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## WHICH FEMINISMS?

**O**F ALL THE OPPOSITION movements to have erupted since 2008, the rebirth of a militant feminism is perhaps the most surprising—not least because feminism as such had never gone away; women’s empowerment has long been a mantra of the global establishment. Yet there were already signs that something new was stirring in the US and UK student protests of 2010, the 2011 Occupy encampments at Puerta del Sol and Zuccotti Park. In India, mass rallies condemned the gang rape of Jyoti Pandey in 2012 and feminist flash-mobs have disrupted the moral-policing operations of Hindutva fundamentalists. The protests against sexual assault on US campuses blazed across the New York media in 2014. In Brazil, 30,000 black women descended on the capital in 2015 to demonstrate against sexual violence and racism, calling for the ouster of the corrupt head of the National Congress, Eduardo Cunha; earlier that year, the March of Margaridas brought over 50,000 rural women to Brasília. In Argentina, feminist campaigners against domestic violence were at the forefront of protests against Macri’s shock therapy. In China, the arrest in 2015 of five young women preparing to sticker Beijing’s public transport against sexual violence—members of Young Feminist Activism, an online coalition that’s played cat-and-mouse with the authorities—was met with web petitions signed by over 2 million people.

In January 2017, a ‘feminism of the 99 per cent’ declared itself with the million-strong march against the Trump Administration in the US. In Poland, mass women’s protests forced the Law and Justice government to retreat from tightening the already restrictive abortion law. Italy, Spain and Portugal saw huge marches against domestic violence and economic

precarity. On 8 March 2017, these movements came together to put International Women's Day back on the radical calendar, with demonstrations and strikes on three continents. The eruption of #MeToo in October 2017 and the convulsions that have followed are only the latest in a string of mass events around the world.

Yet any attempt to renew feminist strategy today confronts a series of dilemmas. First, we lack convincing assessments of the progress already made. What results have the old feminisms produced and how adequate have these been in meeting women's needs? How, exactly—by what processes, to what extent—have conditions improved? What changes have been brought about, globally, in gender relations, and where do these now stand? Through to the mid-twentieth century, the hegemonic, though far from universal, Western model entailed the rule of men across the public sphere—governments, armies, legislature, judiciary, institutes of learning, the press—and, in return for the slights and buffetings of mass industrial-capitalist society, offered each man the private fiefdom of the domestic sphere, where he could rule over the wife who bore and raised his children, served him at table and in bed. This was qualified internationally by a wide range of geo-cultural family structures and forms of production, and co-existed with broader, seemingly universal moralities of pleasure and predation, eliding good-girl and bad-girl categories with inequalities of class, race and caste.<sup>1</sup>

A mass of data now shows that women have entered the global waged-labour force in their hundreds of millions since the 1970s. In tertiary education, girls outnumber boys in over seventy countries. In terms of reproductive health, average fertility has fallen from five births to two. On the domestic front, men report that they do more housework than their fathers, women less than their mothers. In attitudes, polls show a majority in favour of gender equality on every continent, with near universal support in many countries. In politics, a new cohort of female leaders has appeared on the world stage, heading governments across Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America; if she'd paid more attention to hard-hit rustbelt voters in 2016, there would almost certainly be a woman in the White House. On this basis, the mainstream-feminist response to the question of strategy has long been: more of the same. Women have

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<sup>1</sup> The indispensable global analysis of changing gender relations within geoculturally differentiated family structures is Göran Therborn's *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World, 1900–2000*, London 2004.

made significant progress in work and education, but sexual violence is still a major issue and, in the glib parlance of official feminism, ‘challenges remain’. Ergo, the same programme that has already produced such good results should continue, with renewed vigour and cash.

Yet—this is the second part of the puzzle—advances in gender equality have gone hand-in-hand with soaring socio-economic *inequality* across most of the world. The levelling up of world regions through accelerated accumulation in China and East Asia has been matched by growing disparity between classes, which the advance of professional-strata women has helped to accentuate by creating a thin layer of double-income wealthy households. Since 2008, debate over these patterns has intensified, questioning mainstream feminism’s collusion with the neoliberal order.<sup>2</sup> Relatedly—this is the third problem—the global data treat the overall categories of work, reproduction, culture and politics as unchanging, measuring only women’s advance within them. In reality, each of these spheres has undergone profound changes that have themselves been deeply gendered and which inter-relate in contradictory ways. In the realm of production, ‘masculine’ rustbelt manufacturing has been automated or downgraded and outsourced, feminized in sun-belt Special Economic Zones. In the expanding service sector, intensified economic pressures reinforce the competitive advantages of ultra-femininity, of women’s traditional experience in the domestic sphere. Hegemonic masculinities have become, on the one hand, more cerebral and sensitive; on the other—in global finance, virtual worlds, the gangsterized zones of the informal economy—more swaggering than ever.<sup>3</sup> The realm of reproduction has undergone a dramatic

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<sup>2</sup> Seminal contributions included Hester Eisenstein’s *Feminism Seduced* (2009), which explored the appropriation of feminist ideas to justify the exploitation of cheap female labour in the global supply chain, and Nancy Fraser’s ‘Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History’ (NLR 56, March–April 2009) examining the resignification of liberationist themes in the era of globalization.

<sup>3</sup> Though current discussions have emphasized pathological forms of hyper-masculinity, much the most interesting work has been done on the cerebral-sensitive kinds. See for example Kam Louie’s discussion of the changing relations between the Chinese masculine ideal of the gentleman-scholar, *wen*, with his quiet good taste and self-restraint, and that of the martial hero, *wu*, in *Theorizing Chinese Masculinity* (2002) and *Chinese Masculinities in a Globalizing World* (2015). In the first, Louie compared *wen-wu* conceptions to Greek and Roman emphases on both body and mind, suggesting that Jewish culture, like the earlier Chinese tradition, emphasized the cerebral: p. 4. The pioneering work in the field of hegemonic masculinities was that of the Australian sociologist R. W. Connell.

transition to lower birth rates, based on a world-historical severance of sex from procreation and the equally unprecedented extension of mass female education. Culture has been transformed by a means of communication premised on an Ivy League ‘hot or not’ game, representations of sex by the ubiquity of online porn, blinking alongside consumer ads and messages from friends. In the West, the enormous weight of heteronormative-family ideology has succeeded in producing the ‘normal’ gay couple, while campus and bohemian milieus have nurtured post-gender spaces and identities. Politics, the realm of power, has been simultaneously opened—induction of women and minorities; third-wave democratization—and homogenized around a single programme, reproducing the pattern of parity within inequality. These transformations are inter-linked: economic pressures worsening gender and sexual relations, culture and politics proposing contradictory forms of compensation. In these conditions, ‘more of the same’ is not enough.

Questions of feminist strategy have been sharpened by the debates around #MeToo. The enabling conditions by which the Hollywood cliché of the lecherous producer in a flapping bathrobe, familiar at least since Scott Fitzgerald’s day, could unleash a mass political phenomenon are discussed below. In broader strategic terms, #MeToo poses the question of how we should understand the present moment comparatively and historically. Lin Farley, the pioneer of feminist research into sexual harassment in America—the term supposedly coined, as an analogy with racial harassment, by the women’s group she convened at Cornell in 1974 to discuss work-place life—provided a compelling analysis of men’s views and women’s experience that identified two key functions. In traditional ‘women’s jobs’—waitressing, shop-work, the typing pool—sexual harassment by male superiors operated to keep women down. In non-traditional sectors—Farley spoke to female police officers, wholesale managers, technical draughtsmen—sexual hazing and bullying functioned to keep them out.<sup>4</sup> But if this analysis held for American men born in the 1930s or 40s, is it still the case for those growing up half a century later, when women occupy 50 per cent of most professions and

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<sup>4</sup> Lin Farley, *Sexual Shakedown: The Sexual Harassment of Women in the Working World*, New York 1978, pp. xi–xii, 52–3. Farley’s research project on workplace sexual harassment had support from the National Organization for Women (NOW), the New York City Human Rights Commission and the *New York Times*, where Enid Nemy’s article on the 1975 Cornell ‘Speak-Out against Sexual Harassment’ produced a bursting mailbag: p. xii.

are widespread in the ranks of private-sector management? Has the balance between 'down' and 'out' mutated? Has there been regression as well as advance? Is harassment still functional as a gendered form of workplace discipline, or is it residual? Have its racial patternings undergone any change?

These are questions not just for analysis but for strategy as well. How effectively can sexual harassment be tackled if intersecting insecurities are not addressed? In surveys of US women working in the fast-food sector, for example, a third of the African-Americans and Latinas reported that a harasser had disrupted their work, compared to a quarter of white women. The women of colour were significantly more likely to face punitive retribution if they tried to report harassment—but Latina workers, far more than black women, said they had to keep quiet and put up with it, in order to keep the job.<sup>5</sup> Their silence was imposed not just by male domination but by the institutionalized state of anxiety that governs undocumented immigrants, in which economic pressures and insecure civic status combine with gender oppression to weaken rights to bodily integrity, while heightening domestic fears. A comparative perspective also helps to contrast feminist strategies in an international frame. While US preoccupations have centred on harassment at work and in education, the new movements in Latin America have focused on domestic violence, those in southern Europe on economic, sexual and migrant precarity.

What aspects of the old feminisms should be challenged, and on what grounds? To what extent do the new feminisms replicate or break with them? The present text is an attempt to define the paradigms that have governed practice up till now and to think through their adequacy for mid-21st century conditions. The perspective is international; it would be solipsistic to premise inquiry on the experience of a single country without asking how that related to developments elsewhere. How to address, analytically, the countless varieties of feminism that exist in the world today? Overall, there is little doubt that the hegemonic form—the feminist politics with the most influential programme, the most professional infrastructure and the greatest resources at its disposal—remains the agglomeration of practices, campaigns, policy-making and research that falls under the rubric of 'global feminism'. At the international level, it

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<sup>5</sup> Hart Research, 'Key Findings from a Survey of Women Fast-Food Workers', 5 October 2016.

plays a lead role in setting benchmarks and orchestrating the flow of funds from corporate donors and overseas-aid ministries to women's projects around the world. It has established a sophisticated programme, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, and articulated a set of processes to monitor its advance. No evaluation of contemporary feminist strategy can ignore this stratum. If it is indeed hegemonic, then all other feminisms will be in part defined by their relation to it. At the same time, global feminism flourished under the high meridian of American power and its practice has been deeply informed by US exemplars and expertise; to understand either involves grasping the relationship between the two. To that end, it makes sense first to consider the character of mainstream US feminism, the strategic logic of its programme and its interface with the institutions of American rule.

### I. THREE PERSPECTIVES

Like every feminist upsurge before it—the 1790s, 1840s, 1860s, 1900s—the women's movement of the late 1960s and 70s was borne up on a wider wave of struggle that infused its language and helped to shape its horizons. At each of these junctures, increasing tensions within the prevailing regime of reproduction, with its specific division of labour, gender roles and behavioural norms, overlapped with intensifying contradictions in the regime of accumulation. In the 1960s, the post-war boom in the advanced-capitalist countries was reaching its limits just as a brief but exhilarating international-left insurgency flared across the South, from Latin America to Indochina, a 'revolution in the revolution' that threw the Communist Bloc itself into turmoil and was matched by a mass civil-rights movement in the US. Young women's rebellion against the roles allotted to them under the Cold War patriarchal order was informed by this insurrectionary backdrop: access to university education only heightened the contrast between their futures and their brothers', while new forms of contraception opened the way to sexual experimentation freed from the fear of pregnancy, and labour-force expansion offered the possibility of financial and social autonomy—escape from material dependence on a man.

Hence the explosive radicalism of women's liberation's early days, when the end of the nuclear family and the revolutionary transformation of child raising and sexuality were in the air. The span of human

development offered an abundance of systemic alternatives; even if feminist anthropologists were wrong about the details of democratic collectivism in sex-segregated Iroquois long houses, or the degree of sexual liberation that Trobriand Islanders enjoyed, they were right to claim these as evidence that reproductive relations could be structured on radically different lines—social, flexible and egalitarian, rather than the privatized, radically asymmetrical gender division of labour that set the norm for the modern-capitalist nuclear family. ‘Before us lies the necessity and labour of a thorough social revolution’, wrote the editors of *No More Fun and Games*, an early liberationist journal.<sup>6</sup> For the Combahee River Collective, ‘The liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism, as well as patriarchy’—though ‘a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and anti-racist revolution’ would be no guarantee of liberation. Radical as well as socialist feminists in the US called for the overthrow of existing structures. ‘All male-female institutions stem from the male-female role system and all are oppressive’—‘marriage and the family must be eliminated’, declared the authors of one manifesto.<sup>7</sup> Kate Millett’s ‘Sexual Politics’ essay in *Notes from the Second Year* called for an end to ‘the patriarchal proprietorial family’, Shulamith Firestone’s ‘Love’ for ‘destruction of the institutions which have created the problem’ and ‘the revolutionary reconstruction of society in a way that will allow love to function naturally (joyfully) as an exchange of emotional riches between equals.’ The Redstockings Manifesto announced: ‘We define our best interest as that of the poorest, most brutally exploited woman.’ To an anarcha-feminist, ‘Feminism doesn’t mean female corporate power or a woman president; it means *no* corporate power and *no* presidents.’<sup>8</sup>

But in the United States, at least, this was only one of three distinct bodies of thought on the status of women and the crisis of the post-war

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<sup>6</sup> Editorial, ‘What Do You Women Want?’, in *No More Fun and Games: A Journal of Female Liberation*, no. 2, February 1969.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith and Demita Frazier, ‘The Combahee River Collective Statement’, April 1977; ‘The Feminists: A Political Organization to Annihilate Sex Roles’, in *Women’s Liberation: Notes from the Second Year: Major Writings of the Radical Feminists*, New York 1970, p. 117.

<sup>8</sup> Millett, ‘Sexual Politics’, and Firestone, ‘Love’, in *Women’s Liberation: Notes from the Second Year*, pp. 112, 27, 113; Peggy Kornegger, ‘Anarchism: the Feminist Connection’, *Second Wave*, Spring 1975.

order. Predating women's liberation, the most influential perspective was the anti-discrimination and equal-opportunities model, centred on work and education. Propounded by an older generation of Labor Department officials, women's rights activists and union full-timers, this line was picked up by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, hoping to encourage more women—'the great untapped resource', according to LBJ—into a tight labour market. Initially these campaigners concentrated on equal pay. But once the 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed, its Title VII outlawing discrimination at work on grounds of sex as well as race, and establishing the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to adjudicate matters, that framework became the main focus of their attention.<sup>9</sup>

While women's liberationists insisted on the overthrow of existing structures, the anti-discrimination approach sought to induct women into them. The strategy was legalist, handing authority over gender relations to the courts. Any individual who experienced discrimination at work could file a charge with their regional EEOC, which would investigate the complaint and, if substantiated, attempt to settle with the employer—or, if that failed, file a lawsuit against the firm within the civil-court system, of which the ultimate arbiter would be the Supreme Court. The National Organization for Women, founded in 1966 by Betty Friedan and others to ginger up the EEOC, epitomized this integrationist goal—'to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society'.<sup>10</sup> When Nixon supplemented the anti-discrimination machinery with affirmative-action measures in the 1970s, and the system was extended

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<sup>9</sup> 'Sex' had only been added to the bill's outlawing of discrimination on grounds of 'race, colour, creed or country of origin' in a late-stage filibuster in the House of Representatives, but the equal-opportunities approach enjoyed such broad US establishment support that it would inevitably have been extended to women at some point in the 1960s.

<sup>10</sup> National Organization for Women, 'Statement of Purpose', 29 October 1966. Some of those involved had been active in Popular Front feminist organizations in the pre-McCarthyite 1940s, including the 250,000-strong Congress of American Women, the US chapter of the Soviet-led WIDF; Friedan herself had been a journalist on the United Electrical Workers' paper *UE News*. See Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War and Modern Feminism*, Amherst 1998, pp. 126–7, 250–1; for the similarities (to put it mildly) between passages in Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* and earlier writings by feminist colleagues such as Betty Millard and Elizabeth Hawes, see pp. 127–31; and Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation*, Baltimore 2001, pp. 67–96.

to education under the auspices of Title IX and the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, NOW and its sister organizations seized on these as well.

The third strategic perspective on women's status was formulated by the neoliberal thinkers grouped around Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago. While some Mont Pèlerin Society members held deeply reactionary views on social questions, the American branch was eager to position itself on the side of progress, against outdated 'obstacles'—trade unions and red tape, of course, but also racist, sexist or homophobic bigotry and prejudice—to the smooth functioning of a free market. In *The Economics of Discrimination*, Friedman's star student Gary Becker demonstrated, through a blizzard of marginal-utility equations, that discrimination was economically harmful to those who perpetrate it, not just to its victims; a non-discriminatory market would always be more efficient. Though writing with African-Americans in mind, Becker argued the framework was just as applicable to sex discrimination: employing women was economically beneficial.<sup>11</sup>

Most consequentially, the Chicago economists and the NOW leadership converged on two key questions: work and the family. For the neoliberals, as Friedman explained, the family was 'the basic social unit'—indeed, a bulwark against socialism—and childcare should remain a parental responsibility.<sup>12</sup> For Becker, the nuclear family was the optimal site not only for the production and daily sustenance of children, but for a range of 'commodities'—health, happiness, esteem, security, sexual enjoyment—which were 'more efficiently produced and consumed within households.'<sup>13</sup> NOW's founding statement cautiously hoped that

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<sup>11</sup> Gary Becker, *The Economics of Discrimination*, Chicago 1971 [1957], pp. 19, 153; based on Becker's doctoral dissertation, supervised by Milton Friedman and Harold Lewis.

<sup>12</sup> See Milton Friedman, 'The Role of Government in Education', in Robert Solo, ed., *Economics and the Public Interest*, Rutgers, NJ 1955; and 'Day Care: The Problem', *National Review*, 8 July 1988.

<sup>13</sup> Gary Becker, *A Treatise on the Family*, enlarged edition, Cambridge, MA 1991 [1981], p. 61. Family members could maximize production through a division of labour, each specializing their human-capital investment in either market-oriented or household-oriented activities. Given male discrimination, lower wages and their biological role as mothers, women had historically enjoyed a comparative advantage in household productivity, though that could change, with declining fertility rates and rising investment in women's market-oriented human capital. Even though a division of labour would still be rational, it need not necessarily be linked to sex: pp. 78–9.

women might combine marriage and motherhood with a professional career, helped by child-care provision. By contrast, women's liberationists envisaged a radical rupture with the nuclear-family household and its generational re-inculcation of gender norms, to be replaced by experimental, communal arrangements and high-quality social provision. They drew on the collectivist experiments of earlier revolutionaries—the neighbourhood kitchens set up by Parisian women in 1848, Russian Constructivist designs for flexible social housing, communal childcare, radical pedagogy; the non-possessive relationships charted by Alexandra Kollontai and Simone de Beauvoir.

On employment, both NOW and the neoliberals favoured the legalist, anti-discrimination approach. Women's liberationists didn't disdain incremental improvements—'It is inhuman and cruel to condemn as "reformist" anything which eases suffering', declared the editors of *No More Fun and Games*. But they hoped that these could be means to transformative ends.<sup>14</sup> For them, the rationale for women entering the labour force was not just to gain a measure of individual autonomy—to escape the isolated drudgery of housework, compounded by economic dependence on a sexual partner—but to provide a stronger basis for collective organizing. For equal-opportunity feminists, workforce participation was a goal in itself, especially when it involved the higher rungs of the employment ladder. For neoliberals, the rationale was one of utility maximization. Unlike equal-opportunity feminists, they opposed equal-pay legislation, on the grounds that it denied women the freedom to compete at a lower wage, which would impose a cost on employers who still chose to hire men; conversely, non-discriminatory firms would enjoy the benefits of cheaper labour.

These convergences would become more salient as the revolutionary tide of the late 1960s ebbed, the Federal authorities and philanthropic foundations threw their weight behind the anti-discrimination system and American feminism began its long march through the institutions. On the question of childcare, NOW shifted to support for tax-credit and voucher systems that were merely a variant on Friedman's proposals, giving parents the 'freedom' to purchase their own childcare package while, as Nixon put it, helping 'to cement the family in its rightful position

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<sup>14</sup> 'What Do You Women Want?', p. 5.

as the keystone of our civilization.’<sup>15</sup> As the American economy was transformed under Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton—monetarist austerity, union-bashing, shareholder agendas, off-shored manufacturing, deregulated finance, subprime debt—mainstream feminists’ response was simply to demand a larger stake within it: more women at the top of Forbes 500 companies, not disincentives to relocation.

On the question of affirmative action, Chicago neoliberals *purs et durs* parted company with anti-discrimination feminists: this was government regulation and bound to produce distorted outcomes. But what might be called actually existing neoliberalism—the practice of corporations committed to shareholder agendas—came to see advantages in the active promotion of women and minorities. For Human Resources and PR departments, affirmative-action targets and timetables brought a progressive sheen to the company image at no extra cost; the self-evaluation reports required by the EEOC were a bulwark against litigation. Firms and institutions began adopting affirmative-action goals on a voluntary basis and Reagan made no move against it. With globalization, ‘diversity’ became a capitalist asset. Management consultancies like McKinsey took up the banner, quizzing CEOs on their goals for putting women on the board and parroting the neoliberal slogan: ‘It’s not just good for gender equality, it’s smart economics.’

## 2. ORIGINS OF THE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION MODEL

The striking thing about the anti-discrimination framework as a feminist strategy was that its starting point took no account of women’s needs.<sup>16</sup> The model was originally crafted as a social-engineering project to neutralize a growing revolt by African-Americans against their subordinate position within a race-class configuration that was unique in the New

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Nixon, ‘Veto of the Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1971’, American Presidency Project website; Friedman, ‘The Role of Government in Education’.

<sup>16</sup> Black women fought long and hard for desegregation—as well as housing, health, justice, jobs, schools—and benefited from the abolition of Jim Crow. But as discussed below, the anti-discrimination law failed to recognize them as such, requiring them to be either ‘women’ or ‘black’, but not both, for the purposes of the court.

World, let alone elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> Richly detailed critical scholarship, mainly by black historians, has done much to dismantle the ‘master narrative’ of the civil-rights movement, canonized ‘in heritage tours, museums, public rituals, textbooks’ as a cornerstone of American national self-understanding.<sup>18</sup> In this bowdlerized account, racism was portrayed as a residual Southern problem, which fair-minded Federal authorities and patient NAACP lawyers were working to correct; the wise rulings of the Supreme Court stood as so many milestones on the road down which the non-violent, church-led movement marched to the crowning achievement of the 1964–65 Civil Rights Acts. The narrative not only excluded the redistributive demands of the civil-rights movement (jobs, housing), the Northern ghettos, the dense local networks for Southern black self-defence and more radical political traditions—Third World solidarity, self-determination, land-reform.<sup>19</sup> It also blanked out the strategic goals of the Federal administrations and the international context in which they were operating.

From the 1940s on, the Federal authorities handled the question of civil rights with one eye on America’s standing as leader of the free world, the

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<sup>17</sup> European slave plantations, situated thousands of miles from the home country, were external to the metropolitan social order. In the Caribbean, blacks constituted a large enough proportion of the population to fight for their own sovereign rule. Perhaps the nearest New World equivalent to the US as a former slave-plantation society was Brazil. But there—quite unlike the hardened WASP ideology of American white supremacy—the landowning class was itself the product of centuries of miscegenation. In contrast to the ruthless dynamism of American industrial capitalism, it presided over a stagnant agrarian economy, where manumission into a semi-free poverty was relatively common, especially for women and *mulatto* children; with the result that, twenty years before the formal abolition of slavery, almost half the Brazilian population consisted of free blacks and *mulattos*, some of them owning slaves themselves. Post-abolition racial oppression was characterized by informality, the unlegislated correlation of lightness or darkness to socio-economic status, in contrast to the rigid legal proscriptions and spatial demarcations of Jim Crow. In the US, African-Americans, at 12–15 per cent of the population, had insufficient numbers to impose concessions without the help of allies, while the weapon of their labour was spiked by a permanent stream of Old World immigrants. At the same time, they were too numerous and, after the ideologization of skin colour and brutalizations of slavery, too culturally distinct to be as easily digested as the mass of European newcomers.

<sup>18</sup> Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, ‘The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past’, *Journal of American History*, March 2005, pp. 1, 233.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*, Trenton, NJ 2007, p. xiii.

other on the need for white and Southern votes. The precursor and prototype of the Civil Rights Act's EEOC was the war-time Fair Employment Practices Committee, established by an FDR Executive Order in 1941, as the US ramped up for war against Japan, to head off a 10,000-strong African-American March on Washington demanding desegregation of the armed forces and jobs for blacks in the booming defence industries.<sup>20</sup> (Japanese military propaganda made much of its pan-Asianist policy of uprisings against white colonial rule.) During the Cold War, the State Department took a lead in pressing for civil-rights reform. Officials complained that images of lynchings and other Jim Crow atrocities, front-page headlines in Moscow and the anti-colonialist press, were 'a gift for world communism'. *Brown v. Board of Education* was hailed by the Republican National Committee as a facet of Eisenhower's 'many-frontal attack on global communism'—'Human equality at home is a weapon of freedom: it helps guarantee the Free World's cause.' In the early 60s, Kennedy switched to support for de-segregation when TV footage of white cops fire-hosing neatly dressed black schoolchildren in Mississippi and Alabama flashed round the world, just as the White House was stepping up military intervention in Vietnam. At the Justice Department, his brother Robert summed up the decision: 'Get this into the court and out of the street.'<sup>21</sup>

In the short run, the anti-discrimination machinery set in place by the 1964 Civil Rights Act appeared a spectacular failure, as the Northern ghettos—Harlem, Watts, Newark, Detroit—erupted in revolt. Formal equality and the legal ban on segregation, though historic gains, left intact the barriers of class, poverty, unemployment, rundown schools and housing, compounded by systemic racism and police harassment. All-white fire departments sat on their hands while the ghettos burned. TV images of US tanks and helicopter gunships sent to subdue Detroit evoked a blazing Vietnam in the heart of America. Philip Randolph and Martin Luther King called for a billion-dollar Freedom Budget, a domestic Marshall Plan for the ghettos. In 1967, King himself finally came out against the war

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<sup>20</sup> Conceding the FEPC's toothless *post factum* inquiry into racist hiring practices at Boeing, Standard Steel, etc., Roosevelt stoutly defended segregation in the WW2 American military.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, Princeton 2000, 2nd ed. 2011, pp. 3–4, 29, 109, 178–9. Dudziak has mined the diplomatic archives to provide an indispensable account of the international context of US civil-rights reform.

in Vietnam. Black power leaders went further, making common cause with anti-imperialist fighters around the globe. In response, Hanoi hailed African-Americans' struggle as the opening of 'a second front'.<sup>22</sup>

### *Nixon's double blade*

In 1970, as he stepped up the war in Indochina, Nixon launched an ambitious social-engineering project that aimed to settle America's 'Negro question' once and for all. The strategy was double-edged, involving both integration and coercion. It aimed at a substantial expansion of the African-American professional class—reducing unemployment and boosting what Nixon called 'black capitalism'—with a concomitant crackdown on the rest. The integrationist project comprised a major programme of affirmative action, which set numerical targets for minority recruitment in employment as a condition for receiving Federal funds. It operated through the Department of Labor, building on the existing anti-discrimination machinery of the EEOC.<sup>23</sup> Though affirmative action was framed by Federal officials with African-American men in mind, the Nixon Administration quickly expanded it to females of all skin tones when feminist protests hit the headlines. In December 1971 the Labor Department added the category of 'women' to those of 'Negro, Oriental, American Indian and Spanish Surnamed Americans' specified in its original order of February 1970.<sup>24</sup> The emphasis was on process and ideological compliance: the Labor Department required firms to demonstrate their good faith by submitting reasonable targets, timetables and hiring goals for women and minorities, rather than concrete results. In 1972 Nixon signed into law another amendment, Title IX, outlawing sex discrimination in all federally funded educational activities. The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR)—a twin for the Department of Labor's EEOC—was charged with issuing compliance manuals and overseeing Title IX's enforcement.

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<sup>22</sup> Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, p. 243.

<sup>23</sup> The outlines of a minority hiring obligation for Federal contractors were developed under LBJ, but it was the Nixon Administration that gave the programme teeth and extended it to women. The term 'affirmative action' was first proposed by a young aide in 1961 in a rather different context: as a euphemism to disguise Kennedy's deliberate fudge on civil rights in the run-up to the 1962 mid-term elections, while still conveying a sense of 'positiveness': Terry Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness: A History of Affirmative Action*, Oxford 2004, pp. 60–1.

<sup>24</sup> Anderson, *Pursuit of Fairness*, pp. 133, 125, 134–5.

Meanwhile, the repressive flank of Nixon's social-engineering project took the rhetorical form of social 'wars'—war on crime, war on drugs—under the banner of zero-tolerance. Operating through the Department of Justice, the courts, the INS, the prison system and the police, it introduced racially targeted crackdowns and imprisonment on a new scale. It involved the pathologization of those who failed to make it into the professional class: any blacks who didn't take advantage of affirmative action had only themselves or their work-shy culture to blame. In gender terms, the coercive side of Nixon's project—criminalization, incarceration—manifested itself in policies targeted at poor and marginal women, especially in communities of colour. Sterilization programmes were imposed on drug users, obligatory job-seeking on unemployed mothers. Campaigns against domestic and sexual violence were brought under the aegis of the criminal-justice system, reframing them as a behavioural problem of individual rogue males, to be dealt with by tougher sentences and more interventionist policing, rather than a social question. In communities already on guard against racist treatment by the police, mandatory arrest laws—and the possibility of deportation—made it harder for women to report violent men.<sup>25</sup>

Nixon's expanded anti-discrimination paradigm retains an extraordinary hegemony in the US, comparable only to that of the Constitution itself. In racial terms, the effect of his double-edged policy was dramatic. Within a generation a new African-American elite had been consolidated, with a much-enlarged position in politics, business, the media and education; meanwhile over two million poorer blacks, mostly male, languished in prison.<sup>26</sup> In gender terms, the peculiar origins of the anti-discrimination feminist model—spun off from a strategy devised to neutralize a rebellious national minority—distinguished it from women's agendas elsewhere in the world. Notably, the new American paradigm differed from two main 'state feminisms' that had emerged by the early twentieth century as modernizing answers to the Woman Question.

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<sup>25</sup> Clinton's 1994 Violence against Women Act codified the criminal-justice approach to domestic violence. See Andrea Smith, 'Colour of Violence', *Meridians*, vol. 1, no. 2, Spring 2001; Ana Clarissa Rojas Durazo, 'We Were Never Meant to Survive', in Incite!, ed., *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, Cambridge, MA 2007, pp. 119–20.

<sup>26</sup> Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, Chicago 2016, pp. 4–9. Taylor provides a blistering indictment of the Obama Administration's record on these questions.

The most influential of these was the social-democratic model, which arose from the mass parties of the early Second International. It foregrounded the collective provision of childcare, cooking, housing, education and health facilities, full female employment and generous maternity leave—in brief, socializing the domain of women’s ‘private’ domestic labour. In its vanguard forms, this strategy envisaged abolishing the heteronormative nuclear family altogether, in favour of communal living. This model informed the programmes implemented, to better or worse effect, in Scandinavia and the state-socialist countries, and thence exported in modified forms to the newly independent Third World countries and parties that looked to the Soviet Union for developmental ideas. It was also influential among women’s liberationists, especially in Europe. In contrast to this project of expanded social provision, the anti-discrimination model was almost cost-free to the state; lawyers’ fees were met by the appellant and her employer.

The other ‘state feminism’ was eugenicist—‘improve the woman, improve the race’. It arose from the competitive imperialist-modernization projects of the 1900s, and informed the work of early birth-control campaigns. From the 1950s this approach was given a new lease of life by US modernization theory, in conjunction with the pharmaceutical conglomerates and the Rockefeller-backed proselytizers of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, funded by a billion dollars of USAID. Cold War allies in Asia and Latin America were persuaded that falling fertility rates were a means to jump-start modernization, rather than a consequence of it. Their ‘all-out drive’ (Nehru’s phrase) ran directly counter to liberationist calls for a woman’s right to choose. Third World women were treated as baby-producing machines whose bodies needed to be switched off, cheaply and efficiently, through mass sterilization campaigns—often carried out in unsanitary conditions for a small cash reward—or the implantation of ‘permanent’ devices such as the Dalkon shield, an IUD notorious for piercing the uterine wall (and bought in bulk by USAID, up till 1975). An IUD had the advantage that ‘once the damn thing is in, the patient cannot change her mind’, as Planned Parenthood president Alan Guttmacher explained.<sup>27</sup> Population

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<sup>27</sup> Linda Gordon, *Women’s Body, Woman’s Right*, 2nd ed., New York 1990; for USAID spending and Guttmacher, see Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population*, Cambridge, MA 2008, pp. 290, 205. The IPPF was bitterly denounced by women’s liberationists, who also pointed to the eugenic campaigns Planned Parenthood had led against poor white and African-American women in the US Mid-West and South: Connelly, *Fatal Misconception*, pp. 117, 208.

control was complementary to anti-discrimination feminism—the one treating women as breeders, the other as employees—and would remain an important front for US overseas policy.

### 3. INSTITUTIONAL REINFORCEMENTS

The hold exercised by the anti-discrimination approach over US feminism was based on tangible results. The 1970s saw a raft of equal-opportunity measures for women on credit and mortgage lending (1974), the military (1975) and work-place pregnancy (1978), flanked by Supreme Court rulings to legalize contraception (1972) and abortion (1973). These victories owed much to liberal-establishment support—above all, to the wealth and expertise of the corporate-philanthropic foundations that funded the institutionalization of anti-discrimination feminism from the 70s on. As Johanna Brenner pointed out, this was one of the striking contrasts between ‘first’ and ‘second-wave’ US feminism. After winning the vote in 1920, women’s rights campaigners were politically marginalized. By comparison, after the legislative and social gains of the 1970s, feminist demands were ‘increasingly institutionalized and culturally incorporated’, the radical ferment of the autonomous movement capped by a powerful Washington-based ‘women’s lobby’.<sup>28</sup> Its wealth and influence—matched by a correspondingly impressive presence in the universities—would distinguish it not just from first-wave US feminism but from movements in the rest of the world as well.

The institutionalization of the US women’s movement was not an organic process, in the way that the bureaucratization of trade unions had been. It was driven from outside, by the active intervention of the same philanthropic foundations that had played a major role in shaping the Civil Rights Acts and funding the NAACP. The upshot would install the anti-discrimination approach as the hegemonic form of feminist politics, while the ‘mainstream’ in which it sought to integrate women was itself reshaped by Friedmanite neoliberal policies in response to the long economic downturn. Paramount among feminism’s sponsors was the Ford Foundation, with \$200m a year to spend on social reform and a 400-strong team to scour the country for promising recipients. In the 1960s Ford had already poured millions into radical black and

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<sup>28</sup> Johanna Brenner, ‘The Best of Times, The Worst of Times: US Feminism Today’, *NLR* 1/200, July–Aug 1993.

Latino organizations, in the belief that its support could, as its president McGeorge Bundy explained to Congress, encourage young organizations towards responsible, constructive projects and guide them away from the paths of disruption and discord; ‘making the world safe for capitalism’, as Bundy sardonically put it elsewhere. This meant channelling radical energies towards legalist projects within the anti-discrimination framework.<sup>29</sup>

Bundy’s career was a synecdoche for the politics of the philanthropic foundations, whose beneficence was the *quid pro quo* for the multi-billion-dollar tax exemptions granted to their parent companies. A patriotic Boston Brahmin, he had served as a hawkish National Security adviser to Johnson—driving the US escalation in Vietnam and backing the Marines’ dispatch to the Dominican Republic—before transferring to Ford. Bundy saw no contradiction between saturation bombing in Indochina and funding social reform at home: both were for the good of America. As he told the National Urban League, ‘The level of effort—financial, political and personal’ required to end racism was ‘fully comparable to the effort we now make as a nation in Vietnam.’<sup>30</sup> The Ford Foundation’s recruitment methods were highly professional, a latter-day version of those tried and tested by the Jesuits. Ford officials would select and groom likely movement candidates, inviting them to apply for grants, holding out the prospect of jobs, salaries, contacts and high-level intellectual support. If the initial projects succeeded in terms of measurable outcomes, larger sums could be disbursed.

From the early 1970s, Ford money poured into the feminist anti-discrimination committees whose agendas matched that of the Foundation.<sup>31</sup> Its material support was critical in providing them with a well-resourced institutional basis, lifting their representatives above the ferment of store-front women’s centres, mimeographed newsletters,

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<sup>29</sup> Kai Bird, *The Colour of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy: Brothers in Arms*, New York 1998, p. 393; for Bundy’s testimony to Congress, see Joan Roelofs, *Foundations and Public Policy: The Mask of Pluralism*, Albany, NY 2003, p. 125.

<sup>30</sup> *New York Times*, 3 August 1966, cited in Bird, *Colour of Truth*, p. 380. A seminal study of the foundations described them as ‘unofficial planning agencies’ for an ‘increasingly interconnected world-system with the United States at its centre’: Robert Arnove, ed., *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism*, Bloomington 1982, p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Magat, *The Ford Foundation at Work: Philanthropic Choices, Methods and Styles*, New York 1979, pp. 185–6.

bookstores, crèches and refuges for battered wives, into air-conditioned eyries in DC or Manhattan, backed by dedicated research centres at top universities.<sup>32</sup> By the end of the 70s a flotilla of mainstream feminist organizations had opened offices in the capital, staffed by full-time lobbyists who became the head and hands of the movement once the original ruckus began to subside.<sup>33</sup> Beltway groups could lobby officials, place members on Federal advisory committees, nurture relationships with congressional staffers and present their research findings to legislators. NOW, with its local chapters, served as a transmission belt funnelling activists into anti-discrimination campaigns and re-orienting the women's movement towards the political establishment. The futile battle for an Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution—not strictly necessary, since American women's rights were already formally protected by the Fourteenth Amendment—left NOW flush with cash and political contacts.<sup>34</sup> By the 1990s, foundation funding for mainstream US feminism was running at over \$60m a year, giving it a huge advantage over more radical strands, both at home and abroad.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Among the Ford Foundation-funded projects were NOW's Legal Defense and Education Fund, the National Women's Political Caucus, the Center for Women's Policy Studies, the Women's Legal Defense Fund, the National Women's Law Center and the ACLU Women's Rights Project, as well as the National Abortion Rights Action League and the National Coalition against Domestic Violence. See Kristin Goss, *The Paradox of Gender Equality: How American Women's Groups Gained and Lost Their Public Voice*, Ann Arbor 2013, p. 55; Joyce Gelb and Marian Lief Palley, *Women and Public Policies: Reassessing Gender Politics*, 3d ed., Charlottesville, VA 1996, pp. 30–2.

<sup>33</sup> The relationship between Washington feminists and their corporate or government backers was not without tension. In 1985 the National Coalition against Domestic Violence cancelled a \$1m 5-year grant from Johnson & Johnson, in protest at the company's investments in South Africa; a few years earlier, the NCADV had returned \$400,000 in Department of Justice funding when officials tried to stop the organization producing a leaflet on lesbian-battering. See Jennifer Leigh Disney and Joyce Gelb, 'Feminist Organizational "Success": The State of US Women's Movement Organizations in the 1990s', *Women & Politics*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2000, p. 65. See also Maryann Barakso, *Governing NOW: Grassroots Activism in the National Organization for Women*, Ithaca 2004, p. 60.

<sup>34</sup> For the Supreme Court's ruling on the Fourteenth Amendment, see Myra Marx Ferree and Beth Hess, *Controversy and Coalition: The New Feminist Movement across Four Decades of Change*, 3rd ed., New York and London 2003, Chapter 6.

<sup>35</sup> Goss, *Paradox of Gender Equality*, pp. 144–5. In retrospect the 'anti-feminist backlash' of the 80s appears less significant for the growth of the women's lobby: not only did corporate-foundation funding for feminist organizations soar during this period, but feminist groups predominated in appearances before Congress, outdoing anti-feminists like Phyllis Schlafly by a ratio of five to one: Goss, pp. 80–2.

Naturally, the donors exacted a price. New groups seeking grants were steered towards working either through affirmative action—helping individual women, especially young women, or people of colour, or disadvantaged women, or women from disadvantaged countries, to succeed within the system—or criminal justice: active cooperation with the police, the courts, the immigration authorities. Foundation funds and state aid recalibrated the internal culture of movement organizations.<sup>36</sup> Wider strategic discussions, more radical campaigns and popular-education programmes had to be set aside in favour of the time-consuming bureaucratic procedures of applying for non-profit status, writing job descriptions, taking out insurance and adopting pseudo-corporate structures: executive director, board of trustees, professional accountants, PR, fundraisers. Once militants had been transformed into salaried officials, fear of losing their livelihood led to growing conservatism and self-censorship.<sup>37</sup> The foundations' preference for novel projects helped to drive a deeper segmentation of feminist practice, with campaign groups under pressure to promote their speciality as a unique selling point with its own 'organizational niche'. Instead of bringing different communities of women together, as the early movement hoped to do, the donors' application processes encouraged them to compete against each other in the fight for funds.<sup>38</sup> Later, these processes would become familiar across the world under the name of NGOization.

### *Academic credentials*

The radical spirit of women's liberation found a home in the universities, where institutionalization took a different course. From the mid-60s, women's history courses began springing up spontaneously across the US, drawing on the experience of the civil-rights movement's Black History studies and the radical pedagogy of the Mississippi summer schools. By 1971 the Feminist Press could list 600 of them, most still

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<sup>36</sup> Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, Norman, OK 2003, pp. 206–9.

<sup>37</sup> A Latina feminist, for example, was discouraged from publicizing sexual assaults by immigration officers or campaigning against anti-Spanish language propositions at election time, for fear of losing non-profit status: Ana Clarissa Rojas Durazo, 'We Were Never Meant to Survive', in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, pp. 114, 117.

<sup>38</sup> See the eloquent account in Goss, *Paradox of Gender Equality*, pp. 145–6. For 'organizational niche', see Disney and Gelb, 'Feminist Organizational "Success"', p. 50.

marginal and unaccredited.<sup>39</sup> Again, the wealth of the philanthropic foundations played a crucial role. Applying the lessons of its work on Black Studies in the 1960s, Ford's multi-million-dollar intervention aimed at a systematic professionalization of the field: grants for post-doctoral projects, followed by funds for Women's Research Centres at top universities (Stanford, Berkeley, Wellesley, Brown, Duke, Arizona). In 1975 the Foundation organized the launch of *Signs* as an interdisciplinary feminist journal, and in 1977 helped found the National Women's Studies Association and the National Centre for Research on Women, led by former Ford official Mariam Chamberlain.<sup>40</sup> In the 1980s the Foundation switched to 'mainstreaming' feminism, as a component of the undergraduate core curriculum. By the early 90s, its priority was integrating research on minority women; its officials initiated a series of conferences that would prepare the ground for the take-up of intersectional theory.<sup>41</sup> A consultant's report could justly note that Ford's project for the field of gender studies had 'actively influenced the direction it would take'.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Catharine Stimpson with Nina Kressner Cobb, *Women's Studies in the United States: A Report to the Ford Foundation*, New York 1986, p. 4. The Feminist Press was founded in 1970 with capital of \$100, a volunteer editorial collective and a garage for a warehouse, after a passing mention in the Baltimore Women's Liberation Newsletter produced an enthusiastic response; it played a key role in reprinting lost works by rebel female authors. In 1972 the Press received \$600,000 from Ford for a series on women's work, the first of many large-scale grants for feminist teaching material. See Florence Howe, *A Life in Motion*, New York 2011, pp. 279–310.

<sup>40</sup> Altogether, Ford provided \$22m of the total \$36m philanthropic funds for women's studies between 1972 and 1992, complementing the resources of the universities themselves. See Rosa Proietto, 'The Ford Foundation and Women's Studies in American Higher Education: Seeds of Change?', in Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, ed., *Philanthropic Foundations: New Scholarship, New Possibilities*, Bloomington 1999, pp. 271–6. Proietto's study is a rare attempt to draw up a critical balance sheet in a field where most evaluations are written by the practitioners themselves.

<sup>41</sup> Leslie Hill, 'The Ford Foundation Programme on Mainstreaming Minority Women's Studies', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 18, nos 1–2, 1990.

<sup>42</sup> Catharine Stimpson, 'Consultant's Report to: Ford Foundation Programme on Education and Culture', no. 011359, November 1982, cited in Proietto, 'The Ford Foundation and Women's Studies', pp. 273–4. As the US women's movement institutionalized, it began to replicate at a lower level the revolving-door syndrome that operates at the summit of US power. Thus Mariam Chamberlain could step smoothly from dispensing grants at Ford to the Ford-funded NCRW, while Catharine Stimpson, recipient of Ford's largesse at *Signs*, was employed to report on the Foundation's achievements in education. Chamberlain and Alison Bernstein, her successor at Ford, thought the Foundation's support was crucial in helping Women's Studies gain 'both legitimacy and momentum': 'Philanthropy and the Emergence of Women's Studies', *Teachers College Record*, vol. 93, no. 3, Spring 1992.

A second, more specialized form of campus-based institutionalization was the growth of well-funded student-support organizations for ‘equity, diversity and inclusion’, operating under the Title IX umbrella. They provided a continuity of leadership, resources, legal expertise and campaign experience—picketing, posters, T-shirts—that sustained the politics of anti-discrimination during periods of low student militancy. Together with core-curriculum requirements for gender studies, these peer-run mini-bureaucracies ensured the induction of new cohorts of students into a form of equal-opportunity gender politics that had become naturalized, ‘like fluoride in the water’<sup>43</sup>—an informal curriculum for a radicalism that operated within, and helped to reproduce, the limits of the anti-discrimination model. Professionally trained administrators—Title IX staffers, equity and inclusion officers, campus safety advisers—provided the cadre for a gender politics that sometimes had little to do with the teachings of faculty feminists.

At the same time, feminist thinking underwent a profound acculturation as it developed inside the habitus of the American academy. The bold claims and synthesizing ambitions of women’s liberation gave way to disciplinary differentiation and career-oriented choices of dissertation topic; academic credentials established a hierarchy alien to movement egalitarianism. In the ‘policy disciplines’—economics, social and political sciences—which would produce an impressive cadre of feminist experts, research tended to be compartmentalized within neo-classical or functionalist, quantitative or qualitative traditions. In the humanities, and above all the literature departments, where new generations of gender activists were generally schooled, the predominant influence remained Foucault.<sup>44</sup> Within these limits, critical heterodox thinking was encouraged—and funded. Around 1990, Berkeley and UCLA produced two major theoretical challenges to the hegemonic anti-discrimination model of feminist politics. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler launched a passionate assault on the binary categories of ‘men’ and ‘women’ presupposed by mainstream feminism, and questioned its practice of making representational claims on women’s behalf; to do so was merely to extend the power-knowledge regime responsible for producing ‘male’ and ‘female’. A new feminist politics should contest the reifications of gender and identity, taking their variable construction as

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<sup>43</sup> Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *ManifestA*, cited in Jo Reger, *Everywhere and Nowhere: Contemporary Feminism in the United States*, Oxford 2012, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Activists’ education: David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules*, New York 2015, pp. 56–7.

a methodological prerequisite and political goal.<sup>45</sup> A few months earlier, Kimberlé Crenshaw had assailed anti-discrimination law from a Critical Legal Studies perspective for its single-axis approach, which treated race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience; as a basis for policy demands, the entire framework should be rethought and recast. Collective political action should put the marginalized at the centre, begin from the needs of the most disadvantaged, and thereby remake the world for the benefit of the rest.<sup>46</sup>

In a comparative framework, the main point to register is the sheer scale of US feminist production as a result of such munificent funding: an enormously impressive volume of scholarship—a women's studies bibliography mentions nearly 4,000 titles—including work of the highest calibre.<sup>47</sup> Just as Beltway feminism had constructed a body of political and legal expertise without parallel in the rest of the world—mastering the skills of lobbying, drafting, fundraising, presenting polished pitches or carefully calibrated proposals, along with the finer points of congressional or juridical procedure, while accumulating a roster of powerful contacts—so feminists within the American university system built up an unrivalled infrastructure for research: dedicated institutes and centres, hosting national or international seminars and conferences, undertaking large-scale empirical investigations, sophisticated theoretical elaborations, comparative studies and technical reports, supported by nearly four dozen specialist journals. No other country would lavish \$36m on feminist scholarship, over and above some of the world's most generous public funding. A recent survey counted some 540 gender and women's studies courses in the US, compared to 44 in Canada, 35 in the UK and no more than twenty in any other country.<sup>48</sup> Similar ratios apply for scholarly feminist journals: 43 in the US, eight in the UK, five in France and in Australia, four in Canada and fewer than that elsewhere.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, New York and London 1990, pp. 194, 130, 7–8.

<sup>46</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989, no. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Linda Krikos and Cindy Ingold, *Women's Studies: A Recommended Bibliography, Third Edition*, Westport, CT 2004; it runs to 828 close-typed pages.

<sup>48</sup> Joan Korenman, 'Women's Studies Programmes, Departments and Research Centres', University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore County, 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Krikos and Ingold, *Women's Studies*, pp. 721–9, supplemented by 'Core List of Journals', Association of College and Research Libraries, Women and Gender Studies Section; both sources are themselves US-based.

The field's top-ranking titles are all based in the States: *Signs*, still the intellectual flagship of the movement, is flanked by *Feminist Studies*, *Gender & Society*, *Feminist Economics*, *Hypatia* and the *Journal of Women's History*; the *International Feminist Journal of Politics* has a far-flung editorial team, but emerged from conversations at the US-based International Studies Association.<sup>50</sup>

The closest competitors were the other Anglophone states. Australia had a strong equal-opportunity framework, but a much more limited university system; Canada had a few centres of feminist intellectual production, strong in social theory and research, but this only put it on a par with the smaller US states—Wisconsin, say, or North Carolina. In the UK, groundbreaking Marxist-feminist work in the 60s and 70s emerged from the culture of the new left, largely outside the academy; later, national specializations were honed in feminist cultural studies and development economics, but British feminism's political clout was relatively weak. In Germany, influential women's ministries were established at regional level in the Länder during the 1980s, but the university system remained impermeable—as late as 1990, only 5 per cent of professors were female—and women's studies was largely confined to community and adult-education centres; left, maternalist and eco-feminist theory flourished on the margins. In France—with the exception of enclaves like Vincennes—and Italy, both the universities and the machinery of government remained largely closed to feminist scholarship and policy making for another decade. Elsewhere—the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, India—gender research was largely funded by American foundation money.<sup>51</sup> In sum, mainstream American feminism enjoyed a

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<sup>50</sup> American preponderance shouldn't be taken to imply intellectual parochialism: most of these journals are impressively internationalist in scope. The editor of *Signs* estimated that two-thirds of the journal's research was focused outside the US, mainly on Asia and Europe, while 52 per cent of the authors were non-US scholars and submissions were received from eighty countries: Mary Hawkesworth, 'Signs 2005–2015: Reflections on the Nature and Global Reach of Interdisciplinary Feminist Knowledge Production', *Signs*, vol. 36, no. 3, Spring 2011. *Signs* has even run a Gender and Polar Studies issue, with texts on Sámi reindeer herders, women's place in Antarctic literature and a thoughtful account of cross-border organizing against domestic violence on the shores of the Barents Sea.

<sup>51</sup> Ford-sponsored projects in the 1980s included the Beirut Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World; the Buenos Aires Center for Research on Women; the New Delhi Centre for Women and Development Studies; the Women in Development unit at the University of the West Indies; the Gruppo di ricerca sulla famiglia e

combination of wealth, institutional heft and scholarly achievement to which no other women's movement could compare.

### *Guerrilla legalism*

If the energies of the early women's liberation movement had been largely domesticated by Capitol Hill or acculturated within the academy, there was one strand of radical feminism that aimed instead to leverage its relation to the state. Because the anti-discrimination laws were never designed to cover the rights and wrongs of gender relations, feminist attorneys were confronted with the task of trying to make sure they did. This involved incessant litigant activism to extend the scope of the law—expanding 'discrimination on grounds of sex' to include sexual harassment and child-bearing—with foundation-funded attorneys bringing individual test cases to push the boundaries, one judgement at a time, in the twin domains of employment and education.<sup>52</sup> Since

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sulla condizione femminile at the University of Milan; and the London Women's Research and Resource Centre. Ford also funded research by scholars at the UN's African Training and Research Centre for Women; the Senegal-based Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD); the University of Dar es Salaam; the Development Studies Research Centre at the University of Khartoum; the Catholic University of São Paulo; the Carlos Chaga Foundation in Brazil and the Jamaican Women's Bureau. See, *inter alia*, Nüket Kardam, *Bringing Women In: Women's Issues in International Development Programmes*, Boulder, CO 1991, pp. 88–91; Howe, *A Life in Motion*, pp. 324–30. See also the retrospect by practitioners in Ed Hatton, 'The Future of Women's Studies: A Ford Foundation Workshop Report', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 22, nos 3–4, 1994, where criticism was voiced (by Peg Strobel, University of Illinois–Chicago) at the way that African women's studies scholars often received funding in the form of consultancies with outside agencies, who then set the agenda for research.

<sup>52</sup> Landmark cases were *Barnes* (filed in 1974, appealed in 1977), establishing a manager's *quid pro quo* demands for sex as a form of discrimination, and *Alexander v. Yale* (1977), prohibiting *quid pro quo* harassment (good grades in return for sexual favours) at universities; discrimination was later extended to include a hostile environment. Paulette Barnes, an African-American administrator in the EEO office of the EPA in Washington, DC, was supported by the DC-based Women's Legal Defense Fund: Carrie Baker, *The Women's Movement against Sexual Harassment*, New York 2008, p. 49. The students in *Alexander v. Yale* were backed by WEAL, the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund and the National Women's Law Center. Though the legal impact of their case was more limited, it resulted in hundreds of colleges and universities establishing sexual-harassment grievance procedures by the early 1980s: Anne Simon, 'Alexander v. Yale University: An Informal History', in Catharine MacKinnon and Reva Siegel, eds, *Directions in Sexual Harassment Law*, New Haven 2004, pp. 53, 56.

the 70s, court rulings, executive interventions, new regulations from the EEOC or ORC, Supreme Court decisions and Congressional interventions have continually reinterpreted the meanings of sex discrimination and harassment, extending the liability of employers and universities, and increasing the damages that can be extracted from them. The result has been a legal field in a state of permanent agitation—unlike that in countries where expressly drafted statutes leave less room for manoeuvre and feminist activism is more likely to take extra-legal forms. The litigant-driven process made it, in the view of one young attorney, an exciting, thriving area of law—‘there’s always a court that might be willing to extend the definition of sexual harassment.’<sup>53</sup>

This inherent instability opened the way for one strand of radical-feminist jurisprudence to advance a more militant agenda. This was most fully formulated by Catharine MacKinnon, who scoured the Marxian tradition for clues on how to construct a similarly ‘epic theory’ for feminism—one that would grasp society’s laws of motion in their totality, enabling women to become a ‘group for itself’.<sup>54</sup> She identified ‘work’ as the fundamental category of Marxism, and posited ‘sexuality’ as its feminist equivalent—the process through which ‘social relations of gender are created, organized, expressed and directed’. Sexuality, in this view, should not be confused with arousal, mutual pleasures or love-making. Its dynamic was hierarchical, involving a systematic division of social power, enforced to women’s detriment, in which ‘male’ and ‘female’ were created through the eroticization of dominance and submission, and women were taught to identify themselves as beings that exist for male sexual use. MacKinnon flatly rejected the understanding of sexuality as cultural-anthropological practices shaped by historically changing conditions of gender inequality, as well as the Freudian model of an innate drive repressed by the processes of socialization, which should be allowed greater expression. For her, ‘Sexuality is gender inequality: male excitement at the reduction of a person to a thing is its motive force.’ The proof of this was revealed by feminist consciousness-raising about women’s lived experience, exemplified in ‘rape, incest, battery, sexual harassment, abortion, prostitution and pornography.’<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cited in Abigail Saguy, ‘French and American Lawyers Define Sexual Harrassment’, *Directions in Sexual Harassment Law*, pp. 609–10.

<sup>54</sup> Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, Cambridge, MA 1989, pp. x, 39. The concept of ‘epic theory’ was borrowed from Sheldon Wolin, ‘Political Theory as a Vocation’, *American Political Science Review*, vol. 63, no. 4, 1969.

<sup>55</sup> MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, pp. 3, xiii, 41, 113, 110, 130–1, 109.

The logical political corollary of this construction was feminist separatism and political lesbianism, minority traditions with their own history and integrity. Instead, MacKinnon espied in US anti-discrimination law ‘a crack in the wall’—‘a peculiar jurisprudential opportunity’ around the issue of sexual assault. The goal was to use the law to confront the reality of women’s position—that is: ‘sex-based destitution and enforced dependency and permanent relegation to disrespected and starvation-level work’, combined with pervasive rape, systematic battery and prostitution, ‘the fundamental condition of women’, of which the porn industry was a wing. The liberal state was ‘male’: it treated women as men do, enforcing the male viewpoint as law on society; the negative freedoms of the US Constitution merely ensured the freedoms of a male status quo. Equality required a new jurisprudence, embodying women’s point of view. It would be attacked as ‘special pleading’, as ‘not neutral’—but neither was existing law. The first steps would be to tilt the burden of proof in sexual-assault cases in women’s favour, to rule out the defence of male intentions or apparent female consent. Feminists should fight to have pornography banned under the sex-discrimination laws, and prostitution criminalized.<sup>56</sup>

This viewpoint has been roundly criticized by other feminists, then and since.<sup>57</sup> Sociologically, MacKinnon’s portrayal of American women in the 1980s as sex slaves on starvation wages was unconvincing, her concept of sex as ‘male excitement at the reduction of a person to a thing’, culturally and anthropologically impoverished. Theoretically, MacKinnon’s starting point—as work is to Marxism, so sex is to feminism—involved a double error. For Marx, the determinant practice was not ‘work’ but the mode of producing what’s needed for daily subsistence—food, fuel, clothing, shelter—of which labour is one critical factor, along with nature, and the accumulated gains of technology, capital, language. The gender equivalent, if that’s what’s sought, would be the organization of human reproduction, of which sexuality is one crucial aspect, along with pregnancy, parturition, care of infants, socialization of children and the making of gendered selves. Its temporalities and divisions of labour are articulated with those of production. Against the radical-feminist view of male-female relations as a field polarized

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<sup>56</sup> MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, pp. 244–5, 242–3, 162, 237, 164, 249, 247.

<sup>57</sup> Landmark interventions include Carole Vance, ed., *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, London 1992 [US 1984]; Varda Burstyn, ed., *Women against Censorship*, Vancouver 1985.

by the primary oppression of sexual violence, this conception offers possibilities for negotiated cooperation and joint projects. It recognizes antagonisms in which gender may be a secondary division, not the primary one, and can therefore address oppressive relations between women, both structural and personal, for which radical feminism provides no adequate explanation. A strength of Marxism as a social theory is its ability to hold positives and negatives, creation and destruction, within a single frame. If a feminist ‘epic theory’ is required, it will need to do the same—to encompass pleasures as well as dangers; the risky attractions of otherness, the manifold problems of love.

The political progress of radical-feminist jurisprudence would throw interesting light on the American way of dealing with the question of sex in a mass society: on the one hand, the market; on the other, much smaller, hand, ideologized regulation. Working with Andrea Dworkin, a more effective publicist, MacKinnon’s first big project, a push for state-level anti-porn ordinances, was defeated by the Supreme Court in 1986. (In Canada, where this policy met with more success, the first target for suppression was a journal of lesbian-feminist erotica, *Bad Attitude*.<sup>58</sup>) The porn industry went on to flourish online, its reified representations now reaching a far wider audience, on a more frequent basis, than top-shelf magazines and ‘adult’ sleaze shops had done, and providing the syllabus for early-teen sex education. Pornography was subject to the same forces that shaped the rest of the American economy: globalization, outsourcing, price deflation, niche marketing, personalization, feminization; though still largely a male spectator sport, a growing chunk of erotic material was aimed at women. On the supply side it remained a cut-price industry, LA’s San Fernando Valley a fraction the size of Hollywood, beleaguered by piracy and by competition from pay-to-play online chatrooms, which the cam girls describe as a relatively safe form of sex work.

Defeated on the cultural front, radical-feminist jurisprudence secured a firmer niche on US campuses. Through the 1980s and 90s, litigant activism, incremental court decisions and executive intervention combined to widen Title IX definitions of harassment and assault, lighten

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<sup>58</sup> Carole Vance, *Pleasure and Danger*, p. xxxiv. ‘Feminists agree that pornography is sexist, reifying’, wrote Vance, but why was sexism in sex worse than sexism anywhere else? Why campaign against the porn industry but not the (much larger) bridal sector?

the complainant's burden of proof and increase the university's liability.<sup>59</sup> Legal activists like MacKinnon and Anne Simon proselytised the need to tilt the Title IX machinery in women's favour.<sup>60</sup> In the 90s, the leadership of campus anti-rape campaigns was taken up by their supporters, or by women—some quite conservative like Katie Koestner, the date-rape campaigner featured on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1991—radicalized by sexual coercion. Other feminist currents—post-structuralist, intersectional, queer, green, alter-globo—devolved to other issues, sniping at the 'essentialism' of the rad fems. Yet this tendency's subversive-instrumentalist legal project was not matched by any redistributive political-economic programme; in that sense, it was loyal to the mainstream American paradigm.

#### 4. GLOBAL BUILD-OUT

There's a widespread myth that American feminist leadership put women's rights on the world agenda. The opposite is the case. The initial impetus came from the Soviet bloc and non-aligned Third World states.<sup>61</sup> In the early 1970s, while Washington was struggling with military defeat in Indochina compounded by recession and political crisis at home, leftist African and Arab countries were temporarily riding high, buoyed up by a flood of petro-dollars. In 1974 this 'Group of 77' used their new majority at the one-state, one-vote UN General Assembly to push through the Declaration for a New International Economic Order, under whose charter developing countries would be able to regulate the activities of multinational corporations on their territory, including nationalizing their assets, with compensation to be settled under the domestic law of the nationalizing country. Naturally this was anathema to the US, but the Soviet bloc lent NIEO its support in exchange for G-77 votes for the Brezhnevite agenda of détente.

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<sup>59</sup> In 1997, as Bill Clinton's sex life was being debated by Congress, his OCR issued a 'Dear Colleague' letter warning that schools would be violating Title IX if they did not deal with behaviour that created a 'hostile environment' for women on campus; the Bush Administration reiterated the position in 2001: Jacob Gersen and Jeannie Suk, 'The Sex Bureaucracy', *California Law Review*, vol. 104, no. 4, 2016.

<sup>60</sup> Carrie Baker, *The Women's Movement against Sexual Harassment*, New York 2008, p. 62.

<sup>61</sup> A point emphasized by Therborn in *Between Sex and Power*, p. 76.

This was the context in which the UN General Assembly backed a proposal from the Soviet-led WIDF for an international ‘year for women’ in 1975, capped by a world conference in Mexico City to plan their full integration in the coming economic order.<sup>62</sup> For the US State Department, the General Assembly of the 1970s was a diplomatic battlefield in which success was measured in terms of damage limitation. Its officials participated in preparations for the Mexico City conference as a matter of course, but Washington’s priority for global gender politics remained population control: it allocated a \$3m budget for a 1974 UN gathering on family planning, compared to \$350,000 for the 1975 women’s conference.<sup>63</sup> Mexico City hosted two gatherings, setting a pattern for the future: an official UN inter-governmental conference, marked by the hot air and posturing typical of such occasions—delegates were chosen by foreign-ministry officials to showcase their leading ladies<sup>64</sup>—and a parallel cultural forum that attracted an audience of 6,000 for a programme of film shows, dancing, prayer (led by Mother Teresa) and panel discussions. Here the temper was more radical; the US women’s movement provided the largest foreign contingent, though there were strong showings from other American countries, Mexico at that time being a refuge for those fleeing dictatorships further south. The stand-out speaker was an indigenous Bolivian woman, Domitila Barrios, who had survived a massacre of protesting miners’ families by US-backed government forces only to be jailed and tortured, suffering a miscarriage as a result.

At the official plenary, the two-fold centrepiece was a declarative treaty of rights, CEDAW, and a Plan of Action.<sup>65</sup> Since these were non-binding,

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<sup>62</sup> The Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF) was then the largest international women’s network, with member organizations in over a hundred countries. Although its official bodies in the Comecon countries were stultifyingly conservative, WIDF branches played a significant role in organizing women around socio-economic questions in parts of Africa, Latin America and the Indian Subcontinent.

<sup>63</sup> Deborah Stienstra, *Women’s Movements and International Organizations*, New York 1994, p. 124.

<sup>64</sup> The Shah of Iran’s twin sister played a central role, while the best of her country’s young men and women were locked in Savak’s dungeons; fellow delegates included Mrs Marcos, Mrs Rabin and Mrs Sadat. The Soviet delegation was led by the world’s first female astronaut, evidence for Moscow’s claim that women in the state-socialist bloc already enjoyed equality, which was at least statistically true in terms of education and employment.

<sup>65</sup> CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

diplomats took the approach of 'cumulative drafting, selective application' and included proposals from all three blocs—the G-77 project for women's emancipation through socio-economic development, the Comecon stress on peace and the US theme of non-discrimination.<sup>66</sup> The outcome was an unwieldy, repetitive document, some 33 pages long, which defied American foreign policy in calling for support for black South African women suffering under apartheid and Palestinian women under Israeli occupation; the US duly voted against it.<sup>67</sup> Concretely, the Mexico Plan of Action called for an international 'decade for women and development' along NIEO lines, focused on health, education and child-care provision; each country would set up an office to monitor progress on these fronts and report to follow-up conferences held in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995). The skeleton of a global-feminist research apparatus was set in place, with a data-collection centre, INSTRAW, and Unifem, a voluntary fund, both based at UN HQ in New York. UN staffers convened seminars of 'experts' on women's issues to establish parameters for global research projects; subsidiary institutions like the ILO and FAO launched surveys of their own. It was not until 1979, four years after Mexico, that the US made its global-feminist turn. Carter's Secretary of State announced in a six-paragraph telegram to the American diplomatic service that 'a key objective of US foreign policy is to advance worldwide the status and conditions of women.'<sup>68</sup> The official onset of globalized neoliberalism came a few months later, when Carter's Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker hoisted interest rates, ringing up the curtain on the Third World debt crises and IMF

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<sup>66</sup> Hilary Charlesworth, 'Women as Sherpas', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, Fall 1996.

<sup>67</sup> Virginia Allan, Margaret Galey and Mildred Persinger, 'World Conference of International Women's Year', in Anne Winslow, ed., *Women, Politics and the United Nations*, Westport, CT 1995, p. 41.

<sup>68</sup> 'Telegram from the Department of State to All Diplomatic and Consular Posts', 327, National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D790246-0969, 31 May 1979. Promotion of feminism tallied with Carter's human-rights talk, the basis for a new ideological offensive against the Soviet Union and signal of ethical renewal at home, after Watergate. Carter elevated a raft of Beltway feminists to an advisory committee, while his appointee at USAID's Women in Development office was given a budget of \$10m and helped fund the American intervention at the second UN World Conference on Women, held in Copenhagen in 1980: Karen Garner, 'Global Gender Policy in the Nineties', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 24, no. 4, Winter 2012. But as the archives make clear, the Carter Administration devoted far more attention to population policy than to women's rights.

structural-adjustment programmes of the 1980s which would re-tool Southern economies for the new era.

### *A hundred flowers*

As the UN women's decade unfolded, the non-official forums took on a life of their own. Rather like the alter-globo World Social Forums that emerged from Porto Alegre in the early 2000s, these were large, boisterous feminist gatherings that saw heated international debates, and helped forge lasting friendships and contact networks amid the organizational chaos.<sup>69</sup> Eight thousand women attended the 1980 Copenhagen gathering. In 1985, over 13,000 thronged the University of Nairobi gardens, a majority from official African women's organizations. Ten years later, an estimated 40,000 would stumble round the half-built conference centre at Huairou, on the outskirts of Beijing. These gatherings undoubtedly helped to catalyse the oppositional women's movements that sprang up around the world in the late 70s and 80s, remarkable for their variety of forms and emphases. Feminist activism flourished in post-Emergency India, producing an extraordinary crop of initiatives—campaigns, street-theatre groups, magazines, state-level and national gatherings. In Brazil, Argentina and Chile, neighbourhood women's groups organized against the dictatorships; feminist tendencies crystalized within student groups and left parties. The region-wide Latin American *encuentros feministas* held throughout the 1980s were marked by passionate debates about sexuality, race and class.<sup>70</sup> In China, the democratic ferment of the 1980s included feminist currents and there was talk of de-bureaucratizing the All-China Women's Federation, sidelined for bourgeois deviationism during the Cultural Revolution

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<sup>69</sup> This was thanks in part to American foundation funding, which underwrote invitations and travel expenses. After the Mexico City conference, the organizers of the unofficial forum there got Ford Foundation backing to establish a permanent office, the International Women's Tribunal Center, also in New York, which mailed out newsletters and took charge of the NGO gatherings at future UN women's conferences. But non-official international networks also sprang to life, notably ISIS, the International Women's Information and Communication Service launched by Marilee Karl, which helped promote international socialist-feminist conferences in Paris and Amsterdam in 1977.

<sup>70</sup> For a vivid account of the Latin American feminist gatherings, see Alejandra Restrepo and Ximena Bustamante, *10 Encuentros Feministas Latinoamericanos y del Caribe: Apuntes para una historia en movimiento*, Mexico City 2009.

but resuscitated by Deng Xiaoping after 1978. Even in Japan, where an earlier women's liberationist impulse, growing out of the revolutionary student movement and the art scene, had been stymied, the UN decade stimulated feminist protests. These autonomous movements were often scathing about the official bodies set up to monitor women's progress for the UN conferences. Indian feminists condemned their National Women's Commission as elitist and bureaucratic, a pawn in successive governments' hands. In Nepal, Queen Aishwarya appointed herself head of the Women's Services Coordination Council whose main task, according to a local feminist critic, was glorification of Her Majesty and control of foreign NGO funds. In Kenya, there were complaints that men were using their wives to set up front organizations to get government grants, as the number of groups registered by the Women's Bureau rose six-fold across the decade.<sup>71</sup>

Culturally, international feminist influence generally flowed from core to peripheries, but it was adapted, appropriated and sometimes bowdlerized along the way. The 1980s saw the global take-off of the American women's liberation classic, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1970), which had appeared in over twenty languages by the end of the century—usually missing its devastating critique of the medical industry's treatment of women, as well as its chapters on self-examination and self-pleasure.<sup>72</sup> Flowing in the other direction, the Feminist Press, with Ford and Rockefeller backing, undertook two hugely ambitious literary projects, excavating and translating 'lost' women's writings from India and

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<sup>71</sup> Nuita Yoko, Yamaguchi Mitsuko and Kubo Kimiko, 'The UN Convention on Eliminating Discrimination against Women and the Status of Women in Japan', in Barbara Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, eds, *Women and Politics Worldwide*, New Haven 1994, p. 401; Shirin Rai, *Gender and the Political Economy of Development*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 181–2; Meena Acharya, 'Political Participation of Women in Nepal', and Maria Nzomo and Kathleen Staudt, 'Man-Made Political Machinery in Kenya: Political Space for Women?', both in Nelson and Chowdhury, *Women and Politics Worldwide*, pp. 485 and 420–1, respectively.

<sup>72</sup> Kathy Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels across Borders*, Durham, NC 2007, pp. 52–8. After Italian, Danish, French and Japanese editions in the 1970s, adaptations of the book were published in Sweden, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Israel and Egypt in the 1980s; translations appeared in Russian, Thai and Mandarin in the 1990s; in the Balkan languages, Armenian, Polish and Korean in the early 2000s.

Africa in multi-volume editions, and producing bi-lingual collections of Spanish, French, German, Italian, Flemish, Hebrew and Vietnamese feminist poetry, stretching from antiquity to the present, in the 'Defiant Muse' series.<sup>73</sup>

### *Structural adjustment with a female face*

Reagan's accession did little to alter the State Department's 'pro-feminist' foreign policy, and First Daughter Maureen Reagan led the US diplomatic team at the 1985 UN Women's Conference in Nairobi.<sup>74</sup> By now, international tides were running in America's direction. The Third World debt crisis had brought many of the G-77 to their knees, the appeasement-oriented Shevardnadze had taken over from Gromyko at the Kremlin and the PLO leadership was on the run. At the culmination of the UN Decade for Women, the Reagan Administration at last managed to clinch a diplomatic outcome that was acceptable to the US. Ideologically, there was a broad continuity in the action plans affirmed by the three conferences between 1975 and 1985, though by the time of Nairobi's 'Forward-Looking Strategies' the order of the three blocs' themes had been silently reversed: anti-discrimination now came first, followed by development and peace.<sup>75</sup> More strikingly, amid the morass of UN verbiage and vacuous wish-lists, the few actually feasible measures, standing out for their steely quality, were all from the

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<sup>73</sup> Edited by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, the two-volume *Women Writing in India: 600 BC to the Present* (1991, 1993) took six teams of scholars over seven years to produce, working across nine of the Subcontinent's seventeen main languages; the four-volume *Women Writing Africa* (2003, 2005, 2007, 2008) organized by geographical region and overseen by Tuzyline Jita Allan and Abena Busia, was fifteen years in the making; the Ford Foundation also sponsored a contemporary 'Women Writing Africa' series. The impetus for the excavation of 'lost' cultural history as a contribution to changing consciousness sprang from the Feminist Press's early experience of reprinting American works such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Yellow Wallpaper* or Agnes Smedley's *Daughter of Earth*. See Howe, *A Life in Motion*, pp. 364–5.

<sup>74</sup> Though Reagan, like Trump, made the gesture of cutting Federal funds for family-planning organizations that mentioned the word 'abortion', the shortfall was quickly plugged by philanthropic-foundation dollars.

<sup>75</sup> The documents also grew longer: Mexico City's 'Plan of Action' (1975) was 33 pages, Copenhagen's 'Programme for Action' (1980) 57 pages and Nairobi's 'Forward-Looking Strategies' (1985) 88 pages, while Beijing's 'Platform for Action' (1995) would top out at 130 pages.

neoliberal anti-discrimination playbook: 'improve women's access to credit', 'promotion of women's occupational mobility', 'flexible working hours for all'.<sup>76</sup>

Yet here, 'women's advance' and neoliberal policy prescriptions seemed set for head-on collision. In many parts of the Third World, women's social and economic position had worsened sharply during 'their' UN decade. Volcker's 20 per cent interest rates at the Federal Reserve sucked international capital back to the US, deepening a world recession and ratcheting up the cost of dollar-denominated Third World debt. By the late 80s, interest payments to Western banks were consuming 25 per cent of African and 40 per cent of Latin American export earnings; real wages fell by over 30 per cent across Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>77</sup> Both the debt crises and their 'solution', IMF structural-adjustment programmes, were deeply gendered, wiping out the fragile gains of the 1970s. Women in the lower ranks of public-sector employment were fired first as state spending was slashed. Cuts in fuel and food subsidies meant that Third World women were putting in extra hours of cooking and caring to meet basic needs; their incomes were falling, their health and nutritional status deteriorating, their cultural subordination becoming further entrenched under IMF 'reforms'. The new machinery of global feminism was thus being constructed over the top of worsening conditions for women across much of the world.

Feminist developmental economists, commissioned to report on women's progress at the 1985 UN Conference, instead lambasted the outcomes of IMF and World Bank structural adjustment. The critical approach propounded by the DAWN group, in its workshops at Nairobi and in its pamphlet, *Development, Crises and Alternative Visions*, was a high-profile example. DAWN was a collective of top-flight scholars, largely drawn from the Indian Subcontinent, the Caribbean and Latin America, who took 'the experiences lived by poor women throughout the Third World' as 'the clearest lens for an understanding of development processes', and their aspirations 'for a future free of the multiple oppressions of gender, class, race and nation' as the basis for new feminist

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<sup>76</sup> Nairobi 'Forward-Looking Strategies', paras 115, 133 and 136.

<sup>77</sup> Commonwealth Secretariat, *Engendering Adjustment for the 1990s: Report of a Commonwealth Expert Group on Women and Structural Adjustment*, London 1989, pp. 26–7.

strategies.<sup>78</sup> Without naming capitalism as a system, DAWN assailed the IMF–World Bank assumption that free capital flows led to optimal allocation of resources. Instead, small enterprises had been snuffed out by competition with multinationals; export-oriented cash crops displaced domestic food production; the work offered by the growing informal sector was precarious; for the tiny proportion of women employed in assembly plants in the new Special Economic Zone, jobs were short-term and subject to tyrannical labour discipline. Meanwhile stepped-up militarization, led by the Reagan Administration, and the diversion of public funds to arms spending, had sharply gendered effects in terms of civilian casualties and refugees, while bolstering conservative ideologies of male *machismo* and ‘good’ or ‘bad’ women, housewives or whores.<sup>79</sup>

DAWN’s founders were socialist or social-democratic feminists, Gandhian or *marxisant*, whose long-run proposals gestured towards land reform and greater control over multinationals. Nevertheless, their remarkably modest short-run demands offered some overlaps with the orthodox neoliberal agenda. DAWN’s principal proposal—increasing the productivity of women in the informal sector by offering them greater access to credit—was music to the World Bank’s ears. By the early 90s, feminist economists were pushing at an open door: ‘growing out of debt’ and ‘adjustment with a human face’ had replaced the deflationary policies of the Volcker era. IMF programmes had broken down barriers to Western goods and capital flows. Hernando de Soto’s ideas for informal-settlement property titling and Muhammad Yunus’s schemes for micro-credit were laying the basis for the financialization of the Global South. In this context, socialist-feminist calls for help with

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<sup>78</sup> Gita Sen and Caren Grown, for DAWN, *Development, Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women’s Perspectives*, London and Washington, DC 1988 [1987], pp. 23, 9–10. DAWN—the acronym stood for Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era—was funded by the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish overseas-aid agencies, the Ford Foundation and the UN’s NGO Secretariat. Its founders included Devaki Jain (trained at Oxford), Gita Sen (Stanford), Peggy Antrobus (Amherst), Fatima Mernissi (Sorbonne, Brandeis), Rounaq Jahan (Harvard), Lourdes Arizpe (University of Geneva, LSE) and Achola Pala (Harvard). Many of them had taken part in a 1977 international conference at the Center for Research on Women at Wellesley College, sponsored by Ford and USAID, which produced a landmark collection of texts on feminist development issues, canonized in a special edition of *Signs* and later published by Chicago: Wellesley Editorial Committee, *Women and National Development: The Complexities of Change*, Chicago 1977.

<sup>79</sup> Sen and Grown, *Development, Crises and Alternative Visions*, pp. 35, 61–73.

informal trading or small co-operatives could converge with neoliberal arguments that Third World women offered an untapped resource for credit-driven, private-sector growth. World Bank officials and overseas-aid bodies began to seek out projects that could count as 'gender-oriented' in appraisals of their own work. When donor funds began to flow in the aftermath of IMF structural-adjustment programmes, women's NGOs were used to replace erstwhile state-run social services.

The World Bank's 'feminist turn' was argued on purely neoliberal grounds: 'women's empowerment' would boost economic growth and could help to reduce fertility rates.<sup>80</sup> But global feminism could also play a compensatory or diversionary role. In response to critics who pointed to the 'feminization of poverty' under structural adjustment, or to Western creditors' self-enrichment at the expense of impoverished African and Latin American countries, the World Bank could show that, in line with its mandate, it did care about poverty and inequality—gender inequality, at least. From the early 1990s, the Bank issued a series of policy guidelines instructing its functionaries that national programmes should aim to identify 'gender-related barriers to growth' and encourage women's participation in the labour force, to overcome the 'rigidities', 'inefficiencies' and 'lowered output' created by the existing division of labour. It argued that micro-credit programmes had a proven record of 'empowering' women, who were more responsible than men in keeping up interest payments and more likely to spend extra income on their children.<sup>81</sup> Feminist economists, commissioned by the World Bank to explore how women were coping in poor communities, argued that policies should address the needs raised by women themselves: electricity, public safety, water, sanitation.<sup>82</sup> Without bothering to refute them, the Bank pocketed such reports and, under the rubric of 'women's empowerment', ploughed on with its preferred private-sector

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<sup>80</sup> Sophie Bessis, 'International Organizations and Gender: New Paradigms and Old Habits', *Signs*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2004. By the 1990s, the Ford Foundation's arguments for supporting global feminist action were almost identical to Becker's: staff at Ford's International Division explained that sex discrimination was 'a costly constraint on productivity': Kardam, *Bringing Women In*, p. 100.

<sup>81</sup> See the retrospect in World Bank, 'Integrating Gender into the World Bank's Work: A Strategy for Action', Washington, DC 2002.

<sup>82</sup> Caroline Moser, *Confronting Crisis: A Comparative Study of Household Responses to Poverty and Vulnerability in Four Poor Urban Communities*, World Bank, Washington, DC 1996.

programmes—micro-credit, land titling, conditional cash transfers, or ‘investment in human capital’, another of Becker’s ideas, which essentially meant encouraging girls’ education—funded by Western agencies and administered by selected NGOs.<sup>83</sup>

### *A global programme*

After Washington’s Cold War victory, a run of UN conferences helped to win consent for a social-liberal agenda on the environment (Rio 1992), human rights (Vienna 1993), population (Cairo 1994) and gender (Beijing 1995). More experimentally, the US and its allies moved toward establishing an international criminal-justice system, building on the model of the post-war military tribunals at Nuremberg and Tokyo.<sup>84</sup> A new stratum of global-feminist professionals found their voice at these UN conclaves, where the deep pockets of the Washington women’s lobby and its experience in mastering conference arrangements gave it a leading edge. WEDO, a caucus led by Bella Abzug and her colleagues, was one of the largest at the UN. Applying tactics honed by the Congressional Women’s Caucus in DC, WEDO mobilized a phalanx of international delegates, 1,500 strong, which became a semi-official entity at the UN and played a key role in mobilizing votes for American formulations in the ‘world declarations’ adopted at Cairo and Beijing.<sup>85</sup>

By the time of the Beijing UN Women’s Conference in 1995, America’s diplomatic triumph was complete. Russia, under Yeltsin, barely had a voice on the world stage; China, the conference host, was an eager pupil

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<sup>83</sup> Gary Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education*, 2nd ed., New York 1975 [1964]. Pierre Bourdieu, well aware of Becker’s work, developed the concepts of social, cultural and symbolic capital in its wake: *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*, Paris 1979.

<sup>84</sup> At Washington’s behest, the UN Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia in 1993 and another for Rwanda in 1995. The statute of the International Criminal Court itself was finalized in 1998, with Germany and Canada in central roles. The ICC began operations in The Hague in 2003. See Tor Krever, ‘Dispensing Global Justice’, NLR 85, Jan–Feb 2014.

<sup>85</sup> WEDO: the Women’s Environment and Development Organization. See Suzanne Braun Levine and Mary Thom, *Bella Abzug: An Oral History*, New York 2007, pp. 261–7; Rosalind Petchesky, *Global Prescriptions: Gendering Health and Human Rights*, London 2003, p. 70, fn 3. Petchesky also notes the role of the Ford-funded Center for Women’s Global Leadership at Rutgers University in drafting paragraphs on gender violence for the Vienna conference in 1993.

of the new international order. Symbolically, the figure of Hillary Clinton replaced that of Domitila Barrios as the conference heroine. Discursively, the anti-discrimination approach and 'entry into the mainstream' had vanquished proposals for women's emancipation through a more egalitarian socio-economic order. In the Beijing Platform for Action, the world's states endorsed 'an agenda for women's empowerment' which underscored 'the importance of trade liberalization and access to open dynamic markets' and affirmed that 'the family is the basic unit of society and as such it should be strengthened.'<sup>86</sup> Becker and Friedman must have been proud. Within this framework, the twelve-point Platform identified strategic objectives and action proposals covering almost every sphere—economic (poverty, the environment, women in the economy), political (human rights, decision-making, armed conflict), social (education, the media, gender violence, health, the girl child)—with the notable exception of sex and reproduction. In time-honoured State Department fashion these were administered separately, with global guidelines agreed by the 1994 Cairo conference on population.

Once the verbiage was peeled away, the operative clauses of the Platform for Action followed a familiar anti-discrimination logic: women's integration into the existing global-capitalist order, underpinned by coercion. Governments agreed to pay lip service to gender equality through a host of formal measures—equal access, on paper, to markets, resources, employment, pay, inheritance, credit, political decision-making and education; bringing a 'gender perspective' to bear on neoliberal economic programmes. This was backed up by a raft of affirmative-action suggestions for feminizing professional and managerial strata: positive measures to ensure a 'critical mass' (30 per cent) of women in government, media and judiciary; promoting women to advisory boards; a global media directory of female 'experts'; leadership and self-esteem training for girls. Poorer women would be helped out by targeted micro-credit and self-employment schemes, plus incentives to raise school and college enrolment. Meanwhile, criminal-justice measures would be used to tackle violence against women: toughening penal sanctions, prosecuting offenders, criminalizing pornography and enforcing sexual harassment laws. Social provision—refuges for battered women, housing, sanitation, health care, schools, safe transport, clean water, food and fuel subsidies, obstetrics, nurseries—would only

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<sup>86</sup> Beijing 'Platform for Action', paras 1, 16, 29.

be improved ‘as appropriate’, code word for ‘subject to budgetary constraints’, which was as good as saying: not at all. Instead, NGOs were enjoined to fill the gaps.<sup>87</sup>

The Platform for Action was softened by mildly positive cultural suggestions—training boys in household skills, non-discriminatory career counselling, diverse media portrayals, non-sexist textbooks—and topped off with agendas for further research: how to measure women’s unpaid labour, causes of gender violence, health policies, effects of toxic hazards, not least on indigenous women. The mechanism for advance on these many fronts came straight from the affirmative-action playbook: states were chivvied to set goals, to demonstrate their good faith, while global technicians devised metrics to help monitor progress towards them—a mode of data production that was also a measure of ideological commitment. (The latest global initiative, Agenda 2030, has 17 goals and 230 indicators for monitoring progress.)

The 1994 Cairo Programme for Action on women’s reproductive health followed the same strategic logic. Socialist feminists had arrived at the conference with a powerful critique of USAID-style population control and the ravages caused to health provision by structural adjustment. Their alternative integrated fertility issues—increased resources for maternal health, safe abortion and contraception on demand, an end to coerced sterilization and harmful trials—with broader social and ecological demands. But as one US feminist ruefully confessed, they found themselves spending disproportionate energy fighting religious conservatism and very little battling neoliberal macro-economics, effectively conceding ground on IMF austerity programmes in exchange for US and EU support on sexual rights.<sup>88</sup> The result was a UN Declaration whose Preamble offered a blamelessly holistic view of health and sustainable development, regretting the deleterious effects of structural adjustment, while the operative clauses of its Programme for Action directed the bulk of funds towards long-acting contraception programmes, and urged governments to improve cost effectiveness, roll back regulatory restrictions

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<sup>87</sup> Beijing ‘Platform for Action’, chapter IV.

<sup>88</sup> Women’s Coalition members ‘were reluctant to push the United States and Europe too hard on the resources questions because of needing these delegations as allies on reproductive and sexual-health rights’ against a Vatican-led alliance of ‘fundamentalisms’, including those defending national sovereignty and cultural traditions: Petchesky, *Global Prescriptions*, p. 45; see also pp. 40, 35.

and promote the private sector. No funds at all were earmarked for primary health care, child survival, emergency obstetrics, environmental or social services, as the Programme specifically noted.<sup>89</sup> An integrative feminist politics of reproduction was reduced to decorative support for pharmaceutical companies and population controllers. Numerical targets for implants and sterilizations—the polar opposite of a woman’s right to choose—still drove policy on the ground.

### *Hardening crust*

Though informed by mainstream US feminism, the global variety differed in several respects. First, there was no international equivalent to the court-backed civil-rights machinery of Title VII and Title IX; national attempts to copy it lacked the litigatory culture and historic legitimation that buoyed up the American original. Second, the neoliberal input has been much stronger: global-feminist programmes are often add-ons to capital-driven development policies—land titling, slum clearance, labour-force restructuring, credit expansion. To date, the lion’s share of resources have been directed to two projects dear to State Department and Wall Street hearts: population control and micro-finance, in public-private partnerships with pharmaceutical companies and banks. Third, there is an unavoidable element of foreignness: donors arrive from abroad—Norway, Sweden, Canada, USAID—to assess potential projects through cool outsider eyes; foundation-funded projects such as girls’ schools often stand out from the local environment. Despite talk of countries ‘owning’ programmes, the superiority of Western models is taken as given—trapping women in the Middle East and Africa between accusations of being ‘US stooges’, on the one hand, or conceding to local male dominance, on the other, and lending weight to patriarchal charges of ‘neo-imperialism’ against feminism as such.

By the turn of the century a thick carapace of global-feminist officialdom had been conjured into being. At world-summit level Beltway feminists, now thoroughly at home in the corridors of wealth and power, drafted the goals for ‘women’s empowerment’. The international financial institutions—World Bank, IMF—expanded their gender-mainstreaming

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<sup>89</sup> Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994, Ch. XIII, sections 13.15–13.17. Of the \$21.7bn envisaged for 2015, \$13.8bn would be spent on family planning, \$6.1bn on maternal health, \$1.5bn on HIV-AIDS prevention and the rest on research.

units to ensure that the globalization measures they imposed took a feminist agenda into account.<sup>90</sup> They were backed up by an international layer of highly qualified, Western-educated feminist professionals, mediating between the development agencies, ‘the donors’—Scandinavian overseas-aid officials, foundations (Gates, Ford, Rockefeller), investment banks and corporations (Walmart, Coca-Cola, Goldman Sachs)—and a now much more homogenized hierarchy of international, regional and local bodies, employing hundreds of thousands of NGO full-timers, many deeply committed to the cause. These were the foot soldiers of global feminism, their numbers testifying to its growing presence. Below them came the women ‘on the ground’.

Mainstream feminism faced opposition from the right—the redoubts of theocratic patriarchal conservatism, led by the Vatican and Riyadh—but also from the left, as scholars and local activists defended a more radical social stance against ‘NGOization’.<sup>91</sup> But, as with mainstream feminism in America, the global brand had the advantage of deep philanthropic-foundation and foreign-aid purses and powerful institutional backing. As in the US, existing feminist groups were often gratified to be invited

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<sup>90</sup> This bureaucratic build-out was complemented by ‘targeted interventions’, meaning financial support for one-off NGO projects, some worthwhile, others superficial: a girls’ school, a leafletting campaign on AIDS awareness, a public-speaking course for female local-government candidates, a survey of the needs of market women. See for example the World Bank’s ‘Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Growth: 2016–23 Gender Strategy’. Caren Grown, a former DAWN member, is now Senior Director for Gender at the Bank.

<sup>91</sup> On Latin America, see the discussion of antagonism between *las ongistas* (NGO-ers) and *el movimiento* in Sonia Alvarez, ‘Latin American Feminisms “Go Global”’, in Sonia Alvarez et al, eds, *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures*, Boulder, CO 1998; Ángela Ixkic Bastian Duarte, ‘From the Margins of Latin American Feminism’, *Signs*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2012; Mary Garcia Castro, ‘Engendering Powers in Neoliberal Times in Latin America’, *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 28, no. 6, 2011; Verónica Schild, ‘Feminism and Neoliberalism in Latin America’, NLR 96, Nov–Dec 2015. On India, Nandini Deo, ‘Indian Women Activists and Transnational Feminism over the Twentieth Century’, *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2012. At a programmatic level, the Indigenous Women’s Network counterposed the concept of ‘women’s self-determination’ to the ‘gender equity’ ubiquitous at Beijing. The Cairo Programme was attacked for its ‘neoliberal populationism’ by feminist critics, including the Women’s Global Network for Reproductive Rights, the Third World Network, the Dhaka-based UBINIG research centre and the Centre for Women, Population and the Environment. See, respectively, Karen Garner, ‘Global Gender Policy’; and for Cairo, Petchesky, *Global Prescriptions*, p. 47; Jael Silliman and Ynestra King, eds, *Dangerous Intersections*, Cambridge, MA 1999, pp. xi–xii.

to apply for grants by intelligent and sympathetic foundation officers. Local scholars, carefully selected by foundation recruiters, were invited to all-expenses-paid international gatherings, taken to visit pilot projects in the region and encouraged to set up similar programmes, with ample funding.<sup>92</sup> Activists became minor officials themselves, with little time for the more radical projects they still dreamt of undertaking because they were so busy filing reports and complying with legal formalities for their donors. The hundreds of millions of dollars these donors dispensed each year to NGO networks in the name of gender equality was peanuts compared to the \$44bn the UN bureaucracy spent on itself, let alone the trillion-dollar annual budget for NATO; but it far outweighed what dissident feminists might contribute from their own time and pockets.

Abroad, America's substantial record of support for international gender equality helped burnish its badge as global sheriff. Washington's numerous wars from the 1990s onward could be fought under the banner of women's rights, while its enemies were re-denominated as opponents of feminism.<sup>93</sup> *Time* magazine depicted the invasion of Afghanistan as a joyous day for womankind—'the greatest pageant of mass liberation since the fight for suffrage'. Reciprocity was expected. 'Feminists, more than anyone else, should realize that the West is worth defending', a US paper editorialized. The Ford Foundation required NGOs in the region to sign up to its statement on terrorism.<sup>94</sup> American feminists split over the invasion: the Congressional Women's Caucus gave it almost unanimous support, and the Feminist Majority Foundation led a brigade of NGOs into US-occupied Afghanistan. On the other hand,

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<sup>92</sup> See the fine-grained account of Chinese feminists' relations with the Ford Foundation in Lu Zhang, 'Chinese Women Protesting Domestic Violence', *Meridians*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2009. The Zhongze Women's Law Centre, founded by Guo Jianmei, received an annual \$150,000 from Ford, from 1995 through to its closure by the Chinese authorities in 2016.

<sup>93</sup> Feminism, it was claimed, featured prominently in the 'cluster of images and ideas of the West in the minds of its haters' that the *New York Review of Books* dubbed 'occidentalism', or 'the creed of Islamist revolutionaries': Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, 'Occidentalism', *NYRB*, 17 January 2002.

<sup>94</sup> Respectively: Nancy Gibbs, 'Blood and Joy', *Time*, 26 November 2001, and 'The War, the West and Women's Rights', *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 16 December 2001, both cited in Carol Stabile and Deepa Kumar, 'Unveiling Imperialism: Media, Gender and the War on Afghanistan', *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 27, no. 5, September 2005. Andrea Smith, 'The NGOization of the Palestine Liberation Movement: interviews with Hatem Bazian, Noura Erekat, Atef Said, Zeina Zaatari', in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, p. 176.

Code Pink and Women in Black were among the staunchest anti-war groups, *Meridians* curated a useful oppositional archive on the War on Terror and critical feminists produced an impressive flow of anti-militarist analysis.<sup>95</sup> Morally, however, mainstream global feminism emerged tarnished from its place in the baggage train of NATO forces.

Radical-feminist jurisprudence also found a place for itself in the imperial *ménage*, gaining a foothold in the international criminal-justice system that burgeoned under the New World Order. Established on the model of the post-war military courts at Nuremberg and Tokyo, the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia was vulnerable to the same criticisms: functioning as an international show trial, in which the great-power victors grant themselves impunity, scanting legal principles of established jurisdiction and ‘no punishment without law’; the court, in the absence of a legislature, minting crimes itself and applying them retrospectively. The upshot of such trials was not justice, but the ‘authoritative confirmation’ of a desired historical narrative.<sup>96</sup> In the case of Yugoslavia, this involved casting the Allies as blameless defenders of peace, the wars of secession a product solely of ‘Serb aggression’. Comparable charges could be laid against the later ICT for Rwanda and the International Criminal Court, whose jurisdiction excludes the Western powers under the principle of ‘complementarity’ and whose legal categories—‘aggression’, ‘crimes against humanity’—were notoriously ill-defined.

But selective justice and pliable laws were an advantage for a certain tendency of radical-feminist legal activism—‘a historic opportunity’, as one attorney said of the Yugoslav wars.<sup>97</sup> The tribunals and the ICC could all the more easily be used to re-forge legal definitions of crimes against

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<sup>95</sup> Collections include Naeem Inayatullah and Robin Riley, eds, *Interrogating Imperialism: Conversations on Gender, Race and War*, Basingstoke 2006; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Minnie Bruce Pratt and Robin Riley, eds, *Feminism and War: Confronting US Imperialism*, London and New York 2008.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Authoritative confirmation’: Ronen Steinke, *The Politics of International Criminal Justice*, Oxford 2012, p. 9, cited in Krever, ‘Dispensing Global Justice’, p. 69. ‘A high-grade lynching party’ with a ‘façade of legality’ was how Harlan Fiske Stone, then US Chief Justice, described the trials at Nuremberg: Krever, p. 68.

<sup>97</sup> Catharine MacKinnon, *Are Women Human? And Other International Dialogues*, Cambridge, MA 2006, p. 191. MacKinnon plunged with gusto into the ‘lynching party’ narrative of the Yugoslav tribunal: the ‘fact’ of the war was ‘Serbian aggression’, aiming at the genocidal extermination of non-Serbs; Serbian rapes were ‘to everyday rape what the Holocaust was to everyday anti-Semitism’: p. 161. While insisting on the extra-legal determinants of gender relations, MacKinnon’s polemic excluded all other over-determining social forces and agencies. It was the 1980s

women, providing models for use elsewhere—as with the 1998 *Akayesu* case in Rwanda, where the Tribunal accepted a loosened definition of rape as ‘physical intrusion of a sexual nature under coercive conditions’, which no longer needed to entail forced intercourse. This was swiftly followed by moves in California (2003) and Illinois (2004) to incorporate the revised definition into state law. No matter if the goal of the Rwanda Tribunal as an international show trial was to establish a narrative scapegoating lower-level officials while shielding the Western powers, above all the Clinton Administration, which had for years turned a blind eye to the Habyarimana regime’s weapon-buying and militia training, with IMF funds. Most culpably, Clinton blocked dispatch of the effective UN security mission mandated by the Arusha Accords, despite repeated warnings from Gen. Dallaire, the mission commander, and indeed the CIA, in the months before the massacres and rapes.<sup>98</sup> No matter, if the outcome could be for radical-feminist attorneys to tweak American law in women’s favour.

## 5. RESULTS

Nearly 25 years on from Beijing, what are global feminism’s main achievements? Undoubtedly the greatest gain has been a remarkable advance of knowledge. The expansion of data-gathering, field studies and comparative analysis is a tribute to the strengths of the American university system. It was US diplomats who pushed for research to be a central plank of the UN programme from the start, and US resources have helped to see it through—assembling a global cadre of experts, elaborating successive agendas, pestering governments and so forth. Every empire discovers a

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debt crisis and IMF austerity that made a tinderbox of the ethnic mosaic in post-Tito Yugoslavia, where large sections of the Serb population lived outside the borders of the Serbian state, precisely to avoid it dominating the smaller nations in the Federation as during the 1930s. What stoked the fire from 1991 was EU recognition of Croatian and Slovenian secession, without any credible guarantees of security for the Serbian minorities. Left to defend themselves, the Serbian enclaves duly resorted to ‘ethnic cleansing’—soon degenerating into retributive atrocities, mass rape and murder—to create a corridor to the Serb Republic. Operation Storm, the NATO-backed counterblast, then effected ‘cleansing’ on a greater scale. As Amnesty insisted at the time, rape was being used as a weapon by all sides.

<sup>98</sup> Colette Braeckman, ‘New York and Kigali’, *NLR* 9, May–June 2001. For *Akayesu*, see MacKinnon, *Are Women Human?*, pp. 238, 245, 319, 370. Nowhere in her writings from the 1990s does MacKinnon have a word to say about the rape and gross molestation charges against Bill Clinton.

need for information about the populations it superintends, but none to date has extended research into gender questions, at this scale and with such a level of sophistication. It's true that this has not been a period of theoretical brilliance to compare with the starburst of original thinking that exploded with the 1970s women's liberation movement; but that applies across the board. It's also the case that the extraordinary projects of worldwide cultural recuperation once pioneered by the Feminist Press have largely petered out. The preoccupations of the funding bodies have tilted research towards women's labour and population studies; they display less curiosity about psychology, household structures, religious practices, body politics and sex. Nevertheless, the gender research of the past thirty years constitutes a historic achievement.

Concrete social change attributable to the global-feminist agenda has been less dramatic—and largely concentrated at the top of the social pyramid. Most significant has been the increase of young women in tertiary education, partly owing to big-bang expansions of the university systems in China, the Middle East and Latin America. Though these have been roundly criticized for chaotic implementation and lowered standards, there is nevertheless hope that further education may offer tens of millions of young women a degree of autonomy and a broadening of social horizons beyond the patriarchal family. On the political front, the total proportion of women in national parliaments rose from 12 per cent in 1997 to 24 per cent in 2017, with some of the highest increases in Latin America (53 per cent in Bolivia); the extent to which these female tribunes represent women's interests, once elected, is another matter. There has been a mild feminization of global elites—business, administration, politics, culture; women from well-connected families in Africa and Asia have carved out formidable careers as professors, journalists, lawyers, ministers, judges. There is a broader global acceptance of the principle of gender equality.

Beyond this, advance on the Platform for Action has been more halting. The pace of change has actually slowed in female literacy, maternal mortality and girls completing primary school since the Beijing conference, compared to earlier decades.<sup>99</sup> Poverty levels have improved, largely thanks to China, but malnutrition rates rose among poor women in India after 1995.<sup>100</sup> At median level, economic equalization has largely been a

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<sup>99</sup> Female literacy and elementary school rates: World Bank Data; Margaret Hogan et al, 'Maternal Mortality for 181 Countries, 1980–2008', *The Lancet*, 8 May 2010.

<sup>100</sup> Pranab Bardhan, *Awakening Giants, Feet of Clay*, Princeton 2010, p. 104.

process of men ‘levelling down’; as male wages fell and the breadwinner model eroded, women whose work had once supplemented their husbands’ became by default major providers, in conditions of generalized economic stress. In survey after survey, women confirm the small net gain in personal independence that waged work brings, but also its limited impact on gender relations.<sup>101</sup> The new export-manufacturing centres have exerted a similar levelling-down effect. The *maquiladoras* in northern Mexico, the Foxconn plant in Shenzhen, the garment industry in Dhaka, won export orders by paying pin-money wages to young rural women, under highly coercive labour regimes; for lack of better, young men came to accept the same conditions, and are now a majority in many plants. Foxconn girls were sometimes better off working in the hyper-gendered Shenzhen entertainment sector.<sup>102</sup>

There are no long-run global data sets for sexual and domestic violence, but these are strongly correlated with male joblessness, which is high, and with war zones, which have expanded. The NGO push for laws to criminalize domestic violence has had some success, but with contradictory outcomes. Brazil’s 2006 Maria da Penha Law, for example, introduced mandatory prison sentences for wife beaters and charged regional authorities with setting up special courts to investigate complaints (as opposed to funding refuges, for which women’s groups had campaigned). Feminists monitoring its implementation reported a drop in the number of assaults registered, as women hesitated to see their husbands locked up in the country’s notorious jails, with potentially disastrous consequences for the household’s finances and without any state economic assistance for themselves, when what they wanted was for the men to stop hitting them.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Buenos Aires, woman textile worker: ‘I’d come back at six or seven at night to find nothing had been done and the children were unfed and dirty. I’d tell him to help but he became violent—he hated most that his shirts weren’t ironed.’ Kampala, 35-year-old man: ‘Most men want working women, not parasites. But women ought to be home in time and satisfy their husband’s needs.’ Respectively, Liliana Acero, ‘Women’s Work in Brazilian and Argentinian Textiles’, in Swasti Mitter and Sheila Rowbotham, eds, *Women Encounter Technology: Changing Patterns of Employment in the Third World*, London 1995; Siri Lange, ‘When Women Grow Wings: Gender Relations in the Informal Economy of Kampala’, Michelsen Institute, Bergen 2003.

<sup>102</sup> Deng Yunxue, ‘Gender in Factory Life: An Ethnographic Study of Migrant workers in Shenzhen Foxconn’, Hongkong Polytechnic University Masters Thesis, 2012.

<sup>103</sup> Silvia de Aquino, ‘Organizing to Monitor Implementation of the Maria da Penha Law in Brazil’, in Mulki Al-Sharmani, ed., *Feminist Activism, Women’s Rights and Legal Reform*, London 2013.

Global-feminist reproductive politics have also retained a coercive edge. The focus of NGOs has been on the pharmaceutical suppression of fertility, rather than developing the social conditions for women's autonomy—education, travel, economic independence—that help make birth control a positive choice. Research by the pharmaceutical giants centres on long-acting methods that can't be reversed without professional intervention, putting control in the hands of (mainly male) paramedics rather than women themselves. Despite the pro-choice mantras of IPPF websites, in practice numerical targets still guide international population-control programmes. The recent 69-country Family Planning 2020 campaign, backed by the Gates Foundation, plans to 'cover' 120 million women with hormonal implants (Norplant, Sinoplant, Jadelle: small rods of progesterone, inserted into the arm) or injectables (Depo Provera, Noristerat: injected deep into the gluteal muscles for slow release). Though marketed as reversible, side-effects can include long-delayed return of fertility, menstrual irregularities, headaches, thrombosis, weight gain, loss of bone density and depression. Nigeria's 2020 target is to cover another 13.5 million women; India's, 48 million.<sup>104</sup> Birth control substitutes for primary healthcare in impoverished northern Nigeria, where the per capita ratio of doctors is 0.4 per thousand. In India, sterilization remains the most prevalent form of contraception, implemented on over 70 per cent of women 'users' and consuming 85 per cent of family-planning funds. In Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, mass campaigns aimed mainly at Muslim, Dalit and tribal communities use cash incentives to meet state quotas, with the operation performed in dangerously unsanitary conditions. Female sterilization rates are also high in Brazil (42 per cent) and China (45 per cent). Backstreet abortions are a common cause of maternal mortality in Latin America and West Africa, especially among teenage girls.<sup>105</sup>

Micro-credit has been global feminism's leading 'empowerment' policy in the informal economies of the developing world, where equal-pay and

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<sup>104</sup> See the key country documents on the Family Planning 2020 website.

<sup>105</sup> Petchesky, *Global Prescriptions*, pp. 199, 207, 216; For India, see also 'For sterilization, target is women', NYT, 7 November 2003; for Brazil, Sérgio Luiz Gonçalves de Freitas, 'Brazil: Contraception, Abortion and Population Planning', in Robert Francoeur, ed., *International Encyclopaedia of Sexuality*, New York 1997–2001; for China, Makoto Atoh, Vasantha Kandiah and Serguey Ivanov, 'The Second Demographic Transition in Asia? Comparative Analysis of the Low Fertility Situation in East and Southeast Asian Countries', *Japanese Journal of Population*, vol. 2, no. 1, March 2004, p. 60.

anti-discrimination laws could have no purchase. The model was pioneered in Bangladesh by Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank. Lending to poor male labourers was risky, due to high default rates, but Yunus found that that their wives could be ‘easier’ to manage, more pliant and amenable to peer pressure. The Grameen template was premised on a village borrowers’ group that took joint liability for its members’ individual loans: all would lose access to credit if its poorest members defaulted. Women would pay a joining fee and demonstrate their fiscal discipline by bringing small savings deposits to the weekly meetings for some time before they were allowed to apply for a loan, \$20 or so, repayable within a year at a fixed interest rate of around 20 per cent. Micro-credit was where global feminism and global finance came together to create a new ‘sub-prime frontier’ valued at \$100bn—‘fighting poverty, profitably’, as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation likes to say.<sup>106</sup> The logic was that of private-sector affirmative action: a tiny loan would help a village basket-weaver or shanty-town seamstress to become a micro-entrepreneur, raising her family’s living standard, perhaps eventually generating new jobs, while paying a handsome return to her creditor.

But evidence of any emancipatory effect for poor women is thin. In keeping with the original affirmative-action model, the main beneficiaries of micro-credit in Bangladesh have been women from the rural petty bourgeoisie, who would send their servants to the weekly meetings and often used the loans to become money-lenders themselves, generating a tidy profit. Poorer women struggled to keep up with instalments, often borrowing from one NGO to repay another. ‘Right after we take a loan, the worry sets in: how are we going to pay? Everyday becomes a stressful situation. If we fall behind, the group members come and harass us. The NGO field-worker harasses us. Our husbands and in-laws get angry with us—we have pressure from all round.’<sup>107</sup> There is ample anecdotal

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<sup>106</sup> ‘Credit is a human right!’ was Yunus’s slogan, updating the 19th-century motto, ‘Free trade is Jesus Christ.’ See Philip Mader, *The Political Economy of Microfinance: Financializing Poverty*, Basingstoke 2015, pp. 4, 10, 61–2. As the field became increasingly crowded, micro-lending institutions became more aggressive, provoking debtor rebellions. In Bolivia, debt protesters took hostages at the Superintendancy of Banks and negotiated reductions. There were repayment strikes in Lahore in 2008 and a 10,000-strong No Pago movement in Nicaragua. The Moroccan Victims of Microcredit Campaign shut down local finance offices in 2011: Mader, pp. 70–2.

<sup>107</sup> See Lamia Karim’s fine critical ethnography, *Microfinance and Its Discontents: Women in Debt in Bangladesh*, Minneapolis 2011, pp. 198–9, 54–5, 88–9. As Karim points out, a high proportion of the ‘scholarly’ literature on microfinance is produced by authors on the payroll of the institutions: pp. 67–8.

evidence of husbands, having spent the loan, venting their anger on their wives or beating them if they didn't bring in more credit. High repayment rates proved to be a mark of village women's social vulnerability; the threat of shame or domestic tyranny lay behind their desperate efforts to avoid default.<sup>108</sup> Micro-credit drew upon and reinforced existing gender relations, rather than challenging them. A woman in Cairo complained bitterly that when she'd started pickling vegetables to sell to the local shops, her husband had intervened, saying he could wholesale them to merchants in the market: 'He pretended he would help; now he's in control of the whole business. So not only do I serve him and his children, I'm a worker in his little pickle factory.'<sup>109</sup>

## 6. COUNTERVAILING FORCES

Why such disappointing returns on so much effort, with benefits so heavily skewed to the upper-middle class? In part, the limitations of the global-feminist project are inscribed in its strategic model: 'bringing women into the mainstream' of the existing order, above all the business and professional strata. But that order itself has been in flux. The same structures and institutions that have been supporting global feminism have also presided over countervailing developments, of greater force and reach. Privatization—from land titling in East Africa, to real estate in China, to QE-funded share buybacks on Wall Street—has generally accrued assets in rich male hands, trophy wives only benefiting as such. (Anti-discrimination rules have never applied to ownership, where restrictions are unthinkable within this model.) The public sector, for

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<sup>108</sup> Juliet Hunt and Nalini Kasynathan, 'Pathways to Empowerment? Reflections on Microfinance and Transformation in Gender Relations in South Asia', *Gender and Development*, vol. 9, no. 1, March 2001. Evidence on the relation between microfinance and violence against women is mixed. An independent ethnographic study of Grameen's impact in a Bangladeshi village found that of 121 borrowers, 18 per cent reported a decrease in male violence, while 70 per cent said it had increased as a result of their involvement with the bank: Aminur Rahman, *Women and Microcredit in Rural Bangladesh: An Anthropological Study of the Rhetoric and Realities of Grameen Bank Lending*, Dhaka 1999, cited in the overview by Naila Kabeer, 'Is Microfinance a "Magic Bullet" for Women's Empowerment?', *Economic & Political Weekly*, 29 October 2005.

<sup>109</sup> Imam Bibars, 'Gender and Poverty in Egypt: Do Credit Projects Empower the Marginalized and the Destitute?', in Sylvia Chant, ed., *The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty: Concepts, Research, Policy*, Cheltenham 2010, pp. 584–5.

all its problems, has been a world-historic ally for women. Globally, it is where most non-discriminatory employment is to be found, as well as the best parental-leave benefits. The material support it can offer—secure housing, safe refuges for battered women, free childcare—provides the most capacious alternative to oppressive domestic relations.

Shrunk and downgraded by the very authorities that brandish their global-feminist credentials, lashed by the pro-cyclical austerity waves of boom-and-bust capitalism, eviscerated public sectors have been throwing responsibilities for reproductive labour back into the nexus of the private household, where—as with China’s shut-down of work-unit crèches in the late 1990s—they are gendered anew. Women in the informal slum settlements cite lack of social infrastructure as the main cause of their fear of violence, keeping them indoors, especially after dark—‘with nightfall comes the sound of shooting and running.’<sup>110</sup> Dhaka garment-workers describe their long walk home on darkened roads, for lack of affordable transport: ‘I can feel my heart beat in my ears. I walk very fast so no man can inflict harm on me’—‘Though we walk in a group, we feel scared. Anything can happen.’<sup>111</sup> In the absence of social provision, family and kinship relations often provide the sole support for negotiating the informal economy and coercive bureaucracy, in crowded, low-income neighbourhoods from Cairo to Jakarta. At the same time they reproduce, in ethically legitimated form, gendered conditions of dependency and subordination: selflessness, unpaid labour, shouldering domestic responsibilities without complaint, remain the defining characteristics of a dutiful daughter, loving mother or good wife.<sup>112</sup>

Regressively gendered privatizations interact with larger secular shifts: the global expansion of informal economies and service sectors. The informal economy is itself heavily gendered, the pay gap wider and sex-based divisions of labour more deeply entrenched than in formal employment. In the shanty-towns and favelas that mushroomed with Third World urbanization, young women who’d moved with their husbands from the countryside improvised petty-cash versions of traditional

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<sup>110</sup> A Filipina in Metro Manila, her fears echoed by women from Lusaka and Guayaquil: Moser, *Confronting Crisis*, p. 71.

<sup>111</sup> Syeda Sharmin Absar, ‘Women Garment Workers in Bangladesh’, *Economic & Political Weekly*, vol. 37, no. 29, July 2002.

<sup>112</sup> Diane Singerman, ‘Restoring the Family to Civil Society: Lessons from Egypt’, *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, Winter 2006.

household chores—cleaning, laundry, beauty care; cooking and selling street food—when casualized male wages prove insufficient. As growth rates and formal employment levels fell from the 1980s onwards, the provisional became semi-permanent, paid work simply serving to reproduce the gendered division of labour, with sugar daddies and commoditized sex its logical extension.<sup>113</sup> Similar patterns took hold in the growing cities of Africa and Southeast Asia.

In the advanced-capitalist world, and above all in the US, the patterns of the anti-discrimination paradigm are clearly visible in the skewed and racialized pyramid of gender advance. The official ideology of equality and the reality of women's relative earnings served to neutralize and depoliticize gender relations, while the culture industry pumped out reassuring visions of privatized fulfilment within the modern American family—now not necessarily heterosexual or white. Among professional strata, the top 15 per cent, the gender gap in pay and status had all but closed by the 1990s, and progress thereafter stalled.<sup>114</sup> Near-universal contraception severed the link between intercourse and pregnancy, stretching the childfree years into mature adulthood and helping to open unprecedented space for gender-fluid experimentation and for women's selves de-linked from maternity; among college-educated women, the total fertility rate fell to sub-replacement levels.<sup>115</sup> The advent of a baby in conditions of privatized childcare and housing often signalled a rude class and gender reawakening, as prevailing socio-economic

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<sup>113</sup> Marcela Cerrutti and Rodolfo Bertonecello, 'Urbanization and Internal Migration Patterns in Latin America', Centro de Estudios de Población, Argentina, 2003; 'Women, Slums and Urbanization', Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, Geneva 2008.

<sup>114</sup> Paula England, 'The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled', *Gender and Society* 24, April 2010. From the 70s, US women poured into professions that were once male preserves—management, law, medicine, university teaching—and now make up virtually half the newly graduating MBAs, JDs, MDs and PhDs; in 1960, the figure was barely 5 per cent.

<sup>115</sup> In surveys, 3–6 per cent of American women aged 18–44 identify as lesbian and 2–5 per cent of men as gay, with higher figures (5–7 per cent) for those in their twenties; Gary Gates, 'LGBT Demographics: Comparisons among population-based surveys', Williams Institute, UCLA, September 2014. Same-sex households now make up 0.5 per cent of the US total, over a quarter of them (131,729 of 646,464) lawfully wed; a third of lesbian households include children, as do a fifth of gay men's. See Timothy Homan and Frank Bass, 'Number of Same-Sex Households Jumped 80 per cent since 2000', *Bloomberg News*, 28 September 2011; Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, New York 2005, p. 275.

circumstances conspired to reproduce nuclear-family divisions of labour. But for the top 15 per cent, this was softened by the advent of a new layer of female domestics, themselves excluded from anti-discrimination law—exploiting the global pay gap through ocean-spanning ‘chains of care’.<sup>116</sup> Ethical norms—the gendered sense of a ‘good’ self—underwent less change; arguably, both privatized family responsibilities and the gendered self-presentations favoured by social media served to intensify and reproduce them.

For the median-income majority, around 60 per cent of Americans, the shift has been in the opposite direction: the gender gap has mainly narrowed through a levelling down of men’s pay and working conditions, while women’s marginally improved.<sup>117</sup> Sex-segregated work still prevails across large swathes of the median-income economy: construction, transportation, maintenance; retail, fast-food, the care industry, clerical work. In service-sector work—‘affective labour’—ultra-femininity may provide a competitive advantage, but brings higher costs in sexual harassment. The gender-neutral space that college-educated women have won through universal contraception, extended study and greater economic independence is much reduced here. Across the ‘other’ America, from New Mexico and Arizona to the Mississippi Basin, the

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<sup>116</sup> The ‘chain’ ultimately depends on unpaid female labour: US domestic workers earn perhaps \$750 a month, sending \$400 home, of which some \$50 may go to pay the servants helping to look after their children and husband back home, while those servants’ children may be cared for unpaid by a sibling or relative, or just tag along: Arlie Russell Hochschild, ‘Love and Gold’, in Hochschild and Barbara Ehrenreich, eds, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, London 2003, p. 18. It involves a steep *déclassement*: ‘Of course we were not so rich in the Philippines, but we had *maids*’, a college-educated Filipina recalled of her arrival in a US household, where she was provided with a mop and a bucket by the lady of the house, but had no idea how to use them: Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work*, Stanford 2001, p. 150.

<sup>117</sup> Between 1973 and the early 2000s, real income rose 21 per cent for Americans with an advanced degree but fell by 4 per cent for those with a bachelor’s degree, 13 per cent for those who didn’t finish college, 26 per cent for high-school education and 38 per cent for those who didn’t finish high school. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, cited in Michael Kimmel, ‘Boys and School: Background Paper on the “Boy Crisis”’, Swedish Government Report SOU 2010:53, Stockholm 2010, p. 15. For women: Francine Blau and Lawrence Kahn, ‘Swimming Upstream: Trends in the Gender Wage Differential in the 1980s’, *Journal of Labour Economics*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1997.

Appalachians and the Great Plains states, the average age for a woman's first birth is around 22, compared to 28 on the Northern Seaboard; fertility rates are some 25 per cent higher.<sup>118</sup> Across racial categories, young women from median-income families are less likely than those from professional strata to use contraception systematically and, if they get pregnant, less likely to have an abortion—whether because the opportunity costs of having a baby are lower, or the upsides of maternity look more attractive, or due to religious beliefs, lack of abortion facilities, or absence of the parental intervention that has become a notable feature in 'grown' upper-middle-class children's lives.<sup>119</sup> Childcare is more likely to fall on unpaid relatives—the case for nearly half of US under-fives with working mothers—with another fraction at a child-minder's home.<sup>120</sup> If financialization has brought increased asset wealth for the professional strata, it largely means debt and anxiety here. Men have seen their jobs downgraded; women are working too hard, while still being frontline carers for the health problems and life crises of an extended family, over the course of an 18-year recession. There is a much higher break-up rate for couples—26 per cent, compared to 13 per cent for those with college degrees—who cite work and time stresses as the major cause: men complain that women come home from work tense and irritable, women that the men do too little housework and childcare, both that the other gets angry easily, is critical or moody, just won't talk.<sup>121</sup>

For the poorest sectors, disproportionately people of colour, Nixon's war on crime has never stopped. Most salient in a succession of punitive measures were Bill Clinton's workfare bill, falling hardest on African-American single mothers, and criminalization of domestic

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<sup>118</sup> T. J. Mathews and Brady Hamilton, 'Delayed Childbearing: More Women Are Having Their First Child Later in Life', US Dept of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief 21, August 2009, pp. 3–4; Ron Lesthaeghe, 'The Unfolding Story of the Second Demographic Transition', *Population and Development Review*, vol. 36, no. 2, June 2010.

<sup>119</sup> Paula England, Elizabeth Aura McClintock and Emily Fitzgibbons Shafer, 'Birth Control Use and Early, Unintended Births', in Marcia Carlson and Paula England, eds, *Social Class and Changing Families in an Unequal America*, Stanford 2011, pp. 23, 29–32; for interventionist parents, Carlson and England, p. 14.

<sup>120</sup> US Census Bureau, 'Who's Minding the Kids?' Childcare Arrangements: Spring 2011', Washington, DC 2013.

<sup>121</sup> Andrew Cherlin, 'Between Poor and Prosperous: Do the Family Patterns of Moderately Educated Americans Deserve a Closer Look?', in Carlson and England, eds, *Social Class and Changing Families in an Unequal America*, pp. 79–80.

violence—stripping women in precarious communities, such as undocumented Latinas, of viable protection. The economic gains for working-class African-American women were proportionately greater than for their menfolk: trapped in domestic servitude as an occupational ghetto in the post-war period, they stormed out of it from the 1970s to occupy public-service jobs in health and education. But this was qualified precisely by the disproportionate deterioration in the position of black working-class men, and the concomitant practical and psychological burdens that imposes on black women, under conditions of privatized social care.<sup>122</sup>

## 7. NEW MOVEMENTS

Even in its heartlands, then, the mainstream-feminist model had been exhausted as a solution to median-income women's problems—one reason why so many of them refused to turn out for Clinton in 2016; or, indeed, voted for Trump. Globally, this was the context in which the new feminisms began to stir. To what extent do they challenge, transcend or reproduce the hegemonic paradigm? How autonomous are they from the now mildly feminized world order of multinational corporations, bureaucratized non-profits and NATO powers? Any definitive answers would be premature: the whole scene is highly mobile, protests are by nature an ephemeral form and changes in consciousness can't be registered at this scale. But a preliminary, highly schematic survey of the new feminisms could just note to what extent, and with what success, they challenge the 'integrate, regulate, incarcerate' model.

At first sight the heterogeneity of the scene today, both within and between countries, is more reminiscent of the effervescent 1980s than the becalmed donor-run zones of the 1990s. Social media as a mobilizing device, violence against women as a theme, and utopian, post-gender practices of personal and sexual identity are present almost everywhere; but their expressions and extent vary widely. Vertically, the new campaigns co-exist with the establishment structures that grew up

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<sup>122</sup> Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant provides an extraordinary exploration of issues of health, food and personal space as the social pressures of being a 'strong' working-class black woman are internalized: 'Keeping Up Appearances, Getting Fed Up: The Embodiment of Strength among African-American Women', *Meridians*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2005.

in the global-feminist era. Horizontally, their developments are strongly differentiated by their local political cultures and social conditions, the temporalities of their economic cycles. What follows will focus on those regions where they have already made an impact—Latin America, Europe, the US and, for contrast, China—without prejudging developments elsewhere. It will concentrate only on the most salient campaigns in each case, examining the organizational forms they take, the themes they raise and their international reach. Social change is always the product of a confluence of factors, so even the most notational survey should try to ask what wider forces and agencies are shaping regional outcomes. The hope is that the numerous errors and omissions such mapping must entail will be spurs to better accounts by other hands.

### *Southern cone*

The new Latin American feminisms lie to the left of the spectrum, despite—or even because of—the advent of rightist governments there. In Argentina, the popular mobilizations that erupted out of the 2001 economic crisis left their mark on the official women's machinery, transforming the annual Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres, formerly a staid event linked to the UN process, into a 12,000-strong assembly of students, workers and *piqueteras*. By 2014 it had become a regular rallying point for women across the region, a radical three-day gathering of 44,000. In Brazil, too, the Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras, established as a national coordinating body for the 1995 Beijing conference, has evolved to the left, declaring itself anti-capitalist and anti-racist; it calls for redistributive economic policies, political democratization, sexual freedom, reproductive autonomy and an end to violence against women.<sup>123</sup>

Thematically, domestic violence and, especially, femicide have been the central issues in Argentina. In 2015, the dying months of Cristina Fernández's government, press coverage of a young man's gruesome murder of his pregnant teenage girlfriend sparked a social-media call for action by women journalists. Huge protests under the banner of #NiUnaMenos ('not one less') took place in cities across the country—250,000 marched in Buenos Aires—building on the *piqueteras'* tradition of mass action. By 2016 the campaign had become a national movement, mobilizing

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<sup>123</sup> See 'História', *Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras* website.

demonstrations half a million strong; that November, a hundred thousand women attended the annual Encuentro. #NiUnaMenos expanded its programme to include reproductive rights in response to another shocking news story: a miscarrying woman, accused by a Church hospital of aborting her baby, sentenced to seven years in prison. Taking a stand against the new Pope, #NiUnaMenos joined the call by Polish feminists fighting a draconian abortion law for an international women's strike on 8 March 2017. In Argentina, that action expanded into three days of mass strikes, as the new feminists joined (largely female) teachers, students and public-sector workers in protests against the Macri government's austerity policies.<sup>124</sup> Transmitted by Skype and social media, the influence of #NiUnaMenos has extended across the region—Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Mexico—and lapped the southern shores of Europe in Portugal, Italy and Spain.

Brazil's new feminisms emerged amid the political maelstrom that marked the right-wing overthrow of Dilma Rousseff's presidency and the end of fourteen years of PT rule. What the press dubbed the #PrimaveraFeminista of 2015 contained distinct, if not necessarily differentiated, approaches and themes. Sociologically, some seemed closer to the upper-middle-class revolt against the PT, and provided a more attractive face for it than the new right that led the street demonstrations.<sup>125</sup> Others were stung by the gross sexism of the attacks on Dilma—dubbed by the Brazilian press 'the lying prostitute of the Planalto', with imagery to match—and mobilized against the raft of reactionary laws pushed through by Temer and the Congressional right: criminalization of abortion for rape victims, constitutional sanctification of the family, privatizations, pension cuts. Black consciousness, socio-economic questions and mobilizations against militarized police operations in the favelas were joined together. Sexual violence was a key issue, even if mass mobilizations were

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<sup>124</sup> 'The act of occupying the streets produces a collective strength which you can bring back to your neighbourhood', a Ni Una Menos organizer argues, operating against the 'logic of victimhood': Verónica Gago, interviewed in *Jacobin*, 7 March 2017. See also Ezequiel Adamovsky, 'Ni Una Menos: Feminism and Politics in Argentina', *Telesur*, 6 July 2015; Zoe Salanitro, 'The Women's Movement in Argentina', *Anti-Capitalist Feminism*, March 2017.

<sup>125</sup> For the #PrimaveraFeminista, glossy magazines lent their editorial pages to women journalists for a week under the slogan 'Now It's Their Turn'. The well-funded blog and NGO ThinkOlga, a more tasteful version of *Jezebel* or *Lenny Letter*, received 40,000 replies to its October 2015 tweet #PrimeiroAssedio [First Assault], inviting girls to speak out about abuse.

not on the scale of Argentina's. In June 2016, the gang rape of a teenage girl in Rio provoked protest rallies in fifty Brazilian cities, 30,000 strong in São Paulo, connecting with #NiUnaMenos marches across the region. Thematically, the new feminisms here are best characterized by their variety. A wealth of blogs—Blogueiras Feministas, Blogueiras Negras, Marcha das Vadias and more—interlink to each other across a wide range of issues: black identity, body politics, critique of institutions. 'Anatomy of Pleasure', Blogueiras Feministas' piece on the female orgasm, has been the most popular of them all.<sup>126</sup>

Outcomes to date: if Brazil's new feminists remain a marginal force in the country's political life, #NiUnaMenos has had a national impact. In comparative terms, Argentina doesn't have high femicide or homicide levels: the first is half the second, and both are lower than the US; *grand guignol* treatment of sex and violence by the Buenos Aires press is one reason why this has become a stand-out issue. Yet the campaign also taps a truth about *violencia machista* in a national imaginary premised on ethnic cleansing. At the same time, the Macri government has been trying to co-opt the high emotions at stake for a law-and-order platform, more popular than his economic measures; Macri himself has been photographed with a #NiUnaMenos placard. So far, the most significant outcomes have been harsher sentencing policies, with gestures towards improving hotline services for women at risk of domestic violence. On the movement's other main theme, reproductive rights, the Argentine Congress may be moving—against Macri's stated position—to legalize first-trimester abortion. The austerity programme remains in place.

### *Mediterranean*

In Europe, the new movements emerged in the context of high youth unemployment and crushing EU austerity measures, with mainstream feminism enjoying untrammelled hegemony across the liberal media. Organizationally, there has been a variety of patterns. In Poland, the mass uprising that defeated a conservative abortion bill in 2016 left in place a nervous system of interlinked groups, ready to mobilize again. In

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<sup>126</sup> C. Matos, 'The New Brazilian Feminism and Online Networks', *International Sociology*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2017. A borrowing from the North—the original slut march was a university demonstration against the Toronto Police HQ in 2011—the Marcha das Vadias has been naturalized in Brazil, with local groups in 25 states supporting women and trans sex workers and producing their own stylish imagery and blogs.

London, the balance of forces was exemplified on International Women's Day when an official march sponsored by CARE UK, itself backed by DFID, PWC, KPMG et al., ambled harmlessly from Parliament to Trafalgar Square, and it was left to a valiant band of sex workers and the anti-austerity Sisters Uncut to extend the protests to health-service closures and housing evictions. In Italy, by contrast, young feminists have pioneered entirely new forms. Picking up the call from Argentina, an alliance of 'Io decido' abortion activists, squatter collectives and women's refuge workers summoned a #NonUnaDiMeno march in Rome in November 2016, a quarter of a million strong, against Renzi's attacks on public health and the living conditions of precarious workers, as well as sexual violence. It was followed the next day by a participatory assembly that agreed to draft a feminist plan against gender violence, with nine working groups tackling different aspects. Over the next year, #NonUnaDiMeno assemblies met in more than a hundred cities across Italy to debate the issues, with a series of national gatherings to define the planks of the platform and agree tactics for strikes and demonstrations in its support.

Thematically, the #NonUnaDiMeno plan, *Piano Femminista*, broke decisively with the mainstream model. In place of a criminal-justice approach to sexual violence, it addressed its social contexts—work, the family, health and education systems; the sexist imaginary of the corporate media—and explicitly rejected strategies based on victimhood and dependence, rather than autonomy and self-determination. Its collective authors attempted to address the grammatical gendering of Italian, with some passages using @ in place of -a and -o adjectival endings, and welcomed the convergence the national debate had brought about between women, feminists, transfeminists, queer and LGBT\*QIA+ voices. The *Piano Femminista* called for a universal basic income as guarantee of economic independence, a roll-back of Renzi's education laws and means-tested welfare reforms, the extension of parental leave to those in precarious employment, funding for women's refuges and citizens' rights for immigrants; it attacked the institutional racism inflicted on refugees by the EU's Dublin system and the policing accords with Libya and Turkey.<sup>127</sup> In Spain, too, the 5-million strong fiesta on International Women's Day 2018—led by the left-feminist mayors of Barcelona and Madrid, but building on years of campaigning by the *indignada* networks, public-sector *mareas*, anti-eviction and feminist

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<sup>127</sup> Non una di meno, *Abbiamo un Piano: Piano femminista contro la violenza maschile sulle donne e la violenza di genere*, 2017.

struggles—foregrounded the claim of self-determination. In Croatia the *FACTIV* collective, organizers of the Zagreb night marches against sexual violence, also fight against privatizations and attacks by the ruling-HDZ on reproductive rights.<sup>128</sup>

The outcomes so far: #NonUnaDiMeno's demonstrations were broadly welcomed by the Italian media and its Plan took a small step forward with the 2018 election—universal basic income is a central plank of the Five Star Movement, which got the largest vote. Against its implementation stands the institutional might of the Eurozone, a bulwark against the least infraction of austerity and major backer for official feminism. In Spain, the scale of the 2018 women's strike could not have been lost on the governing PP, the only major party not to back the events. But attempts to recuperate its energies for the establishment's agenda, in the context of the ongoing political crisis for the 1978 Constitution in Catalonia, were immediately underway. For *El País*, contrary to those who saw the Spanish democratic system as 'withered and regressive', 8-M could show it was 'vibrant, conscious and plural'.<sup>129</sup>

### *Cheongsam feminism*

In China, organizationally, the opposite conditions prevailed. In 2015 young feminist dissenters were arrested on the eve of International Women's Day, though later released. For the past two years the main blogsite, Feminist Voices, run from the US by a former *China Women's News* journalist, has been shut down for the month of March.<sup>130</sup> The official body, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), has had the field to itself. This is an area in which Beijing has long felt confident of its ability to compete with the United States. Female emancipation was a founding principle of the People's Republic; women were welcomed into production here at a time when the Truman Administration was

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<sup>128</sup> Marea Granate-Femigrantes, 'Towards an International Women's Strike: Spain', in *Power Upside Down: Women's Global Strike*, Transnational Social Strike Platform, Spring 2018; Hana Grgić, 'Meet *FACTIV*, the Feminists Fighting Conservatism and Patriarchy in Croatia', *Krytyka Polityczna*, 6 March 2018.

<sup>129</sup> Editorial, 'Una agenda de cambio: Las movilizaciones del 8-M deben traducirse en medidas concretas', *El País*, 11 March 2018.

<sup>130</sup> Luo Siling, 'Fighting on Behalf of China's Women—From the United States', *NYT*, 15 February 2017. International Women's Day occurs during the annual session of the National People's Congress, held in early March, so young feminist activists often fall victim to the specially repressive clamp-down that accompanies it.

insisting their place was in the home. The PRC was a keen participant at the Mexico conference in 1975 and one of the first countries to ratify CEDAW four years later; its 1990s sex-discrimination laws followed the ILO's best practice on equal pay. Though gender inequality has widened since then, the advances of the revolutionary era were such that China still does well by world standards: more self-made female billionaires than the US, twice as many private-sector CEOs, a better position in the media—44 per cent of journalists, 50 per cent of editors in the press and publishing—and in manufacturing, in addition to four months' paid maternity leave.<sup>131</sup> On this basis, China took the lead after 1995 in organizing world gatherings to monitor progress on the Beijing Platform for Action. For the twentieth anniversary in 2015, the PRC and the UN co-hosted a 'Global Leaders Meeting' on gender equality, addressed by Xi Jinping himself, who reaffirmed China's commitment to keep women's rights 'at the centre of the global agenda.' At home, Xi vowed, the PRC would continue to forge 'a socialist advanced gender culture with Chinese characteristics.'<sup>132</sup> The All-China Women's Federation would be at the heart of this process.

The ACWF is unique in the annals of world feminism. Its organizational reach and social-reform mandates put NOW or the WIDF in the shade. Its pyramidal structure extends down from national to provincial, municipal, county, district, town and village level, throughout the land; its offices at each rank are staffed and financed by the equivalent Party organ—the ACWF leadership supervises but does not appoint its own cadres. At national level it has an array of women's research units and a stable of magazines, weeklies and dailies, which employ thousands of intellectuals, of whom quite a few are feminists. Its responsibilities

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<sup>131</sup> Chloe Sorvino, 'It's a Record-Breaking Year for Self-Made Women Billionaires. Here's Why', *Forbes*, 21 March 2017; Kevin Lam, Paul McGuinness and João Paulo Vieito, 'CEO Gender, Executive Compensation and Firm Performance in Chinese-Listed Enterprises', *Pacific-Basin Finance Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1, January 2013; 'Report on Major Results of the Third Wave Survey on the Social Status of Women in China', All-China Women's Federation/National Bureau of Statistics of China, 21 October 2011; Sukti Dasgupta, Makiko Matsumoto and Cuntao Xia, 'Women in the Labour Market in China', ILO, Geneva 2015, p. 14; Elizabeth Penney, 'Why Is the Number of Women in Manufacturing Declining?', *ML&R Wealth Management*, 23 October 2016. The record in other spheres—upper-level political representation, reproductive self-determination—is of course much worse.

<sup>132</sup> 'Global Leaders' Meeting, 27 September 2015; 'Report of the PRC on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action', p. 2.

include arguing for women's interests within the bodies of the state and, more importantly, mobilizing women for labour, care of the environment and enforcement of national fertility policy. Women's Federation cadres were answerable to their local Party officials for their efforts to organize abortions or sterilizations to meet the one-child policy—and, since 2016, to press mothers of one child to have another. Gender equality is part of their remit, but this isn't reinforced by Party discipline in the way that reproductive targets are and tends to weaken at village and township levels.<sup>133</sup>

The strategic paradigm here is a form of eugenicist feminism that would have been familiar to the Fabians and Margaret Sanger, with roots in the modernization theories of the republican era.<sup>134</sup> The two key themes are the project of improving Chinese women's 'quality' and an emphasis on sexual difference. From the 1980s, the unisex egalitarianism of the Cultural Revolution—"Times have changed, men and women are the same!"—was sharply attacked for its denial of 'natural' characteristics. Gender equality was redefined in terms of male-female complementarity, the basis for a harmonious whole; femininity and masculinity were aligned with Confucian categories of *nei* and *wai*, inner and outer. Glossy magazines like the ACWF's *City Lady* gave a face to the new Chinese woman—modern, ultra-feminine, well-to-do—with a corresponding set of moral assets: dutiful daughter, attractive sweetheart, educated wife, enjoying a 'suitable' career (teaching, psychology, arts and letters) that allowed her to raise a child of good cultural and evolutionary quality. The ACWF promotes a programme of the Four Selves to raise female-quality levels: self-reliance, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-improvement.

Fifty years ago, a Chinese feminist slogan—"Women hold up half the sky!"—resounded across the world. The international reach of 'Four Self' feminism remains to be seen, though it resonates with *hindutva* projects

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<sup>133</sup> See Jin Yihong, 'The All China Women's Federation: Challenges and Trends', Liu Bohong, 'The All China Women's Federation and Women's NGOs', Naihua Zhang, 'Searching for "Authentic" NGOs', and Elisabeth Croll, 'New Spaces, New Voices', collected in Ping-Chun Hsiung, Maria Jaschok, Cecilia Milwertz and Red Chan, eds, *Chinese Women Organizing: Cadres, Feminists, Muslims, Queers*, Oxford and New York 2001. See also the interesting discussion on feminist intellectuals, party bodies and outside funding, pp. 250–3.

<sup>134</sup> See Tani Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*, Durham, NC 2004, Chapter 3.

for upper-caste female purity in India, and arguably has affinities with Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In* movement in the US.<sup>135</sup> Yet the national remit of the ACWF ensures it has a broader social base: a recent International Women's Day programme featured 'double identities', the same women photographed during their day job, as construction workers in hard-hats, and as catwalk models in *cheongsam* gowns. Against this ideological barrage, courageous young feminists have tried to mobilize anti-discrimination themes with NGO backing: street performances and small-scale flash mobs raising issues like sexual harassment, discrimination in higher education, homophobia. These are easily squashed by the authorities, but one outside commentator following the movement argues that over the last few years, Chinese women have become a lot more vocal on social media about sexism.<sup>136</sup> There was a howl of online protest when a *China Daily* story about Harvey Weinstein noted that the virtues of Chinese culture included a low incidence of sexual harassment. When the Feminist Voices blog asked its followers in March 2017 to list the sentences they couldn't bear to hear, top of the list was 'China has already achieved gender equality.' Since the late 90s, when social services were severed from local work units and nurseries shut down, in preparation for WTO entry, singleton daughters born under the one-child policy have been lumbered with a care burden far greater than in the West, with the expectation that they would look after both their own elderly parents and their in-laws, as well as any children, without other siblings to help out. It's possible that the situation will be neutralized by a new class of domestic servants, as in the US. In their absence, the conditions may be brewing for new feminisms in China that could be genuinely *sui generis*.

### *United States*

As in Europe, the broader historical context for the new feminist ferment in the US was set in place by the 2008 financial crisis, which gave the skewed outcomes of the neoliberal-feminist era a sharp generational

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<sup>135</sup> Since 2013, *Lean In* has set up groups in twenty Chinese cities. Its focus, as their director coyly puts it, is 'on personal professional development, innovation and investing in female talent, which are all in line with China's national agenda': Emily Feng, 'China's mixed messages to working women', FT, 30 November 2017.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Leta Hong Fincher, author of *Leftover Women* (2014): 'China's Feminist Movement Faces a Crackdown on International Women's Day', *The Verge*, 9 February 2018. For the young activists' protests see the 'Feminist Voices' Facebook page.

twist. If working-class men had borne the brunt of restructuring in the 1980s, now it was the college-educated cohort that faced the sharpest contractions of opportunity, the most intensive ratcheting up of competitive tensions, as incorporation into the professional stratum became a bitter zero-sum struggle. This was the context in which other, more radical tendencies—queer and intersectional activists, anti-rape campaigners—would emerge from the campuses to provide new cadres for US feminism. Yet the pressures were contradictory. As in previous recessions, affirmative-action claims could provide a straw to cling to, offering a rare foothold for professional advance. Feminist cultural politics was already deeply imbued with the affirmative-action outlook: totting up credits and bylines, without regard for substance. To what extent have the new movements here succeeded in pushing beyond the limits of the anti-discrimination paradigm?

The provisional balance sheet is mixed. In the initial aftermath of the 2008 meltdown, an upsurge of political anger drove successive waves of revolt: student protests (2010), Occupy (2011), Black Lives Matter (2013–14), the Sanders campaign (2015–16). All were, to a greater or lesser extent, assaults on the established political model. The students' fight-back against austerity led to a broader critique of the university system and the precarious existence beyond it.<sup>137</sup> Occupy took aim at Wall Street. Black Lives Matter, in many respects a women's movement that built on years of community action around gun control, schools and housing, could be read as a national uprising against the 'war on crime', a permanent counter-insurgency operation against black men. Sanders, operating inside the system, was a self-declared socialist calling for single-payer health insurance. Nascent amid the student protests, new expressions of feminist consciousness were articulated within Occupy, took centre stage in Black Lives Matter and combated attacks by mainstream Clintonites on the flood of young women rallying to Sanders.

In contrast to this, and to the mass movements in Italy and Argentina, the impetus for the new protests around Title IX campaigns on campus

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<sup>137</sup> The universities' response to the protests produced a strange cocktail, as Jennifer Doyle has noted: anxiety about the students' sexual safety, mixed with pepper spray and baton charges against them when they protested financial policies. At Berkeley, Chancellor Birgeneau sugared the fee rises with a \$10 million sop for equity and diversity outreach. Jennifer Doyle, *Campus Sex, Campus Security*, South Pasadena 2015, pp. 13–18.

came from the apex of government. In 2011, with negative personal-approval ratings and 15 million unemployed, Obama needed low-cost gestures towards ‘hope and change’ to galvanize supporters for his second-term election. Three issues were selected, after careful focus-group testing: gay marriage, immigrants’ children and sexual assault on campus. The latter took the form of a gesture towards the radical-feminist policy playlist—pro-woman jurisprudence, loosened legal definitions and expanded criminalization. On the day Obama formally announced his bid for 2012, his Department of Education dispatched a ‘Dear Colleague’ letter to university administrators detailing new Title IX regulations that incorporated much of this agenda. The standard of proof for complainants was lowered and due process for the accused subordinated to the need for speedy resolution of cases. The Supreme Court’s 1986 insistence on ‘severity’, ‘pervasiveness’ and ‘detrimental impact’, in the eyes of a reasonable third party, was effectively dropped as grounds for actionable sexual harassment, leaving its unwantedness by the complainant as the sole criterion.<sup>138</sup>

Greeted with some bemusement at first by college administrators, the 2011 Dear Colleague letter was followed by a spate of initiatives, generating positive headlines at a time when police killings of black men were becoming an embarrassment for Obama. In 2014 a White House Task Force stepped up the pressure, expanding the scope of ‘sexual violence’ to include remarks about physical appearance, while the Education Department’s OCR officials launched scores of campus-wide investigations into compliance with its new ‘Dear Colleague’ rules. In 2015, Vice-President Biden toured the universities, speaking of a student-rape ‘epidemic’, in terms that echoed the Nixon and Reagan talk of wars on drugs and crime, and bandying the headline figure of ‘one in five’.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> See Janet Halley, ‘The Move to Affirmative Consent’, *Signs*, vol. 42, no. 1, September 2016.

<sup>139</sup> The authors of the study from which the ‘one in five’ figure (also foregrounded in the 2011 Dear Colleague letter) was plucked have warned against this usage. It derived from a voluntary online survey at two universities and measured a wide range of behaviour, including ‘attempted touching of a sexual nature’: Christopher Krebs et al., ‘The Campus Sexual Assault Study’, RTI International, October 2007, pp. x, xii–xiii. In the latest online survey—covering 27 universities, though with a very low response rate—5 per cent of women reported they had experienced ‘unwanted penetration effected by physical force’ while at college, and 5 per cent ‘unwanted penetration while incapacitated’ by drink or drugs. The annual rate for both was estimated at 3 per cent. Gays and lesbians registered the highest levels of

Following the Administration's lead, corporate donations poured into the coffers of student anti-harassment campaigns. Know Your IX (KYIX), founded in 2013, was a spin-off from the DC-based Advocates for Youth, originally set up to counter teen pregnancy, which benefited from an annual \$6 million in corporate donations and government grants. End Rape on Campus (EROC), also set up in 2013 and led by three student rape survivors, was funded by the Kering Foundation and Gucci. In 2014, photospreads in the Manhattan media helped to make these new campaigners household names.

In contrast to the broad-based campaigns taking off in Latin America and Europe, mobilizing precarious workers and the unemployed, the energies of EROC and KYIX were restricted to the university system. Their tactics were pre-determined by the legal parameters of Title IX, whose logic demanded that universities be targeted for failing in their 'duty to protect' female students—the opposite of the stress in Rome and Buenos Aires on autonomous collective action. *Le strade sicure le fanno le donne che le attraversano* was #NonUnaDiMeno's chant—it's women's presence that makes streets safe. While Italian feminists undertook a year-long debate to formulate their manifesto, the direction of the US campus campaign was largely set from above by executive fiat, overriding longstanding differences among feminists about the politics of sexual violence, not least the relative priorities of material, public and personal forms of self-defence as against post-factum criminal process. The back-and-white legalist logic of the US Title IX campaigns had no place for the multi-hued cultural politics of the Brazilian movement, which retained a central place for sexual pleasure. The experimentation with queer and gender-fluid modes of being, widespread on US campuses, was often deliberately airbrushed from campaigners' presentations to the media; while #NonUnaDiMeno went out of their way to block any media attempt to racialize their campaign against sexual violence, some of the EROC activists were prepared to flirt with that, for the good of the cause. As one explained to a sympathetic reporter:

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sexual harassment. Asked about their personal perception of risk, 70 per cent of female students thought there was very little chance that they themselves would experience sexual assault or misconduct; only 8 per cent thought it 'very likely' that they would: David Cantor et al., 'Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct' (revised), Rockville MD, October 2017, pp. ix, xv, xx, Table 7.5.

'If you make people uncomfortable about not helping the white ladies who happen to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, if you talk about predators who we can get behind and hate, if we get rid of them with harsh penalties and punitive actions that Americans love . . . ' She trails off, but I get the gist—there are gains to be had.<sup>140</sup>

The political culture of the new survivor-led anti-rape campaigns differed in important respects from the older radical feminism. Ideas of personal trauma replaced structural notions of male dominance and female subordination; the subject was no longer 'women as a class' but 'me'. Mattress protests claimed a greater theoretical sophistication than the whistle-blowing, punk-era marches to Reclaim the Night. Yet both approaches were highly legalist, foregrounding punitive regulation and tending to dismiss the alternative feminist project of strengthening women's solidarity networks, and their cultural and psychological capacity to defend their own bodily integrity, as 'blaming the victim'. Like the Chicago neoliberals, the radical-feminist attorneys offered a clear list of policies, a transitional programme of small, simple steps towards a revised jurisprudence, expanding the sphere of criminalization through looser legal definitions and lowered evidential standards.<sup>141</sup> That agenda now supplied the hegemonic programme for campus activists.

Meanwhile, the concrete outcomes of the US campus campaigns were overdetermined by the universities' institutional interests. Informed that they risked being held legally liable for sexual assault if they couldn't prove they had taken steps to prevent it, university bureaucrats responded with craven over-compliance. Oberlin administrators emailed the entire campus to report that police had removed a person for 'unwanted touching and grinding' at 11 pm on a Friday night in a student bar. *En bloc*, colleges implemented the affirmative-consent package touted by the sector's risk consultants and supported by many student groups.<sup>142</sup> The University

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<sup>140</sup> Vanessa Grigoriadis, *Blurred Lines*, Boston 2017, p. 91.

<sup>141</sup> Promotion by EROC and KYIX of the authorities' 'duty to protect' was in stark contrast to MacKinnon's cynical-realist view of the male liberal state. Preferring to stress structural social coercion as grounds for assault charges, MacKinnon opposed any emphasis on 'consent': MacKinnon, *Butterfly Politics*, p. 321.

<sup>142</sup> Higher education had never moved on an issue 'at once and in concert with such dramatic fervour', according to Brett Sokolow, CEO of the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management: 'Open Letter', May 2014.

of Wyoming was one of many warning its students: ‘Anything less than voluntary, sober, enthusiastic, verbal, uncoerced, continual, active and honest consent is Sexual Assault.’ Body language could be misinterpreted; consent required ‘a verbal “Yes”. Or even, “Yes, Yes, Oh! Yes!”’ At Georgia Southern University, legal sex required ‘imaginative, enthusiastic, creative, wanted, informed, mutual, honest and verbal agreement.’ At Elon University, ‘only a comprehensible, unambiguous, positive and enthusiastic communication of consent for each sexual act’ could avoid the risk of being charged with sexual assault.<sup>143</sup> In 2015, state legislatures in California and New York passed their own affirmative-consent laws, requiring schools to treat any sexual behaviour that didn’t have explicit verbal permission as assault.

Between the campus sexual-assault campaigns and #MeToo came the election of Trump and the response to it by Democratic voters: panic, shock and grief. There were bitter recriminations against those who hadn’t voted for Clinton—all feminists must unite. This imperative drove the million-strong women’s demonstration in Washington in January 2017 and the consolidation of the mainstream feminist lobby behind the Women’s March, a national network led by former Obama and Clinton staffers, so politically conformist that it could not even bring itself to support a single-payer healthcare system. Meanwhile, with the Democrats in disarray, it fell to the Manhattan media to lead the opposition. In this atmosphere of heightened outrage, an inveterate molester like Harvey Weinstein, though an impeccable Democrat, became a sort of surrogate for Trump. For the *NYT* and *New Yorker*, tales of his deprecations combined ritzy settings, celebrity gossip, prurient details and *Schadenfreude* at the downfall of mighty men, all wrapped in impeccably feminist sentiments. One of the most striking contrasts between the US movement against sexual harassment and the Euro-Latinoamericana campaigns was the social status of their leading figures: in place of Italian women’s-refuge workers, or unemployed Argentine nurses, here it was the Hollywood–Manhattan axis that dominated events. Demonstrations took place not on the streets but on the red carpet at the Oscars or the Golden Globes. The invitation to followers to tweet about their own sexual harassment, using the hashtag #MeToo—taken up by over half a

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<sup>143</sup> All cited in Gersen and Suk, ‘The Sex Bureaucracy’.

million US Twitter users—was issued by a former star of *Melrose Place* and *Wet Hot American Summer*.<sup>144</sup>

Hollywood provenance shouldn't detract from the flood of testimonials that followed. In the initial outpouring of October 2017, a large proportion of the women posting recalled being groped in their early teens—'my stepfather', 'my uncle', 'my dad's friend'—or in their first months at work, where middle-aged men treated young female employees as a perk of the job. There were chilling accounts of retribution exacted by men whose advances had been rebuffed. As a moment of collective consciousness-raising, it was both therapeutic—breaking the oppressive silence, the nightmarish inability to scream, that many young women experience as part and parcel of male molestation—and evidential: an indication of the scale of sexual aggression as a social fact. For the most part, as with Tarana Burke's original Me Too initiative, or ThinkOlga in Brazil, the focus was on the women themselves, rarely naming names or calling for retribution.<sup>145</sup> It catalysed innumerable face-to-face conversations between women, about their own range of experiences and those of their friends, on a scale probably not seen since the 1970s. It drew in men, as sympathizers, in a way that would have been unimaginable back then.

Thematically, however, this was the narrowest of the movements. Unlike ThinkOlga and Burke's NGO, Hollywood's #MeToo has so far offered no material or psychological support to those who'd suffered abuse, beyond a new anti-discrimination legal-defence charity, Time's Up. Nor was there any attempt to develop a broader social agenda around violence, as in Argentina and Italy, or alternative cultural projects, as in Brazil. Instead, the paradigm within which #MeToo operated, and which gave political form to this powerful but inchoate upsurge of sexual discontent, was largely limited to a variation of the radical-feminist, anti-discrimination, criminal-justice approach that had been naturalized by

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<sup>144</sup> Figures are for 15 Oct–9 Nov 2017, covering the rise and fall of the social-media wave; Facebook reported that 24 million 'joined the conversation' worldwide, though that would include negative responses. Kara Fox and Jan Diehm, '#MeToo's global moment: the anatomy of a viral campaign', CNN, 9 November 2017.

<sup>145</sup> An African-American youth worker, Tarana Burke set up a MeToo Myspace page in 2006 as a support for girls who'd been subjected to sexual abuse.

the campus sexual-assault campaigns: the acceptance of any accusation as de facto *bona fide*; the focus on the post factum penalization of men, and spectacular punishment of some as a deterrent to all, to the exclusion of preventive strategies that foregrounded practical, cultural and material support for women's self-determination.

Within that framing, presumption of guilt and disproportionate punishment for minor misdemeanours could be positive features, in having a greater deterrent effect. To this was added the new practice of trial by social media, which abandoned any notion of fair hearing.<sup>146</sup> The upshot was that the tentative online female solidarity of the #MeToo testimonials was often shouldered aside by retributive campaigns against individual men, pressing into action the campus norm of 'guilty if accused'. 'Woke' men often shouted the loudest in these denunciations, perhaps calculating that attack was the best form of defence. In the most grotesque cases, reminiscent of the days of HUAC, zealots set about extirpating works from the canon on the basis of anonymous and unsubstantiated third-party accounts.

Need it be said that the fight for a fair hearing for accusers, in adjudicatory systems historically skewed against women and people of colour, should not preclude a fair hearing for the accused? Beyond this, an effective feminist politics on harassment needs to recognize its differentiated landscape, varying horizontally, along the course of the life cycle, and vertically, in different social, class and racial situations—as the Italian Plan sets out to do. Hopefully, the US movements will learn from these more radical, broadly based campaigns in southern Europe and Latin America; hopefully too, the net effect of #MeToo will be to enable more median-income women to speak out, and deter more men from exacting retribution if rebuffed. But so far, the movement around #MeToo has been the most conservative of the new crop. It seems to have done little to address an agenda that would tackle the enabling conditions for sexual harassment—including precarious work, racialized gender stereotypes and criminalized migrant status—and for escaping intimate-partner violence, much of which takes place in the home. As part of the post-Trump re-consolidation of mainstream US feminism, it risks affirming, rather than challenging, the socio-economic status quo. The Weinstein

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<sup>146</sup> See JoAnn Wypijewski's delicate but unflinching examination of narrative, truth and sexual panic, 'What We don't Talk About When We Talk About #MeToo', *The Nation*, 22 February 2018.

business provided the opportunity for a root-and-branch attack on the culture industry. Instead, Hollywood has been pink-washed by the parade of feminist activists across the red carpet, wiping away the stain on its reputation. Having removed a few ‘bad apples’, #MeToo risks leaving the wider system as it is. Ironically, it could end up as a reaffirmation of the type of feminism whose failings helped put Trump in power.

The American model naturally has greater international reach than Chinese, Italian, Spanish or Argentinian versions. Yet while sexual violence remains a leading theme across the world, #MeToo’s social media impact has been uneven. Compared to 500,000 Twitter posts in the US, the highest figures were France (100,000), the UK (74,000) and Canada (43,000), with numbers in Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Australia and India ranging from 13,000 to 24,000. Elsewhere—in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia—the absence of mainstream-press support and thinner social-media coverage saw posts down to four digits or below.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, #MeToo showed signs of petering out in the US once the Manhattan media decided it had all gone far enough.

So far Sweden has been the only country actively to adopt #MeToo as its own, with public rallies, professional-sector petitions protesting at harassment in their field, backing from the Crown for high-level policy discussions. Elsewhere—and again, unlike the other movements discussed—its impact has been most visible at the level of government, US allies reacting with a rash of harsher penalties and repressive laws. In France, Macron announced fifty measures on sexual harassment—including street fines and expanded criminalization of teenage sex—along with further deregulation of labour. The Australian government imposed sexual abstinence on itself.<sup>148</sup> In the UK, the Deputy Prime Minister was sacked for browsing pornography and the ‘fleeting’ touch of a journalist’s knee, while the Health Secretary presided over a winter crisis that saw patients dying in hospital corridors, yet remains in place.

Nevertheless, a survey that covers only the most salient features of the most prominent movements will inevitably miss many of the more

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<sup>147</sup> Fox and Diehm, ‘#MeToo’s Global Moment’.

<sup>148</sup> ‘Égalité femmes-hommes: les mesures prévues par le gouvernement’, *Le Monde*, 8 March 2018; ‘Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull’s “bonk ban” ridiculed’, *New Zealand Herald*, 16 February 2018.

interesting things that are going on. Beneath the radar, there are numerous signs of young people in the US linking up gender and socio-economic issues, as in Brazil and southern Europe, in more imaginative and hopeful modes. It will take time for new thinking to be articulated in more durable, complex and extended forms than posts and tweets can offer.

Future studies in this series will examine the widely varied geo-cultural and economic starting points of gender regimes around the world, and the uneven impact of the global-feminist programme upon them. Gender developments in China over the past thirty years have little in common with those in India; within the Middle East, dynamics in Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran are quite distinct, and differ in turn from those of the devastated 'arc of war', stretching from Mali to Afghanistan. Latin America's decade of left governments saw social inequality falling somewhat, against the trends elsewhere. Patterns of work, sex and reproduction vary in surprising ways across Europe's regions and Southeast Asia's cultures; US developments differ again. Against these backgrounds, the journal hopes to explore the resources that feminist theory and cultural practice might offer for the new movements.

For now: what do the trajectories of these new movements suggest about the relationship between gender equality and social inequality, at a global level? Two powerful official feminisms, American and Chinese, promote strategies that would meld the former with the latter: gender equality within each social stratum, each layered ethnic group. The most salient radical alternatives in southern Europe and the Southern Cone would reduce social inequality in the process of promoting gender equality, and vice versa; but they are beleaguered in their national contexts by the balance of political-economic forces, which strongly favours capital, and by the international order, under American hegemony. Then there are the regions where class rule and patriarchal power form a single order. The scene is fascinating—though not, for a coherent egalitarianism, especially hopeful. But it moves.