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E. Ann Kaplan

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Feminist Futures: Trauma, the Post-9/11 World and a Fourth Feminism?

By E. Ann Kaplan¹

Abstract

This article will engage with the possibilities of feminist futures. That there is no monolithic feminism is a good, it at times uncomfortable, fact: positions, actions and knowledge – constantly being contested, questioned, and debated – mean that feminism is alive and well, and always changing in accord with larger social, historical and political changes. However, the ways in which social and political conditions on both local and global levels are impacting on feminism must be addressed. The post-9/11 world is one in which we need to re-think what feminisms have achieved and how the various groups positioned under the term “feminisms” can move forward. Have we arrived at the need for a “fourth” feminism in a so-called era of “terror”? This article will address the challenges future feminism face because of feminist histories: achieving some modest goals; recognizing what new directions past knowledge makes possible; addressing globalization and new technologies; and, assessing the possible impact of 9/11 on feminist futures.

Key Words: third wave feminism, trauma, 9/11

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Prologue

In 2002, after approximately four decades of struggle, it seems that the futures of feminisms are at stake across of number of arenas, including the academy, social and political policies, medicine, law, and multi-cultural, multi-national sites. Feminist futures are at stake for a number of reasons: while no doubt we would all provide different reasons, and tell different narratives about feminisms past and future, living in the US the reasons seem to involve having achieved a few modest feminist goals (even if they constantly have to be defended); having produced feminist knowledge within and beyond the academy, which means that new (practical and scholarly) directions opened up; and, finally, the dramatically changing social and political conditions in (and prior to) 2002 on local, national and global levels which are impacting on feminisms. The end of the Cold War altered international relations in unpredictable ways: old constructs, such as “East” versus “West,” or “Communism” versus “Capitalism,” merge into new constructions, such as the recent “Islam” versus “West.” In light of this, wherever feminists are situated, it is time to re-think what feminisms (in all their variety) have achieved, and where different groups need to go next.

In a sense, the *Third Wave Feminism* conference seemed to offer precisely the forum for such re-thinking. There have been few occasions like that conference where not only third and second wave feminists came together, but where feminists brought knowledge of struggles they knew about from diverse nations they live in, or have lived in, or work in. There were panels on Third World Feminisms, Muslim Feminisms, Eastern European Feminisms, to say nothing of women presenting papers from Germany, Sweden, Poland, the Czech Republic, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada,

Ireland, the UK and the US – and more. The range of topics was broad and all-inclusive. If the conference turned out to be less a place where we could actually engage differences – of which there were many – it was very much an opportunity to grasp the different kinds of projects and observe the range of perspectives and concerns that are all “feminist” in diverse ways.ⁱⁱ From grasping this plurality, we had an opportunity to think from where we happened to be about where we needed to go next. The fact that so many women with different agendas, knowledges and activist projects were brought together to engage in debate and learn from one another attested to the inroads that feminism has made in our personal and scholarly lives in different societies. That there is no monolithic feminism is a good, if at times uncomfortable, fact: positions, actions and knowledge – constantly being contested, questioned, and debated – mean that feminism is alive and well, and always changing in accord with larger social, historical and political changes in whatever nation or part of a society women live in.

But challenges in the wake of 9/11 seem greater than those of recent years. And it is the possible traumatic impact of 9/11 in the US, as it may affect future feminist agendas, that I will focus on shortly. How far does living with terror (as people in different parts of the world have been doing for decades) influence women's lives especially? How does it affect feminist ideas, specific feminist agendas? How has 9/11 within the US context at least destabilized prior apparently certain political affiliations, including feminist ones? Can feminists (and women more generally) within and beyond academia contribute fruitfully in this situation by virtue of our socialization? Have we arrived at the need for a “fourth” feminism in a so-called era of “terror”? For even if the era of terror is largely a US media construction – and it is partly that – this construction is already having profound effects on consciousness: it is impacting materially on local and national policies as well as on economics (*e.g.* on jobs for women globally), and finally it is impacting on social practices and ways of being in daily life – things that have always concerned feminists.

In what follows, speaking from my position as a professor in a US university, I will say something about four kinds of challenge future feminisms face because of feminist histories, leading up to a discussion of 9/11. There is first the challenge of achieving some modest feminist goals; second, the challenge of what new directions past knowledge makes possible; third, the challenges that globalization and new technologies produce; and, finally, there is the possible impact of 9/11 on feminist futures.

Feminist Futures in the Wake of Achieving Modest Goals

A major question facing us today is to what degree we still need feminism as ideology and perspective, given past US gains; but, if we agree that we need feminism, how do we undertake feminist policy today, especially in light of 9/11? Modest goals in the US and elsewhere have been achieved, but as time goes on, their results reveal complexities and new problems – problems that challenge some second wave feminist assumptions. Amongst the general public, there is cynicism about what feminisms have achieved: for instance, a UK colleague of mine commented that all that feminism had achieved was to enable young women to behave in as loutish a manner as young men have been doing for generations. This implies that instead of feminists changing men or society for the better, all that has happened is that women have won the right to join men in objectionable behaviors.

Let me cite a few randomly selected US journalists' stories to suggest areas that require feminists' attention in the future, especially as these are already attracting media interest:

- The increasing number of women now entering and succeeding in professions has produced new problems. An article on Ann Hewlett's book (UK title: *Baby Hunger*; US title: *Creating a Life: Professional Woman and the Quest for Children*), discussed the book's poor sales. The explanation given was that professional women did not want to be told that engaging in careers and delaying childbirth may jeopardize their ability to have children (St. John). In the wake of second wave feminist advances in opening professions up to women, this highlights an ongoing issue for career women having children.
- A related story (Bonner) discusses the frequency of choices like that of Wendy Chamberlin, who gave up the job of US Ambassador to Pakistan because her teenage children needed her. "I'm a mother first," she said. Feminists have perhaps been too slow to respect women's responsibilities to their families. Another story (Duenwald) continues concern about mothering and careers by focusing on controversies within psychology about the negative impact of divorce on children. Obviously, feminists worked hard to make divorce easier and to change the stigmatism linked in the US to single parent families. But the cost to children has to be considered.
- Sex discrimination is alive and well according to a story about a Lafayette University Athletic Director, who sued the college for sex bias. The first woman appointed to such a position, she was summarily fired in 1999 evidently for raising the issue regarding sex discrimination in the College's sports (Wong). The question of women in sports remains urgent.
- An article about girls' so-called "relational aggression" (Talbot) details the cruel cliquish behavior of girls in a US Cathedral School. The piece implicates feminism in seemingly controverting an assumption about females' greater empathic modes of being.ⁱⁱⁱ This theme is taken up in a related article (Eakin) about the \$12.5 million given by Jane Fonda to Carol Gilligan at Harvard to create a center for studying cultural assumptions about gender as these affect children's learning and development. It is assumed that feminist research will illuminate changed gendered behavior.^{iv}
- Finally, an article entitled "About a Boy Who Wasn't" (Denizet-Lewis) discusses the problems of gay/lesbian, bisexual and especially transgender teenagers in a California School. While not explicitly critical of changing sex-role phenomena that feminisms have enabled, the piece does highlight the young people's isolation and need for support groups.

Modest gains, then, are shown to create new situations with problems that could not have been foreseen when second wave women made their demands for gender equality, fair treatment and social change to accommodate women's needs. This pattern no doubt prevails in many other nations where women are struggling to win rights and produce social change.

Feminist Knowledge Opens Up New Directions

A second kind of gain – namely the institution of Women’s Studies in the Academy – has produced the challenge of how new knowledge produced by second wave feminists impacts on feminist futures in both scholarly and activist arenas. Differences between the so-called US “waves” are by now well known and were revisited in panels at the *Third Wave Feminism* conference.^v While some feminist scholars (such as Judith Roof) object, with some justification, to the formulation of feminist “waves” because of the implied generational structure of this terminology – its links to what she calls “debt, legacy, rivalry, property” (84) – the terminology can usefully serve as shorthand for the purposes of a paper like this one.^{vi} Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake’s *Third Wave Agenda* and Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards’ *Manifesta* have done much to bring attention to a (self-styled) “generation” of women who have been engaged in organizing.^{vii} These third wave women have had difficulty getting attention because they did not situate themselves in sensational ways – as did Katie Roiphe and Naomi Wolf – to be snapped up by a US media only interested in feminisms in crisis.

Knowledge produced by second wave women indeed situated younger women differently, and opened up new areas for feminist concern, including third wave women’s “correcting” of some extremes second wave women reached in order to make their points about gender imbalances and sex discrimination. For example, in addition to second wave critiques of beauty culture, sexual abuse and power structures, third wave feminists also acknowledge “and make use of the pleasure, danger, and defining power of those structures” (Heywood and Drake 3). Second wave critiques of beauty culture have moderated (and women’s behaviors have changed) in the wake of third wave women’s work. The critiques has moved into the more pressing current concerns regarding reproductive technologies, and (recently) genetically engineered foods and cloning. Science studies within women’s studies in the academy is a growing and important area.

But more dramatic new directions have been taken by gay/lesbian and queer studies initiatives. If these coincided with the cruel AIDS crisis – the legacies of which remain central, and not only to the gay/lesbian movement – many different kinds of work are ongoing within activist and academic circles. Queer initiatives, along with the equally dramatic new directions taken by multicultural women, change the very object of early feminist projects, namely a seemingly monolithic “woman.” However, as Susan Stryker emphasized at the *Third Wave Feminism* conference, gay/lesbian communities have not always reacted kindly to transgender people. Clearly, transexualities have drastically altered old ideas of distinct male/female subjectivities on which, perhaps ironically, many feminisms relied. To the extent that feminism has depended on certain distinctive attributes under the sign “woman,” even if seen to be socially constructed, the changed conceptualization of gender is having a dramatic impact on the future of feminisms. Psychoanalysis and queer studies have opened everything up: as Jacqueline Rose reminded the *Third Wave Feminism* conference audience, gender is unstable in the unconscious. In addition, as we know, “feminisms” are no longer the sole concern of beings named “women,” and the gay/queer community may be especially anxious for this fact to be properly recognized by second wave women. Third wave women have made inroads in the area of gay/lesbian research and in foregrounding alternate sexualities. Feminist futures must be different if such changes are to be integrated into our work.

Multicultural US feminist research has also been (and remains) a major challenge to feminist futures. As I note below, it has had an important impact on academic feminist research generally and on women's activist work. The once "monolithic" woman turned out to be heterosexual and white, so that much research on different agendas, different needs and ways of seeing has been essential. Third wave women do not repeat the mistakes of some of their earlier sisters regarding race, while an interchange of ideas and practices amongst women from different cultures is more crucial than ever, as I emphasize later on. One participant at the *Third Wave Feminism* conference stressed how race remains a central issue in feminisms, and cannot be separated off as only of "local" importance. We are all implicated in racial injustices and histories as global phenomena.

But the situation regarding gender and race remains complex: recent research by Seyla Benhabib on US court cases regarding diasporic ethnic women's resistance to abuse by their husbands showed that judges tended to decide in favor of the husbands. In other words, a general misogyny is alive and well in the US, despite feminist advances. Perhaps ironically, this misogyny is concealed by judges using the old anthropological "cultural relativism" argument – namely, that people in the West have no right to judge practices in other societies, no matter how "offensive," because they belong in cultural traditions we cannot properly understand. This bonding between men across different cultures is something feminists need to address in the future, and to debate in the context of racial politics.

Debates about how to produce future feminist knowledge within the academy are now ongoing in the US, were addressed at the *Third Wave Feminism* conference, and will need more discussion in coming years. Is women's studies, as presently conceived, doing what it needs to do given social and political changes, including 9/11? Have modest gains in university curricula rendered specific departments of women's studies unnecessary? Should we have gender studies rather than women's studies? Where do queer studies, gay/lesbian studies and transgender studies fit in now? It is interesting that the strongest critique of second wave feminists' work within the US academy comes not from a third wave feminist but from a second wave scholar/activist, Ellen Messer-Davidow, whose organizing efforts in the late 1960s and 1970s helped to establish women's studies in the university. In *Disciplining Women: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse* (2002), Messer-Davidow makes the somewhat devastating claim that women's studies has been co-opted by the US university in the course of aiming to transform it. That is, having painfully made their way from being educated in traditional, implicitly male, disciplines to transforming those disciplines by introducing feminist perspectives, university women allowed feminist studies to become contained by the academy. In this way, Messer-Davidow argues, the feminist project that would fuse academic knowledge to social activism was derailed. I do not altogether agree with Messer-Davidow as I have explained elsewhere (Kaplan, "The Changers and the Changed"), but I mention her book as an example of a second wave scholar's view of the current situation. Messer-Davidow's expectations of what women's activism could achieve, and the role of university professors in this, seem to be very second wave, as does her focus on US national institutions rather than thinking globally. Messer-Davidow's ambitions for transforming US institutions seem part of an era when such changes still seemed possible but which now, regrettably, can seem hopelessly utopian.

If Messer-Davidow's era is not totally behind us as we move into the so-called "era of terror," it needs to be reformulated for the new situation. Interestingly, some of Messer-Davidow's suggested strategies – for Internet communication and networking, etc – might lend themselves to the new global context.^{viii}

Impact of Globalization and New Technologies on Feminist Futures (Prior to 9/11)

Feminist knowledge, thus, as with modest social gains, at once furthered understanding of women's histories, their complex roles in society, and their hitherto neglected contributions to the arts and sciences. But the knowledge also led to new inquiries, new areas of research that often challenged prior aspects of the movement. One aspect was the tendency of euro-centric women to focus on the West. While in the 1990s, US women were appropriately taken up with different projects to do with continuing to improve gender equality and organizing around women's needs,^{ix} women in the rest of the world were in different situations, with different needs and agendas. Work done on "situated" feminisms already anticipates the context we find ourselves in today in the wake of 9/11.

As global communication became more rapid around the millennium, with new digital, Internet and DVD technologies added to existing international radio, film and TV, so differences between the cultures, needs and situations of women across the world produced yet more debates and discussions. What "feminism" meant to one group of women in a particular nation was quite different from what it meant in another nation. The current postcolonial, postmodern, global system with increased communication means that the exchange of images and ideas, and the interlacing of diverse national movements, has become more rapid than ever. As Angela Davis points out, "it is the homelessness of global capital that poses the greatest threat to women throughout the world" (xii). Reminding us of the women whose grossly underpaid labor produces goods sold to women, as well as men, in the West, Davis urges us to take global sisterhood seriously – that is, to extend gathering knowledge about similarities and differences among Northern and Southern women to include social activism. With perhaps second wave optimism (an optimism often critiqued by third wave feminists like Heywood and Drake), she urges us all to become "scholar/activists," if we are to form productive forms of feminist solidarity (xii).

However, as Davis surely knows, such productive forms of feminist solidarity are extremely hard to bring about. The ambivalent reception of "Western" feminist ideas in different national locations is well-known and highlights the inevitable "situatedness" of meanings given to feminism internationally. I need hardly mention what is familiar to all (and looks back to Benhabib's research and related anthropological issues) – namely the tense debates about so-called cultural practices, such as clitoridectomies. Are such issues a matter of universal women's rights to control their bodies, or a matter that the specific groups involved should decide about? The cultural situatedness of such practices will long be a challenge to feminist futures, but – especially from the post-9/11 perspective – it is time we confront this issue head on.^x

Research by scholars on global feminisms begins to confront difficult issues of cultural situatedness. Ann Snitow, for instance, has usefully documented Russian attitudes to feminisms in a short piece, "Cautionary Tales," about her work with a small nongovernmental organization (NGO). As one of the founders of the small NGO

Network of East-West Women, Snitow notes that discourses of feminists in the former Soviet bloc differ from those of Western women because the dilemmas that face Russian women are different. For example, Russian women could not mount a critique of patriarchy because under communism the family had been a bulwark of resistance; the language of emancipation did not work either because it had been used by the communists in a crudely instrumental fashion; and, finally, tempted to embrace the new free markets, women only too soon saw the markets' misogynist underpinnings yet felt obliged to join in. Snitow goes on to show how Eastern European and Western women understand sexuality and race in entirely different ways. She points out that issues of gender can mask those of race and class in both Western and Eastern European feminisms. NGOs can get funding to work against trafficking in women, for example, but not "to construct a politics that criticizes the unregulated flow of capital and confronts women's further loss of power both at work and at home" (Snitow, "Cautionary Tales").^{xi} Different contexts for divorce than those in euro-centric areas may mean that some women (such as those in Romania) may prefer not to have easy divorce laws. Snitow hints at ways in which NGOs may in the end work against the economic interests of women in a particular nation.

Betty Joseph is also concerned about the work of such well-meaning feminist NGOs. In a paper on "Globalization and Flexible Accumulation: The Time and Space of Gendered Work," Joseph details the dangers of debt dynamics in rural Bangladesh. Following the advice of NGOs, banks are eager to give women loans to help them become economically independent, but Joseph notes the resulting erosion of political expression. Debt introduces individualism but "in a dead-end way," Joseph argues, and it erodes anti-globalization activism as well (6-7).^{xii}

The Future of Feminisms in the Post-9/11 World: Or, Trauma and a "Fourth" Feminism?

All of the preceding challenges to feminisms, and their futures, now need to be situated in the context of 9/11. Many of the complex, even controversial, arguments, about globalization, about indigenous versus Western feminisms, and about NGOs' and liberal attempts to help women living in dire poverty throughout the world, already anticipated, in a very loose way, implications of the 9/11 attacks.^{xiii} It seems that 9/11, while it happened in New York, symbolizes or embodies some of the larger realities Snitow and Joseph talk about, and it situates debates outlined above between second and third wave feminists as belonging to a very specific historical and "local" period. Susan Hayward, during the *Third Wave Feminism* conference, reminded us that the US had suffered from traumatic attacks before (Pearl Harbour; the Oklahoma bombing; the 1995 bombing of the Twin Towers). However, 9/11 was the first time there had been a foreign attack of this scale on the US mainland. In suggesting that feminists (or some feminists?) may need to conceptualize a "fourth" feminism in the wake of 9/11 as a crystallizing moment, I do not mean that the work of the prior so-called waves will be irrelevant or useless. Nor do I assume that enough has been said about the pioneering efforts of third wave women, or the advances they have made upon second wave efforts. Far from it. But, because of the knowledge that these prior waves together have already produced, one has a glimpse of what has changed in the wake of 9/11 – or what was already in process long before 9/11, but not yet visible as such.

I have elsewhere written about the personal impact of 9/11 (our flat in New York is a mile from where the World Trade Centers stood) (“A Camera and a Catastrophe”). But the larger impact quickly became clear in regard to disrupting what, for years, had seemed political certainties, including my adjusted “second wave” feminist politics. That is, through being an administrator in a university structure where compromise is essential in order to bring about change, I have been forced to make adjustments to some of my positions in order to have feminist causes advance. But, in the wake of 9/11, the destabilization of my political universe was dramatically revealed at a reunion of second wave feminists – itself quite remarkable, and planned long before 9/11 happened. Although we were all meeting after a long lapse of time (as past members of an ongoing seminar Ann Snitow had organized at New York University) and with no planned agenda, we immediately and spontaneously began to discuss 9/11. We discovered that we had divergent opinions about causes of the attacks, about the US response in bombing Afghanistan, about government response within America, about European response to US actions, and so on. We differed, we found, regarding what we knew or believed about women in Afghanistan, their situations vis-à-vis the Taliban, and so on. Nearly the only thing we agreed about was the irony of George Bush claiming that bombing Afghanistan would “liberate” Afghan women. Heated, though articulate, discussion ensued, obviously without any solution or agreement.^{xiv}

What is important to my purposes here is not the issues themselves (although they are crucial, of course), but the following question: in what ways does the changed world order in which feminists (of whatever stripe) find themselves influence the prior feminist agendas noted above? One very obvious impact, especially for second wave academic feminists deeply mired, often, in local institutional politics of multiple kinds (as in Messer-Davidow’s work mentioned earlier), is that we can no longer think locally or nationally, or even in terms of the US and Europe. Liberal third wave women almost automatically think in global terms, very aware of how global financial systems increasingly exploit women in many nations, but second wave women have tended to focus on local politics. The enmeshment of systems worldwide now needs focus.

9/11 has dramatically made us see the world as a small place, with national antagonisms in the Middle East, and academic knowledges we thought perhaps peripheral as, in fact, central. At a New York University conference soon after 9/11, Susan Buck-Morse bravely alluded to her ignorance of work by Islamic scholars, indeed, her ignorance of Islam itself – an ignorance she shared with most of the audience. To Davis’ call for us to be in solidarity with exploited female workers internationally and Messer-Davidow’s concerns about feminism in the US Academy, must be added the challenge to engage with Islam and Africa – and their diverse religions, politics, perspectives.

To put the question perhaps too strongly for the sake of argument: have at least some feminists achieved enough regarding gender equality that we can set aside such issues and deal with terrorism? Or, at least, do we need to prioritize issues so that thinking about contributions to mitigating terrorism would come higher on our agenda? As my earlier discussion of other challenges to feminisms has shown, problems have not been solved for euro-centric women, let alone for diasporic women or women living in cultures that repress women and their bodies. Do we need to re-organize our priorities so that we focus on what women can do to help the battle of our times, namely terrorism,

moving on from thinking about what can be done for women, to what women can do for the world (to paraphrase John Kennedy's famous phrase)?

It is not as if this would be something totally new: women have always done a lot for the world, although not necessarily as part of any formal or self-conscious feminism. We do not need to go back to Greece and *Lysistrata* for models of how women have taken the lead in moral issues across history as citizens. After all, women contributed enormously to the fight against fascism: it was women who led the 1960s US Peace Movement; women who marched on Aldermaston; and who later sat in at Greenham Common. Temma Kaplan's research has documented many other ways in which women across many nations have left their homes to organize for peace. Without falling into the pit of essentialism or idealizing women (dangers other keynote speakers at the *Third Wave Feminism* conference warned against), psychology research shows that women are socialized to be more empathic – better able to put themselves in the place of others – and that women (perhaps as a result) have taken the lead in moral education in recent years (see Hoffman, "Sex Differences in Empathy"). As I hope has been assumed throughout my discussion, I use the signifier "woman" for a symbolic rather than any biological concept. Men too will be part of a fourth feminism as they participate in empathy and leadership to mitigate terrorism.

I raise this question about radically re-organizing priorities because the trauma of 9/11 seems to be a breaking point in the US. Or, rather, it seems that an irrevocable line has been drawn on both conscious and unconscious levels between "before" and "after." The fact that this was the first time attacks took place by foreigners on the US mainland has raised fears of future similar attacks, changing US consciousness – and the unconscious as well. However much a product of media sensationalism and the US government's exploitation of the situation for other agendas, the atmosphere of terror is coming to define daily life as it has already defined lives elsewhere. Many women who suffered prior traumas now find a return of old symptoms as a result of 9/11. If Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome has risen to the fore as something to be taken as a serious cultural problem, it is for good reason. This is not to say that others have not already encountered and endured similar (or worse) traumas, and I am not making a case for US exceptionalism. Far from it. I rather want to emphasize that the US has finally joined others in such suffering. While some Americans may see benefits (*e.g.* a "correction" perhaps to a national illusory sense of US containment and invulnerability), it is at great human cost.

9/11 impacts on issues that have preoccupied third wave women, such as the relative paucity of academic and other jobs, since such paucity will increase in the post-9/11 "terror" era. As Heywood and Drake point out, the main enemy of 1970s feminists, namely "patriarchy," may have been replaced by a newer problem, under- or unemployment, as the main concern for third wave women (14). This difference in regard to job opportunities and careers has not been sufficiently addressed by second wave women – a fact that now takes on new force in the context of "terror," and an increasing employment problem for both young women and young men. Should this become a major feminist focus? Women's jobs globally have already been affected by 9/11 because of new security limitations. New rules are making it harder for foreign women to enter the US. Increased passport control is already causing people problems. Will feminists need to get involved in immigration issues? How will different feminists react

to limitations on certain freedoms? In the wake of 9/11, issues are complex. Do we all agree that the new rules to combat terrorism are merely “political”? Will foreign men mainly be targeted? How should feminists react to this?

These are all urgent questions that face feminists as we look toward the future. While, as noted, 9/11 was a crystallizing moment, the global changes I have been pointing to have been evident, albeit semi-unconsciously, in multi-ethnic women’s art, especially that relating to traumatic ethnic and political conflict. It is no accident that for some years now many female scholars in the US Academy have been drawn to art by African-American, Aboriginal, ethnic and diasporic women within the US and beyond that details women’s painful experiences in foreign nations, in the US, historically and today.

As Joseph noted, we are drawn to art perhaps because that is the terrain beyond ordinary ways of thinking, beyond normal reason, logic, or business and government strategic habits of thought, where something else can be “known,” or where familiar things can be known in a different register, mainly through the work itself, but also through a work being placed, situated, linked to surrounding contexts, to historical traces, etc. by critics, scholars and activists. Art is also a terrain where the level of subjectivity, including its unconscious aspects, becomes visible. This is a level too often overlooked in political, sociological or historical accounts. Certain kinds of art, then – especially those which offer the possibility for the viewer to become a kind of “witness” to atrocities (Laub, “An Event Without a Witness”; Kaplan, “Trauma, Cinema, Witnessing”) – provide one of the means through which, in the fourth wave, responding to terror as international feminists, women can learn about each other’s traumatic experiences, can appreciate the damage brought about by repressive regimes, can transform themselves, and can determine to build a future world in which such traumas are rare rather than the stuff of daily life.^{xv}

While third wave feminists were inevitably to some degree situated in a semi-genealogical relationship to second wave feminists, the fourth wave will be distinguished by bringing second and third wave feminists together to confront a new and devastating reality that involves us all, if not equally, then at least at once. This new reality ideally cuts across racial, ethnic and national divides. A documentary by Shira Richter, *Two States of Mind* (2001), follows a Palestinian and an Israeli woman as they set out together on a physically tough fund-raising venture in the desert. The challenge called for by the event is for each team to navigate their way across a vast, unmarked desert-scape. They have to orient themselves on a map that shows the markers they must pass before getting to the end. It is a race to see which team can complete the course first. In the best of circumstances, couples would get into fights. As the director explained at a showing of the film in Berlin, her “dream” for the film was to show that being women would enable the two to work together, and to bond in the process. The “dream” was that afterwards the women would be able to remain friends, and to move beyond their dramatic political allegiances and realities. While this did not happen, the two endured their travails together in good spirits and grew close in the process. The very effort of the film in posing the question as to whether women from such opposed groups and national locations (so to speak) can overcome their differences makes it important. And an appropriate reference with which to conclude this paper.

Or nearly conclude. For there were angry objections at the *Third Wave Feminism* conference to what I had said here. As I listened to what evidently had been heard as some sort of argument for US exceptionalism or as a lack of appreciation for US destructive international interference over many decades (which was far from my intention), I realized how the changed world order had split women apart, forced us into our national locations (as in Richter's film) even as our very condition is constituted by inevitable global interconnectedness. The different perspectives I had suggested at the start of this article as describing feminists' reality today were exemplified in the response to my address. Confronting differing views amongst women on 9/11, on what the US is doing, and on reasons for the increase of terrorism, reflect some of the tough work that needs to be done in coming years as feminists debate their positions and perspectives, now within a new sensitivity to our national locations and, therefore, very differing experiences and standpoints.

But I would like to end on a more positive note and point out that the very fact that so much knowledge has been produced from feminist perspectives in thirty or so years to create a context for the differences brought together at the conference is truly remarkable. Also remarkable are the ongoing debates about those knowledges, which attest to their continuing importance. The women's movement over the past 40 years has produced genuine, and apparently lasting, social change in many nations within a relatively short historical span. That is something to celebrate, even as feminisms face uncertain and difficult futures in the twenty-first century, as we engage as never before in debating our differences and opening feminism to its many hidden faces. However we may differ, the world needs feminisms if we are not to be devastated and divided in the era of terror.^{xvi}

ⁱ Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director, The Humanities Institute, Stony Brook University, US. For comments contact E. Ann Kaplan at ek361@hotmail.com.

ⁱⁱ Differences were most apparent in the keynote lectures, where about 200 women gathered to hear a speaker. In that context, while differences were loudly asserted, there was no chance to really engage them. Often, however, discussions continued over lunch or dinner, and in that way, I think, they allowed for a better understanding of different positions. Interestingly, as I will discuss here, national identities took precedence over specifically *feminist* identities.

ⁱⁱⁱ In a *Newsweek* issue devoted to "In Defense of Teens: They're Not All 'Mean Girls' And 'Ophelias'", Meadows argue that some girls are "not mean. They like their parents. They're smart, confident and think that popularity is overrated." (44)

^{iv} Since this article appeared, Professor Gilligan has moved to New York University and the status of the center is unclear.

^v I am less concerned with time than with context, and the reference to "waves" permits me to briefly survey some differing US contexts for feminist ideas so as to set the stage for my discussion of the possible need for a fourth feminism, appropriate to our era of so-called "terror."

^{vi} Heywood and Drake, tackling the contested nature of the term, usefully distinguish different meanings assigned to "third wave" feminism by women with different political agendas. Conservative postfeminists distinguish between "victim feminism" (second wave) and "power feminism" (third wave in a conservative mode). Sommers distinguishes only "equity feminists" (power feminists) and "gender feminists" (victim feminists). Anyone speaking of woman-centredness or oppression she puts in the victim camp.

^{vii} Baumgardner and Richards, for example, discuss their involvement with *Freedom Summer '92*, aiming to mobilize a million young women from fifty states to vote in the 1992 elections, and later their involvement with Kennedy's *Project Vote*. They also describe the forming of the Third Wave Foundation, with five thousand members, and the work of a San Francisco based Young Women's Work Project, the Riot Grrrls and the "Girlies" who write zines like *BUST* and *Bitch*. They describe their generation's concern with how gender fairness can be achieved, their understanding that second wave women changed

the rules, and that third wave women start where those women left off. They suggest, however, that the third wave needs to take more initiative and not just follow along prior lines of thought and action.

^{viii} Here Messer-Davidow mitigates her prior suggestion that academic feminists have gone astray – a debatable point – and rather seems to agree that we need a collaborative process in which feminists doing a wide variety of work “build a cross-sector infrastructure” (288). Messer-Davidow’s suggestions include developing a hard network that reaches across sectors of the academy to connect all concerned with public issues, forming a council of academic and activist organizations, identifying public issues for local, regional and national coalition building, and more (288).

^{ix} That is, given our location, context, and what now, economically speaking, looks like strange “boom” years, such concerns made sense.

^x An *International Herald Tribune* article, entitled “Barbaric and Oppressive Injustice” (18 July 2002), suggested that people in the nation itself (not only or mainly in the West) were shocked by a rural Pakistan tribal council’s judgement that gang rape was admissible “as a punishment to avenge an episode of illicit sex that probably never happened.” Women’s low status, everyday violence, the weak reach of central authority, and the injustices of a feudal society obsessed with honor and revenge, were cited as concerns by many in Pakistan.

^{xi} See also Snitow’s related article, “Feminist Futures in the Former East Bloc.”

^{xii} An *International Herald Tribune* article (18 July 2002) reported an encouraging account of a protest by Nigerian women working for Chevron in Escravos, Nigeria. Subtitled “Takeover protest for jobs and services expands to new sites,” the article described the powerful “shaming gesture” the women aged 30 to 90 used to maintain control over the facility and the hostages the women had taken. The women obtained a number of their demands, and a recognition by the Chevron Texaco executive that the corporation needed to be more involved with the communities where they had factories.

^{xiii} In a paper at the *Trauma Network* conference in 2002, entitled “Some Thoughts on Collective Traumatization and Silence in the Context of Relational Approaches,” Mészáros compared Hungarian Jewry’s denying the signs of growing anti-Semitism in the twentieth century to 9/11. She noted that many authors have asked about 9/11: “‘Why couldn’t we see what was right in front of us?’ There were plenty of warnings in the last few years....Surely this narcissistic ego-diastrale blocked the people in power from examining reality on the ground in a proper way.”

^{xiv} I am, of course, aware of the transatlantic differences regarding terrorist threat. If Americans resent their government’s unilateralist manner of taking military action alone, according to an *International Herald Tribune* article (15-16 June 2002), “Europeans generally do not believe that the terrorist threat is as dangerous as it is made out to be by Washington. Most believe that Al Qaeda only want to hurt not overthrow the US, and Europeans are not enamoured of a military approach, preferring to live without a foreign policy.” On the other hand, an article in the same paper talked about the dangers of US extremists lining up with Muslim terrorists through a whole series of fundamentalist Internet sites appealing to hate and anti-Semitism and applauding 9/11 attacks.

^{xv} While I cannot go into details here, let me just say that the concept, originally developed by psychoanalysts like Dori Laub as a way to understand the role of interviewers and psychotherapists dealing with traumatized victims of the Holocaust, may apply to viewers of certain kinds of art as well. The process Laub describes is crucial for victims of catastrophes because it creates a witness where there was none before. A writer or filmmaker may also set the stage for bringing into being a witness – the viewer – where there was none before. Laub stresses how the Other as well as the subject giving testimony is changed in being witness to a traumatic narration. The dual processes of empathic arousal and cognitive awareness of injustice or irreconcilable difference may, depending on the viewer’s ideology, lead to action or, if not to action, at least to a changed awareness that might influence public policy. Art that takes trauma for its topics but does not allow for comfortable closure, that leaves the wound open (as does, for instance, Tracey Moffatt’s short film, *Night Cries*), pulls the spectator into its sphere in ways other kinds of art cannot. *Night Cries* leaves the viewer with an uneasy, disturbed feeling but with the sense of having been moved ethically and empathically. For a full discussion of Moffatt and her film see Kaplan, “Trauma, Cinema, Witnessing.”

^{xvi} Indeed the world needs feminism as ideology, practice and knowledge production if women are to contribute meaningfully to understanding and altering the terrorism that threatens us all. Exactly how and in what ways women can contribute remains to be seen. I will just say that I think studying unconscious motives and unconscious desires should be included in whatever re-thinking of women’s studies programs

we undertake: we do not want to fall into the old error of focusing either on social, political or economic analyses or on psychoanalytic analyses. Rather, we need to work at the same time on both sorts of analyses, since the one will illuminate the other. And I cannot think of a better group than that at the *Third Wave Feminism* conference to start such a difficult project.

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