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Introduction

Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake

Recently much media attention has been given to writings about third wave feminism, often labeled "postfeminism." In the perpetual battle of representation and definitional clout, the slippage from "third wave feminism" to "postfeminist" is important, because many of us working in the "third wave" by no means define our feminism as a groovier alternative to an over-and-done feminist movement. Let us be clear: "postfeminist" characterizes a group of young, conservative feminists who explicitly define themselves against and criticize feminists of the second wave.

Not surprisingly, it is these conservative feminists who are regularly called upon as spokespersons for the "next generation." Writers such as Katie Roiphe, Rene Denfield, and Naomi Wolf argue against feminist critiques of rape, sexual harassment, and abortion. They publish books, appear on op-ed pages, and write for popular young women's magazines such as *Glamour* and *YM*. Conservative postfeminism is in every way more visible than is the diverse activist work that terms itself "third wave." The one anthology that explicitly refers to a "third wave" of feminism, *The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism*, cited in a *Genders* article in 1994, reflects on how the "third wave" is defined by the challenge that women-of-color feminists posed to white second wave feminism. This book, unlike the work of conservative white feminists, has seen a difficult road to publication. Perhaps because this book challenges easily assimilated feminist stereotypes and because it is being published by a small, independent house, the book's production has seen problems that rarely occur in the large, mainstream publishing houses to which conservative feminism has easier access.[1]

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Two third wave feminist anthologies that have gained some prominence and are written in a less conservative vein, Barbara Findlen's *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation* and Rebecca Walker's *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*, present the reading public with a version of third wave feminism that relies, for the most part, on personal anecdote for their definitional and argumentative strategies.[2] These writings tend to be autobiographical and experiential, giving the insiders' "view from the heart," a glimpse of the social preoccupations and problems facing this "next generation" of feminists. Yet as important as these two books have been in addressing the experiences of this next generation, the writing rarely provides consistent analysis of the larger culture that has helped shape and produce those experiences.

Third Wave Agenda picks up where these other collections left off, joining the efforts of Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry, editors of the 1996 anthology *"Bad Girls"/"Good Girls,"* to present a group of writers who work as cultural critics, activists, and teachers, whose life stories are informed by an intense engagement with the most vital cultural theory available today.[3] These are personal voices mediated by their grounding in research, theory, and social practice, an engaged scholarship that combines new interdisciplinary methodologies with an autobiographical style. Fusing the confessional mode of earlier popular feminisms with the more analytic mode that has predominated in the academy since the 1980s, both *Third Wave Agenda* and *"Bad Girls"/"Good Girls"* comprise essays that give an emotional life and a personal stake sometimes missing from academic writing, while maintaining an analytic focus. But, unlike *"Bad Girls"/"Good Girls," Third Wave Agenda* presents a generational perspective, gathering the voices of young activists struggling to come to terms with the historical specificity of our feminisms and with the times in which we came of age (the late 1970s through the late 1980s).

Because our lives have been shaped by struggles between various feminisms as well as by cultural backlash against feminism and activism, we argue that contradiction—or what looks like contradiction, if one doesn't shift one's point of view—marks the desires and strategies of third wave feminists. Whereas conservative postfeminist thinking relies on an opposition between "victim feminism" (second wave) and "power feminism" (third wave), and suggests that "power feminism" serves as a corrective to a hopelessly outmoded "victim femi-

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nism," to us the second and third waves of feminism are neither incompatible nor opposed. Rather, we define feminism's third wave as a movement that contains elements of second wave critique of beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power structures while it also acknowledges and makes use of the pleasure, danger, and defining power of those structures. Conservative postfeminist Christina Hoff Sommers splits feminism into two camps only: equity feminists (power feminists) and gender feminists (victim feminists).[4] She defines equity feminists as those who "stay within the bounds of traditional scholarship and join in its enterprise." She defines gender feminists as those who "seek to transform scholarship to make it 'women-centered'" (55). For Sommers, and for postfeminists in general, anyone who speaks of "oppression" or is "woman-centered" is in the "victim" camp.

One group of feminists not accounted for by this polarity—ourselves among them—is young feminists who grew up with equity feminism, got gender feminism in college, along with poststructuralism, and are now hard at work on a feminism that strategically combines elements of these feminisms, along with black feminism, women-of-color feminism, working-class feminism, pro-sex feminism, and so on. A third wave goal that comes directly out of learning from these histories and working among these traditions is the development of modes of thinking that can come to terms with the multiple, constantly shifting bases of oppression in relation to the multiple, interpenetrating axes of identity, and the creation of a coalition politics based on these understandings—understandings that acknowledge the existence of oppression, even though it is not fashionable to say so. We know that what oppresses me may not oppress you, that what oppresses you may be something I participate in, and that what oppresses me may be something you participate in. Even as different strains of feminism and activism sometimes directly contradict each other, they are all part of our third wave lives, our thinking, and our praxes: we are products of all the contradictory definitions of and differences within feminism, beasts of such a hybrid kind that perhaps we need a different name altogether.

In the important second wave collection *The Feminist Papers,* Alice Rossi contests the position that feminism "died" after the suffrage movement and came to life again in the late 1960s. Instead, she argues, there is a continuity between feminist generations that doesn't seem like continuity:

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> [T]he public heroines of one generation are the private heroines of the next. . . . [B]etween 1920 and 1960 . . . [women] private[ly] consolidated . . . gains made by their mothers. . . . [S]trong-minded descendants of the suffragists were pouring much of their energy into education and employment, and if they were married, they did double duty at work and at home; such a profile leaves little time and energy for political involvement.[5]

Facing classrooms of young women and men who are trained by the media caricature of "feminazis," who see feminism as an enemy or say "feminist" things prefaced by "I'm not a feminist, but . . . ," finding little time in our own overextended, economically insecure lives for traditional public activism, we may be experiencing a repetition of the historical pattern Rossi documents.

In the current historical moment, then, third wave feminists often take cultural production and sexual politics as key sites of struggle, seeking to use desire and pleasure as well as anger to fuel struggles for justice. These forms of third wave activism don't always look "activist" enough to second wave feminists. But, as Rossi argues, exploring different activist practices doesn't mean we're not feminists: "[T]he [less publicly activist] generation, unnoted by historians, may consolidate gains and provide the foundation on which the [next] generation takes off again into public and historical notice" (619). Within the "generation" addressed in *Third Wave Agenda*, whose birth dates fall between 1963 and 1974, we can see this historical dialectic in operation. Those of us on the older end of this spectrum have tended to spend more time establishing our careers, whereas those of us on the younger end have had more experience with public activism. But, as *Third Wave Agenda* attempts to establish, we are all third wave feminists, bringing the specificity of our historical situation to our widely variable definitions of that term.

One public figure who demonstrates some of the contradictions that third wave feminism brings together is Courtney Love, the punk rock musician who bridges the opposition between "power feminism" and "victim feminism." She combines the individualism, combativeness, and star power that are the legacy of second wave gains in opportunities for women (which arrived in conjunction with cultural backlash against such gains), with second wave critiques of the cult of beauty and male dominance. Love is a prototype of female ambition and a sharp cultural critic of both the institutions that sustain that am-

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bition and those that argue against it. Glamorous and grunge, girl and boy, mothering and selfish, put together and taken apart, beautiful and ugly, strong and weak, responsible and rebellious, Love bridges the irreconcilability of individuality and femininity within dominant culture, combining the cultural critique of an earlier generation of feminists with the backlash against it by the next generation of women, legacies of Reagan Republicanism who are busy reclaiming the province of beauty for female power in ways that can only fail because they have been critiqued too thoroughly.

Love's most famous song, "Doll Parts," contradictorily combines the second wave critique of "I am / doll eyes / doll mouth / doll legs" with the third wave postmodern individualism facilitated by the second wave—"I want to be the girl with the most cake / I fake it so real I am beyond fake"—but returns to the lived cost of female ambition: "[S]omeday, you will ache like I ache."[6] Love's media persona combines the reality of female competitiveness with a feminist sensibility and a vocal support of other women: in conversation, Love often cites Susan Faludi's *Backlash* and raves about some women's performances at the same time that she defines herself competitively against others. Even in her mass media incarnation as Althea Flynt in Miloš Forman's *The People vs. Larry Flynt* and her January 1997 layout in *Vogue*, Love is still throwing an unfashionable feminism in the face of fashion, tongue in cheek. Love was "bossily laying into me," the *Vogue* reporter writes, "about anorexic models, the power of fashion magazines to determine national standards of body mass." "I can't stand it, that whole thing," Love says, "sitting around with your girlfriend and kvetching about weight. It takes all your confidence. . . . [T]hat's my big feminist lecture for today."[7] Love is aware of the social context that now makes a "big feminist lecture" unhip, thus harming chances for individual success, yet does it anyway.

Love's star quality and personal ambition may be a legacy of the Reagan 1980s and a quality discouraged by the collective movement ethos of second wave feminism, but it was the second wave that made ambition a realizable possibility for women. Equity feminist, postmodern feminist, and victim feminist all at once, Love combines the contradictory aspects of these discourses in a way that recognizes and makes use of complications that young women working within dominant culture face today. For better and for worse, she may be our Gloria Steinem, in that she is a highly visible lightning rod for

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third wave issues. Stylistically, however, Love emerges more from the playful, parodic tradition of the late 1960s WITCH (Women's International Conspiracy from Hell) and women's liberation guerrilla theater movements.[8]

African American hip-hop artist Me'Shell NdegéOcello is another public figure who exemplifies third wave feminist hybridity, contradiction, and activism. With her deep voice, barely there hair, and sexily androgynous clothing, NdegéOcello plays the edges of boy and girl, masculine and feminine, while her music voices a bisexual feminist sensibility strongly grounded in African American culture and hip-hop's hybrid logic.[9] Many of the songs on *Plantation Lullabies* (1993) call for love between black men and women, "a love that is essential to the loving of one's self," whereas on *Peace beyond Passion* (1996) NdegéOcello attacks homophobia in "Leviticus: Faggot" and speaks to a woman lover in "Who Is He and What Is He to You."[10] In songs such as "Two Lonely Hearts (on the Subway)," gendered desire becomes less important than raced desire and connection. The lyrics addressed an unspecified "you" whose "lovely black face" the speaker wants to get to know, perhaps by reading Ntozake Shange or the *Village Voice* together. Collaborative escape into love and language, the speaker suggests, might provide an antidote to "singin' the blues on the subway." NdegéOcello's songs enact the pleasures of desiring and desirable blacknesses, and show how love's necessary and healing power mingles with the outrage of "livin' in the midst of genocide." Loving Black men *and* Black women in such a world, and saying this out loud, is one way for NdegéOcello to live her whole, complex self.

The movement between love and outrage also characterizes NdegéOcello's take on religion, particularly evident in *Peace beyond Passion*. Taking Old Testament books as song titles, and collaging verses and images that recall Moses and Diaspora, human divinity, Mary Magdalene's prostitute-beauty, racial uplift, and some Christians' biblical justification for condemning homosexuality, NdegéOcello seeks healing through a redefinition of Christian faith and tradition. Revising, hybridizing, and reclaiming a spirituality that can do what she needs it to, NdegéOcello also turns to other religions, naming one song "God Shiva" and dedicating another to Kahlil Gibran. As *Rolling Stone* writer Ann Powers observes, in this activist work NdegéOcello "joins the chorus of contemporary women—Tori Amos, Joan Osborne,

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Polly Jean Harvey, Jewel—re-imagining the mystical through the vehicle of pop, using music's power to challenge conceptions and build some myths of their own."[11] NdegéOcello's engagements with spirituality also participate in a key aspect of black feminist praxis. Taken together, the various facets of her performances work the edges of contradiction in a powerfully feminist way.

In the introduction of *To Be Real*, Rebecca Walker lists contradiction as a generative force for her collection but sets third wave hybridity in opposition to what she describes as a rigidly ideological second wave feminism:

> Constantly measuring up to some cohesive fully down-for-the-feminist-cause identity without contradictions and messiness and lusts for power and luxury items is not a fun or easy task. . . . For many of us it seems that to be a feminist in the way that we have seen or understood feminism is to conform to an identity and way of living that doesn't allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect personal histories.[12]

Third Wave Agenda makes things "messier" by *embracing* second wave critique as a central definitional thread while emphasizing ways that desires and pleasures subject to critique can be used to rethink and enliven activist work. We see the emphasis on contradiction as continuous with aspects of the second wave, whereas many writers in *To Be Real* seem eager to distance themselves from the second wave by forgetting or dismissing its legacies. The politics, however, that their essays advocate is very much indebted to the work of women of color who are generationally second wave—Walker's mother among them.

Perhaps ironically, this politics is perhaps best expressed today in the inclusive feminist activist collective Third Wave, which Rebecca Walker founded. Third Wave is a good example of a coalition-politics activism that defines itself, and its politics, through the multiple subject positions and diverse community affiliations of its members. Third Wave's mission statement reads as follows:

> Third Wave is a member-driven multiracial, multicultural, multisexuality national non-profit organization devoted to feminist and youth activism for change. Our goal is to harness the energy of young women and men by creating a community in which members can network, strategize, and ultimately, take action. By using our experiences as a starting point, we can create a diverse community and cultivate a meaningful response.

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Third Wave makes the inclusion of persons of various genders, sexualities, nationalities, and classes a top priority and combines elements of equity feminism and gender feminism in a grassroots feminism that still fights for equal access and equal pay for equal work but also seeks to transform the structures within which young people work.

The lived messiness characteristic of the third wave is what defines it: girls who want to be boys, boys who want to be girls, boys and girls who insist they are both, whites who want to be black, blacks who want to or refuse to be white, people who *are* white *and* black, gay *and* straight, masculine *and* feminine, or who are finding ways to be and name none of the above; successful individuals longing for community and coalition, communities and coalitions longing for success; tensions between striving for individual success and subordinating the individual to the cause; identities formed within a relentlessly consumer-oriented culture but informed by a politics that has problems with consumption. Although many third wave writings make provocative use of these contradictions, they often posit a cleaner break between the second and the third wave than *Third Wave Agenda*'s contributors are willing to advocate, and those writings often do not mention where these contradictions have previously been most powerfully voiced.

From the Third World to the Third Wave: Our Debts

Characterizing the "third wave" as a movement defined by contradiction is not new. In fact, the definitional moment of third wave feminism has been theorized as proceeding from critiques of the white women's movement that were initiated by women of color, as well as from the many instances of coalition work undertaken by U.S. third world feminists. As Kayann Short notes in an article in *Genders*, "[S]ome feminists of color use the term `the third wave' to identify a new feminism that is led by and has grown out of the challenge to white feminism posited by women of color."[13] As early as 1981, which saw the publication of the landmark anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, and 1983, the year of the publication of Barbara Smith's *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, contradiction was claimed as a fundamental definitional strategy, a necessary, lived, embodied strategy.[14] Why, then, has there been in mainstream media representation no "third wave" until the 1990s?

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What is the relationship between the self-named U.S. third world feminism of *This Bridge Called My Back* and the third wave feminism of the "next generation"?

As we finished compiling this manuscript and reading through individual contributions, we were struck by the fact that most of them, our own included, cited the work of bell hooks and her emphasis on coalition politics as a model for third wave activist theory and praxis. Contributors to this volume have looked to hooks in particular as a model for hope, for some sense of what to do next, but hooks's work itself is situated within the hybrid and intersecting discourses of black feminism and U.S. third world feminism. Chela Sandoval's important 1982 essay on U.S. third world feminism and white feminist racism, "Feminism and Racism: A Report on the 1981 National Women's Studies Association Conference," argues for a feminist movement defined by difference: "What U.S. third world feminists are calling for is a new subjectivity, a political revision that denies any one perspective as the only answer, but instead posits a shifting tactical and strategic subjectivity . . . no simple, easy sisterhood for U.S. third world feminists."[15] And what third wave feminists seek and find in the writing of hooks, Hazel Carby, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, Maxine Hong Kingston, Ntozake Shange, Patricia Hill Collins, Bharati Mukherjee, Patricia Williams, Ana Castillo, Coco Fusco, Toni Morrison, and so many others, is languages and images that account for multiplicity and difference, that negotiate contradiction in affirmative ways, and that give voice to a politics of hybridity and coalition. *Third Wave Agenda* acknowledges how fully third wave feminism comes out of this groundbreaking work, and how U.S. third world feminism changed the second wave of the women's movement for good.

In acknowledging the profound influence of U.S. third world feminism on the third wave, it is imperative to recognize the dangers of appropriation, as well as the ways that, as Hazel Carby argues, "feminist theory has frequently used and abused [the writing of black women] to produce an essential black female subject for its own consumption."[16] For example, as important as hooks's work has been for U.S third world feminism and third wave feminism, she is often read and taught as *representing* black feminist thought. And, as Patricia Hill Collins notes, "While black women's particular location provides a distinctive angle of vision on oppression, this perspective comprises neither a privileged nor a complete standpoint."[17] A definitive aspect

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of third wave feminist movement, then, is negotiating multicultural and antiracist standpoints amid the ongoing tensions between borrowing and appropriating. As Vron Ware points out in *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History*, "[T]he extent to which this borrowing, or appropriating, is acknowledged obviously varies a great deal, but I think it can potentially provide an important link between different types of struggles . . . [leading] to forming alliances."[18] White U.S. feminism has a long history of borrowing from, allying with, and betraying African American liberation movements, and a consciously multicultural third wave feminism must continuously work with and through these tensions. Perhaps this is where the concept of "feminist generations" is most useful: as an articulation of feminist *movement*, ongoing change, and struggle.[19]

If "whiteness" has been assumed by white women to mean privilege, visibility, belonging, and sisterhood, many of the writers in *Third Wave Agenda* have spent their lives feeling the often inchoate failures of whiteness, white femininity, and competitive individualism. As James Baldwin argued so eloquently, there *is* no white community: "America became white—the people who, as they claim, 'settled' the country became white—because of the necessity of denying the Black presence, and justifying the Black subjugation. No community can be based on such a principle—or in other words, no community can be established on so genocidal a lie."[20] And, as historian David Roediger writes, "Whiteness describes, from Little Big Horn to Simi Valley, not a culture but precisely the absence of culture. It is the empty and therefore terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn't and on whom one can hold back."[21] In a world whose population is expected to double in the next ten years, where social criticism and angst are treated by Prozac, and where Republicans and Democrats alike trumpet the vision of "family values" and nuclear, single-career families precisely when so many of us make alternative families and seek dual careers by choice *and* because we must—in this world, the old motivator of individual distinction, required and perpetuated by the lies of whiteness and assimilation and equal opportunity, often feels like the dustiest myth. In this historical moment we are motivated by "despair, uncertainty, and loss of a sense of grounding" to do something other than adopt "the ideology of individualism that assumes a competitive view of the individual."[22]

Yet that oh-so-American ideology has been ingrained into our

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deepest senses of ourselves, an ironic legacy of the second wave feminist and civil rights struggles that fought for equal access to the opportunities of white men. Despite our knowing better, despite our knowing its emptiness, the ideology of individualism is still a major motivating force in many third wave lives. Further, our struggles to negotiate individualism's powerful seductions and betrayals provide the third wave with an odd form of common ground, linking us across our many differences. So many of us are panicked about our futures and places, or lack thereof, in the world. With hundreds or sometimes thousands of applications for every "good job"—that is, a job with benefits that is not temporary or part-time—it is hard to think in terms of joining together with others rather than competing against them. The specter of anonymity, linked as it is with the threat of un- and underemployment for all workers, is one of our generation's biggest fears. As David Wild writes in an article on MTV's *The Real World* for *Rolling Stone*,

> One senses *The Real World* speaks to an entire generation of viewers that can hardly wait to get a camera crew on its ass. An application in *The Real Real World* book led to 10,000 new young bodies anxious to sign on for house duty. One imagines packs of pushy twentysomethings lying in wait for a quick way out of the ghetto of obscurity.[23]

In a time of radically diminished economic opportunity, the reality of this "ghetto of obscurity" generates an almost panicked impulse to escape, a panic that makes pushiness and ruthless competition easy. It is a panic that makes other bodies look, on certain mornings, like so many bowling pins to bump out of the way. It is a panic that fuels the current backlash against affirmative action programs, the tightening of border security and anti-immigration laws, and the legislation ending welfare as we know it. The powerful motivating force of this fear often bumps up against a more reasoned knowledge that this adversarial attitude only contributes to the sense of placelessness. Competition can appear to be the most readily available survival strategy even as we know it ensures our extinction. This is a contradiction that feminism's third wave has to face: an often conscious knowledge of the ways in which we are compelled and constructed by the very things that undermine us.

This isn't just "Generation X" whining but, rather, a form of

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spiritual sickness that most compels generationally third wave men and women to activism and that most works as a galvanizing force for social change. Bell hooks writes in "Postmodern Blackness":

> The overall impact of postmodernism is that many other groups now share with black folks a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, loss of a sense of grounding even if it is not informed by shared circumstance. Radical postmodernism calls attention to those shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race, etc., that could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy—ties that would promote recognition of common commitments, and serve as a basis for solidarity and coalition.[24]

Although hooks points out that a longing for community is specific to middle-class white women who have been allowed to join the competitive fray of the dominant culture, it may be this longing that helps fuel white participation in third wave activism. Hooks writes that white feminism "did not question whether masses of women shared the same need for community. . . . [T]he focus on feminism as a way to develop shared identity and community has little appeal to women who experience community, who seek ways to end exploitation and oppression in the context of their lives."[25] But it may be that the longing for community that is characteristic of some white feminists will serve as a motivation to form coalitions that seek to "end exploitation and oppression" affecting lives other than just their own. In addition, the concept of "equal rights," which obscures the complex ways that exploitation and oppression work and are normalized, is also a concept that, *because* most young Americans internalize it naively, can lead to coalition. While growing up, we take "equal rights" seriously, assuming that they apply to all Americans, and we are often horrified when we realize, sooner or later, that in practice, "equal rights" apply only to a few.

Shaped by hegemonic privileges, white women's paths to a coalition-based feminist consciousness have often been based in ignorance, contradiction, and confusion. In some fundamental ways many of us still don't "get it." Striving for the success and equality with white men that second wave feminism made possible, white women in particular often became so focused on individual achievement and success that we became wholehearted supporters of the very structures we most wanted to contest. Third wave women and men of color who have gained access to these kinds of "opportunities" also get caught in

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this bind. In short, many of us have been clueless, swallowing status quo gambits whole, not choking until we find they have eaten us up from the inside—our hearts, livers, stomachs, lungs—until we can't feel or eat or breathe. We once *could* eat and breathe, and because we could, others couldn't. Third wavers know in theory that, as hooks wrote in 1984, "[B]roader perspectives can only emerge as we examine both the personal that is political, the politics of society as a whole, and global revolutionary politics."[26] But we don't always know how to accomplish this.

Perhaps these are some of the reasons that, for most women who are generationally third wave, the feminist-separatist, pro-woman "gynocriticism" and "goddess worship" of some feminisms, although they sometimes sounded nice, seemed all too wishful and frilly and arcane to make any sense of our lives. Although we also owe an enormous debt to the critique of sexism and the struggles for gender equity that were white feminism's strongest provinces, it was U.S. third world feminism that modeled a language and a politics of hybridity that can account for our lives at the century's turn. These are lives marked by the realities of multicultural exchange, fusion, and conflict, lives that combine blackness, whiteness, brownness, gayness, bisexuality, straightness. These are lives that combine male-identification and female-identification, middle-class status and staggering debt, lives that are hopeful and stressed and depressed, empowered and exhausted and scared. As Gloria Anzaldúa writes in her foreword to the second edition of *This Bridge Called My Back*, "[W]e have come to realize that we are not alone in our struggles nor separate nor autonomous but that we—white black straight queer female male—are connected and interdependent."[27] We hope that in these pages we have begun—provisionally, slowly, making some dumb mistakes—to pay our debts to those women whose work has sometimes literally saved our lives.

Keeping a Faith

Essays in *Third Wave Agenda* try to answer the question, What is the third wave? in a variety of ways. Coming out of a turn in the academy that tended to privilege a feminist theory that often seemed like a disembodied language game, three years ago in a bookstore in Ithaca, New York, we—both of us academic activists with creative writing backgrounds—sat down in frustration in the feminist theory section.

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We wanted, needed, more than anything to see a kind of writing that addressed our historical perspective, a writing that was intellectually rigorous and heartfelt and unpretentious at once. Without knowing it, we were looking for the kind of writing that reflected a faith, a writing that Cherríe Moraga characterizes as "believing that we have the power to actually transform our experience, change our lives, save our lives. . . . It is the faith of activists I am talking about."[28] We wanted the kind of writing that Moraga and Anzaldúa name "theory in the flesh" and that bell hooks calls "lived theory," one that could articulate the historically situated experiences of our "generation."[29] Not finding examples of this kind of writing by third wave writers yet hoping it was out there somewhere, we sent out a nationwide call for papers to both nonacademic and academic venues, and we received contributions from academics, activists, and artists. The hybridity of language we were looking for—the hybridity characteristic of our identities, our lives—proved more difficult to find than we had imagined. We wanted good storytelling *and* critical analysis without jargon, lived personal experience that was tied to the larger social scene. But readers as well as contributors often were uncomfortable with language that wasn't clearly one or the other. We have struggled to keep both forms of discourse in play, to keep the faith that writing itself can be transformative.

The essays in *Third Wave Agenda* are organized into four sections: (1) What Is the Third Wave? Third Wave Cultural Contexts; (2) The Third Wave and Representation; (3) Third Wave Negotiations; and (4) Third Wave Activism and Youth Music Culture. "What Is the Third Wave?" articulates some of the questions most pressing for third wave feminism, examining possibilities for activism in the context of the economy, multiple identity positionality, and a cultural climate hostile to feminism. The section includes Michelle Sidler's "Living in McJobdom: Third Wave Feminism and Class Inequity," which argues that the choice for which second wave feminists fought—equal access to the workforce—is no longer a choice, because the U.S. workforce is now part of a global economy based on turnover and lower wages for all workers. Sidler calls for "a new feminist political agenda [that] work[s] to relieve the economic disparity facing twentysomethings," and argues that it is now under- and unemployment that are the most pressing problem for feminism, not "patriarchy." Our "We Learn America like a Script: Activism in the Third Wave; or, Enough Phantoms

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of Nothing" explores the emptiness of some of the traditional forms of empowerment, as well as some possible sources of the hunger for community and coalition that fuels contemporary activism. Deborah Siegel's "Reading between the Waves: Feminist Historiography in a 'Postfeminist' Moment" looks at some of the complications of theorizing feminism in the 1990s, including a backlash culture and "postfeminism." She concludes that "we must recognize that there can be no single representative subject of feminism, while, at the same time, we must continue to speak in a collective voice that articulates political demands on behalf of a group called 'women.'" The section concludes with "*HUES* Magazine: The Making of a Movement," an essay by three women who themselves are examples of third wave feminist practice, *HUES* magazine editors Tali Edut, Dyann Logwood, and Ophira Edut. They discuss the importance of biracial coalition and activism in the third wave and the story behind their brand of activism, which took the form of a nationally distributed fashion magazine that is a multicultural, feminist alternative to mainstream women's magazines such as *Glamour* and *Mademoiselle*. In a different way, each piece in this section articulates the importance of the contradictory and fragmentary identities in the third wave, making connections between racial, sexual, and gender identities, categories that make no sense if considered in isolation.

Section 2, "The Third Wave and Representation," explores multiple ways that fan culture and engagement with media figures have been empowering, if problematic, to third wave feminism, and how media promotion of conservative feminists has led to the highly distorted public perceptions of both second and third wave feminisms that conservative feminists love to attack. Leigh Shoemaker's exposé of and identification with singer Henry Rollins in "Part Animal, Part Machine: Self-Definition, Rollins Style" explores the relationship between contemporary configurations of masculinity and feminist male identification, which she argues is the result of the mixed messages of the backlash: "second wave feminism had taught me that, as a girl, I could do anything I wanted to do, but the backlash let me know that this was possible only as long as I wasn't a *girl*—as long as I wasn't soft and feminine and weak." She theorizes Rollins as the practitioner of our culture's latent fascist tendencies that problematically appeal to the malaise and the sense of disenfranchisement of third wavers. Jennifer Reed's "Roseanne: A 'Killer Bitch' for Generation X" explores the pos-

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sibilities of "bitchiness" and identification with media figures for personal and political empowerment, offering Roseanne as the creator of "a new subjective space for women" that "both parodies and embraces glamour, . . . a construction committed to working with the contradictions and the irreconcilability" that characterize such a space. Carolyn Sorisio's "A Tale of Two Feminisms: Power and Victimization in Contemporary Feminist Debate" critically engages the Camille Paglia–Katie Roiphe–Naomi Wolf representation of third wave feminism. She argues for the value of feminist history and the need to make that history a more vital, present part of contemporary culture. Because Paglia-Roiphe-Wolf's popular work ignores much academic feminism and feminist history, particularly the work of feminists of color, and returns to a universalized concept of woman, this elision further indicates that "academic feminists must intensify efforts to speak to the overall feminist community. Otherwise, we will constantly remain in the same place, reinvent the same wheel, and learn nothing from the past." Together, the pieces in this section examine the role of representation in creating feminist identities and feminist histories (or lack thereof), arguing for the centrality of popular culture and an audience that goes beyond the academy to activist strategies in the third wave.

Section 3, "Third Wave Negotiations," presents some key sites of contradiction that characterize third wave experience. Carol Guess writes a meditation on the relationship between gay identity, academia, queer feminism, and feminist practice in "Deconstructing Me: On Being (Out) in the Academy," addressing the difficulties of negotiating lesbian identity and Butlerian poststructuralism. Lidia Yukman's "Feminism and a Discontent" performs in its language the hybridity that we argue is most characteristic of third wave activist strategy, pointing to the difficulties of negotiating creative and critical language and cross-gender/racial/sexual/class affiliations in the classroom, and arguing that ideas and words and writing are forms of activism that can save a person's life. And in "Masculinity without Men: Women Reconciling Feminism and Male-Identification," Ana Marie Cox and others negotiate between feminism and male identification. Writing in dialogue form, they discuss how, instead of being opposed to feminism, they have found male identification an enabling, embodied form of third wave feminist praxis.

The final section of the book, "Third Wave Activism and Youth Music Culture," highlights what many have found to be the most pro-

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ductive site for activism in the third wave. Because contemporary rap, rock, and alternative music is produced and consumed primarily by persons in the third wave, music has emerged as a site for activist coalition and community building like no other and has led to activist projects that link gender activism with other interventions. Riot Grrrl activists in Washington, D.C., for instance, first came together to produce girl-oriented music and fanzines, and then diversified their activist work to include literacy projects, self-defense projects, and empowerment initiatives in the wider community. Melissa Klein's "Duality and Redefinition: Young Feminism and the Alternative Music Community" is a firsthand account of that activism, providing a history of Riot Grrrl and the way the movement has branched out. "I have had to step outside the punk scene," Klein writes, and "into social service work to confront race, aging, and poverty issues, because the punk scene remains predominantly young, white, and middle class." Fellow activist Jen Smith discusses the evolution of musical production into diverse forms of "punk feminist cultural productions" in "Doin' It for the Ladies—Youth Feminism: Cultural Productions/Cultural Activism." And Jeff Niesel, a freelance music critic for the *Orange County Register* and the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, analyzes, in "Hip-Hop Matters: Rewriting the Sexual Politics of Rap Music," the politics and possibilites of rap music for race activism and its complicated relationship to feminism, emphasizing an alternative tradition in hip-hop that embodies and encourages coalition. This hip-hop alternative argues that only an examination of race and gender as related forces can make for meaningful cultural (ex)change. Together, the pieces in "Third Wave Activism and Youth Music Culture" argue persuasively for cultural production as a powerful activist site, perhaps the site where the third wave has made its strongest interventions.

Communities today have to be imagined on different bases than that of the separatism of identity politics, bases such as what bell hooks calls a "commonality of feeling."[30] Unlike Naomi Wolf, who is most often called upon as a spokesperson for third wave feminism, the writers in *Third Wave Agenda* believe that living in a world that preserves the status quo of free market competition and upward mobility is not enough to maintain our sanity and human dignity, if it is even possible. Always personal and engaged while maintaining a scholarly focus, these essays perform a kind of hybrid thinking and writing that marks part of a critical agenda for the third wave, a place of discussion

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and disagreement that is also a place of community. Writers in *Third Wave Agenda*, although their positions are by no means comprehensive of the diversity of the third wave, engage the possibility of rethinking and reshaping. Following the lead provided by the work of bell hooks, Susan Bordo, and others that has reshaped the critical paradigms of our time, we try to confront the complications of contradiction in ways that begin to expand comfortable cultural polarities and situate youth culture squarely within lived experience and cultural practices. We also begin to chart a series of directions for third wave feminism at a cultural moment when mainstream hostility to such projects has reached new peaks. We are able to do so only with the help of all the feminisms that have come before us and of the ways in which feminist work, more than anything else in contemporary culture, has made it possible for us still to have hope, to think, to keep the faith, to survive.

Notes

1. *The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism*, edited by Lisa Albrecht et al., is being published by Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press and has been rescheduled for publication in spring 1997. Small presses often run into funding problems and get by with volunteer staffs.

2. See Barbara Findlen, ed., *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation* (Seattle: Seal, 1995); and Rebecca Walker, ed., *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

3. See Nan Bauer Maglin and Donna Perry, eds., *"Bad Girls"/"Good Girls": Women, Sex, and Power in the Nineties* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996).

4. See Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

5. Alice Rossi, *The Feminist Papers* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1973), 616–17. Our thanks to Susan Bordo for suggesting this source.

6. Hole, "Doll Parts," *Live through This* (Geffen, 1994).

7. Vicki Woods, "Labor of Love," *Vogue*, January 1997, 135.

8. Our thanks go to Susan Bordo for her insights on this point.

9. Cultural critic Greg Tate signifies on hip-hop complexity in the liner notes for NdegéOcello's *Plantation Lullabies*:

> There's no such thing as alternative hiphop because the only known alternative to hiphop is dead silence. . . . Hiphop is the inverse of capitalism. Hiphop is the reverse of colonialism. Hiphop is the world the slaveholder made, sent into niggafide future shock. Hiphop is the black aesthetic by-product of the American dream machine. . . . Hiphop is the first black musical movement in history that black people pimped before the white boys got to it. Hiphop converted raw soul into fetishized commodity. Hiphop has

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> no morals, no conscience, and no ecological concern for the scavenged earth or the scavenged American minds wrecked in the pursuit of new markets. Unlike Sigourney Weaver's nemesis Alien, hiphop is not the other man's rape fantasy of the black sex machine gone berserk. Hiphop is James Brown's pelvis digitally grinded [*sic*] into technomorphine. Hiphop is DOPE-KNOWLOGY, THE ONLY KNOWN ANTIDOTE FOR PRIME TIME SENSORY DEPRIVATION.

10. Me'Shell NdegéOcello, *Plantation Lullabies* (Maverick Recording, 1993) and *Peace beyond Passion* (Maverick Recording, 1996).

11. Ann Powers, "Black and Blue," *Rolling Stone*, September 5, 1996, 34.

12. Walker, *To Be Real*, xxxi.

13. Kayann Short, "Coming to the Table: The Differential Politics of *This Bridge Called My Back*," *Genders* 20 (1994): 3–44.

14. Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing by Radical Women of Color* (Latham, N.J.: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981); Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983).

15. Chela Sandoval, "Feminism and Racism: A Report on the 1981 National Women's Studies Association Conference," in *Making Face/Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), 67.

16. Hazel Carby, "The Multicultural Wars," in *Black Popular Culture*, ed. Michele Wallace and Gina Dent (Seattle: Bay, 1992), 192.

17. Patricia Hill Collins, "What's in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond," *Black Scholar* (winter/spring 1996) 26:1, 16.

18. Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London and New York: Verso, 1992), 240. See also Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House, 1979).

19. On the concept of feminist generations, see Nancy Whittier, *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical Women's Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995). Whittier's book is problematic because of its lack of substantive discussion on the impact of women-of-color feminism. "Feminist Generations" was also the name of a conference devoted to the generational theme, held at Bowling Green State University in February 1996, and an anthology is planned based on the papers given there.

20. James Baldwin, "On Being White and Other Lies," *Essence*, April 1984, 92.

21. David Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness* (London and New York: Verso, 1994), 13.

22. Zillah Eisenstein, introduction to *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, quoted in bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End, 1984), 8.

23. David Wild, "Television Reality Bites Back," *Rolling Stone*, September 5, 1996, 71.

24. Bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness," in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End, 1990), 27.

25. Hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 28.

26. Ibid., 25.

27. Gloria Anzaldúa, foreword to the second edition of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2d ed., ed. Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga (Latham, N.Y.: Kitchen Table: Women of Color, 1983).

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28. Cherríe Moraga, preface to Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge*, xviii.

29. "Theory in the Flesh" is a subtitle of one section of Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge*. See also hooks's discussion of "lived theory" in her "Theory as Liberatory Practice," in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 59–75.

30. See bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). The way hooks engages the widest possible audience by letting her work appear in an amazing diversity of publications, from her many books to popular magazines to the feminist self-defense music compilation *Free to Fight! An Interactive Self-Defense Project* (Candy-Ass Records, 1996), is a crucial political strategy for progressive third wavers. Susan Bordo's work has been similarly influential, opening areas such as medicine, philosophy, and sociology to the possibility of cultural critique. The discussion of eating disorders in *Unbearable Weight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), for instance, has had an impact on medical paradigms for treatment. These kinds of analysis—ones that do actual cultural work—are the third wave's best hope as well as its point of departure.

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