



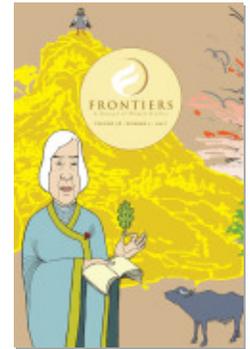
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Anthology That Vanished

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Ghost in the Machine

Kitchen Table Press and the Third Wave Anthology That Vanished

JENNIFER GILLEY

What a text says is forever linked to the mundane realities underlying the physical product that gives the text a material embodiment.

—G. Thomas Tanselle¹

Simone Murray, in the introduction to her 2004 book *Mixed Media: Feminist Presses and Publishing Politics*, argues for the importance of a nascent academic field she names feminist publishing studies, calling for it as a necessary intervention into the already extant fields of book history and women's studies. While book historians like Tanselle (see epigraph) had pointed out the relationship between meaning-making and the physical and economic process of publication, feminist scholars had not yet paid a lot of critical attention to the "mundane realities" of publishing that undergirds feminist knowledge production. Speaking of the books that made women's studies possible by providing the course content, Murray writes, "It is exceptional that a field such as women's studies, which has paid rigorous attention to the means by which academic disciplines are constructed and imbued with intellectual authority, should have failed to address in-depth attention to the political and commercial realities underpinning its own development."² There was, in fact, a developing body of scholarship on feminist print culture by 2004.³ Yet it remained largely under the radar, with much of the material relating to book publishing buried in dissertations.⁴ Therefore Murray rightfully declares that there is "a paucity of book-length research on the subject of feminist publishing."⁵ She goes on to describe a litany of other scholars (Florence Howe, Dale Spender, Cheris Kramarae, Stacey Young) who had also lamented this lack of historical attention to feminist publishing studies and concludes that "by a curious turn of academic events, feminist publishing begins to take on the trappings of a phantom discipline—commented upon as much for its absence as for its contributions."⁶ To begin to flesh out this "phantom discipline," Murray

advocates for “a dynamic blend of feminist theory and publishing practicality, grounded in varied and detailed case studies, [which] is required to do justice to the complexities of the modern feminist publishing experience.”⁷ A growing number of scholars have heeded this call, creating a burgeoning literature in feminist print culture studies.⁸

In addition to exploring case studies of feminist texts, presses, and periodicals that actually exist(ed) for what they have to tell us about how feminist knowledge production interacts with and is influenced by the material realities of publishing under capitalism, Murray urges us to look for the “hiatuses, disruptions, and silences in the [publishing] process.”⁹ In other words, what books never got published, what points of view were either discarded or reframed, what presses never got off the ground? These sorts of stories are harder to tell because there may be little evidence of what never existed, but Murray warns that “the ghosts of these silences and hiatuses haunt feminist publishing endeavors.”¹⁰ Alexis Pauline Gumbs, writing about black feminist publishing projects that never materialized, feels the weight of these untold stories as well: “And just because something does not happen does not mean that it doesn’t exist, as a marker of the edge of the world, as a warning, as a shadow, as a trace, as a ghost. What if haunting is a form of survival? In that case we might want to look more closely at the plans that never came to be, what happens to books that are never published.”¹¹ In this context I offer the case study of one such “ghost” book: an anthology commissioned by Barbara Smith of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press that was to be titled *The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism*. Smith intended *The Third Wave* to continue the work of Kitchen Table’s previously published anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* in defining a new path forward for feminism that foregrounded race, racism, third world feminism, and transnational feminism. The book took six years to create and seemed due to be published around 1993. At the 1993 American Booksellers Association (ABA) convention, the largest US gathering of booksellers and vital to feminist organizing in the 1980s and 1990s, Kitchen Table passed out flyers for this forthcoming book. It had both an ISBN and cover art. The Women’s Studies International database has a record for the book. However, despite all evidence to the contrary, it never came out under that title or from Kitchen Table Press. Unraveling the mystery of what happened to this book is important because it held the promise of proclaiming the “third wave” of feminism and defining it as based on anti-racist activism.

In 2015 the first feminist print culture conference, the Publishing Feminisms Symposium, was held in Banff, Canada. Organized by Michelle Meagher of the University of Alberta, the conference brought together a commu-

nity of practitioners and scholars to analyze the past, present, and future of feminist print culture. The symposium's call for papers stated that "the goal of this symposium is to explore the relationships between feminist print culture . . . and post 1960 feminisms." The story of the Kitchen Table third wave anthology provides a uniquely illuminating glimpse into the workings of the relationship between feminist print culture and the direction of the contemporary feminist movement precisely because it failed. The phantom book was actually very influential despite its non-existence because Barbara Smith did market the book in the feminist press and explained its intent. How, then, might the historiography of the third wave have been different if this book had come out in 1993, at the time that the third wave was first being shaped? The economic and political realities of feminist publishing that underlie the story of this anthology had a direct bearing on feminist history, and therefore an excavation of what happened to this book has much to tell us about both the promise and peril of feminist publishing. The story begins with Kitchen Table Press.

KITCHEN TABLE: WOMEN OF COLOR PRESS AND THE POLITICAL WORK OF ANTHOLOGIES

According to Barbara Smith, its long-time publisher, the idea for Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press began in a phone conversation in October 1980 between herself and Audre Lorde. Lorde said, "We really need to do something about publishing," and Smith thoroughly agreed, so she arranged for a group of women of color in the Boston area to get together when Audre Lorde and some other women from New York were in town for a black women's poetry reading. She recounts in her article "A Press of Our Own" that "it was at that meeting that Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press was born. We did not arrive at a name or announce our existence until a year later, but at that initial meeting we did decide to be a publisher for all women of color."¹² Their motivation for starting a press run by and for women of color was that "as feminist and lesbian of color writers, we knew that we had no options for getting published, except at the mercy or whim of others, whether in the context of alternative or commercial publishing, since both are white-dominated."¹³ By the fall of 1981 they had officially launched, and they chose the name Kitchen Table "because the kitchen is the center of the home, the place where women in particular work and communicate with each other and because we wanted to convey the fact that we are a kitchen-table, grassroots organization, begun and kept alive by women who cannot rely on inheritances or other benefits of class privilege to do the work we need to do."¹⁴ From 1981 to 1996 Kitchen

Table produced and kept in print nine books and six Freedom Organizing Pamphlets as well as posters and buttons designed to help activists with their organizing.¹⁵ The nine books consisted of seven books of poetry and/or short stories and two mixed-genre anthologies, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, and *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, edited by Barbara Smith. *This Bridge* was originally published by Persephone Press in 1981, and *Home Girls* was originally slated to be published by Persephone as well, but Persephone collapsed under financial strain. Smith and Moraga, another of the co-founders of Kitchen Table, worked to revert the rights from Persephone. KTP published both anthologies in 1983.¹⁶ *This Bridge* and *Home Girls* were Kitchen Table's best-selling titles. Both are back in print today, a testament to the power and utility of what Maylei Blackwell calls the "technology of the anthology."¹⁷

Multi-genre anthologies have been an indispensable tool for the feminist movement in general and for women of color feminism in particular. Barbara Smith writes in the introduction to *Home Girls* that "anthologies which bring together many voices seem particularly suited to the multiplicity of issues of concern to women of color."¹⁸ An anthology can accommodate not only multiple points of view and multiple issues but also multiple styles of writing, such as poems, interviews, and journal entries in addition to more academic pieces. As Joan Pinkvoss, publisher of the multicultural women's press Aunt Lute, said in an interview, "A lot of women don't have the time to sit and write long works—they'll write a poem right now, an essay next year. It's very hard to get long pieces of work from someone who has another life. . . . You just have to let women move at their own speed . . . most don't have the time or money apart from their [paid] work."¹⁹ Gail Chester, in her article about the medium of anthologies, agrees that "the composition of a relatively short piece can be fitted in with the many other duties which occupy women's time, and its length is not overwhelming to the less confident writer."²⁰ As women's participation in the labor force rose steadily in the second half of the twentieth century, they nonetheless remained the primary caregivers in society and the primary performers of housework, leaving little time for solitary writing. In addition, the type of women who would be creating radical theory are more likely to be out engaging in radical praxis, organizing and protesting rather than writing alone in a room, and they also may not be academically trained in writing and theorizing. Contributors to an anthology do not need to be academics but can be activists, poets, and community organizers. Indeed, as Cynthia Franklin argues, not only is traditional academic writing not

required, but the multi-genre anthology form actually embodies “an implicit critique of, and alternative to . . . academic feminist writing.”²¹

Anthologies are not just random collections of multiple voices and writing styles, however; they are consciously edited into what Jane Gallop calls “organized choruses.”²² These organized choruses have frequently been used to “constitute new communities of and for women who share the identities to which the anthologies give voice.”²³ The print artifact of the book not only brings the author’s voices together in a single location but brings readers together with those authors and with each other to create and sustain new political formations. Blackwell argues that “the specific print technology of the anthology can be seen as producing discursive and public cultures where women of color could construct and learn the terms of their emerging coalitions or political projects.”²⁴ *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* serves as a brilliant example of an anthology’s ability to constitute a community and to create a discourse from that community, changing the conversation in the feminist movement as a whole. Barbara Smith writes in the introduction to *Home Girls*: “I think that more than any other single work, *This Bridge* has made the vision of Third World feminism real.”²⁵ Writing sixteen years after its original publication, Franklin sums up its historical impact: “*This Bridge*, the best known of the multi-genre anthologies, is commonly perceived by contributors to later anthologies, as well as by academic feminists, to have been the catalyst for the explosion of multi-genre women’s anthologies of the past decade, and to be of central importance in establishing and articulating third world feminism.”²⁶

In 1987 Barbara Smith decided it was time to push the vision of Third World feminism realized in *This Bridge* even further and create an anthology that would both embody and document cross-racial organizing against racism in the women’s movement. Rather than edit it herself, she invited a multiracial collective of editors who were each involved in anti-racist activism to create the work. With the title *The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism* firmly in place, Smith proceeded with her usual business practice of marketing the book “as thoroughly and aggressively as possible,” mentioning it in press interviews, talking it up at the ABA booksellers conference, and including it in her print fliers.²⁷ This aggressive marketing campaign, combined with the massive success of *This Bridge* and the eager anticipation in feminist circles of an equally groundbreaking follow-up work that was provocatively titled *The Third Wave*, led to an unusual phenomenon: a small press book that had not yet been published entered the national feminist conversation.

Despite the fact that it was never published, this anthology became a significant presence in the burgeoning academic literature on the third wave, making it the ghost in the machine of third wave feminism. In 1994 Kayann Short referred to the anthology in an article in the journal *Genders*. She describes *The Third Wave* as an “impressive example of how women of color, joined in their struggles by white women, can organize around the issue of racism.”²⁸ Her footnote cites the anthology as being published in 1994. She writes that its “strength lies in its explicitly political focus on antiracist organizing” and cites a May 1990 article in the feminist journal *Hot Wire* in which Barbara Smith was interviewed about the book and Kitchen Table Press.²⁹ Short’s article was not about third wave feminism; it was actually an analysis of *This Bridge Called My Back*. However, her mention of the anthology, plus its presence in Kitchen Table marketing materials and interviews with Barbara Smith in the popular press (such as the *Hot Wire* article), led to its being picked up by feminist scholars as one of the first articulations of the phrase “third wave.”

In 1997 Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake referred to the ghost anthology in the introduction to their book *Third Wave Agenda*, the first academic book on the subject. They wrote that the anthology “reflects on how the third wave is defined by the challenge that women-of-color feminists posed to white second wave feminism.”³⁰ Their footnote stated that the book was slated for publication in spring 1997, but they gave no source for that information. Also in 1997 Catherine Orr published an influential essay in *Hypatia* titled “Charting the Currents of the Third Wave,” in which she referred to the anthology as “the earliest mention of the term third wave.”³¹ She went on to describe the meaning of the third wave suggested by the anthology: “The emphasis was to be on multiracial alliances among women that grew out of the political and theoretical discussions of the early eighties on race and sexuality. Age did not seem to be the issue.”³² She cites a personal interview with Lisa Albrecht, one of the anthology’s editors, as the source for this information. By 1997 a book that had not actually been published had nonetheless been given pride of place in the third wave feminist historiography.

Astrid Henry commented on this in her 2004 book *Not My Mother’s Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism*. “Though never actually published, *The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism* continues to inform the way some feminists employ the term ‘third wave,’ using it to signal a new wave of feminism led by women of color that is specifically anti-racist in its approach.”³³ Ednie Kaeh Garrison, in her 2005 article deconstructing the met-

aphor of the third wave titled “Are We on a Wavelength Yet?” further commented on the critical legacy of this ghost anthology, stating that “although this book never materialized, the desire for it is such that people do speak as though it exists.”³⁴ The “desire” that Garrison speaks of is evident in the sheer number of times that the anthology was cited by practitioners and historians of the third wave as well as the hopeful tone with which these writers mentioned its important focus on anti-racism. Yet, in the absence of the actual book to grapple with, the authors failed to dig deeper to find other manifestations of transnational, anti-racist feminism at the time, and they moved on to spend much more time outlining other narratives that were competing to define the third wave.

CONTESTED MEANINGS OF THE THIRD WAVE

Why is this ghost anthology so important to people that they would write about it without ever having read it? In the late 1980s and early 1990s, when this book was being created, the phrase *third wave* was still up for grabs by competing interpretations. The common origin story for the launching of the third wave is the Rebecca Walker *Ms.* article from 1992 entitled “Becoming the Third Wave.” Written in response to the treatment of Anita Hill at the Clarence Thomas hearings, Walker’s piece ultimately set up third wave feminism as something generational and particular to young feminists. This meaning, however, was only one of the many potential meanings of “third wave.” As early as 1975 Ann Pride, editor of *KNOW Press*, declared in a speech to the 1975 *NOW* convention that “the third wave is cultural feminism, the conscious emergence of women’s culture.”³⁵ In 1978 Carol Seajay of the *Feminist Bookstore Newsletter* wrote of a “third wave of feminist publishing,” which referred to mainstream presses publishing feminist works for profit.³⁶ In 1987 Deborah Rosenfelt and Judith Stacey wrote in their review essay “Second Thoughts on the Second Wave” that “the specific agendas of what some are calling a third wave of feminism are already taking shape, and they focus on . . . recommendations for pay equity, maternity and parental leave, maternal and child health needs, childcare provisions, and revised work schedules.”³⁷ In 1990 Ynestra King was referring to ecofeminism as the “third wave of the women’s movement” in her public speeches.³⁸ In this period between 1975 and 1990 the meaning of “third wave” was contested; many scholars, writers, and activists imagined possible meanings for it, all with their own visions of feminist social transformation.

In 1991, just before Walker’s famous *Ms.* essay, mentions of a third wave began to pick up steam. Lynn Chancer wrote a *Village Voice* article calling for

the creation of a third wave that would “incorporate two significant developments” since the second wave: it would be pro-sex (sex radical), and it would pay “explicit attention to racism and class inequalities.”³⁹ That same year Chela Sandoval also published a very influential essay in the journal *Genders* titled “U.S. Third World Feminism”; Sandoval defined a third world differential consciousness and stated that a recognition of this consciousness is “vital to the generation of a next third wave women’s movement.”⁴⁰ However, Naomi Wolf’s bestseller *The Beauty Myth*, also published in 1991, described the third wave as young feminists acting in revolt against their feminist mothers. Wolf’s high visibility in the media combined with Walker’s widely read *Ms.* essay shortly thereafter dismissed the ideological battle over what third wave would mean, at least in the popular mind, distilling it to refer to a generational conflict between second and third wave feminists. This trajectory could certainly have turned out differently. The publication of an anthology titled *Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism* in the early 1990s by the tiny but massively influential Kitchen Table Press could have cemented anti-racism and transnationalism as the focus of third wave feminism. The fact that it never came out is therefore painful to those who wish mainstream feminist politics would have gone in this direction.

There is no question that the groundbreaking works of women of color like Barbara Smith, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, bell hooks, and many others had a profound influence on the young feminists who make up the third wave generation and that a consciousness of issues surrounding race is therefore certainly a part of the third wave mix. Astrid Henry, whose book on third wave feminism mostly analyzes it as a generational conflict, nonetheless states that the “feminist theory produced by women of color is foundational to third-wave feminism.”⁴¹ Heywood and Drake likewise acknowledge that most of the essays in their collection cite the work of bell hooks “and her emphasis on coalition politics as a model for third wave activist theory and praxis.”⁴² However, the question is whether or not race, intersectionality, and the need for coalition politics would be placed at the heart of third wave feminism and feminist organizing going forward. Decidedly it was not. At least for the next decade, feminist writing focused on individual identities and choices, generational conflict among feminists, and popular culture, not mass organizing to end all forms of discrimination. In 2002 Kimberly Springer’s *Signs* article titled “Third Wave Black Feminism?” argued that the term *third wave* and what it had come to signify by then was exclusionary to black feminists, because the wave model leaves out the historical record of women doing anti-racist organizing in between the “waves,” and because there is no generational rift between black feminists of different generations.⁴³ The popular use of the

term *third wave* to refer to young feminists and generational conflict between feminists, then, was especially harmful to the anti-racist meaning put forth by the Kitchen Table anthology. Thus the ideological consequences of the ghost anthology's disappearance were profound. What happened to this anthology? Why was it never published? The story is not a simple one, but it is a fascinating one that demonstrates the inherent difficulties of creating and publishing radical, coalition-based feminist work.

ORIGINS OF THE GHOST ANTHOLOGY

The story of the anthology begins in December 1987. Barbara Smith wrote in a letter to Lisa Albrecht and other potential editors: "I have been talking for a number of years about the need for a book on racism in the women's movement or a book about racism written from a feminist perspective."⁴⁴ She conceived of this work as including material by both women of color and white women, a first for her press, but one which she felt was important for a work on racism. "You need to have white people address this—because it is, after all, their baby."⁴⁵ Her vision also included a multiracial collective of four co-editors, two women of color and two white women. She deliberately chose women who were activists in hopes that they could produce a work that would provide a model for coalition work in anti-racist organizing. The four women who agreed to take up the challenge were M. Jacqui Alexander, writer, academic, and transnational theorist from the Caribbean; Lisa Albrecht, Jewish academic and anti-racism activist; Sharon Day, Native American activist and poet; and Mab Segrest, southern white writer and anti-racist organizer. (Norma Alarçon, Chicana author, academic and publisher, also joined them as a fifth co-editor for a couple of years.) The first meeting of the co-editors of what was then called the *Kitchen Table Press Racism Anthology* was in Ithaca, New York, in February 1988, held in conjunction with a conference titled "Afro-American and White American Women: Culture, Community, and Organizing." Mab Segrest was sick and had to join the meeting by phone, which resulted in her typing up her thoughts afterward and sending them to everyone in the mail. In these working notes she discusses the scope of the book and argues that both of Smith's suggested possibilities, a book on racism in the women's movement or a book about racism from a feminist perspective, are too limited. She suggests a third alternative, which she describes by quoting at length from a recent article in *Sojourner* that was co-written by Jacqui Alexander, one of the other co-editors: "As a movement, we are poised at the brink, ready to link spirituality with the growing current of internationalism, creating visions of a feminist theory which views direct action on behalf of

planetary survival and the empowerment of all the world's people to be as important as the raising of one's own consciousness."⁴⁶ Segrest then moves from this quote to her own summary:

So what we are talking about is "Third Wave" feminism, of which we are "on the brink"—or "in the trough," not to mix metaphors; which is also feminism in context of the Third World, whether domestic or international; feminism that is anti-racist and interracial and takes in other complexities of power and identity. . . . It would combine the subjective sensitivity of CR with a more objective understanding of material conditions. . . . It would both draw on BRIDGE and HOMEGIRLS as foremothers, and carry the Third Wave for which those were some of the earliest documents toward a crest. . . . So if I had to come up with a working title, it would be THE THIRD WAVE: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON RACISM.⁴⁷

Segrest is thus the first to suggest that their anthology might serve as the flagship for third wave feminism, but Barbara Smith jumps right on board, writing in her response that "Hey! This is the third wave of feminism we're starting."⁴⁸

The question of whether they were starting the third wave in 1988 or continuing it is an important one for feminist historiography and depends on whether texts like *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981), *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983), Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), and the *Cambahee River Collective Statement* (1979) are considered to be part of the second or third waves of feminism. They were certainly disruptive interventions into the racism of the second wave and brought the radicalizing concepts of intersectionality and identity politics to the broader feminist movement. Should they be seen as part of the second wave or the beginning of the next wave? The answer to this question lies in recent scholarship countering the notion that women of color feminism arose in reaction to racism in the second wave, rather than arising at the same time and as part of the second wave.

Sherie Randolph argues:

Many scholars, students, and people concerned with political issues assume black women did not engage in postwar feminist actions until after the development of the predominantly white second wave women's movement. While scholars have begun challenging this historical inaccuracy, most works on postwar feminist radicalism still view black feminism as emerging largely in protest against exclusion by white feminists or in opposition to Black Power.⁴⁹

This view that black feminism, third world feminism, or women of color feminism arose in the early 1980s as a reaction to racism in the white feminist movement is largely predicated on the idea that *This Bridge* was the first manifestation of those movements. On the contrary, Randolph argues that “black women were present at the creation of postwar feminist movements.”⁵⁰ And Kimberly Springer has shown that the emergence of black feminist organizations was a “parallel development to the predominantly white women’s movement, rather than merely a reaction to racism.”⁵¹ Becky Thompson offers an alternative recounting of women of color feminism (including Chicana feminism) and its relationship to the second wave: “During the early period of the feminist movement (the late 1960s and early 1970s), women of color in the United States were working on three fronts: forming women’s caucuses in existing mixed-gender organizations, developing autonomous feminist organizations, and working in white-dominated feminist groups. This three-pronged approach contrasts sharply with the common notion that feminism among women of color emerged in reaction to (and therefore later than) white feminism.”⁵² Thompson goes on to provide an alternative timeline of second wave feminist history that includes multiracial feminism and argues that “in fact, periodization of the women’s movement from the point of view of multiracial feminism would treat the late 1960s and early 1970s as its origin and the mid-1970s, 1980s, and 1990s as a height.”⁵³

If we accept Thompson’s expanded periodization of the second wave, the women of color anthologies already mentioned should be considered a crucial part of that wave. Yet clearly many feminists at the time saw them as something new, completely apart from the second wave, rather than an integral part of it, possibly as a result of the amnesia in the historical record about earlier women of color feminism. For this reason, some theorists have identified these texts with the third wave, even though they came a full decade before Rebecca Walker’s *Ms.* essay. Melissa Harris-Perry, in her book *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*, calls *This Bridge Called My Back* “a foundational text of third wave feminism.”⁵⁴ Analouise Keating, in her introduction to Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Interviews/Entrevistas*, reports that “two days ago a friend sent me an email informing me that, at a conference she had recently attended, *Borderlands* was repeatedly cited as *the* text of third-wave feminism.”⁵⁵ Others have referred to the feminist movement of the 1980s as the third wave. Lisa Albrecht, for example, wrote in 1988 about the “past decade of this third wave of the women’s movement.”⁵⁶ AnnJanette Rosga and Meg Satterthwaite recounted in *The Feminist Memoir Project* that “the third wave—marked chiefly by a decentering of the unmarked (hence, white and middle class) Woman—was well underway by the time we reached college in

1986, as was the conservative backlash.”⁵⁷ This general narrative of the 1980s as the start of the third wave, however, had not taken hold widely or been identified as such at the time, so the editors and publisher of this new Kitchen Table anthology strategically seized this terminology to signal something new, to take control of feminism’s definitional reins to move beyond identity politics into coalition-building activism. By commandeering the term *third wave*, they could be in charge of constructing its meaning.

Jacqui Alexander’s response to Segrest’s working notes, in June 1988, reinforces the notion that the third wave they are starting needs to be international and needs to focus on anti-racist coalition work: “How women of color and white women build coalitions in the 90s and what we choose as a common ground from which to organize is still crucial; the areas in which we have failed, what have we learned, where do we go from here, etc. can all be explored here.”⁵⁸ Alexander also agrees with Segrest’s call to move beyond the individualism that can come out of consciousness raising and identity politics. “*This Bridge* and *Homegirls* provided a model, as it were, to talk about identity politics and the meaning of our multiple experiences as feminist women of color. But there is a way in which experience comes to be viewed as so individualized that both history and community get lost.”⁵⁹ The editors, in their discussion of the scope of this anthology, were doing no less than fleshing out a vision for what the third wave of feminism should look like and setting up the anthology as a roadmap to get there. They wanted to move beyond raising awareness of the effects of intersectionality on individual identity and actually use this knowledge as a basis to create real revolution. The potential historical importance of this was not lost on anyone. Adrienne Rich, in a letter to Lisa Albrecht later in 1988, writes that this anthology “will probably be a major text in the movement for some time.”⁶⁰ And indeed, we can see that it was actually quite influential even without being published, so they were not mistaken in their understanding of how much impact the anthology could have had. So what happened? Why was *The Third Wave* not published?

CHALLENGES

The first difficulty was that the editors were unhappy with the first round of submissions. They met in Durham, North Carolina, on February 10, 1989, to review manuscripts. Lisa Albrecht writes in her notes that they are “very disappointed/disillusioned with quality. A lot of white girls talking about being anti-racist after going to one workshop and looking inward at their identities.”⁶¹ She notes that Jacqui Alexander was “not knocked out by manuscripts,” that Sharon Day felt there was “not much on coalition work,” and her notes

next to Mab Segrest's name say "disappointed, tired of doing CR. How is identity politics played out? Not just *being* but doing."⁶² Their call for papers had resulted in manuscripts that were still stuck in identity politics and had not moved on to strategic thinking about coalition work. Instead of scrapping the submissions completely, however, the editors responded with a form letter to those who had submitted, trying to clarify what they wanted.

We found that a great many of the essays in response to our call were framed in purely personal/consciousness raising terms, often leading the writer to the question: "What should I do?" with no indication of an answer, of strategy or collective action, or the meaning of institutional contexts for social change. This led us to think more closely that what we're aiming for is an extension of the subjective analysis that has come from consciousness raising and identity politics within feminism. We're looking for work about the objective, material conditions that help shape racism locally, nationally, and globally.⁶³

A second difficulty was the contentious issue of whether and how to include essays on anti-Semitism in an anthology about racism. Jacqui Alexander refers to this friction in her portion of the introduction to the work that was never published: "Of struggles we have had many, some of which we thought we might never survive. Is anti-semitism a form of racism?"⁶⁴ Lisa Albrecht, a Jewish woman and anti-racism activist, felt strongly that anti-Semitism should be included, while the others were not so sure. Barbara Smith sent a letter to the editors in February 1989, giving her reaction to the initial submissions and saying:

Another concern I have about contents is the kinds of articles that will be included from white women. There are several articles listed that seem to address anti-semitism solely. This is a complicated issue, but my understanding of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press choosing to publish white women in this particular anthology is that they would address racism as it affects people of color and/or their efforts to confront their own racism, organize against it, etc. It does not feel appropriate to me to include work that does not have this focus.⁶⁵

Albrecht consulted externally with fellow Jewish feminists Adrienne Rich and Elly Bulkin on this issue and ultimately they dropped several of the submissions, but one article about the history of anti-Semitism in America, written by Matthew Lyons, stayed in the anthology.

The third issue arises out of the previous two and is the likeliest contributor to the eventual failure to publish the anthology, in addition to the general

lack of financial resources. By 1991, nearly four years after the conception of the anthology, the editors had a final table of contents in place, but Barbara Smith and her assistant Lillian Waller did not feel the book had fulfilled their original vision. In a letter to the editors on June 12, 1991, Barbara writes: "The other major concern I have is what kind of politics the book will put forth as a whole. Even though this is an anthology, I believe it should have a consistent analysis and vision of what to do about the problems it addresses." In a further letter in September, she adds: "What will this book do, accomplish, mean that no other book has? What does it tell us about feminist perspectives on racism?"⁶⁶ This letter throws the editors into a tailspin and in a conference call shortly thereafter, they ask "Is this a Kitchen Table Press book?"⁶⁷

In addition to thinking that the book lacked a consistent analysis, Barbara Smith and Lillian Waller also felt that the writing was too academic, too much like social science research, rather than the "accessible, engaging, and passionate style that will draw the reader into the book and also excite them about the challenge of doing anti-racist organizing."⁶⁸ They had political disagreements as well. A conflict erupted between the editors and publishers over two pieces in particular: one by Huanani-Kay Trask on self-determination for Hawai'i and one on "Art in America" by Cherríe Moraga. Smith felt that the Trask and Moraga articles were "politically reactionary" and nationalistic. She declared that "Trask is anti-feminist, anti-white, and anti-left. Moraga is ethnically separatist and elitist." Waller concluded: "I find the articles to be antithetical to the principles of this press."⁶⁹ Yet these two articles stayed in the book as evidenced by a table of contents dated June 1992.

In 1992 the editors began demanding final timelines from Kitchen Table on when the book would be produced, but Barbara Smith was still suggesting new pieces for the collection and double-checking every copy-edited piece, writing directly to authors to insist on various changes that she felt were crucial but that the editors had not. Clearly her vision for the book had not yet been fulfilled, and the editors felt this keenly. In a draft letter from the editors to Smith, they wrote: "Our bottom level question (and fear) is that you really do not want to publish the book we have produced."⁷⁰ They took this sentence out of the final draft, but sent Smith a certified letter in September 1992 declaring: "We, as a collective, are satisfied with the content for each of the manuscripts we have edited, and we are unwilling to have you continue to raise content questions with the authors."⁷¹ They try to negotiate a final publication date: "A target date for publication that is acceptable from our perspective is January 1, 1993. If you are not willing to negotiate with us, then we are requesting a written release of the manuscript which will allow us to find another publisher."⁷² Rather than releasing the manuscript, Smith sets a final

publication date for March 1, 1993, but that date comes and goes, and there is no more correspondence in the Lisa Albrecht Papers between the editors and Barbara Smith.

In January 1994 Kitchen Table Press joins forces with the Union Institute Center for Women and the press moves to Brooklyn, although Barbara Smith stays in Albany. By February 1995 Smith has relinquished her role as the publisher and Andrea Lockett, a Kitchen Table board member, is named the new publisher. A new contract is signed to publish the Third Wave anthology by June 30, 1995, but on October 31, 1995, the editors receive the following letter from Lockett.

I am sorry to have been so negligent about keeping in touch. This year has been very difficult—from some changes in personnel, which meant that for a while I was the only full-time staffer, to the break-in which left us without equipment, to my own injury and transplant operation which left me unable to read for a while. This meant that everything here essentially came to a standstill for quite some time.⁷³

Sadly, hardships such as break-ins, the theft of equipment, staffing problems, and the lack of adequate health care were fairly common among feminist presses, which were always chronically understaffed and undercapitalized. Smith had kept the press alive for many years with only herself or one or two other employees, working out of her own house and with a low and intermittent salary. These conditions are not conducive to success and yet are often the only choice for the presses that are likely to publish the most radical materials, the ones that may not be commercially successful. Despite all these setbacks, Lockett continues: “We are on the printer’s schedule for early December, which means that the book should be out by the end of the year, provided that all missing materials get in to me ASAP.”⁷⁴ She also notes that Barbara Smith has sent her a revised foreword, suggesting that Smith was still backing the project after all this time. After this date, there is no more correspondence from Andrea Lockett in the Lisa Albrecht Papers, but according to Barbara Smith’s writings, the press closed in 1996. No one informed the editors, however, because on December 4, 1996, Lisa Albrecht wrote despairingly to Lockett: “I have decided to write to you regarding the irresponsible manner in which you have dealt with the publishing of *The Third Wave*.”⁷⁵ She laments a lack of communication from the press, asks for the agreed upon payments of one thousand dollars each for the editors, and concludes: “The sorriest thing is that we desperately still need our book. And the saddest thing is that KTP can’t do it.”⁷⁶

In 2001 Dorothy Abbott, a writer who had been on the Kitchen Table/Union Institute transition team contacted the editors about their never-published anthology and connected them with the newly formed Edgework Press, a nonprofit collective publisher begun by twelve women writers and led by Kim Chernin. (Abbott also helped shepherd the work to publication by taking care of organizational details.) The work was then reborn. Only about half of the original pieces were retained, with an additional eight authors choosing to replace their old pieces with newer ones, and much new material was added, so that only 37 percent of the final product was the same as its original incarnation. However, the purpose and political orientation of the original anthology did not waver: it remained a multi-genre, third world feminist exploration of colonialism, racism, and neoliberal globalization. These themes had not been integrated into the mainstream feminist movement in the intervening years, and it was just as necessary in 2001 as it had been in 1996. The editors wrote in a draft of the introduction that “if we were originally apprehensive that its reemergence seven years later would make it a museum piece, we found on rereading the original essays that there was much of substance that, unfortunately, was still applicable given the turn-of-the-century climate, nationally and globally.”⁷⁷ It was being finished right after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, and the introduction and first section contain several pieces reflecting on this event and its global aftermath. Other topics covered include the prison-industrial complex, racism in US welfare policy, Israel-Palestine relations, global labor networks, the history of racism and anti-Semitism in the United States, international adoption, radical spirituality, and Native American struggles over land and environmental pollution. The collection opens with a poem written by Nagamoo Mahingen and Sharon Day in reaction to September 11 and as a whole contains a combination of poetry, personal essays, interviews, and creative analysis, retaining its commitment to creative work as a radical force for change. The book was well-reviewed in *off our backs* and the *NWSA Journal* and certainly achieved its intention stated in the introduction “to contribute to a growing transnational feminist movement.”⁷⁸ It is an important work and a landmark of third world feminism, but there also can be no doubt that its place in feminist historiography was altered when it did not come out in the 1990s under the title *Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism*.

The reborn anthology came out in 2003 from Edgework Press and was titled *Sing, Whisper, Shout, Pray: Feminist Visions for a Just World*. The title comes from its opening poem “We, the Womyn of the World, Stand!” which

ends with the proclamation “We stand to sing, whisper, shout and pray for a just world.” It had been eleven years since the third wave was launched in the popular imagination by Rebecca Walker and Naomi Wolf as a movement for young feminists, so the book no longer carried the title “third wave.” The opportunity to define what the third wave would mean and therefore to shape the direction of the feminist movement in the 1990s had been lost. The editors must have considered attempting this rhetorical coup a second time; according to one book contract, the anthology was at one point titled “The 4th Wave.” Instead, they ultimately went with a title that was both poetic and spiritual, emphasizing the importance of spirituality in recent third world feminist writing.

CONCLUSION: HAUNTED HISTORIOGRAPHY

A fundamental tenet of feminist print culture studies is that the product of feminist knowledge creation (in this case, writing) must be distributed in some way if it is to be influential to the overall feminist political movement. How a text comes to publication and what real-life situations influence it determines which writing is distributed—and which writing is not. To return to the Tanselle quote that opened this essay, what the text of the ghost Kitchen Table Third Wave anthology did not get to say, because it was not published, was entirely related to the “mundane realities underlying the physical product,” such as an overall lack of funding both for writers themselves and for feminist presses. Because the contributors to an anthology are either not paid or are paid only a small one-time fee, and because the contributors to this particular anthology were activist women of color who were not likely to have access to a lot of time and financial support, essays and poems had to be written as a labor of love and political commitment and could not always be turned in on time. Similarly, the editors did not receive payment and were given little reimbursement for communication and travel expenses, making the process of collective work across long distances challenging at times. Finally, Kitchen Table Press was underresourced and undercapitalized; it was Barbara Smith’s labor that kept it going. The press did not have the technology and the resources for communication and copy editing that a commercial publisher would have had.

In addition to economic realities, there were also differences of political vision that are a natural by-product of trying to produce a feminist anthology with a collective of four very different women and an equally passionate publisher. Barbara Smith did not see this as a drawback when she set up the project; she intended it be a model of multiracial coalition building that would

embody the anti-racist focus of the anthology. Ultimately, the project worked and created an important repository of third world feminist thinking, but this type of radical coalition work takes time and never has enough financial resources to support it properly. What are the ramifications of this for the availability of theorizing from radical, marginalized voices? In this case, the ghost of the third wave anthology, thanks to Barbara Smith's marketing, did haunt third wave historiography enough to have an impact on its definition—but not enough to steer the feminist movement away from its retreat to the individual and toward a mass movement based on coalition building.

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