic] course suited students who wanted to do it as part of Politics I". See Liz Blieschke, "'Women' is the Subject of a New Course", *The Advertiser*, 12 July 1973: n.p.

¹⁷ Sheridan, "Interview", 8 July 1998 and Matthews, "Interview", 24 April 1998.

¹⁸ Pringle was an early career academic when first appointed. She had recently completed a PhD in History at Macquarie University. Leaving Flinders, she took up a position in the newly established Sociology Department at Macquarie in 1977, where she taught a number of courses on

The feminist component of the course was by then so small that it was known as "After Dinner Mints", reflecting its status as "optional extra".¹⁹ On offer to second and third year Politics students during this period was a course with a strong feminist strand called "Contemporary Social Theory". Pringle was responsible for organising a set of lectures on feminism that took up approximately six weeks of this course, and her brief included involvement in a number of other courses across the University.²⁰ In the Department of Sociology at the University of Queensland in 1973, Merle Thornton taught what she has recently described as an "interdisciplinary Women's Studies course", called "Sex Roles and Social Inequality".²¹ While at the University of Tasmania in the same year, Kay Daniels taught a History IV seminar course entitled "Women in English Society, 1791-1928".²² Highlighting the absence of women from mainstream historiography, Daniels'

gender, sexuality and power with Bob Connell. Women's Studies did not exist at Macquarie until 1984, and a Women's Studies committee was formally constituted in 1985. Pringle chaired that committee until her departure for Griffith in 1994 to take up the position of Professor of Women's Studies. Pringle has been Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom since January 2000. For further discussion of academic feminism at Macquarie, see Rosemary Pringle, "Interview", Sydney, 23 March 1998. See also Jill Roe's account of the teaching of women's history at Macquarie, "From Sydney to Boston & Back in Twenty-Five Years, with an Account of Many Strange & Unexpected Happenings Along the Way, or There's No Place Like Home", *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 106, April 1996: pp. 37-48.

¹⁹ Matthews, "Interview", 24 April 1998 & Sheridan, "Interview", 8 July 1998.

²⁰ Pringle, "Interview", 23 March 1998. "Contemporary Social Theory" was a course taught by Graeme Duncan, and according to the 1974 *Calendar of the University of Adelaide*, it was "concerned with the nature and problems of social life in modern industrial societies. In particular, certain radical views of human freedom, autonomy, authenticity and the kinds of social reorganisation which they entail". The section on feminism, taught from 1974, focused on an "analysis of the theories of feminism and the assumptions they contest". Such theories were also "used as pointers to specify investigations of the position of women, past and present". Feminist texts appearing on the course reading list included Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1952), Eva Figes' *Patriarchal Attitudes* (1970), Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate* (1971) and Robyn Morgan's edited collection, *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970). See *Calendar of the University of Adelaide, Volume II - Details of Courses*, The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 1974: pp. 648-649.

²¹ Thornton, "Scenes From a Life": pp. 27-35. The course's beginnings were noted at the time in the University of Sydney's *Union Recorder*, 28 June 1973: n.p., and Thornton wrote an article on the course, "Qld Pilot Women's Course", *Inquest*, vol. 4, 31 August 1973: p. 5. Copies of some of Thornton's lectures from the course's first year are held in the Women's Department Archive held by the Students' Association of Flinders University, for instance, "Lecture One: The Nature of Woman", "Lecture Three: John Stuart Mill & Women's Liberation", "Lecture Five: The Sex War & the Class Struggle in Marx", WDA 1/2/7-12. Thornton was an established academic when she taught the course, as well as a veteran of campaigns for women's rights. Thornton wrote a very early article on the struggle for women's equality, "Women and Inequality", *Dissent*, no. 17, Winter 1966: pp. 43-46. She is most famous for being one of two women (Rosalie Bogner was the other) who chained themselves to a hotel bar in Brisbane in April 1965 in order to campaign for women's right to drink alongside men in public bars. See *Courier Mail*, 1 April 1965: n.p.

²² See "Women's Studies Courses", RG, Summer 1972-1973: p. 39. Like Thornton, Daniels had been teaching in an existing discipline for a number of years before she began the course. For an account of Daniels' life, see the obituary by Anne Summers published in the *SMH*, 28-29 July 2001: p. 39. Jill Roe's obituary of Daniels' appeared in *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 16, no. 35, 2001: pp. 153-

course gave students the opportunity to critique existing disciplinary traditions. Most famously, Liz Jacka and Jean Curthoys began teaching the course "Philosophical Aspects of Feminist Thought" in Philosophy at the University of Sydney in third term of 1973, after highly publicised staff and student strikes in support of their right to convene the course.²³ Also taught at Sydney in that year was a seminar course on the family, convened by Liz Fell and Anne Summers, and offered to fourth year students in Government.²⁴ At Monash, meanwhile, from 1973, Jan Mercer taught a third year Sociology option, open to politics and anthropology students on an official basis and open "unofficially" to any individual "from student to housewife, who wishes to come".²⁵

In 1974, an interdisciplinary feminist course began at the University of Sydney, entitled "Political Economy of Women".²⁶ Margaret Power from the Department of Economics,

155 and another, by Rae Frances was featured in *Labour History*, no. 81, November 2001: pp. 197-198. For a brief discussion of Daniels' contribution to women's history at the University of Tasmania see the recently produced Angela Rockel, *Documenting the History of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Tasmania*, The Women's Studies Committee, School of Philosophy, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2000.

²³ Liz Jacka & Jean Curthoys were both postgraduate students at the time of teaching. In arguing for the teaching of "Philosophical Aspects of Feminist Thought", Jacka & Curthoys made reference to the feminist courses already on offer at Flinders University and the University of Queensland. See Melanie Petrovic, "Provocateurs or Philosophy Professors?", *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 1973: p.18. For Jacka's account of events, see her "Interview", Sydney, 12 August 1998 and for Jean Curthoys' see her "Email Interview", 22 July - 4 August 1998.

²⁴ Fell and Summers were also postgraduates at the time of teaching. Fell & Summers were not asked to teach again in 1974. For Fell & Summers' reflections on teaching the course, see Anne Summers & Liz Fell, "Teaching About Families", *Search*, vol. 5, no. 7, July 1974: pp. 279-282 and reprinted in Penny Ryan (ed), *A Guide to Women's Studies in Australia*, Australian Union of Students, Melbourne, 1975: pp. 16-19. See also Anne Summers, "Interview", Sydney, 15 July 1998.

²⁵ See "Women's Studies As They Are - Victoria - Monash University" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 44. Mercer's course was brought to the attention of readers of the Hobart Women's Action Group's newsletter, *Liberaction* in a letter from Mavis of Melbourne. According to Mavis, Mercer's course was the only "women's course" taught at Monash in 1973. She described it as "a reasonable course" except that Mercer subscribed to an understanding of women's oppression that "tends to ignore those aspects of oppression unconnected with child-bearing." Drawing on the example of one specific lecture given by Mercer to illustrate the pitfalls of such an approach, Mavis wrote, "after an excellent analysis of the rise of womens lib [sic] out of the sexist oppression experienced in the black movement, the student movement and the youth culture", Mercer's discussion of the relationship between women's liberation and gay liberation brought out her sense that there could be "no political advantage" in an alliance with gay lib [sic]." For Mavis, the problem lay in Mercer's apparent "blindness" to inequalities amongst women. Mercer proposed: "'Oppression: is it society or is it men?' 'Well, you can't seperate [sic] it'", but according to Mavis, it was in this that Mercer ignored the possibility of "'Oppression: is it women?'" For Mavis, not only was Mercer dismissive of homosexuality, but she was also unable to recognise the implications of her prejudice for wider questions within the movement itself. See Mavis, "Just Another Petty Phase", *Liberaction*, no. 19, November 1973: p. 4 (emphasis in original). Mercer later edited an early and important text of Australian feminism, *The Other Half: Women In Australian Society*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1975.

²⁶ Also in 1974, a special Women's Edition of *National U* featured a small article on academic feminism in Western Australia in which Maureen Davies, Australian Union of Students' Organiser for WA, wrote: "Thursday May 30th sees the inaugural meeting of the first Women's Studies Group

Robin Cooper of Fine Arts, Carole Pateman of Government and Barbara Tucker of Economic History joined forces to teach this long-running and determinedly multidisciplinary course.²⁷ Also in Sydney, at the University of New South Wales there were two feminist courses on offer in 1974 — one in Sociology, “Women and Society” and the other in Philosophy, Barbara Roxon’s “Oppression and Liberation”.²⁸ Historian Miriam Dixson’s “Problems of Women, Family & Identity in Australia, 1788-1974”, a later year course offered in History at the University of New England from 1974, drew on staff expertise from across the Faculty of Arts.²⁹ Like Dixson’s course, the University of Queensland’s 1974 offering, “20th Century Women Writers”, was taught from an existing department, in this instance, English. In the Social Work Department at the University of Queensland, the course “The Welfare of Women” was also offered in 1974.³⁰ And in the following academic year, a new first year Sociology course, open to all students, began under the title “An Enquiry into the Nature of Women”. Deemed both a prerequisite for Advanced Sociology courses, and making up one part of what was called a Women’s Studies major, “An Enquiry into the Nature of Women” was to be taken alongside two courses put together by Carole Ferrier in English: “Women’s Studies: Literature” and “20th Century Literature & Society: Social & Sexual Liberation”. Those initiating the major had originally proposed a combined English and Sociology course for first year students.

in WA which is being arranged by the Guild of Undergraduates at WA University”. Like those initiating feminist courses in other states, community involvement was important to those in WA, with the initial meeting and all subsequent meetings held in a central location off-campus in order to encourage “maximum participation from all suburbs”. Likewise, self-management and self-determination were crucial: “How the course develops is something only those people participating in it can decide”, Davies wrote. See “Western Australia”, *National U*, Women’s Edition, 3 June 1974: pp. 8-9. 1974 was also the year of the Women In Tertiary Education Conference held in Melbourne on 18-19 May with over 200 women in attendance. See Maria Girdler & Sue Walpole, “Women In Tertiary Education” in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: pp. 20-21. See also a report of the conference by Margy Burn, a student in the Flinders Women’s Studies course, which appeared in *National U*, 3 June 1974: p. 2.

²⁷ See “Women’s Studies Courses”, *RG*, Summer 1973-1974: pp. 47-48. For an early description of the course, see the *Faculty of Economics Handbook, University of Sydney, 1974*, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1974: p. 153. For Margaret Power’s account of this long-running course see her “21 Years of Political Economy of Women”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, Autumn 1995: pp. 177-185. And also Margaret Power, “Interview”, Sydney, 25 August 1999.

²⁸ See “Women’s Studies As They Are – New South Wales – University of New South Wales” in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 32. See also comments from Moira Gatens, taped conference proceedings, “Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad”, University of Sydney, November 1996.

²⁹ See “Women’s Studies As They Are – New South Wales – University of New England” in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 33. For an early description of the course, see the *University of New England Calendar 1975*, University of New England, Armidale, 1975: p. 390. Dixson wrote one of the first specifically Australian feminist histories, *The Real Matilda: Women & Identity in Australia 1788 to 1975*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1976, published the year after she began teaching the course. A little older than her academic feminist contemporaries, Dixson was a lecturer in History when she initiated the course.

³⁰ See “Women’s Studies As They Are – Queensland – University of Queensland” in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: pp. 34-35.

However, Ferrier noted at the time that "so many minor red-herrings and barriers were raised by the older men in the department", that a decision was made to offer the first year course only in Sociology and to offer the English courses to second and third year students exclusively.³¹ At Sydney, meanwhile, an "omnibus" course in the History Department, taught by Sybil Jack, Heather Radi and Barbara Caine was offered in 1975, covering women in sixteenth-century England, women in Victorian England and women in Australia.³² And in the Department of Psychology at the University of Melbourne, a weekly two-hour postgraduate research seminar on "The Psychology of Women" was taught from 1975 by Norma Grieve and Virginia Holmes.³³

1976 saw the beginning of another set of feminist courses. Bob Connell was appointed a Professor at Macquarie University, responsible for setting up the University's new Sociology program. The teaching of the course was organised around three core dimensions, of which gender and sexuality were one. Connell (and Rosemary Pringle, from 1977) established three courses in Sociology which ran from second to third year, one of which was called "Sexuality & Social Order", and another, "Gender & Power Structure".³⁴ At ANU, a well-publicised student-led campaign for Women's Studies in

³¹ See "Women's Studies As They Are - Queensland - University of Queensland" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 35. According to *A Guide to Women's Studies in Australia*, it was at the instigation of staff rather than students that the courses in English were proposed. Although officially approved, at the time of writing it was expected that Ferrier would have to convene the two courses in her own time, in addition to teaching in more standard courses. Noting that the majority of existing courses taught within the Department continued without examining even a token woman writer, the article noted, "[t]radition dies hard, but some doing your own thing within the system appears to be possible": p. 35.

³² See Barbara Caine, "Interview", Sydney, 10 July 1998, and her piece on "Women's History" in Barbara Caine et al., *History at Sydney, 1891-1991: Centenary Reflections*, History Department, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1992: p. 115.

³³ See "Women's Studies As They Are - Victoria - University of Melbourne" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 44.

³⁴ Connell spent three years (1973-1975) setting up Sociology at Flinders, prior to his time at Macquarie, and it was there that he first became involved in teaching about gender. His time at Flinders corresponded with the setting up of Women's Studies there. In 1973 he taught a first year Sociology course called "Love & Power in Australia", which he recalls was promptly nicknamed by some of the academic conservatives "Sex and Sadism Under Southern Skies". Although he did not give explicit attention to gender in his courses until 1975, "Love & Power" did introduce students to theorists such as R.D. Laing and Frantz Fanon. In 1975, he set up and taught a course called "Sex and Age Roles". See Bob Connell, "Interview", Sydney, 8 February 1999. See also R.W. Connell, "Long & Winding Road" in Barrie Thorne & Barbara Laslett (eds), *Feminist Sociology: Life Histories of a Movement*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ, 1997: pp. 151-164. Both Connell & Pringle took care to point out that the courses they taught at Macquarie were "not women's studies courses as such"; rather they directed "themselves specifically to the problems of the women's and gay liberation movements". See RG, no. 16, May 1978: p. 35. Connell and Pringle's courses featured Michel Foucault on their reading lists in the mid to late 1970s. Confirming Pringle and Connell's conception of the intellectual derivation of the courses they taught, Meaghan Morris has argued that "interest in [Gilles] Deleuze and Foucault in the 1970s [in

1975 resulted in an independent and interdisciplinary Women's Studies course — the only one of its kind — beginning at ANU in the following year.³⁵ Convened by Ann Curthoys from 1976 to 1977, Women's Studies at ANU relied on teaching contributions from staff throughout the University.³⁶ In covering a number of disciplinary bases, including Anthropology, Economics, Politics and Sociology, the shape of the course was determined by the strengths in the Faculty.³⁷

None of these courses was instituted in a straightforward manner, nor without considerable disruption to the academy. Much of the chapter that follows deals with the debates, practical concerns and negotiations which occurred in response to the teaching of feminist courses in universities. Here, however, I turn to a close analysis of the campaign to teach one course in particular, whose proposal prompted a response from the

Australia] was fostered more by debates in Gay Liberation than by those then prevailing in the Australian women's movement". See Meaghan Morris, *Too Soon, Too Late: History In Popular Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1998: p. 235.

³⁵ The students involved in initiating Women's Studies at ANU in particular were unwilling to concede on the question of what form the course would take. Liz O'Brien, a participant heavily involved in the beginnings of Women's Studies at ANU, remarked in 1974: "although we don't oppose faculties enlarging their courses to examine how the subjects affect women", the group working towards Women's Studies' establishment (which included both staff and students), "still believe that a multidisciplinary approach is the only fully acceptable program". "Women are not a minority group", said O'Brien — "their role must be examined in an integrative manner, not piecemeal". See "ANU Reflects Male Bias", *ANU Reporter*, 24 May 1974: p. 3.

³⁶ See "Women's Studies As They Are — Australian Capital Territory — Australian National University" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 31; Ann Curthoys, "Interview", Canberra, 23 April 1998; and Jill Julius Matthews & Dorothy Broom, "Orphans of the Storm: The Attrition of the ANU Women's Studies Program", *The Australian Universities' Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1991: pp. 12-14.

³⁷ RG's issue on "Women and Education" devoted a section to Women's Studies courses being undertaken in secondary and tertiary institutions across the country in 1978. Courses listed included: at Adelaide University, "The Family in History", Department of History, 2nd & 3rd year course, convened by Vivian Brodsky; "History of Education Course – Family History Component", Department of Education, convened by Alison Mackinnon. At Flinders University, "The Position of Women in Modern Society", Department of Sociology, 2nd & 3rd year course, convened by Anna Yeatman; "Family & Kinship, Department of Sociology, 2nd & 3rd year course, convened by Anna Yeatman; "Social Inequality", Department of Sociology, 2nd & 3rd year course, convened by Riaz Hassan & Glynn Huigol. At the University of Melbourne, "Women in British & Australian Society 1738 to 1978 – A Comparative Study", Department of History, 4th year Honours; "Women & the Family in Australian Society, 1788-1979", Department of History, 2nd & 3rd year course, convened by Patricia Grimshaw; "Women's Studies Course", Department of Political Science, 4th year Honours, convened by Marian Simms. At Murdoch University in Western Australia, "Sex, Psyche & Class in Australia, School of Social Inquiry, 2nd & 3rd year course, convened by Francis Beaton & Liz Harman; "Women in Society", School of Social Inquiry, 1st year course, convened by Francis Beaton & Liz Harman. At the University of Queensland, "Sexism in School & Society", Department of Education, Diploma of Education course, convened by Helen Yeates. At the Western Australian Institute of Technology, "Sexuality & Homosexuality", Department of Social Sciences, convened by Roger Woods; "Women, Planning & the Law", Department of Architecture, convened by David Brown; "Women in Education", School of Teacher Education, convened by Louise Hodell. At the University of Wollongong, "Women in Society", convened by Eveleen Richards. See "Women's Studies Courses – compiled by Marie Markey", *RG*, no. 16, May 1978: pp. 29-35.

institutional hierarchy at one of the oldest universities in the country that was especially resistant. The campaign for a feminist course in Philosophy at the University of Sydney in 1973 was a site that explicitly brought together academic feminism and the radical critique of the academy that I examined in chapter one.

Part Three — Authority and Knowledge: The Philosophy Strikes

On 20 June 1973 a large number of staff and students of the Philosophy Department at the University of Sydney voted to go on strike in protest against the decision by the University's Professorial Board to prevent the course "Philosophical Aspects of Feminist Thought" from proceeding in the second half of that year. It was to have been taught by two postgraduate students, Liz Jacka and Jean Curthoys.³⁸ A majority of the staff and students of the Philosophy Department — which had been governed by participatory democracy since November 1972, giving students equal vote in departmental meetings — supported the proposal, and the Faculty of Arts had approved the course. But the Professorial Board overruled both those fora.³⁹

Although the Board would normally have endorsed the Faculty's recommendation as a matter of course, instead it appointed a Committee to consider Jacka and Curthoys' qualifications before making its final decision. When the Board met a month later, the two

³⁸ As I outlined in chapter one, the University of Sydney was not the only institution to have the authority of its professors challenged in such a fashion. For further discussion of national unrest on such questions, see for example a symposium published under the title "Who Should Run the Universities?" in *Vestes*, vol. 14, no. 2, August 1971. For discussion of earlier disputes within the Philosophy Department at the University of Sydney, see David Rayment's "The Philosophy Department Split at Sydney University, 1964-1973", unpublished Honours thesis, Department of History, University of Sydney, 1999. For recent analyses of events in the Philosophy Department during the period, see also John Franklin, "The Sydney Philosophy Disturbances," *Quadrant*, vol. 43, no. 4, April 1999: pp. 16-21 and John Burnheim's response, "The Destruction of Philosophy", *Quadrant*, vol. 43, no. 7-8, July-August 1999: pp. 20-23. As Rayment's piece illustrates, the dispute was certainly as much about the Philosophy Department itself as it was about the University as a whole. For an account of the strike written at the time, see Peter Westmore, "The Strike at Sydney University: June - July 1973", *Quadrant*, August 1973: pp. 23-29.

³⁹ At an earlier departmental meeting, a majority approved the teaching of the course by a margin of twenty-nine to five, but of those in favour, only six were permanent members of staff, and those who voted against included four of the most senior members of the department: Professors Nerlich and Armstrong and Associate Professors Rose and Campbell. In line with university policy, the decision was referred to the Faculty of Arts for consideration and they voted, albeit narrowly, to approve the course and its teaching by Jacka and J. Curthoys. See "Feminist Course Emasculated", *Honi Soit*, 21 June 1973: p. 1. The strikes received almost daily publicity in the press: "Course on 'Women's Lib' Demanded", *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)*, 20 June 1973: p. 3; "Philosophy Staff Strike for Women's Course", *SMH*, 21 June 1973: p. 2; "Liberationists' Battle: Women's 'Embassy' & A Builders' Ban at the Uni", *SMH*, 30 June 1973.

women were informed that a majority of the Committee did not consider them suitably qualified to take primary responsibility for the course — though a majority supported their appointment to teach on the proviso that arrangements were made for supervision by a senior member of the Philosophy Department. The Board voted thirty-nine to seven against the Committee's recommendation that Curthoys and Jacka be appointed to teach the course — even under supervision — framing its objection to the course via an assertion of the highly problematic nature of appointing postgraduate students to a position of senior responsibility.⁴⁰

Those in support of the course interpreted the Professorial Board's decision as unjust and without foundation. Jacka and Curthoys interpreted the Board's decision as a "direct denial" of the rights of students and staff to decide what courses could be taught, and further, one that "shows more than anything that women are oppressed".⁴¹ Reflecting on the level of staff and student frustration subsequent to the Board's rejection of the appointments, Associate Professor Keith Campbell, described in a submission to the University Senate how "the often deferred hopes of many people who warmly welcomed the introduction of Women's Studies had waxed and waned with each step of this process".⁴² According to Campbell, the Professorial Board's decision had "utterly dashed" those hopes. And even worse, for supporters of the course, those hopes had been "dashed by an illegitimate, entrenched, permanent, and reactionary oligarchy, the professoriat".⁴³

Over the next few days, those on strike from Philosophy were joined by colleagues from various other departments — Government, Italian, Fine Arts, Education, Anthropology and later, History. Those on strike stopped attending lectures or refused to give lectures and tutorials. Scheduled teaching time was turned over to discussion of the Board's decision. Exams were boycotted and administrative work came to a halt. "Alternative lectures" were given in a number of departments, covering topics as diverse as "The Democratisation of Education", "Women and Education", "Gay Studies and the

⁴⁰ See Westmore, "The Strike": p. 24. See also "Proposed Appointment of Two Part-time Lecturers in Philosophy", *The University of Sydney News*, vol. 5, no. 9, 4 July 1973: pp. 1-2.

⁴¹ The first quote is J. Curthoys & Jacka cited in Westmore, "The Strike": p. 25. The second is from Jean Curthoys cited in "Professors Veto First Course in Women's Lib", *The Australian*, 19 June 1973: p. 3.

⁴² K.K. Campbell, "Statement to the Senate on Matters Arising out of Philosophy Course Proposals", 7 July 1973, John Burnheim Papers (in possession of Alison Bashford, University of Sydney).

⁴³ K.K. Campbell, "Statement to the Senate on Matters Arising out of Philosophy Course Proposals", 7 July 1973, John Burnheim Papers.

University" and "How to Depose A Professor".⁴⁴ A "Women's Embassy" was set up in the Main Quadrangle, along with a large sign proclaiming "Sisterhood Is Powerful".⁴⁵ By the beginning of the second week, the Clothing Trades Union and the Shop Assistant Union — trade unions with a large number of women members — had announced their support for the strike. "We think it important that some course in Women's Studies be launched", a spokesperson was quoted as saying in the *Daily Telegraph*.⁴⁶ At the height of the strike (and media and public attention), the state executive of the Builders' Labourers Federation imposed a ban on new building construction on campus. Asserting the union's determination to maintain the ban, Jack Munday informed the *Sydney Morning Herald* that it would only be lifted when "the university altered its 'sexist' policies".⁴⁷

On 2 July 1973, the University Senate appointed a Committee to inquire into the disputes arising out of the proposal of the Philosophy course and to recommend a course of action to resolve the matter. Eventually a compromise formula acceptable to Curthoys and Jacka was proposed, and the Faculty of Arts approved the appointment of the two postgraduate students (with support from the Professorial Board), to teach "Philosophical Aspects of Feminist Thought" as part-time tutors under the supervision of a senior member of staff. The course began on Friday, 20 July 1973.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See Westmore, "The Strike": p. 27.

⁴⁵ The Department of Gender Studies at the University of Sydney is now, somewhat ironically, located in the Main Quadrangle.

⁴⁶ "Unions Call for Women [sic] Studies", *Daily Telegraph*, 28 June 1973: p. 12. See also Verity Burgmann & Meredith Burgmann, *Green Bans, Red Union: Environmental Activism & the NSW Builders Labourers' Federation*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1998: p. 144 for a brief but contemporary analysis in relation to other movements.

⁴⁷ "Unions Back Student Strike", *SMH*, 28 June 1973: p. 9. Munday further explained the Union's ban with the comments: "In these days of social enlightenment and reform, the wiping out of these discriminations should start at the universities. Now we find that discrimination is being promoted at the universities. The ban will stay on all further construction until the decisions are reversed": *The Age*, 28 June 1973: n.p. cited in Burgmann & Burgmann, *Green Bans, Red Unions*: p. 144. The University of Sydney's *Union Recorder* wrote of Munday's support for the strikes: "The fantasy of a student-worker alliance continues to flourish in the minds of **Our Jack's** campus friends". See "Our Jack", *Union Recorder*, vol. 53, no. 13, 5 July 1973: p. 187 (emphasis in original). A meeting of striking students and staff was called at the time to discuss the Builders' Labourers Federation's support of the strike, with speakers disagreeing "on whether the Builders' Labourers, with members working on the campus, were 'outsiders' and whether 'outsiders' had a right to interfere". See "Outsiders Can Aid Cause", *Daily Telegraph*, 29 June 1973: p. 8.

⁴⁸ Westmore, "The Strike": pp. 26-27. See also "University Feminists Look Like Winners", *SMH*, 17 July 1973: p. 3. Controversy over the appointment of women in Philosophy at the University of Sydney continued into the 1980s. See the set of articles by Associate Professor D.C. Stove, including, "The Feminists & The Universities", *Quadrant*, vol. 28, no. 9, September 1984: p. 8; D.C. Stove, "Universities & Feminists Once More", *Quadrant*, vol. 28, no. 11, November 1984: pp. 60-61 & D.C. Stove, "Jobs For The Girls: Feminist Vapours", *Quadrant*, vol. 29, no. 5, May 1985: pp. 34-35, in

Premised on a problematising of authority, the philosophy strikes were principally a struggle over the production of knowledge. Pivotal here was the authority of the Professorial Board to determine the kinds of knowledge to be sought and produced within the institution without any student or staff consultation. Also critical was the question of who had the authority to determine the kinds of qualifications necessary for teaching, and indeed, what kinds of qualifications counted. At the time and in much of the subsequent literature, the strikes have been framed as a dispute between those maintaining that the demand for democratisation was primary, and those who insisted it was sexism that was the crux of the dispute.⁴⁹ Australian cultural historian Alison Bashford has observed that one of the dominant ways of talking about the strike at the time was to ask, "what was the *real* issue?"⁵⁰

In what follows, I examine the ways in which the philosophy strikes were a site where the often competing ideas of democratisation and feminism intersected; that is, where the history of academic feminism and the history of radical critique detailed in chapter one came together. The position adopted by those advocating the primacy of demands for

response to which was published, Peter Shrubbs, "Jobs For the Girls: A Response to D.C. Stove", *Quadrant*, vol. 29, no. 7: pp. 14-16.

⁴⁹ It is worth noting that the term sexism itself was new (at least for those outside the academy), despite the fact that Women's Liberation had its beginnings up to three years earlier. In an article on the strike published in *Woman's Day*, a student's comments on Professor Armstrong's response to demands for a feminist course were quoted, with the magazine going out of its way to define the term: "He thinks philosophy should be divorced from reality. He's not anti-women. His 'sexism' [discrimination against females] isn't just a simple matter of preference for men over women". See Ailsa Craig, "First Blood to the Girls... Crisis at the University", *Woman's Day*, 6 August 1973: p. 3 & p. 13. In related terms, in recalling the beginnings of the Glebe Women's Liberation Group in Sydney in 1970, Ann Curthoys noted that "part of our analysis was in opposition to Left men — their sexism and chauvinism (lovely to have words to describe them), [and] the second place we'd been assigned in the anti-war movement". See her "Mobilising Dissent": p. 160.

⁵⁰ See Alison Bashford, "The Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 27, 1998: pp. 47-53. This edition of *Australian Feminist Studies* contains a number of papers given at the conference organised by Alison Bashford and Glenda Sluga, held at the University of Sydney in November 1996, which dealt with the philosophy strikes as well as other campaigns across the country for feminist or Women's Studies courses during the early 1970s. For a review of the conference proceedings see Judith Ion, "Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad — Embarrassment & Amnesia: A Conference Report of Sorts", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 12, no. 25, 1997: pp. 141-144. For an account of the central issues of the strikes written at the time, see Anne Neale, "The Philosophy Strike: Feminism By-Passed at Sydney", *RG*, Winter 1973: pp. 28-29. See also a letter published in the Adelaide Women's Liberation Newsletter, *Liberation*, May 1973. In her discussion of the philosophy strikes, "Jo Horniman, Sydney, 30/6/73" wrote that "[m]eetings have been interesting as there are a number of interpretations as to the REAL MEANING of the strike. Male lefties... are saying that the *real issue* is not sexism but self-management. This reminds me of the old line — "Women's Liberation is important, but don't forget the Real (re- male) Revolution! In typical fashion feminism and the issue of the sexist nature of the university, not only the structure, but the subject matter of courses, is being subordinated to the old male leftist plea for staff-student control": p. 8.

democratisation more often than not precluded the very possibility of a gendered analysis. Those who defined the issue as one of sexism alone refused to submit to those arguing that gender was peripheral to the grievances embodied in the strikes.⁵¹ The same tensions that British feminist Juliet Mitchell had first identified between feminism and marxism in her influential 1966 essay "Women: The Longest Revolution" were played out in the conduct of the strikes.⁵² Yet it was precisely in relation to the questions each critique raised about knowledge that the positions met, by focusing attention on the academy's everyday drew together the competing critiques.

The philosophy strikes localised many of the issues brought to the fore by campus radicals in earlier campaigns. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Free U's critical engagement with the academy and its problematising of institutionalised knowledge was exemplified via its positioning on the edge of the university — and not merely in terms of the geographical confines of the campus. In refusing to settle the question of whether it was essentially an alternative institution or a project devoted to curriculum reform in existing universities, Free U carefully traversed the line between inside and out. And yet, in formulating its critique on the basis that it was the university's existing structures that restricted freedom and which precluded the very possibility of liberation, Free U's conception of the academy and indeed of how power operated within the academy was unsophisticated. As I posited in chapter one, this conception of its relation to the academy in turn profoundly influenced Free U's understanding of the hierarchies and orthodoxies prevailing in its own intellectual practice.⁵³ What is fascinating about both Free U and the philosophy strikes is that both occurred in the context of one specific institution: the University of Sydney. As an older institution, elitism was entrenched in the University of Sydney's very structure. Indeed, its resistance to curriculum changes was indicative of the strength of the hierarchy endemic to its decision-making processes,

⁵¹ There were differences in conceptions of power between those advocating that sexism was central to the dispute, and those arguing it was about Professorial authority. Those asserting sexism saw power not as liberal "equality for all", but rather equality as gendered; men were privileged and women were still oppressed in that scenario. Neale argued in "Feminism By-Passed" that there were "inequalities built into personal institutional politics": p. 128

⁵² Juliet Mitchell, "Women: The Longest Revolution", *New Left Review*, no. 40, 1966: pp. 11-37, later revised and reprinted as the introduction to her book *Woman's Estate*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971.

⁵³ In some respects Free U's conception of power corresponds with Neale's in "Feminism By-Passed" when she refers to the inability of the men of the Left to understand the fundamental nature of sexual inequality. "It is obvious", Neale contends, "that most of the men on the left are unable to see the relationship between sexism and self-management — sexism is seen to be a minor issue, unconnected to self-management. The kind of self-management they were pushing assumes that there are no inequalities *built into* personal institutional relationships": p. 28 (emphasis in original).

and filtered through the materiality of its administrative and academic operations on a day-to-day basis.

Expressing many of the ideas central to the strikers' demands, the term "God-Professor" was one widely used during the philosophy strikes.⁵⁴ Referring to the power vested in the position of Professor, its use highlighted the profound lack of power available to those not of professorial status. As I demonstrated in chapter one, there was no room for influence by staff at a departmental level, whether in terms of proposing new courses, making appointments or in terms of departmental governance.⁵⁵ For radicals, a system in which professorial power had ultimate decision-making power, and in which departmental professors were answerable to none due to their ability to veto all decisions, was a system in which power was held in the hands of a few, privileged individuals and one that was therefore entirely unacceptable.

Of paramount concern to those staff and students who were striking in opposition to the Professorial Board's refusal to endorse the proposed course was the question of who could produce knowledge, and hence the kinds of knowledge produced in and by the institution. In their frustration with the Board's decision, radicals focused on the procedures of decision-making embedded in the University's very structure. In particular, they were critical of the absence of any "constitutional means of indicating dissent" since it was in the name of such procedures that those of professorial status were endowed with the power to contravene the manifest wishes of staff and students at all levels of university governance.⁵⁶ Anne Summers, a postgraduate student and member of staff in the Government Department at the time of the strikes, questioned how the University as "an institution which professes the dissemination of rational thought and the examination of ideas as its *raison d'être*" could explain the behaviour of the Professorial Board.⁵⁷ Summers further expressed her doubt in the existence of any "circumstance under which a new kind of course may be introduced into these hallowed halls of learning".⁵⁸ Crucial for Summers here was the question of authority, where she

⁵⁴ R.S. Parker's, Professor of Political Science at ANU, "Departments and God-Professors: Some Suggestions" provides an early example of the use of the term in addressing issues of professorial power in Australian universities. See *Vestes*, vol. 7, no. 1, March 1965: pp. 17-24.

⁵⁵ Except, of course, in the Philosophy Department at the University of Sydney, which had been governed by participatory democracy since November 1972, as noted earlier.

⁵⁶ Ann Whelan, "Angered Femme", *Union Recorder*, vol. 53, no. 15, 19 July 1973: p. 221.

⁵⁷ Anne Summers, "Why We Need Women's Studies Courses" in Jean Curthoys, Anne Summers & Liz Fell, *Sexism in the University*, 1973, John Burnheim Papers: p. 1.

⁵⁸ Summers, "Why We Need" in J. Curthoys, Summers & Fell, *Sexism in the University*: p. 1. *Sexism in the University* was a pamphlet produced during the strikes that also included an article by Jean

conceived of the Board's decision as an "autocratic manifestation of professorial power".⁵⁹ Characterising the decision as exemplary of the disjuncture critical to the University's very structure, she highlighted the incongruity between "the atavistic seignorial posture adopted by the professors" and the prevailing cultural and intellectual milieu in which the democratisation of institutions had become both "a desired and realisable goal".⁶⁰

Like the question of who could produce knowledge, the problem of what counted as knowledge was crucial to those striking. "What we are involved in... is a clash about the kind of theory that ought to be produced within a university", declared Jean Curthoys.⁶¹ Eager to render precise the discomfort generated by the course's proposal in an institution that many women students considered a "citadel of male privilege", Jacka and Curthoys declared that the Professorial Board's decision was sexist.⁶² Contesting the very basis upon which universities determined what counted as knowledge and expertise, a leaflet distributed at the height of the strikes, "Sexist Aspects of Professorial Decision-Making", argued that only Jacka and Curthoys were qualified to teach the course:

They have had practical experience in the workings of feminism; they have done a lot of research into Feminist Theory; but more importantly, they are women who are vitally concerned with the problems and oppression of women in society. The total disregard of these qualifications is indicative of male decision-making within the University.⁶³

Indeed, many interpreted the antagonism that accompanied the course's proposal as expressive of a significant level of fear; namely, "that this respected public institution is going to be invaded by subject matter which is essentially trivial and feminine".⁶⁴ Such fear was seen as exemplary of the disdain felt by the Board, and the academy more generally, in relation to the study of women and, further towards women per se. While

Curthoys entitled "Sexism & the University" (the text of a lecture delivered to students in a Government II course in Political Philosophy on 26 June 1973): pp. 4-8, and a short piece by Liz Fell, "Some Suggestions for Action": pp. 8-9.

⁵⁹ Summers, "Why We Need" in J. Curthoys, Summers & Fell, *Sexism in the University*: p. 1.

⁶⁰ Summers, "Why We Need" in J. Curthoys, Summers & Fell, *Sexism in the University*: p. 1.

⁶¹ J. Curthoys, "Sexism & the University" in J. Curthoys, Summers & Fell, *Sexism in the University*: p. 5.

⁶² Craig, "First Blood": p. 3. See also J. Curthoys, "Sexism & the University" in J. Curthoys, Summers & Fell, *Sexism in the University*: p. 8.

⁶³ Pamela Hansford & Anne Neale, "Sexist Aspects of Professorial Decision-Making", Leaflet, 19 June 1973, Folder 16, D. M. (David Malet) Armstrong Papers, MS 9363, National Library of Australia.

⁶⁴ J. Curthoys, "Sexism & the University" in J. Curthoys, Summers & Fell, *Sexism in the University*: p. 7.

keen to embrace conceptions of the course as a challenge to existing academic institutions, they were careful to define its challenge as firmly fixed in intellectual rigour. At the first session of "Philosophical Aspects of Feminist Thought", Curthoys assured students that the course was "not intended to be a consciousness-raising exercise on women's liberation". "You will need to be more interested in Philosophy than women's liberation, or you'll be disappointed", she informed those present.⁶⁵

Writing in the socialist newspaper *Tribune* just after the resolution of the strikes, Peter King, a member of the Government Department, suggested that with the initiation of the strikes had come a shift in radical politics. Identifying the differences between the character of earlier radical unrest on campuses and that of the philosophy strikes, he asserted that prior to the strikes "university politics had looked predominantly outward".⁶⁶ According to King, the strikes reflected a shift "inwards" to "the very institution of which we are a part... [by] applying the same analysis of oppression and liberation to the university".⁶⁷ In arguing that radicals had moved from deriving their sense of liberation through freedom from an outside power to a focus on freedom from the structures and processes determining their everyday interaction with the institution, King highlighted the reconfiguration of power crucial to the way the philosophy strikes came to problematise authority. He suggested that for both staff and students it was the autocracy of the God-Professors that was acutely important: "We have no power, no control over our own educational activities and environment", he wrote.⁶⁸ According to King, at a departmental level real power lay solely with the professors since staff were unable to teach how or what they wanted to teach "except in certain bounds".⁶⁹

Similarly, student Dave McKnight argued that "the Philosophy strike was different: it was not injustice and oppression 'out there,' but right at the gut-level of student experience: doing a course, being lectured, passing exams".⁷⁰ He suggested that student actions prior to the philosophy strikes, consisting mostly "of occupations of the Administration, confrontation, etc", were "inevitably divorced from the feelings of the mass of students". For McKnight, such action "bore little relation to the day-to-day things

⁶⁵ J. Curthoys cited in "Men To The Fore in 'Women's Lib' Course", *SMH*, 20 July 1973: p. 3.

⁶⁶ Peter King, "Self-Managed Education and Revolutionary Change" in *Red Letter (A Tribune Supplement)*, *Tribune*, 31 July-6 August 1973: p. 3.

⁶⁷ King, "Self-Managed": p. 3.

⁶⁸ King, "Self-Managed": p. 3 (emphasis in original).

⁶⁹ King, "Self-Managed": p. 3

⁷⁰ Dave McKnight, "Successful Uni Strike" in *Red Letter (A Tribune Supplement)*, *Tribune*, 31 July - 6 August 1973: p. 5 (emphasis in original).

of student life", and as a consequence was "alienating and abstract (for *both* the radicals and the mass)".⁷¹ The philosophy strikes, in contrast, both emphasised and validated "students' assertions of their educational needs, as defined by them, not by well-meaning staff or autocratic professors", and for McKnight it was in this precisely that the value of the philosophy strikes lay.⁷²

However, the question of what constituted primary importance in the day-to-day of student life for the women involved in the strikes soon came to the fore thanks to the sexism rampant even in the self-managed collective of the strike committee. McKnight described the dilemma the women confronted:

The women found themselves in the paradoxical situation of needing male support in order to have a fighting chance of putting the course on, yet being put down by male Left heavies with political 'expertise'.⁷³

It was during strike meetings that the men's — staff and students — disinterest in the course became apparent. In addressing such meetings, the "women's strike" speakers were often greeted with "interjections, laughter and sometimes paper aeroplanes".⁷⁴ Jacka perceived such conduct as indicative of the sexism rife in wider society: "The whole situation mirrors perfectly the way that men unconsciously manipulate women in society and the way we accept this subordination", she said.⁷⁵ The prevalence of "male chauvinism" throughout the strikes was typified in one male law student's response to an address by speakers for the women's strike. He began his speech in reply with the comment: "As we all know, a woman's place is in the home".⁷⁶ While the sexism that held sway amongst the men on the Left during the strikes was deeply concerning to the women involved, the strikes did provide women with the opportunity to participate in more substantial ways than they had in previous student actions. As one participant

⁷¹ McKnight, "Successful Uni": p. 5.

⁷² McKnight, "Successful Uni": p. 5.

⁷³ McKnight, "Successful Uni": p. 5.

⁷⁴ See "Women Scab in this Lib Struggle", *The Australian*, 21 July 1973: n.p. In order to differentiate between those demanding democratisation and those insisting that sexism and the course itself were primary, Jean Curthoys uses the term "women's strike" in her recent account of events, "Memoirs of a Feminist Dinosaur": pp. 55-57 especially. She recounts the tensions that arose between the women and the men of the Left, telling of how the swamping of "the distinctively feminist political style" of the feminist women, by "the 'macho' style" of the Left prompted the women to form a "women's caucus" in which, for a short time, the women "met separately in order to equip themselves both to engage in and to oppose the fiercer confrontations of the strike committee": pp. 56-57.

⁷⁵ Jacka cited in "Women Scab": n.p.

⁷⁶ See "Women Scab": n.p.

observed, "this strike saw more women speak publicly and assert their rights in the face of sexism than any other political struggle in the past".⁷⁷

At the same time, the competing interests of democratisation versus sexism were the source of widespread and often ferocious debate. The author of "Shit Pouring Time", published in *Honi Soit* at the conclusion of the strikes, argued that attention had been diverted away from the "most important" concerns of the strikes — the maintenance of the Philosophy Department's democratic ideas — and further, that such diversion had been the source of a great deal of tension between strikers. Expressing his frustration with those championing an analysis of the strikes in terms of sexism, he declared: "the heavy handed women's lib fuckwits jumped on the band wagon, splatter[ing] 'sexism' around the campus until it ran diarrhoea like from everyone's assholes [*sic*], which seemed to be the part most people were using as mouths".⁷⁸ Many of the women involved in the strikes became infuriated when "sexist issues" were repeatedly "either ignored or underplayed", often by men who argued that it was not "'tactically advantageous'" to take a feminist position.⁷⁹ Writing about the strikes in *Refractory Girl* in 1973, Anne Neale, a member of the Women's Caucus, wrote of how the men of the Left insisted that "mention of sexism might alienate potential supporters".⁸⁰ For Neale, "the sexist nature of the politics that dominated the strike" nullified "all the left's mumblings about self-management and democracy".⁸¹ Even those supposedly sympathetic to the women's course were quick to dismiss its significance in the face of potential defeat. Such behaviour was typified in the response of one male supporter who, according to Neale, replied to a woman's comments bemoaning the apparent loss of the course with the

⁷⁷ See McKnight, "Successful Uni": p. 5.

⁷⁸ Glorfindal Eunuchwarbler, "Shit Pouring Time", *Honi Soit*, 19 July 1973: p. 6. For an article expressing a similar level of contempt for the women's demands (and one equally contemptuous of students in general), see "Is There A Professor In The Kitchen", an editorial published in *The Sun*, 26 June 1973. It began, "Over at Sydney Uni — light years away from the world of earning a living — some students are on strike. They want a course in women's liberation. Or as university people put it in their usual cluttered way — a course in philosophical elements of feminist thought. The course is as harmless a way as any to waste the taxpayers' money". Explaining the Professorial Board's rejection of the course, it wrote of the decision to strike: "instead of accepting these facts of life — even women's life — students and some lecturers are putting on a paddy. They're sulking on their school cases... Bringing the university once again under the dark gaze of people who pay the bills". And referring specifically to the women involved in the strike: "If the uni girls scanned the papers today they would see a women's job paying \$15,000 is going begging... A job like that takes real learning, which the university is already equipped to give. Unfortunately, too many women will be women. All they really want to do is talk": n.p.

⁷⁹ Neale, "Feminism By-Passed": p. 28.

⁸⁰ Neale, "Feminism By-Passed": p. 29.

⁸¹ Neale, "Feminism By-Passed": p. 29.

declaration: "Damn the women's course — this is important. If the professors win on this one, the whole movement for self-management will be set back years!!"⁸²

The philosophy strikes are particularly fascinating since they were a site in which staff and students alike problematised notions of power, authority, hierarchy and bureaucracy. Writing in the University of Sydney's *Union Recorder*, student Ken Brimaud noted the "age, archaic decision-making processes and authoritarian hierarchical structure" of the University, arguing that as an older, established institution, Sydney was particularly vulnerable to campaigns for democratisation.⁸³ Figuring the dispute as primarily one of academic freedom, Brimaud asserted that the Professorial Board's decision "seriously offends against the basic idea of a University as a single community of scholars and students jointly engaged, with freedom and dignity, in the pursuit of higher learning".⁸⁴ Similarly, Michael Devitt, a member of the Philosophy Department who strongly supported the teaching of the feminist course, described Sydney as a "19th century university with a 19th century structure".⁸⁵ For Devitt, it was this structure which placed "all effective power over the academic lives of thousands of staff and students in the hands of the professors".⁸⁶ In condemning the actions of the Professorial Board "in the strongest possible terms", John Mills, another member of the Philosophy Department, further argued that "the Professorial Board's unprecedented, arbitrary, ill-informed and unjust determination of the competence of Ms Curthoys and Jacka" provided definitive justification for the strikes.⁸⁷

However, there were those sceptical of the legitimacy of the strikes. Outlining the position of some staff opposed to the strikes, R. J. Hunter, President of the Sydney Association of University Teachers, contended that those on strike had "assiduously cultivated the notion that they are defending the rights of the majority of the academic staff and the students against the unreasonable actions of the professoriate".⁸⁸ Aiming to highlight the divisions that existed between staff, he described how a meeting of the staff association, convened to discuss the practice of referring matters to the Professorial Board

⁸² Neale, "Feminism By-Passed": p. 28 (emphasis in original).

⁸³ Ken Brimaud, "Sexism at SU?", *Union Recorder*, vol. 53, no. 12, 28 June 1973: p. 177.

⁸⁴ Brimaud, "Sexism at SU?": p. 177.

⁸⁵ Michael Devitt, "Speech to the Philosophy Department Meeting, 26 June 1973", John Burnheim Papers.

⁸⁶ Devitt, "Speech to the Philosophy Department".

⁸⁷ John Mills, "Statement 21 June 1973", John Burnheim Papers.

⁸⁸ R.J. Hunter, "Letter to the Editor", *Union Recorder*, vol. 53, no. 15, 19 July 1973: p. 219.

that had taken place before the strikes had begun, had been "unemotional".⁸⁹ According to Hunter, those present had "voted unanimously that whatever changes were made to the governmental structure of the university, the Academic Board must retain its ability to function as the ultimate authority".⁹⁰ For those staff opposed to the strike, it was the appointment of postgraduate students to a formal teaching position that was of greater concern than the content of the course itself. "We do not believe that it is proper to expect, or to permit, graduate students to undertake the responsibility for developing, presenting and examining an undergraduate course", he declared.⁹¹ "Those responsibilities", asserted Hunter, "rest with the permanent academic staff and cannot be ceded to any other group without placing the academic standards of the University in jeopardy".⁹²

Tensions over the strikes also arose between staff and students. In particular, questions were raised concerning the democratic nature of decisions to strike, especially in departments such as Government, from which a large number of participants were drawn.⁹³ Describing the behaviour of some members of academic staff as an "arrogant abuse" of their position, the Editor of the *Union Recorder*, George Maltabarow, contended that "those in the vanguard of the strike movement have abrogated all responsibility to their student charges and fellows by employing the most blatantly dishonest tactics to further their own cause".⁹⁴ Maltabarow further cited the decision by one member of the Government Department, Carole Pateman, to replace her scheduled lecture with a talk by Curthoys and Jacka on the issues of the strikes as exemplary of such abuses of power. While those in favour of the philosophy strikes maintained they were fundamentally concerned with democratisation, Maltabarow suggested that a number of academic staff had adopted the slogan "with an almost mystical reverence".⁹⁵ Writing under the heading "Arrogant Staff", he contended that "some so-called academics" had forgotten

⁸⁹ Hunter, "Letter to the Editor": p. 219.

⁹⁰ Hunter, "Letter to the Editor": p. 219.

⁹¹ Hunter, "Letter to the Editor": p. 219.

⁹² Hunter, "Letter to the Editor": p. 219.

⁹³ Professor Henry Mayer of the Government Department wrote a response of over four thousand words to a petition put forward in favour of participatory democracy in his Department. Mayer concluded his statement by asserting that he opposed the petition on the basis that it was "unreasonable". Defending his position, he noted that he did not mean "unreasonable as defined by Henry Mayer, other Heads, top dogs, etc", but "unreasonable as will become apparent to most students and staff of good will on sufficient calm reflection and after due argument". See Henry Mayer, "Discussion on the Petition: Comment by Henry Mayer", 8 June 1973, n.p., John Burnheim Papers.

⁹⁴ George Maltabarow, "Arrogant Staff", *Union Recorder*, vol. 53, no. 13, 5 July 1973: p. 186.

⁹⁵ Maltabarow, "Arrogant": p. 187.

what democratisation meant, and further had “shown themselves to be as blatantly dogmatic and intolerant as their professed [*sic*] arch-villain — Professor [*sic*] David Armstrong”.⁹⁶

Whilst such charges of misconduct were sometimes unfounded or at least exaggerated, many were based on legitimate concerns about the “democratic” procedures operating in strike-related fora. In his article, “Academic Apathy... Or, Don’t Count On Me Mate, I’m Not Here”, student Norm Neill wrote of the problems he had encountered in departmental meetings convened to vote on whether or not to strike. Relaying the case of a meeting of staff and students held in the History Department where a motion to join the strike was passed by a margin of 185 to 163, Neill described how a fairly large group had abstained from the vote. The confusion that Neill asserted characterised the outcome of the vote, which he sourced both to the fact that very few staff had voted in favour, and to the fact that about two-thirds of the Department’s student body had been absent from the meeting. Noting that some members of the Professorial Board, likewise, had been absent when it voted to reject the appointment of Curthoys and Jacka, Neill asked:

Which then gives a more representative decision — a meeting of one-third of the Professorial Board to decide whether or not to approve an academic appointment, or a meeting of one-third of the staff and students of a department to decide whether or not to strike?⁹⁷

Like Neill, John Mills from the Philosophy Department drew attention to the complications arising out of “democratic” decision-making by raising questions about the character of the democracy operating in his department. Mills claimed that one group dominated proceedings in Philosophy to such an extent that “there is little political process... [and] much political hustle”.⁹⁸ For Mills, the result was a “rapidly increasing debasement” of participatory democracy in the department.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Maltabarow, “Arrogant”: p. 187. One commentator described the *Union Recorder’s* allegations about the Government Department’s strike as observations made “from the *Recorder* office, using an ear trumpet and a toy periscope whilst leaning heavily to the Right”. See *Union Recorder*, vol. 53, no. 15, 19 July 1973: p. 220.

⁹⁷ Norm Neill, “Academic Apathy... Or, Don’t Count On Me Mate, I’m Not Here”, *Union Recorder*, vol. 53, no. 17, 26 July 1973: p. 233. Letters from some students who wrote to the *SMH* to express their concern over the conduct of the strikes were published in the Letters to the Editor: V. A. W. Larkin, “Strike at University”, *SMH*, 3 July 1973: p. 6 and Randall Powell & Soames Job, “Strike at University”, *SMH*, 4 July 1973: p. 6.

⁹⁸ Mills, “Statement”: n.p. (emphasis in original).

⁹⁹ Mills, “Statement”: n.p. For comment on Mills’ statements, see “The Mills’ Bomb: An Alternative View of the Philosophy Strike”, *Union Recorder*, vol. 53, no. 13, 5 July 1973: p. 188.

Alongside many of the philosophies of radical education contemporaneous to the strikes, at the core of the demands for democratisation was the idea that “students have the right to participate in, if not control, the making of decisions affecting their education”.¹⁰⁰ Also prominent in discussion and analysis of the strikes was the concept of self-management. Dissecting the ideas fundamental to those critical of existing academic processes and practices, Peter King’s essay “Self-Managed Education and Revolutionary Change” asserted that self-determination was inherently powerful. For King, self-management encouraged staff and students to wrest back professorial authority and thus to gain joint control of the educative process. “If the philosophy of education implicit in the professional power situation is accepted”, King wrote, “then learning is simply programming, something that is done to you, an essentially *authoritarian* activity”.¹⁰¹ The alternative, and according to King, “one of the fundamental aims of staff-student control” was to end such authoritarian control in order “to break down the teacher/student, active/passive roles and to promote education as a critical, cooperative dialogue — an activity done *by* the learners not *to* them”.¹⁰² “Real education”, he asserted, “is the *collective* activity of becoming *critically aware* of our natural and social reality”.¹⁰³

The strikes, which resulted from demands for the teaching of a feminist course in Philosophy at the University of Sydney, were initiated on the basis of a politicising of knowledge, which in turn problematised the academy itself. Scenes of students and junior staff initiating feminist courses were witnessed, often in less dramatic circumstances, across Australian campuses in the early 1970s. In part, such scenes were reflective of a wider contesting of what counted as knowledge. At the same time, crucial to such contest was a set of specifically feminist questions, and basic to the institution’s response was a thorough discomfort with the challenges women themselves represented to existing knowledge and knowing.

Conclusion

Like the discomfort exemplified in the academy’s response to the proposal of a feminist course in Philosophy at the University of Sydney in 1973, feminism’s discomfort with the academy was generated via a set of questions directed at the institution’s everyday. In

¹⁰⁰ Neale, “Feminism By-Passed”: p. 28. For further discussion of this point, see Debby Payne, “Victory for Women’s Course”, *Direct Action: A Socialist Fortnightly*, no. 44, 19 July 1973: p. 9.

¹⁰¹ King, “Self-Managed”: p. 3 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰² King, “Self-Managed”: p. 3 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰³ King, “Self-Managed”: p. 3 (emphasis in original).

staking a claim for the primacy of its critique of existing knowledge, academic feminism also claimed space for women within the realms of existing institutional and intellectual practice. Feminism's problematising of ideas like the natural division of public and private, and men and women forced the academy to rethink the assumptions underpinning its own everyday operations — not only in terms of its membership but also in the kinds of theories it produced.

Chapter Three — Woman, Heterosexuality, Respectability

Introduction

The Women's Liberation Movement — a social movement of and for women — posed as problematic the historical oppression of women. In doing so, it defined "women" and "woman" as primary categories of political identification, and the oppression of women by men as its principal site of struggle. Grounded and sustained in the conceptual opposition of man and woman, feminism's intervention into existing knowledge and institutions was first and foremost constituted in sexual difference. Figured on the basis of woman's sexed specificity, academic feminism was further founded on the presumption of heterosexual difference.¹ In Australia in the 1970s academic feminism took on the task of representing "woman" as its primary epistemological project. Defined essentially as a site of belonging; one in which belonging to "woman" and belonging to Women's Studies were completely compatible, if not identical, academic feminism articulated its intervention via demands for women's space.

In this chapter, I examine how 1970s academic feminism occupied, resisted, produced and experienced the category of "woman". In particular, I explore how participants negotiated the category of "woman" through respectability. I use the term respectability to refer both to the idea of academic respectability whereby academic feminism and its participants strived to be considered intellectually worthy, reputable and meritorious in the eyes of the institution, and to the idea of respectability in relation to societal expectations of behaviour appropriate, proper and acceptable for women. Respectability was one of the most ubiquitous signifiers of status and credibility, of institutional value and legitimacy in the academy at that moment. Moreover, it was one of the key mechanisms by which these women positioned themselves, and how they in turn were positioned. I investigate the ways in which such identifications were secured and destabilised by representation and I ask what subject positions were available for occupation. While academic feminism's intervention into the academy was premised on woman's sexed specificity, it was at once a claim for the right to recognition *and* a refusal of recognition. That is to say, those participating in academic feminism both inhabited and refused to be fixed by the category of "woman". Indeed in mediating between the

specificities of “woman” and its potential constraints, participants took up a position of resistance and agency, one in excess of the apparatus of gender and heterosexuality.

Crucial to how 1970s feminism articulated its intervention into the academy were the tropes of place and space. Academic feminism was exemplary in problematising how women were inscribed within the institution, how they inscribed themselves and what could and could not be spoken from such a location. Thus, ideas of location and positioning provide the framework for my understanding of feminism’s movement through institutional spaces.

For Elspeth Probyn, as for numerous others, the project of representing women has been “a condition of possibility” for feminism and the origin of the epistemological foundations that structure its articulation.² Yet, as Probyn notes, central to the problematic of representation is the question of who speaks for whom, and why. For those who claim to interpret the social for someone, or some group — like feminism, which speaks of and to a collectivity of women — the question of “who gets to speak, from and for whom” is profoundly troubling.³ For Probyn, theoretical accounts of the social are undermined by the absence or indifference of any constituency. Yet for feminism the representation of women has been and continues to be the ground upon and from which it speaks.⁴ In this respect, it is not only theoretical pronouncements that undermine this ground, but also the ambivalence that feminism often engenders in the public.

Such ambivalence has been crucial to my experience of teaching academic feminism in a contemporary tertiary institution. Like the discomfort that marked feminism’s interaction with the academy in Australia in the 1970s, the ambivalence toward feminism typical of present-day students is crucial to how feminism inhabits the institution in the present. In one of my most memorable teaching experiences, a student eagerly confessed to me her surprise at how much she was enjoying a particular feminist course: “I can’t believe I really love this course”, she told me. “I thought it would be all ‘radfem’”. “I thought you

¹ See Teresa de Lauretis, “Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory & Historical Consciousness”, *Feminist Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, Spring 1990: p. 130.

² See Elspeth Probyn, *Sexing the Self: Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London & New York, 1993: pp. 7-8, and most famously, Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*, Routledge, New York, 1993 and Denise Riley, “Am I That Name?”: *Feminism & the Category of “Women” in History*, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1998.

³ Probyn, *Sexing the Self*: p. 9.

⁴ Probyn, *Sexing the Self*: pp. 7-8.

were a 'radfem'", she pronounced in embarrassed tones.⁵ In response, I was reminded of the social materiality and the lived relations of many contemporary women students and further, of the resilience of gender at its most reductive. But more than that, I was alerted to my own complacency. For me, what occurred was a shock of recognition: on an individual level, I was at once sexed. But more confronting, I was forced to look beyond myself and to acknowledge the ways in which women continue to be sexed by figurations they never themselves inhabit.⁶ Alongside this shock of recognition, I experienced a moment of disorientation; one in which the comfort of my own position — in which I take for granted the far-reaching effects of feminism's refiguring of the category of "woman" — was profoundly unsettled. In part, I felt disconcerted by the resilience of a figure conjured from the past yet rendered visible in my student's remarks, the figure of the "1970s feminist".⁷ Her comments are testament to the seemingly perpetual return of a set of clichés about feminism: that feminism is anti-men, that all feminists are lesbians, that only women can be feminist, that feminists are dour and humourless. I felt further disconcerted at the idea of my students (who are often only a few years younger than me) conceiving of both what I "am" and what I "do" as some remnant of a past that, nevertheless, exists with such clarity in their very contemporary minds. Thus despite my sense of my own "sophistication", I remain hailed in this instance by a conception of gender structured only in terms of woman's difference from man. And despite the success achieved by feminism in the name of women, my students remain ambivalent about whether they are in fact represented by feminism.

⁵ For further analysis of present-day students and academic feminism see chapter six.

⁶ See Elspeth Probyn on Raymond Williams & his "shock of recognition" in her *Sexing the Self*: pp. 21-26. Such comments are also about a discomfort between the clichés of feminism and their implications for the concept of woman in these women's everyday lives. Students are defining themselves as "not that" as much as "yes, that". What "that" is, it would appear, is a clichéd or mythical concept of what a feminist is: anti-men, hairy-legged, dowdy dresser. All of this despite years of academic and popular discussion of the possibilities available to women thanks to feminism. For further discussion see chapter six.

⁷ In the Australian context, Jean Curthoys suggests that present-day feminist thought is marked by a "mythical" 1970s feminism. See J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia: The Wake of Women's Liberation*, Routledge, London & New York, 1997. See also Jackie Stacey, "Feminist Theory: Capital F, Capital T" in Victoria Robinson & Diane Richardson (eds), *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory & Practice* (2nd edition), New York University Press, New York, 1997, in which she discusses the present-day construction of feminist theory in the British context. Stacey argues that such constructions are dependent on particular depictions of feminism's past, contending that "what has been called '70s feminism' has taken on a coherence, and often a personification, of mythic proportions. The '70s feminist', with all the media stereotypes that figure evokes, is so frequently referred to in Women's Studies classes today that I can only conclude her presence in a feminist imaginary to be highly significant. Now '70s feminism' has been constituted as a key player in the narrative genealogy of feminist theory": p. 59.

While such unease with the category of "woman" is the commonsense of feminism in the present, I contend that an unease also characterised 1970s academic feminism. I begin this chapter with "The Subject of Feminism", in which I draw on Teresa de Lauretis' arguments about the technology of gender in order to suggest that while the category of "woman" was absolutely central to how the women involved in academic feminism negotiated the institution, it was a position seldom inhabited with comfort. In the second part of this chapter, "Negotiating Woman", I draw out the intricacies of the day-to-day of academic feminism. I ask how was the category of woman occupied, resisted, experienced and produced through academic feminism? And I emphasise that the tension between what feminism wanted to do for women, and what it was subsequently able to do for women was always implicated (and inseparable) from its relation to the institution.⁸ At issue here is academic feminism's negotiation of specific institutional contexts.

While critical reflection on the subject of feminism was of crucial importance to those inside the academy, the contradictions of the institution of feminism itself were primary for those outside. In the third part of this chapter, "Negotiating Inside and Out", I examine the movement of both individuals and ideas between the Women's Liberation Movement and academic feminism. In particular, I consider the critical rethinking of the category of "woman" undertaken by the Hobart Women's Action Group (HWAG) in the years 1972 - 1975. HWAG suggested that there was a strong connection between the Movement's increasingly unproblematic championing of the category of "woman", and its poor treatment of lesbian women. Supporting the deconstruction rather than simple abandonment of the configuration of the identity "woman", HWAG argued for an end to the practice of attributing various behaviours, personality and status to individuals on the basis of sex, and in the name of female superiority. For HWAG, the Movement's devotion to a fixed and polar opposition between the categories of masculine and feminine acted to reproduce the values upon which "patriarchal society" was founded.

Part One — Women's Space

In her 1987 essay "The Technology of Gender", Teresa de Lauretis argues that feminist interventions into existing knowledge and institutions, historically, have been formulated

⁸ See Jacqueline Rose, "The State of the Subject (II): The Institution of Feminism", *Critical Quarterly*,

around “the creation of social spaces” — gendered spaces — such as consciousness-raising groups, Women’s Studies and “Women and...” courses in existing disciplines. Figured on the basis of woman’s difference from man and thereby constituted in heterosexual difference, for de Lauretis, academic feminism has and continues to be a space in which sexual difference itself is “affirmed, addressed, analysed, specified or verified”.⁹ In what follows, I take up the work of Foucault, like de Lauretis, in order to ask what are “‘the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours and social relations’... by the deployment of the technology of gender?”¹⁰

Academic feminism in Australia during the 1970s deemed women’s space fundamental to its critique of existing institutions.¹¹ Absorbed with figuring a space free of men’s authority and hierarchies of knowledge and learning, feminists reclaimed the specificity of “woman” as the key to radical social change. Cognisant of the history of women’s exclusion from tertiary institutions on the basis of their difference from men, women in the academy in the 1970s employed that difference to claim their right to feminist courses and to women’s space.¹² In asking how and why women’s contribution to culture and society had and continued to be dismissed, those demanding feminist courses made clear the systematic exclusion of women from power and from public life. If, as the Women’s Movement asserted, women were oppressed because they were women, it was the status and power of men as men that ensured women’s continuing inequality. According to Eileen Haley, member of Women’s Liberation in Canberra and later, participant in Women’s Studies at Flinders University, men dominated society in almost every way:

vol. 29, no. 4, 1987: p. 11 & p. 14.

⁹ de Lauretis, “Eccentric Subjects”: p. 130; de Lauretis, “The Technology of Gender” in her *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film & Fiction*, Macmillan Press, London, 1987: p. 1.

¹⁰ de Lauretis, “The Technology of Gender”: p. 3.

¹¹ In her recent article “Scenes From A Life In Feminism”, *Hecate*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1999, Merle Thornton, who taught a feminist course in Sociology at the University of Queensland (UQ) from 1973, has written about her time at UQ from the early 1960s and into the 1970s. Thornton notes that on arrival at UQ she was involved in a “pioneer entry to the Staff Common Room for women”. Indicative of the place of women in the 1960s academy, prior to this initiative “the few women academics were segregated”: p. 29. Thornton describes “working for the advancement of women” during the 1960s and 1970s, as “necessarily very much a matter of oppositional politics, opposition to entrenched practices and dominant interests in institutions such as government instrumentalities and universities”. According to Thornton, “the problem was to get people even to entertain the idea of change”: p. 33.

¹² Earlier feminists were also great advocates of women’s space, including women’s spaces at universities. For example, Manning House at the University of Sydney was originally (and for many years) a women-only student space. The notion of “separate spaces” was not exclusive to 1970s feminism, although 1970s feminists soon realised the limitations of separate spheres, an idea which many argued had limited what feminists could achieve in the past. For historical examinations of “separate spheres” contemporary to 1970s feminism see most famously, Carroll

the Government belongs to them, the laws belong to them, the churches belong to them, the culture (including the so-called counter-culture) belongs to them, the coercive powers of the state (army and police) belong to them, the streets belong to them. In short, everything but the kitchen sink.¹³

The idea that woman's position in society was directly connected to their oppression on the basis of sex translated into a desire for solidarity among women, one rendered explicit in the academy via demands for women-only spaces.

Anne Summers, writing during the philosophy strikes at the University of Sydney, suggested that "for women students... what is at issue is the nature of the 'education' — the content and the form of the knowledge which is imparted".¹⁴ As I demonstrated in chapter two, embedded in such critique was the idea that institutional hierarchies mirrored social hierarchies, and that the very ways universities were organised — what they taught and how — prevented them from addressing the principle upon which existing knowledge was conceived: men's privilege. Thus, women-only spaces were exemplary in the way that they came to problematise existing knowledge — both in content and form. While feminism's contesting of existing knowledge and existing institutional space was preoccupied with establishing women's space, it was also premised on its practice. Crucial to the conception and practice of women's space were the principles of open admission, allowing those from outside the university to participate in feminist courses, and self-management, enabling participants to determine their own methods of study and content, as well as means of evaluation. In refusing the hierarchies and elitism of existing institutional practices, each of these principles was deemed peculiarly suited to creating a space conducive and specific to women's ways of knowing and learning.¹⁵

Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love & Ritual: Relations Between Women in 19th Century America", *Signs*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1975: pp. 1-29.

¹³ Eileen Haley, "A Case for 'Women-Only' Meetings", *Woroni*, 12 July 1972: p. 5. Haley edited *A Guide to Flinders Women's Studies*, along with fellow students Margy Burn & Cathy Yates in Adelaide in 1973. This publication aimed to provide information for those interested in enrolling in the 1974 course, and acted as a forum for discussing the successes and failures of the course in its first year. See Eileen Haley, Margy Burn & Cathy Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders Women's Studies*, Empire Times Press for the Flinders Women's Studies Course, 1973, Adelaide, 1973.

¹⁴ Anne Summers, "Why We Need Women's Studies Courses" in Jean Curthoys, Anne Summers & Liz Fell, *Sexism in the University*, 1973, John Burnheim Papers: p. 2. A version of Summers' essay also appeared under the title "Redressing the Balance", *National U*, vol. 41, no. 5, July 1973: p. 4.

¹⁵ Women's Studies at Flinders University was the course most faithful to these principles in its day-to-day operations, but courses across the country reflected these principles to varying degrees. See chapter five for further analysis of feminist pedagogical practice in 1970s feminist courses.

The specificity of “woman” pivotal to feminism’s intervention into the academy was articulated via demands for women’s space in most contentious terms during the first year of the interdisciplinary Women’s Studies course at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. Women students enrolled in the course in 1976 called for women-only tutorials and expressed their strong opposition to male lecturers.¹⁶ It was those women who had been involved in the student-led campaign for Women’s Studies at ANU who were “especially rigorous” in their criticism of the course.¹⁷ Having played a central role as participants in the campaign for Women’s Studies, and having been instrumental in the student/staff committee responsible for determining the character of the course, the students felt justified in ensuring the course was consistent with their initial conception of the content and form of Women’s Studies.¹⁸ It was the increasing

¹⁶ Liz O’Brien, one of those at the fore of the campaign for Women’s Studies at ANU, wrote in *Woroni* of her objections to men tutoring or lecturing in the course. “The concept of any man, however sympathetic, lecturing a group of women on the nature of their oppression is one I find totally repulsive”, she wrote. See Liz O’Brien, “Politics of Sisterhood”, *Woroni*, vol. 26, no. 8, 1974: p. 4.

¹⁷ Ann Curthoys, “Women’s Studies at the Australian National University: The Early Years”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 27, 1998: p. 79. The Campus Women’s Liberation group devoted its meetings to discussion of “the organisation and implementation of the Women’s Studies Course”, extending an invitation to attend meetings to all women members of the academic staff. See “Woman’s Studies [sic]”, *Woroni*, vol. 26, no. 9, 2 May 1974: p. 8.

¹⁸ For discussion of negotiations between staff and students regarding the ANU Women’s Studies course at the time, see Liz O’Brien, “Jesus, More Women”, *Woroni*, vol. 26, no. 10, 1974: p. 7. In a veiled reference to the tensions that characterised negotiations between staff and students over Women’s Studies at ANU, O’Brien wrote, “One word of warning to anybody about to embark on a campaign for a women’s studies course: your toughest opposition will not come from male academics but from women who have made it to the top of the academic woodpile and see no reason why everybody else shouldn’t have to undergo the same struggle”. See her “Women’s Studies at ANU” in the Women’s Edition of *National U*, 3 June 1974: p. 8. For contemporary recollections of the staff and student committees, see Susan Magarey, “Interview”, Sydney, 9 July 1998. Magarey recalls heated debate between staff and students about what form Women’s Studies should take at ANU. She says, some academic staff asserted that they were already teaching feminist content in their courses, and they suggested that a “mainstreaming” of such content should be the aim instead of a separate Women’s Studies course. The student members of the committee put together a reading list to prove to the academics that there was enough material around which to organise a course. Chair of the staff/student committee, Thelma Hunter, then lecturer in Political Science at ANU addressed the question of discipline-based feminist teaching versus interdisciplinary in her 1974 article “‘The Womanities’: Towards Integration or Segregation”, *ANU Reporter*, vol. 5, 14 June 1974: p. 4. In her recent book *Not A Dutiful Daughter* she recalls her involvement in the establishment of Women’s Studies at ANU. Hunter writes of her objection to the idea, advocated by feminist students, that the content of the ANU Women’s Studies course be decided by the women of the university. She writes, “I felt — and I was not alone on faculty — that, like any other course, its content should be decided by those who had either taught courses on women or who had done some research in the area, preferably both”. For Hunter, “[b]eing a woman was not in itself a qualification for deciding on its content, as some argued”. Fearful of feminism’s isolation from the institution it wished to change, she argued that the committee should concentrate on adding courses on women within existing departments rather than a separate course: “Many of us felt that a separate course would accentuate segregation

number of male students enrolling in the course, according to its first convenor, Ann Curthoys, that precipitated the women's insistence on women-only tutorials.¹⁹ For Curthoys, the question of women-only tutorials was a "very vexed" issue; yet one, she acknowledges, that occurred at least in part in response to the behaviour and attitudes of many of the male students enrolled in Women's Studies at the time. She recalls that there were quite a few men enrolled and "not all were supportive", indeed, some were "quite offensive — they just wanted to heckle". And further even those men who meant well were "quite unconsciously sexist in quite profound ways".²⁰ While only some of the women in the ANU course were opposed to male students, according to Curthoys, there were a large number of students who "didn't like having male lecturers".²¹ This resistance to men's presence in the classroom, formulated alongside a wider refusal of male authority, was premised on the desire to avoid a pedagogical model that students perceived too easily reproduced existing hierarchies of man as expert and woman as novice.²²

Like the ideas embedded in the women's resistance to male authority in the classroom, for Curthoys, "the personal is political" — a concept central to feminism's critique of existing society — was about "not trying to measure up to male standards either collectively or individually". In other words, "not trying to please men".²³ For Curthoys, this was a concept "really deeply embedded in the culture", especially for women at university, "who were in a minority" and more often than not "students of men only".²⁴ The strength of student opposition to male lecturers was clearly articulated in student

of the sexes as well as of subject matter". See Thelma Hunter, *Not A Dutiful Daughter: The Personal Story of a Migrant Academic*, Ginninderra Press, Canberra, 1999: especially pp. 202-211.

¹⁹ Ann Curthoys, "Interview", Canberra, 23 April 1998.

²⁰ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

²¹ Liz O'Brien further outlined her position on men's involvement in Women's Studies, carefully distinguishing between their involvement as tutors or lecturers versus students. She said that she did not "wish to suggest that men should be excluded from being students of such a course". However, the idea of male academics teaching Women's Studies, she maintained, "merely serves to enforce the patriarchal image of man as the teacher, guide and leader of woman". See O'Brien, "Politics of Sisterhood": p. 4.

²² See "ANU Reflects Male Bias", *ANU Reporter*, 24 May 1974: p. 3 in which Liz O'Brien is quoted as saying, "It is patently obvious to us that a male teacher, no matter how sympathetic he is, cannot tell the oppressed about oppression when he is himself speaking from a superior stance. He could not appreciate the extent of social indoctrination, the extent to which women students see male values reigning in the University".

²³ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

²⁴ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998. The situation of women in tertiary education was addressed at a conference of the same title, held in Melbourne in May 1974. A report of the conference by Margy Burn, a student in the Flinders Women's Studies course, appeared in *National U*, 3 June 1974: p. 2. For an account of the status of women within the university during this

responses to the men teaching in the first year of the ANU course. Curthoys recalls the atmosphere in classes taught by men at ANU, in understated terms, as "a bit tense". Women students asked "hostile questions" of their male lecturers, and the "tumult" surrounding such classes, she remembers, prompted her to appoint only women to teach the compulsory components of the course in its second year.²⁵ In effect, women students with a preference for women-only classes could avoid male lecturers.

At Flinders University, men's participation in Women's Studies was much less controversial. For one, men's presence in the Flinders course was generally construed as "a good thing".²⁶ Also, it was the support of male academic staff from Philosophy that had given the women initiating the course the impetus (and status) they needed to take on the university hierarchy in their campaign for Women's Studies.²⁷ From its very beginnings, Women's Studies at Flinders was taught with the approval of the existing Philosophy discipline, and most importantly, the support of Professor of Philosophy,

period, see for example Rosemary Pringle, "Women On Campus: 'I'm tired of fuckers, fuckin' over me'", *Honi Soit*, 22 October 1975: pp. 14-15 & 19.

²⁵ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

²⁶ The cooperation that characterised relationships between the men of philosophy & those involved in Women's Studies at Flinders was matched by a desire to include male students in the course. See Helling, "Women's Studies 1973: A History of the Course", Eileen Haley, Margy Burn & Cathy Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders Women's Studies*, Empire Times Press for the Flinders Women's Studies Course 1973, Adelaide, 1973: pp. 17-20. Reflecting on the participation of male students, Helling, convenor of the course in its first year, wrote, "there seemed to be no problems caused by their presence, and mostly groups felt that they benefited from having a male point of view expressed": p. 20. Despite a general principle of support for men's participation in Women's Studies, the hesitancy that here marks Helling's comments is reflective of the less than positive experience she had with one particular male student in the Women's Studies course in 1973. Larry Johnson, an American philosopher newly appointed to the Flinders Department as a lecturer had asked to be admitted to the Women's Studies course as an observer. Prior to this request he had voiced his strong opposition to Women's Studies, expressing the opinion that the course was "unphilosophical": p. 20. His critique left many feeling "highly suspicious" of his motives for wanting to "observe" the course and its participants. He was given permission to join the course, but only on the same basis as others: the Women's Studies committee decided that there could "be no observers, only participants". Johnson's first initiative in the course, however, was to attempt to have a meeting of the Philosophy Consultative Committee censure Helling for her "sexist bias". Johnson was incensed by the comments Helling made regarding the terms of his participation in the course, specifically that "an observer, travelling from group to group, would be intimidating to members of the course (particularly those not used to university courses), and particularly in view of the fact that he was a man".

²⁷ Susan Sheridan emphasises this point in her account of the campaign for Women's Studies at Flinders. She writes, "it has to be conceded that they [men in Philosophy] were not only necessary to get these courses approved, they were in most cases already the political allies of the women concerned, in the anti-war and radical education movements as well as in Women's Liberation". She further asserts that these political connections were reinforced by personal ones — "among the initiating group, Yvonne Allen was married to one of the Philosophy lecturers, Anne Newmarch was living with the Professor, and Rita Helling was involved with a fellow postgraduate in Philosophy". See Susan Sheridan, "'Transcending Tauromachy': The Beginnings of Women's Studies in Adelaide", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 27: p. 70.

Brian Medlin. Under Medlin's leadership, Philosophy at Flinders was governed by participatory democracy, with its primary decision-making body, the Philosophy Consultative Committee, made up of the entire staff and student population of the discipline.²⁸ Also important, the support of the men of Philosophy enabled the course a substantial degree of autonomy and independence. Those initiating Women's Studies insisted on self-determination as a condition of the course's very existence since it was first and foremost to be a course organised by, for and on women; a course "hitherto unknown within the University, which would explore the history and condition of women in society".²⁹ A self-managing committee was created specifically to "initiate the planning and administration of the Women's Course". The committee consisted of:

students intending to enrol; women within the university; women from the Adelaide 'Women's Liberation Movement' not involved in the university; [and] women from the community not involved in either the 'Women's Liberation Movement' or the university.³⁰

Despite the autonomy embedded in the very fabric of the course, its independence was entirely provisional or at least utterly dependent on the goodwill of the men of Philosophy. For one, without the approval of the Humanities School Board the course could not proceed, and in order to guarantee such approval, the women needed the support of members of the Philosophy discipline.³¹ In addition, as Susan Sheridan argues, it was the support that the course received from the men of philosophy that prompted the

²⁸ For discussion of group assessment in Philosophy at Flinders see "Group Assessment", *Empire Times*, vol. 5, no. 6, 1973: pp. 18-19. For discussion of Medlin's role in the Philosophy department see David Hilliard, *Flinders University: The First 25 Years, 1966-1991*, Flinders University of South Australia, Adelaide, 1991: pp. 57-58.

²⁹ This quote is from Yvonne Allen, author of one of a number of short pieces reflecting on the first year of the course collected under the title "Criticisms" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 21.

³⁰ Helling, "Women's Studies 1973: A History of the Course" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 17.

³¹ Announcing the beginnings of Women's Studies at Flinders in the Adelaide Women's Liberation Newsletter, *Liberation*, "Miriam T" outlined the kinds of negotiations the group faced in their interaction with the Humanities School Board: "True, we had to modify our submission and course outline by substituting acceptable phrases like 'women's status' for offensive ones like 'women's oppression', and we also had to designate an academic, the Professor of Philosophy, Brian Medlin as co-convenor with Rita Helling, but no important principle was compromised". Acknowledging the crucial role played by the men of Philosophy, "Miriam T" declared, "We owe our thanks to the members of the Philosophy Department at Flinders, who have really stuck their necks out to put this course on". See "Women's Studies — at Flinders", *Liberation*, no. 18, March 1973: p. 4.

Board, despite its reticence to approve the course, to resist rejecting it outright.³² Indeed, she contends that what mattered to the Board's members was that the course had the support of the men of Philosophy — "men to whom the Board was bound to listen because they were colleagues". If women alone had proposed the course, "women who were mere students, tutors and some even from outside the university", Sheridan contends, it "could easily have been ignored".³³ In mediating between the necessity of men's involvement in the course and fear concerning its constraints, the Flinders women came to recognise the limitations of their own institutional power (or lack thereof). What soon became clear were the benefits of appropriating the institutional status and power of the men of philosophy for the women's own purposes. As the women conceded, if they had been compelled to fight for the general principle of including students in the decision-making processes of the discipline as well as for the course itself, their task would have been far more difficult.³⁴

³² Sheridan, "'Transcending Tauromachy'": p. 69.

³³ Sheridan, "'Transcending Tauromachy'": p. 69. In related terms, Sheridan observes that the reaction of the men of the Humanities School Board who were alarmed by the proposal of the course was characterised by "ridicule rather than reason" and thus with "tactics they would not normally have used against their colleagues": p. 70. As Sheridan relates, the behaviour of the Professor of Spanish exemplified this reaction. He produced a parody of the Women's Studies proposal, suggesting a course entitled "The Philosophical, Social, Sexual & Artistic Transcendancy of Tauromachy". Concerned with the theory and practice of bullfighting, it would be taught by "Spanish and Latin American migrants, whose "lack of academic qualifications would not be a serious impediment". For a full account of this incident see Sheridan, "'Transcending Tauromachy'": pp. 67-73. As well, a progress report on Women's Studies at Flinders, appearing in the Women's Edition of *Empire Times*, Flinders' student newspaper in 1973, noted with approval that the university administration had accepted the course at the end of its first year, but also observed that "[t]o say that during this year they (men) became aware of the necessity of women's studies in education, is grossly optimistic. To say that they consider it harmless is probably more the case". See "Women's Studies at Flinders", Women's Edition, *Empire Times*, vol. 5, no. 10, 1973: n.p.

³⁴ See Eileen Haley, "Political Lessons" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: pp. 26-27. Haley draws a comparison with the course at Adelaide, referring in particular to Flinders' policy of group assessment. She writes, "The Adelaide Politics Department is rather academically snobbish, and kept being anxious about the maintenance of academic standards in the Women's Studies course. We at Flinders felt a bit of external pressure to be accademic [*sic*], but this came just from being in the university, not from staff members in the Philosophy Department, most of whom accept the idea that the usefulness of a piece of work in helping people is a better criterion of its worth than its proper academic style of presentation": p. 26. An interview with those responsible for organising both the Adelaide and Flinders courses, published in *National U* addressed the issue of negotiating with existing departments. See "Women's Studies: one interview with Rita Helling, a convenor of the Flinders Course and the other with Jill Matthews, Helen Bannister, Mary Venner, Dianne Otto & Sue Higgins", *National U*, vol. 41, no. 5, July 1972: p. 5. In a reflective piece on Women's Studies at Flinders, Margy Burn noted how crucial the Philosophy discipline's support of the course had been. Its status, "(for all its faults)... [as] by far the most radical and democratic discipline in the university" was "terribly important". Indeed, Burns suggests that "there are some features which are central to our course that we would not have been able to have had we been in some other discipline (it is doubtful we could have even had a course at all in any of the other disciplines)". See Margy Burn, "Flinders", Women's Edition, *National U*, 3 June 1974: p. 9.

Insofar as the project of representing women was the foundation upon which those at Flinders and at ANU operated, the courses themselves reproduced and regulated a specific power differential between women and men through gender.³⁵ Meaghan Morris, amongst others, argues that feminism has and continues to preserve (and promote) the assumption of "a continuous and evenly distributed, consistently significant oppression of the external natural object 'woman' or 'women'".³⁶ For Morris, feminism's fidelity to such a conception of the subject of feminism is founded on the desire to establish identity, equivalence and similarity rather than diversifying the possibilities of feminist struggle.³⁷ In similar terms, in privileging woman's sexed specificity — her difference from man — those at Flinders and ANU made thinking about a whole set of power relations, like race and class and sexuality difficult. Each became a challenge to address by means of concepts of gender and sexual difference.³⁸ The possibility that participants were here confining themselves to a position of homogeneity, left them with the dilemma both of how to grasp the intersection of such relations, and of how to address the ways each may have affected the other.³⁹ At ANU in particular, where the position adopted by many students was in effect based on a desire for separatism, participants necessarily found themselves in a bind. While such a position valorised women's interactions with one another, it also reproduced and solidified the split between public and private typical of women's lives by duplicating the very subject of its initial critique.⁴⁰

Yet to argue that the subject of feminism as conceived by those in Women's Studies at Flinders and ANU was constituted in gender is not to argue that it was constituted only by sexual difference. As I made clear in the introduction, in her important argument about gender and representation, de Lauretis insists that the subject of feminism is an

³⁵ de Lauretis, "Eccentric Subjects": p. 130 & p. 129.

³⁶ Meaghan Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée: Feminism, Reading, Postmodernism*, Verso, London & New York, 1988: p. 54.

³⁷ Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée*: p. 62 & p. 60.

³⁸ See de Lauretis, "Eccentric Subjects": p. 133.

³⁹ The Hobart Women's Action Group (HWAG) made a similar point. I discuss their critique of the category of "woman" in the final part of this chapter.

⁴⁰ Those behind initiatives for a feminist course to be taught in Philosophy at the University of Sydney were fearful of an interdisciplinary course for this very reason. Writing at the time of the Philosophy strikes, Anne Summers argued that "an inter-disciplinary Women's Studies course could be no more than a cop-out". Summers suggested that the kind of recognition Women's Studies demanded could only be achieved if it were acknowledged as a legitimate field of study by the department running the course. An interdisciplinary course, in contrast, "would of necessity be shallow and unsystematic". In particular, she worried that "it would contradict those qualities of rigour [and] critical inquiry", which were the key to Professorial acceptance at the University of Sydney. See Summers, "Why We Need" in J. Curthoys, Summers & Fell, *Sexism*: pp. 1-4.

uncomfortable one. For de Lauretis, the subject of feminism is engendered in the movement between feminism's promotion of the specificities of "woman" and its constraints. That is, in a space in excess of representation — in a space "elsewhere".⁴¹ Thus, for those who premised their relation with the academy on creating women's space, like those at ANU and Flinders, the subject of feminism was constituted both in the discursive spaces made available by existing discourses on gender, and the elsewhere of those discourses.⁴² Indeed it was the movement between those spaces, which itself was the space where women know they are not "woman" ("they are conscious of that twofold pull"), yet they allow themselves to *become* that for strategic reasons. In de Lauretis' terms, that ambiguity is "where women are both inside and outside the ideology of gender" as well as "within and without representation".⁴³

Part Two — Negotiating Woman

The category of "woman" was absolutely central to how those involved in academic feminism negotiated the institution. Moreover, it was via the ambiguities of the subject of feminism that these women negotiated their micropolitical and everyday interaction with the academy. Always active in producing the meanings of the positions they inhabited (or refused to inhabit), participants of academic feminism were both strategic and self-conscious in mediating between the specificities of "woman" and its constraints. One of the most significant ways that participants in academic feminism in Australia in the 1970s came to negotiate the category of "woman" was through respectability.

My conception of respectability is here informed by Beverley Skeggs' explorations of the relation between respectability, class and heterosexuality.⁴⁴ She examines the "lived experience" of a group of working class British women, investigating how they inhabit different social positions and cultural representations in their daily lives. Focusing her analysis on the unease characteristic of these women's negotiations of the category of "woman", she insists that respectability is one of the key mechanisms by which they

⁴¹ de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender": p. 26.

⁴² See de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender": p. 2.

⁴³ de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender": p. 10.

⁴⁴ Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*, Sage Publications, London, 1997. In her 1975 book *Damned Whores & God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, Anne Summers argued that respectability was the central tenet in the treatment of women and the position of women in Australian society, both historically and at the time she was writing. According to Summers, women were viewed by society either as damned whores or god's-police, each determined by an individual woman's "respectability" in the eyes of society.

navigate their position (and positioning).⁴⁵ For Skeggs, respectability is “a discourse of normativity”, one whose normalising function works precisely by defining what it is not. For instance, not to be respectable is to have little social value or legitimacy.⁴⁶ She further contends that respectability “is rarely recognised as an issue by those who are positioned with it, who are normalised by it, and who do not have to prove it”.⁴⁷ According to Skeggs, respectability embodies moral authority: “those who are respectable have it, those who are not do not”.⁴⁸ For those who feel positioned by and position themselves against the discourse of respectability, it is crucial.

Like Skeggs, I suggest that the women central to my analysis were cognisant of their place, of how they were positioned socially and in terms of the institution and further, of attempts to represent them. I further assert that these women operated in what she calls “a dialogic form of recognition” wherein “they recognise the recognition of others”.⁴⁹ The women were constantly aware of the judgements of real and imaginary others, and more pointedly, it was through such recognition that they negotiated a position of their own. According to Skeggs, the positions the women of her study occupy are rarely accommodated with comfort. She remarks, “they live their social locations with unease”.⁵⁰ I suggest that the same was true of those involved in 1970s academic feminism in Australia. Critical to my analysis is the question of how these women mediated the discomfort intrinsic to their positioning under the category of “woman” — a sign to which they at once belonged and did not belong.⁵¹

Respectability was critical to Ann Curthoys’ negotiation of the academy and of her own subjectivity.⁵² For Curthoys, demands from Women’s Studies students at ANU for women-only tutorials were always tempered by her sense that women-only spaces operated in a manner “contrary to the way the university does things”.⁵³ The concept of women-only tutorials was a radical proposal given the prevailing pluralism on which the liberal university was founded, and Curthoys felt self-conscious about the ways such demands positioned Women’s Studies as in conflict with liberal conceptions of “public”

⁴⁵ Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 4.

⁴⁶ See Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 3.

⁴⁷ Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 1.

⁴⁸ Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 3.

⁴⁹ Skeggs, *Formations*: pp. 3-4.

⁵⁰ Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 4.

⁵¹ See Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 4.

⁵² The engagement between feminism and the academy at ANU was profoundly marked by the incongruity of a supposedly radical movement’s concern with respectability.

⁵³ A. Curthoys, “Interview”, 23 April 1998.

education.⁵⁴ For Curthoys, the idea of separate space was always associated with the question of respectability. Articulating the unease with which she (and Women's Studies) inhabited the institution, Curthoys describes how she felt under pressure both from colleagues and in relation to the institution to be "respectable" and "straight".⁵⁵ In part, the pressure she felt was a result of the notoriety of the Women's Studies program with which she was associated. From its beginnings, the course at ANU was marked by the fact that it had been initiated on the basis of a set of demands from students who had occupied the ANU Chancelry in 1974.⁵⁶ Women's Studies at the ANU stood out also since it was housed and administered through the University's History Department — entirely on account of Curthoys' training as an historian.⁵⁷ Above all, Women's Studies was conspicuous merely by its presence in the University; or, rather as a consequence of the fact that its engagement with the institution was figured on the basis of "woman's" absence from existing knowledge. The program's placement in a department that, according to Curthoys, exhibited what could best be described as "an active lack of support" heightened her already strong sense of Women's Studies' tenuous presence in the academy.⁵⁸

Skeggs points to the consistency with which metaphors of space and place appear in the narratives of those women who are "out of place" and further, the self-conscious ways those women occupy space. In reference to the working class women who are her focus, Skeggs observes: "they know they occupy space in different ways".⁵⁹ Similarly, metaphors of space and place figure in the way Curthoys characterises the ways she (and Women's Studies) inhabited the institution. She was always conscious of the judgements

⁵⁴ For discussion of the liberal university and the University of Sydney's feminist philosophy course "Philosophical Aspects of Feminist Thought", and its insistence that only women could teach the "women's course", see Jean Curthoys, "Memoirs of a Feminist Dinosaur", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 27, 1998: pp. 55-61. See also her book *Feminist Amnesia*.

⁵⁵ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

⁵⁶ The impetus for the establishment of Women's Studies at ANU occurred via its listing as one of a set of four demands made by students who occupied the Chancelry building in 1974. The other three demands related to equal staff/student control in the determining of course content, student choice of the means of assessment and an end to overcrowding by repeating lectures or tutorials. By all accounts its proposal passed through the first administrative hurdles with ease. See Faculty of Arts Meeting, 22 April 1974, *Minutes*, "The Australian National University, School of General Studies, Student Concerns Expressed at the Meeting of the Council, 19 April 1974", ANU Archives, 1284/1974 – 1289/1974 and "ANU Reflects": p. 3. See also Stephen G. Foster & Margaret M. Varghese (eds), "Women's Studies" in their *The Making of the Australian National University*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996: pp. 246-248.

⁵⁷ See Correspondence, 13 January 1976, "Women's Studies", ANU Archives, File 31.1.37, Women's Studies Program. See also Board of the School of General Studies, 27 February 1976, *Minute No. 21*, "Women's Studies", ANU Archives, File 31.1.37, Women's Studies Program.

⁵⁸ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

of others and the way Women's Studies was positioned not just as different, but as inferior and as inadequate — that was her situated knowledge.⁶⁰ Her sense of feeling “out of place” was based in part on the treatment she received at the hands of some of those more senior within the Faculty. Early on in Curthoys' term as convenor of Women's Studies, she faced the wrath of a Professor of Sociology, passionate in his opposition to the field and in his suspicion of its intellectual worth. In a Faculty meeting, voicing his doubts concerning the intellectual credibility of Women's Studies, the Professor suggested that Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* — one of the key texts on the course reading list — was exemplary of the kinds of academic deficiencies which led him to question the intellectual merit of a project like Women's Studies more generally. At the time, Curthoys had no response to the accusation, but even now she vividly recalls wishing she had possessed the “wit and forethought to have responded to him ‘since when was a Harvard PhD not academic enough for ANU!’”⁶¹

In similar terms, for Jean Curthoys — convenor (with Liz Jacka) of the feminist course in Philosophy at the University of Sydney — her course's high profile both within the academy and outside determined the way she and Jacka (and the course itself) positioned themselves in the academy. As I demonstrated in chapter two, the strikes that were crucial to the campaign to pressure University authorities to allow the course to proceed (with Curthoys and Jacka as convenors) generated a massive amount of attention. And with that attention came an ongoing and intense examination of their every move.⁶² “Liz and I spent some time making it [the course] as respectable as we could because of all the

⁵⁹ See Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 92.

⁶⁰ See Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs & Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Free Association, London, 1991: especially pp. 1-4 & pp. 183-201.

⁶¹ A. Curthoys, “Interview”, 23 April 1998. She also recounted the episode in her book *For & Against Feminism: A Personal Journey into Feminist Theory & History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988: p. 43. The Canberra Women's Liberation mentioned a similar incident in their newsletter, conferring their “Droopy Penis Award of the Month” on a member of the Philosophy Department at ANU: “(he) said that such a course had so little intellectual content that the ways and means of establishing it were hardly worth discussing”. See *Canberra Women's Liberation Newsletter*, no. 43, August 1974: n.p.

⁶² Even after the course had begun it received some coverage in the press. For example, “Masculine Drop-Out”, an article that appeared in *The Australian* in December 1973 addressed the controversial issue of men's participation in the course. The article began: “Some of the female students, it appears, resented the presence of men at the seminars, especially as the men did nearly all the talking”. Liz Jacka was quoted as saying, “[f]or the first couple of months there were quite a few fights and squabbles, but after the August holiday break most of the men stopped coming and worked by themselves”. Emphasising the discrepancy between men's participation and what the course was attempting to achieve, Jacka maintained that “[t]he women felt a lot happier about it then, because it is a very personal type of course, not at all like the usual dry, impersonal studies”. See “Masculine Drop-Out”, *The Australian*, 11 December 1973: p. 12.

public scrutiny", Curthoys recalls.⁶³ Already conspicuous in the light of the strikes, the course's prominence in the institution (and its position as "out of place") was only enhanced by the novelty of its subject matter — women.⁶⁴ Though Curthoys' and Jacka's attempts to attain respectability in the academy were aimed at achieving a less visible presence in the institution, as at ANU the focus on women fundamental to the course meant it was always already marked as different (and as inferior). Writing at the time, Curthoys argued that the University's antagonism to the prospect of a feminist philosophy course was founded on the fear that it would "lower standards". In a move indicative of such fear, University authorities treated the course as representative of "the collapse of anything that is serious and proper within the University" rather than as a "serious political threat".⁶⁵ In response, the course (and its convenors) were left feeling at once invisible and under scrutiny, but above all "out of place" in the academy. In Jean Curthoys' terms, the University's "disregard" for the study of the role of women and further, its contempt for "the actual role of women" in society was here crucial.⁶⁶

Ann Curthoys' preoccupation with respectability, like that of others, was about avoiding drawing attention to herself (and Women's Studies). It was further the concern of an individual apprised of the institutional dynamics which dictated that visibility would bring with it, for Women's Studies at least, a measure of undesired attention. Curthoys knew what was considered respectable and unrespectable by her colleagues — having spent a number of years as an undergraduate and then postgraduate scholar she was trained in (and cognisant of) the established codes and conventions of behaviour and thought in the academy. While the scrutiny to which Curthoys was subject came mostly from her colleagues and university authorities, it came also from her students. Her status as convenor and her schooling in the protocol of academic codes and conventions here positioned her firmly within the institution. Like many of those around her she was "unable to find an academic position in Australian history", instead Curthoys (and others) "found themselves in Women's Studies". Curthoys writes, "for us, the first

⁶³ See Jean Curthoys, "Email Interview", 22 July-4 August 1998.

⁶⁴ As I noted in chapter two, the strikes received almost daily publicity in the press: "Course on 'Women's Lib' Demanded", *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)*, 20 June 1973: p. 3; "Philosophy Staff Strike for Women's Course", *SMH*, 21 June 1973: p. 2; "Liberationists' Battle: Women's 'Embassy' & A Builders' Ban at the Uni", *SMH*, 30 June 1973. As Jean Curthoys makes clear in her analysis, the very idea of a course taught on women was provocative to many.

⁶⁵ Jean Curthoys, "Sexism & the University" in J. Curthoys, Summers & Fell, *Sexism in the University*: p. 8.

⁶⁶ J. Curthoys, "Sexism & the University" in J. Curthoys, Summers & Fell, *Sexism in the University*: p. 8.

generation, Women's Studies was not necessarily our first choice or our only option".⁶⁷ Jill Julius Matthews confirms that those involved in the beginnings of academic feminism in Australia did not "move into the academy". Matthews recalls, "We were always already there — a lot of us anyway".⁶⁸ In arguing for a complicated conception of feminism's moves "into or out of" the academy — and thus its relation with the academy — Matthews highlights the depth of the investments she and her contemporaries had made in the university as an institution. At the same time, she acknowledges that she was equally invested (as were her contemporaries) in academic feminism and its challenge to prevailing academic practice.⁶⁹ One of the ways Ann Curthoys in particular negotiated the contradictions of this position was via claims for respectability. Though thoroughly implicated in the project of academic feminism, her positioning was always

⁶⁷ A. Curthoys, "The Early Years": p. 76. Of those in Women's Studies early on, a number remain affiliated with Women's/Gender Studies, while others have moved back to their original discipline. Ann Curthoys completed a PhD in History at Macquarie University in Sydney, taught Women's Studies at ANU for two years, then moved back to Sydney, teaching at the University of Technology, Sydney in an interdisciplinary context. Since 1995 she has been Manning Clark Professor of History at the ANU. Jean Curthoys was in Philosophy at Sydney before moving to coordinate the Women's Studies course at Flinders for two years from 1975. She then returned to Philosophy at Sydney, where she continued to teach until 1997 when she retired from academia. Most recently, she has taken up the criticisms she made of contemporary feminist scholarship in her 1997 book *Feminist Amnesia* to critique new academic feminist works. Her reviews have appeared in *Quadrant* and in the Higher Education Supplement (HES) of *The Australian* newspaper. See for example, Jean Curthoys, "Feminism's New Age of Tolerance", HES, *The Australian*, 7 January 1998: p. 39 and related responses by Kay Schaffer, "Feminism as Paternalism", HES, *The Australian*, 14 January 1998: p. 39 and Jean Curthoys, "Poverty, not Paucity, of Feminist Theory", HES, *The Australian*, 21 January 1998: p. 42. Susan Magarey completed her PhD in History at ANU, first teaching Women's Studies at the same university in 1978. She left for Adelaide University's Centre for Research in Women's Studies at the end of 1983, and she is now attached to the History Department at that university. Susan Sheridan, Professor of Women's Studies at Flinders University, began her academic career in the discipline of English. Arriving in Adelaide from Sydney via London in 1970, she was involved in teaching "After Dinner Mints" with Jill Julius Matthews and Rosemary Pringle at Adelaide University. She has been teaching Women's Studies at Flinders since 1987. Lyndall Ryan completed a PhD in History, went into the public service from 1974-1977, and then taught feminist courses at Griffith from 1978 until the early 1980s. She moved to Flinders to teach Women's Studies in 1986, where she stayed until 1998-1999 when she took up the position of Professor of Australian Studies at the University of New England. Jill Julius Matthews completed her PhD in History at the University of Adelaide, taught history at the same institution, then moved to ANU to teach Women's Studies when Magarey left at the end of 1983. She remained with Women's Studies until 1997 when she shifted to the History Department at the same institution. Rosemary Pringle began her academic career in History as well, soon moving from there to Politics and then Sociology at various universities — from Tasmania to Adelaide to Macquarie and then Griffith, where she was Professor of Women's Studies. In 2000, Pringle became Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology & Social Policy at the University of Southampton, UK. Liz Jacka spent only one year teaching "Philosophical Aspects of Feminist Thought" at Sydney, before shifting to Philosophy at Macquarie. There she became interested in media policy, taking up work in the government sector for a number of years. She is now Professor of Communication Studies in the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences at UTS. Margaret Power taught "Political Economy of Women" for twenty-one years, retiring from academia in 1995 to teach yoga.

⁶⁸ Jill Julius Matthews, "Interview", Canberra, 24 April 1998.

disrupted by her knowledge of a judgemental external other; she was in effect positioned both as surveillant of herself and of Women's Studies.

Curthoys' discomfort with those students who did not adhere (either by design or inadvertently) to the codes and conventions of existing institutional practice features strongly in her recollections. As detailed above, student demands for women-only tutorials provided a dilemma for her precisely because they threatened to mark Women's Studies as different. Under pressure to sway to student demand, but at the same time keeping at the fore her own sense of the strategic necessity of following existing institutional protocol, Curthoys insisted on having "mixed tutorials and some women-only tutorials", providing students with the opportunity to choose what most suited them. Reflecting back on this decision, she remarks: "If I'd had just my own way of doing it, I wouldn't have had women-only tutorials, I would have just had tutorials".⁷⁰ She is similarly candid about her discomfort with those Women's Studies students most visible to University authorities: "I was always a little wary of the ANU student radical type — the young women in boilersuits (the fashion of the day in 1976) — and the oddity of rushing home from these angry boilersuited [*sic*] young women to breastfeed my toddler".⁷¹ Animating Curthoys' discomfort here is the figure of the respectable woman — she who defers to authority, is obedient, appropriate, feminine, and heterosexual.

According to Skeggs, the respectable woman is the embodiment of a particular form of womanhood — of which femininity is one sign. She suggests that the investments the working class women in her study make in the ideal of femininity enables them access to status and moral credibility. However, she is quick to note that such status and credibility is entirely provisional since for these women any lack in femininity is swiftly followed by a corresponding reduction in respectability.⁷² Indeed, she makes clear the ways working class women historically have been positioned against femininity (a point she also raises in relation to "the lesbian").⁷³ In the process, she draws out the association between femininity, respectability and heterosexuality.

⁶⁹ Matthews, "Interview", 24 April 1998.

⁷⁰ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

⁷¹ A. Curthoys, "The Early Years": p. 79.

⁷² Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 99.

⁷³ Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 118.

I conceive of heterosexuality as an authorising discourse — one that gives validity to “correct” forms of sexuality (and indeed correct expressions of femininity).⁷⁴ In Ann Curthoys’ negotiation of respectability, sexuality rarely figures directly but it was often present. In her recollections of her efforts to distance herself from being labelled unrespectable, heterosexuality was the ever-present underpinning which informed and circumscribed her ability to be respectable. To be specific, in setting herself (then and now) in opposition to the “angry boilersuited young women”, Curthoys aims to establish a position for herself (and Women’s Studies) as precisely that which they were not. The figure of the angry boilersuited young woman was exemplary in its embodiment of all that Curthoys so desperately wished to avoid. The boilersuit — the uniform of the radical women — signified a lack of femininity (of course, it was worn by the women at least in part with the intention of disrupting the ideal of femininity). Their “anger”, as Curthoys’ discomfort at its expression makes clear, further positioned them as unruly and disorderly. But most troublesome, animating the figure of the angry boilersuited young woman was the lesbian — a subject defined historically as deviant, dangerous, contaminating and most of all, unrespectable.⁷⁵

In acknowledging that heterosexuality historically has been associated with respectability, Skeggs recognises the ways the lesbian (and working class women) have been associated with perverse sexuality. Most importantly, she argues that the association of lesbianism with sex makes it difficult for women to maintain any distance from the ways “woman” historically has been positioned as first and foremost a sexual subject.⁷⁶ In clear terms, Skeggs takes care to point out that the “actual practice of sex occurs within a framework of recognitions of how women have already been socially positioned”.⁷⁷ In similar terms, Curthoys’ efforts to distance herself from the radical students are generated via a refusal of her own “momentary recognition” of herself, and of “woman”, as a sexual subject. Investing in heterosexuality — in subject positions such as mother, wife, girlfriend — Curthoys’ makes an effort *not* to be recognised by others nor to recognise herself as a sexual subject. Indeed, she recognises herself as heterosexual only via disassociation from the “angry boilersuited young women” and in the hope precisely of avoiding “being sexed”. Here, her investments in forms of femininity enable a movement away from the sexual; they offer routes into respectability. The prioritising

⁷⁴ See Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 120.

⁷⁵ See Skeggs, *Formations*: pp. 118-138.

⁷⁶ Skeggs, *Formations*: especially p. 118.

⁷⁷ Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 124.

of heterosexual masculinity as the norm through which the structure and pedagogy of the academy is organised makes Curthoys' investments all the more crucial.

In response to this constant marking and positioning, Curthoys recalls investing in ideas of rigorous scholarship and proper intellectual practice. Hers was a claim for the right to be recognised rather than a refusal of recognition (in this instance at least). She remembers her desire for respectability as one generated by a preoccupation with "proving your academic credentials" and with proving that feminism had academic credentials — that it wasn't just a social movement, that feminism was "intellectually worthwhile".⁷⁸ In her desire to prove academic feminism's credentials she longed to demonstrate how it was "helping to change the university domain". But her enthusiasm was always constrained by her sense of how critical it was that she ensure academic feminism was not "bringing inappropriate behaviour into the university".⁷⁹ For Susan Magarey, a postgraduate student at ANU at the time, her certainty of the resilience of the project of academic feminism was generated via the "enormous amount of intellectual work going on outside the universities — in the discussion groups, in the meetings, in the conferences". Magarey suggests this engagement was what led many at their "most confident" to argue that "universities needed to benefit" from what feminism had to offer.⁸⁰ But where Magarey and others were convinced of the surety of academic feminism's place in the academy, Curthoys was troubled by the implications of the surveillance she encountered in her daily interaction with the academy. Reflecting back on the degree to which she was occupied by the question of Women's Studies' survival, she hesitates before saying, "I don't *think* there was much to pick on". But "I do remember being worried that people might close it down... so there must have been some kind of disquiet".⁸¹

While some feminist courses, in particular that at Flinders were conceived on the basis of a set of ideas drawn from modes of consciousness-raising and principles of self-management, the constancy of Curthoys' concern with respectability left her unwilling to engage such methods in her classes.⁸² Comparing the ANU course to that taught at

⁷⁸ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

⁷⁹ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

⁸⁰ Susan Magarey, "Interview", Sydney, 9 July 1998. Liz Jacka and Jean Curthoys certainly framed their proposal for the feminist course in philosophy at the University of Sydney in those terms.

⁸¹ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

⁸² For further analysis of the pedagogical methods adopted in the Flinders course see chapter five.

Flinders, Magarey describes the former as “very conservative and conventional”.⁸³ Quick to confirm her reticence to adopt methods of radical pedagogy in Women’s Studies at ANU, with much laughter, Curthoys proclaims, “Not under my regime! We didn’t have that kind of thing!”⁸⁴ In more serious tones, she explains, “I was under enough scrutiny as it was”. For Curthoys, who was absorbed in maintaining a scholarly appearance and with being “rigorous” and “proper”, her inexperience — which was certainly not unusual amongst those teaching early feminist courses — only contributed to her anxiety.⁸⁵ “I had no idea how to teach, and I’d only ever tutored”, she recalls. “I’d never designed anything, [and] I’d certainly never done a Women’s Studies course”.⁸⁶

In her preoccupation with respectability, Curthoys’ mediating of a position — both for herself and Women’s Studies — was the antithesis of at least one of her peers, Bob Connell. For Connell, who taught a feminist course in Sociology at Macquarie University from 1976 the necessity to attain respectability was far less of an issue. Acknowledging the benefits and rarity of his position amongst those who were involved in academic feminism at that moment, Connell remembers the “odd” character of his positioning. By the time he took up his appointment at Macquarie he was a Professor and thus, at the top of the academic hierarchy and in possession of a great deal of institutional power.⁸⁷ Equivalent courses, the majority of which, as I noted in chapter two were convened by early career academics (most of whom were women) were devoid of such influence. For Connell, the institutional status that accompanied his position as Professor meant, in his words, that he was “able to get away with murder”. “No other person in the university could make claims on my territory”, he recalls. By his own admission, this was “a very weird situation” for someone convening a feminist course.⁸⁸

Margaret Power’s experience of teaching the interdisciplinary course “Political Economy of Women” at the University of Sydney was different again. Power was a tenured academic with sound experience in teaching by 1974, the year the course was first offered.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, she remembers experiencing many of the same kinds of

⁸³ Magarey, “Interview”, 9 July 1998.

⁸⁴ A. Curthoys, “Interview”, 23 April 1998.

⁸⁵ A. Curthoys, “Interview”, 23 April 1998.

⁸⁶ A. Curthoys, “Interview”, 23 April 1998.

⁸⁷ See Bob Connell, “Interview”, Sydney, 8 February 1999.

⁸⁸ Connell, “Interview”, 8 February 1999.

⁸⁹ Power taught “Political Economy Of Women” with a team of women. In the early days, two American economic historians, Linda Bowman and Barbara Tucker, Government lecturer Carole Pateman and Robyn Cooper from Fine Arts. The composition of the first teaching team, according to Power, was partly a “geographical accident”. They all worked in the same building and as

institutional sanctions that feminist scholars of lesser academic status encountered. Her relative seniority in the academic hierarchy did little to shield her from the positioning, codification and valuing of women — and courses on women — common to universities across the country. The inscribing of women, and courses on women, as either trivial, novel, anti-intellectual or most often, inferior set strong limits on the amount and form of authority and credibility that was available or could be generated by those involved in feminist initiatives in the academy. Power credits her status as an experienced scholar with ensuring at least that criticism from the Faculty concerning the day-to-day operations of “Political Economy of Women” was minimal. “[T]hey just kept a hands-off policy”, she recalls.⁹⁰ But Power and her colleagues were not exempt from criticism in other respects; she remembers facing censure from the Faculty on each occasion she was assessed for promotion. Indeed Power remembers the Faculty most often responding to her applications for promotion in remarkably dismissive tones. “You’re not entitled to promotion”, she recalls them saying, before explicitly citing her involvement in “Political Economy of Women” as the reason for refusing to authenticate her academic work. “It’s not economics, it’s not political theory”, she remembers them declaring.⁹¹ The Faculty was equally dismissive of the intellectual merit of feminist scholarship in its refusal to give full credit for the hours Power spent teaching the course. In tallying up the year’s teaching, she remembers, “they’d have a little asterisk” next to her name and “it would say, ‘also teaches “Political Economy of Women”’, but it wouldn’t be put down hour for hour”.⁹²

Imbricated in Ann Curthoys’ desire for respectability — her compulsion for “rigorous” and “proper” scholarly conduct — was her sense of the strategic necessity of refusing the

Power recalls, “the course evolved out of morning tea discussions and things like just chatting about the sorts of things that were happening”. One of the strengths of “Political Economy of Women” was its interdisciplinarity: “It wasn’t under the control of any department head”, appearing at a time when the Dean was democratically elected by Faculty, the course was administered by an “interdepartmental committee” consisting of those who taught the course and “nominally” a Professor. Power recalls, “they [other members of Faculty] could have come to our meetings... but in the whole 21 years I was there I don’t think they ever came”. Each year the women submitted a copy of the course outline to the Handbook and, according to Power’s memory, this was “never criticised”. They were even allocated a small amount of money to be used as they deemed necessary, specifically for the course. Power has argued that the money “gave us quite a bit of freedom to do things that weren’t regularly done in other courses”. They were able, for instance, to “hire people [as guest lecturers] who would never have been hired in another university course”. See Margaret Power, “Interview”, Sydney, 25 August 1999. For Power’s recollections of the course upon her retirement see Power, “21 Years of Political Economy of Women”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, no. 21, 1995: pp. 177-185.

⁹⁰ Power, “Interview”, 25 August 1999.

⁹¹ Power, “Interview”, 25 August 1999.

⁹² Power, “Interview”, 25 August 1999.

classification of “not belonging” in the academy.⁹³ According to Magarey, it was the desire of those involved in the ANU course to show a measure of “how intellectually respectable [the work was that] we were doing” that was key to its cautious approach.⁹⁴ Thus, in negotiating within the constraints of her own institutional position, Curthoys was determined to display Women’s Studies as not that which the institution expected. Curthoys’ efforts at keeping her teaching “fairly academic [and] fairly professional” were motivated in particular by the degree of self-scrutiny she felt was essential at all times in her engagement with the academy.⁹⁵ Even within the confines of her own classroom, Curthoys was conscious of her positioning (and that of Women’s Studies) in relation to the institution. Noting the emphasis she placed on keeping the personal out of her classes, Curthoys remembers only allowing students to speak of personal experience through what she describes as a “scholarly funnel”.⁹⁶ By resisting the classifications she knew would specify Women’s Studies as not belonging, she refused to allow Women’s Studies to be positioned where it could be measured in relation to those classifications. “I don’t remember in class talking in a directly personal way”, she says, “and I wouldn’t have been comfortable with that”.⁹⁷

For others, a refusal of recognition on the institution’s terms gave them the opportunity to embrace a position of marginality. A forum on the state of Women’s Studies in Australia held at the 1978 Women’s Studies Conference, remarked on the resentment many involved in feminist initiatives felt at the “traumas of striving for academic respectability”.⁹⁸ Refusing to be measured in the institution’s terms, the forum declared: “[a] hostile university council/academic board has to be expected”. Describing Women’s Studies as a field whose “courses run counter to the prevailing university ideology” — an ideology “authoritarian in structure and based on disciplines determined by men” — the forum was resigned to the idea that there was “little hope of persuading a university council that Women’s Studies are worthy of study and academically sound”.⁹⁹ Instead, they insisted, “Women’s Studies must expect to live on the fringe of academia”.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ A. Curthoys, “Interview”, 23 April 1998.

⁹⁴ Magarey, “Interview”, 9 July 1998.

⁹⁵ A. Curthoys, “Interview”, 23 April 1998.

⁹⁶ A. Curthoys, “Interview”, 23 April 1998.

⁹⁷ A. Curthoys, “Interview”, 23 April 1998.

⁹⁸ “Women’s Studies Throughout Australia? Report of a Conference at Erskin House, Lorne, April 28-30, 1978” (no papers given, rather round-table discussion as forum), Conference Papers, Women’s Studies Conference, Lorne, Victoria, 28-30 April 1978 (hosted by Deakin University, School of Humanities): p. 6, First Ten Years Collection (FTYC), Sydney.

⁹⁹ “Women’s Studies Throughout Australia?”: p. 6, FTYC.

¹⁰⁰ “Women’s Studies Throughout Australia?”: p. 6, FTYC.

This was most certainly an idea that Curthoys resisted. But despite her dedication to securing Women's Studies' positioning in the academy, it was the very notion of feminist engagement itself that she was forced in many instances to work against. As I discussed earlier, this contradiction was at the heart of the implications of the threat posed to the academy by the concept of a course established on the basis of student demand.¹⁰¹ British feminist, Jacqueline Rose makes the most important of points that feminist engagement necessarily questions the form of the institution itself.¹⁰² In examining the kinds of challenges new forms of theoretical and political understanding represent to the academy, Rose argues that most confronting is the question of whether such challenges are aimed at transforming existing institutions or whether their aim is to undermine the condition of the existing institution as an entity. For Rose, this uncertainty has a particular resonance for feminism, since feminism adds to the previous question the larger political question of the very form of the institution itself. That is,

Of what it means — of what is lost and what is gained — when women enter into institutions which have historically excluded them, in the context of an analysis which says that the very fact of the institution (its "institutionality") has been predicated on sexual exclusivity as such.¹⁰³

For Rose, it is a matter of considering the limits and participation of feminism as a political process within academic life; it is the question of how women should best situate themselves in relation to the institutionalised forms of discourse itself that always mediates their relation with the institution.¹⁰⁴ Put another way, it is a question made possible through a refusal to allow specificity to mean confinement.

While Curthoys was a firm advocate of the need for feminist critique of existing academic practice and theory, the uncertainty that Rose identifies between feminism's political argument and its accusation against the institution was one she found herself negotiating. In spite of Curthoys' gestures toward respectability, it was her own students' mediation of feminism and the academy that compelled her to confront the implications of her own engagement — as woman and as intellectual — with an institution that was predicated on "woman's" exclusion. For Curthoys, who figures her claims for respectability around a

¹⁰¹ For demonstration of this crucial point see especially chapters one, two and five.

¹⁰² Rose, "The State of the Subject": pp. 9-15.

¹⁰³ Rose, "The State of the Subject": p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ Rose, "The State of the Subject": p. 11.

determined separation of the personal and the intellectual, it was her students' desire to engage with the "personal stuff" in the classroom that made her distinctly uncomfortable. Reflecting on her unease, she remarks, "[w]hat I hadn't understood... [was] how many people did Women's Studies as a life changing thing, not just as a subject".¹⁰⁵

Curthoys frames herself as one who took a "slightly more hardline intellectual attitude". "For me", she recalls, "the personal stuff had been done in the women's movement not in Women's Studies". Yet fundamental to feminism's challenge to the academy was its critique of the exclusion of women from public life and its challenge to the dismissal of women's contributions to society, articulated most famously through a reconstituting of what counted as public and private. In her determination to separate the personal and the intellectual she struggled with the precise separation academic feminism had declared was critical to its challenge of existing knowledge and knowing. It was this challenge that persistently interrupted her engagement with the institution. She reflects:

For me, Women's Studies was a product not a cause; but for them it was intimately linked with the women's movement, and there were a lot of students dealing with the personal stuff during the course, leaving their husbands — that kind of thing.¹⁰⁶

Though she remembers the insistence with which she maintained a separation of personal and intellectual, such separation is remarkably absent in her published work (then and now). For instance, *For and Against Feminism* (1988), a collection of documents written during the 1970s and 1980s and subtitled, "A Personal Journey in Feminist Theory and History" is highly autobiographical.¹⁰⁷

Like Curthoys, Barbara Caine, who taught a feminist course in the Department of History at the University of Sydney from the mid-1970s recalls the tensions apparent between the practice of teaching a feminist course and the institution in which (and against which) such a course operated.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, for Caine the contradiction of "teaching about women's oppression" in the academy — which she describes as "extremely hierarchical and patriarchal" — was paramount.¹⁰⁹ She remembers in particular, the difficulties of

¹⁰⁵ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

¹⁰⁶ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

¹⁰⁷ Ann Curthoys, *For & Against Feminism*. An account of Curthoys' tenure as lecturer of Women's Studies at ANU, originally intended for publication in the ANU student newspaper, *Woroni*, is reproduced in *For & Against Feminism*: pp. 43-46.

¹⁰⁸ Barbara Caine, "Interview", Sydney, 10 July 1998.

¹⁰⁹ Caine, "Interview", 10 July 1998.

preventing the institution's ways of operating from encroaching on her classroom — a space that was, in theory at least, free of the confines of men's authority and privilege.¹¹⁰ Despite having marked out a separate space — women's space — for Caine, the necessity to deal with what went on elsewhere in the University as well as in her own department was constant. The treatment of women students in their daily interaction with the academy, whether in the form of accounts of sexual harassment or of an active refusal of support for women, continually impinged on Caine's attempts to differentiate her class from the space in which it operated. In effect, it was the tension between claiming women's space and the compulsion to remain engaged with the institution in which (or against which) that space was positioned, that for Caine made clear the provisional nature of feminism's — and women's — contesting of existing institutional space.¹¹¹

The negotiations undertaken by these women in their daily interaction with the academy must be read back into the institutional dilemma that feminism addressed and out of which these issues in themselves were produced. That is to say, academic feminism's engagement with the academy was a process through which the larger question of institutional and political transformation was posed. In Rose's terms, feminist interventions into the academy are not merely spaces in which an alternative can be practiced; rather they are spaces in which marginality is enacted and where it signifies contest and complexity.¹¹² For Rose, feminist engagement is always mediated by the tension between what needs to be and can be done for women and by the "problem of what has been allowed as the dominant representation of what is being, or is in need of being, said".¹¹³ This tension likewise mediated the ways participants in 1970s academic feminism were active in producing the meanings of the positions they inhabited (or refused to inhabit).

Though the course Caine taught was established with little objection from her departmental colleagues, they were not so accepting when it came to her identifying as feminist. Her attempts to institute the smallest of feminist conventions in her relations with colleagues are testament to this. In choosing to refer to herself as "Ms" — "because I wasn't a Doctor, and I didn't want to be a Miss" — Caine drew the derision and contempt of her colleagues.¹¹⁴ She describes how in one meeting, held in a room with two

¹¹⁰ Caine, "Interview", 10 July 1998.

¹¹¹ Caine, "Interview", 10 July 1998.

¹¹² Rose, "The State of the Subject": p. 10.

¹¹³ Rose, "The State of the Subject": p. 11.

¹¹⁴ Caine, "Interview", 10 July 1998.

comfortable chairs — in one of which the Head of Department had sat — when one male colleague stood to give her the second chair, another responded with the quip, “You don’t have to do that, she’s got ‘Ms’ on her office door”.¹¹⁵ Such behaviour, Caine recalls, was typical of the kinds of “personal antagonism and hostility” she confronted in her everyday negotiation of the institution. “All I had to do was to make what were terribly small demands to be read as [one perpetrating] acts of extreme aggression”, she remembers. “In the end”, she says, “you expected their disapproval and shrugged your shoulders”. In effect, in resigning to a position of “outsider” she was able to set up a framework for resistance. The alternative, according to Caine, would have been no better: “They didn’t behave well to women. There was no space for women”.¹¹⁶ In choosing not to “kow tow [*sic*] in certain kinds of ways”, Caine placed herself in a position in which “it took longer to get acceptance”. But, she reflects, “it was better”, partly because “you didn’t have that thing that you’d allowed people to patronise you”. She notes, “of course they may have been terribly aggressive anyway... I mean, obviously they did still patronise you, but it felt much more powerful” having at least attempted not to allow such behaviour.¹¹⁷

Thus, the refusal of recognition — refusing to be fixed by “woman” — was one way participants in academic feminism were able to disavow the fixity of a position which had the potential to imbue the academy with tremendous power. For Meaghan Morris, such a disavowal, grounded in either defiance or compliance is testament to academic feminism’s consciousness of the “efficacy of different methods of attack in different situations, of the possibility of multiplying rather than restricting... the points from which women’s struggle can develop”; it is a matter of “refusing to think in terms of all or nothing — conserving one’s virginity for the ultimate Event”.¹¹⁸ In this, she argues, feminism’s different modes of interaction with the academy can be productively understood as an enactment of “strategic specification”.¹¹⁹ By analysing “the fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformation”, she argues, “something more than a history of a “construction” becomes possible”. Instead of an uncomplicated designation of academic feminism as always already constricted by the confines of “inside” and “outside” the academy, what becomes possible is “a history of

¹¹⁵ Caine, “Interview”, 10 July 1998.

¹¹⁶ Caine, “Interview”, 10 July 1998.

¹¹⁷ Caine, “Interview”, 10 July 1998.

¹¹⁸ Morris, *The Pirate’s Fiancée*: p. 68.

¹¹⁹ Morris, *The Pirate’s Fiancée*: p. 62.

strategic specification", and at the same time, "a history of that in women which defies specification, which escapes its hold".¹²⁰

Though in her own desire for respectability Curthoys persistently sought to separate notions of inside and outside, personal and intellectual, it was the desire for separation articulated by members of the Women's Movement — separation from the academy and from men — that she argued had the potential to be most destructive to the project of academic feminism. In an essay she wrote for the 1975 Women's Studies Conference held in Adelaide, she voiced her concern at

the anti-intellectualism of many women in the movement, who see all intellectual enquiry as 'academic' and 'male', and who distrust all attempts at theoretical analysis and detailed research as being antithetical to the emphasis on personal experience which is basic to the movement.¹²¹

Her concerns were highly topical at a conference where the convenors warned those participating in and teaching Women's Studies in universities, to be mindful of the danger "of cooption... into something respectable and non-threatening to educational institutions".¹²² Articulating their discomfort with the outcomes of feminism's interaction with the academy so far, the convenors further asserted:

Instead of women demanding their own Women's Studies courses which challenge the oppressive character of our education system, we are being handed them on a plate, often developed by men, and sometimes even taught by men! Women's Studies has become 'safe' and 'acceptable' — there is talk of establishing Women's Studies departments and job opportunities 'for the girls', are proliferating.¹²³

Such assessments were indicative of a wider argument advocated by those fearful of Women's Studies cooption and disturbed by its "appropriation" into the institution.

¹²⁰ Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée*: p. 62 (emphasis in original).

¹²¹ A. Curthoys, "Women's Studies, The University, And The Women's Movement", Conference Papers, Women's Studies Conference, Adelaide, 28-29 June 1975: p. 1, FTYC.

¹²² "Women's Studies Conference", "Session 1: Women's Studies and the Women's Movement, Starting Points for Discussion", Conference Papers, Women's Studies Conference, Adelaide, 28-29 June 1975: n.p., FTYC.

¹²³ "Women's Studies Conference", Conference Papers, Women's Studies Conference, Adelaide, 28-29 June 1975: n.p., FTYC. This piece was composed by those organising the conference on their assumptions and expectations in relation to Women's Studies. It also included the proposed agenda for the conference, notes regarding the organisation of the conference and was signed by "Jan, Jean, Margy, Heather, Suzanne, Rosemary", Women's Studies Committee, c/- Philosophy Dept, Flinders University.

In her treatment of the Women's Movement in Italy during this time, de Lauretis remarks that a position premised on isolation merely provided:

daily confirmation of its [the Movement's] incompatibility with, its utter otherness and alienation from, all other social relations outside the movement, where women's new critical knowledge — their "sense of existence" or "their ways of being in the world" — were neither legitimated nor recognised.¹²⁴

Likewise, crucial to Curthoys' observations was the idea that in spurning interaction with the academy, the Women's Movement was effectively endorsing a mode of feminism isolated from the social relations beyond it.¹²⁵ In effect, while acknowledging that the subject of feminism as it was practiced inside the Movement was productive and its isolationist policies allowed a space otherwise unavailable for women, she argued that its desire to dissociate itself from the academy reinforced, or rather reproduced that which it supposedly sought to challenge. Refusing to acknowledge the movement of ideas and individuals, leaving no room for slippage between inside and outside in what was a critique of absolutes, the Movement disallowed the possibilities of multiple or contradictory positions. Similarly, the singular and careful negotiations of the everyday that constituted feminist interaction with the academy were for many also negated.

¹²⁴ Teresa de Lauretis, "The Practice of Sexual Difference & Feminist Thought in Italy: An Introductory Essay" in The Milan Women's Bookstore Collective, *Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1990: pp. 7-8.

¹²⁵ *Refractory Girl's* decision to change name from "A Women's Studies Journal" to "A Journal of Radical Feminist Thought" in 1976 reflected the careful negotiations between the academy and feminism during this period. For *Refractory Girl*, it was "the nature of some existing women's studies courses" that was cause for concern. "Taught by academics (male and female) without any feminist or radical perspective, they are conservative in methodology and reactionary in content", the collective wrote. But their decision to change name was made in an effort to address concerns voiced by many in the Movement that "Women's Studies" was itself only relevant to those enrolled in university courses. "As long as we carry a women's studies description", they remarked, "many women will regard us as being exclusively oriented towards the universities. This is an exclusivity we wish to avoid. While some women's studies courses are provoking new methodologies and theories, much of this is also being done by women who have dropped out of, or have never been in, universities". See "Editorial", *Refractory Girl*, March 1976: p. 2.

Part Three — Negotiating Inside & Out

For Meaghan Morris, a concern with the limitations and specificities of academic practice leads her to consideration of Foucault's notion of the "specific intellectual".¹²⁶ She contends that the "specific intellectual" is valuable both in the ways it allows "institutional struggles to occupy a field of 'everyday life'" — its refusal to relegate the institution to an "'ivory tower'" — and in the ways it makes possible criticism of the "moment in which a theory 'mistakes the liberal academy as the collective subject of a universally useful knowledge'".¹²⁷ For Morris, the notion of an isolated academy — an academy having no impact beyond the institution — is a foundation for critique built upon a "myth of institutional and discursive closure".¹²⁸ It is further a notion which presupposes a world without any movement of ideas or individuals between fora. Morris considers the question of the limitations and specificities of academic practice in the light of her own assertion that a primary function of the academy in contemporary society is precisely "an incessant 'shuttling' (of personnel as well as of activities) into other social sites".¹²⁹

In contemplating the implications of her own experience of academic practice, Morris draws specifically on the relation between feminism and academy (between feminism inside and feminism outside the academy).¹³⁰ To those who argue that feminism has no relevance outside the academy — that it does not exist outside the sphere of its own classroom — she warns of the danger of accepting and reinforcing as absolute, rather than contesting and transforming, prevailing conventions about the available places from which people (and for Morris, feminists) can be allowed to speak.¹³¹ Indeed, she insists that such assertions reinstitute the confines that for so long constrained women to

¹²⁶ Foucault discusses the "specific" intellectual in an interview with Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino entitled "Truth and Power", reproduced in Colin Gordon (ed), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Pantheon, New York, 1980: pp. 109-133.

¹²⁷ Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée*: p. 8.

¹²⁸ Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée*: p. 10.

¹²⁹ Morris, *The Pirate's Fiancée*: p. 9.

¹³⁰ For Morris, the relation between feminism and the academy (the discomfort of a position both inside and outside of the academy) is one she has negotiated in her own professional life. Indeed, the essays appearing in *The Pirate's Fiancée* were written during a period in which she worked primarily as a film reviewer rather than an academic. Morris has continued to inhabit a position "in between" with her move to Lingnan University in Hong Kong where she is now Professor and Chair of the Department of Cultural Studies. On her own sense of alienation from and on being forced outside the academy in Australia, like many Australian academics compelled to go overseas in order to work, see Meaghan Morris, "Losing Our Minds", *The Weekend Australian*, 22 July 2000: p. 19.

marginality and to silence. To those who argue the opposite, that feminism should be discarded on the basis of its interaction with the academy — often by using a “vaguely expansive metonym of ‘the institution’” — she cautions against the obscuring of valuable questions concerning cultural practices in specific sites, like questions of class and race, amongst others.¹³² Premised on a definition of the institution as the “designated ‘other’... constructed as the standard to [and] from which” those outside the academy measure themselves, for Morris, such a position leaves no room for the possibilities of tension between inside and out.¹³³

With this in mind, she maintains that one of the most important consequences of the notion of the “specific intellectual” is “not to translate ‘specificity’ as ‘confinement’”.¹³⁴ Morris insists that the “specific intellectual” is significant precisely in its acceptance of the idea that academic work “can be used and rewritten in unpredictable ways... elsewhere”, and further in its acknowledgment that “this movement can run the other way”.¹³⁵ The idea that “academic theorisation can and should transform its practices by learning from the experiences, the concepts and the methodologies developed by people in broader social and political movements” is crucial to Morris.¹³⁶ Moreover, it is her contention that the relationship between academic feminism and feminism outside the academy historically has operated precisely in this “two-way sense”.¹³⁷

In considering the conventions of what was (and is) imaginable in terms of academic practice, I examine here the ways in which we understand (and remember) the persistently complex exchanges that took place between pedagogical institutions and social movements in Australia throughout the 1970s. I am concerned specifically with the close and important connections forged between those involved in Women’s Liberation and Women’s Studies in Australia at that time. Those women involved in teaching the earliest feminist courses in Australian universities, whether in Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne or Hobart were also active in Women’s Liberation in those cities.¹³⁸ Many were regular contributors to Women’s Liberation newsletters, were often

¹³¹ Morris, *The Pirate’s Fiancée*: p. 9.

¹³² Morris, *The Pirate’s Fiancée*: p. 9.

¹³³ Morris, *The Pirate’s Fiancée*: p. 9.

¹³⁴ Morris, *The Pirate’s Fiancée*: p. 10.

¹³⁵ Morris, *The Pirate’s Fiancée*: p. 10.

¹³⁶ Morris, *The Pirate’s Fiancée*: p. 10.

¹³⁷ Morris, *The Pirate’s Fiancée*: p. 10.

¹³⁸ A shift occurred from the early days when the term Women’s Liberation Movement was in wide circulation to later on when the term Women’s Movement became more popular. Rosemary

responsible for establishing women's newspapers and feminist academic journals and for organising conferences focusing on scholarship on women across the country.¹³⁹ Indeed, the ease with which these women moved back and forth between the Women's Movement and Women's Studies often meant that debates about ideas were resolved or at least heatedly discussed (in the productive tension that characterised such debate) in the literature and publications arising from outside as well as inside the academy.

Women's Liberation across Australia was remarkable in its commitment to the literature generated in its wake, and groups affiliated with the Movement were typically well-read. "Reading Groups" were common to most Women's Liberation groups, indeed some groups devoted all their energy into existing solely as reading groups. The newsletters of such groups featured detailed treatments of specific texts and told of regular meetings arranged around set readings. In tackling many of the texts central to the teaching of feminist courses in the academy these groups were testament to the vitality and enthusiasm of the Movement's engagement with the literature and ideas of the time.¹⁴⁰

Pringle recalls, "We used to call ourselves Women's Liberation Front and the front bit dropped off first and then the liberation bit". See Rosemary Pringle, "Interview", Sydney, 23 March 1998.

¹³⁹ For example, Ann Curthoys and Anne Summers were involved with *Mejane* and, along with Jean Curthoys and Lyndall Ryan were founding members of the *Refractory Girl* collective.

Rosemary Pringle and Kay Daniels were instrumental in *Liberaction*.

¹⁴⁰ For example, mention is made in *Liberaction* of a presentation on the work of Wilhelm Reich given by "Rosemary" and in the same edition, there is a reading list published which includes Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate*, Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Powerful*, Eva Figs' *Patriarchal Attitudes*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* and David Cooper's *Death of the Family*. See *Liberaction*, no. 1, April 1972: p. 3. In the next edition, a contributor notes that the reading group has already read and discussed the work of Friedan, Mitchell and Firestone. In relation to Friedan's work, one contributor observes: "Looking back at the book after ten years, many of us felt it should be seen as the last of the feminist mystique literature rather than the vanguard of the new feminism". See *Liberaction*, no. 2, August 1972: p. 6. There is also reference to a reading group on "Patriarchy" which examined the work of Figs and Millet, and another which read Altman's *Homosexual: Oppression & Liberation*. See *Liberaction*, no. 6, 1972: p. 4. HWAG did not limit itself to the texts of the Women's Liberation Movement, it also read the work of New Left theorists such as Herbert Marcuse. See its analysis of Marcuse's "Feminist Socialism the Hard Core of the Dream" in "And Yellow Logarithms To You, Mate", *Liberaction*, no. 29, September 1974: n.p. Like HWAG, the Canberra Women's Liberation Group had set texts for discussion each week at their meetings. Published in the group's newsletter is the following: "23/12/70 Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*; 7/11/70 de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*; 14/1/71 Greer's *The Female Eunuch*". See *Canberra Women's Liberation Newsletter*, no. 3, December 1970: n.p. The newsletter also carried summaries of books or articles considered particularly important, such as Roxanne Dunbar's "Liberation As the Basis for Social Revolution" from Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970), with an accompanying request for members to "READ IT!". See *Canberra Women's Liberation Newsletter*, February 1971. In the *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter* a book list published in early 1974 which includes *Sisterhood is Powerful*, *Woman's Estate*, *The Feminine Mystique*, *The Second Sex*, *Sexual Politics*, Kollontai's *Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Woman*, *The Dialectic of Sex*, *The Female Eunuch* and *Patriarchal Attitudes* is testament to the growing corpus of Women's Liberation texts. See *Sydney Women's Liberation Newsletter*, April 1974: p. 6. The Adelaide Women's Liberation Group's Newsletter, *Liberation*, features a discussion of Dennis Altman's *Homosexual*:

In my concern with the kinds of connections that characterised the relationship between feminists inside and outside the academy in Australia, my focus is the Hobart Women's Action Group (HWAG). HWAG was a group whose members, in the strength of their connections to those inside the academy, typified the productive and complicated movements of both individuals and ideas that took place between feminism and the academy during the 1970s. HWAG's membership comprised a group of women who were closely affiliated with the academy, including Kay Daniels, Rosemary Pringle, Shirley Castley, Lorraine Miller, Anne Picot and Marilyn Lake. The group's newsletter, *Liberaction*, was a publication filled with rich and lively discussion and debate and devoted to the development of a strong and well informed theoretical and critical position on Women's Liberation and its ideas.¹⁴¹

In the clearest manifestation of its theoretical leanings, HWAG developed a critique of the category of "woman" and its use and interpretation in the Women's Liberation Movement. This critique was presented for the first time at the Women's Liberation Theory conference held at Mt Beauty in Victoria in January 1973, when four members of HWAG presented the paper "Sexism and the Women's Liberation Movement, Or 'Why do Straight Sisters Sometimes Cry When They Are Called Lesbians?'"¹⁴² HWAG itself

Liberation & Oppression under the title "Sexual Liberation". See *Liberation*, no. 13, August 1972: p. 1. *Liberation* carries an announcement from the "SA Feminist Group", who in preparation for the Mt Beauty conference were arranging a number of mini-conferences to discuss a number of authors and their work: Firestone, Engels, Reich, Marcuse, Figes, Evelyn Reed, de Beauvoir, Laing and Cooper, Freud and Mitchell. See *Liberation*, no. 13, August 1972: n.p.

¹⁴¹ The first issue of *Liberaction* appeared in April 1972.

¹⁴² A version of HWAG's paper appeared in print in the Gay Liberation publication *Camp Ink*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1973: pp. 8-12 and in a special Lesbian Issue of *Refractory Girl*. See Hobart Women's Action Group (HWAG), "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement: Or 'Why Do Straight Sisters Sometimes Cry When They Are Called Lesbians?'" , *Refractory Girl*, Summer 1974: pp. 30-33. The conference at which the paper was first presented, the Mt Beauty conference, was unofficially titled the Theory Conference. A group from Canberra Women's Liberation including Susan Magarey, Daphne Gollan, Elizabeth (Biff) MacDougall and Jill [Julius] Matthews organised the conference, calling themselves "The Hevvies" — an irreverent title they adopted in an effort to convey that they did not take themselves "too seriously". They described their choice of name as a "send up of ourselves. Who wants to be 'serious,' 'bookish,' 'heavy' about our fight for freedom?". See *Canberra Women's Liberation Newsletter*, no. 26, November 1972: n.p. "Julia M" writing in Adelaide's *Liberation*, provided a brief account of the conference proceedings. She describes the conference as one "organised for all Women's Liberationists by the Canberra sisters, [and] centred round theoretical papers", to which "over 90 sisters came, from Sydney, Wollongong, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart, Wangaratta and England". She adds, "[t]he residential nature of the gathering meant that discussions and insights were continuous. Some sisters never went to bed but talked or listened all day and all night for three days". See *Liberation*, no. 18, March 1973: n.p. For discussion of the history of the Canberra Women's Liberation group see Susan Eade [Magarey], "And Now We Are Six: A Plea For Women's Liberation", *Refractory Girl*, March 1977: pp. 3-11. Most recently, see Judith Ion "'She Gave Me That Look': Narratives of

came to an end late in 1972 in the midst of preparations for writing the Mt Beauty paper, but with the group's demise came a renewed determination to cultivate the *Liberaction* approach to "Women's Liberation Theory" — a process which saw what the "house style" elevated to the "august levels of theory itself".¹⁴³

Thus, while those inside the academy were negotiating the benefits and limitations of the category of "woman", those outside were engaged in critical reflection on the very same. As for those inside the institution, respectability was one of the key mechanisms by which HWAG positioned itself, and how others in turn positioned them. For HWAG, it was the institution of feminism itself, rather than the institution of the academy that was central to its efforts to negotiate the category of "woman". Moreover, HWAG navigated its position (and positioning) in relation to feminism through (and against) respectability. As for Curthoys, it was heterosexuality that was the ever-present underpinning which informed and circumscribed HWAG's ability to be respectable. As I argued above, heterosexuality as an authorising discourse gives validity to "correct" forms of sexuality (and indeed correct forms of femininity). Not only were HWAG's members positioned as unrespectable (and disrespectful) in their critique but also in their sexuality. Their identification as lesbian — deviant, dangerous, contaminating — further positioned them as unruly, disruptive and above all, unrespectable. HWAG embraced this positioning, indeed vital to the ways HWAG positioned itself against the discourse of respectability was the relation between respectability and heterosexuality. As Skeggs insists, the heterosexual subject is a particular sort of woman — a respectable woman.¹⁴⁴ By refusing to recognise themselves and the ways others represented them — the ways they were positioned by others — HWAG's members took up a position that refused the fixity of the ideas of prevailing feminist thought. In this, they made feminism (and its participants) distinctly uncomfortable.

Same Sex Desire (And the Impact of Feminism) in Canberra, 1965-1984", PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2001: especially pp. 140-147.

¹⁴³ With the demise of HWAG as a group, *Liberaction* came to the fore. The newsletter had "become an end in itself as a platform from which to launch debate, if not a forum for it". Writing in the newsletter's final edition, "Anne" characterised the *Liberaction* style as "argumentative" from beginning to end, adding that "hardly a theoretical line appeared in its pages which did not arise from movement debate or critiques... of the movement". See Anne [Picot], "Who Do We Think We Are", *Liberaction*, March 1975: n.p. The group of women responsible for producing *Liberaction* each month referred to themselves as the *Liberaction* Diaspora: Anne Picot, Lorraine Miller, Frances Bonner, Kay Daniels, Rosemary Pringle, Marilyn Lake & Shirley Castley.

¹⁴⁴ See Skeggs, *Formations*: p. 99.

HWAG had established a reputation amongst Women's Liberationists nationally as "scurrilous" well before the heights of controversy generated by their Mt Beauty paper. In *Liberaction* in late 1972, "Rosemary" articulated the mode by which HWAG approached debate within the Movement, declaring that "rebellion is the appropriate stance, shit-stirring the appropriate activity".¹⁴⁵ In a style typical of the irreverence that distinguished *Liberaction* from its counterparts in Women's Liberation, a statement of support from one Sydney reader, "Mary", was published under the title "Irritants Vindicated". According to "Mary", *Liberaction* was the "only feminist publication out of the grips of orthodoxy". "If the passage over Bass Strait can be braved", she wrote, *Liberaction* "can offer a forum for discussing feminist issues outside the parameters of mythology [sic]".¹⁴⁶ But the humour and impertinence fundamental to *Liberaction* was not always appreciated by those affiliated with Women's Liberation more widely. The group's isolation from the Movement's geographical centre served only to reinforce their impudence in the minds of their mainland counterparts.¹⁴⁷ Contributors to *Liberaction* remarked on the consistency with which HWAG noted its "danger of excommunication" from the Movement, describing in particular the uncertainty which characterised its relation to the Movement as a whole: "It became difficult", HWAG wrote, "to tell whether we were still thought of as in it".¹⁴⁸

At the same time, the compulsion for critique in the pages of *Liberaction* — driven by what the group described as the "suffocating maintenance of Movement consensus" — was only heightened by the repeated reproach of other Women's Liberation groups.¹⁴⁹ "In trying to break out of consensus thinking *Liberaction* was constantly accused of being destructive", wrote "Anne".¹⁵⁰ Criticism from others was a regular occurrence, though according to *Liberaction* more often than not such critique was received "by way of the grapevine" rather than through any formal engagement with their ideas. *Liberaction* received criticism in various forms. The arrival of "an old tea-bag", accompanied by a "note saying 'slut'" was heralded in the pages of *Liberaction* as the "major contribution to

¹⁴⁵ Rosemary [Pringle], "Notes From An Ex-Christian Militant", *Liberaction*, no. 7, November 1972: p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ Mary, "Irritants Vindicated", *Liberaction*, no. 16, August 1973: n.p.

¹⁴⁷ Rosemary [Pringle], "Sydney Re-Visited", *Liberaction*, no. 15, July 1973: p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Mary, "Irritants Vindicated": n.p.

¹⁴⁹ Anne, "Who Do": n.p.

¹⁵⁰ See Anne, "Who Do": n.p. Contributors further complained that the "labels attached to *Liberaction* by those few people who read it ensured that *Liberaction* could be isolated and served to immunise people from ideas that if they had come from other sources might have been taken seriously". See "The Exceedingly Tiresome History of *Liberaction*", *Liberaction*, March 1975: n.p.

actual debate at the time".¹⁵¹ *Liberaction's* account of a letter of complaint received from the Launceston Women's Action Group, noted that the authors "seemed to sum up their dislike" of its Hobart counterparts in two "dreaded words": "intellectual" and "lesbian".¹⁵² Such actions only confirmed HWAG's own contention that the "refusal to discuss ideas and theory was the most destructive tendency in the Movement".¹⁵³

In preparation for the Mt Beauty paper, HWAG read widely and with an eye for criticism.¹⁵⁴ Occasional reports on the paper's progress appeared in the newsletter in cryptic form, with notice that it was under way declared in comment that a "discussion on radical lesbianism" had taken place, though it was "too painful [and] drunken" and as a result, "unreportable".¹⁵⁵ Most discussion on the ideas generated and controversy engendered by the paper took place after the conference. Various accounts from conference participants about the reception the paper received were made public, with some describing the incident as "near-hysterical" and others as a "super brawl" in which the audience responded "angrily" and the HWAG women were "ferociously attacked".¹⁵⁶ Accusations were made that HWAG had behaved in an "arrogant", "elitist", "exclusionist" and "hostile" manner, to which they responded with the assertion that such accusations merely provided confirmation of the "allegation of sexism" critical to the

¹⁵¹ See "The Exceedingly Tiresome History": n.p.

¹⁵² See "The Exceedingly Tiresome History": n.p.

¹⁵³ Anne, "Who Do": n.p.

¹⁵⁴ The paper itself engaged specifically with the work of Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Anne Koedt's "Lesbianism & Feminism" and "The Woman Identified Woman" by Radicalesbians. Koedt's article and "The Woman Identified Woman" both appeared in *Radicalesbians, Notes From the Third Year: Women's Liberation*, New York, 1971, Ann Oakley's *Sex, Gender & Society*, Norman Mailer's *The Prisoner of Sex*, and in its revised form also Sydney Abbot and Barbara Love's *Sappho Was A Right On Woman: A Liberated View of Lesbianism*, Stein & Day, New York, 1972.

¹⁵⁵ See "The Exceedingly Tiresome History of *Liberaction*", published in *Liberaction's* final edition, March 1975: n.p.

¹⁵⁶ HWAG used the words "near-hysterical" in the revised version of the paper that appeared in *Refractory Girl*. See HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 30. The other accounts come from Lesley Lynch, "Mythmaking in the Women's Movement", *Refractory Girl*, Summer 1974: pp. 36-37. Commenting on the reaction and impact of HWAG's paper, Sue Wills later noted: "Arguments over how to interpret the reception of the paper... will doubtless continue to engage us as we hobble around the Old Feminist Home with the aid of walking sticks. What is important is what the presentation of the paper signified; a group of lesbians symbolically external... to Women's Liberation went into the heart of the Movement and accused it of being hostile to lesbians and lesbianism". See Sue Wills, "Looking For A Home: Lesbians & the Women's & Gay Movements. In Both But Of Neither, Sydney, 1970-1973", unpublished paper, cited in Susan Tiffin, "Lesbianism — An Early Controversy" in *Refracting Voices: Feminist Perspectives From Refractory Girl, Refractory Girl Feminist Journal*, Sydney, 1993: p. 79. See also Denise Thompson, "Another Perspective" in *Refracting Voices*: pp. 85-87.

paper.¹⁵⁷ *Liberaction* published a brief survey of how the Women's Liberation press had responded to the paper under the title "Shithouse Sisterhood".¹⁵⁸ Taking the hostility with which the paper (and the women themselves) were received none too seriously, HWAG's survey began with the remarks: "Ego-tripping writers of the Mt Beauty paper on sexism and lesbianism in the movement have been eagerly scanning mainland papers and newsletters for references to themselves".¹⁵⁹ Needless to say, the Mt Beauty incident brought the group's reputed "scurrilousness" to new heights.¹⁶⁰

The source of the profound discomfort generated in response to HWAG's paper was the accusation key to the ideas around which the paper was organised: that in adhering to a fixed and polar opposition between the categories of masculine and feminine, Women's Liberation made clear its unwillingness to confront its own sexism.¹⁶¹ In asserting that feminism's devotion to the idea of women's solidarity as women was the source of the sexism it identified as endemic to the Movement, HWAG refuted any singular conception

¹⁵⁷ The accusations against HWAG appeared in Lynch, "Mythmaking": p. 36 and HWAG's response appeared in HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 30.

¹⁵⁸ "Shithouse Sisterhood", *Liberaction*, no. 12, April 1973: p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ The entry then went on to say, "What really happened That Night was revealed in *Mejane* by Kultcha Heroine and sometime Tasmanian Tourist Anne Summers, and immortalised in verse in *Vashti's Voice*". See "Shithouse": p. 3. According to *Liberaction*, an account of the day's proceedings from "Julia M" an Adelaide Women's Liberation member, gave the HWAG paper "no more than a passing glance". The event is "disguised so as to be barely recognisable even to the eager scanners". Nevertheless, *Liberaction* reproduced the account: "Another theme discussed fairly intensely", she writes, "was the position of lesbians in the movement. Some lesbian sisters felt rejected and we had the largest 'rap' session ever seen when sisters talked about their hangups [sic]". In its original form "Julia M's" account appeared in *Liberation*, no. 18, March 1973: n.p. For HWAG's comments on accounts of the day see "Shithouse": p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ According to *Liberaction*, HWAG's reputation for "destructive criticism" was "probably related to memories of our unpleasant personalities at Mt Beauty, to our attacks on sexism within the movement, [and] to criticisms of anti-rationalism in the movement". See "The Exceedingly Tiresome History": n.p.

¹⁶¹ HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": pp. 30-33. The only history of Australian feminism to examine the HWAG "incident" at Mt Beauty in any detail is Ion's "She Gave Me That Look": pp. 140-147. It usually rates no more than a brief mention as the quintessential example of lesbian critiques of feminism. See for example, Verity Burgmann, *Power & Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1993: pp. 172-173. The list of personal experiences around which the paper was written (and which I discuss below) has been reproduced both in Marilyn Lake & Katie Holmes (eds), *Freedom Bound II: Documents on Women in Modern Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1995: pp. 160-161 and in Gisela Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement, 1950s-1990s*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996: p. 101. More recently, Marilyn Lake's *Getting Equal* (Lake was a member of HWAG) suggests that HWAG were one group in the Women's Movement resolute in their refusal of reform over revolution. Lake writes, "The lofty attitude of the intellectuals in the Hobart Women's Action Group in particular provoked resentment among their reform-oriented sisters": p. 219. She also mentions HWAG's Mt Beauty conference paper, asserting that it was "a pioneering discussion of the implications of 'difference' in the women's movement". See Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999: p. 244.

of "woman".¹⁶² Indeed, it was the way in which the Movement attributed various behaviours, personality and status to individuals on the basis of sex and in the name of female superiority that was the focus of HWAG's critique since it was this, it argued, which effectively imposed a single identity and source of women's oppression on all women.

According to HWAG, the sexism endemic in the Women's Liberation Movement mirrored the longevity and seeming resilience of the categories of masculine and feminine in society as a whole. "Feminists are always talking about getting rid of the male cultural baggage they've been forced to carry but the most oppressive and least readily relinquished are the concepts of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'", it argued.¹⁶³

In championing the "real" woman, HWAG suggested, Women's Liberation moved only "towards self-cocoonment [*sic*] and towards self-indulgence". More pointedly, in its critique of those who championed the "female world", HWAG contended that Women's Liberation's approach was implicated in that which it sought to challenge, and with serious ramifications. In its efforts at maintaining unity, the Movement encouraged a virulent policing of its participants via a concept of the "real" woman. In HWAG's words, the concept of the "real" woman was "used to keep all feminists in line for fear they'll be told they have internalised male values if they use male systems of thinking, and consequently are not real women but only male surrogates".¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² HWAG's renegotiation of the institutions of feminism was directed not only at intellectual issues, but also in response to the style and tone of the Women's Liberation press. In particular, the earnestness which prevailed in much of the Women's Liberation press was of great concern to HWAG. In an attempt to "broaden the front of feminist consciousness", which HWAG suggested was "narrowly applied and regrettably humourless", HWAG began to include film reviews and dining out experiences in the pages of *Liberaction*. See Anne, "Who Do": n.p. In its earliest reviews the "Feminist Food Guide" suggested, for instance, that "if your hangover is hefty and with haggard face and trembling hand you seek nourishment untainted with the demon drink, try an omelette at the Pepper Pot. It's the best omelette you can get in any Hobart restaurant". See "Feminist Food Guide", *Liberaction*, no. 12, April 1973: p. 3. For reviews of film and television see for instance, Anne [Picot], "Private Eyes & Women's Libbers, TVT6 Style", *Liberaction*, no. 17, September 1973: p. 2.

¹⁶³ See HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 32. Using Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* to support its claims, HWAG agreed with her assertions that the "mutually exclusive, contradictory and polar qualities" of the categories of masculine and feminine "imposed upon human personality" do not give rise to "sufficiently serious question" amongst women's liberationists, let alone the general community. "Under their aegis", Millett wrote, "each personality becomes little more and often less than half, of its human potential". See Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd, London, 1969: p. 32.

¹⁶⁴ Lorraine, Anne, Rosemary, Mary, Kay (not Shirley who hates the whole thing), "Cook's Tour of Recent Feminist Literature: Sorrento Gems — A Quick Horrified Glance", *Liberaction*, no. 16, August 1973: p. 10.

HWAG reserved the most scathing of its attacks for those who spoke of "the 'empty destructive male structure'" and who championed the "recovery of female culture, [and] the superiority of female values and attributes."¹⁶⁵ "Rosemary" wrote of the newsletter of the Sydney Women's Liberation group as a publication that "positively reeks of Sisterhood and consciousness-raising,... spoken of in a mealy-mouthed and totally nauseating way". She described its language as the "language of the womb", going on to argue that it was "reminiscent of the suffocating envelopment of Christian Fellowship".¹⁶⁶ Chief objects of *Liberaction's* wrath were the newspaper *Mejane* and the journal *Refractory Girl*, both Sydney-based publications. Reviewing the second edition of *Refractory Girl*, "Dr K in Sydney", proclaimed:

Women's Studies indeed! If this is the end product of editorial high-handedness all it can do is to inspire the mediocre, the newly-confident [not] to say the loose, woolly, illogical and imprecise to rush into print believing that they are indeed in possession of 'more radical and imaginative methodological analysis.' Before the year is out we'll be right back to the abysmal standards of *Mejane*.¹⁶⁷

In her challenge to the journal's editorial committee, "Dr K" asked "is there any room in *Refractory Girl* for careful, precise, rigorous, honest, questioning and testing scholarship? Certainly those of us who suffer from 'those male traits of abstract conceptualising abilities and persistent curiosity' will be looking elsewhere".¹⁶⁸ HWAG's concern with the quality of academic debate in the journal set it apart from others in the Movement, many of whom were critical of *Refractory Girl's* preoccupation with the "academic":

Was it not supposed to be in close touch with the grass roots, the forum for active theoretical debate, whose existence would enable us to move beyond the small

¹⁶⁵ Anne, "Who Do": n.p.

¹⁶⁶ Rosemary, "Sydney Re-Visited": p. 2 (emphasis in original). The theme of Sisterhood as religion was a recurring one in the pages of *Liberaction*. See for example the account of the "Radical Lesbian" conference held at Sorrento in Victoria in June 1973, "Sydney Atheist", "The New Religion - Or Senokot at Sorrento", *Liberaction*, no. 17, September 1973: pp. 1-2. According to the "Sydney Atheist", Sisterhood (as practised at Sorrento) "has all the earmarks [*sic*] of a great new religion". For example, "Confessions: played a large role in the proceedings. Women confessed to all manner of evil doing in their former (ie. pre-salvation) lives — like seeking male approval, thinking some women were dull, preferring male to female company and talking to men without picking them up on their every sexist remark" and "Missionary Zeal: was abundantly in evidence with women willing to sacrifice their all to save their 'potential' sisters in the factories and slums, to save them in the jails, in the laundromats and on the beaches": p. 1.

¹⁶⁷ Dr K[ay Daniels], "*Refractory Girl*, No. 2", *Liberaction*, no. 14, June 1973: p. 10. For critique of *Mejane*, see also Lorraine, Anne, Rosemary, Mary, Kay (not Shirley who hates the whole thing), "Cook's Tour of Recent Feminist Literature: The Victim As Myth or Female Cultural Baggage We've Been Forced to Carry", *Liberaction*, no. 16, August 1973: p. 8.

group experience and together begin to formulate a more sophisticated theory of social change? Not bloody likely... The sad thing about *Refractory Girl* is not that it's academic, but quite the reverse, that it has not as yet come up with any significant contribution to theory.¹⁶⁹

HWAG responded to what it perceived as the Movement's initiation of a regressive campaign of renewed fidelity to a hierarchy of male and female systems of thinking, by energetically disputing the value of any disengagement from existing knowledge and institutions.¹⁷⁰

Articulating the unease with which they — as intellectuals — inhabited their position in the Movement, HWAG was quick to identify the limitations of this approach:

A movement which sees the so-called 'female virtues' that women have acquired out of their oppression as the virtues which should be emulated, and which sees 'male virtues' such as rationality as worthless is only digging for itself a deeper hole in the sand.¹⁷¹

In recognition of the broader philosophical problematic of the Movement's fidelity to the category of "woman" conceived in these terms, "Rosemary" demanded that the Movement "realise that diversity is not a threat, that different forms of oppression must be considered in their own terms and cannot be subsumed under 'man-hating'".¹⁷² The

¹⁶⁸ Dr K, "*Refractory Girl*": p. 10.

¹⁶⁹ Rosemary, "Sydney Re-Visited": p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ See for example Shirley [Castley], "Brickbats and Brickbats" a report on the Annual Philosophy Conference of the Australian Association of Philosophy and specifically, a paper given by Rita Helling and Chris Starr entitled "The Class Membership of Women", *Liberaction*, no. 18, October 1973: pp. 3-5. Shirley was critical of those at the conference who refused to engage with those perceived as anti-feminist. She asked: "Do women want feminism and women to be totally and naturally included in all disciplines, or do women simply wish to set up parallel, equally sexist and truncated ones? The assumption is that we do want knowledge which is not sexist and that we do intend to do this within existing disciplines otherwise why fight so hard to have women's studies courses at the universities? Why come to a philosophy conference unless you are willing to spend some of your energy trying to change what already is?": p. 5. Elizabeth Jacka wrote a letter in response, "On Not Combatting the Enemy On His Own Ground", *Liberaction*, no. 26, June 1974: pp. 3-4, in which she argued that "it would be a grave mistake for women to spend time, energy and emotion on trying to refute male arguments... And there are more urgent things to be done, such as the forging of a rigorous women's liberation theory which at the moment we have only the merest outlines and beginnings of": pp. 3-4. Shirley in turn responded to Jacka. See "On Not Combatting the Enemy on Her Own Ground", *Liberaction*, no. 26, June 1974: pp. 4-5.

¹⁷¹ Kay [Daniels], "NOW, for Lesbians...", *Liberaction*, no. 11, March 1973: p. 3. Opposition to *Liberaction* was often raised by those who saw it as "espousing the masculine surrogate argument, creating unsisterly strife and adopting the patronising tones of internalised male values towards the movement". See Anne, "Who Do": n.p.

¹⁷² "Rosemary", "Sydney Re-Visited": p. 3.

Movement's refusal to discuss ideas and theory was, she asserted, the direct result of its rejection of diversity and difference, and a move that had serious ramifications for academic women, since such a position was the product of a marked anti-intellectualism.¹⁷³ In their proximity to the academy HWAG's members were led to focus on the implications of feminism's devotion to a definition of the intellectual as masculine — effectively a refusal to engage with existing modes of knowledge. Apart from their contention that such anti-intellectualism was profoundly sexist, HWAG's members further insisted that it made it impossible for the Movement to challenge the very means by which "patriarchal power" was conceivable. "Surely", they remarked, "it's better to try and challenge power structures even at the risk of contamination than preserve your purity (virtue intact?) by opting out".¹⁷⁴

In straightforward terms, there were then three fundamental points around which HWAG's critique was organised. The group's proposition read:

- as long as people believe that genital sex should limit and delineate one's temperament, personality and behaviour, people are not free to develop as people;
- that people, even women's liberationists, are capable of creating new masculine and feminine stereotypes that are different, but are still not liberating because they only impose on everyone a new sexism;
- that by taking attitudes to lesbianism as one illustration, we can see how little women's liberation has managed to grapple with its own sexism, which is only saying how little women's liberation has managed to understand the whole complex of things that oppress women.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ "The Exceedingly Tiresome History": n.p.

¹⁷⁴ Rosemary, "Sydney Re-Visited": p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ Kay, "NOW": p. 2. In "She Gave Me That Look", Judith Ion argues that the "paper addressed what we would today call 'heterosexism', and what was then called 'sexism'": p. 143. Though there is a sense in which HWAG's explorations of sexism are concerned with heterosexism, HWAG claimed that the paper was itself an "attempt to define sexism". See the *Liberaction* Diaspora, "Lesbians and their Girlfriends", *Refractory Girl*, no. 6, June 1974: pp. 2-4, a response to *Refractory Girl's* issue on "lesbianism". Writing at the beginning of 1974 in a review of Dennis Altman's analysis of sexism in an article of his published in the *Gay Lib News*, Kay [Daniels] outlines her own definition of sexism (developed over time since the Mt Beauty paper). She writes, sexism "refers to a division made between people on genital/sexual grounds which goes beyond the simple biological classification and into the area of suppositions about personality, ability, equality, etc. It is about a series of alleged differences extrapolated from one basic biological difference". See Kay [Daniels], "Not So Much An Article... 'On Altman, On Sexism'", *Liberaction*, Christmas/New Year Double Bumper Edition, no. 21 & 22, January & February 1974: pp. 13-14.

For HWAG, the Movement's treatment of lesbian women was exemplary of the failure of Women's Liberation "to come to grips with sexism either inside or outside of the movement".¹⁷⁶ Indeed, HWAG contended that lesbians were considered useful to the Movement only insofar as they identified as women. Comparing the treatment of lesbians within the Women's Movement to that of women in the Left more broadly, HWAG declared that "in both, the oppressed groups — women or lesbians — are acceptable as long as they subordinate their demands or individuality to the 'broader' aims of the Movement". But the parallel, HWAG noted, ends there: "women will become equal with men 'after the revolution', but lesbians (poof) will disappear".¹⁷⁷

What HWAG highlighted in its explorations of the relation between lesbianism and feminism was the set of ideas upon which they argued the Movement's "sexism" was founded. More specifically, it suggested that the roots of "anti-homosexuality" lay in that sexism. Drawing on the work of numerous international scholars and in particular, a 1971 piece by US group Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman", HWAG drew attention to the ways in which lesbian — "the word, the label, the condition" — operated as a means of keeping women in line: "When a woman hears the word tossed her way, she knows... that she has crossed the terrible boundary of her sex-role".¹⁷⁸ In this regard, HWAG insisted, that "rather than learning to cope with the name calling (Set face like flint and count to ten) feminists need to examine why being called a lesbian hurts them".¹⁷⁹

In line with its profound importance to HWAG's negotiation of the institutions of feminism, the category of "woman" was central to the group's examination of two of the primary institutions of Women's Liberation — consciousness-raising and Sisterhood.

¹⁷⁶ HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 33.

¹⁷⁷ HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 30. The idea of lesbian women disappearing was one that related to HWAG's critique of the notion of bisexuality. See for example, "I'm Dreaming of a Bi Christmas" in which Rosemary [Pringle] writes, "Homosexuals have justifiably been fed up with bisexuals and bisexuality. In conformist Australia it has constantly been pushed as the future 'ideal'. It has been used to block discussion of homosexuality in the present, diverting it yet again into heterosexual terms and the possibility of heterosexuals going bi. A lesbian who occasionally fucks blokes could in no way qualify for the title, but she has to put up with heteros out on a fling, while sheltering behind a 'normal' identity. In short, homosexuality is dismissed as a secondary extension of heterosexual behaviour and homosexuals are ignored as a 'problem' which will die a natural death when the bisexual millennium comes upon us". Rosemary [Pringle], "I'm Dreaming of a Bi Christmas", *Liberaction*, Christmas/New Year Double Bumper Edition, no. 21 & 22, January & February 1974: pp. 3-4.

¹⁷⁸ Radicalesbian, "The Woman Identified Woman", *Notes From The Third Year* cited in HWAG, "Sexism in the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 32.

¹⁷⁹ HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 32.

Dissatisfied with the concept of a mere "reinterpretation of Women's Liberation theory", a process which HWAG asserted would only make possible the "inclusion" of the lesbian, the group aimed to return "to a restatement of what we see as basic Women's Liberation theory, which depends for its validity on the inclusion of all women and on an understanding of sexism."¹⁸⁰ In questioning the very form in which feminist thought manifested in the Movement's everyday practice, HWAG members turned to their own experience in order to illustrate the ways in which sexism was embedded in the institutions upon which Women's Liberation was founded. The catalogue of personal experiences that they listed, included: "Having one's consciousness 'raised' by a discussion on how to cope with being called 'that horrible name' at our first women's lib meeting"; "Being told to keep out of the movement because 'some women won't come if lesbians are there, and those women shouldn't be put off because Women's Liberation is for all women'"; "Having to change the pronouns at consciousness raising meetings (or just shut up) for the above session"; and "Being told lesbianism is a 'passing phase' in women's lib".¹⁸¹

According to HWAG, consciousness-raising was a "heterosexually based institution". For HWAG, consciousness-raising was founded on the assumption that personal relationships could be discussed openly and honestly, an idea which itself operated on the presumption that the other person in the relationship (assumed to be male) was not in attendance. Consciousness-raising further presumed that the idea that "what is personal is also shared" was common to all women, but according to HWAG such an idea had little relevance to lesbian women. In clear terms, it pronounced:

In lesbian groups or [consciousness-raising] at the very personal level seems unnecessary. In mixed groups, not only is the lesbian's experience likely to be purely personal and not shared, but the lesbian is being asked to assume a degree of vulnerability before other women, not expected of them.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 30.

¹⁸¹ HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 31. In her recollections of the discomfort expressed in HWAG's concern with consciousness-raising, Rosemary Pringle says, "I was in a reading group in Hobart... (my first Women's Liberation group, [HWAG]), and I was heterosexual at the time, but most of the women were lesbians". For HWAG, Pringle notes, "given the idea of a consciousness-raising group was supposed to be where you talked about your other half or your relationship — I mean it never quite gelled. We were aware quite early on of the sort of heterosexist assumptions that could be made about consciousness-raising. It was about speaking about those who were absent from all those groups, those who weren't present". See Rosemary Pringle, "Interview", Sydney, 23 March 1998.

¹⁸² HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 31.

In making problematic the assumption that women's space was necessarily inclusive and "safe", HWAG wrote of the higher degree of trust and confidence in their "sisters" required by lesbian women in order to "risk" consciousness-raising. HWAG further insisted that holding back in such forums was for lesbian women both a protective measure and a "necessary hypocrisy".¹⁸³ In drawing out the contradictions apparent in the process of consciousness-raising for many lesbian women, HWAG argued that while an emphasis on "sisterhood" was for straight women indicative of an increasing closeness to other women, for lesbian women it served to underplay the significance of their relationships with other women. Indeed, it drew them out of the "feminine" sphere and into establishing "real" relationships with men. For HWAG, this was yet another incidence driven by an assumption of the sexist division of society: "All it aims to do is alter the balance of power and esteem between the sexes", they observed. "It continues to assume the differences between the masculine and feminine worlds. The lesbian is still a misfit in this situation".¹⁸⁴

In the same way the Movement avoided confronting the inequalities inherent in the principles of consciousness-raising, according to HWAG, it refused to ask the most basic of questions of its attempts at liberation; it attacked some of the "symptoms" of patriarchal society, rather than the grounds upon which it was based. For HWAG, the feelings generated in response to their Mt Beauty paper — according to "Kay", a response "hostile, aggressive and too often, vicious and personal" — reflected the Movement's inability to think critically about itself.¹⁸⁵ But another present disputed "Kay's" reading of the incident. Indeed, in her response to HWAG's paper, conference participant, Lesley Lynch, contended that it was not the ideas expressed in the paper that "provoked the anger of such a number of women towards the HWAG representatives".¹⁸⁶ According to Lynch, there were two possible interpretations of the reception the paper received: on the one hand, that the crowd responded the way they did because the gathering was so "stung" by the "unanswerable charges" of sexism that they "blindly" and "indignantly" hit out at the HWAG women in order to "avoid examination of their own sexist behaviour".¹⁸⁷ And on the other, that it was not the claims of the paper that prompted such a response from the crowd, but rather "what had excited people's irritation was the apparent arrogant, elitist and exclusionist behaviour of the four HWAG women over the

¹⁸³ HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 31.

¹⁸⁴ HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 31.

¹⁸⁵ Kay, "NOW": p. 2.

¹⁸⁶ Lynch, "Mythmaking": p. 36.

¹⁸⁷ Lynch, "Mythmaking": p. 36.

two days before the paper was discussed".¹⁸⁸ Describing her own "version of events", Lynch wrote, "I am confident that the ill-feeling originated in a fairly widespread interpretation of the HWAG women's behaviour as being unfriendly and provocative throughout the conference".¹⁸⁹ According to her recollection, "the first question directed towards them — and not by a heterosexual woman — was for an explanation of their hostility". She noted further, that "many of the people hadn't yet read the paper but were simply responding to the vibes they felt from the HWAG women".¹⁹⁰ For Lynch, the subtitle of the HWAG paper "'Why do Straight Sisters Sometimes Cry When They Are Called Lesbians?'" was especially reflective of that hostility, it was "inappropriate" and "counter-productive". She wrote of her preference for the subtitle "it has since been rumoured" they had originally planned to work with: "lesbians are sister-fuckers".¹⁹¹

For "Kay", in its articulation of the very ideas against which the HWAG paper had set itself, Lynch's account was indicative of the inability of the Women's Liberation Movement more broadly, to investigate its own complicity in the maintenance of its own criteria of privilege. "Kay" remarked, wryly,

to see women's liberationists accusing other women of being 'paranoid' and 'over-sensitive' about discrimination, of having chips on their shoulders, of being 'provincial', of deliberately provoking hostility by their life-styles and their criticism of 'the movement' was a good exercise.¹⁹²

In more pointed terms, she observed that "[i]t is probably a good exercise for women's liberationists to hear themselves by-passing a discussion of ideas and substituting in its place a discussion of who-sat-with-whom-and-who-talked-with-whom-when-and-who-didn't".¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Lynch, "Mythmaking": p. 36.

¹⁸⁹ Lynch, "Mythmaking": p. 36.

¹⁹⁰ Lynch, "Mythmaking": p. 36.

¹⁹¹ Lynch, "Mythmaking": pp. 36-37

¹⁹² Kay, "NOW": p. 2.

¹⁹³ Kay, "NOW": p. 2. She went further, describing, "fantasies afterwards: four black women go to a conference and accuse white women of racialism; are told it's all in the mind, and anyway it's your fault if you provoke these reactions — (try to fit in); four suburban housewives 'outside the movement' (an interesting category that cropped up occasionally) go to a conference and are accused of 'sticking together too much' (unwritten law: minority groups must not only circulate but *be seen to* circulate), of having a different life style and (horror) Courting Hostility... If the proof of the paper was in the reaction to it, it says a lot about women's liberation": p. 2.

HWAG was similarly preoccupied with the category of "woman" in its examination of Sisterhood. Central to the analysis appearing in the pages of *Liberaction* was HWAG's "distaste" for what it described as the "emotional values [that accompanied] the warm waves of superior sisterhood" so prevalent in Women's Liberation.¹⁹⁴ Embedded in Sisterhood, HWAG argued, was a "mindless unity" which regarded argument as "unsisterly strife", in turn fuelled by the desire to "invest the old values of the 'female world' with a new status".¹⁹⁵ In its contention that it was precisely "debate and criticism" that were "stifled under hot-house sisterhood", HWAG drew attention to the hypocrisy apparent in an environment in which "anyone who 'blasphemes' against it is dismissed as a nasty" — though "much greater nasties are committed under its veil".¹⁹⁶ For HWAG, the presumptions of unity and of uniformity intrinsic to the very notion of Sisterhood were profoundly problematic. "Rosemary" articulated the group's concern when she declared that the "worship of sisterhood is as bad as the worship of motherhood". "It smothers", she remarked, "because it prevents us from analysing different sorts of oppression".¹⁹⁷ Indeed, "we put them under the [same] umbrella to assert our solidarity as women and now that solidarity is itself breaking down because it imposes a single identity and problem."¹⁹⁸

Conclusion

In their negotiation of specific institutional contexts, whether securing or disrupting existing notions of the subject of feminism, the imperative toward difference among women acted to unsettle the notion of an internally consistent category of "woman". My suggestion is that almost despite itself, this was the case from academic feminism's outset. By critically examining the positions employed by academic feminism's participants in their negotiation of the category of "woman", in particular via their demands for women's space, I have explored the ways in which their identification with the category of "woman" — a sign to which they at once belonged and did not belong — was a position seldom inhabited with comfort. In mediating between the specificities of "woman" and its potential constraints, participants both claimed the right to recognition under the category of "woman" and refused such recognition. In this they took up

¹⁹⁴ Anne, "Who Do": n.p.

¹⁹⁵ Anne, "Who Do": n.p.; HWAG, "Sexism & the Women's Liberation Movement": p. 33.

¹⁹⁶ Rosemary, "Sydney Re-Visited": p. 3.

¹⁹⁷ Rosemary, "Sydney Re-Visited": pp. 2-3.

¹⁹⁸ Rosemary, "Sydney Re-Visited": pp. 2-3.

positions of resistance and agency and thus, positions in excess of the apparatus of gender and heterosexuality.

In negotiating their everyday interaction with the academy via the ambiguities of the subject of feminism, these women likewise mediated the discomfort intrinsic to their positioning in an institution that had historically excluded them and indeed, according to their own analysis, was predicated on sexual exclusivity. But the tension between what feminism wanted to do for women, and what it was subsequently able to do for women was always implicated (and inseparable) from its relation to the academy, especially since feminism necessarily questioned the very form of the institution itself. It was a question of how these women could best situate themselves in relation to the institutionalised forms of discourse that always mediated their relation with the academy.

The positions employed by academic feminism's participants in their negotiation of the category of "woman" were in turn problematised by contemporary critical commentary. By examining the persistently complex exchanges that took place between academic feminism and Women's Liberation in Australia throughout the 1970s, I contend that like those inside the institution, those outside actively contested the exclusions inherent in the conception of the subject of feminism. Active in producing the meanings of the positions they inhabited (or refused to inhabit), they questioned the limitations and specificities of feminist practice and they pointed to the ways in which prevailing ideas of the subject of feminism left little room for acknowledgment of the ways in which she was multiple and divided. In this, they made feminism (and its participants) markedly uncomfortable.

Chapter Four — Woman, Race, Oppression

Introduction

My narrative here follows on from the previous chapter in its devotion to countering the now normative assumption that early second-wave feminism was indifferent to race and sexuality — an assumption that disturbingly casts both non-Anglo women and lesbians as belated arrivals to feminist critical practice and thought in Australia. This is not an argument against the charge that feminism and academic feminism were racist in their second-wave articulation; it is an argument against writing out of the history of contemporary feminist thought early and vibrant discussions of race and sexuality. If, as I posited in the previous chapter, academic feminism's negotiations in relation to the institution were indicative of the types of negotiations performed by early participants within and between the determinedly diverse category of "woman", then its negotiations around questions of race further illustrate the ways in which the heterogeneity of the category of "woman" has marked academic feminism from its beginnings. While at times identity served productively to isolate women's difference and to generate a collective identification in the face of that difference, the imperative toward differences among women such as race, class and sexuality, from the outset unsettled any easy collapse of "woman" into a monolithic or unified construction.

The process of specifying the oppression of women was the primary focus of academic feminism in the early 1970s. In this chapter, I ask how did academic feminism conceive of oppression, and from what sources did it take its formulations of oppression? In straightforward terms, what texts were students set to read in feminist courses? In surveying the corpus of feminist thought applied in the teaching of academic feminism in Australia in the 1970s — a set of texts which included works significant to feminism internationally and those drawn from liberation struggles contemporaneous to second-wave feminism itself — my aim here is to reconstruct the internal workings of the prevailing modes of thinking at that moment. In examining the ways in which participants were informed by the works they read, I hope to draw out the conceptual moves embedded in their formulation of the subject of feminism through the analytic tool of "oppression".

I suggest that those involved in academic feminism in Australia during the early 1970s took from these texts a set of ideas about a new kind of political subject, and a model for political engagement which they in turn adapted to their own needs. I further contend that the conceptual basis upon which academic feminism formulated its ideas of oppression (and liberation and freedom) involved a complicated engagement with such texts, rather than a straightforward echoing of the ideas of others. As such, I mean here to avoid drawing any easy linear connection between the presence of particular theorists' work on reading lists and the ideas at work in academic feminism. Instead, I maintain that the ideas expounded by these theorists can be traced in the kinds of question asked (and not asked), the language mobilised and the concepts utilised by academic feminism. My primary focus in this chapter is the question of race and the implications of race and its relation to gender for the foundational category of "woman". I draw out the implications of the ideas explored in the texts crucial to feminist thought by concentrating on the traces of such theorising in the writings of Australian academic feminism's practitioners in the field's beginnings; traces rendered explicit in the questions asked and assumptions contested by feminist scholarship.

In the first part of this chapter, "Reading Feminism", I survey the corpus of texts used in the teaching of academic feminism in Australia during the 1970s. My approach to the process of disciplinary retrospection is configured around a close reading of two essays that emerged from the earliest moments of Australian academic feminism: Anna Yeatman's "The Liberation of Women" and Ann Curthoys' "Historiography and Women's Liberation".¹ Above all, I am interested in how these works contain within themselves commentaries on the institutional status of feminist scholarship itself. This in turn leads me to the second part of the chapter, "Reading Millett", a detailed examination of Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969), a text which was formative in Australian academic feminism's synthesising of its methodological priorities.² In the third part of the chapter, "Encountering Race", I focus on the connection between feminism and the Left internationally by examining the echoes of the encounter between the work of Frantz Fanon — like Millett, a theorist whose contribution to academic feminist scholarship was germinal — and the model of oppression mobilised in academic feminism's theorising of

¹ Anna Yeatman, "The Liberation of Women", *Arena*, no. 21, 1970: pp. 19-34. "Historiography & Women's Liberation" was Ann Curthoys' response to both Yeatman's piece and an essay by Ian Turner, "Prisoners in Petticoats: A Shocking History of Female Emancipation in Australia", which appeared in Julie Riggs (ed), *In Her Own Right: Women of Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1969: pp. 3-24. The essay by Ann Curthoys was published alongside Yeatman's in the same issue of *Arena*: pp. 35-40.

women's liberation.³ My analysis here centres on how that encounter was played out in the Australian context, and particularly in the production of Australian feminist scholarship. In the section that follows, "Remembering Exclusions", I examine a number of articulations of Indigenous Australian critical commentary contemporaneous to and in part formative of white Australian academic feminism in this early period. I assert that such commentary contested the assumptions typical of the types of negotiations performed by white feminists in their attempts to mediate within and between the persistently heterogeneous category of "woman". I further suggest that in its insistence on a mutually constituting and intersecting oppression rather than an analogous conception of parallel oppressions, the work of Indigenous Australian women complicated the engagement between academic feminism and its contemporaries on the Left.

Part One — Reading Feminism

According to Marilyn Lake's recollection, feminism's engagement with the academy was "radical" precisely because it took "women's lives seriously enough to have them on the reading lists and discussed in class".⁴ Feminism's engagement with the academy was also radical in the way in which it intervened in existing knowledge and in its preoccupation with new conceptions of knowing. Reading lists for feminist courses taught in Australia in the early 1970s, both as discipline-based and as interdisciplinary units of study featured a wide array of texts. International feminist texts were especially crucial in the Australian context, and those books appearing on the reading lists of feminist courses included Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate* (1971) and her subsequent book *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969) and Robin Morgan's edited collection, *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970). Also consistently appearing were Alice Rossi's *The Feminist Papers* (1973), Eva Figes' *Patriarchal Attitudes* (1970), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Sheila Rowbotham's classics of women's history, *Women, Resistance & Revolution* (1972), *Hidden from History* (1973) and *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (1973). The set of texts traditionally associated with the study of woman's position, John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), Frederick Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and*

² Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd, London, 1969.

³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington, Penguin Books, Melbourne, (1961) 1970.

⁴ Marilyn Lake, "Interview", Melbourne, 15 February 1999.

the State (1884), Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1952) and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) were also included. Contemporary sociological and anthropological texts were featured, including Juliet Kreps' *Sex in the Marketplace: American Women at Work* (1970), Louise Lamphere, Joan Barberber and Michelle Rosaldo's edited collection *Women, Culture & Society* (1974), Ann Koedt's edited collection *Radical Feminism* (1973), Ann Oakley's *Sex, Gender & Society* (1972), Ernestine Friedl's *Women & Men: An Anthropologists' View* (1975) and Norman Mailer's *The Prisoner of Sex* (1971).

Around 1975, a number of specifically Australian texts appeared on reading lists including Edna Ryan and Anne Conlon's *Gentle Invaders* (1975), Ann Curthoys, Susan Eade and Peter Spearritt's *Women at Work* (1975), Beverley Kingston's *My Wife, My Daughter, and Poor Mary Ann* (1975), Miriam Dixson's *The Real Matilda: Woman and Identity in Australia, 1788-1975* (1976), Anne Summers' *Damned Whores & God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia* (1975) and Jan Mercer's edited collection, *The Other Half: Women in Australian Society* (1975). Early analysis of women's position in the Australian context emerged in the form of Julie Rigg's edited collection, *In Her Own Right* (1969) and Sol Encel, Norman MacKenzie and Margaret Tebbitt's *Women and Society: An Australian Study* (1974), each of which was included on reading lists.⁵ Appearing with less

⁵ For valuable discussion of some of these texts see Ann Curthoys, "Cosmopolitan Radicals" in Barbara Caine et al., *Oxford Companion to Australian Feminism*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1998: pp. 39-48. Earlier publications in the Australian context included Madge Dawson, *Graduate & Married: A Report of a Survey of 1070 Married Women Graduates of The University of Sydney*, Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney, 1965, and Norman MacKenzie, *Women in Australia*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1962. *Refractory Girl*, one of the earliest journals to emerge from Women's Liberation in Australia, was also one of the first to feature discussion of the primary texts of the movement, making its first appearance in Sydney in 1972-1973. Other publications arising from Women's Liberation, like *Mejane* in Sydney and *Vashti's Voice* in Melbourne from 1971, *Liberaction* in Hobart from April 1972 and Sydney-Melbourne based *Scarlet Woman* from 1975, as well as the lesser known newsletters of various women's liberation groups, all provided a forum for local discussions of feminist ideas. Brisbane based *Hecate* first appeared in 1975, and like *Refractory Girl*, carried long and thoroughly researched articles. See Jane Sunderland, "Australian Feminist Periodicals in the Seventies", *Hecate*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1979: pp. 22-30. As well, reviews or analyses of books published during this period give us some sense of how specific texts were received. International feminist texts were especially crucial in the Australian context. Where earlier books and Mitchell's article were little discussed, these new collections and books were widely debated, and in an ongoing fashion. For example, Lyndall, review of Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, *Mejane*, no. 2, May 1971: p. 12; Anne Summers' review of Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate*, "Radical Feminism Debate Goes on", *Mejane*, no. 6, Summer 1972: p. 10; Carmel Shute's review of *Woman's Estate*, *Refractory Girl*, no. 4, 1973: p. 25. See also Liz Jacka's review of Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis & Feminism*, *Scarlet Woman*, no. 3, February 1976: pp. 25-26; and Pat Vort-Ronald and Una Gault, "Psychoanalysis & Feminism: Two Reviews of Juliet Mitchell", *Refractory Girl*, Winter 1975: pp. 19-23. Also appearing in *Hecate*, was Merle Thornton's discussion of Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis & Feminism*, "Consciousness-raising, The Unconscious & Juliet Mitchell", *Hecate*, vol. 1, no. 2, July 1975: pp. 79-86. For a detailed analysis and review of Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis & Feminism* see also "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: A Marxist Critique of Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis & Feminism*", *Working Papers in Sex, Science & Culture*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1976: pp. 15-46.

consistency was Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970). As a popular, rather than academic text, Greer's was not amongst the corpus of texts regularly used in the teaching of academic feminism in Australia.⁶

A number of texts drawn from liberation struggles contemporaneous to second-wave feminism were also featured on reading lists. As I noted in chapter one, the Australian New Left was heavily influenced by the ideas of the New Left internationally, and the same can be said of academic feminism. Indeed, the presence of such books on reading lists was indicative of the cultural and intellectual context within and against which feminism's engagement with the academy took place. Some, such as social theorist Herbert Marcuse's *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), Frantz Fanon's study of alienation in colonial society, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), psychiatrist R.D. Laing's *The Divided Self* (1960) and *The Politics of Experience* (1967), Wilhelm Reich's *The Sexual Revolution* (1961) and Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) appeared on reading lists for feminist courses with remarkable consistency. As I demonstrated in chapter two, feminism's inception into the academy occurred both in the context of the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement and as part of a renegotiation or refiguring of intellectual

Books were not the only means of dissemination of feminist ideas amongst the Australian feminist community. Pamphlets, journals and newspaper articles were also vital in the spread of ideas. Women's liberation groups duplicated and distributed a great deal of important work. Specifically Australian texts were later subject to the same enthusiasm, as that seen in the quality and tone of reviews of overseas publications. See for instance, extensive discussion of Dennis Altman's *Homosexual: Oppression & Liberation*, Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, New York, 1971 in HWAG's *Liberation*. Specifically, the reading group's report on Altman's book, Lorraine [Miller], "Homosexual: Oppression & Liberation", *Liberation*, n. 6, 1972: p. 4. For discussion on the relation between Gay & Women's Liberation see Kay [Daniels], "NOW for Lesbians...", *Liberaction*, n. 11, March 1973: p. 3 and Kay [Daniels], "Not So Much An Article... On Altman, On Sexism", *Liberation*, no. 21-22, January-February 1974: pp. 13-14. Marilyn Lake's review of Miriam Dixson's *The Real Matilda* received an energetic response from Dixson. See Lake, "To Be Denied A Sense of Past Generations", *Hecate*, vol. 2, no. 2, July 1976: pp. 68-73; for Dixson's reply see *Hecate*, vol. 3, no. 1, February 1977: pp. 115-117; and for Lake's rejoinder, *Hecate*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1977: p. 87. Other reviews of Australian feminist texts included, Kay Daniels & Carmel Shute, "Walloping Matilda", a review of Summers' *Damned Whores & God's Police*, *Hecate*, vol. 2, no. 1, January 1976: pp. 97-99; Mari Anna Shaw's review article "Bread & Roses", covering Edna Ryan & Anne Conlan's *Gentle Invaders*, Beverley Kingston's *My Wife, My Daughter, My Poor Mary Ann*, Ann Curthoys, Susan Eade & Peter Spearritt's *Women At Work*, *Hecate*, vol. 2, no. 1, January 1976: pp. 104-111; Julie Richter's "An Odd Anthology", a review of Jan Mercer's *The Other Half, Refractory Girl*, March 1976: pp. 29-31; and Mary Murnane's review of Dixson's *The Real Matilda*, "Why Australian Women Should Cringe", *Refractory Girl*, June 1976: pp. 36-37 & p. 40.

⁶ Ann Curthoys makes this point in "Cosmopolitan": p. 44, as does Christine Wallace, author of Greer's unauthorised biography, *Greer, Untamed Shrew*, MacMillan, Sydney, 1997. *The Female Eunuch* did appear, in the early years, on reading lists of the Women's Studies course taught at Flinders and on that of "Philosophical Aspects of Feminist Thought" at the University of Sydney. For an early and detailed account of the Flinders course outline see *Flinders Calendar 1974*, Flinders University, Bedford Park, SA, December 1973: p. 439. For copy of an early course outline from the

culture itself. Courses appearing on university curricula structured around race, class and imperialism were testament to the success of radicals in their call for universities to address the fundamental ethical and moral concerns of contemporary society.⁷

Ann Curthoys has noted the lack of space devoted to discussion of women's status in the journals of the New Left both internationally and in Australia during the 1960s and 1970s. She is careful to emphasise that the minimal response recorded at the time in New Left journals in Australia to important feminist work such as Juliet Mitchell's 1966 article, "Women: The Longest Revolution" was indicative of the absence of such space, rather than the absence of debate per se. "The poverty of this debate", Curthoys suggested, "was the result not of any paucity of socialist intellectual debate or absence of discussion of the position of women, but rather of the rarity — as Mitchell had pointed out — of their conjunction".⁸

Sydney course see Peter Westmore, "The Strike at Sydney University: June – July 1973", *Quadrant*, August 1973: p. 23.

⁷ Such courses included, "Applied Philosophy: Vietnam, Imperialism & the Nature of Man" taught by Brian Medlin in Philosophy at Flinders University in 1972, and a new set of interdisciplinary courses, also taught at Flinders, "Racialism, With Special Reference to Race Relations in Australia" and "Imperialism: An Interdisciplinary Approach". See *Flinders Calendar, 1972*, Flinders University, Bedford Park, SA, December 1971: pp. 439-446. In the Government Department at the University of Sydney in 1974 a course in Political Theory, which in first semester covered "Marxism" via a "detailed study of Marx himself and an introduction to those theorists who have worked within a Marxist framework". In second semester, the course covered "Disobedience, Direct Action and Political Authority" and considered "some of the complex theoretical and practical problems raised when citizens decide that they can no longer obey the law — when, for example, they dodge the draft, sit on the road, go on a rent strike, squat in empty houses". The central questions of the course included "what kinds of justification can be offered for disobedience and direct action; what form can they legitimately take; whether we might sometimes have a duty to disobey; whether there are any forms of political authority under which disobedience would never be justified": p. 125. Also taught in Government, this time in 1975, was a course entitled "Ethics and Politics: Violence". Central to the course was the question of "when to kill, not whether". It examined "politics and ethics where normal ritual and institution [sic] do not apply as in revolution and war", and asked "are there limits on human action outside institutions? Are there limits on authority inside institutions?". See *Faculty of Arts Handbook, 1975*, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1975: p. 147. The Faculty of Economics at Sydney University in 1973 taught a course, "Approaches to the Study of Power" described as "interdisciplinary in its approach", and drawing on materials from the "social sciences, biography, fiction and drama". According to the outline, the course ranged over "sociological, economic, psychological and aesthetic" frameworks of analysis. See *Faculty of Economics Handbook, 1973*, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1973: p. 73. In 1973 at Adelaide University, the Politics Department taught "Industrial Society & Theories of Community". See *Calendar of the University of Adelaide, 1973*, The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 1973: p. 669 & in 1975, "Problems of Social Change", focusing on the work of Gramsci, Trotsky, Lenin & Mao". See *Calendar of the University of Adelaide, 1975*, The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 1975: p. 667.

⁸ Ann Curthoys goes on to note that "within five years, all that had changed". See A. Curthoys, "Cosmopolitan": p. 41. She mentions an article on the position of women — "brief and idiosyncratic" — by Margaret Mortimer published in *Arena* in 1967, as well as several responses to it. My interviews with the women involved in academic feminism in its early years, the course outlines of feminist courses published in the *Calendars* of individual universities, as well as

Two essays composed at the intersection of New Left and feminist intellectual practice in Australia, both of which were published in the journal *Arena* in 1970 were Anna Yeatman's "The Liberation of Women" and Ann Curthoys' "Historiography and Women's Liberation". Working their way between and among their own Left intellectual heritage and the innovative intellectual possibilities feminism had to offer, both essays were prudent early enactments of a particular critical strategy that soon came to seem inevitable. Implicit in both essays is the story of the transformation of scholarship on women from maverick activity to academic field. In the opening paragraph of her essay, for instance, Yeatman notes that Women's Liberation has generated a "plethora of articles", in effect producing "a general and revolutionary critique of the position of women in contemporary society".⁹ Having recently returned from the United States, Yeatman was keen to highlight what she described as the "cautionary tale" of Women's Liberation in that country. In Australia, Yeatman observes, the "probable existence of male chauvinist attitudes within the Left has not been exposed". However, as she warns her compatriots, in the US "the reduction of women to sex-object seems as widespread among radicals as it is in society at large".¹⁰

Having pinpointed the potential for "weakness" in the Movement's relation to its contemporaries on the Left, Yeatman then suggested a means of circumventing the ascendancy of the seemingly resilient sexual roles of "masculine" and "feminine". Describing her proposal as "the only adequate framework in which analysis and projection of an alternative situation may be undertaken", she argued for the "assertion of the individual, of the 'self', as against being passively defined by predetermined social roles".¹¹ For Yeatman, the critique of the position of women offered by Women's Liberation was one which set the existing conditions of women against "the marxian ideal of the individual" — in her words, an individual "unfettered by any predetermined social role, and free to realise his/her individual expression of human creative potential and sociability".¹² Thus, critical to Yeatman's conception of an alternative to women's subordination was her assertion that the "sexual role-structure" from which women sought emancipation acted also to confine men. Yeatman wrote:

discussions of specific texts within Women's Liberation newsletters during this period certainly support her assertions, and provide valuable insight into the reception such texts received at this moment.

⁹ Yeatman, "The Liberation": p. 25.

¹⁰ Yeatman, "The Liberation": p. 23.

¹¹ Yeatman, "The Liberation": p. 23.

Consciousness of the extent of her conditioning cannot go far until she understands the male to be also imprisoned within a sexual role: his individuality is also suppressed and done violence to by the 'masculine' — and socially useful — attributes (virility, aggressiveness, emotional detachment, physical courage) expected of him.¹³

What Yeatman enacted here was a turning away from description of the oppression of women, toward what she called "analysis" of the sources of woman's historically subordinate position and, finally, "an efficacious critique of the position of woman".¹⁴

For Curthoys, like Yeatman, the idea of women's liberation was one not merely concerned with the position of women but rather "the whole question of sex differentiation".¹⁵ As such, she began her essay by positing that the imposition of role divisions according to sex "clearly harm and distort both sexes".¹⁶ Positioning her own critique as a response to the shortcomings of both her feminist and Left predecessors in their treatment of "the 'woman question'", Curthoys asserted that as long as the "disjunction between radical and feminist critiques and demands continues, neither the liberation of women nor of mankind generally will be possible".¹⁷ She proposed instead to conceive of her examination of the condition of women within existing society as fundamental to her wider critique of capitalist society. In line with Yeatman, Curthoys emphasised the importance of analysis rather than description, arguing that what was required was something more than an explanation for the existence of women's subordination. Indeed she suggested that what was essential in activating a framework for change in relation to "sex roles" was:

a much more far reaching study of why sex differentiation in all its aspects has occurred, how it has affected the lives of both men and women and how it is related to the maintenance of, or change in, entrenched social and power structures.¹⁸

At the same time, her attention was set on the effects of such division, specifically in relation to women. In her proposal for achieving women's liberation, she impressed

¹² Yeatman, "The Liberation": p. 20.

¹³ Yeatman, "The Liberation": pp. 23-24.

¹⁴ Yeatman, "The Liberation": p. 25.

¹⁵ A. Curthoys, "Historiography": p. 35.

¹⁶ A. Curthoys, "Historiography": p. 35.

¹⁷ A. Curthoys, "Historiography": p. 35.

¹⁸ A. Curthoys, "Historiography": p. 36.

upon her reader the critical importance of “historical perspectives and explanations”.¹⁹ Crucial to her presentation of an alternative to women’s subordination was her insistence on the refiguring of existing conceptions of history itself. A “history of women”, she wrote, “must analyse why public life has been considered to be the focus of history, and why public life has been so thoroughly occupied by men”. Above all, she asserted, “we must find out how the assumptions of female inferiority in public life and subordination in the home have operated in history”.²⁰ What Curthoys accomplished here was a moving away from mapping the traces of women in history, and toward a profound reconceptualisation of what counted as history.

In important ways, the narrative animating both essays was one framed around the methodological transition from an examination of women’s position historically, to feminist critique of the discipline’s very constitution. Indeed, both essays concluded not with a turn to political action, but with a call for further academic work in the very field that each in effect had helped to open out. In her final paragraph, Yeatman called for “a new historiography”. “History up to now”, she wrote, “has been a male preserve — written by and about men: it is time to demonstrate the importance and nature of woman’s role in social development”.²¹ Curthoys, meanwhile, concluded with an acknowledgment of “the tremendous gaps in Australian historiography”, which she followed with a warning to practitioners to “be careful that we do not confine our analyses to ‘the position of women’ but are able to integrate analyses concerning women within the mainstream of historical enquiry”.²²

Situated at the very beginning of intellectual engagement with feminism (and feminism’s engagement with its own intellectual possibilities) these essays represented both of a moment rudimentary in approach to the analysis of the position of women, and in the work of two junior scholars grappling with the implications of a set of new critical questions. In the present, of course, both Yeatman and Curthoys are Professors, highly respected academics renowned for their ongoing innovative contributions to fields firmly established in contemporary critical thought. The personal academic histories of each traverse a route that in many ways corresponds with that of the institutionalisation of academic feminism in Australia. Both Yeatman and Curthoys have crossed within and between their own disciplinary affiliations, to Women’s Studies and back again.

¹⁹ A. Curthoys, “Historiography”: p. 36.

²⁰ A. Curthoys, “Historiography”: p. 37.

²¹ Yeatman, “The Liberation”: p. 25.

Curthoys completed her PhD in History at Macquarie University in Sydney in 1973, beginning her academic career more formally in 1976 as the first convenor of Women's Studies at ANU. She moved at the end of 1977 to the New South Wales Institute of Technology (later the University of Technology, Sydney), where she taught in an interdisciplinary capacity until 1995. In that year she took up the position she currently holds as Manning Clark Professor of History at the ANU. Yeatman spent some time in the US doing postgraduate study before returning to Australia to take up a position lecturing in Sociology at Flinders University in Adelaide. She was at Flinders until she was appointed the Foundation Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand in 1991 and since 1993 Yeatman has been the Chair of Sociology at Macquarie University in Sydney.

In many respects, the essays of Yeatman and Curthoys were animated by a conception of "woman" and of feminist scholarship from which each has since distanced herself. In more recent times, both women have produced important scholarly work that engages with the significant challenges raised in relation to feminism and questions of difference, as well as critical commentary on the institutional project of academic feminism itself.²³ It is tempting to read in the essays the transformation of a feminist scholarship constituted by concern with a unified and exclusive "woman", to a critical field premised on the multiplicity of feminism's subjects.²⁴ Without doubt the idea of an internally consistent category of "woman" was a theoretical force in the essays of both Yeatman and Curthoys, as well as in the work of their contemporaries. But what is often overlooked in a narrative that figures feminism's shift from recent past to present as a tale of progress from a naïve and exclusive "experiential" 1970s feminism, to the diverse and sophisticated "theoretical" moment of feminism's present and beyond is the way in

²² A. Curthoys, "Historiography": p.40.

²³ On the question of difference see for example, Anna Yeatman & Sneja Gunew (eds), *Feminism & the Politics of Difference*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993 and Ann Curthoys, "Identity Crisis: Colonialism, Nation & Gender in Australian History", *Gender & History*, vol. 5, 1993: pp. 165-176. On academic feminism, see Anna Yeatman, "The Place of Women's Studies in the Contemporary University" in her *Postmodern Revisionings of the Political*, Routledge, New York & London, 1994: pp. 42-53 and Ann Curthoys, "Gender Studies in Australia: A History", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 15, no. 31, 2000: pp. 19-38, as well as her analysis of the state of feminism in the academy in "Where is Feminism Now?" in Jenna Mead (ed), *Bodyjamming: Sexual Harassment, Feminism & Public Life*, Vintage, Sydney, 1997: pp. 189-212.

²⁴ As I argued in the introduction, it is further a narrative figured around a move from margin to centre, one which figures academic feminism as always-already compelled to concede to the radical promise intrinsic to its initial critical stance.

which that category was in fact problematised at the time. I suggest this occurred primarily via an analogy between sex and race that was crucial to early theory.²⁵

Part Two — Reading Millett

Like the essays by Yeatman and Curthoys, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969) contained many of the reductive methodological techniques typical of second-wave intellectual production. At the same time, fundamental to Millett's work and common in early feminist theory more generally, was an analogy between sex and race which in itself made problematic the assertion of an internally consistent category of "woman". In their attempts to illustrate the depth of women's oppression, academic feminists employed a parallel between racism and sexism, arguing that oppression on the basis of sex was like oppression on the basis of race. While the move to draw this analogy has more often than not been dismissed as itself a colonising gesture, I suggest here that its appearance represented rather an important moment in the taking up of early postcolonial theory. The analogy marked a significant (and complicating) moment of interaction between sex and race in the history of academic feminism in Australia.²⁶

Although *Sexual Politics* did not appear in Australia until 1971, Millett's essay on the works of Norman Mailer, Henry Miller and Jean Genet — which later became the first chapter of the book — was widely distributed amongst Women's Liberationists in

²⁵ For Ann Curthoys at least, the question of race was crucial to the kind of work she produced early on in her academic life. Her PhD thesis, which focused on the origins of the White Australia Policy in New South Wales and included policy and ideology about Aborigines during the same period was entitled "Race and Ethnicity: A Study of the Response of British Colonists to Aborigines, Chinese & Non-British Europeans in New South Wales, 1856-1881", PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1973. But as she recalls, "although I could write passionately about the need for an Australian women's history, I found it extremely difficult to incorporate my new feminist insights into my thesis". She did, however, make some attempt by devoting the final chapter of her thesis to "discussion of the sexual dimension of racism and attitudes towards intermixing, intermarriage and the children born of people of different racial and ethnic groups". See Ann Curthoys, "Romancing The Past" in Bain Attwood & Joy Damousi (eds), *Feminist Histories* — Jill Julius Matthews, Patricia Grimshaw, Ann Curthoys, Marilyn Lake, History Institute, Carlton, 1991: p. 29. In more recent comments on her efforts to address questions of race and gender, she reflects, "I didn't get very far, that was the best I could do. And actually in effect, I thought that was a brave attempt!" See Ann Curthoys, "Interview", Canberra, 23 April 1998.

²⁶ Most recently, Indigenous Australian scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson has noted the resilience of this analogy in present-day Australian feminism. See her *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women & Feminism*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2000: especially pp. 126-149. Jackie Huggins addressed the implications of white feminists' use of this analogy in her 1987 article "Black Women & Women's Liberation", *Hecate*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1987: pp. 77-82.

Australia from 1969.²⁷ Ann Curthoys has described Millett's essay as an "energetic literary analysis", enlivened by its "manifesto-like proclamation of a new feminism" and, in the Australian context, a piece that was "excitedly read for its new ways of thinking about gender and sexuality".²⁸ The book itself was formative in Australian feminism's synthesising of its methodological and theoretical priorities. Liz Jacka describes *Sexual Politics* as a text vital to the feminist philosophy course she taught with Jean Curthoys at the University of Sydney in 1973.²⁹ According to Jacka, Millett's work was especially important for those from a background other than literature. The paucity of scholarship on women at that moment meant that courses like Jacka's were heavily reliant on texts emerging from disciplines other than their own. "Academic women were grasping for whatever discipline was available", she recalls.³⁰

Crucial to the way Millett figured her analysis in *Sexual Politics* was the question: "[c]an the relation between the sexes be viewed in a political light at all?" The answer, according to Millett, was one entirely dependent "on how one defines politics".³¹ If, as she suggested, the traditional concept of politics is extended and thereby applied to "power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another", then the concept of sexual politics became "eminently useful".³² Millett's aim was specifically to establish sex as a "status category" with political implications — across time and across cultures. Her analysis was premised upon historical continuity: "the situation between the sexes now, and throughout history", she wrote, is "a relationship of dominance and subordination [*sic*]"³³ At play in Millett's assertions of the litany of parallel forms of the subordination of women was the most resilient of the "methodological vulgarities" of 1970s feminism — the monolithic category of "woman".³⁴ It was further the category of "woman" conceived in these terms that is

²⁷ The version of the essay as it appeared in Australia was reproduced from its original form as published in the *New American Review* in 1969. According to Ann Curthoys, "the notions of 'patriarchal ideology,' 'sex-roles' and sexual power", all of which were crucial to Millett's text, "became profoundly important for Australian thinking about questions of gender and sexuality". See A. Curthoys, "Cosmopolitan": p. 44.

²⁸ A. Curthoys, "Cosmopolitan": p. 43.

²⁹ Elizabeth Jacka, "Interview", Sydney, 12 August 1998.

³⁰ Jacka, "Interview", 12 August 1998. Ann Curthoys notes the way "disciplinary boundaries were readily crossed in the search for answers" for women's continued subordination to men. See her "Gender Studies in Australia": p. 20.

³¹ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 23.

³² Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 23.

³³ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 25.

³⁴ The term "methodological vulgarities" is Alice Gambrell's. See her recent essay "Remembering Women's Studies" in Krzysztof Ziarek & Seamus Deane (eds), *Future Crossings: Literature Between Philosophy & Cultural Studies*, North Western University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 2000: p. 80.

fundamental to her assertion of an all-pervasive patriarchy: "perhaps patriarchy's greatest psychological weapon is simply its universality and longevity. A referent scarcely exists with which it might be contrasted or with which it might be confuted", she insisted.³⁵

Turning from her observations of the far-reaching effects of patriarchy on society, Millett applied her analysis to a context familiar to much of her readership by directing her critique toward knowledge and specifically, academic knowledge. Lyndall Ryan, in 1971 a member of Women's Liberation in Sydney and a postgraduate student, remembers reading Millett as "someone who was very dissatisfied with the kinds of questions that people in literature could ask about literary texts".³⁶ Marilyn Lake, also a student at the time it appeared and from 1972 a participant in the Hobart Women's Action Group (HWAG), describes *Sexual Politics* as a book that for her, "like other academic women, was enormously enlightening and challenging".³⁷ She recalls that Millett "brilliantly showed how you could re-read history and English literature in ways we had never been shown before". For Lake, Millett provided "a new theoretical perspective on texts".³⁸ In furnishing a model for feminist analyses of existing knowledge, Millett revealed the workings of power that had acted up until that moment to maintain men's privilege — the principle upon which, she argued, existing knowledge was conceived. Millett's preoccupation with knowledge was one formulated around the proposition that "if knowledge is power, power is also knowledge". Thus, just as she asserted that "sex-roles" represented "a status or power division" in society, Millett insisted that the segregation of knowledge on the basis of sex intrinsic to universities, was "very eminently a matter of political power".³⁹ Moreover, according to Millett, women's subordinate position owed much to the "systematic ignorance patriarchy imposes upon women".⁴⁰

At the same time, however, Millett argued that the real power of patriarchy lay in the "psychology of the sexes". She conceived of patriarchy as "a habit of mind and a way of life", more than a "political system".⁴¹ As such, it was an "altered consciousness" — a "transformation of personality", one that would entail "an integration of the separate

³⁵ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 58.

³⁶ Lyndall Ryan, "Interview", Sydney, 6 July 1998.

³⁷ Lake, "Interview", 15 February 1999.

³⁸ Lake, "Interview", 15 February 1999.

³⁹ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 42.

⁴⁰ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: pp. 41-42.

sexual subcultures, [and] an assimilation by both sides of previously segregated human experience" that was critical to the social change that she envisioned.⁴² Calling for "cultural revolution", Millett insisted that the "most profound" changes were to be accomplished by "human growth and true re-education".⁴³ In specific terms, she asserted the necessity of:

the re-examination of the traits categorised as 'masculine' and 'feminine', with a reassessment of their human desirability: the violence encouraged as virile, the excessive passivity defined as 'feminine' proving useless in either sex; the efficiency and intellectuality of the 'masculine' temperament, the tenderness and consideration associated with the 'feminine' recommending themselves as appropriate to both sexes.⁴⁴

For Millett, freedom from "the tyranny of sexual-social category and conformity to sexual stereotype" would bring an end to male supremacy and to the socialisation by which it was upheld.⁴⁵

Above all, Millett's insistence on women's oppression across time and across cultures was grounded in a crucial analogy between racism and sexism, namely, between the movements of Black Liberation and that of Women's Liberation. In seeking to illustrate the profound character of women's oppression, Millett drew heavily on language analogous to that which animated the literature of her contemporaries in other liberation movements — in particular, that of Frantz Fanon in his most influential work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). Her second chapter "Theory of Sexual Politics", began with the suggestion that "quite in the same manner" as the study of racism has "convinced us that a truly political state of affairs operates between the races to perpetuate a series of oppressive circumstances", an examination of "our system of sexual relationship" would reveal an association configured around "sexual dominion".⁴⁶ According to Millett:

[w]hat goes largely unexamined, often even unacknowledged (yet is institutionalised nonetheless) in our social order is the birthright priority whereby males rule females. Through this system a most ingenious form of 'interior

⁴¹ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 363.

⁴² Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 62.

⁴³ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 62.

⁴⁴ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 62.

⁴⁵ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 363.

⁴⁶ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: pp. 24-25.

colonisation' has been achieved. It is one which tends to be sturdier than any form of segregation, and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring.⁴⁷

Indeed, the "interiorisation" of patriarchal ideology — a process by which "women develop group characteristics common to those who suffer minority status and a marginal existence" — was crucial to her formulation of the effects of oppression on women's lives.⁴⁸ Similarly important was the idea of "the division of the oppressed", where, according to Millett, "[h]aving internalised the disesteem in which they are held, women despise both themselves and each other".⁴⁹

What was significant here was the way Millett's use of ideas such as "interiorisation" and "interior colonisation" suggests the work of Fanon. In clear terms, Millett's intervention was one framed around an analogy between racism and sexism and thereby, an assertion that sex oppression was like race oppression, a shift common in the literature of the second-wave internationally. Millett's was not an analysis of intersection — of the intersecting oppressions of race and sex. As I noted above, for many, the analogy crucial to Millett was itself a colonising gesture, one that effectively erased non-Anglo women from a moment in feminist history that posited race and gender as distinct, rather than overlapping categories.⁵⁰ Though for the purposes of her argument Millett established "woman" as unified and her oppression as uniform, by employing the analogy between racism and sexism in her analysis she effectively complicated (and indeed, in some respects contradicted) her own reduction of "woman". Her use of this analogy was in

⁴⁷ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 25.

⁴⁸ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 54 & p. 55. For discussion of Fanon's influence on second-wave feminism in Australia and internationally, especially the importance of his work in the light of his insistence on the necessity of internal, psychological change for effective political change see Jean Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia: The Wake of Women's Liberation*, Routledge, New York & London, 1997: especially pp. 15-29. For J. Curthoys, the other important theorist of liberation theory was Paulo Freire, whose own work was profoundly influenced by that of Fanon and enthusiastically taken up in the very popular radical literature of the time. For further discussion on the influence of Freire's work see chapter one.

⁴⁹ Millett, *Sexual Politics*: p. 55.

⁵⁰ In the Australian context, Indigenous women have been clear in acknowledging the intersection of race and gender, but also in setting out which category is their primary point of identification. As for the women in chapter three, for these women a refusal of recognition under the rubric "woman" and an enthusiastic taking up of Aboriginality is a matter of both political strategy and political expediency. See for example, Lilla Watson, "Sister, Black Is the Colour of My Soul" in Jocelyne A. Scutt (ed), *Different Lives: Reflections on the Women's Movement & Visions of its Future*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1987: pp. 44-53 and Elizabeth Williams, "Aboriginal First, Woman Second" in Scutt (ed), *Different Lives*: pp. 66-74. In the American context, Gambrell cites the "famous 1982 anthology title *All The Women Are White, All The Men Are Black, But Some Of Us Are Brave*" as the quintessential example of this discourse. See Gambrell, "Remembering": p. 85.

effect an acknowledgment of the existence of oppressions other than those enacted on the basis of sex. Put another way, her engagement with race as an analogous rather than intersecting oppression itself enacted a problematisation of the category of "woman" and further, it effected an important interaction between early postcolonial theory and academic feminism.

Part Three — Encountering Race

The work of white feminist critics during the 1970s was marked by a tendency to describe their own social subordination by means of reductive analogies to the subordination of the "third world". From its very beginnings, Women's Liberation in Australia drew analogies between the oppression encountered by victims of imperialism, particularly American imperialism, and the oppression they faced in their own lives.⁵¹ At an anti-Vietnam War rally in Sydney in December 1969, a leaflet headed "Only the Chains Have Changed" heralding the emergence of Women's Liberation in Australia was distributed amongst participants. "We, like the Vietnamese", it proclaimed, "can only be free of oppression when the profit makers no longer have the power to determine our lives".⁵² Here the language of oppression and liberation that was so important to the antiwar movement was mobilised by Women's Liberationists to articulate and theorise the position of women in their own society.

In analysis reminiscent of that offered by Millett, Yeatman asserted the resilience of the circumscription of individuals by a "'masculine' or 'feminine' identity". Like Millett, her essay was structured around the proliferation of analogous forms of women's subordination across cultures and throughout history. Yeatman noted, "this process of description, these cries of anger and frustration, have been voiced by many individuals for well over a century".⁵³ Likewise, for Curthoys, the entire question of sex-role differentiation was pivotal, grounded as her analysis was in the contention that it "has

⁵¹ Ann Curthoys has observed that the Women's Movement in Australia was "deeply influenced by the context of the anti-war movement and black liberation movements emerging internationally" during the 1970s. See A. Curthoys, "Cosmopolitan": p. 42.

⁵² Cited in Ann Curthoys, "Doing It For Themselves: The Women's Movement Since 1970" in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney 1992: p. 433. See also Pat Grimshaw, "Only the Chains Have Changed" in Verity Burgmann, *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia Since 1788*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1988: pp. 66-86.

⁵³ Yeatman, "The Liberation": p. 24 & p. 25.

occurred in all societies".⁵⁴ The essays of both Yeatman and Curthoys were marked by each scholar's willingness to draw on universalising techniques to explain the subordination of women. In this respect, these works were typical of the kinds of negotiations performed by early participants in feminist critique in the academy (negotiations that sometimes failed) within and between the determinedly diverse category of "woman". But more pertinent for my purposes here, both women made analogous commentary on the (male) liberation movements and their own analysis of the position of women early on in their essays. Yeatman wrote: "It is not surprising that the radical women extended the humanist claims advanced for the Negro and the Vietnamese to themselves, for, within the Movement, they had been denied leadership".⁵⁵ Curthoys in turn declared, "just as the breakdown of racism in society is bound up with the development of black movements and self-consciousness, so the breakdown of rigid sex role differentiation is bound up with the fortunes of women's movements".⁵⁶ This move was one which replicated the erasing of non-Anglo women effected by the men of liberation movements contemporaneous to second-wave feminism.

This analogy's preeminence was especially important in the Australian context, where its use excluded the contemporaneous critical production of a specific group — Aboriginal Australian women. As Bobbi Sykes powerfully observed in 1975, the Indigenous woman was typically "'invisible'" in the minds of her white female contemporaries.⁵⁷ But rather than dismissing work such as that by Yeatman and Curthoys on the basis of its universalising gestures and exclusionary comparisons, I suggest that it is more productive to consider the work as itself shaped and determined in significant ways by the exclusion of non-Anglo women by means of analogy.⁵⁸ In other words, rather than

⁵⁴ A. Curthoys, "Historiography": p. 35.

⁵⁵ Yeatman, "The Liberation": p. 19.

⁵⁶ A. Curthoys, "Historiography": p. 36.

⁵⁷ Bobbi Sykes, "Black Women in Australia: A History" in Jan Mercer (ed), *The Other Half: Women in Australian Society*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1975: pp. 313-322. More recently, Indigenous critics Catrina Felton and Liz Flanagan indicated that Indigenous women's ongoing invisibility in present-day white Australian feminism was in part responsible for their call to Indigenous women to "set our own agenda". "We are writing now to state unequivocally", they wrote, "that we as tiddas refuse to be left off the feminist agenda which has ignored and deemed us invisible for so long". See Catrina Felton and Liz Flanagan, "Institutionalised Feminism: A Tidda's Perspective", *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal*, no. 8, Summer 1993: pp. 53-59.

⁵⁸ In the Australian context, the work of Adele Murdolo has focused on the exclusions that migrant women faced in their interaction with the women's movement during the 1970s and 1980s. See for example Adele Murdolo, "Warmth & Unity with all Women?: Historicising Racism in the Australian Women's Movement", (Ann Curthoys, Helen Irving & Jeannie Martin (eds), "The World Upside Down: Feminisms in the Antipodes"), *Feminist Review*, no. 52, Spring 1996: pp. 69-86. This article touches on the work which appears in the more recent, Adele Murdolo,

conceiving of second-wave feminism's engagement with race as an analogous oppression as an "easy" or straightforward shift, I suggest that what impelled this move to analogy was an engagement — without doubt one that was sometimes problematic — with early race theory. Since the analogy crucial to these works drew at least in part on Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) — as I outlined earlier, Fanon's book appeared consistently on the reading lists of academic feminist courses in Australia during the 1970s — a close reading of that text is here imperative.⁵⁹

Fanon was an important figure in the formation of Left intellectual thought internationally. His scholarship served as a prototype for liberation struggles across the world, including Women's Liberation. As Jean Curthoys has noted, a "strange solidarity" existed between the armed struggles of national liberation movements in the "Third World" and radical movements internationally during the 1960s and 1970s.⁶⁰ According to Curthoys, the emphasis on consciousness prevalent in black liberation movements in particular was informed by these connections. Moreover, she maintained that it was the insistence on the necessity of internal, psychological change for effective political change, an idea fundamental to Fanon's work (he was a psychiatrist as well as race theorist), that was taken up by Black Liberation and in turn, Women's Liberation. For Curthoys, it was in his fusing of psychology and politics that Fanon understood the conditions of this transformation to be "intimately bound up with the workings of power".⁶¹

Stuart Hall has suggested that Fanon's scholarship aimed to unpack the "inner landscapes" of racism.⁶² Keeping in mind Hall's observations, I suggest that it was the way Fanon conceptualised a new kind of political subject and more broadly, a new model for liberation that was vital to the way his work informed feminist knowledge. Indeed, it was the opening up of this "radical aperture", as Hall describes it, which was the central legacy of Fanon's work for feminist thought.⁶³ Although Fanon was certainly not the only critic to inform the ideas of oppression mobilised within academic feminism, his work provides a fascinating and complicated entry point into a critical engagement with the

"Contesting Feminist Spaces: Immigrant & Refugee Women Write History", PhD Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1999.

⁵⁹ One of the reviews of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* to appear in the Australian context was by Tony Brown, "A Classic of Anti-Colonialism", *Arena*, no. 14, 1967: pp. 60-63.

⁶⁰ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 1.

⁶¹ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 1.

⁶² Stuart Hall, "The After-Life of Frantz Fanon: Why Fanon? Why Now? Why *Black Skin, White Masks*?" in Alan Read (ed), *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, Bay Press, Seattle, 1996: p. 19.

⁶³ Hall, "After-life": p. 19.

forms and figures of theories of oppression current in the 1970s. In what follows, I mean to resist any attempt to restore the “true meaning” of Fanon’s work, or to fix once and for all “who/what academic feminism *really* took its ideas from/as”. Instead, I retrace the conceptual turns taken by Fanon in order to grasp the “matrix of intelligibility” — to use Hall’s phrase — within which both theorists and feminist scholars came to say what they did (and not say that which they were unable).⁶⁴

Fanon mobilised a range of existentialist and psychoanalytic thinkers in order to theorise alienation in colonial society; that is, black alienation in racist society. Crucial to his profound re-telling of the lived experience of anti-colonial political activity in *The Wretched of the Earth* was the idea of “the psychology of the oppressed” — the process by which the colonised “internalised” their ongoing exposure to the coloniser’s representations of their culture. According to Fanon, “native” society was described not simply as a society lacking in values: “It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in the colonial world”, he remarked. Instead, “the native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values”.⁶⁵ It was the ubiquity of the coloniser’s representations and the distorting effects of such oppression that led Fanon to insist on the necessity of internal psychological change as the means by which to effect political change. Fanon declared: “the colonised peoples must lose the habits of mind which have characterised them up to now”.⁶⁶

Fanon’s model of the struggle for liberation was one exemplified in the experience of “the colonised intellectual”. Detached from his own society thanks to an idea “hammered” into his mind by the colonial bourgeoisie — one that idealised “a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought” — the colonised intellectual, according to Fanon, was complicit in his own subjection.⁶⁷ His relation to his own people was one characterised by division. The struggle for liberation, in contrast, offered the Fanonian intellectual “the opportunity to return to the people”; the process of “opening their minds, awakening them, and allowing the birth of their intelligence” was one through which the intellectual discovered the “falseness” of the coloniser’s individualism. Most important, though, it was a process in which the colonised themselves “willed, called for, [and] demanded” change and

⁶⁴ Hall, “After-life”: p. 26.

⁶⁵ Fanon, *The Wretched*: p. 32.

⁶⁶ Fanon, *The Wretched*: p. 114.

through which “the very forms of organisation of the struggle” suggested to him “a different vocabulary” — “brother, sister, friend”.⁶⁸ For Fanon, such language was the basis of a new found solidarity amongst the colonised — one, he wrote, where “the interests of one will be the interests of all”, and where the process of a “collective building up of a destiny” brought the colonised the desired status of being “fully” human.⁶⁹

Yet the struggle for liberation did not end there: “Colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country”, observed Fanon. Indeed, “colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it”.⁷⁰ Thus, crucial to Fanon’s model for liberation was his assertion that the colonised can facilitate their own freedom only by means of writing their own history. He declared:

The immobility to which the native is condemned can only be called in question if the native decides to put an end to the history of colonisation — the history of pillage — and to bring into existence the history of the nation — the history of decolonisation.⁷¹

For Fanon, it was not the success of the struggle alone, “this enlightening of consciousness and this advance in the knowledge of the history of societies”, which gave vigour and validity to the colonised; rather, it was the struggle itself. Critical here was the premise upon which Fanon founded his analysis: the idea that “the thing which has been colonised becomes human during the same process by which it frees itself”.⁷² Fanon wrote, while “in its development and in its internal progression” the struggle for liberation “sends culture along different paths and traces out entirely new ones for it”. The end product of such independence and renewal was not only the “disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonised man”.⁷³ For Fanon, ultimately, it was in the revolution that the old culture would break apart, offering new ways of life made in and through the revolution.

⁶⁷ Fanon, *The Wretched*: p. 36.

⁶⁸ Fanon, *The Wretched*: pp. 36-37.

⁶⁹ Fanon, *The Wretched*: p. 37 & p. 165.

⁷⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched*: p. 39. For discussion of Fanon’s relevance to present-day critical theorising see Nigel Gibson, “Thoughts about doing Fanonism in the 1990s”, *College Literature*, vol. 26, no. 2, Spring 1999: p. 98.

⁷¹ Fanon, *The Wretched*: p. 40.

⁷² Homi K. Bhabha, “Day by Day... with Frantz Fanon” in Alan Read (ed), *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, Bay Press, Seattle, 1996: p. 200.

The encounter between Fanon and academic feminism, both internationally and in Australia took up Fanon's ideas. In Millett's case, the connection between her formulation of a theory of women's subjectivity and the ideas of Fanon on the subjectivity of the oppressed was complicated. As I demonstrated in the previous part of this chapter, Fanon, amongst others, left distinctive marks on her formulation of the subject of feminism; at the same time she took those ideas in a decidedly different direction. Millett embraced and in many ways rendered possible a vision of liberation that was utopian in character and grounded in a vision of the possibilities and value of a feminist identity politics premised on a vision of the progressive potential of "woman" as a political subject. As with Millett, the encounter with Fanon can clearly be detected throughout each of Yeatman and Curthoys' essays.

In some respects, this connection bespoke the close proximity of second-wave feminism and its intellectual contemporaries in liberation movements internationally. In the Australian context, in the most straightforward of ways, the language of contemporaneous liberation movements had entered freely into the broad arena of the Australian Left, and subsequently into the language of feminist critique. Ann Curthoys has argued that connections between international literature, and that composed in Australia were sometimes direct. Indeed, locally written articles were often wholly derivative of their international sources.⁷⁴ According to Curthoys, the culture of that moment was one of "energetically soaking up ideas", where "borrowing, reprinting, reworking, quoting at length, discussing [and] explaining" from any number of theorists was the norm.⁷⁵ In the same way, the ideas of any specific author became so much a part of general theoretical language that often times the work of scholars was imbued with the ideas of another without any direct acknowledgment or connection.

Like Fanon, for Yeatman, the idea of the psychology of the oppressed was critical to her formulation of the political subjectivity of "woman". Early on in her essay, Yeatman established the frame through which she understood women's inequality: "The inferior, exploited position of women breeds a psychology analogous to that of any exploited group", she remarked.⁷⁶ Moving from the specificity of woman's position to a wider reference to the psychology characteristic of the oppressed, Yeatman echoed Fanon's

⁷³ Fanon, *The Wretched*: p. 197 & p. 198.

⁷⁴ A. Curthoys, "Cosmopolitan": p. 43.

⁷⁵ A. Curthoys, "Cosmopolitan": p. 43.

articulation of the “interiorisation” pivotal to the colonised in their self-conception. She wrote: “typically, the marginal person accepts the standards of the dominant group, while suffering a particularly intense sensitivity to the judgement of that group”.⁷⁷ Yeatman further recalled Fanon’s emphasis on the distorting effects of oppression and more pointedly, on the division characteristic of such distortion. “In adopting the group’s standards”, observed Yeatman, “the marginal person is very critical of the deficiencies of... her group, ‘an attitude which very often involves self-contempt and self-hatred’, and attempts to individually escape beyond identification with the group”.⁷⁸

In her emphasis on the woman intellectual, Curthoys likewise echoed Fanon’s account of the struggle for liberation. Like the Fanonian intellectual, Curthoys’ woman historian achieved success by playing down her connection to other women. “Female historians”, she wrote, “have been affected by a desire to succeed as *people*, to submerge their feminine identity and by an abhorrence of the feminist stereotype”.⁷⁹ As Fanon’s intellectual was bound by the coloniser’s reading of his history, so Curthoys noted that “male historians see ‘women’s matters’ as trivial and not the stuff of history”. For academic women, such assertions resulted in a situation where they themselves “tend to avoid studying or talking about women in society”.⁸⁰ Thus, in the same way Fanon conceived of the struggle for liberation as a process not merely concerned with uncovering subjugated knowledges, but rather about challenging the ways of thinking produced by colonial rule, Curthoys demanded that “the concepts usually operating in historiography, [and those] defining what is important” be questioned.⁸¹

My aim in re-reading the early work of Yeatman and Curthoys was to suggest how dismissive accounts of the “simplicities” of white feminists of that moment operated to obfuscate a more dynamic and heterogeneous historical record. Certainly the tendency amongst white feminist critics in the 1970s to connect their own oppression as women with black oppression was problematic. But feminism was informed by early postcolonial theory — although often in ways that we have come to think of as inadequate — and that enabled the development of analogies between racism and sexism. Like contemporary critical commentary on sexuality which, as I demonstrated in the

⁷⁶ Yeatman, “The Liberation”: p. 24.

⁷⁷ Yeatman, “The Liberation”: p. 24.

⁷⁸ Yeatman, “The Liberation”: p. 24.

⁷⁹ A. Curthoys, “Historiography”: p. 37 (emphasis in original).

⁸⁰ A. Curthoys, “Historiography”: p. 37.

⁸¹ A. Curthoys, “Historiography”: p. 37.

previous chapter, problematised the positions employed by academic feminism's participants in their negotiations of the category of "woman", the contemporaneous criticism of Aboriginal women actively contested the exclusions inherent in any singular conception of "woman".

Part Four — Remembering Exclusions

The assumption upon which virtually every contemporary historical narrative of the recent past of Australian academic feminism is founded is that it was not until half a decade after the essays of Yeatman and Curthoys appeared, with the publication of Pat O'Shane's 1976 article "Is There Any Relevance in the Women's Movement for Aboriginal Women?" that Indigenous Australian women "finally" began to interrogate the unexamined whiteness of academic feminism.⁸² Or, alternatively, it is another half decade later again with the holding of the 1980 and 1984 Women and Labour Conferences that is cited as the moment when confrontations took place between Indigenous and white Australian women, thereby propelling feminist scholarship into its next, more heterogeneous phase.⁸³ I have no problem with claims of the importance of O'Shane's article, or the significance of debates that took place at the Women and Labour Conferences in the first half of the 1980s. But I am troubled by the late placement of both moments in the history of Australian academic feminism, as well as the effects of the preeminence of such accounts, neglecting as they do to acknowledge — indeed, they forget — the contemporaneous critical production emerging from other Indigenous

⁸² Pat O'Shane, "Is There Any Relevance in the Women's Movement for Aboriginal Women", *Refractory Girl*, September 1976 : pp. 31-34.

⁸³ For an account focusing mainly on the 1984 conference, but which also addresses earlier conferences see Bronwen Levy, "Sisterhood in Trouble: The Fourth Women & Labour Conference, Brisbane 1984", *Hecate*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1984: pp. 105-109. For discussion of earlier incidences of tension on the question of race in the Australian left more broadly, see for example Warren Osmond's report of the conference on "Racism & Education", held in Brisbane in January 1972, which he argues "developed into a more or less open black-white confrontation": p. 13. One of the points on which tensions arose related to the relation between racism and sexism. According to Osmond, "the blacks argued, impatiently, that sexism was either an irrelevant issue for them, or at least a private issue... There was a conference of Aboriginal women in Canberra at the same time as the Brisbane conference, but this was unhappily dismissed as a coincidence by the organisers. Whatever the 'truth' of the matter, it was clear that no blacks were prepared to even rank sexism with the overwhelming problem of racism". See Warren Osmond, "Black Militancy & the White Left", *Arena*, no. 28, 1972: pp. 12-16.

women.⁸⁴ With this in mind, I suggest an alternative plotting of these works and the questions raised via their analysis.

The appearance of O'Shane's essay in 1976 was not an isolated event; rather, its materialisation corresponded with a number of other crucial events in the development of academic feminism.⁸⁵ The same issue of *Refractory Girl* in which O'Shane's article featured, was devoted to the theme of "Feminism and the struggle for women's liberation in Third World countries and other underdeveloped situations".⁸⁶ The year before O'Shane's article appeared, Bobbi Sykes' essay "Black Women in Australia: A History" had been published in Jan Mercer's edited collection *The Other Half*.⁸⁷ Sykes wrote in

⁸⁴ I draw my argument here in part from American feminist Robyn Wiegman's discussion of a similar point in relation to the timing of the arrival of "women of colour" in current narratives of US feminism's recent history. She contends that African American women are not positioned as having arrived 'after' feminism but choreographed as its latest arrivals. For Wiegman, "such a narrative writes racial differences among women into feminism as a second order concern, which has the effect not simply of producing a normative origin for feminism that establishes the utopian as a claim to a racially neutral unified collectivity, but marshals the utopia of such unified collectivity as the subjective formation of feminism's futurity". See Robyn Wiegman, "Feminism's Apocalyptic Futures", *New Literary History*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2000: pp. 812-813.

⁸⁵ A body of literature in the mid to early 1990s from a number of young Indigenous women, recalled many of the same critiques of white feminists from Indigenous women in the 1970s, reinforcing the ongoing and critical importance of what would seem a fairly pedestrian procedure: that is, the cataloguing of the critical commentary of Indigenous women in the 1970s. One of those contributions, Melissa Lucashenko's "No Other Truth?: Aboriginal Women & Australian Feminism", provocatively addressed white feminists with her comments: "Why are so few Aboriginal women part of the feminist struggle?... [because] you have little or no understanding of your colonial presence;... because you fail to recognise Black Australia is as diverse as your Australia;... because Black Australian history is a void or an irrelevance... because you are baffled by the idea that Black women are justified in fearing you; because you want to 'help' Black women; because you presume that having attempted our genocide you can attempt our ideological resurrection; because you think that indigenous culture survived for millennia in this country *without* Black feminists, and because of your imperialist attitude that you alone hold a meaningful concept of female strength and solidarity". See Melissa Lucashenko, "No Other Truth?: Aboriginal Women & Australian Feminism", *Social Alternatives*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1994: p. 24. Other contributors included Larissa Behrendt, "Aboriginal Women & the White Lies of the Feminist Movement: Implications for Aboriginal Women in Rights Discourse", *The Australian Feminist Law Journal*, vol. 1, August 1993: pp. 27-44; Felton & Flanagan, "Institutionalised Feminism": pp. 53-59. Indigenous academic Wendy Brady's recent essay "Colour Bars" is clear in its assertion of the important work of accounting for the crucial role Aboriginal participants have played over time in gay and lesbian politics in Sydney. See Wendy Brady, "Colour Bars" in Craig Johnston and Paul van Reyk (eds), *Queer City: Gay & Lesbian Politics in Sydney*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 2001.

⁸⁶ See *Refractory Girl*, September 1976. In that same year, *Koori Bina: A Black Australian News Monthly*, an initiative of a group based in Redfern, Sydney and calling themselves the Black Women's Action Committee, appeared for the first time. Meredith Burgmann described *Koori Bina* as "a lively and informative paper about black affairs in general but with a 'feminist' approach (ie. articles about rape, 'pin-ups' of black male boxers, etc)". See Burgmann, "Black Sisterhood: The Situation of Urban Aboriginal Women & Their Relationship to the White Women's Movement", *Politics: Australasian Political Studies Association Journal*, vol. 17, no. 2, November 1982: p. 30.

⁸⁷ Also appearing in Mercer's collection was an article by white anthropologist Annette Hamilton, "The Means of Production", in which she examined the accuracy of conventional accounts of

provocative terms of the discrepancy between the demands of white women and their black contemporaries. In explaining why black women more often than not refused to participate in the white women's movement, Sykes remarked, "that there has been no common experience is perhaps the most obvious reason".⁸⁸ She further noted the "lack of interest" shown by white liberation groups in relation to problems significant to the black community as a whole. The situation, according to Sykes, had led black women to conclude that they "are going to have to develop... projects themselves, and they are going to get little, if any, help from the white community".⁸⁹

In that same year, a group of young, urban Aboriginal women from Sydney and Brisbane were interviewed by Meredith Burgmann, a high-profile participant in the women's movement and in the Left more broadly, on the question of their relationship to the white women's movement.⁹⁰ Burgmann analysed their responses via Fanon's conception of political subjectivity and his model for liberation. In 1974, many Aboriginal women had decided not to participate in the activities of International Women's Year on the grounds that they considered the discussion of women's rights irrelevant to Indigenous women so long as their main oppression — racism — continued unabated. Of the women who spoke to Burgmann, many were damning in their appraisal of white feminist efforts at understanding the motivation behind black women's refusal to participate in the white women's movement. One interviewee declared:

They [white women] are talking about things that they don't know anything about — they say a lot of things about the black movement and black women's roles in things. I doubt very much if a quarter of them have ever bothered to speak to black

Aboriginal society as structured around a dynamic where men were "violent brutes" and women "abject pawns". Hamilton concentrated on the situation in one specific Aboriginal community, and the impact contact with white society had on that community. She wrote, "if my analysis of the status of women in pre-contact times is correct, then Aboriginal women have been given the toughest deal in the game. Where once they were ideologically inferior to but substantially independent of their menfolk, they have been made both dependent and inferior": p. 178.

⁸⁸ Sykes, "Black Women": p. 320.

⁸⁹ Sykes, "Black Women": p. 320. Sykes ended the article with an insightful analysis of rape and the correlation between myths about black women's sexuality and white women's inability to confront the involvement of white men in such incidents. Like O'Shane, Sykes argued that it is vital that black women attempting to liberate themselves, "do so without causing further injury to the black man": p. 321.

⁹⁰ Burgmann began the interviews in March 1975, as part of her research for an essay to be published in a book that year. The book never eventuated and she continued to conduct interviews with urban Aboriginal women until August 1978, many of which appear in print in her 1982 article "Black Sisterhood: The Situation of Urban Aboriginal Women & Their Relationship to the White Women's Movement". See Burgmann, "Black Sisterhood": pp. 23-37.

women on a very intimate level — have intimate discussion with them and really find out the problems.⁹¹

Others were critical of the movement's exclusionary practices more generally: "suddenly this women's liberation movement developed and there were no black women involved in it", said "Ms C".⁹² "One of the things with women's liberation is that we felt we were being pushed into something that we were never first involved in — it was just sort of put there", added "Ms J".⁹³

In September of 1975, the Women and Politics Conference in Canberra was the site of the most public demonstration of black hostility towards the white women's movement that had occurred to date.⁹⁴ Aboriginal conference participants repeatedly urged white feminists to embrace those issues affecting the entire Aboriginal community. For one Aboriginal woman participant, the conference

just seemed like another thing that they were going to set up and now after it's set up, now they'll involve the blacks — why — because we haven't got enough intelligence to understand what the word women's liberation means or to understand the significance of women's liberation? We understood all right but what we didn't understand was why it took them so bloody long to get around to us.⁹⁵

Indigenous women's frustration with the lack of effort shown by white feminists in acknowledging their own complicity in the oppression of Aboriginal women, was for many exemplified in the conference's reticence to provide a forum in which Aboriginal women could feel comfortable in "disclosing the injustices they suffer".⁹⁶ In response, Aboriginal and Islander women attending the conference convened an "Aboriginal Speak-Out" where in an effort to ensure that they would "genuinely be able to have their say", it was agreed that only black women should address the audience.⁹⁷

⁹¹ "Ms D, 7 May 1977" cited in Burgmann, "Black Sisterhood": p. 32.

⁹² "Ms C, 29 October 1976" cited in Burgmann, "Black Sisterhood": p. 32.

⁹³ "Ms J, 20 March 1975" cited in Burgmann, "Black Sisterhood": p. 32.

⁹⁴ See Burgmann, "Black Sisterhood": p. 32.

⁹⁵ "Ms J, 20 March 1975" cited in Burgmann, "Black Sisterhood": p. 32.

⁹⁶ See "Black Women in Society" (transcript of address by Flo Kennedy & discussion) & "Aboriginal Women's Speak-Out", *Women & Politics Conference*: pp. 198-209 & pp. 209-213.

⁹⁷ See "Black Women in Society": pp. 198-209 & pp. 209-213.

Pat Eatock and Carol Ambrus declared in the paper they presented at the Women and Politics Conference that "white women must understand that in the present historical situation it is to be expected, and in fact is necessary, that black women align themselves with their men".⁹⁸ Responding to those who argued that Aboriginal women's reluctance to join the Movement was the result of a lack of feminist consciousness amongst black women, Ambrus and Eatock asserted that "Aboriginals have reached a higher consciousness of their oppression than have [white] women", which in combination with "a higher level of desperation and urgency among Aboriginals" has in turn produced "a higher level of activity and agitation".⁹⁹ In comparing the plight of the Aboriginal to that of the white woman, Ambrus and Eatock asserted that it was "obvious" that the "black movement is taken more seriously than the women's movement" by wider society. Rather than articulating their critique in terms of their frustration at the demands the white women's movement's made of black women, they asserted the value of Aboriginal society as a whole. Aboriginal society, they argued, was peculiarly suited to addressing the problem of oppression in all its guises since it was a culture based on "cooperation between people". Declaring white Australians "too short-sighted" to recognise the model of "egalitarian civilisation" that was Aboriginal society, Ambrus and Eatock shifted the onus back onto white society: "Instead of taking a lesson from the Aboriginals, Australians are bent on a destructive course and are dragging the Aboriginals down with them", they wrote.¹⁰⁰

In discussing encounters between Indigenous and white feminist commentators during this period, Australian feminist Katy Reade has argued that these interactions were testament to the growing visibility of white feminists' inability to address the "whiteness" which infused their conception of the political subject of feminism.¹⁰¹ Specifically, Reade

⁹⁸ Carol Ambrus & Pat Eatock, "Racism & Sexism as Determinants of the Status and Position of Aboriginal Men & Women in Australia", *Women & Politics Conference, (Canberra, ACT), 1975, Volume 2*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1977: p. 139. Eatock's account of the conference is contained in her "There's a Snake In My Caravan" in Scutt (ed), *Different Lives*: pp. 22-31.

⁹⁹ Ambrus & Eatock, "Racism & Sexism": p. 139.

¹⁰⁰ Ambrus & Eatock, "Racism & Sexism": p. 141.

¹⁰¹ See Katy Reade, "Limited Gestures: White Feminists & Aboriginal Women in the 1970s' Women's Movement" in Patricia Grimshaw & Diane Kirkby (eds), *Dealing With Difference: Essays in Gender, Culture & History*, Network for Research in Women's History, Melbourne, July 1996: pp. 118-129. One article which did attempt to address the "whiteness" of Australian feminism was Eileen Haley's "Colours", first presented at the Women's Liberation Theory Conference, held at Mt Beauty in Victoria in January 1973 (the same conference that the Hobart Women's Action Group presented their critique of the category of "woman" I discussed in the previous chapter). Haley called for the women's movement to connect the fight against sexism with that against racism, and further, questioned the sincerity with which white feminists had tackled their own "white-

has contended that a state of "ambivalence" characterised white feminist attempts to address the differences of Aboriginal women's experiences and perspectives in the 1970s. Such differences were most often tackled by means of "dealing with", "accepting" or "accommodating" Aboriginal women within the movement as it already existed.¹⁰² In slightly altering the emphasis upon which Reade's analysis was founded, I further suggest that these encounters were testament to the significant impact Indigenous women were having on both contemporary Indigenous society and contemporary feminist thought.

I keep to the fore the arguments of Aboriginal feminist critics, Catrina Felton and Liz Flanagan. In maintaining that Aboriginal women's engagement with feminism historically has been understood through a "white theoretical framework", Felton and Flanagan have insisted that Aboriginal women's political endeavours in the past and present have been conceived as a "response" to white feminism, as "reactive" or "passive" in their relations with the white women's movement.¹⁰³ More pointedly, the inability or unwillingness of white feminists to recognise the cultural specificity of white feminism has meant that Indigenous women's activism has been (and continues to be) silenced. Specifically, Felton and Flanagan emphasised the autonomy and achievements of such women:

Koori women are respected and there are always strong Black women present and speaking out from within our communities. Koori women are active in the struggles which confront our communities daily, but White women don't hear Koori women speak out from within a joint community network. They are only concerned with involving Koori women in White feminist issues.¹⁰⁴

What I gain from Felton and Flanagan is a heightened concern with reading the exclusions intrinsic to the encounters between Indigenous and white feminist commentators here central to my analysis.

White feminist critics' turn toward "analysis" and toward an indepth questioning of existing ways of conceiving of political subjectivity was exemplified in the essays by Yeatman and Curthoys in their treatment of the position of women. More than just collating women's experiences, as I noted earlier, Yeatman and Curthoys initiated a

feminine identity". For a fuller account of Haley's paper see Reade, "Limited Gestures": pp. 120-121.

¹⁰² See Reade, "Limited Gestures": p. 120.

¹⁰³ Felton & Flanagan, "Institutionalised Feminism": p. 54.

¹⁰⁴ Felton & Flanagan, "Institutionalised Feminism": p. 58.

thorough challenge to existing conceptions of what counted as history. Important here, this initiative coincided with what is best described as a more empirically grounded series of intellectual labours performed by Indigenous feminist commentators. O'Shane accounted for such differences in approach in clear terms, when she observed that:

[w]hilst there is no doubt a need for esoteric debate on such questions as the ideology of the women's movement, so far as Black women are concerned it is the nitty-gritty struggle around such issues as health, housing, education and land rights that is of the greatest moment.¹⁰⁵

While white feminists were celebrating the possibilities of a feminist identity politics premised on "woman" as its political subject, Indigenous women were preoccupied with refusing what they perceived as the confines, or alternatively the exclusivity of a feminist subject that had its own criteria of privilege. In particular, Indigenous commentators focused on — indeed, their analyses explicitly addressed — pronouncements by white feminists that the refusal by Aboriginal women to participate in feminist initiatives was derivative of the historically subordinate position of women in their own societies.¹⁰⁶ Herein lies the importance of resisting the prevailing characterisation of O'Shane's article, or contemporaneous commentary on the Women's Movement from other Indigenous women as belated arrivals to the feminist project, or as indicative of a group yet to reach an appropriate level of feminist consciousness — both ways in which the work of Indigenous critics was conceived at the time and has since commonly been remembered.¹⁰⁷

With this in mind, I suggest that a complicated metacommentary on the problems of representation was played out in the very earliest part of O'Shane's essay, for instance, when she addressed the work of anthropologist Diane Barwick.¹⁰⁸ O'Shane began her

¹⁰⁵ O'Shane, "Is There": p. 34.

¹⁰⁶ For instance, when discussing how one anthropologist accounted for the change in woman's role in Aboriginal society historically from "subordinate" to newly independent as the result of white intervention, O'Shane remarked, "I often times get the impression that this attitude about Aboriginal women still prevails, particularly (in my experience) amongst women involved in the women's movement". See O'Shane, "Is There": p. 31. For further analysis of this point see below. See also present-day Indigenous women's critiques of Australian feminism and feminists.

¹⁰⁷ For discussion of such misconceptions at the time see Burgmann's "Black Sisterhood" article, in which she contended that "there is a black women's movement — it is just that white women know virtually nothing about it and, because its demands and priorities are different, believe that it does not exist". See Burgmann, "Black Sisterhood": p. 31. And for more recent discussion, see Felton & Flanagan, "Institutionalised Feminism": especially pp. 54-58.

¹⁰⁸ Barwick's essay "And the Lubras Are Ladies Now" appeared in Fay Gale (ed), *Woman's Role In Aboriginal Society*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1974: pp. 51-63.

essay by refuting Barwick's account of change in the status of Aboriginal women historically in their own societies. In O'Shane's reading, the primary assertion of Barwick's essay was that "women in traditional Aboriginal society lived in a state of constant brutalisation by their savage menfolk", which in turn, according to O'Shane, implied that it was "by the intervention of the great white fathers — and mothers — [that] those women were emancipated! Set free!"¹⁰⁹ What O'Shane contended instead was that what Barwick referred to as "emancipation" was more accurately a moment where Indigenous women "became, along with the[ir] men, enslaved".¹¹⁰ Thus, where Barwick determinedly separated the status of Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men, O'Shane drew them together — in both the past and the present. "Aborigines in Australian society continue in that enslavement today", she wrote.¹¹¹ Most pointedly, O'Shane's counter to Barwick's conception of woman's role in Aboriginal society represented a challenge to the ground upon and from which feminism's condition of possibility — its presumption that it speaks for all women — was derived. In unsettling the ease with which Barwick (and numerous others) universalised the situation of Indigenous women, O'Shane effected a recalibration of the relation within and between racism and sexism — here, the relation was not Yeatman and Curthoys' analogical one, but rather a case of mutually defining categories. Racism, O'Shane insisted, "is the most important issue for us to examine when considering the position of Aboriginal women today, and particularly their position vis-à-vis the women's movement".¹¹²

Thus, the argument of O'Shane's essay comprised an effort to dismantle the conventional feminist opposition between the status of men and that of women and the prevailing feminist idea that "race" and "sex" oppression were somehow parallel. She concurred with her contemporaries, anthropologists Fay Gale and Annette Hamilton, in their observation that Aboriginal women's increasingly common occupying of "positions of dominance in the family and leadership in the community" was not necessarily a positive development, since what this "new status" was often accompanied by was a concomitant loss of status and self-respect for Aboriginal men.¹¹³ While Gale and Hamilton were resolute in the care they took not to overstate the worth of Aboriginal women's gains in status in their own communities, O'Shane was enthusiastic in mobilising feminist analyses of the position of women in society as a whole in order to counter those who

¹⁰⁹ O'Shane, "Is There": p. 31.

¹¹⁰ O'Shane, "Is There": p. 31.

¹¹¹ O'Shane, "Is There": p. 31.

¹¹² O'Shane, "Is There": p. 31.

¹¹³ See Fay Gale and Annette Hamilton cited in O'Shane, "Is There": p. 32.

were unproblematic in their representations of the strength of Aboriginal women's standing. She wrote, "[g]iven... that generally the status of women is devalued, it follows... that the status of Aboriginal women is greatly devalued".¹¹⁴ O'Shane's eagerness to demonstrate the oppression Aboriginal women encountered as women, was driven in part by her firm belief in the interrelation within and between sexism and racism — it was here that her analysis took a step further than Yeatman and Curthoys. Accordingly, she remarked, "not only are Aboriginal women victims of male chauvinism, but also of racism".¹¹⁵ In effect, O'Shane emphasised the significance of the sexism Aboriginal women met, while at the same time, refusing the conceptual basis of conventional feminist understandings of the term; that is, one which conceived of the relation between men and women as oppositional. Ultimately, it was O'Shane's question: "Is [the enslavement of men] the price that we, as women, want to pay for our (seemingly) greater status?" that was vital to her analysis and thereby, to her examination of the relation between women themselves.¹¹⁶

"There is no doubt in my mind that racism is expressed by women in the [women's] movement", declared O'Shane. Turning to an example from her own experience, she aimed to demonstrate the critical importance of white women's acknowledgment of their own privilege and moreover, their complicity in the oppression of Aboriginal women and men. O'Shane's cataloguing of her own and other Aboriginal women's encounters with racism was here situated within and against a broader philosophical problematic, wherein the terms through which Indigenous women were represented by the Women's Movement were placed against Indigenous women's representations of their own interests (and status). She identified an "attitude" common amongst those she described as "activists", who argued that "black women ought to be involved in the women's liberation movement at the same level and in the same organisations as are white women". O'Shane's response was concise (and impatient) in exposing the exclusivity intrinsic to white feminist conceptions of women's position in their own society: "Obviously black women in this country do not have the same social status as white women — the racism which is so rampant in this country takes care of that".¹¹⁷

One of the clearest enactments of this dynamic transpired in the course of O'Shane's comments on Aboriginal women's ongoing exposure to racism. Such encounters, she

¹¹⁴ O'Shane, "Is There": p. 32.

¹¹⁵ O'Shane, "Is There": p. 32.

¹¹⁶ O'Shane, "Is There": p. 32.

suggested, were exemplified in the “desperate” state of Aboriginal men. O’Shane explained:

What has happened and is happening is that Aboriginal women are being held to ransom. What white society does is strip the Aboriginal man of any human dignity, and then *appears* to elevate the role of Aboriginal women — in white society.¹¹⁸

This polarisation of black men and women she defined as connected with the “whole question of how racism is practiced”.¹¹⁹ In emphasising the intersection between gender and race, O’Shane lay bare white feminism’s complicity in the racism endemic to Australian society. “The fact is that, along with the men, Aboriginal women are also stripped of human dignity and their apparently greater status makes easier their exploitation”, she wrote.¹²⁰ On the whole, O’Shane’s argument was thus a plea for Indigenous multiplicity, but more urgently, a plea for survival; she consolidated her position with the pronouncement that “[s]exist attitudes did not wipe out whole tribes of our people, sexist attitudes are not slowly killing our people today — racism did, and continues to do so!”¹²¹

Conclusion

It is difficult to trace any kind of white feminist response to O’Shane’s article. Certainly there was no direct engagement with her call for the women’s movement to “take head-on, the struggle against racism” in the pages of subsequent editions of *Refractory Girl*.¹²² O’Shane’s challenge to white feminists, her proclamation that the “problem of racism is one that all women in the women’s movement must start to come to terms with” was undoubtedly aimed at (and was successful in) generating a degree of discomfort in those towards whom it was directed.¹²³ In this respect, the silence with which O’Shane’s provocative and confronting call for recognition and for acknowledgment of white women’s privilege was greeted is itself suggestive of a tardy and unresponsive white feminist commentary. In its silence, white feminism positioned O’Shane as firmly out of time; it was precisely in *not* taking up O’Shane’s ideas that the white women’s movement indicated its discomfort with a set of ideas which confronted its own conception of

¹¹⁷ O’Shane, “Is There”: p. 33.

¹¹⁸ O’Shane, “Is There”: p. 32 (emphasis in original).

¹¹⁹ O’Shane, “Is There”: p. 32.

¹²⁰ O’Shane, “Is There”: p. 32.

¹²¹ O’Shane, “Is There”: p. 34.

¹²² O’Shane, “Is There”: p. 34.

¹²³ O’Shane, “Is There”: p. 34.

feminism's political subject. At the same time, however, there is a case for the recognition of the early and vibrant discussions that feminism, informed by early postcolonial theory, articulated via its engagement with the analogy between racism and sexism. Likewise overlooked is the role Indigenous women played in complicating the engagement between feminism and its contemporaries, in moving feminism from an analogous conception of parallel oppressions to one of intersecting and constituting oppression. In accounting for the scholarship produced by Indigenous Australian women during the 1970s as a response overdue in light of the universalising prevalent in a feminist moment struggling with exclusions, Indigenous women are configured as feminism's "latest arrivals". What troubles me is the timing of the "arrival" of Indigenous women in such narratives of Australian academic feminism's history.

The sorts of encounters that I demonstrate characterised Australian academic feminism's attempts to negotiate within and between the heterogeneous category of "woman" go a long way toward complicating the all-too-common notion that scholarship produced by Indigenous Australian women in the late 1970s constituted a belated response to the exclusions that were most often apparent. I further suggest that these complications might also enable us to recognise the chronology that grounds this narrative: to see it, for the moment, the other way around, so that Australian academic feminism in its early forms begins to look more and more like the belated response of white commentators to challenges posed by Indigenous Australian women. Above all, my aim is not to enact a simple reversal of temporal priority, one that locates the Indigenous woman at the point of feminist origin, but instead to negotiate a position that acknowledges the silences and complexities of the diverse range of feminist writings that emerged during the 1970s.

Chapter Five — Pedagogy, Power, Institutions

Introduction

I begin this chapter by focusing on the principles of feminist pedagogy upon which academic feminism was premised and by resituating these principles within the context of some of the current preoccupations of academic feminism. I concentrate in particular on the Women's Studies course taught at Flinders University, a course whose innovative pedagogical techniques were typical of the modes of pedagogy used in feminist classrooms across the country. As I outlined in chapter one, such techniques were drawn from oppositional movements contemporaneous to feminism's engagement with the academy, central to which was the contesting of modes of governance practiced in universities: these fields all interrogated what was taught and how. Crucial to my analysis is the question: how were feminist subjects constituted through the pedagogy of 1970s academic feminism? In principle, 1970s academic feminism refused to allow itself any form of authority or distinction in the classroom, indeed, authority and expertise were often deemed illegitimate. Moving from past to present, I argue that the spectre of 1970s feminism's haunting of present-day academic feminism is echoed in feminism's ongoing discomfort with authority, power and expertise, as well as in the sense that as oppositional intellectuals feminists are often compelled to oppose power, legitimacy and hierarchy.¹ Here, my analysis is animated by the return of the familiar in contemporary academic feminism: a moment that contains within itself a haunting of feminism's past.

I am often amazed and always intrigued by the surety with which individuals around me profess their "knowingness" of what feminism is about. In simple terms, I am told, "it is about women". By considering feminism's intellectual past in the context of such sure conceptions of feminism in the present, I locate myself throughout this thesis in a position at once inside and outside feminist criticism; that is, in what Teresa de Lauretis has called the "space-off".² Insisting on the discomfort entailed in remembering our own

¹ Jean Curthoys describes Women's Liberation as the "spectre haunting feminism". She argues that consciousness-raising and the "politics of experience" likewise "has both been most lost in the mists of time and, paradoxically, has left the strongest mark on feminist theorising". See "Memoirs of a Feminist Dinosaur", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 27, 1998: p. 56 & p. 58.

² As I outlined in the introduction, I have found Teresa de Lauretis' use of the "space-off" particularly useful in conceptualising my own position in relation to the thesis. In *The Technology of Gender*, de Lauretis argues that the subject of feminism is an uncomfortable one. She marks the "space-off" — "the space not visible in the frame but inferable from what the frame makes visible"

disciplinary history and the discomfort of the subject of feminism itself, I argue that the distinctions between remembering the past and devising possible futures for feminism are often obscured in the articulation of feminism's present. Thus, my analysis locates itself in a position between remembering the past and imagining possible futures. In this it aims to enact a genealogical critique of academic feminism's intellectual practice in order to understand its own disciplinary history. I give a Foucauldian reading primacy because of its effectiveness in unsettling the categories that stabilise ideologies and institutions — even those of individuals considered “oppositional intellectuals”.³ By considering the genealogical burden of my discipline, its discourses, its institutional forms and my place within it, I seek to illuminate the constituents of feminist intellectual activity that have defined academic feminism from its founding moments. My point is that the commonsense of such oppositions is wrapped up in contemporary feminist theory's conception of itself.

It is a Foucauldian conception of power that guides me in tracing out connections between past and present. I draw here not only on the more familiar modes of Foucault's reconceptualisation of power but also on the practices or “doing” imperative of a Foucauldian analysis. In this chapter, I demonstrate not only how power was thought of at that moment, but also how it was practiced through certain pedagogical techniques. In “Two Lectures”, Foucault remarks:

we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects.⁴

In so doing, power cannot be conceived as a relation between those who exclusively possess it and those who are subject to it. Instead, power must be analysed as something which “circulates”. At once dispersed and specific, Foucault conceives of power as never localised here or there; it is never solely possessed by one individual.⁵ Instead, it is an

— as “both the historical condition of [the] existence of feminism and its theoretical condition of possibility” and thus, as a vital location for feminist criticism. See “The Technology of Gender” in her *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film & Fiction*, Macmillan Press, London, 1987: p. 26.

³ See Paul Bové, “Foreword. The Foucault Phenomenon: The Problematics of Style” in Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*. Translated by Seán Hand, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis & London, (1986) 1988: p. xxxvi.

⁴ Foucault, “Two Lectures” in Colin Gordon (ed), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Pantheon, New York, 1980: p. 98.

⁵ Foucault, “The Subject & Power”, *Critical Inquiry*, no. 8, Summer 1982: p. 789.

open list of power relations, a “set of actions upon actions”: to incite, to induce, to make simple or complicated, to expand or restrict, to make more or less probable.⁶ It is more a “permanent provocation” than a clash between opposites. And most important, individuals are “always in a position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” — “they are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation”.⁷

In avoiding an analysis of power in terms of who has possession, Foucault turns away from concern with regulated and legitimate forms of power in their centralised locations, and towards those points where power is in capillary form. According to Deleuze, in putting forth a new topology Foucault no longer locates the origin of power in a privileged place, and no longer accepts a limited localisation. But the ‘local’ has two very different meanings here: power is local because it is never global, but it is not local or localised because it is diffuse.⁸ As Foucault suggests, “we have to know the historical conditions which motivate our conceptualisation”. Thus, we need a theory of power which implies a strong set of relations between theory and practice, and, in Foucauldian terms, one which consists of taking “forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point”.⁹

In *Foucault*, Deleuze contends that the idea that power “passes through the hands of the mastered no less than through the hands of the masters” is central to a Foucauldian conception of power.¹⁰ To define the exercise of power as “a set of actions upon other actions” — as I do throughout this chapter — is to turn from power itself to power relations. For Foucault, therefore, the question we should ask is not “What is power?” or “Where does it come from?”; it is rather “How?” — and not in the sense of “How does it manifest itself?” — but in terms of “By what means is it exercised?”¹¹

In the analysis that follows, I contend that in designating its own specific mode of subjectivity or subjectification, 1970s academic feminism enacted a form of resistance not

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*. Translated by Seán Hand, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis & London, (1986) 1988: p. 70.

⁷ Foucault, “Two Lectures”: p. 98.

⁸ Deleuze, *Foucault*: p. 26.

⁹ Foucault, “The Subject”: p. 778 & p. 780.

¹⁰ Deleuze, *Foucault*: p. 71.

¹¹ Foucault, “The Subject”: pp. 786-788.

against the institution so much as against the kinds of power it propagated.¹² This subjectivity — embodied in the epistemological basis upon which academic feminism instituted specific pedagogical practices — was certainly oppositional, though the main objective of its struggle was to attack not so much a specific institution of power, or group, or elite, or class but rather, in Foucault's terms, "a technique, a form of power".¹³ Thus, academic feminism questioned the way in which knowledge circulated and functioned — its relations to power. In "The Subject and Power", Foucault points to a series of oppositions contemporary to feminism, arguing that it is not enough to say such struggles are simply concerned with opposing authority.¹⁴ Instead, he defines each as an articulation of a new kind of subjectivity, constituted through the practice and refinement of a power technique he calls "pastoral power". For Foucault, pastoral power refers to a power both individualising and totalising in form. In situating individuals within a centralised yet personally attentive system, pastoral power looks after not just the entire community but each individual throughout their life; it individuates or subjectifies. Foucault suggests that though previously confined to the discourse and practices of Christianity, in more recent times, it has been with a secular set of aims in the everyday

¹² In many respects, this is the point at which the gap in contemporary literature on pedagogy becomes apparent. Much of the literature is explicit in its recognition of the gendered nature of encounters in the institution and in the classroom and of the "sexual politics" inscribed in the academy. While this point is undoubtedly important, it effectively enacts a surrendering of power and authority to the institution; it is an assertion of the futility of feminist/radical pedagogy in an institutional environment. See for example, Carmen Luke's approach in "Feminist Politics in Radical Pedagogy" in Carmen Luke & Jennifer Gore (eds), *Feminisms & Critical Pedagogy*, Routledge, New York & London, 1992: pp. 25-53. Luke leaves little room for the complications of the movement of ideas and individuals between the inside and outside of the institution in her analysis. More successful, is Jennifer Gore's, "What Can We Do For You! What *Can* We Do For 'You'?: Struggling Over Empowerment in Critical & Feminist Pedagogy" in Luke & Gore (eds), *Feminisms & Critical Pedagogy*: pp. 54-73. Gore notes the dangers of deeming critical approaches liberatory on the basis that they frame themselves in opposition to existing discourses rather than because they are or have been liberatory for particular groups or people. Gore questions the amount of freedom possible within the "institutional and pedagogical exigencies of teaching". As a consequence, she neglects the practices themselves, instead focusing on whether "freedom" is possible given academic feminism's location in the institution and the limitations of the institutions of pedagogy. And further, she neglects to dismantle the dynamics of the classroom itself as an example from which to draw wider theoretical points. It is this point that I take up here. I argue that institutional location is not the only consideration in attempts to radicalise pedagogy. By side-stepping the academy's status as all-powerful I address something of the dynamics of the classroom: the pedagogy itself and the ways in which the content, knowledge and practices are mediated in the classroom. For one of the most valuable discussions of contemporary pedagogical considerations in academic feminism see C. O'Farrell, D. Meadmore, E. McWilliam & C. Symes (eds), *Taught Bodies*, Peter Lang, New York, 2000. On the question of affect in the contemporary feminist classroom see Elspeth Probyn, "Affect In/Of Teaching: What Can a Body do in a Gender Studies' Classroom?", Feminist Interdisciplinary Pedagogy Seminar, Lancaster University, United Kingdom, October 2001.

¹³ Foucault, "The Subject": p. 781.

lives of individuals, their interactions with one another and between the institutions of society that pastoral power has come to be practiced. Thus, the function of pastoral power — as it spread into the whole social body — brought with it a new kind of ethics as well as a proposal for a new set of power relations throughout the world.¹⁵

In its struggle against the forms of power prevailing in the academy, the pedagogy of 1970s academic feminism, like pastoral power, activated a new kind of ethics and thereby, a new set of power relations. In Foucault's terms, at the same time as it struggled against power, the pedagogy of academic feminism "aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious".¹⁶ Here, however, I am less interested in the question of how feminist pedagogy acted to resist established power at work in the academy or what its challenge revealed about the character of such power, than in examining the *exercise* of power in feminist pedagogy itself. As such, Wendy Brown's investigation into the constitution of political subjects, and in particular, into how "certain well-intentioned contemporary political projects and theoretical postures inadvertently redraw the very configurations and effects of power that they seek to vanquish" is important to my analysis.¹⁷ Specifically, I am intrigued by how feminism has and continues to replicate the power it critiques.

Part One — Uncomfortable Truths

In her 1975 proclamation celebrating the benefits and potential of academic feminism, Penny Ryan of the Australian Union of Students (AUS) declared:

At its best a Women's Studies course is likely to provide at least one, and often all, of the following: self-actualisation and consciousness-raising; the feminist interpretation of 'received doctrine' and familiar materials or the discovery or

¹⁴ Foucault lists a number of examples, such as opposition to the power of parents over children, psychiatry over the mentally ill, medicine over the population, administration over the way people live. See Foucault, "The Subject": p. 780.

¹⁵ See Foucault, "The Subject": pp. 780-785.

¹⁶ Foucault, "Intellectuals & Power': A Conversation Between Foucault & Deleuze" in Donald F. Bouchard (ed), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1977: p. 208.

¹⁷ Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995: p. ix.

creation of new or neglected materials; [and] the formulation of strategies for social change.¹⁸

In its fostering of "an understanding of both self and world", argued Ryan, Women's Studies would nurture the "capacity to act on that understanding in a context larger than the classroom".¹⁹ The tone of her declarations were matched by a set of utopian pronouncements from participants, many of whom praised the "unique" qualities of such courses. The enthusiasm with which Women's Studies courses, especially the Flinders course, took up the idea of recruiting participants from outside the university was often cited as quintessential in this regard. According to Jean Curthoys, the Flinders course was "extraordinarily successful" at what it set out to achieve — the provision of a "centre for local women to think about their role as women".²⁰ Indeed, for one such participant, it was the way Women's Studies reached out into the community — "in a way no other Uni Dept [*sic*] does" — that made it unique. She wrote, in an essay submitted as part of the Flinders course, that the course was the "only long term gesture on the part of tertiary institutions to relate to people beyond its own campus".²¹

Unenrolled students, most of whom were women, made up the majority of participants in the Flinders course between 1973 and 1976. Those considered "unenrolled" included participants drawn from the community and without any official affiliation with the University and those participating in the course "unofficially", separate to the units of study they were completing as part of their degree. Suzanne Franzway, one of those enrolled in the course, asserted the significance of such participants when she described how the "philosophy of the course has been to involve all women". According to Franzway, this initiative was one that aimed "to facilitate the process of discovery on a realistic level rather than confining it to academic expertise".²² Despite the enthusiasm

¹⁸ Penny Ryan, "Introduction" in Penny Ryan (ed), *A Guide to Women's Studies in Australia*, Australian Union of Students, Melbourne, 1975: p. 5. Ryan was the Resources Officer of the Australian Union of Students (AUS), and it was around this time that AUS established a Women's Department.

¹⁹ Ryan, "Introduction" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 5.

²⁰ Jean Curthoys, "Personal Correspondence", 2 April 2001.

²¹ "Untitled", unpublished essay, Women's Studies, Flinders University, n.d., [1975]: n.p., WDA 1/99/7 from the collection of essays held by the Students Association of Flinders University in their Women's Department Archive (WDA) written between 1975-1981.

²² Suzanne Franzway, "Women's Studies", unpublished essay, Women's Studies, Flinders University, 1975: p. 1, WDA 1/2/4. Not only were Women's Studies practitioners interested in recruiting women from the community into the university, the evangelism characteristic of their ideas and in particular the idea that it was every woman's "right" to reach self-discovery, led them to take feminism out into the community. Susan Sheridan has spoken of the early years of Women's Studies as a moment in which participants were "much more set on getting what we

with which the course attempted to recruit students from outside the university and indeed, its success in terms of numbers, it soon became apparent that in the very modes by which it aimed to effect "liberation", the course reproduced the same relations. In other words, the forms of power that produced opposition and liberation were themselves saturated with that production — they did not precede it. Similarly, tensions that arose within the course were indicative of the power relations that themselves constituted the discipline of academic feminism.

In what follows, I turn to an examination of the struggles that took place between enrolled and unenrolled students in the practice of Women's Studies at Flinders, and struggles that occurred between the role of course convenor and the principles of participatory democracy that impelled Women's Studies. I am here primarily concerned with studying power at that point where "it installs itself and produces its real effects".²³ In Foucault's terms, I am attentive to "regimes of truth"; the effects of truth produced and transmitted by the mechanisms of power — by the pedagogical practices of academic feminism. For Foucault, a regime of truth operates not as a set of truths to be discovered or accepted but rather as an "ensemble" of rules according to which true and false are defined, and where specific effects of power are attached to the true. I am not only interested in the effects of truth emanating from these practices. As I outlined above, I also assert that in their very action — in the exercise of power — these practices reproduced that which they set themselves in against.

Articulating a new kind of subjectivity, one constituted through the practice and refinement of a specific power technique, 1970s academic feminism was impelled by the desire to bring a new code of ethics and practice to the university, and its modes of

could [from the academy] and moving out [into broader society]"; it was a matter of "using the university for what we immediately wanted and... taking it out into the community". See Susan Sheridan, "Interview", Sydney, 8 July 1998. For Jill Julius Matthews, who taught (with Pam Connell) a feminist-inspired Sociology course at an Institute of Technology in Adelaide in the early 1970s, such evangelism was all-powerful. In their desire to provide women with what they believed was the opportunity to turn their lives around, Matthews and Connell "were quite rabid about improving their attitudes". In the course they taught, the majority of participants were social workers who were employed in the community. According to Matthews, it was the very notion of their "bad attitudes" about the family that was of greatest concern to she and Connell. Ultimately, it was that tension which caused them to clash: "We were about smashing the nuclear family, they were about reinforcing the nuclear family". Realising that they "couldn't just confront them, couldn't just bash them" with their ideas, Connell and Matthews learnt to adapt both their teaching style and the way they presented their ideas — they had to learn a lot and very fast about "appropriate scholarly persuasion". As Matthews remembers, "we realised that shouting didn't get very far!". See Jill Julius Matthews, "Interview", Canberra, 24 April 1998.

²³ Foucault, "Two Lectures": p. 98 & p. 97.

knowing. Embodied in the pedagogical practices enacted in its own classes was the new set of power relations that academic feminism proposed and aimed to spread throughout the institution and beyond. Directed toward the techniques or forms of power at work in the academy, academic feminism's contesting of the institution was opposed to the effects of power linked to knowledge and expertise. Moreover, in conceiving of pedagogy as a means of calling knowledge into question, this new set of power relations was a mode of operating which refused the hierarchies and elitism of existing institutional practices. In this, it was crucial to those who argued feminist courses were essential. While local in its practice, academic feminism's wider intention was to influence the status of women in society. Feminist courses, argued Ryan in her introduction to *A Guide to Women's Studies in Australia* (1975), "have been founded on the belief that the subjective experience matters, that lives will be changed, that social and political institutions will be challenged".²⁴ At Flinders, for instance, the principles which energised the course's establishment — women coordinating a course on women, open to people outside the university, and with participants who determine their own methods of study and content, and means of evaluation — were premised on the idea that how the course operated on a day-to-day basis mattered, in particular for women. Thus, the principles on which the Flinders course was founded were framed as a "necessary condition" for the course to "serve the interests" of women. For one, self-management whereby those involved determined how and what the course covered, gave participants the "freedom to make our own judgement about what knowledge is valuable and useful". It challenged "'academic standards' and 'legitimate areas of study'", and thereby threatened the "authoritarian structures of the universities".²⁵ For women especially, this was crucial where the "theoretical concepts" of knowledge itself — "having usually been formulated by men" — militated against them.²⁶

Pedagogical techniques adopted in feminist courses around the country reflected similar principles. According to Liz Jacka, the idea that "we should be very careful about giving everybody a full chance to speak", coupled with the principle of "everyone in the room having equally valid things to say — that everybody should have a voice" was crucial to the way she and Jean Curthoys conducted their feminist philosophy course at the

²⁴ Ryan, "Introduction" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 5.

²⁵ See "Women's Studies As They Are: South Australia — Flinders" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 42 and Margy Burn, "Women's Studies Appraisal", *Empire Times*, vol. 5, no. 6, 1973: p. 20.

²⁶ Miriam Tonkin, "An End to Being Taught" in Eileen Haley, Margy Burn & Cathy Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders Women's Studies*, Empire Times Press for the Flinders Women's Studies Course, 1973, Adelaide, 1973: p. 15.

University of Sydney.²⁷ As Rosemary Pringle remembers, the Politics course on contemporary social theory that she tutored at Adelaide University “could go on til all hours, and a lot of wine was consumed in the process”. She recalls, “it wasn’t the sort of course that ended after an hour or two, we stayed as long as people wanted to talk”.²⁸ Also crucial, was the way the tutorial room was configured: “in terms of space, this was the era of bean-bags on the floor rather than sitting around a conventional table”, says Pringle.²⁹ For Susan Magarey, the spacial arrangements she initiated at ANU were based on the idea that “we didn’t have classrooms with desks in rows and someone at the front”. Although, she notes, such practices were difficult in practice: “institutions make life very difficult for someone wanting to move desks into a circle [when] they nail them to the floor”.³⁰

Not only did academic feminism contest the way existing institutional spaces operated, it also enacted a wider critique of the institution itself. Those campaigning for feminist courses across the country longed for a moment in which such courses would be open to any woman who wanted to participate. But it was the Flinders course that was most successful in its attempts to institute a policy of open-access, one which they argued was “symptomatic of a desire to sweep away the barriers between the ‘educated’ and the ‘uneducated’”.³¹ The Flinders course was marked by a longing to overcome the restrictions exacted on individuals conditioned to accept without question the limitations imposed by society; a process one participant described as “singularly successful with women”.³² Women, so the argument went, had been conditioned to defer to others as experts rather than take responsibility for themselves. “We’ve been educated to distrust and discount our own feelings and experience”, argued Rita Helling, one of the chief

²⁷ Elizabeth Jacka, “Interview”, Sydney, 12 August 1998. Margo Moore, a student in the first year of Liz Jacka and Jean Curthoys’ course discussed the benefits of such pedagogical practice in “Jean of the Circus: A Magnificent Story of School & Collective Production”, *Scarlet Woman*, no. 3, February 1976: pp. 14-15.

²⁸ Rosemary Pringle, “Interview”, Sydney, 23 March 1998.

²⁹ Pringle, “Interview”, 23 March 1998.

³⁰ Susan Magarey, “Interview”, Sydney, 9 July 1998.

³¹ Tonkin, “An End” in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: pp. 14-15. Dominated by Maoist Marxists, the Flinders Philosophy Discipline maintained that university resources should be made available to “the people”. Yvonne Allen, writing in *A Guide to Women’s Studies in Australia* in 1975, explained their position: “By involving women from outside the university, we hoped to open the resources of that institution to the community which, after all, it serves”. See Yvonne Allen, “The Silence Ends” in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 9. Most recently, Jean Curthoys has argued that “the Women’s Course was their [Philosophy at Flinders] first — and only — attempt to make this a reality”. See J. Curthoys, “Personal Correspondence”, 2 April 2001.

³² Tonkin, “An End” in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: pp. 14-15.

proponents of Women's Studies at Flinders.³³ Intent on replacing the "passive teaching process" with the "active learning-by-doing" process, Women's Studies offered participants the chance to "fully participate" in their own learning.³⁴ For Yvonne Allen, a student in the 1973 course, the optimum way to ensure success in this regard was to create an "environment where women can be encouraged to learn to be articulate, to learn to participate, to learn to accept responsibility, to learn to act". "In short", argued Allen, "a situation must be created in which women can learn to be people in their own right, not just supporters and maintainers of other's lives".³⁵ The principles of group assessment whereby the compulsion for all to participate necessitated a shift in responsibility from one individual to all participants, ensured that women in particular were given the chance to exercise "equal power and responsibility"; a skill they had actively been discouraged from developing.³⁶

Alongside group assessment, self-management — facilitated through participatory democracy and collective decision-making — was one of the principles deemed crucial in encouraging women to exercise "initiative and personal decision-making". For practitioners of Women's Studies, none of the latter could be achieved by traditional pedagogical methods. Also important was the principle of equality between all. Best enacted by having a "convenor" rather than a teacher, this was a principle that aimed to effectively dissolve the hierarchies of student and non-student within the class. Finally, the principle of access for all was especially meaningful. As Liz O'Brien, a key player in student agitation for Women's Studies at ANU noted in *National U*, "a study of women's issues and women's status is a course that should be open to all the community". Comparing the Flinders course to that proposed for ANU, she added, "Flinders University has been able to achieve an open course but for those of us who are fighting even to have a course established this is a proviso that we have not been able to demand".³⁷ In her emphasis on open access, O'Brien reflected the weight Women's

³³ Rita Helling, *The Politics of Women's Studies*, The Flinders University of South Australia, Adelaide, 1981: p. 15.

³⁴ Tonkin, "An End" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 15.

³⁵ Allen, "The Silence" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 9. Like the principles of consciousness-raising groups, many of the pedagogical techniques adopted by feminist courses were grounded in essentialist conceptions of "woman" as participatory and non-aggressive, and used in an effort to create the "ideal" space for women.

³⁶ See Rita Helling, "Women's Studies Course 1973: A History of the Course" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 20 and Helling "Women's Studies Assessment", *Empire Times*, vol. 5, no. 6, 1973: p. 20. Most notably, group assessment was used by the entire Philosophy Discipline before it was used in Women's Studies at Flinders.

³⁷ Liz O'Brien, "Women's Studies: Why We Want It", *National U*, Women's Edition, 3 June 1974: pp. 8-9.

Studies practitioners across the country placed on the removal of divisions between the university and the community. While open access was pivotal to feminist courses and most notably the Flinders course, it also served to underscore the significance of the wider critique embedded in academic feminism's adoption of specific pedagogical techniques. In a 1972 interview Rita Helling spoke of how the "people in the [Flinders] Women's Studies course realise that not only must you make resources available but also appropriate to the people's needs". More pointedly, Helling added, "we have had an enormous response to the Women's Studies course [because w]omen feel it is directly related to their interest".³⁸

Writing in 1973, Cathy Yates, a student in the Flinders course, emphasised the "unique" quality of the ways in which Women's Studies enabled members of the community to participate in a university course "without meeting requirements guaranteeing the elitism of academia".³⁹ In its close scrutiny of the formulation of privilege and expertise prevailing in the academy's existing form, academic feminism was driven to define those same forms as the basis for its challenge of the institutional and ideological boundaries of such knowledge. More specifically, it targeted those boundaries that historically had masked their own relations of power behind complex modes of distinction and privilege. In allowing those who had not passed the "stringent quality control tests for university admission" to not only participate in and contribute to the course but also to run it, Women's Studies at Flinders aimed to highlight what they spoke of as the disinterest of the "authorities" in the "achievements of these people".⁴⁰ Moreover, in inviting non-enrolled participants to join with those officially enrolled in the course and submit assessable work, they hoped to prove that the contribution of such students "has been no less than that of any enrolled student".⁴¹ By directly courting participants who would not have met the criteria for entry into university under any other circumstances, the Flinders

³⁸ Helling in "Women's Studies: one interview with Rita Helling, a convenor of the Flinders Course and the other with Jill Matthews, Helen Bannister, Mary Verner, Dianne Otto & Sue Higgins", *National U*, vol. 41, no. 5, July 1972: p. 5.

³⁹ Cathy Yates, "Women's Studies Alive At Adelaide's Uni's", *Nation Review*, 9 June-5 July 1973: p. 1132. Yates' article was accompanied by a piece on the philosophy strikes at the University of Sydney, entitled "Philosophers Strike on Feminism". At the announcement of a Women's Studies course to be offered at Flinders, Adelaide newspaper, *The Advertiser*, interviewed an unenrolled student of the new course, "Mrs Trish Clark, of Bridgewater". She was quoted as saying she that wanted to participate "to find out the facts behind the suppression of women". According to Clark, "Adelaide women don't know that they are suppressed — they just don't know that there could be something better in their lives". See Liz Blieschke, "A 'Low Key' Start", *The Advertiser*, 12 July 1973: n.p.

⁴⁰ Burn, "Appraisal": p. 20.

⁴¹ Burn, "Appraisal": p. 20. See also Helling, "Women's Studies Assessment": p. 20.

course drew attention to the workings of power in operation throughout the academy. Historically, such workings had ensured the exclusion of women from universities and in the contemporary academy they continued to function as a means of regulating the boundaries of knowledge. In this regard, the Flinders course and academic feminism more generally, were entirely successful in defining knowledge itself as a contested terrain.

In its desire to recruit participants from the community, feminist courses, including the Flinders course, longed to end the strict separation of university and community. At the same time, however, their desire for community participants and the fixed demarcation of inside and outside the university was precisely what enabled the oppositional position of feminist courses. In addition, while Women's Studies at Flinders was undoubtedly successful in recruiting participants from the community, those they deemed non-university participants — or unenrolled students — were more often than not women who had previously been involved with the academy in some capacity. In part, the involvement of such women in feminist courses was reflective of a fluidity denied in academic feminism's structuring of the relation between community and academy and further, in academic feminism's structuring of its own identity as oppositional. Many unenrolled participants were university-trained women who had subsequently moved into the workforce. Others, also degree-holders, were wives of academics. In an interview published nationally, Helling described the situation of many of these women: "[some] have had babies and have been stagnating at home", she said.⁴² Crediting Women's Studies with having "brought them out again", she described the women as "just so much more alive... "It's incredible!"⁴³ Whilst the tone of Helling's comments is

⁴² Helling in "Women's Studies: interview": p. 5.

⁴³ Helling in "Women's Studies: interview": p. 5. In a paper presented at the 1975 Women's Studies conference in Adelaide, Sally Gibson and Jean Curthoys argued that the response of "housewives" to Women's Studies at Flinders was evidence of the "overwhelming need for avenues of contact amongst women who are otherwise alienated and structurally isolated from one another". According to Gibson and J. Curthoys, despite all its talk of the importance of spreading "politicisation" to "housewives" the Women's Movement had done nothing to facilitate their participation, but Women's Studies had made a "concrete approach" to women "out there". See Sally Gibson and Jean Curthoys, "Women's Studies & the Women's Movement", unpublished conference paper, Women's Studies Conference, Adelaide, 28-29 June 1975: n.p., First Ten Years Collection (FTYC), Sydney. It was via a reference to a housewife that Sally J. described the benefits of the course on offer at Adelaide University. In a small piece announcing the beginnings of the course in the Adelaide Women's Liberation Newsletter, *Liberation*, she wrote of her encounter with a "housewife" interested in participating in the course: "'Do you need any... um... well... qualifications? You mean you'd take a dumb housewife?' That question excited me incredibly. It is depressing that anyone could define themselves as a 'dumb housewife', but on the other hand, it is beautiful that in spite of such a self-definition, so many women are brave enough or motivated

clearly condescending in its treatment of the "housewife", one of the great clichés of 1970s feminism, she is at once breathtakingly patronising and thoroughly enticing. While her comments were certainly dismissive of women who care for their children full-time, she was also effusive and passionate in her pronouncement of the possibilities offered via feminism.⁴⁴

Helling's comments reflected the sense of "awakening" many women spoke of in their involvement with feminism and in this case, Women's Studies. In an essay written for the Flinders Course in 1978, "Personal Accounts of Awakening Related to Women's Studies and A Chart of Metamorphosis of Women", two unenrolled students Jussey Harbord and Jeni Holloman described a journey of personal empowerment and enlightenment generated through their participation in Women's Studies.⁴⁵ In comments characteristic of modes of consciousness-raising and self-discovery central to the operations of feminist pedagogy, their essay was propelled by confession. "A true product of our ever conditioning society I have never acknowledged my own identity", wrote one of the students: "I have not belonged to myself but felt guilts [sic] and obligations to a chain of others". As an expression of freedom and of having overcome that which prevented liberation, in Foucauldian terms, Harbord and Holloman's essay sought to reveal the essence of a true self: "not simply in oneself but in the self-examination that yields".⁴⁶ According to Foucault, confession and the work of producing truth are accompanied by the means to liberation; a state whose veracity is ensured only by the intimacy between she who speaks and what it is she is speaking. By recalling the obstacles and resistances encountered along the way, the confessions of Harbord and Holloman articulate the truth of their liberation. One described her journey to enlightenment as "difficult" and "painful", praising the "chance" for self-realisation offered by Women's Studies and arguing that such an opportunity should be the "right" of all women. "At last I'm feeling

enough, to face the grey four squared university, and the tough jeaned long-hairs, in order to do women's studies". See Sally J., "At Adelaide", *Liberation*, 18 March 1973: pp. 4-5.

⁴⁴ One student enrolled in the feminist stream of Politics 1 at Adelaide University argued that it was not "housewives" who could benefit from Women's Studies, but men. The Adelaide *Advertiser* reported, "18 year old Tim Ryan, from Whyalla thinks that the women's study [sic] course is not, at the moment, reaching the people who need it. 'The women who are doing the course either are no longer suppressed, or are doing something about it. Males are in greater need of the course, rather than housewives [sic]. At least females have the experience of knowing what it is like to be suppressed', he said". See Blieschke, "A 'Low Key' Start": n.p.

⁴⁵ Jussey Harbord and Jeni Holloman, "Personal Accounts of Awakening Related to Women's Studies & A Chart of Metamorphosis of Women", 1978: n.p., WDA 1/130/5.

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume One, An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Penguin Books, Ringwood, (1978) 1990: p. 60.

a real sense of belonging, of finally coming home", she wrote.⁴⁷ The other described Women's Studies as a "catalyst", evoking the image of an "opening door" and a "life seen through different eyes"; "A real life with ME at its centre".⁴⁸ Fittingly, it was in gaining the capacity for decision-making that Harbord and Holloman both pinpointed as the culmination of their Women's Studies experience. In line with one of the great truisms of 1970s feminism, for at least one of the women, with self-discovery came the realisation that she could not "function" within the "confines" of her marriage. Her moment of recognition was closely followed by the decision "to have the courage to let go".⁴⁹

For some participants, involvement in Women's Studies brought positive experiences. Structuring their narratives was the suggestion of tension only within themselves, between their "old" and "new" self. For others, their participation in Women's Studies was characterised by unease and discomfort.⁵⁰ At Flinders, difficulties between those enrolled and unenrolled bespoke a tense and often exclusionary classroom. At the same time, those at ease in the feminist classroom at Flinders were not entirely unselfconscious in their privilege. Facing the withdrawal of substantial numbers of unenrolled students from the course, those enrolled acknowledged their own comfort, and the relative ease with which they inhabited the feminist classroom and the institution more widely.

⁴⁷ Harbord and Holloman, "Awakening Related": n.p.

⁴⁸ Harbord and Holloman, "Awakening Related": n.p. (emphasis in original).

⁴⁹ Harbord and Holloman, "Awakening Related": n.p. Gibson and J. Curthoys noted in their 1975 conference paper the changes Women's Studies wrought in the lives of many "housewives" who participated in the Flinders course. According to Gibson and J. Curthoys, it took various forms, and "[n]ot necessarily the stereotyped move of leaving their husbands. Some women have left to get jobs, set up childcare groups in their own locality, enrolled in other courses, continued in Women's Studies or moved into community organisations". See Gibson and J. Curthoys, "Women's Studies & the Women's Movement": n.p.

⁵⁰ Such discomfort was not solely the preserve of academic feminism's students; for some, the practice of teaching feminism brought its own sense of unease. Jill Julius Matthews has argued that at Adelaide University, where she was involved in a feminist course jointly taught by postgraduate colleagues from across the Arts Faculty, "the staff/student divide wasn't... clear cut". Matthews, who was "only three years older than the undergraduates" she was teaching, recalls that despite her position as teacher she "felt very much still a student". See Matthews, "Interview", 24 April 1998. Like Matthews, Susan Sheridan's memories of the time emphasise the contradictions apparent for her in the very idea of authority, specifically, her own authority. According to Sheridan, "as young teachers we didn't have to try very hard to convince someone that [we] didn't know much more than they did, [nor] that [we] were just there to facilitate". See Susan Sheridan, "Interview", Sydney, 8 July 1998. The same was true for Susan Magarey at ANU: "I was acutely conscious of needing to [enact an abolition of power between teacher and learner] because I was having to learn at the same time as the students". But the "crunch came when I had to mark their essays". See Magarey, "Interview", 9 July 1998. Drawing out the contradictions of the "new" pedagogy, Rosemary Pringle has argued that while such pedagogy substantially altered the dynamics of both teaching and learning for a time, "there are always ways in which the power structures are always there regardless". Like Magarey, she cited the fact that "teachers are totally responsible for the grading" as one of the ways a power dynamic remained. See Pringle, "Interview", 23 March 1998.

Careful not to cede academic feminism's claim to a marginal position, student, Yvonne Allen was willing to assign some measure of fault to enrolled students, noting in particular their tendency "to forget about the intimidating nature of the university".⁵¹ Without apportioning full responsibility to students or to Women's Studies, and despite her reticence to admit academic feminism's investment in the institution itself, Allen did acknowledge the ascendancy often accorded to those officially enrolled in the course. "We tended to forget", she explained, "that whilst we sometimes could not articulate our own positions as women, we could at least articulate a little".⁵²

Alongside recognition of their own privilege, came recognition of the tensions between women, and indeed, acknowledgment that "woman" was not a seamless identification. In recognising the limitations of the category of woman as feminism's primary category of political identity, participants did not abandon the female subject of feminism. Instead they engaged with the "impossibility" of "woman" — as coherent and as referent for all. As I argue in chapter three, deploying de Lauretis' conception of the subject of feminism as uncomfortable, the subject of 1970s academic feminism in Australia was both contradictory and complicated. In laying claim to the category of woman, those at Flinders engaged the discomfort of that subject; the tension between the specificities of "woman" and the hazards of its constraints. Premised on its opposition to prevailing knowledge and practice in the academy, academic feminism required the institution, as well as the modes and practices of its knowing in order to continue to make its own identity-based claims. In their positioning of the subject of feminism on the periphery, firmly excluded from the centre as well as from expertise and from knowledge, those at Flinders reflected the status of the institution in academic feminism's self-definition. Most of all, the day-to-day of the feminist classroom was constituted by an ongoing negotiation of the discomfort generated by that position.

Writing of the alienation she experienced while involved in Women's Studies, unenrolled Flinders student Dianne Inwood described how she felt she could not contribute to discussion "because I wasn't as well educated as most of the women in my group". Indicating the extent of her unease, Inwood wrote that she "didn't even know what was being said, because of great phrases and words I didn't know existed".⁵³ Intimidated by the mode of expression used by fellow participants, her inability to match their eloquence

⁵¹ Allen, "The Silence Ends" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 9.

⁵² Allen, "The Silence Ends" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 9.

⁵³ Dianne Inwood, "Criticisms" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 22.

became an issue of status, a source for self-doubt and a marker of her exclusion at the most fundamental level of language and comprehension. Overwhelmed and indeed overshadowed, she described herself as a member of the "uneducated-forgotten lot".⁵⁴ Her disappointment was at once suggestive of an absence of self-consciousness on the part of enrolled students and an instituting of their own set of hierarchies of expertise and authority. "I often wished there was someone else in my group that could speak my language", she wrote. In her desire for connection, Inwood articulated her impatience with the isolation that characterised her involvement in Women's Studies. She suggested, "[i]f the topics of which were being spoken were explained... in an easy to understand way, I could have been able to join in the discussion and let my hair down".⁵⁵ At the same time, she linked her frustration to a discrepancy between the promise of feminism and the reality of her experience of Women's Studies. She remarked, "what I did learn and what I could understand helped me immensely in my outlook, BUT I'm sure I haven't heard half of it".⁵⁶

In accord with Inwood's assessment of the course, another unenrolled student Maureen Woodburn, wrote of the feelings of inadequacy typical in her involvement with Women's Studies. Shamed by her sense of intellectual deficiency, Woodburn's reticence to contribute was founded in anxiety. Apprehensive about her involvement, she was ever fearful of revealing herself to be an "uneducated nit-wit". "One also wonders", she wrote, "what an ego-trip one must have been on, to think that it was possible to participate with tertiary and university educated women in the first place".⁵⁷ For Woodburn, however, such anxiety was eventually replaced by a feeling of "acceptance". Thanks to what she describes as a more inclusive and patient group, one whose members "did explain anything I didn't understand, which was plenty", she was able after some time to "relax" and join in discussion.⁵⁸ While generous, her emphasis on fellow participants as kindly in their sharing of knowledge further strengthens the figure of the unenrolled student as below standard or out of place. Woodburn's trepidation at feeling "particularly 'uneducated'" in a group whose members "quoted from various books they had read", was allayed only when she came to "accept" that "I must participate myself".⁵⁹ Framed chiefly in terms of her own lack of self-determination, Woodburn's comments

⁵⁴ Inwood, "Criticisms" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 22.

⁵⁵ Inwood, "Criticisms" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 22.

⁵⁶ Inwood, "Criticisms" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 22 (emphasis in original).

⁵⁷ Maureen Woodburn, "Criticisms" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide*: p. 23.

⁵⁸ Woodburn, "Criticisms" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide*: p. 23.

here neglected to acknowledge that academic feminism had its own set of "truths" in relation to intellectual privilege. Members of the group were reticent to examine the disciplinary regimes regulating their own practices and, thereby, to take responsibility for the exclusion experienced by participants such as Woodburn. Instead, the burden of "understanding" remained with those alienated by those same practices. For Woodburn, the process of starting to "read pertinent books" in her own time led her to become "more involved" and "a little more confident". At the same time, intimating that her sense of exclusion remained, she concluded her assessment of the course by expressing the hope that in 1974 "young students will be more aware of our feelings of inadequacies and will be only too willing to communicate with us, at our level".⁶⁰

The experiences of both these women encapsulate the complications and contradictions encountered in the practice of particular techniques of pedagogy in academic feminism, both in the Flinders course and in courses around the country. They make visible the assumptions that were the very basis of such pedagogical techniques. Premised on a number of ideas such as "equality", "dialogue" and "sameness", as well as "trust" and "community", the pedagogy instituted in feminist classrooms wrought a specific set of silences. Embedded in the principle of "sameness", for instance, was an inability to recognise or act on discrepancies in ability amongst participants or to account for the myriad differences amongst the subjects of feminism itself. The concept of "dialogue" presumed not only a willingness and capability on the part of all to "participate" but also a common understanding of the terms upon which such interaction could occur. As well, it presumed that differences between women were surmountable because of the commonality of being women. Similarly utopian was the premise of "trust", wherein a bond between women was assumed for reason of their common biological status and their common status as "oppressed". The result was a failure to acknowledge the very possibility of hierarchies amongst women. Drawn from the principles of consciousness-raising and confidential groups, the concept of "trust" was one not easily translated to the university context.⁶¹

Premised on an authenticity of experience, specifically women's experience, the notion of "trust" was itself constituted on the basis of an essentialist notion of woman. In accordance with a conception of woman as cooperative rather than competitive, and as

⁵⁹ Woodburn, "Criticisms" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 23.

⁶⁰ Woodburn, "Criticisms" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 23.

⁶¹ See Sheridan, "Interview", 8 July 1998.

communicative rather than combative, techniques of pedagogy based on a collective process repudiating “selfishness” and “competition”, and reliant upon “mutual cooperation and help” were deemed appropriate to Women’s Studies. Moreover, despite acknowledging that such practices had come from experience in “radical education spheres” rather than from the Women’s Movement itself, one Flinders participant argued that “we knew that these [practices] could only be beneficial to women”.⁶² Those reflecting on the question of what was specifically feminist or “woman-centred” about such practices — to use a phrase from the time — are less enthusiastic in their espousal of the benefits of such practices. In pessimistic tones, Ann Curthoys reflects, “all these questions about [pedagogical] methodology; it’s hard to see what’s specifically feminist about them — that I can remember”.⁶³ For Susan Sheridan, it was the anti-authoritarian features of such practices that meant they were feminist in character. Yet, like Curthoys, her memory is tinged with ambivalence:

Although the practice of consciousness-raising was always thought of as being intrinsically feminist, I don’t know that anyone claimed that a lot of the things that became part of [feminist] pedagogy were intrinsically feminist, but rather that they suited the purposes.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, it was the proposal of a new set of power relations embedded in techniques of pedagogy championed by the radical education movement that led many in academic feminism, as I outlined in chapter two, to adopt them for their own purposes. Feminism’s enthusiasm for such pedagogy lay in the parallels between radical pedagogy’s proposal for a set of new practices, and feminism’s aspirations for a new ethics. As radical pedagogy repudiated “individual advancement” and competition, so feminism defined selfishness, competition and discrimination “to our fellow sisters” as anathema to the principles fundamental to its practice.⁶⁵

While academic feminism’s mode of engagement with the institution was at once grounded in a conception of “woman” and “women” as its primary categories of political identification, it is critical to acknowledge that it was a subject position not taken up with comfort. Indeed, as I posited in the previous two chapters, the employment of the subject of feminism by 1970s feminism was characterised by discomfort. In negotiating the

⁶² “Women’s Studies As They Are: South Australia — Flinders” in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 42.

⁶³ Ann Curthoys, “Interview”, Canberra, 23 April 1998.

⁶⁴ Sheridan, “Interview”, 8 July 1998.

⁶⁵ Helling, “Women’s Studies Assessment”: p. 20.

tension between promoting the category of woman, its specificities and the hazards of its constraints, the subject of 1970s feminism was at once inside and outside, within and without representation. Explaining the high drop out rates of the Flinders course, one participant observed that "it was as if, somehow, the course became influenced and guided by the 'ivory tower' we were trying to breach, as if we began to be incorporated within the University's structure, as if we let ourselves be prevented from reaching outside".⁶⁶ Further complicating that position, the tension of its own privilege — the genealogical burden of academic feminism's own disciplinary discourses and its location within the power/knowledge apparatus — was implicated in that discomfort.

Writing in an essay titled "Problems in Communication in a Self-Managing Group", written for the Flinders course, enrolled student Ali Moore addressed some of the difficulties such discomfort engendered in her experience of the practice of Women's Studies pedagogy.⁶⁷ Beginning her essay in speculative terms, Moore made the point that the problems encountered by her group could either have been the result of the "fact that we were a self-managing group and unaccustomed to it, or they could be purely unique problems which occurred because of the people involved". In hesitating to specify the source of the group's difficulties, Moore's comments made evident the tensions the group experienced in their attempts to faithfully execute the principles of self-governance in their practice. "All of us believed that a self-governed tutorial group was a desirable thing", she wrote.⁶⁸ However, it was that same devotion to self-governance that created a whole new set of problems for the group. Fearful of inadequacy and fuelled by the belief that self-governance "should work", the group "continued for a long time pretending that it was working when it wasn't". By the time it was able to admit "non-achievement" a "certain pattern of communication (or lack of it)" had been set.⁶⁹ The difficulties Moore's group had in confronting its problems were in part due to a set of unspoken tensions, namely that the group consisted of several sub-groups most of which were formed before the course began. Also "inhibitive" were the more obvious "personality clashes", which in spite of the "hope that they shouldn't matter" did hamper communication amongst the group. Unspoken tensions were most damaging, especially since they generated a culture of exclusion and suspicion amongst group members. Moore wrote of her own awareness of "a certain amount of double

⁶⁶ Allen, "Criticisms" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 22.

⁶⁷ Ali Moore, "Problems in Communication in a Self-Managing Group", unpublished essay, Women's Studies, Flinders University, 1976: n.p., WDA 1/2/4.

⁶⁸ Moore, "Problems in Communication": p. 3.

⁶⁹ Moore, "Problems in Communication": p. 3.

entendre, or tacit understanding within a sub-group", which for the rest of the group meant they "did not feel quite 'in it'".⁷⁰ For Moore, the disparity between the ideal of a self-governing group, of self-management through honesty, self-determination through trust, and the day-to-day machinations that constituted the reality of the group itself generated tension. In contravening the ideal, the cliques and hierarchies constitutive of Moore's experience of radical pedagogy acted to highlight the less than self-evident quality of ideas such as "dialogue" and "community".

Of greatest value in Moore's essay is her analysis of the contradictions between specific principles of the ideal and her own group's practice. Foremost in the prescription for a self-governing group, as I stated in chapter two, was the principle of equality for all, best facilitated through a leaderless group. However, for Moore's group, it was in their efforts not to appoint a leader that difficulties arose. Framing the group's attempt to function without a leader as "unnatural", Moore highlighted the paradox of the compulsion to literally "fight against" the emergence of a leader in a situation in which it would have been easy, and moreover, productive to let one emerge.⁷¹ Her frustration emphasised the inconsistency intrinsic to a principle many argued was the "most natural" mode of interaction for women, particularly given her sense that "we needed coordinating and we never managed it".⁷² Also crucial in constituting a self-governing group was the principle of opposition to existing notions of achievement. One participant in the Flinders course located the essence of Women's Studies in the move "away from producing 'good, solid' essays and papers", to the realisation that the "usefulness of a piece of work in helping people is a better indication of its worth than its proper academic style of presentation".⁷³ For Moore, however, in assuming that self-management and "achievement" were contradictory in character, Women's Studies participants were left feeling aimless and detached. She wrote, "we spent very much of our time feeling that we were not actually achieving anything": "in a situation like that we tended to remove ourselves... which only worsened it". Poor or sporadic attendance, a "total inability to reach a decision about *anything*, even trivial matters", as well as a situation in which "discussions were not ever really easy even when they were doing well" were each indicative of a group in serious difficulty.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Moore, "Problems in Communication": p. 3.

⁷¹ Moore, "Problems in Communication": p. 3.

⁷² Moore, "Problems in Communication": p. 3.

⁷³ "Women's Studies As They Are: South Australia — Flinders" in Ryan (ed), *A Guide*: p. 42.

⁷⁴ Moore, "Problems in Communication": p. 4.

In dismantling the implications of these group dynamics, Moore's essay drew attention to how Women's Studies groups were impelled by the desire to make self-governance work, but left little room for investigation into the genealogical burdens of their own intellectual privilege. In the ambiguity that structured efforts to make space for a self-conscious practice, those championing radical pedagogy explicitly acknowledged the difficulties inherent in such ideas. The actions of solving such difficulties were constitutive of the pedagogy and the subject of feminism itself. Incumbent upon a struggle to prove one's worthiness and structured by the compulsion for self-responsibility, the impetus and obligation for liberation lay always with the individual. "Full" participation could be achieved only through confrontation and its mandatory status meant confrontation became a measure of the commitment of participants. For instance, while at once defining difficulties such as personality clashes, personal shyness, fear of ridicule and laziness as inevitable in pedagogical practice, it was the necessity for such issues "to be brought out into the open by the group", or the very process of confrontation that was considered the key to responsibility in participants. For a pedagogy premised on a new ethics of practice the mode of confrontation mattered. It was to be carried out "not stupidly but with tact, so that... individuals learn about their subject" and "learn how to get on with people, realise their fears and responsibility".⁷⁵

Part Two — Oppositional Ambiguities

I turn now to an examination of tensions that arose in the Flinders course between the role of course convenor and the principles of participatory democracy that impelled Women's Studies — tensions indicative of the power relations which constituted the discipline of academic feminism itself. Such tensions are vital to my analysis since the relation between convenor and the practice of participatory democracy was itself intrinsic to the pedagogical principles and practices that energised the course's establishment. As I demonstrated in chapter two, such principles were drawn from movements contemporaneous to feminism's engagement with the academy. From its beginnings, the Flinders course in Philosophy clearly stipulated what the role of convenor would involve. Conceived as an "organiser" rather than teacher, the convenor was to be an "active participant", involved in the course "on the same basis as all other students".⁷⁶ In part,

⁷⁵ "Group Assessment", *Empire Times*, vol. 5, no. 6, 1973: pp. 18-19.

⁷⁶ Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 12.

the role was necessary only to deal with the administrative details generated through the course's interaction with the academy, such as organising seminars, dealing with inquiries and publicity, and liaising between groups.⁷⁷ Mostly, the groups ran themselves, working "fairly loosely" on the principle of self-management, and covering any topic they wished. In 1973 one group of students produced a "Women's Edition" of the student newspaper, *Empire Times*. In the following year, a group worked on setting up a women's shelter, another made a film, one was described as "working very academically", and there were two groups dedicated to consciousness-raising.⁷⁸

Writing in 1974, Rita Helling clearly set out what she perceived as the contradictions involved in appointing a convenor in any official capacity to a course such as that offered at Flinders. "Given the sort of conditions that exist in universities and the sort of encouragement of elitism and authoritarianism that goes on", she wrote, "it will be very difficult to find someone who has the cooperative attitudes necessary to convene the course on the principles above".⁷⁹ Marked by a strict separation of academy and Women's Studies, Helling's comments were indicative of the oppositional stance embodied in the course's organisation and in the practices adopted in classes. She acknowledged the difficulties potential convenors would face in their efforts to avoid replicating the inequalities and hierarchies of knowledge constitutive of the discipline in which they were trained. At the same time, Helling was convinced that Women's Studies could avoid being implicated in the institution simply by maintaining its oppositional practices. "Nobody wants a staff member appointed to teach the course in the traditional way", she wrote, inferring that an official appointment would necessarily bring an end to any of the "radical" possibilities of the course.⁸⁰ In attempting to negotiate the tensions between an anti-institutional stance and the course's entanglement in that same institution, Helling predicted that "if it [the course] was ever taught by any paid academic the chances are it would be a bad thing".⁸¹

Premising her opposition to the appointment of an official academic on the basis of power's corrupting influence, Helling asserted that such an appointment would mean, "other people [in the course] would not have the same decision-making power".⁸²

⁷⁷ Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 12.

⁷⁸ Margy Burn, "Flinders", *National U*, Women's Edition, 3 June 1974: pp. 8-9.

⁷⁹ Helling, "Women's Studies Course" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 20.

⁸⁰ Helling, "Women's Studies Course" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 20.

⁸¹ Helling in "Women's Studies: one interview": p. 5.

⁸² Helling in "Women's Studies: one interview": p. 5.

Crucial to her conception of power as beguiling in its very constitution, she asserted that an official position would be a "bad thing" not only for the course but for the person appointed as well. Reflecting on her own involvement in the Flinders Women's Studies course, she described her sense that "it's even corrupting just to be the convenor of it [the course]", thereby indicating her discomfort with the mere possibility of authority and expertise. "I have to struggle against the bad reactions it [being convenor] produces in me", she remarked.⁸³ Such discomfort was for Helling indicative of the insidious character of power and of the necessity for constant vigilance. Articulating the sense of unease she experienced when convening the course, Helling spoke of her own "very bad" propensity to think "I must be pretty good doing this sort of thing, [and] being smug about my own involvement, working so hard, etc". In this, she drew attention to the prohibitions vital to the maintenance of Women's Studies' oppositional status; that individualism, ambition, and self-satisfaction were all contrary to the ethics of academic feminism.⁸⁴ The compulsion to police not only her own behaviour but also the organisation of the course was itself constitutive of one way academic feminism negotiated its own oppositional positioning.

In many respects, Helling's comments on the tensions between the role of convenor in the Flinders course, and its principles of participatory democracy were indicative of wider dissatisfaction with the organisation of the course per se. In a course premised on the principle of equality for all, the role of convenor seemed contradictory to many. With the appointment of Jean Curthoys to the position of course convenor in a capacity sanctioned by the Philosophy Department from 1974, many of the underlying tensions amongst past and present participants were brought to the fore.⁸⁵ Tension over the course's direction under Curthoys brought such difficulties to a head. Anxious about Women's Studies' increasingly close proximity to the academy, Cathy Yates wrote in 1975 of her concern at the course's "alienation" from the majority of women.⁸⁶ Reflecting on the implications of

⁸³ Helling in "Women's Studies: one interview": p. 5.

⁸⁴ Helling in "Women's Studies: one interview": p. 5.

⁸⁵ To some extent, those involved in Women's Studies at Flinders sought the appointment of an official convenor in order to ease the organisational responsibilities of participants themselves. As Eileen Haley remarked, "Obviously, the people who were involved in the setting up of the course can't just keep doing it again and again! But in no year but the first will there be this committed 'core of people' who'll start the ball rolling". In the light of this, according to Haley, participants went to the Philosophy Consultative Committee (as early as late 1973) and proposed that the next staff appointment in the Philosophy discipline be dedicated to a Women's Studies convenor. See Eileen Haley, "Political Lessons" in Haley, Burn & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 27.

⁸⁶ Cathy Yates, "What Are We On About?", unpublished essay, Women's Studies, Flinders University, 1975: n.p., WDA 1/79/6. Yates presented her paper at the 1975 Women's Studies Conference in Adelaide.

the course's relation to the academy, Yates acknowledged that "a large percentage of women are automatically excluded" from Women's Studies.⁸⁷ Yates was saying nothing new, but she aimed more profoundly to highlight what she perceived was the course's increased emphasis on academic knowledge, and thus its betrayal of the principle of open access – a principle fundamental to Women's Studies from its beginnings and crucial to its ongoing oppositional status. Drawing on the experiences of those enrolled in Women's Studies at Flinders, she argued that of those participating in the course, "many of the [unenrolled students] are quite bewildered about what is happening, [and] have difficulty relating to the course but keep coming hoping that next week will be better". Invoking the image of a disenfranchised student body — one estranged from a course set up on the basis of access for all, and now considered "too academic in nature" and "very hard to follow" — Yates questioned the purpose of Women's Studies.⁸⁸ She was not alone in her concern at the direction Women's Studies appeared to be taking at that moment. Her challenge to existing conceptions of Women's Studies was reflective of a critique that focused specifically on the suitability of Curthoys as the convenor of the course.

In dramatic circumstances in 1975, Curthoys' role as convenor and thus her influence over the direction of Women's Studies at Flinders was curtailed in the midst of a struggle for control of the course between herself and members of the Women's Studies Steering Committee.⁸⁹ Prompted by a growing perception of her position as convenor as antithetical to the founding principles of the course, those on the Committee acted to reduce the responsibilities that came with the role. As one member observed, "we have some hopes that this will provide a wider, more efficient base through which resources can be distributed".⁹⁰ Fearful of the potential for authority and hierarchy embedded in the idea of just one person having the power to make decisions, the Committee, which consisted of elected representatives from each group in the course as well as participants

⁸⁷ Yates, "What Are We": p. 2.

⁸⁸ Yates, "What Are We": p. 1.

⁸⁹ For Jean Curthoys, both then and now the issue was not about the role as such but rather the way she handled the role. Indeed, she characterises the dispute as a "witch hunt". In clarifying her point, she explains: "I mean by that the criticisms made of me were not that relevant to what was going on. The stated criticisms ranged from (i) the claim that I was from Sydney and therefore a Trotskyist (Maoists regarded Sydney leftists as Trotskyists - and "Trots" were "bad"). I did not see myself as a "Trot"; (ii) the claim that I was scruffy. I was; (iii) the claim that since I shared a house with Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle who taught at Adelaide Uni [*sic*], I was an elitist - Adelaide Uni was thought to be elitist; and (iv) that I had kept my 'important Sydney connections' to myself, and therefore I was an elitist". See J. Curthoys, "Personal Correspondence", 2 April 2001.

⁹⁰ Bev Thiele, "Unstructured Group Learning", unpublished essay, Women's Studies, Flinders University, 1975: p. 2, WDA 1/2/4.

from previous years, took on responsibility for its basic organisation. In a move contrary to the course's premise of self-management, the Committee's first action was to increase the rigidity of the course's structure. Hastily acknowledging the seeming paradox of the change, the Committee defended its position with the assertion that "despite this increased degree of organisation of course material we do not feel that the element of free choice and free learning will be detracted from".⁹¹

Dissatisfied with the Committee's assurances, Bev Thiele, a student in the course and member of the Committee, wrote of her concerns at the breakdown in relations amongst the Women's Studies community at Flinders. She described her desire to provide an "honest and critical appraisal" of the repercussions of changes in the practice of the course not just in terms of practices in the classroom, but in the practice of organising the course as a whole.⁹² Writing in the context of Curthoys having vacated her position at Flinders, Thiele asserted that the antagonism that had come to characterise Curthoys' relationship with those on the Steering Committee by the end of 1975 was, in part, responsible for her departure. Such antagonism, argued Thiele, was reflected in the way the Committee operated on a day-to-day basis: "Whatever its previous 'reason for being', its present one is simply that we do not trust those we employ to run Women's Studies", she wrote.⁹³ She characterised the Committee as tyrannical in temperament and fuelled by paranoia, asserting that it had become a group existing primarily "to wield the ultimate veto of, and to maintain a constant controlling interest in the action and activities of the convenors, tutor and resource person".⁹⁴ Drawing attention to the contradictions arising in light of the Committee's claim that it had been reactivated only in order to "safeguard against hierarchy" in the course, Thiele drew out the discrepancies between the Committee's official role, and its everyday practice. She argued that such discrepancies had serious implications for participants in the course.

According to Thiele, the Committee was impelled by an "almost fanatical concentration on the issues of hierarchies, structurelessness and elitism cum leadership to the exclusion

⁹¹ Thiele, "Unstructured": p. 2.

⁹² Bev Thiele, "The Politics of Flinders Women's Studies", unpublished essay, Women's Studies, Flinders University, 1976, WDA 1/1/1.

⁹³ Thiele, "The Politics of Flinders": p. 1.

⁹⁴ Thiele, "The Politics of Flinders": p. 1. American feminist, Jo Freeman's highly influential article "The Tyranny of Structurelessness", which appeared in Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, Anita Rapone (eds), *Radical Feminism*, Quadrangle, New York, 1973 was read as part of the Flinders course. Essays which deal with Freeman's article can be found amongst the archives of the Flinders course, the WDA.

of other issues, most notably Women's Studies itself".⁹⁵ Articulating her unease at the Committee's workings, Thiele insisted that the Committee had effectively taken on the characteristics of the very phenomenon it had been formed to prevent; the concentration of power in the hands of the few.⁹⁶ For Thiele, it was clear that the Committee's use of the language crucial to the principles of the course, meant it was particularly successful in effecting a silencing of critique. It was the "fear of being accused of elitism, of being hierarchical and of engaging in 'conspiracies'" that kept participants quiet, according to Thiele.⁹⁷ Framed chiefly in terms of the Committee's intolerance of dissent and its determination to preserve existing structures, Thiele's critique of the Committee replicated Women's Studies' own critique of existing, "male-centred" pedagogical techniques. According to Thiele, the Committee was "unwilling to compromise, unable to admit the validity of other's ideas and generally incapable of cooperating with each other to achieve a collective Women's Studies".⁹⁸ She argued that such behaviour was particularly disturbing given the Committee's conduct most effected women: "[i]t is women who are oppressing women, women who are being the chauvinists, who display the arrogance which assumes their co-workers incapable of making decisions", she wrote.⁹⁹

Interesting here is the way the Committee's critique of Curthoys and more widely, the very notion of having a convenor in Women's Studies at all, corresponds with Curthoys' own critique of the Committee. It was a critique animated by discomfort with the prospect of legitimacy in the eyes of the institution. Citing the Whitlam Government's tenure as the moment where "things changed", Curthoys recalls, "[f]or most of us it had not entered our heads that we would ever make a serious impact in the institutions or have real access to the corridors of power. And our ideology would have rejected that anyway".¹⁰⁰ Resolute in her insistence on academic feminism's oppositional status, Curthoys maintains, that "even though these courses existed we did not see them as a career path for anyone — but as a way of giving women confidence in themselves to ask and pursue questions about women in whatever they chose to do".¹⁰¹ In fascinating terms, Curthoys resists any recognition of her own institutional status, or its implications in relation to the course's pedagogical practice. She recalls:

⁹⁵ Thiele, "The Politics of Flinders": p. 1.

⁹⁶ Thiele, "The Politics of Flinders": p. 1.

⁹⁷ Thiele, "The Politics of Flinders": p. 2.

⁹⁸ Thiele, "The Politics of Flinders": p. 2.

⁹⁹ Thiele, "The Politics of Flinders": p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ J. Curthoys, "Personal Correspondence", 2 April 2001.

Looking back now, I think these conflicts in [19]75 were between the naïve and intense like myself (those who had found feminism to be an intensely liberating personal experience and with religious zealotry wished to impart it to others), and the more hard headed who recognised accurately that taking up women's issues was a way to get ahead (and to be fair, that much could be achieved through the corridors of power).¹⁰²

Thus, although Curthoys frames herself as determinedly anti-institutional, in the disjuncture between her remembering and the way the Women's Studies Steering Committee conceived of the course during her time as convenor, lay a fundamental contradiction. As much as Curthoys' appointment as convenor had been agreed to by the majority of those involved, the official necessity and character of her role, and indeed, of her qualifications (she had a PhD, and was trained as a philosopher; she was in many respects the quintessential academic feminist) were all indicative of the depth of her investments in the very pedagogical principles against which the course had figured its establishment. The discomfort she articulates in relation to the Flinders course and its "academic focus", is telling here: "[f]rankly, although I wouldn't have said so at the time... it wasn't an academic course in the ordinary sense... It did not act as an introduction to disciplined ways of thinking about issues".¹⁰³

In similar terms, the Committee's desire to maintain academic feminism's oppositional status, meant its handling of the ambiguities apparent between the role of convenor and the principles upon which the course was premised — like equality for all — reproduced the relations it had set itself against. The very modes by which it attempted to effect "liberation" and "equality" and thus, the exercise of power instituted by the Committee in its efforts to retain its oppositional status, was itself saturated with that production. In many respects, it was the Committee's opposition to authority that was vital to the maintenance of Women's Studies' oppositional status. Tensions between the ideas of "best" practice for women and what was possible in the context of the academy's day-to-day operations were indicative of the power relations which constituted the discipline of academic feminism itself. The same can be said of tensions between the principle of collective decision-making and the disempowerment many experienced at its hands. Both were constitutive of feminism's ongoing negotiation of its own uncomfortable

¹⁰¹ J. Curthoys, "Personal Correspondence", 2 April 2001.

¹⁰² J. Curthoys, "Personal Correspondence", 2 April 2001.

subject position. Indeed, such discomfort with authority provides a striking reminder of academic feminism's long history of trying to figure the relation between theory and practice.

Part Three — Embarrassing Presents

In her 1997 article "Success & Its Failures", Biddy Martin argues that present-day academic feminism has come to replicate rather than challenge entrenched modes of institutional and intellectual engagement.¹⁰⁴ Martin writes:

Many of the terms of political analysis and debate, some key critical procedures, and our modes of interacting with one another across disciplines have become so entrenched as to be stultifying; however conventionalised they have become, they are often protected from challenge and change by the piety with which they are repeatedly invoked and the familiarity they have come to enjoy.¹⁰⁵

For Martin, the "mistrust" contemporary academic feminism seems to think "we owe ourselves as oppositional intellectuals" is exemplary in this regard. Suggesting that academic feminism is unable to trust the "possibility of even minimally legitimate forms of authority and distinction", Martin points to the cynicism evident in such feeling. It acts to potentially "excuse us from acknowledging how, as educators, we inevitably exercise both", she writes. Marked by this concern, Martin is fearful of academic feminism's "oppositional stances" becoming "rigid defences against political participation".¹⁰⁶ At once referring to the present and the past, Martin's account of feminism's relation to modes of authority and expertise reflects the historical imperative of feminism's conception of itself. Invoking a Foucauldian conception of intellectual practice, Martin struggles against the forms of power that stabilise the institutions of contemporary academic feminism: for Foucault, "theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice".¹⁰⁷ Thus she contends that contemporary academic feminism's "mistrust" of authority is reflective of its investment in its own positioning as "oppositional". Moreover, it is that investment, she argues, which prevents it from

¹⁰³ J. Curthoys, "Personal Correspondence", 2 April 2001.

¹⁰⁴ Biddy Martin, "Success and Its Failures", (Joan Wallach Scott (ed), "Women's Studies on the Edge"), *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, Fall 1997: pp. 102-131. Although its bibliographical citation is 1997, "Women's Studies on the Edge" was not published until late in 1998.

¹⁰⁵ Martin, "Success": pp. 102-103.

¹⁰⁶ Martin, "Success": p. 105.

confronting the genealogical burden of its own relation to the very "systems of power" that it defines itself against.

My point is that the discomfort with authority that I demonstrated was fundamental to the pedagogy of academic feminism 1970s-style, continues to haunt present-day academic feminism. Thus, to Martin's deployment of "mistrust", I add discomfort: it is discomfort that characterises feminism's relation to authority in the contemporary academy. Above all, I argue that this discomfort is imbricated in the telling of feminist histories.

Furthermore, distinctions between remembering the past and devising possible futures for feminism are often obscured in the articulation of feminism's present. My analysis in this section focuses in particular on consciousness-raising and its place in feminism's disciplinary history. Consciousness-raising has become a touchstone in narratives of academic feminism's history which pronounce with surety the "progress" of feminist analysis from 1970s simple oppositional practice to present-day sophisticated theoretical engagement.¹⁰⁸ Embedded in this turn toward "theory", and exemplified in the rememberings of many of those who participated in 1970s academic feminism, is the idea of the methodological emphases of that moment as naïve or uncomplicated. Thus, consciousness-raising has become a cliché which elicits embarrassment from many contemporary feminist scholars, at least in part because it evokes the language and ideas of 1970s "women's experience".¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Foucault and Deleuze, "Intellectuals": p. 208.

¹⁰⁸ The idea of the "progress" narrative is drawn from Jane Gallop's *Around 1981*, in which she recognises the prominence of a narrative wherein the "simplistic" methodological emphases of 1970s "women's studies" is surpassed by a nuanced, more theoretically sophisticated mode of "feminist theory". See Jane Gallop, *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Thought*, Routledge, New York & London, 1992. Alice Gambrell's reading of the implications of such tendencies in narratives of academic feminism's history has also been important to my formulations here. See Alice Gambrell, "Remembering Women's Studies" in Krzysztof Ziarek & Seamus Deane (eds), *Future Crossings: Literature Between Philosophy & Cultural Studies*, North Western University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 2000: pp. 76-97.

¹⁰⁹ Jean Curthoys chronicles the discomfort contemporary academic feminism feels in relation to consciousness-raising, particularly its deployment of the notion of "women's experience" in *Feminist Amnesia*. See Jean Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia: The Wake of Women's Liberation*, Routledge, New York & London, 1997: p. 4. Consciousness-raising is not the only cliché of 1970s feminism to elicit embarrassment. According to Judith Ion writing in *Australian Feminist Studies* on a report of the Return of the Repressed conference held in Sydney in November 1996, both embarrassment and amnesia characterised the day's proceedings. She describes how the "cloak of embarrassment [was] donned time and time again by speakers as they spoke of their personal involvement with revolutionary movements in the 1960s and 1970s", and she asserts that it was an embarrassment "palpable" in character: "blushing faces, bowed heads, shuffling feet, self-conscious laughter, self-deprecating humour". According to Ion, it was the mention of "revolution" that was the source of this embarrassment. "For many of the speakers, admitting to being part of a movement that truly believed in the possibility of revolution was beyond embarrassment. To have actually used those words and to have them come back to haunt you some 20-odd years later was mortifying,

Fascinated by what she argues is contemporary academic feminism's betrayal of its oppositional heritage, Jean Curthoys in *Feminist Amnesia* sets out to reconstruct the conceptual moves involved in feminism's negotiation of its position in the academy. If, for Martin, the "mistrust" of authority that accompanies contemporary feminism's oppositional status is problematic, for Curthoys, the problem lies in the tension between contemporary feminism's embrace of power and authority and its continuing identification as "oppositional". Crucial to Curthoys' argument is her conception of contemporary academic feminism as the corrupted form of a once moral and ethical movement. Contending that contemporary academic feminism's "ambivalence" to its own power and authority within the academy is at odds with the strength of its attachment to its radical past, Curthoys asserts that it is the set of ideas that constituted the basis of that radical past that "continue to provide contemporary feminism with its enormous moral appeal", acting at the same time to conceal the "self-interested" character of feminism's positioning as oppositional.¹¹⁰ In defining her expectations of the behaviour of present-day academic feminism through direct reference to its predecessors, Curthoys effects a return of feminism's past, and that haunting is echoed in the intensity of her discomfort with what she characterises as contemporary academic feminism's embrace of power and authority. Above all, her unease is imbricated in her telling of feminism's history.¹¹¹

It is the principles of "liberation theory" that Curthoys argues are indicative of the long-forgotten moral opposition to power she credits as formative of feminism's beginnings.¹¹² According to Curthoys, feminism's early insistence on the necessity of psychological change for effective political change — an idea it understood to be intimately bound up with the workings of power — was drawn from liberation theory. Most important, liberation theory's conception of psychological change presupposed a principled opposition to power as such. For Curthoys, it was that opposition to power which was implicit in the activity of consciousness-raising. She further contends that the moral strictures of that understanding, and the moral difficulties it poses, are at the root of contemporary academic feminism's abandonment and repression of liberation theory.

humiliating or at best plain laughable". See Judith Ion, "Return of the Repressed: Feminism in the Quad — Embarrassment & Amnesia: A Conference Report of Sorts", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 12, no. 25, April 1997: pp. 141-144.

¹¹⁰ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 8.

¹¹¹ For further discussion of Jean Curthoys' *Feminist Amnesia* see chapter six.

¹¹² J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: pp. 1-3 & pp. 7-8.

The status of consciousness-raising in present-day narratives of academic feminism's own recent past is, for Curthoys, entirely consistent with academic feminism's transformation from a "radical" and unruly "women's movement" into a "power-oriented" feminism more interested in "acquiring status" in the academy than in opposing it.¹¹³ In seeking to rescue 1970s feminism from this progress narrative, and its place at the bottom of a hierarchy of sophistication, Curthoys asserts the intellectual and moral credibility of 1970s academic feminism. But, in the process she closes down all possibilities of nuance in her own conception of intellectual practice, for embedded in her policing of the behaviour and ideas of present-day feminism is a determined unwillingness to attribute legitimacy to any form of power. Conceiving of power solely as a relation between those who have it in their possession and those who are its objects, Curthoys' expectation that present-day academic feminism be more moral and more ethical than its contemporaries, establishes its own set of oppositional hierarchies by which to determine appropriately feminist behaviour: purity and compromise, morality and corruption, practice and theory. As I showed in the previous section and the thesis as a whole, she relies on a set of ideas that was never as straightforward as such a conception of power remembers it as being.

Consciousness-raising is also central to Susan Magarey's memory of 1970s academic feminism. It could even be said that her account of that time is itself driven by a desire to set the record straight on consciousness-raising's relation to academic feminism. In an article published in *Australian Feminist Studies* alongside other accounts of the establishing of feminist courses in tertiary institutions across Australia, Magarey reflects on her involvement with Women's Studies at ANU. Commenting on the status of consciousness-raising in present-day conceptions of feminism's past, she informs her readers that "someone told me recently, in tones of total certainty, that the early days of Women's Studies at ANU were characterised by consciousness-raising and all that 'touchy/feely stuff'".¹¹⁴ Invoking one of the great clichés of 1970s feminism, the discomfort animating Magarey's source corresponds with her own self-consciousness (and unease) with such descriptions of feminism's past. In her desire to distance herself, Magarey resists an exposition of what constituted that "touchy/feely stuff". Magarey is conscious of the fact that she does not need to draw out what it is the phrase infers, since she knows of the resilience of an imagined 1970s feminism in narratives of academic

¹¹³ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: pp. 7-8.

¹¹⁴ Susan Magarey, "Setting up the First Research Centre for Women's Studies in Australia, 1983-1986", (Guest Editor: Alison Bashford), *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 27, 1998: p. 83.

feminism's past. Most of all, her remarks (and those of the commentator she invokes to frame her narrative) bear the language and ideas of a supposedly long forgotten "women's experience". The point, of course, is that the opposite is true. Slightly abashed by her connection to a feminism whose mention in the present evokes a set of much maligned truisms — the internally consistent category of woman; the solidarity of the oppressed; "the personal is political" and "Sisterhood" — Magarey attempts to neutralise any connections between 1970s academic feminism and consciousness-raising, where what is inferred is "a tutorial where you all sit on the ground and hold hands".¹¹⁵

Utilising her own status as "authentic" voice in order to refute the centrality accorded to consciousness-raising in such narratives, Magarey asserts that "with matching certainty" she "knows" that "if such a characterisation is accurate for the first eight years of Women's Studies at the ANU, then it passed right by me".¹¹⁶ Challenging her readers to disprove the authority of her account, she is careful to differentiate between the raising of consciousness and consciousness-raising. "No doubt consciousnesses were raised", she writes. "And I do recall intense engagement and passionate debate. But I thought that these were spin-offs from the central focus of the work that we did in Women's Studies classrooms". While celebrating a style of engagement that she infers was distinctive to Women's Studies, Magarey is quick to deny that what occurred in feminist classrooms was anything but "intellectual ferment".¹¹⁷ Framing her memories in terms of a strict separation of personal and academic, she describes Women's Studies at ANU as "determinedly cerebral", and thus, as concerned with "quite a bit of theoretical work".¹¹⁸ However, it is in her attempts to refute narratives of 1970s academic feminism as unsophisticated and non-theoretical, that she effectively perpetuates a hierarchy of past and present, practice and theory. Indeed, the very basis of her assertion of academic feminism's intellectual credibility is itself dependent upon a determined split between practice and theory, and in particular, between 1970s academic feminism and the practices of consciousness-raising.

¹¹⁵ Magarey, "Interview", 9 July 1998.

¹¹⁶ Magarey, "Setting up": p. 83.

¹¹⁷ The phrase "intellectual ferment" is one she used in interview in relation to a question about consciousness-raising & 1970s academic feminism, and the assertions she had made in her *Australian Feminist Studies* article. Magarey says, "I do know there were some people who did run Women's Studies courses using consciousness-raising. Well, I don't know this, I heard. I mean consciousness-raising goes on, you can't be reading all these books without your head changing!" She says, "part of what made it [Women's Studies & its ideas] all so immensely excellent, was the intellectual ferment", to which she adds, "and I think it was [its] impact on people's lives [that] gave it a personal, extra edge". See Magarey, "Interview", 9 July 1998.

¹¹⁸ Magarey, "Setting up": p. 83.

Reflecting on their memories of 1970s academic feminism, Rosemary Pringle and Ann Curthoys similarly strive to assert the scholarly character of feminism's pedagogical beginnings. Referring directly to consciousness-raising and its place in histories of academic feminism in Australia, Pringle remarks, "I've always thought consciousness-raising was a kind of myth". Refusing consciousness-raising a central place in her narrative of feminism's past, Pringle asserts that intellectual rather than personal engagement was fundamental to academic feminism in Australia. Clarifying her point, she adds, "I'm not saying it [consciousness-raising] didn't happen, but I think what was much more typical in Australia was reading groups".¹¹⁹ Moving with some haste to distance herself and the Women's Studies course she taught from the practice of consciousness-raising, Ann Curthoys insists that in her course students spoke of personal experience only through a "scholarly funnel".¹²⁰ Comparing her years of teaching with those of her successor, she says, with tongue firmly in cheek, "my understanding is that after I left and Susan Magarey took over it changed. But not under me!"¹²¹

What troubles me here is the mode by which each of these women refuse a characterisation of 1970s feminism as "anti-intellectual" or concerned with "women's experience". In effect, they reiterate the same hierarchies of practice and theory, simplicity and complexity that propel the progress narrative they are attempting to refute. As such, my treatment of their memories of that moment is concerned less with the question of "proving" that consciousness-raising was practised in 1970s academic feminism in Australia, or indeed "disproving" the assumption of its prevalence, and more with how, by accepting the terms of an opposition between theory and practice, such accounts simplify or streamline not only the intertwined significances of its constituent parts, but the history of academic feminism itself.

Conclusion

By foregrounding the problem of power as a constituent of feminist intellectual activity — in the recent past and in the present — I work my way around and within the

¹¹⁹ Pringle, "Interview", 31 March 1998.

¹²⁰ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

¹²¹ A. Curthoys, "Interview", 23 April 1998.

argumentative positions that have governed many recent analyses of feminism's own recent past, in an attempt to acknowledge both the complexities and the reductive qualities of a diverse range of feminist ideas that emerged during the early 1970s. Framing itself as oppositional and as a "threat to the status quo" as well as the "Powers That Be", 1970s academic feminism questioned the way in which knowledge circulated and functioned, and its relations to power.¹²² Driven by the desire to bring a new code of ethics and practice to the university and to its modes of knowing, teaching and learning, academic feminism enacted a set of pedagogical techniques aimed at articulating a new kind of subjectivity and subjectification. In examining the effects of truth emanating from these practices, I contend that in their very action these practices reproduced precisely that which they set themselves against. Returning to the broader question posed by this chapter, I suggest that by learning to refigure the complicated and contradictory negotiations performed by 1970s feminism and its relation to power, we might also be able to generate other possibilities.

My purpose is not by any means to rescue 1970s feminist pedagogy for readers in the present by pointing out its hidden complexities, its supremely ethical character, or its radical status. Instead, like my analysis in the previous two chapters, this chapter points to the ways in which the apparently simplistic "woman" of 1970s feminism was herself multiple and divided. This was sometimes critically reflected upon with insight and at other times surfaced as tension and breakdown (and failure). I suggest how repudiations of the "naïve" practices of feminisms of that phase themselves work to obscure a more dynamic historical document. Also crucial and equally reductive are impatient rejections of the "most ethical" practices of feminisms of that time. These rejections likewise obfuscate a somewhat more vigorous and contradictory moment in feminism's history.

While my readings of the past engage with a number of the polarities that in recent years have both enabled and limited cultural criticisms of academic feminism's past — empiricism versus theory, vulgarity versus sophistication, oppositional political engagement versus complicit elitism, the "monolith" versus the multiple, radicalism versus conformity — also important are its implications for the future. What troubles me are the strictures and prescriptive implications of such hauntings. Implicit in their return is a feminism now constituted by a subject most ethical, supremely worthy, and profoundly scrupulous and, most of all, beyond moral reproach. Further, embedded in

¹²² Haley, Burns & Yates (eds), *A Guide to Flinders*: p. 4.

the reiteration of the subject of feminism is a continued hostility between woman and power, woman and authority, and woman and expertise. What this underscores for the purposes of this chapter and this thesis, is the salience of Foucault's proposal that "maybe the most certain of all philosophical problems is the problem of the present time and of what we are in this very moment". "Maybe the target nowadays", he writes, "is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are".¹²³

¹²³ Foucault "The Subject": p. 785.

Chapter Six — Between Present and Past

I have to admit that Gender Studies was not seen as something 'favourable'. I mean, it has been stigmatised... as a 'man-hating', women 'up themselves' course and receives the 'elevated eyebrow' when mentioned that I am studying this course to my peers.
- Anonymous (2001)¹

Introduction

1970s Australian feminism, and in particular academic feminism, is often re-told as a sustained narrative with a designated point of departure or as an epistemology of origins. Taking one of two forms, such retellings construct a narrative either of an unsophisticated feminism at its inception in the 1970s, progressing to the supposedly complex feminisms of the present, or a “moral” feminism, pure and virtuous in its 1970s beginning, corrupted in later form. Defined against the figure of feminism’s past, such oft-repeated misrememberings act both to collapse the intricacies of that moment in feminist history and to refuse the possibilities of the new for present and future feminism. Structured by a linear progression from past to present, such retellings are articulated via an ambivalent nostalgia for a simpler, knowable past.

In the chapters preceding this, I engaged with the dominant present-day understandings of academic feminism’s recent past. Above all, I worked to problematise such understandings. Operating in my analysis is an engagement with the tension between the object and subject of feminism. This is a tension made all the more important in the lingering of such conceptions of 1970s feminism in present-day accounts of the development of Australian academic feminist thought. Thus, my primary concern in this chapter is 1970s feminism’s resilient yet ever-evasive haunting of the present. In the introduction to the thesis, I drew on what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank insist is problematic about much contemporary cultural theory — “what it thinks it knows”.² Although their critique centres around the role of difference in theory, I take from their work a concern with the cost of contemporary feminist theory’s “knowingness”. I maintain, alongside Sedgwick and Frank, that 1970s academic feminism meant far

¹ See Appendix B and for discussion see part two below.

² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick & Adam Frank, “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins” in their edited collection, *Shame & Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, Duke University Press, Durham & London, 1995: p. 23.

different and more provocative things than have survived the current commonsense consensus of that moment.

I begin this chapter with a close reading of two contemporary and compelling accounts of Australian academic feminism's history, firstly by revisiting the theoretical conversation between past and present animating Jean Curthoys' 1997 book *Feminist Amnesia*, and secondly by examining the narrative of feminist becoming which impels Rosi Braidotti in her article of the same year, "Remembering Fitzroy High".³ In focusing on the temporality implicit in the writing of feminism's past and present in both Curthoys' and Braidotti's accounts, I demonstrate how narratives of failure are crucial to both of their conceptions of feminism's political time.

I focus on the language of affect, of discomfort, anxiety and fear articulated in such narratives in an effort both to capture the depth of the attachment that academic feminism invests in its past, and in order to think through the implications of its devotion to teleological time. I explore the futility prescribed in the employment of such affect, at the same time insisting on the possibilities generated by analysis of the same. My analysis is informed by the work of American feminist Robyn Wiegman, in particular the way in which she conceives of anxiety about feminism's future as "a profound — and profoundly productive — aspect of academic feminism's contemporary knowledge formation".⁴ Following Wiegman, I consider the anxiety that characterises Australian academic feminism's conception of its future both the point and problematic of my engagement.

In part one, "Figuring Failure", I interrogate the ways in which feminism's history is framed in terms of suffering as social virtue and privilege as self-recrimination, drawing out the structuring role of *ressentiment* within individual feminist accounts. I examine the hierarchy of "who hurts most" that organises the accounts of both Curthoys and Braidotti. Both these scholars are exemplary in the ways they give priority to questions of feminism's past, present and future. What becomes increasingly apparent in the process

³ Jean Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia: The Wake of Women's Liberation*, Routledge, New York & London, 1997 and Rosi Braidotti, "Remembering Fitzroy High" in Jenna Mead (ed), *Bodyjamming: Sexual Harassment, Feminism & Public Life*, Vintage, Sydney, 1997: pp. 121-147.

⁴ Robyn Wiegman, "Feminism's Apocalyptic Futures", *New Literary History*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2000: p. 815. While Wiegman's analysis deals specifically with the state of academic feminism in the US context, she is valuable in my treatment of Australian academic feminism since there is a paucity of recent material that engages specifically with Australian academic feminism and its mediation of the academy.

of unpacking the internal workings of such feminist scholarship is the depth of 1970s feminism's haunting — its status as "taken-for-granted", as the ground from which the present and future can be defined. In the second part of this chapter, "Nomenclature", I turn to another site thoroughly imbued with the linking of past, present and future — Gender Studies and Women's Studies in the contemporary academy. Here I ask: what of *ressentiment's* relation to feminism as a discipline, to present-day academic feminism? Like Braidotti and Curthoys, present-day Gender Studies students are preoccupied with feminism's past in their articulations of the field of present-day academic feminism. Most importantly, such articulations often rely on a version of 1970s feminism that I have demonstrated throughout the thesis to be reductive and that I suggest here is structured by *ressentiment*. I discuss student conceptions of what constitutes gender in the context of recent changes of name from Women's to Gender Studies in numerous Australian institutions. Crucial here is the anxiety surrounding the field's relation to men and masculinity and the problem of the identity of "woman". My point — one that is vital not only to this chapter but to the thesis as a whole — is that an imagined 1970s feminism is pivotal both to present-day conceptions of that moment and to the possibilities of feminism's future. It is this that frames my approach to the entire thesis; it is the resilience of 1970s feminism that impels my desire to rethink the ways we remember that moment.⁵

Part One — Figuring Failure

In "Feminism, Institutionalism, and the Idiom of Failure", Wiegman observes that contemporary critique often makes its case according to ideals of political success or failure.⁶ Such critical activity is born in "disjuncture", if not "disidentification" since, in

⁵ While this question has in many ways framed my thesis from its very beginnings, most recently, the very same question has been crucial to Robyn Wiegman's treatment of academic feminism in the United States. See Wiegman, "Women's Studies: Interdisciplinary Imperatives, Again", *Feminist Studies*, vol. 27, no. 2, Summer 2001: pp. 514-518; Wiegman, "Academic Feminism Against Itself", National Women's Studies Association Plenary, Minneapolis, 16 June 2001, <http://www.duke.edu/womstud/NWSA%plenary.htm>; Wiegman, "Object Lessons: Men, Masculinity & the Sign Women", *Signs: Journal of Women & Culture in Society*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2001: pp. 355-388; Wiegman, "Feminism, Institutionalism & the Idiom of Failure", *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1999: pp. 107-136; Wiegman, "Apocalyptic".

⁶ It is important here to differentiate between the US and Australian context. Wiegman's concerns are in some respects peculiar to US feminism, in particular in terms of her insistence on the importance for present-day feminist politics of distinguishing between feminism as social movement and as academic knowledge production. This distinction is one, I argue, that is not of primary concern in debates about contemporary Australian feminism, in part since Australian feminism has a history of close connection to institutions other than the academy — in particular, in its relations with government. See for example, Hester Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators: Australian*

Wiegman's terms, "the present time of writing is never the future the critic strains to think".⁷ Acknowledging that such critique is constituted on the basis of a temporality that "generates value by promising to carry thought beyond the failure of the present", Wiegman asks: "What serves to guarantee knowledge as political progress?"⁸ In answering her own question with an assuredly pronounced "nothing", she makes clear the anxiety at the heart of academic feminism's critical claim. She asserts that academic feminism articulates a strategy for its own value and purpose by arguing that it can find a way out of the present and into the future. For Wiegman, it is through this process that "the anxiety over knowing and doing — over politics and academic production — is seemingly eased".⁹

In Australia in recent times, such opposition between knowing and doing has settled most contentiously in debates about feminism's recent past. For Jean Curthoys, whose recent book *Feminist Amnesia* engages in clear terms with the tension between knowing and doing, the political and the academic, it is the distinction between living "off" and living "for" one's intellectual project, in Weber's terms, that distinguishes between thinking of "dubious" intellectual value and that of genuine worth.¹⁰ "Genuine inquiry", Curthoys writes, "cannot be bureaucratically managed or squeezed into a steady promotion path since, necessarily, it is performed for its own sake, in its own time, and not primarily for external rewards".¹¹ Setting out to illustrate how contemporary

Femocrats & the State, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996 and Marian Sawer, *Sisters In Suits: Women & Public Policy in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990. The same can be said of Wiegman's emphasis on the question of generation, a question that has come to the fore in Australian feminism in the briefest of terms. See for example, Rosamund Else-Mitchell & Naomi Flutter (eds), *Talking Up: Young Women's Take on Feminism*, Spinifex Press, Melbourne, 1998 and Ann Curthoys, "Where is Feminism Now?" in Jenna Mead (ed), *Bodyjamming: Sexual Harassment, Feminism & Public Life*, Vintage, Sydney, 1997: pp. 189-212. And, as Elspeth Probyn argues, feminism in the Australian context takes quite a different form from the "generation wars" that have taken place overseas. According to Probyn, while in the North American context it is often those in the academy who fare badly — who are depicted as "out of touch" — in the Australian context, it is the women in academe who are valorised and those outside who are compared unfavourably with academic feminists. She refers in particular to the arguments of Catharine Lumby in *Bad Girls: The Media, Sex & Feminism in the 1990s*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997 and Mead (ed), *Bodyjamming*. See Elspeth Probyn, "Re: Generation. Women's Studies & the Disciplining of Ressentiment", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 27, 1998: p. 130.

⁷ Wiegman, "Idiom of Failure": p. 107.

⁸ Wiegman, "Idiom of Failure": p. 107.

⁹ Wiegman, "Idiom of Failure": p. 107. Wiegman examines Martha Nussbaum's critique of the work of Judith Butler in "The Professor of Parody: The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler", *The New Republic*, 22 February 1999: pp. 37-45. Most importantly, there are significant parallels between Nussbaum's argument and that of Curthoys in *Feminist Amnesia*.

¹⁰ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: especially pp. vii-ix.

¹¹ See J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: pp. vii-ix. In her interview in 1998, Jean Curthoys describes how she "now resist[s] the idea of a theoretical approach", insisting that "I don't think I have one

academic feminism has fallen from grace, she writes, in rather harsh terms, “[b]ehind the intellectual failure of this generation I find a political and moral failure”.¹² Curthoys’ formulation of intellectual practice here speaks to Wiegman’s figuring of the temporality that drives feminism’s critical claim. For Wiegman, failure is the unavoidable consequence of imagining political transformation, and by inhabiting the spectre of failure that haunts contemporary feminism she aims to disrupt the temporality of that critical claim.¹³ Following Wiegman, I am here concerned with Curthoys’ central contention that contemporary academic feminism is the corrupted form of a once moral and ethical movement, an account driven by the spectre of failure.

Jean Curthoys’ critical strategy is a deliberate counter to what she defines as the “forgetting” of contemporary feminist thought. This, she argues, has tended to rest its self-understanding, indeed its very sensibility of the political, on an ideal of its own originality and superiority: “on the prevailing academic feminist view that there is something special and unique about the emergence of recent feminist thought”.¹⁴ Reliant on a reference to 1970s feminism as unsophisticated and lacking in complexity, contemporary feminism deploys feminism’s past as a figure offering a designated point of departure in a history of linear progression from then to now. Rather than subscribing to the idea of feminism having reached its political time, Curthoys cites the present as the tense in which feminism has gone wrong. Reading failure as the primary characteristic of academic feminism’s present tense, *Feminist Amnesia* is exemplary in offering a vision of “moral” feminism to counter the “political and intellectual mediocrity” of those who prevail in contemporary academic feminism.¹⁵ While Curthoys is not alone in her proposal that contemporary academic feminism is a distortion, if not a betrayal of its

— or ever had one”. Clarifying her comments, she remarks, “It’s not because I think ‘the real is transparent’ or some such but because I think people who live ‘for’ rather than ‘off’ inquiry (as Weber puts it) put the problems they are trying to solve first — they get lost in the issues. Now all sorts of insights and methods may become relevant to solving those problems but so long as they — the questions — are the primary interest then there is no restriction on the answers or where they will lead”. For, as Jean Curthoys maintains, “the negative effect of... the stress on ‘theory’ [is] that attention is focused on the ‘theory’, ‘discourse’ or whatever and not on the problems... And this seems to me to be a real decline because when one is busy producing theory without interest in the problems — or using the problems as a vehicle to show off the ‘theory’ — then the result is of dubious intellectual value”. See Jean Curthoys, “Email Interview”, 22 July - 4 August 1998.

¹² J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. ix.

¹³ Wiegman, “Idiom of Failure”: pp. 107-110.

¹⁴ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. ix.

¹⁵ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. ix.

earlier forms, she is — in the Australian context — one who goes to great lengths to locate the undoing of feminism from within.¹⁶

Written in an effort to recover the legacy of Women's Liberation wisdom, *Feminist Amnesia* is premised on the idea that feminism's political success in the present has been possible "only by way of the repression and distortion of its morality".¹⁷ In seeking an explanation for the repression of liberation theory, Curthoys suggests that the moral demands it posed were too great. Liberation theory, she contends, contains a basic but demanding moral position: "it clearly presupposes a principled opposition to power as such" and it understands this opposition as "a necessity of ordinary life".¹⁸ For Curthoys, the essential ideas of liberation theory "continue to provide contemporary feminism with its enormous moral appeal", persistently engendering support for feminism's rejection of arbitrary privilege.¹⁹ But it is precisely the incoherence between the moral demands of liberation theory and the formulation of contemporary academic feminism that has made the "systematic and necessary forgetting of [such] socially threatening ideas" compulsory.²⁰ For Curthoys, feminism's switch "from genuinely opposing power to seeking power for a highly specific group" was a response to the realisation that "emerging from this very opposition were a growing number of opportunities for power".²¹ It was this realisation, according to Curthoys, that prompted feminism rapidly to abandon its very moral and very radical aspirations. Yet without its moral appeal, that "which prevents a self-interested political movement [from] declaring its self-interested character", Curthoys argues that academic feminism would be unable to function with such great accomplishment.²² What is lost, she suggests, is an ethic straightforward and easily undertaken in the everyday, one obfuscated and confused by an elite in order to give it qualities of "specialness".²³

For Jean Curthoys, the shift that has occurred is one "from the plane of human action to an abstract one".²⁴ Displaced by a range of theories, "many of the postmodern kind" — most of which, she contends, proclaim their own superior radicalism and almost none of

¹⁶ See also Ann Curthoys, "Helen Garner's *The First Stone*", *Australian Feminist Studies*, no. 21, Autumn 1995: pp. 203-212.

¹⁷ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 158.

¹⁸ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 6.

¹⁹ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 6.

²⁰ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 6.

²¹ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 8.

²² J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 8.

²³ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 8.

²⁴ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 11.

which have any direct moral content — feminism 1970s-style has been forgotten in present-day feminism's hasty embrace of institutionalisation and all that goes with it.²⁵ In contemporary feminism's success, its "ambivalent attitude to status and power" and its desertion of an ethic "sought more against than with any prevailing social norms", Curthoys locates its collaboration with "evil".²⁶ Contemporary feminism, she suggests, has domesticated the political enterprise, parodying real intellectual practice. It was the political subjectivity in the early days of the feminist movement that was unique and transformative precisely in its ability to inhabit futurity in the present. For Curthoys, it is the loss of that political subjectivity that generates a feeling of the present as a violent interruption of revolutionary time.

In trying to recover the forgotten moral position of feminism dedicated to an ethic of "the irreducible value of human beings", Curthoys repeatedly returns to "real political life" as the measure of the truth that contemporary feminism has abandoned.²⁷ "There is here no 'real life' solution to the opposition between the political life and the autonomous individual search for wisdom", she writes.²⁸ "The practical synthesis only lasted a moment before the movement transformed into an orthodox political movement strongly attached to and motivated by considerations of social status".²⁹ For Curthoys, to be dedicated to a "real political life" is feminism's historical inheritance and academic feminism's critical, as well as distinctly moral, imperative. She maintains it is this ethic — one that refuses the collusion that operates on "a fundamental disparity in the evaluation of the worth of human beings" — which remains the "significant moral truth in feminism".³⁰ In reclaiming the oppositional formulation of feminism's past, Curthoys contends that 1970s feminism made genuine efforts to implement such a morality in "everyday life", efforts she describes as "extraordinary" in their bridging of the gap between theory and practice.³¹

Figuring her own critique of contemporary academic feminism as a "high risk" activity, she describes it as a task undertaken in the hope that "others" will not "pay the costs of

²⁵ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 3. For critical discussion of Jean Curthoys' attack on contemporary academic feminism in these terms see Rosalyn Diprose, "What Is (Feminist) Philosophy?", *Hypatia*, vol. 15, no. 2, Spring 2000: pp. 115-132.

²⁶ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. viii & p. 157.

²⁷ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 7.

²⁸ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 7.

²⁹ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 7.

³⁰ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 7.

³¹ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 160.

risks taken by oneself".³² In the conspiratorial tone that marks her positioning, she frames herself as survivor of a once moral feminism. In dramatic terms, Jean Curthoys credits her desire to "make some protest on behalf of those of whom I have personal knowledge (students and academics) whose confidence, abilities and career have been stamped on by academic feminism", with giving her the motivation to work through the "mountains of mind-numbing literature" under which the morality of Women's Liberation has been hidden.³³ It is, moreover, precisely in acting on the morality of Women's Liberation — in its obligation to act against the status quo — that Curthoys pinpoints its "enforced" forgetting. "There is an effective prohibition in feminist intellectual circles of any positive identification with the early movement", she contends.³⁴ Citing Meaghan Morris' observation that "the most dreadful condemnation stray feminists have to fear... is dismissal with the last dinosaurs of the late sixties", Curthoys makes clear the costs of her own self-identification with that moment: "no self-respecting feminist can afford to be associated with the politics or ideas of that time", she writes.³⁵ Important in establishing her qualifications as critic of contemporary academic feminism, the biography on the inside of the cover of *Feminist Amnesia* figures Jean Curthoys as one pivotal to the inauguration of the project of academic feminism. Mapping the trajectory of Curthoys' intellectual life, it begins with a description of her as both "pioneering member of the Women's Liberation Movement" and "one of two teachers of the first course in feminist theory at Sydney University in 1973", a course "notorious in the history of universities for having been instituted only after one of the biggest strikes ever of staff and students".

Having confirmed her status as intellectual and activist, and having demonstrated the strength of her investment in and connection to feminist scholarship, it goes on to describe Curthoys' disillusionment with contemporary feminist thought:

³² J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. xi. She hesitates to name those who have helped her in writing the book, an activity she "regards as risk taking", explaining that though "there are those who deserve my thanks for support, encouragement and ideas", she "shall not mention" them.

³³ This quote is from an article she published in *Quadrant* in 1998 that dealt in part with her critique of Mead's edited collection *Bodyjamming*. See Jean Curthoys, "Do Men & Women Live in the Same World?", *Quadrant*, April 1998: p. 16. In this article, Curthoys returns to the arguments she made in *Feminist Amnesia*, expanding on a rather brief point about the parallels between her own work and the critiques of feminism contained in Helen Garner's work of non-fiction, *The First Stone: Some Questions About Sex & Power*, Picador, Sydney, 1995. See J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. x.

³⁴ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 5.

³⁵ The Morris quote is from *The Pirate's Fiancee: Feminism, Reading, Postmodernism*, Verso, London, 1988: p. 69, cited in J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. 1. The same quote is cited by Jean Curthoys in her "Memoirs of a Feminist Dinosaur", *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 13, no. 27, April 1998: p. 55.

After the resulting split in the Philosophy Department, she lectured in the 'radical' department of General Philosophy for some years. Her increasing opposition to 'radical' academia culminated in her transfer to the 'conservative' department of Traditional and Modern philosophy, where she continues to lecture now.

What distinguishes this account of Curthoys' engagement with the academy and feminism is the disjuncture apparent between her positioning as "insider", as one who was there and who inaugurated feminism's institutional intervention, and the persistence with which she claims her place as "outsider", as one who rejected the "conformist" life of the "radical" intellectuals around her, and one most significantly, who is therefore "outsider" to contemporary feminism's "insider" status (and state) in the contemporary academy. Yet it is in this disjuncture precisely, between the ethical basis of feminism's beginnings and its subsequent corruption — the distinction that she maintains has constituted her own intellectual life — that Curthoys locates the contradiction of feminism's contemporary form. This contradiction, made plain via her own connection to "a traditional but little understood morality", is what she insists compels her to confront contemporary academic feminism.³⁶ This morality, she writes, "now seems to require that I take a stand against its subsequent corruption".³⁷

The wider context within which Jean Curthoys' analysis takes place is the end of identity politics and the death of political optimism. Curthoys' narrative of present failure can be read as an instance of the Left melancholia that Wendy Brown defines. In "Resisting Left Melancholy", Brown approaches the issue of producing utopian affect in a present that makes no demands for "revolution" by returning to Walter Benjamin's considerations of temporality and revolutionary politics. Benjamin's notion of "left melancholy" served as a means to characterise a persistent political attachment to the past, according to Brown, one that:

represents not only a refusal to come to terms with the particular character of the present... [but] an attachment to the object of one's sorrowful loss [that] supercedes any desire to recover from this loss, to live free of it in the present, to be unburdened by it.³⁸

³⁶ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. xi.

³⁷ J. Curthoys, *Feminist Amnesia*: p. xi.

³⁸ Wendy Brown, "Resisting Left Melancholy", *Boundary 2*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1999: p. 20. The following passage draws heavily on Wiegman's use of Brown in "Apocalyptic": pp. 806-807.

In using "left melancholy" to define what has otherwise been referred to as the "crisis of the left", Brown diagnoses an attachment to the past, one that in Wiegman's assessment, "makes the present politically (as well as historically and temporally) incomprehensible".³⁹ Acknowledging that "the losses... of the Left are many in our own time", Brown suggests, "[we] suffer with the sense of not only a lost movement but a lost historical moment; not only a lost theoretical and empirical coherence but a lost way of life and a lost course of pursuits".⁴⁰ For Brown, as for Benjamin, left melancholy is a response to the end of utopian affect, an infatuation with the "good, the right, the true".⁴¹ In this attachment, it is the Left that becomes a conservative force by conserving the past; its radicalism is dismembered by temporal immobility.

In writing the present as the scene of both crisis and failure, Jean Curthoys' aim is to guarantee the past as the unspoiled origin not only for utopian affect but for a (paradoxically) normative discourse of the political. In effect, Curthoys preserves the past as "transhistorically adequate", as she defines the present as out of, indeed against, political time.⁴² With this in mind, I contend that Curthoys' political attachment to the past is one motivated at least as much by a fear of failure in the future, as by a sense of past loss. For one, Curthoys locates the end of feminism in today's academy.

In feminism's institutionalisation in the academy, Curthoys pinpoints feminism's cooption into orthodox notions of success and elitism, and further, into prevailing social norms. For Braidotti, institutionalisation has signalled a moving away from an orthodoxy of feminism and of politics. According to Braidotti, feminism no longer subscribes to a singular conception of what counts as feminism or politics or knowledge, indeed it unveils the workings of power in operation in past conceptions of radicalism, feminism and politics. For Curthoys, it is the temporality of feminism's critical claim that has been betrayed. For Braidotti, that temporality is the source of her faith in the feminist project, which engenders her faith in the present. She invests in a narrative of progress, writing time as the utopian becoming of feminism's perfectibility. Here, Braidotti provides an interesting counter to Curthoys' version of feminist history, which tends to rest its self-understanding and its very sense of the political on an ideal of intellectual practice.

³⁹ Wiegman, "Apocalyptic": p. 806.

⁴⁰ Brown, "Resisting": p. 22.

⁴¹ Brown, "Resisting": p. 22.

⁴² Wiegman, "Apocalyptic": p. 807.

Braidotti's critical strategy is a carefully argued riposte to what she defines as the "cultural arrogance" and "politics of universalising" typical of 1970s feminism.⁴³ In a reversal of the temporal plotting proposed by Curthoys, Braidotti figures the present as the point of feminism's political time, and the past as the scene of its failure. Consumed by feminism's critical claim — by the promise of carrying feminist thought beyond the present — Braidotti invests in accusation and attack in order to rescue feminism's future from a certain type of feminism; it is the return of 1970s feminism and indeed, the figure of the 1970s feminist that she most fears. In merging this narrative of feminism's history with the event of Helen Garner's now infamous dismissal in 1972 from Fitzroy High for conducting "unauthorised sex education classes", Braidotti's "Remembering Fitzroy High" works to reinforce rather than to interrogate a progress narrative that pits a culturally insensitive and uncritical 1970s feminism against a self-reflexive, multiple and diverse present-day feminism.⁴⁴ In leaving the determining historical polarity intact, she defines the present against a fixed and unitary past. In maintaining a strict and linear demarcation of present and past, Braidotti's narrative provides a touchstone in the dominant contemporary understanding of academic feminist methodology, as well as a way of authorising present-day feminist theoretical activity. In this regard, she articulates a strategy for present-day feminism's own value and purpose.

Written in an effort to open up the event that was Garner's dismissal, "Remembering Fitzroy High" is figured around the idea of present-day feminism as an interruption of the set of assumptions fundamental to feminism's recent past. For Braidotti, present-day feminism exemplifies "the rigour of a new kind of self-reflexivity for critical intellectuals"; like a "tidal wave" it "swept away" the methodological vulgarities of 1970s feminism and in particular, the "rhetoric of universal liberation".⁴⁵ According to Braidotti, it was "self-reflexivity" precisely that was absent both from Garner's conduct in 1972 and most significantly, from the conception of culture crucial to 1970s feminism itself. "For us", Braidotti writes, "high culture did not coincide, as it did for white Australia, with a faithful imitation of British culture".⁴⁶ Where the problem arose, she

⁴³ Braidotti, "Remembering": p. 143. For further analysis of "Remembering Fitzroy High" in relation to *ressentiment* see Probyn, "Re: Generation": pp. 129-136.

⁴⁴ Braidotti, "Remembering": p. 130.

⁴⁵ Braidotti, "Remembering": p. 137.

⁴⁶ Braidotti, "Remembering": p. 124.

suggests, was in feminism's tendency "to equate this difference with the absence of culture" — "one of the blindspots in the heart of white Australia".⁴⁷

In attempting to reinscribe the voices of those marginal at the time within a position of cultural authority, Braidotti asserts that the assumptions of superiority that structured feminism's conception of the "cultural" and the "political" — what she characterises as "outdated notions of Anglo-Saxon superiority" — were the source of Garner's (and feminism's) profound "inability to think in terms of difference".⁴⁸ For Braidotti, Garner's position "was consolidated on and sealed by the exclusion — in both material and symbolic ways — of the non-white, the non-Australian, the non-educated", a position exemplified by Garner in the way she came to privilege her own "views of sexual liberation over everything else".⁴⁹

For Braidotti, who reads failure as the primary characteristic of feminism's recent past, it is feminism's political subjectivity in the present-day that is unique and transformative precisely in its ability to inhabit feminism's futurity in the present. It is the shift toward that political subjectivity — and in turn the abandonment of 1970s subjectivity — that for her generates the feeling of the present as the culmination of feminism's political time. Indeed, Braidotti's account of the present as the future's political, if not transcendent, guarantee is grounded in an incessant "presentism". Asserting the moral and intellectual supremacy of present-day feminism's methodological strategies, she writes:

'Authenticity', 'liberation', 'pleasure' and 'joy' are the words that recur most often in Garner's account of her exchange with her students. It reads like a manual of Marcuse-style activity, which I find rather naïve in these Foucauldian days of post-sexual liberation politics.⁵⁰

In this, her characterisation of the present as "radical break" from the past figures the formation of academic feminism around a developmental model of feminist thought, with a narrative of progression and an affect of *ressentiment*.

⁴⁷ Braidotti, "Remembering": p. 124. Braidotti argues that this "cultural blindspot" was reflected not only by feminism but by the Left in Australia more widely.

⁴⁸ Braidotti, "Remembering": p. 127.

⁴⁹ Braidotti, "Remembering": p. 132.

⁵⁰ Braidotti, "Remembering": p. 136.

In straightforward terms, *ressentiment* describes the individualising antagonism that is the fuel for Braidotti's retelling. In Nietzsche's terms, *ressentiment* is "the moralising revenge of the powerless", and "the triumph of the weak as weak".⁵¹ It provides a position of articulation grounded in suffering which in turn constructs a hierarchy of pain. In political theorist Wendy Brown's terms, as a force that generates circles of suffering and blame, *ressentiment* inevitably leads to a situation whereby "every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for her suffering, more exactly an agent; [and] still more specifically a guilty agent who is susceptible to suffering".⁵² For Braidotti, it is her own proximity to the harm wreaked on migrants by Garner and "her generation" that personalises the teleology of the event and that installs pain as the foundation of her demand for recognition. "The effect of the Garner affair", she writes, "was a massive silencing of people like me, my mother, my brother and all those who became pawns in the struggle between Old and New Aussie Lefts".⁵³

In her explorations of the problematic of political identity, Brown argues that *ressentiment* is the structuring force in the subject formation of politicised identity itself. In her terms, the demand for recognition as identity is founded on "a politics of recrimination that seeks to avenge the hurt even while it affirms it, discursively codifies it".⁵⁴ In Braidotti's protests against marginalisation and subordination, her attachment to her own exclusion is made clear; her identity as feminist is premised on this exclusion for its very existence. In framing her narrative around the methodological emphases of 1970s feminism and more so her own "exploitation" at its hands, she makes pain the defining feature of feminism's relation to and understanding of her construction as a female subject, or rather her feminist becoming. She recounts her emergence as feminist from that moment even as she denies any connection: "I want to restate the position of a migrant feminist who literally had no place to speak from in 1972 and even less in 1997", she declares.⁵⁵ In effect, Braidotti posits feminism as an identification that arises at the scene of women's disempowerment and loss, specifically her own disempowerment and loss. The process of recounting her "fragmented memories of the Fitzroy High days", she suggests, was always marked by the recognition that it was "one of the most painful periods" of her life

⁵¹ Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power & Freedom in Late Modernity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995: pp. 66-67

⁵² Brown, *States of Injury*: p. 68.

⁵³ Braidotti, "Remembering": p. 145.

⁵⁴ See Brown, *States of Injury*: p. 74.

⁵⁵ Braidotti, "Remembering": p. 144.

and also a moment she recalled “with little pleasure”.⁵⁶ The vocabulary of pain and injury that here structures her reflections on the past also frames the way she positions herself in the present.

For Brown, the relation between present and past is crucial to the logic of *ressentiment*. Contemporary politicised identity, she argues, rails against time itself, against an inability to exert its power over the past by investing in “a perverse kind of mastery” — a mastery that triumphs over the past by remaking the present against the terms of the past.⁵⁷ For Braidotti, the present that she calls into thinking is an interruption of the assumptions of feminism’s past. She remarks: “My whole work is based on difference and on differences among women. So I have the one relief of seeing to what extent my theoretical framework offers an alternative to the monological discursive economy of Garner’s generation”.⁵⁸ In drawing the distinction between feminism’s past and its present, Braidotti positions herself as witness to the fullness of feminism’s time. Yet in the virtue that she claims as survivor of 1970s feminism and the “war of positions” around which her formulation of a new politics — a move away from politics as it was conceived in the past — is configured, she reinstates the very individualising she aims to redress. Her positioning is thus consumed with pain historically and in the present.

Part Two — Nomenclature

For Rosi Braidotti and Jean Curthoys, it is the politicised identities that feminism has produced in its articulation of the intellectual and the political that are crucial. For Elspeth Probyn, who draws a distinction between the formation of feminist identity and its relation to feminism as a discipline in the contemporary academy, academic feminism not only produces forms of politicised identity, but has itself become identity.⁵⁹ As an intellectual project whose imperative is the production of politicised identity, academic feminism is entangled in the tension between the political and the intellectual. At the

⁵⁶ Braidotti, “Remembering”: p. 145.

⁵⁷ Brown, *States of Injury*: p. 72.

⁵⁸ Braidotti, “Remembering”: p. 145.

⁵⁹ This is a distinction Probyn makes in connecting Wendy Brown’s argument concerning the formations of politicised identity and *ressentiment* to feminism and to Women’s Studies as a discipline. See Probyn, “Re: Generation”: p. 132.

same time, as I have demonstrated, the very emergence of a field like academic feminism is predicated on the blurring of the distinction between the political and the intellectual.⁶⁰

When academic feminism emerged as a way to claim knowledge in contemporary Australian universities, its practitioners articulated the project in the language of identity, as the study of women, by women and for women.⁶¹ In "Object Lessons", Wiegman contends that the failure of the identitarian rubric "woman" is symptomatic of a present in which "the articulation of women as an object of study has proven to be different from, while nonetheless the referent for, its deployment as a political category".⁶² Though the differentiation of subject (knower) and object (the known) is an affect generated to some extent via the formation of feminist knowledge, for Wiegman it is such deliberation that at the same time drives academic feminism's move away from "woman" — the identity intrinsic to its own self-definition. It is further such deliberation that has in effect transformed the field's imaginary, "giving *gender* priority as the organising trope for interrogations into a new set of bodies, identities, political acts, and critical practices".⁶³ Here, I draw on Wiegman in order to assert that the desire to find a name that is intellectually capacious enough to be immune to the kinds of exclusions and omissions we have found to be attached to "woman" is implicated in academic feminism's desire to settle the problematic of identity on which its institutional knowledge formation is founded. These exclusions and omissions are exemplified in a set of received mythologies animated by the figure of an imagined 1970s feminism.

There is a rhetorical gesture of inclusion, or of "equality", that often times inaugurates and accompanies the move to Gender Studies, especially in those institutional domains that are contemplating or have recently changed their name from Women's Studies in Australia. That gesture poses a number of questions about the expectations and ideals that govern academic feminism's desire to settle the problematic of identity on which its institutional knowledge formation is founded. The move to gender is most often the product of a desire to avoid the problem of "woman" and to promote the inclusion of men. The anxiety or discomfort through which the perceived absence or exclusion of men

⁶⁰ See Probyn, "Re: Generation": p. 132.

⁶¹ See especially chapters three to five.

⁶² Wiegman, "Object Lessons": p. 380.

⁶³ Wiegman, "Object Lessons": p. 381. For Wiegman, it is precisely the demand for referential coherence that she aims to disrupt. Indeed her goal is "to define the impossibility of coherence as the central problematic and most important animating feature of feminism as a knowledge formation in the contemporary academy". See Wiegman, "Object Lessons": p. 356.

in academic feminism is frequently enunciated and, moreover, the desire to settle this problematic of identity is fuelled by *ressentiment*.

In comments indicative of the ways such desire has been articulated in the present, Professor Paul Thom, then Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the Australian National University, made a number of observations about a faculty restructure that initiated a merging of the undergraduate Women's Studies major with that of Critical and Cultural Studies.⁶⁴ Arguing that the ANU Arts Faculty's decision to merge the two existing majors under the title "Gender, Sexuality and Culture" was one made on the basis that "Women's Studies doesn't really mean the same as [it did] when it was first set up", Thom firmly fixed the intellectual project articulated around the identity of woman in the past.⁶⁵ The structure of time implicit in his narration figured the present as a moment of discontinuity; one, as Wiegman puts it, in which the identitarian rubric "woman" has failed, specifically "because the articulation of women as an object of study has proven to be different from, although still the referent for, its deployment as a political category".⁶⁶

While Thom's formulation of the transformation from Women's to Gender Studies consigns "woman" to a state of critical inertia, as incapable of reflecting the scope of knowledge projects produced under the rubric "Women's Studies", at the same time it signals the ascendancy of a new set of potential objects of study, none of which can be organised under the category of "woman". These new objects of study, including men and masculinity, lesbian and gay communities, and emergent transgender identities are here conceived as the critical content of the category of gender, and therefore by definition the referents for the faulty universalism of "woman" — they make clear "woman's" partiality.⁶⁷ As a set of new identity claims, their incorporation into feminism's imaginary displaces onto "gender" the optimistic hope that a relation of

⁶⁴ See Diana Thorp, "ANU Makes 10 Go Into 4", Higher Education Supplement, *The Australian*, 12 July 2000: p. 40. Before the new Gender, Sexuality and Culture major, which was offered to first year students for the first time, there were two existing majors: Women's Studies and Critical and Cultural Studies. Both were "program majors", which means that they consisted of any two first year points in Arts, plus four later year units. The new Gender, Sexuality and Culture major is on a par with other discipline majors. While there was a preexisting Cultural and Cultural Studies major, it was not very well developed at the point of the merger. Indeed there was no first year, there was only one core unit and Honours was not offered. Women's Studies, in contrast, was far more developed as an institutional body. It offered Honours, as well as several core courses prior to the merger. Many thanks to Rosanne Kennedy for her assistance in clarifying this point.

⁶⁵ See Thorp, "ANU Makes": p. 40.

⁶⁶ See Wiegman, "Object Lessons": p. 380.

⁶⁷ See Wiegman, "Object Lessons": p. 381. For discussion of race and feminism see chapter four.

consistency between field formation and its object of study can be achieved. In this regard, the categorical failure of “woman” constitutes academic feminism as distinctly uncomfortable with itself.⁶⁸ We are left with the impression that in the present, the intellectual project articulated around the identity of “woman” no longer knows how to think, and more profoundly, that the past — represented here as a site of error — can only be “corrected” by substituting gender for women.⁶⁹

More often than not, the question of the categorical function of gender emerges in the context of debate about Women’s Studies and its proper objects of study. But in debates about whether or not to make such a shift, intellectual and pragmatic arguments coalesce, with arguments for a change in name including: the politics of student populations for whom “gender” may be perceived as more conservative than “women”; institutional pressures to “redefine” Women’s Studies as a domain open to and inclusive of men; institutionally enforced mergings of departments to schools; moves made in order to

⁶⁸ In the Australian context, Ann Curthoys is one who finds the spectre of academic feminism’s political end in the fragmentation of “woman”. Despite figuring her article “Gender Studies in Australia: A History” in productive terms as a report “written at the end of one millennium, for readers in the next”, and expressing her longing to “end with a sense of an ending, as well as an expectancy that something new is about to emerge in its place”, there is a palpable sense of trepidation in Ann Curthoys’ observations. Indeed, though tentative, she moves toward an expression of the end of feminism as we know it. See Ann Curthoys, “Gender Studies in Australia: A History”, *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 15, no. 31, 2000: p. 32. Her sense of discomfort — articulated through such a lack of surety — is generous in its refusal to name or attempt to outline her own vision for such a future. Yet it resonates with the sense that academic feminism (or perhaps specific academic feminists) no longer knows how to think. Whilst acknowledging the success of feminist knowledge in the academy, Ann Curthoys argues that such success is “double-edged”. She insists that a great deal of individual and institutional effort is being put into Gender Studies. But what accompanies such effort — something she describes as of “serious concern” — is best described as “a growth of disciplinary specialisation and a growing separation from ongoing social, cultural and political developments”. Ann Curthoys draws on the work of young scholars to illustrate her point, asserting that the “focus of young scholars in the social sciences on gender seems to be declining in favour of studies of sexuality, the body, place, environment, ethnicity and race”. “Even Women’s Studies programmes seem to be full of doctoral students for whom ‘gender’ is a secondary rather than a primary concern”, she writes. See A. Curthoys, “Gender Studies”: p. 32. What animates Ann Curthoys’ analysis is, on the whole, anxiety. She contends that gender as a category of analysis is “declining as a focus of analysis and theoretical innovation” in the contemporary academy. Specifically, she notes that the “marvellous body” of scholarship produced in the last 25 years or so “may be in a progress of transmutation into something else, into a scholarship where categories such as gender (and race and class) cease to carry the theoretical weight they once did”. See A. Curthoys, “Gender Studies”: p. 32. Ann Curthoys’ “Gender Studies in Australia” first appeared as Ann Curthoys, “Gender in the Social Sciences in Australia” in Academy of Social Sciences of Australia, *Challenges for the Social Sciences and Australia*, Australian Government Publishing Services, Canberra, 1998: pp. 177-217.

⁶⁹ See Leora Auslander, “Do Women’s + Feminist + Men’s + Lesbian and Gay + Queer Studies = Gender Studies?”, (Joan Wallach Scott (ed), “Women’s Studies on the Edge”), *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, Fall 1997: pp. 1-30.

reflect more accurately the scope of knowledge projects undertaken in the field.⁷⁰ And all of the latter take place in an academic culture in which money and technical skills — framed in terms of the commonly asked question, “What kind of job will I get with this degree?” — are crucial to students.⁷¹

The shift from Women’s to Gender Studies is one that has taken place in universities across Australia.⁷² The change pivotal to Thom’s narrative, whereby the Centre for Women’s Studies at ANU became part of the new School of Humanities in the Faculty of Arts and took up the title “Gender, Sexuality and Culture” to refer to its undergraduate major, was by no means straightforward. The move from “women” to “gender” at undergraduate level was not accompanied by an equivalent name change for those affiliated with the Centre’s graduate program. Postgraduate students at ANU remain officially attached to the Centre for Women’s Studies.⁷³ Those that have followed ANU in the move to Gender Studies include a number of other universities amongst those first to offer “Women’s Studies” in the 1970s. At Adelaide University, the department formerly known as Women’s Studies merged in 1997 with Labour Studies to form the Department of Social Inquiry, at the same time changing its name to Gender Studies.⁷⁴ At the University of Sydney, the Department of Women’s Studies made the shift to Gender Studies in 1998. At the time, the Department explained its decision as one “in no way heralding a shift away from a concern for women’s issues”.⁷⁵ Instead, it argued that the change was initiated on the basis of the Department’s desire to place those issues “within a theoretical framework that interrogates the cultures and histories of gender and

⁷⁰ See for instance Rebecca Devitt and Melinda Mawson, “What’s In A Name? 25 Years of Women’s Studies at the ANU”, School of Humanities, Faculty of Arts, Australian National University, http://www.anu.edu.au/womens_studies/page2.html (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁷¹ For discussion of the institutional pressures faced by academic feminism in Australian universities, see Jane Kenway and Diana Langmead, “Is There a Future for Feminism in the Contemporary University?” in Linda Hancock (ed), *Women, Public Policy & the State*, Macmillan, South Yarra, 1999: pp. 192-204. Many of the web sites for Gender/Women’s Studies address this very question.

⁷² For account of which Australian universities have and have not changed see Chilla Bulbeck’s “W(h)ither Women’s Studies in the New Millenium [sic] — to Gender Studies? (A Review of University Websites)”, *Australian Women’s Studies Association Newsletter*, vol. 4, no. 1, June 2000: pp. 4-5.

⁷³ The issue of nomenclature has been the subject of some debate amongst graduate students at ANU, particularly in relation to the name of the Centre and the kinds of work being done under its auspices. Such debate was a feature of discussions held at the half-day symposium celebrating 25 years of Women’s Studies at the ANU, held on 3 August 2001. For an account of the day’s proceedings and discussion on questions and debates over the identity and content of the Women’s Studies program at ANU see Devitt & Mawson, “What’s In A Name?”.

⁷⁴ See http://www.arts.adelaide.edu.au/social_inquiry/programs/programs.htm (accessed 22 March 2002).

sexuality".⁷⁶ Flinders University, meanwhile, has retained the title of Women's Studies, continuing to offer students a major in Women's Studies as part of its Bachelor of Arts degree.⁷⁷

Like Flinders, Deakin University and LaTrobe University — both in Victoria — continue to teach Women's Studies.⁷⁸ In Sydney, Macquarie University maintains its Institute for Women's Studies, offering undergraduate programs in Gender Studies and Women's Studies.⁷⁹ At Monash University, the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research, housed in the School of Political and Social Inquiry teaches at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.⁸⁰ Also choosing to utilise both women and gender to cover its offerings, the University of New England teaches Women's and Gender Studies through its School of English, Communication and Theatre.⁸¹ At the University of New South Wales, the undergraduate major in Arts and Social Science is called Women's Studies and the postgraduate program goes by the name "Women's Studies and Gender Studies".⁸² Though courses are taught under the rubric "Gender Studies" at the University of Wollongong, the program is described as having "the motivating force of Women's Studies".⁸³

Universities such as Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia offer a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Gender Studies, which includes courses in "Race, Class and Gender", "Desire, Sexuality and the Body", "Queer Studies" and "Gender and the Popular".⁸⁴ The School of Humanities at Griffith University in Queensland has a Gender Studies major, which includes "Families, Law and Ethics", "Gender, Culture and

⁷⁵ See Bulbeck's "W(h)ither Women's Studies", in which she cites this quote from the web page of the Department of Gender Studies at the University of Sydney: p. 5.

⁷⁶ See Bulbeck's "W(h)ither Women's Studies": p. 5. At the beginning of 2002, the web page for Gender Studies at the University of Sydney was redesigned. The Department's change of name is not addressed on the new web page. See <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/departs/gender/> (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁷⁷ See <http://www.ssn.flinders.edu.au/wmst/> (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁷⁸ See for example the website for Women's Studies at Deakin University <http://arts.deakin.edu.au/guymmer/wshp/> (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁷⁹ Macquarie's Institute for Women's Studies describes itself as the "coordinating centre for research, teaching and community work in gender, feminist and women's studies". See <http://www.iws.mq.edu.au/> (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁸⁰ See <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/ws/> (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁸¹ See <http://www.une.edu.au/arts/WomGend/womgend.htm> (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁸² See <http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/womenstudies/undergrad.htm> and <http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/womenstudies/postgrad.htm> (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁸³ See http://www.uow.edu.au/discover/courses/yr2001/dept_ArtGest.html (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁸⁴ See <http://comcult.curtin.edu.au/bags/htm> (accessed 22 March 2002).

Representation", "Sociology of Identity" and "Gender and Sexuality".⁸⁵ At the University of Melbourne, what was Women's Studies is now referred to as an interdisciplinary Gender Studies program.⁸⁶ And the University of South Australia has a Research Centre for Gender Studies within the Division of Education, Arts and Sciences.⁸⁷

If, as the shift from "women" to "gender" infers, gender is the solution — the intellectually capacious answer immune to the kinds of exclusions and omissions feminists have found to be attached to the category of "woman" — it gains such ascendancy through a presentism that presumes such exclusions and omissions have come to light only in the present.⁸⁸ What such a characterisation of gender forgets is that men and masculinity have elicited critical and cultural feminist commentary before, as I demonstrated in chapter three. For Thom, the impetus for the move from women to gender at ANU was "change", namely in "the aims and the idea" of Women's Studies. Implying that the participation of male students was stimulus for the name change, he notes that "Women's Studies staff were keen to enrol more male students".⁸⁹ In Thom's account, the shift from women to gender is constituted as a canny institutional move, one guaranteed to increase enrolments in an academic environment where numbers have never mattered more. The persistent priority given to men as normative subjects of the university, and the increased fear in contemporary culture that the academy is being feminised because of the greater ratio of women to men undergraduates, are here critical contextual issues. Such tireless articulations of the "crisis of masculinity", similarly enunciated in the anxiety that drives discussion of how curriculum changes have resulted in girls doing better than boys at school, are crucial, especially in light of the continuing absence of women from many disciplines within the academy.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ See <http://www.gu.edu.au/school/hum/content9.html> (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁸⁶ See <http://www.womens-studies.unimelb.edu.au> (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁸⁷ See <http://www.unisa.edu.au/cgs/> (accessed 22 March 2002).

⁸⁸ See Wiegman, "Object Lessons": pp. 358-363.

⁸⁹ See Thorp, "ANU Makes": p. 40.

⁹⁰ In examining the impact of questions of gender in the humanities and social sciences in Australia, Ann Curthoys notes the continuing absence of questions of gender outside the realms of the humanities and social sciences. See A. Curthoys, "Gender Studies": pp. 19-38. In the Australian context most recently, the question of the absence of women from particular disciplines in the academy has been taken up in the context of a campaign for an interdisciplinary Women's Studies program at the University of Technology, Sydney. Although UTS offers a major in Women's Studies within its Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, from the middle of 2001 a group of women — mostly academics — began advocating for a truly interdisciplinary program. To date the campaign has achieved little by way of success. In her examinations of academic feminism in the US, Wiegman notes the importance of what she calls "the sexual division of knowledge". For Wiegman, of vital importance is the question of "how we produce an institutional site that intervenes in the present and future of the university's organisation of knowledge... one that will require the mobility of women to achieve a foothold in those areas that

In his conflation of the inclusion of men and the ascendancy of gender, Thom performs what is his narrative's most persistent strategy: the framing of men's participation as signifier of feminism's "opening up", and the characterisation of the "problem" of men as peculiar to the present. In asserting gender's capacity for critical mobility purely on the basis of its ability to make room for men, Thom's narrative is reliant on an idea of woman conceived in its most reductive terms. His formulation of gender is dependent on a projection of stasis onto both feminism and the female body; that is, woman is fixed merely as referent for the particular and for sexual difference.⁹¹ In this rendering, gender acts to confirm that the intellectual project articulated around the identity "woman" has itself become the repository of exclusionist practices and to reconvene the now-normative assumption that feminism's knowledge and the subjectivities of women are one.⁹² In Thom's reference to feminism's "opening up", academic feminism finds itself yielding to oft-repeated stereotypes — of academic feminism as hostile to men, exclusively concerned with the interests of white, middle class women and as anti-intellectual.

Fixed in the return of such stereotypes is a paradigm of subject formation as the content and political imperative of feminist knowledge. In this fashioning of feminism as a knowledge formation coincident with women's subjectivities, the field of academic feminism is defined primarily as a site of belonging, one in which belonging to "woman" and belonging to Women's Studies are entirely compatible, if not identical. It is precisely this equation between subjectivity and feminist knowledge that makes trouble for academic feminism: here it is gender that consigns academic feminism to affect and not intellect, particularity and not complexity.⁹³ I contend in the central chapters of the thesis that although at times identity served productively to separate woman's difference from

have failed to recognise how profoundly this category of persons has been excluded from those knowledge domains". She argues for the necessity of thinking "about the uneven development of feminist knowledge in the university" and the exploration of the "categorical constraints of identity's deployment in those disciplines that have been most distanced from the political history and theoretical form of academic feminism". See Wiegman, "Object Lessons": p. 384.

⁹¹ See Bidy Martin, "Sexualities Without Genders & Other Queer Utopias" in her *Femininity Played Straight: The Significance of Being a Lesbian*, Routledge, New York, 1996: pp. 71-96 cited in Wiegman's "Object Lessons": p. 382.

⁹² See Wiegman, "Object Lessons": p. 356.

⁹³ In the Australian context, Elspeth Probyn recognises this point when she writes: "As one of the intellectual hotbeds of politicised identity, Women's Studies is sometimes productively, sometimes less so, caught up in the tension between political and intellectual questions". See "Re: Generation": p. 132. In many respects this is Brown's critique of the cost of the configuration of knowledge and politics which conflates the political with the academic best evidenced in the institutionalisation of "identitarian political struggles", namely, Women's Studies. See Brown,

man and to generate a collective identification in the face of that difference during the 1970s, the imperative toward differences among women — whether in terms of race, class or sexuality — from the outset unsettled any easy collapse of “woman” into a monolithic or unified whole.

For Wiegman, what is embedded in the imperative to move from women to gender studies is the determined insistence that an accurately expansive name, and a relation of coherence between field formation and its object of study, can be found. However, in the “utopic imagining” driving the idea that gender can overcome the issues that have arisen subsequent to the institutionalisation of feminism, the problematic of identity that “woman” is said to represent is reproduced rather than solved.⁹⁴ As I demonstrated in chapter five, in negotiating the possibilities and limitations of the set of pedagogical practices that it took up in attempting to enact a new set of power relations, academic feminism often inadvertently redrew the very configurations and effects of power it sought to vanquish. In the implicit priority gender gives in the present to thinking about sexuality, masculinity and men over and against other axes of analysis, such as race and class, it does the same. More than this, it is clearly not just that race or class needs to be added to the name of the field. Rather, as Wiegman cogently argues, feminism’s “ways of thinking about identity are so deeply confounded by the need to develop ways to track something more than interpretative dyads (gender and sexuality, race and gender, class and nationality)”, that in the gesture toward coherence itself, the “exclusivist conditions by which identity is itself theoretically, if not politically, configured” are reiterated.⁹⁵ As in the marshalling of a unified collectivity under the rubric “woman”, such a configuration of knowledge and politics has costs: it refuses to contemplate that an impossibility of representational coherence could be productive.

Among a group of contemporary Australian university students attempting to grapple with their conceptions of academic feminism in its most recent institutional manifestation, the question of what constitutes gender is crucial. During the first semester of the 2001 academic year, I conducted a survey of a large number of first year Gender Studies

“The Impossibility of Women’s Studies”, (Joan Wallach Scott (ed), “Women’s Studies on the Edge”), *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 9, n. 3, Fall 1997: pp. 79-101.

⁹⁴ As Wiegman characterises it, the problem that the institutionalisation of feminism has made clear is best expressed as the incommensurability between “on the one hand, the political development of utopian horizons and critical desires expressed as and through identity rubrics and, on the other hand, the limitation imposed by and on an identity-based object of study”. See Wiegman, “Object Lessons”: p. 381.

⁹⁵ Wiegman, “Object Lessons”: p. 383.

students at the University of Sydney and the Australian National University in which I asked a set of questions about past and present academic feminism in Australia.⁹⁶ For many students the decision to enrol in Gender Studies is a carefully considered one premised on their own political principles. In clear terms, for these students the decision to take Gender Studies is based on the expectation that such courses will be fundamentally different from others they take at university. For others it is just another academic discipline. In both cases, the students' responses effect a return of feminism's past, at the same time projecting the figure of academic feminism as a knowledge formation coincident with women's subjectivities into the present. Here, the resilience of feminism's founding narratives is very apparent.⁹⁷

Configured in one of two ways, the accepted narratives of feminism's foundation figure feminism's shift from recent past to present as a tale of progress from a naïve and exclusive "experiential" 1970s feminism, to the diverse and sophisticated "theoretical" moment of feminism's present and beyond, or as a tale of a pure and virtuous "moral" 1970s feminism, corrupted in later form. Incorporated in these narratives is a set of received mythologies of 1970s academic feminism — they are narratives that routinely figure academic feminism 1970s-style as a site of belonging, in which belonging to "woman" and Women's Studies was entirely consistent, in which a preoccupation with personal experience prevailed and animosity toward men dominated, in which a march from Women's Liberation into the academy was a founding moment and in which an unruly, inappropriate and angry 1970s feminist was evangelical in approach and necessarily lesbian in sexual persuasion. What students anticipated (and in most instances were pleased not to get) were the received mythologies of the 1970s.

In explaining her/his appreciation of the course, one student summoned forth a direct comparison between past and present: contemporary feminists, s/he wrote, are "more

⁹⁶ The anonymous quotes appearing in the following passages are taken from this survey. In the Faculty of Arts at the University of Sydney, Gender Studies is offered only from second year, while at ANU it is offered as a first year subject. At Sydney in 2001 the core course from amongst which students' responses came was entitled "Gender, Media & Popular Culture", while at ANU in 2001 it was called "Sex, Gender & Identity: An Introduction to Gender Studies". Questions included: "Why did you enrol in a Gender Studies unit and what did you expect?"; "What do you think the differences are between 1970s academic feminism and present-day academic feminism?"; "Does this course fit in with what you perceive Gender Studies is about? If so, how?"; "What kinds of issues/questions do you think 1970s academic feminism was primarily concerned with?". See Appendix B.

⁹⁷ Narratives that routinely figure the founding moment of academic feminism in the march of Women's Liberation into the academy incorporate this moment into the now-canonical scene of feminism's self-invention. See introduction.

willing to discuss stuff than yell at each other and have those crazy women's movements (I hate that whole radical thing)". While another student describing the trepidation with which he faced the course wrote, "Being a guy I expected it to be hard to fit in, a sort of black sheep thing. Of course it wasn't that bad at all". Another expressed appreciation of the course with the comment: "I was afraid of getting a kind of feminist-nazi outlook and was relieved to see a well thought out, logical approach to current issues involving gender". In between the students' discomfort with the past and their relief at the present was the figure of the 1970s feminist.

Most often students described Gender Studies — in direct reference to other academic disciplines — as a subject they expected to be "more relevant", "more interesting" and "more open to dialogue" with "more personal reflection and introspection", and a greater ability to attract those "more open-minded and accepting". For one student, the promise of difference from other classes came in the form of a straightforward presumption: "I expected to be taught by a woman", she remarked. In insisting on academic feminism's difference, namely through an explicit linking of politics and knowledge, the students' responses are marked by their referencing of a feminism constituted by its privileging of personal experience, and in particular women's experience: "I expected more open discussion and for past personal experience to actually mean something and be useful". The responses are also marked by a conception of academic feminism constituted by an ethics of political engagement — "I expected people who wanted to improve the world" — and above all, with an oppositional status, particularly in its relation to the prevailing culture of academic knowledge and knowing.

Also prevalent were students whose initial expectations were confounded by their subsequent experience of Gender Studies. In framing their expectations in such terms the students' responses again acted to define Gender Studies against a figure conjured from the past, yet rendered visible in the present.⁹⁸ Referring to the course as "not at all" what they had expected, students signalled their approval with comments such as "I like this course because it doesn't go on about the 'men are all evil' thing" and "I expected a bunch of lesbians preaching away, but it's actually a lot better than I ever would have thought". In indicating their disapproval, students described the course as "too feminist" or much more "strongly feminism [*sic*]" than they had anticipated. At play in the perplexity

⁹⁸ Moreover, this figuring is one that subscribes to an Enlightenment narrative of the past (uncomplicated), to the present (complex). See Jane Gallop's analysis of "progress" narratives in her book *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Thought*, Routledge, New York & London, 1992.

embedded in such appraisals, as well as in those less exact in their formulation of Gender Studies' principal components, is an assumed surety of the field's constituent parts and indeed, of the very terms of its constitution. As I contend throughout this chapter, such surety is crucial to academic feminism's conception of itself in the present, and, both familiar and unfamiliar, it is such assuredness that for students produces what is at once both a shock of recognition and an experience of profound disorientation.⁹⁹ In the words of one student, convinced that "had it [Gender Studies] been called 'Women's' or 'Feminism' Studies, I would have properly understood [what the course would consist of]", we hear an incongruence that belies the confidence with which the student professes her/his knowingness. In the marked inconsistency between the student's declaration of expectations unfulfilled and the surety with which s/he wields the terms "'Women's' or 'Feminism' Studies" lies the figure of feminism's recent past.

It is a figure also vividly invoked in the comments of a student who noted her/his "surprise" at Gender Studies: "I thought the focus would be on Women's Studies", s/he explained. And in the expectations of another, who observed that the course was only "somewhat" like s/he had envisioned: "It looks more along the feminism [sic] lines", s/he wrote. "I thought it would have been equal between males and females". At the simplest of levels, fascinating here is the "knowingness" embedded in these students' readings of academic feminism's present: that Women's Studies is about women; that feminism is only concerned with women; that in a zero-sum equation women's gains equal men's losses; that Gender Studies is about men as well as women and consequently, not about feminism. In what follows, I want to confront what these students think they know, and thereby take on the discomfort of gender as constituted by feminism's own past.

Like the preoccupation with inclusiveness that I demonstrate often accompanies the move from Women's to Gender Studies, prominent in many of the responses to the survey is an anxiety with the perceived absence or exclusion of men from academic feminism both in the past and in the present. Embedded in the conversation about the change from Women's Studies to Gender Studies, and thus, the structuring force in the production and constitution of gender itself as a field formation is *ressentiment*.¹⁰⁰ In answering the question "Does the course that you're enrolled in fit with what you perceive Gender

⁹⁹ For discussion of Raymond Williams' idea of the shock of recognition see Elspeth Probyn's *Sexing the Self: Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London & New York, 1993: pp. 21-26. For discussion of my own "shock of recognition" see chapter three.

Studies to be about?", one student responded, "I thought we would focus more on both women and men, not just feminism". In moving to clarify the critique, s/he turned to reproach, arguing not only that the course was misdirected in its attention to women, but that it was a focus enacted at the expense of men: "We seem to be ignoring the bias and discrimination men face and are focussing entirely on women", s/he declared.¹⁰¹ In depicting men as politically powerless, as the injured party in a relation between men and women figured as one of perpetrator and victim, such a response is fuelled by *ressentiment*: "Women's issues definitely seemed to take precedence to a point where I felt men were actually being punished". As I noted above, at a basic level, *ressentiment* relays much of the individualising antagonism, the pitting of categories against each other that nourishes and is generated by such pronouncements of a "crisis in masculinity".¹⁰² At a more fundamental level, *ressentiment* provides a position of enunciation based in suffering and thereby constructs a hierarchy of pain.¹⁰³ In articulating their anxiety at men's absence via claims that there is "too much emphasis on the female view", and in accusations of "imbalance" where courses are "too feminist", students articulate a reversal of gendered power. The "weak" become those excluded from the field — (real and imaginary) men. In demands that "we should be looking more at men's position in society as well" and in declarations that "She (the Prof) talks too much about women's issues. I want to know more about the other gender as well", students likewise frame masculinity as a position consumed with pain.

In locating a site of blame for masculinity's powerlessness, the students locate the cause of masculinity's suffering — indeed the agents of its suffering — in the emergence of feminism and in women themselves. In this figuring of suffering as social virtue and privilege as self-recrimination, guilt structured as "catching-up" codifies the very powerlessness it aims to redress.¹⁰⁴ As one student's observation that "[i]t's great that they are doing stuff for women but I think they should go with the whole 'equality' thing" makes plain, identity structured by *ressentiment* achieves its moral superiority via a thorough investment in its own impotence. In the flood of concern expressed in such responses is the seeking not of power or emancipation for the injured (men), but revenge: "I think there needs to be greater inclusion of the difficulties [and] challenges that men

¹⁰⁰ See Brown, *States of Injury*: pp. 52-76.

¹⁰¹ Probyn characterises the figuring of women's gains equalling men's losses as a "zero-sum game" in "Teaching in the Field: Gender & Feminist Media Studies", *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2001: pp. 35-39.

¹⁰² See Brown, *States of Injury*: pp. 52-76.

¹⁰³ See Brown, *States of Injury*: p. 27.

experience through their gender as well". Here, men who are excluded embody the ideal to which non-class identities refer for proof of their exclusion or injury.¹⁰⁵ That is, lost is any sense of differentiation, individual privilege or inequality between men; men *per se* are not doing as well as women in education, are "losing out" to women in custody battles, are "at sea" in comparison to their women contemporaries.¹⁰⁶ Fuelled by the fear that the Other's greater moral identity, based in a suffering that surpasses one's own, will prevail, it is precisely and most significantly, "a desire for futurity" that *ressentiment* forecloses.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

It is the distinctions between remembering the past and inventing possible futures that are often obscured in articulations of feminism's present. Crucial both to present-day conceptions of feminism's past and present and to the possibilities of feminism's future is an imagined 1970s feminism. By focusing on the deployment of 1970s academic feminism in present-day narratives of the past, I work my way within and between the discomfort entailed in remembering feminism's own disciplinary history — that which constitutes academic feminism as distinctly uncomfortable with itself. Each of the sites I examine provide importantly different renderings of feminism's relation to past, present and future. In the essays of Jean Curthoys and Rosi Braidotti, academic feminism emerges as a deeply conflicted field. By examining each essay's narrative of failure, I explore the feature most fascinating in the work of both these scholars: their struggle with academic feminism itself. My aim in inhabiting the spectre of failure, here fundamental to contemporary feminism, is to disrupt the temporality of feminism's critical claim — its promise to find a way out of the present and into the future. In drawing out the hierarchy of who hurts most organising these accounts, I reveal the depth of the attachment academic feminism invests in its past in the hope of refusing 1970s feminism status as the ground from which the present and future can be defined.

¹⁰⁴ See Brown, *States of Injury*: p. 55 & p. 68.

¹⁰⁵ See Brown, *States of Injury*: p. 61 & p. 65.

¹⁰⁶ In recent times, high profile *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH) columnist, Bettina Arndt, has championed the idea of a "crisis in masculinity" in a determinedly public fashion, via a litany of articles devoted to examining the state of contemporary masculinity — in relation to education, marriage, divorce, the Family Court, male rates of suicide etc. See for example, "The Conditional Lives of Men", SMH, 26 October 2001: p. 15; "A Better Deal for Boys", SMH, 29 May 2001: p. 11; "The Trouble With Boys", SMH, 17 June 2000: p. 34; "The Descent of Man, Spectrum, SMH, 4 September 1999: p. 5; and "Marginal Man", Spectrum, SMH, 10 October 1998: p. 1 & p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, *States Of Injury*: p. 75.

Reflecting on the broader question posed by the institutionalisation of academic feminism, I examine the change of name from Women's Studies to Gender Studies undertaken across Australia in recent times. I contend that the idea of gender as the "solution" to the kinds of exclusions and omissions that feminists have found to be attached to the category of "woman" gains such ascendancy through a presentism that presumes such exclusions and omissions have come to light only in the present. Moreover, academic feminism finds itself yielding to a set of sustained stereotypes — a set of stereotypes that I have demonstrated throughout the thesis are founded on an imaginary 1970s feminism.

What concerns me here are the costs of contemporary feminism's knowingness. The notion of "woman" as it is conceived now — in present-day feminism, by present-day students of feminism — is configured on the basis of a set of received mythologies animated by the figure of an imagined 1970s feminism. But gender does not necessarily hold out the promise it has been assigned. Why the desire to settle the problematic of identity on which feminism's institutional knowledge formation is found? Why not, as Wiegman suggests, "define the impossibility of coherence as the central problematic and most important animating feature of feminism as a knowledge formation in the contemporary academy"?¹⁰⁸ I am not here interested in proscribing an answer to whether academic feminism as it now exists can generate some kind of resolution to this tension. Instead, I venture to open up the question itself in an effort to embrace the possibilities of the new for future feminism.

¹⁰⁸ Wiegman, "Object Lessons": p. 388.

Conclusion — Futures Untold

Throughout this critical genealogy of 1970s academic feminism, I have analysed the positions that have come to structure historical narratives of academic feminism, positions that are often reduced to a series of oppositions, and the deployment of such oppositions in contemporary feminist theory's conception of itself. It is academic feminism's discomfort with the past, with 1970s feminism and indeed with itself that has framed the thesis in its entirety. Crossing within and between the disciplinary boundaries of history and feminism, my analysis has been devoted to countering the received mythologies of 1970s academic feminism. Configured in one of two ways, these retellings construct a narrative either of an unsophisticated feminism at its inception in the 1970s, progressing to a complex present-day feminism, or of a "moral" feminism, pure and virtuous in its 1970s beginning, corrupted in its later form. Neither of these is adequate; these narratives speak more to contemporary political agendas than to ambiguous feminist pasts and presents.

Framed around an understanding of academic feminism as an institutionalised negotiation, one whose operations were both an effect and part of a new set of relations within educational institutions, my analysis has focused on situating academic feminism within a complex social and cultural field. I have treated the University of Sydney's Free University and philosophy strikes as two sites that were exemplary in their articulation of a broader social and intellectual challenge to institutions, hierarchy and authority. In examining the struggle over the production of knowledge in the university and the way in which authority itself was problematised in the context of that struggle, I have asserted that the activities of academic feminism and concurrent developments such as the reconceptualisation of the intellectual culture per se were interrelated. In mapping the wider intellectual and cultural conditions which informed feminism's engagement with the academy, I have located the development of academic feminism at least as much within the history of the academy, as within the history of feminism. In this I have complicated my own history, as well as other histories of academic feminism.

Throughout the thesis I have sought to move beyond the dominant contemporary understandings of the development of academic feminist thought in which 1970s feminism is most often understood as a designated point of departure and as an epistemology of origins. In the central chapters of the thesis, I have critically examined

the positions employed by academic feminism's participants in their negotiation of the category of "woman", in particular via their demands for and practice of women's space. In my detailed investigation of the modes by which 1970s academic feminism mediated specific institutional contexts, I have explored the ways in which participants' identification with the category of "woman" — a sign to which they at once belonged and did not belong — was a position seldom inhabited with comfort. I have argued that in mediating between the specificities of "woman" and its potential constraints, participants took up positions of both resistance and agency and thus, positions in excess of the apparatus of gender and heterosexuality in their everyday interaction with the academy.

In turn, I have demonstrated the ways in which the positions employed by academic feminism's participants in their negotiation of the category of "woman" were problematised by contemporary critical commentary. By examining the persistently complex exchanges that took place between academic feminism and Women's Liberation in Australia throughout the 1970s, I have argued that like those inside the institution, those outside actively questioned the limitations and specificities of feminist practice. They too pointed to the ways in which prevailing ideas of the subject of feminism left little room for acknowledgment of the ways in which she was fragmented. By investigating the implications of race and its relation to gender for the foundational category of "woman", I asserted that Indigenous Australian critical commentary contemporaneous to and in part formative of white Australian academic feminism in this early period contested the assumptions typical of the types of negotiations performed by white feminists in their attempts to mediate within and between the persistently multiple category of "woman". In contesting present-day normative assumptions that 1970s academic feminism was indifferent to race and sexuality, I have suggested the significance of contemporaneous criticism of the exclusions inherent in the conception of the subject of feminism and further, illustrated the ways in which the heterogeneity of the category of "woman" has marked academic feminism from its beginnings. My proposal is that almost despite itself, the imperative toward difference among women acted to disrupt any conception of the category of "woman" as internally consistent from academic feminism's outset.

Concerned both with how we remember the past and also the implications of that remembering for feminism's future, I focused in the final part of the thesis on the deployment of 1970s academic feminism in present-day narratives of the past. In my reflections on present-day academic feminism, I explored a number of sites thoroughly

imbued with the linking of feminism's past and present. By examining the structuring role of *ressentiment* in individual feminist accounts, as well as *ressentiment's* relation to feminism as a discipline, I have illustrated the ways in which feminism's past is critical to articulations of the field of present-day academic feminism. In my explorations of the change of name from Women's Studies to Gender Studies undertaken across Australia in recent times, I have argued that the idea of gender as the "solution" to the kinds of exclusions and omissions that feminists have found to be attached to the category of "woman" has gained ascendancy through a presentism that presumes such exclusions and omissions have come to light only in the present. I have further made clear the ways in which the notion of "woman" as it is conceived now — in present-day feminism, by present-day students of feminism — is configured on the basis of a set of received mythologies animated by the figure of an imagined 1970s feminism.

All this talk of feminism's past and present prompts me to ask what is seemingly the most obvious of questions: what of feminism's future? Critical here is my concern not just with how we remember the past, but with the implications of that remembering for feminism's future. The resilience of feminism's founding narratives and the figure of feminism's past are central to the possibilities of feminism's future. If writing the past is a process that involves linking both past and present to a possible future, then how we understand the relations between past and present has direct implications for whatever conceptions of the future we may develop. In Elizabeth Grosz's recent ruminations on feminist futures she writes of "the idea of an open future", a future not constrained through the past, "that is, a future yet to be made".¹ Her model of time and history is one open to contingency and the new. For Grosz, what counts as history — what constitutes the past — is that which is deemed relevant in the present. In her formulation it is the present that writes the past rather than the past that yields to the present. That is not, she writes, to argue that the present is all that remains of the past, but rather that "the past contains the resources to much *more* than the present".² Indeed "the past endures", according to Grosz, "not in itself, but in its capacity to become something other".³

For Grosz, feminist history is crucial "not simply because it informs our present but more so because it enables other virtual futures to be conceived, other perspectives to be

¹ Elizabeth Grosz, "Histories of a Feminist Future", *Signs*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2000: p. 1017.

² Grosz, "Histories": p. 1019.

³ Grosz, "Histories": p. 1018.

developed, than those that currently prevail".⁴ It is Grosz's contention that "a past no longer understood as inert or given, may help engender a productive future" — "a future beyond the control or limit of the present".⁵ Following Grosz, I propose that the implications of my rethinking of the ways we remember that moment, and further the implications of my analysis for the formulation of feminist futures, are what is important here. I have intervened in the present in the hope of moving away from feminism's beginnings or endings and precisely in the expectancy of opening out feminism's future.

⁴ Grosz, "Histories": pp. 1018-1019.

⁵ Grosz, "Histories": p. 1018 & p. 1019.

Appendix A

Personal Interviews

Approval for interviews was granted by the Human Ethics Committee, University of Sydney.

- Caine, Barbara "Interview", Sydney, 10 July 1998.
Connell, Bob "Interview", Sydney, 8 February 1999.
Curthoys, Ann "Interview", Canberra, 23 April 1998.
Curthoys, Jean "Email Interview", 22 July – 4 August 1998.
Irving, Terry "Interview", Sydney, 31 March 2000.
Jacka, Elizabeth "Interview", Sydney, 12 August 1998.
Lake, Marilyn "Interview", Melbourne, 15 February 1999.
Magarey, Susan "Interview", Sydney, 9 July 1998.
Matthews, Jill Julius "Interview", Canberra, 24 April 1998.
Power, Margaret "Interview", Sydney, 25 August 1998.
Pringle, Rosemary "Interview", Sydney, 23 March 1998.
Ryan, Lyndall "Interview", Sydney, 6 July 1998.
Sheridan, Susan "Interview", Sydney, 8 July 1998.
Summers, Anne "Interview", Sydney, 15 July 1998.

Interview Questions

Each individual interview lasted for approximately 90 minutes.

- 1) To begin, can you spend a little time talking about the beginnings of your academic life — when do you think your work became explicitly feminist?
- 2) Was the academy feminist in the 1970s?
- 3) What arguments were put forward in favour of or against the teaching of feminist courses?
- 4) What do you remember agitation for feminist teaching and learning being about? Did the agitation come from students or from staff?
- 5) Was it agitation for feminist teaching in specific departments or was it about feminist teaching across the institution/across disciplines more generally?
- 6) Did the fact that the course you taught was set up through student agitation impact upon the way you devised the course? And the way you taught it?
- 7) The idea of "rescuing women from history" was vital during the 1970s — how do you remember the significance of an historical understanding of women's oppression?
- 8) How do you remember your own disciplinary background and training impacting upon how you approached feminist scholarship?

- 9) Do you remember a theoretical approach that was distinctly feminist in the 1970s?
- 10) Would you define your theoretical approach as a product of your disciplinary training your involvement with the Women's Movement?
- 11) The personal is political is vital to understanding this moment. How do you remember or how would you articulate what the personal is political meant during the 1970s?
- 12) How do you remember the personal is political informing notions of oppression?
- 13) How do you remember the personal is political informing notions of freedom and liberation?
- 14) How do you remember the personal is political informing notions of power?
- 15) How central were ideas of "experience" to 1970s feminism?
- 16) Did everyone have a personal that was political?
- 17) I'm interested in how concepts that were being rethought, or were central to analyses of contemporary social theory, were understood and further, how they were used — in particular, ideas of oppression, liberation, freedom, power?
- 18) What issues/ideas were central to you in your own work?
- 19) The inception of feminism in the academy was indicative of a merging of theory and practice; a place where being offered itself to be thought, a site of practising theory/theorising practice — do you think that the feminist courses you were involved in were reflective of a merging of theory and practice?
- 20) Was the course you were teaching designed in a manner explicitly opposed to traditional methods of teaching and learning?
- 21) Were ideas of participatory democracy modelled on ideas and practices that were feminist and/or liberatory?
- 22) Do you remember such pedagogy as feminist? What was feminist about this new pedagogy? Was it just that it was preoccupied with participation for all, or that it insisted on hearing from all involved?
- 23) Do you remember non-traditional teaching and learning practices being modelled on consciousness-raising groups?
- 24) Did such pedagogy alter the dynamics of teaching and learning in feminist classes?

Follow-Up Correspondence

Curthoys, Ann "Personal Correspondence", 5 October 1999.

Curthoys, Jean "Personal Correspondence", 2 April 2001.

Appendix B

Survey Participants

"Gender, Media & Popular Culture", Department of Gender Studies, School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, University of Sydney, Sydney, First Semester 2001.

"Sex, Gender & Identity: An Introduction to Gender Studies", Centre for Women's Studies, School of Humanities, Australian National University, Canberra, First Semester 2001.

Survey Questions

- 1) "Why did you enrol in a Gender Studies unit and what did you expect?"
- 2) "What do you think the differences are between 1970s academic feminism and present-day academic feminism?"
- 3) "Does this course fit in with what you perceive Gender Studies is about? If so, how?"
- 4) "What kinds of issues/questions do you think 1970s academic feminism was primarily concerned with?"

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Terry Irving Papers (in possession of Terry Irving, University of Sydney).

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