This begins with two premises: that a radical and utopian rethinking of the idea of globalization must be the promise and goal of feminism, its future; and that theatre and other performative arts have a key role to play in visualizing the international, making it possible to imagine bodies in transnational and transcultural interplay. Like Gabriele Griffin’s important study of black and Asian women dramatists, my discussion here is indebted to Avtar Brah’s articulation of the transitional space of the global as a ‘diaspora space’:

Diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are contested. My argument is that diaspora space as a conceptual category is ‘inhabited’, not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of diaspora space (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of ‘staying put’. The diaspora space is the site where the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native.

An important link between feminists of different cultures in the production of this utopian ‘entanglement’ is the ‘new citizen’: not the migrant, although her role in the dialogue is also important, but her children, ‘second-generation’ or ‘new’ citizens who are born or raised in the new homeland. Second-generation citizens are uniquely positioned to be agents of intercultural communication and exchange, as (at least in theory) they are acknowledged as reliable informants and translators by both natives and migrants. They are also uniquely capable of transforming
adopted homelands into ‘diaspora spaces’. Traditionally, claims of national belonging have been given legitimacy by claims to history – in Eric Hobsbawm’s words: ‘[n]ations without a past are a contradiction in terms. What makes a nation is the past.’\(^3\) Unable to claim the nation’s history as her own, the new citizen devises alternative ways to perform citizenship, disinheriting nationalities and histories to produce what Stuart Hall calls a ‘new ethnicity’ that ‘retheorize[s] the concept of “difference”’.\(^4\) The new citizen’s conflicting claims to nation-state and ancestry have the potential to create wholly new discourses of ethnicity and identity, and to perform citizenship and belonging in entirely new ways.

Ideally, quests for democratic rights by first- as well as second-generation immigrants would entail a complete rethinking not only of the national, ethnic and racial constitutions of the state in question but also of the notion of statehood itself. However, this sort of reconfiguration is usually forestalled by a strategic liberalization of the state’s self-conceptualization. On the one hand, alien bodies are acknowledged as citizens while, as Nira Yuval-Davis puts it, ‘the differences of class, ethnicity, gender, etc., [are considered] irrelevant to their status…’.\(^5\) Then, often in response to a crisis such as race riots, ‘difference’ is acknowledged and accommodated by the state, for example in the form of subsidy for ethnic arts or grants to foster multicultural curricula in schools. Inevitably, this sort of accommodation into the cultural apparatus leaves the dominant ethnic core undisturbed, while placing ethnic minorities who seek citizenship in the odd position of demanding a legal status which in practical terms relegated them to the cultural periphery, singing and dancing from the margins in a kind of state-sponsored ethnic sideshow. A number of commentators have observed that, in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, racism in the dominant culture encouraged communities of women to form political alliances across racial, ethnic and national boundaries, while by the mid-1980s and 1990s alliances across these divisions had become more complex and difficult to resolve. Pratibha Parmar despaired in 1987 that ‘many women have retreated into ghettoised lifestyle “politics” and find themselves unable to move beyond personal and individual experience’.\(^6\) Amina Mama similarly argued that ‘a growing focus on identity and a new competitive cultural politics replaced the 1970s/early 1980s notions of black unity and wider anti-imperialist and black liberation struggles’.\(^7\)

The difference is, arguably, not only an ideological but also a generational one. Earlier immigrant generations had confronted more unified forms of racism and were thus able to form coalitions based upon