

Krin Gabbard: Good afternoon. We're in Atlanta, Georgia. It's April second, 2016, at the annual meeting of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. My name is Krin Gabbard. I'm currently teaching in the Jazz Studies Program at Columbia University. For many years I taught at Stony Brook University, where I was colleagues with E. Ann Kaplan, who joined the faculty there in 1987 and who is the subject of our interview today. I just got back from having lunch with a former graduate student who's now teaching in the field, who told me that, when she was working in a feminist bookstore before coming off to graduate school, she read E. Ann Kaplan's books, and because of that she went to Stony Brook so she could study with Ann.

Krin Gabbard: Hello Ann, how are you?

E. Ann Kaplan: I'm really well, thank you.

Krin Gabbard: Good, good. May I start by just running down a few of your books. You have an extremely impressive bibliography. I could be here for half an hour reading it. Instead, let me just allude to some of your important works.

Krin Gabbard: In the area of women in film, you've published *Women in Film Noir* from 1978, *Women in Film: Both Sides of the Camera* in 1983, and your monumental collection, *Feminism in Film*, which came out in 2000. Your book on music video, *Rocking Around the Clock: Music, TV, Postmodernism and Consumer Culture* was published in 1987. You have anthologies, *Psychoanalysis in Cinema*, *Postmodernism and Its Discontents*. You've published in the area of Postcolonial theory, you've an excellent monograph on motherhood and representation.

Krin Gabbard: When did you first get interested in becoming a film and media scholar?

E. Ann Kaplan: That's an excellent question, and I'm going to begin by setting the context. My first degree, my BA, was in Birmingham University, England, and it was the most traditional course of study you could imagine. F. R. Leavis who didn't believe that any literature other than English was worth reading, was the god still, so I did a degree in English Language and Literature, which meant reading middle English learning, to read middle English, and also Anglo-Saxon, which I took as a foreign language.

E. Ann Kaplan: I went up to London following then, thinking I'd have a space between going on for the PhD, did a post-graduate education course at London University, in the course of which I was given a teaching practice at Kingsway Day College. This was a day release college for working college class students, because the labor government had set up this Tripartite system so that only ... you had to take an exam at 11 years old, so basically only middle class children got into the grammar school system. The others went to technical schools.

Krin Gabbard: And this was your first job, and this was in London?

E. Ann Kaplan: That's right.

Krin Gabbard: Did you apply for this job with your degree?

E. Ann Kaplan: Exactly, after I finished my post-graduate degree. Now, so I'm faced with these young students who are coming for one day to college. They were basically girl Fridays or they were clerical staff, they were completely, 15 years old. The question was how to approach them. Luckily, at the same time that I was hired Norman Fruchter, and also a little later Jim Kitses were hired as Americans just coming from having toured Rutgers University. The president of the college said, "Let's give these two young people the job setting up the general course," and that is how I got into film studies. Norm had already made contact with the British Film Institute, Paddy Whannel had just arrived there to set up an education department, and he was really anxious to get teaching of film into all the colleges. There was no, of course, university teaching, so Norm and I started a course in film studies, really by talking to the students about what they were looking at.

Krin Gabbard: So, at Kingsway Day College, no one had been teaching film, or for that matter popular culture?

E. Ann Kaplan: Absolutely not. They were trying to teach them literature. They were trying to sort of raise them up into high culture.

Krin Gabbard: Did you get resistance when you started teaching film?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well luckily no. This principal, Fred Flower, was so advanced and actually so left wing that he was very pleased to have it. The other faculty, yes, were disgusted and upset, and we were challenging the system. But we did it and, of course, it was the British Film Institute's having the films, the archives, and Paddy Whannel's commitment to getting film studies going, that enabled us to do this work. We would traipse off to the British Film Institute, grab one of the films in a box, walk all the way back to Kingsway Day College, thread it through the eight millimeter, 16 millimeter projector, and then walk back up with it after which to return it to the British Film Institute. We had no texts, there no film texts appropriate anyway to that context, but Paddy Whannel had gotten scholars to write little film notes. We relied on little packages.

Krin Gabbard: Who were some of those scholars that you were mentioning?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well, there was Peter Harcourt, who was already ... There was a series of BFI lectures, to phrase it that way. Alan Lovell, I don't know if you know these names, was there, Peter Harcourt, and guess who? Stuart Hall. It was actually Stuart, whose courses I attended, that really gave me my film education. There were no film courses, there were no film degrees at this time, and there was no university teaching, but these extramural courses. Stuart was teaching at a teacher training college, I was teaching, and Norman, at this Kingsway Day

College, other people were teaching at adult education colleges, and maybe it was Alan or Peter was teaching at the Berkeley Adult Evening Program.

Krin Gabbard: What in particular did you get from Stuart Hall? What did you learn from him that was useful as a film scholar?

E. Ann Kaplan: I went to sit in on his classes, and it was the first time I had ... you know, we read film history, there were only film history books ... first time that I began to thought about the question of representation. It sounds naïve now, but representation and reality, and how films were not simply mirrors on reality, that things were constructed, that there was numerous choices that were made, and how films were edited. It was brilliant. If you look at Stuart's, he has some video cassettes now ... well, I guess they're now on DVD ... that really give the kind of thing he was teaching and that I learned from so much.

Krin Gabbard: And who else were you reading? Who else was helpful as you were preparing your lectures?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well, quite quickly Stuart and Paddy, you remember this book, *The Popular Arts*? Then that became actually the shape for the courses, because it'll sound odd now to young people watching this video, but he was concerned. To get film accepted, we had to appeal to the aesthetes and the people who were interested in high culture. One of the strategies was to show the difference between a popular version of something and a high culture version, and they discussed this in this really wonderful book. We would show Bobby Darin, the pop star, singing Mack the Knife, and then of course we'd put on Kurt Weill's version. And so to say -

Krin Gabbard: Which one is high culture?

E. Ann Kaplan: That's very good. That's the right answer. The wrong answer, but yeah. To sort of show how much more material, how much more sophisticated, the rhythms, the tonalities, the instrumentation for the Kurt Weill, as against the, "da, da, da, da" routine Bobby Darin.

E. Ann Kaplan: But we did other interesting courses, reflecting back. We taught a course on the city, documentaries about the city. Urban planning was a big post-war phenomenon, so we looked at films about urban planning, we looked at Postmodern, well sorry, Postmodernism wasn't even on the horizon, but we looked at new ways of thinking about the city, Avant-garde films about the city. We also taught a course on South Africa because Sharpeville happened in 1962. We taught *Let My People Go*, Lionel Rogosin's movies, documentaries. We got all this stuff from the British Film Institute. I actually taught a course on women, and women in cinema or women in the city. Even then, nobody was thinking feminism yet, but I sort of somehow, I remember teaching some of these topics.

Krin Gabbard: And what inspired you to make that, so we'd say pre-feminist move?

E. Ann Kaplan: I think the young women in my classes. I felt so poignant about them. Here they were, fifteen years old. They were sweet, young girls, but they were all into makeup, and high heels, and doing their nails, doing their lipstick. I just sort of thought that they needed to have a higher vision of what they could possibly be.

Krin Gabbard: Ah, that's fascinating. I wanted to ask you also about what you were doing in London. At the same time, something on a parallel track was happening in France and the continent. Looking back on it now, how was the French experiments in getting screen education, film studies. How was that different from what you were doing in London?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well, I don't know, between 1960-1963, that much about screen education was going on in Paris. But the way France came in hugely importantly was the new wave. I remember we trekked down, Norman and I, and then Jim Kitses when he came to replace Norman, to the Art Cinema on Oxford Street. Only place you could see new films, and watching *Breathless*. We watched *Breathless* in '60, it came out in '58 but we watched '60. We started watching Rossellini. These films were slowly coming, Antonioni, to London in those years. The French culture, and of course Italian culture, came in Europe, came in by the cinema.

Krin Gabbard: What was the reaction, on your side of the channel, to *Cahiers du Cinéma* and some of the work that was being done over there?

E. Ann Kaplan: We were reading it, but in a way we were very provincial. I do want to say that. Just as the course study of Birmingham, before Stuart came, was just English Language and Literature, we were reading, there was something called *Screen Education* that came out before *Screen* got properly started, that was just started. We also read *New Left Review*. The *New Left Review* was embryonic, but Norman was writing for it, Stuart Hall was writing for it, Norman and I might have had a short piece. But the main thing we were doing was trying, following Paddy Whannel's sort of inspiration, was pedagogical. He was concerned with how we could get film teaching into the institutions that would accept it, and to get courses as sort of models.

E. Ann Kaplan: The first series of books that the British Film Institute published were books that Paddy Whannel had us write, those of us we knew who were teaching new courses. So I did one, but actually then with Jim Kitses. He had replaced Norman Fruchter who'd gone back to America. He and I wrote *Talking About the Cinema*, which basically was interviews with our students. We tape-recorded their responses to what we showed them. Stuart Hall did a book in the series, which was more theoretical along the lines I just said. Anthony Higgins did one on television. Albert Hunt did one on adult education and an adult education college. This little series, I believe was the first in Paddy Whannel's huge library, huge work that followed.

Krin Gabbard: So how long were you at Kingsway Day?

E. Ann Kaplan: I left in 1963.

Krin Gabbard: And then there was a gap before you got to Rutgers?

E. Ann Kaplan: Yes. What happened was, for personal reasons I wanted to go to America. Norman was going back to America, I had grown up in post-war Britain, well wartime Britain and post-war Britain. We had gotten passes from the United States, the martial plan sent us parcels, so we had bananas and exotic things that I had never even heard of. America was, in those days this sort of fascinating, rich place. We were all very excited to see it.

E. Ann Kaplan: In '63 Norman and his colleagues organized for me a fellowship at Rutgers University, where they had all come from. I took up this fellowship in comparative literature at Rutgers, and just never went home.

Krin Gabbard: And I understand you were a troublemaker at Rutgers.

E. Ann Kaplan: I was a troublemaker, and this is where film comes in again. I went to a graduate studies meeting, and they didn't know what to do with their money. I put up my hand and I said, "You know, what you do is you run a film series." They looked at me sort of askance, you know, "How could we possibly do that?"

E. Ann Kaplan: I guess I had already made contact through women's networks with a burgeoning *Women Make Movies*, little office on 10th Street, I walk up and there they were, just starting from scratch. I figured I could carry these films, as I had carried them from the British Film Institute to Day college, I carried them from New York back to Rutgers and we did film screenings. Finally, the Filmmakers Cooperative was starting in New York. Andy Warhol, Paul Morrissey and -

Krin Gabbard: Jack Smith.

E. Ann Kaplan: Jack Smith.

Krin Gabbard: And you brought *Flaming Creatures*?

E. Ann Kaplan: I did.

Krin Gabbard: You have to tell people how you got away with that.

E. Ann Kaplan: Wind got around that I was bringing this film. Finally the provost, I had to go visit the provost. I had to go into his exalted office with the red carpet and the big thing was very intimidating, and justify showing Jack Smith's films. Somehow I did it. I made the case: this was art, this was new, this was revolutionary cinema, Rutgers had to be part of this.

E. Ann Kaplan: We had a huge screening of this film, and the Velvet Underground came as well. Paul Morrissey came, Warhol did not come himself. But we had the Velvet Underground playing in Scott Hall at Rutgers University. It was remarkable.

Krin Gabbard: I know that you have special skills in persuasion, and you were able to persuade the provost. But once this happened, once you showed the film and brought the music, did he regret his decision?

E. Ann Kaplan: You know? Never heard from him again, so I assume all was well. Then I started to get back to the next stage of things. I did my degree. Of course, it was high politics time, '63 to '70. Rutgers, we were very involved with the Vietnam teachings. We also had a political project going in the ghetto that was still there in New Brunswick. But I managed to get my degree and then the question came of, I got a job at Monmouth College, of what I would teach there. Again, I arrived there. There was absolutely no film ongoing, but my courses, which would've been in American studies given my degree although it was comparative literature, were all taken by senior professors. I didn't know where, I was just going to be teaching writing.

E. Ann Kaplan: So I put in an appeal to teach the first Women in Cinema course, and I think that must have been in '72. Or it could have been even earlier, I started the job there in 1970. I hooked up with the women's movement at that time, consciousness raising groups were starting, and I again had no models. I had to invent the course myself.

Krin Gabbard: Again, what texts were available?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well, I do remember teaching Agnes Varda. Her *Le Bonheur* was available. I remember teaching *The Porn Brokers*, which has some female characters. I mean, I taught some Hollywood films, although I tried to mainly teach French film, foreign film and documentary film.

Krin Gabbard: And what'd you have the students read?

E. Ann Kaplan: You know? That's a very good question, Krin. I absolutely cannot remember. I don't remember what there was to read in '72. I mean, we were starting to look at Krakauer by '72, we were. Bazin had just been translated, I think, in the mid '60s. So those were available, but there were no woman in film texts to read.

Krin Gabbard: And you were one of the first women to read a paper at what is now the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. What was it then, and how did you get into what was then an all male bastion?

E. Ann Kaplan: Yeah, yeah. This is a really interesting story, and I would recommend that people go check out the SCMS archives, the actual records of these conferences to confirm what I'm just going to say. Indeed, it was SCS at the time, Society for Cinema Studies, it was an all male club. They had conferences and if you look at

the handouts, the program, you'll it's all handwritten and lots of crossings out. It was incredibly informal. Which is fine in a way, but it was an all male club.

E. Ann Kaplan: There was going to be an SCS conference at Temple University. It was '77 I believe. What had happened to me in between is that I got to be on the editorial board of this journal, *Marxist Perspectives*. Short-lived journal, Eugene Genovese. The leftists at Rutgers set this up, and I had written a little piece on Lina Wertmüller, either on *Seduction of Mimi* or *Seven Beauties*, or those two films together. Somehow this woman, at Temple Perlmutter? I haven't had time to check where she is now.

Krin Gabbard: Ruth Perlmutter?

E. Ann Kaplan: Ruth, sorry. Ruth Perlmutter called me up and said, "We have to begin having some women presenting at this conference. Will you come?" So I said, "Sure! I'll come and talk about Lina Wertmüller." I later learned she had also called Vivian Sobchack and a couple other people whose she did know that was coming out. We got there, ready to read the paper. I hadn't remembered this. When I looked at the program on the archive site, the men had their panels it was all listed with topics, there was then a category, "Volunteer Papers," and there all the women's names were listed under Volunteer Papers. This happened a couple of years, 'cause they're now up to '78, and the next year too. But then it was more, Janet Welsh was in there ... oh, of course. Annette Michelson was the only one who had been earlier involved in the male club. I think she was the first that I found as a woman on the first SCS conference. So then by '79 I think in San Francisco there were a lot of women.

Krin Gabbard: Did the men come to hear your papers?

E. Ann Kaplan: Do you know? I can't remember the audience. Probably not. I would guess we were speaking to ourselves.

Krin Gabbard: At about this time you started publishing.

E. Ann Kaplan: Yes.

Krin Gabbard: What was it like to write something like *Women in Film Noir*, *Women: Both Sides of the Camera*? What was the whole publishing culture at that time for a feminist?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well, again, I mean and this was interesting about my situation as a Trans-Atlantic scholar. Because what happened was, in '74 I had a sabbatical. I decided to go to England so I could be with my family, and took my daughter. I'm not sure how I found out ... Well, I guess Claire Johnston had just published or brought together a little anthology, *Notes on Women's Cinema*, and I must have seen that in the United States. Well, I was keeping up. Every time I went to

England I took publications, so I'm sure I got it when I went to England, say, '73. It was '72, I don't remember when it came out, so I knew her name.

E. Ann Kaplan: I contacted her in London, and she said, "Oh sure, come up." I said, "Can I interview you guys?" So I came to interview her, and the trio was Laura Mulvey, Claire Johnston and Pam Cook.

Krin Gabbard: And what year was this?

E. Ann Kaplan: This was '74. So I sat with them in London over several days, learned about their amazing collaborative project. They had just done this film, *The Amazing Equal Pay Show*. It was a sort of an abject prop film, and they were very proud of the fact that they took turns to be the cameraperson, the script person, the set design person or the person organizing the group. That's when I first ... Laura was just beginning the work that became the famous essay, "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema". In '75, she published that, but she'd done some a little earlier. I interviewed them, and *Jump Cut* published that interview. Which was really good, because actually *Jump Cut* was where I was publishing, aside from the little pieces in *Marxist Perspectives*. They were very hungry for work, and very welcoming, and very encouraging of women wanting to write about women's work. Julia Lesage, and Chuck Kleinhans, and John Hess -

Krin Gabbard: *Jump Cut*, yeah.

E. Ann Kaplan: ... were editors of *Jump Cut*. I guess I was publishing there, published this interview with Laura, Pam and Claire. That then brought me in, it must've been '77, or '78, to the Screen conference in Sterling. That's where I went to this panel on film noir. And again, this is all in the British context that was not going on in America. I mean, what was going on in America was another group, the west coast group, Constance Penley, Janet Bergstrom, Sandy Flitterman and Liz Lyon, working the French-American axis. I was working, and I was alone I think, working the British-American axis. I was on the east coast, and they were on the west coast. It's kind of really interesting. We weren't really talking that much to each other. As you know, they dropped out of the journal *Women in Film* to set up a very highly theoretical journal that became *Camera Obscura*.

E. Ann Kaplan: Meanwhile, I was much more working with the Marxist-Socialist focus through *Jump Cut*, although I was also theoretical. So I was sort of trying to bridge these two main foci that were developing at that time.

Krin Gabbard: So you started out with Stuart Hall, you became involved with Marxist studies. That Marxist critique runs through your work. When did psychoanalysis enter?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well, I think with the interviews with Laura Mulvey and Claire Johnston. Claire was more Althusserian, we were sort of Althusserian in those days. Laura was always political but more psychoanalytic and Lacanian with her analyses. I was interested in it, but wanting to do a critique as well, or wanting to question it

some more. Laura had written about the male gaze, but as my work developed I wrote a paper called "Is the Gaze Male?", sort of wanting to problematize it and bring in a more sociological approach, trying to combine the sociological with the psychoanalytics. Keeping them going in tandem.

E. Ann Kaplan: Now that was not quite heinous at the time, but was not ... Both sides said, "You're not properly Marxist," and they said, "Well, you're not properly Lacanian," but the book was a huge success. That book, that was another lucky publishing thing.

E. Ann Kaplan: So I was coming up to tenure. I should actually say, since you asked about publishing. Do you remember that series that Ron Gottesman organized? Paddy Whannel in England was developing the publishing through the British Film Institute. Ron Gottesman, bless his heart, wanted to get film publishing going here, and he got, I can't remember the press, some big press to agree to a series of books about directors. They were gonna be reference books. They were basically extremely complex bibliographies, that way you would have to look at every film of the director, you had to do all the search, find every article or book about the director and put it between covers. I did that one of Fritz Lang. That was my first book.

E. Ann Kaplan: I was back at Rutgers, teaching, and was coming up for tenure. That department was not going to take what basically looked like a bibliography as a tenure book. I was extremely anxious and, in fact, you mentioned psychoanalysis. I actually was in having some therapy and I looked at the Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis to do training. I was going to do training if I didn't get tenure at Rutgers.

E. Ann Kaplan: I had written this book on women in film. I had been publishing also. Do you remember also, you shouldn't forget *Millennium Film Journal*?

Krin Gabbard: Oh yeah.

E. Ann Kaplan: I was publishing about film in *Millennium Film Journal* through the Anthology Film Archives. I gathered this material together, and expanded it and worked it up into a book, and was sort of wondering where and how to publish it. It's extraordinary. It turned out that Maurice Charney, is that a name you remember?

Krin Gabbard: Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative), yes.

E. Ann Kaplan: Who was a big professor at Rutgers, an established literary person, scholar, [crosstalk 00:28:55] that somehow ... Psychoanalysis and cinema, turned out.

Krin Gabbard: [crosstalk 00:28:55] And very interested in psychoanalysis.

E. Ann Kaplan: So he was, now I'm gonna forget her name, was it Janice ... I'm gonna forget her second name ... at Rutledge, was looking for books in the United States. She hooked up with Maurice. I don't know that story. Maurice, meanwhile was scouting out among Rutgers professors for books. He asked me one day, which we traveled on the train together back to New York, and he said, "What're you working?" And I said, "Well, I'm thinking about a book on women in film." He said, "Send it to me. Send it, I'm working for some new work." I sent it to him, and Rutledge was very excited to take it.

E. Ann Kaplan: But that was the second book, 'cause I had done *Women in Film Noir* through the British Film Institute.

Krin Gabbard: It's an anthology.

E. Ann Kaplan: The anthology, taking from the -

Krin Gabbard: So you had a very solid tenure case. Were there any women voting on your tenure?

E. Ann Kaplan: There were women voting.

Krin Gabbard: There were.

E. Ann Kaplan: There were. Elaine Showalter -

Krin Gabbard: Oh yeah.

E. Ann Kaplan: ... was, of course, I don't know how she voted. I don't know how anyone voted. That's interesting, there were not that many tenured women professors at Rutgers. Yeah. Elaine may be the only one.

Krin Gabbard: But your tenure process was relatively painless, it sounds?

E. Ann Kaplan: Yes, yes, it went through. And I think what happened ... Do you remember this name also, Tom Van Laan? He did a writing textbook, but he used a lot of visual culture. I think he appreciated the book, I could guess that he did. But I got tenure, yeah.

Krin Gabbard: Then shortly after that you began writing about television. How did that happen? How did you go from a really revolutionary approach to cinema at that time, using these theoretical paradigms, bringing in feminism, what got you interested in switching to television? Not switching, but bringing in television.

E. Ann Kaplan: Bringing in television. Well, that is very interesting. I was not in television, well there was hardly any television studies. Again, it was kind of my somehow feeling where things were going. I don't know who it was, but somehow around New York University I got wind of a group coming together to have a conference

on television studies. Now, I missed it, so I think it was missing ... I was so annoyed with myself that I missed this embryonic conference on television studies, that I decided to try to reach the people who I know had been in the conference.

E. Ann Kaplan: Again, it was the British influence. They were ahead. David Morley and Charlotte Brunsdon, their book on British television, I'm sorry not to remember the date, but they were doing work on British television and they had inspired some of the American scholars. Sandy Flitterman was really there, way ahead, writing about ads in television, theorizing them sort of in a theoretical way. Charlotte Brunsdon then, from England. I got to write... Tania Modleski.

Krin Gabbard: You tried a soap opera book. [crosstalk 00:32:07].

E. Ann Kaplan: [crosstalk 00:32:07] It was a soap opera book and I got her to write about television soap operas, and it became this book *Regarding Television*. I think it was one of the first critical books. I mean, Pat Mellencamp followed pretty quickly with their work, remember *Cinema in Television*? Also an edited collection.

Krin Gabbard: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

E. Ann Kaplan: The AFI was publishing, so trying to be a little bit like the British Film Institute, or doing some publishing.

Krin Gabbard: So, in 1987 you published your book *Music, Television and Postmodernism*. So this is the first time we talked about postmodernism. How does that come in? How was that part of the turn towards music video?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well, this is an interesting thing about my career and the different theoretical paradigms that I've used. I was, by '87, hired to direct the Institute at Stony Brook, but this book was before. I think what happened was I got fascinated with the idea of postmodernism. It's hard for me, going back actually, to see exactly why because it was Jameson, it was his paper. I went to hear his paper on postmodernism and consumer culture, and the pastiche idea, his argument that new works and works that went in depth were no longer ... And it seemed to me that you could make the case that television was such a superficial form if you sort of thought about the seriality of television. Then Baudrillard came along, we were all somehow got fascinated with the idea of simulation. Again, it seemed to fit how we were experiencing American culture at the time. It seemed to fit the big emphasis on consumerism developing rapidly through corporate mechanisms. It seemed to explain a certain thing of why ... we were trying to be Marxists so I couldn't work, people were drawn to consumer culture.

E. Ann Kaplan: In a way, it was a short-lived paradigm. In a certain way, on the other hand, it's actually penetrated and in some ways still in post-structuralism and

deconstruction. You can see them coming as sort of wings of post modernism or somehow in a similar modality of breaking down subjectivity, and dispersing subjectivity. I got fascinated, but then, having taken up this job at Stony Brook, wanting to think of themes for the institute.

Krin Gabbard: So that was the perfect storm, wasn't it?

E. Ann Kaplan: Yeah.

Krin Gabbard: Just as all of this intellectual firmament is happening in the profession you get the job as director of the Humanities Institute at Stony Brook. What special opportunities did that offer?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well, it was a wonderful moment, and you, of course, being at Stony Brook were right there and involved. We had some funds, quite generous funding [crosstalk 00:35:16] considering the poverty now, right?

Krin Gabbard: [crosstalk 00:35:16] At first.

E. Ann Kaplan: And the French were very happy to come over to be sponsored by us. I got very involved, of course with postcolonialism. This was the moment for postcolonialism. So Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha. These wonderful people came for relatively inexpensive. Edward Said, we had Jacques Derrida, Baudrillard actually came, - Jean-François Lyotard, Kristeva. I mean -

Krin Gabbard: And many of them came more than once.

E. Ann Kaplan: Yes, many of them came more than once. Just looking back at who we had and how much we could learn from them. They often came for four day visits in those days. Stayed around, did seminars. So, I think it did influence my work. Certainly Bhabha and Spivak, in terms of postcolonial work, I think the turn from postmodernism, for me, was that I got very serious about that work. That led to the book *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze*. So I started working on the question of postcolonialism in documentary film, and film in general. But it was a wonderful moment, yeah.

Krin Gabbard: And then you got interested in trauma.

E. Ann Kaplan: I did indeed.

Krin Gabbard: And you published several books now in trauma theory. I think you and I talked about your experience growing up in Britain, and how that was so important as an archive, a personal archive, when you began working in trauma studies.

E. Ann Kaplan: Yes. Well, it was really 9/11 that shook me up. This question of triggering in trauma studies, triggered a lot of World War II childhood memories, and I began to really reflect on how these events impacted so deeply in the psyche. 9/11, I

was right there on 10th street. Terrifying event, again, and the whole thing of the city being shut down from 14th street to Ground Zero. And then the smell and the ...

Krin Gabbard: And it made you recall your experience during World War II.

E. Ann Kaplan: That's right, that's right. So -

Krin Gabbard: What was that like?

E. Ann Kaplan: World War II was pretty awful. You know, in England people were going to school at four, and I had to go to school, to little primary school in a city several miles from home, had to wear a gas mask, terrified about bombs happening, and going into these underground shelters. Just totally terrifying, as practice. We had to practice against possibly raids. Coventry is just thirty miles from where I live. Our area was relatively safe, so we weren't evacuated as children, but no children were evacuated to our area because it was too dangerous, because we had munitions factories around there and the Germans were looking for them. But they were far inland, about 140 miles from London, so the planes had to get through the whole defense around London -

Krin Gabbard: Did they ever hit the mark?

E. Ann Kaplan: They did. One bomb landed one mile from my house. Though they were in the wrong direction for the munitions factory, but they did come within a mile of the munitions factory.

Krin Gabbard: And you remember that?

E. Ann Kaplan: I remember that. Terrifying. There were these terrifying experiences in a situation where, and that you mentioned growing up in England. Well, my parents had no idea about psychology, no idea about how to deal with children who are afraid, or who are a little sensitive. There was no comforting, it's kind of, "Just deal with it, kid." There was no understanding of psychological impact of events, so we didn't really get any help to work these things through until later on.

E. Ann Kaplan: So yes, so this inspired the trauma work. I taught a course with Ban Wang, who had also been traumatized by growing up in China in the [crosstalk 00:39:32] Red Guard days.

Krin Gabbard: [crosstalk 00:39:32] The Cultural Revolution. Yeah.

E. Ann Kaplan: Absolutely. The post revolutionary days. So he and I each had experiences to bring to a very interesting course. I taught a course on trauma and aging, which got published a bit later on, and then the *Trauma Culture* book that you mentioned was the book where I started to think about the aesthetics of trauma

and theorizing this question of, "Is trauma unrepresentable? Can it be represented?" All those very heavy debates.

Krin Gabbard: When were the theoretical paradigms that then became useful? And who were the authors you were reading as you did your trauma works?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well, I got inspired by Cathy Caruth, as many of us did in her wonderful, I think, still extremely useful edited collection. Several major authors. Robert Jay Lifton, Dori Laub, Shoshana Felman. I mean, really good ... I've mentioned Shoshana Felman's book, *Education and Crisis*, was a great inspiration. Started to turn to psychology. Judith Herman's book on trauma and loss, and the rich, rich field of people coming out of that time were extremely helpful.

E. Ann Kaplan: But there was not that much on cinema. Janet Walker brought the first article on trauma in cinema in *Signs*, I think in, I can't quite remember the date, but before '98 or something.

Krin Gabbard: Yeah, that sounds right.

E. Ann Kaplan: And that really, and her book really inspired me. Ban Wang and I put together *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations* because we had an international group. And then this latest book, of course, is the end of that journey.

Krin Gabbard: Yes, I do wanna talk about that in a minute, but I'm also interested in all the bridge building you were doing when you were directing the Humanities Institute at Stony Brook. Could you talk about the institution and how you were able to really involve from other disciplines to make the whole thing come alive?

E. Ann Kaplan: Again, this was just such a rich moment. The reason that then president, and you remember this, John Marburger, had the idea for an institute, was that he thought that the English department was not taking up new ideas, that it was too traditional. They were resisting the theoretical moves that were going on, and somehow John knew, whether he's a physicist, but he somehow knew this was exciting and important work.

E. Ann Kaplan: So he set up the institute. And so I had the opportunity, really, because the English department and most departments were sort of resistant, to bring everyone in around the table. A very exciting time, and I was so appreciative of the opportunity to gather people from Sociology, the Medical School, Art History. People who didn't normally talk to each other, around a table, on a topic or a theme. I would have, in the spring semester I ran a faculty seminar. It was for no credit or anything, just for us to bring our work, share work and do reading of new materials.

E. Ann Kaplan: We did one on motherhood early on. I was doing the book on motherhood and representation at the time, and took the opportunity to make this inter-

disciplinary move. We early on did reproductive technologies. We worked with the Medical school. Susan Squier was a big mover in that, she's gone on to great heights in terms of questions about reproductive technology and now many more. We did a whole year on postcolonialism. We did a year, of course, on postmodernism. People read work, they wrote papers, they talked together, and we tried to bridge disciplines. To listen to each other's often hard. We ran a science and art seminar. Remember that one? With people from the Physics Department and Evolutionary Biology, Chemistry around the table trying to share ideas. That was not easy. I think we sort of, were more like ...

Krin Gabbard: How did you convince those physicists and chemists to come over to the institute?

E. Ann Kaplan: I respect them very much for wanting and agreeing to spend time talking. They were often the very senior ones. The young guys are in their labs, they got to compete and work and have their heads down, but the older ones had ... And Paul Adams. Some of these people were really, even one Noble Laureate agreed to come and talk. The old generation were a little more relaxed about their careers, these scientists were interested enough. And this actually now newly taking place more in applied sciences, with the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences because the last ten years, as you know I started in 2007, taking up the theme of climate change and environmental humanities through the institute. Then we lined up with the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences. They were also very interested in working with us in the Humanities, feeling the need, I think, for approaches that would bolster or expand what they were able to do. That has been, of course, the latest work that I've organized at the institute.

Krin Gabbard: But you've never really left Cinema Studies.

E. Ann Kaplan: That's right.

Krin Gabbard: You've been part of that from the very beginning. You were president of the organization for several years. One of the things that we're talking about a great deal at this conference here in Atlanta is the future of the discipline, particularly what I would call old school Cinema Studies now, which were so cutting edge not too long ago, and the digital turn. What is your prognostications? What do you see as the future of film studies?

E. Ann Kaplan: I mean, this is the million-dollar question. I myself am very fascinated by digital studies, but it's not an area that I'm equipped to go into. I listen to papers. I think it's important work, I think, particularly, the work that looks at the impact. I'm not so interested in the work that, is it highly technical?

Krin Gabbard: Or just a description of the technology, often.

E. Ann Kaplan: That's right. I'm not so interested. If people need to do that, maybe that really is extremely important, but the impact, books and articles, and the analyses, I think is a big field and should be one, and we in cinema studies need to do it. At the same time, I would hate to see even sort of analyses of films go out of fashion, or not be anything that is of interest to people. Reading films for the social, cultural, political, ideological, you know.

Krin Gabbard: Are you hopeful that's going to continue?

E. Ann Kaplan: I'm actually not. Let me see, I just taught a course, a really interesting, interdisciplinary group of students on the climate change topic called Climate, Trauma: The New Environmentalisms. I had papers from all over the map. I said you can do, I didn't want to limit what they can do. At one end were some students that were so into Oriented Object Ontology, Bruno Latour, Jane Bennett, coming out of Deleuze, really. I'm very interested in that, I'm not sure I can use it. They brought books to the class that were about *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*, and *Cosmic Pessimism*. Really far out, feeling that all the paradigms that we've been working with in Cinema Studies, in Literary Studies, even Philosophy are no longer helpful. That the situation's so dire. That's one trend that I think, Timothy Morton, is continuing and makes me worried about film studies because they're looking at such a macro level.

Krin Gabbard: Would you extend this to the Humanities in general? Are you equally pessimistic about the future of the Humanities in American institutions?

E. Ann Kaplan: It's very, very upsetting what's going on, the sense that ... Remember the University of Kansas, was it, that said, "We'll only give funds to departments that bring in STEM students?" That sort of said, "Well, what about the humanities?" I don't think, obviously, I don't think in the United States, I know in Britain there've been moves to completely cut all Humanities departments. Once one nation or set of institutions start something, the others all fall in line. That made me very nervous. I'm afraid funding, they're asking us to get our own funding. This is the problem. We've all got to be entrepreneurs now. We've all got to make our own funding, and it's very hard in the Humanities, as you know, to find funding. So, in that sense.

E. Ann Kaplan: But I think film is such a huge, powerful medium. I just can't see that there won't be continuing interest in cinema as cinema, however we look at it, however the idea of moving into a classroom and looking together at a film. And I must say that the English department is doing that. They have this course, this freshmen course on global film traditions, and 25 students have to come on a Tuesday to watch the film together. I'm to mark their absences -

Krin Gabbard: This is the English department.

E. Ann Kaplan: English department. And we watch it together. It's a unique experience for them. They never watched a film on a big screen together to hear responses.

And then we talk about immediately, most old fashioned sort of method of teaching. But I'm so happy that that's going on, and they really enjoy it. The thing is they really enjoy it. As long as it can be some small, little loophole places where work like that can go, those students will continue to be interested in film as film, having had this experience.

Krin Gabbard: What's your next project?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well, I've been talking actually to a couple of publishers. Probably it will be about continuing some of the Age Studies work I've done. I'm interested in aging and the environment, for instance. Trying to bring together questions of, and now thinking, not only about nature and the landscape and the question of aging, but the institutional places and the question of environments for the aging. I'm interested in memory loss and the gendering of memory loss. This will be a more traditional representation sort of study. I'm interested in the politics of care, which links in a way to the aging in the environment. We have Medical Humanities at Stony Brook as part of Lisa Diedrich's Medical Humanities group.

E. Ann Kaplan: Something in that area, maybe it will be in interviews or something.

Krin Gabbard: Well I think that you should write your memoirs. Although, in fairness you've been doing that all along. There are powerful, memoir-like prose in both of your recent trauma books. The story about when Hurricane Sandy came, and your life, coping with that on the high floor in your apartment building, is really compelling writing. It's as powerful in account of that as I read in any place. I feel the same about your 9/11 material and the earlier trauma book. But you also have a lot of memoir, biographical material, on motherhood and representation. I think that's something we should probably talk about, what it was like to be a woman in academia and a mother.

E. Ann Kaplan: Wow, I mean the young students looking at this video, may be really surprised to know I had my baby, one child, in 68, and I was part of several women's consciousness raising groups. I had to sort of hide the fact that I had a child if she was with her father, or if I brought her with me, she had to stay in the corridor, and if she cried everybody was extremely impatient and irritated. There was no daycare at any of our conferences in the '60s, and as I said, had to feel sort of ashamed. I got pregnant finishing my dissertation. I was ashamed to tell my thesis director that I was pregnant. I thought he was going to say, "Okay, alright, that's it. Out." Things were more reasonable than my imaginary. He did come up with money for me to have babysitting two days a week, and I got the dissertation written.

Krin Gabbard: And this was extraordinary. This had not happened before.

E. Ann Kaplan: No. He found a way to get money through some other means. He probably didn't say it was for babysitting, but he found a way to get me some money. That was 1968, so it's as recently as that, in away. I mean, that's a long time ago,

but nevertheless you could see what the women's movement has actually produced. I'm glad you asked that question.

Krin Gabbard: Well, we're almost out of time. Is there anything else we haven't touched on that we should put on the record about your experience in this profession?

E. Ann Kaplan: I think the transnational aspects of my career are really interesting. I think the British-American, sort of these bridges, and the French that want to be ... you know, was to Europe's influences from France through the California group, and from London through my group. Then increasingly, obviously other nations came in, and we made a big effort. We were very white and very middle class, and very self-consciously so for many years. But towards the end of the ... it was late, it was more in the 80s that self consciousness about our situation and our privileged perspective -

Krin Gabbard: And you've been to China.

E. Ann Kaplan: Yes, that was very important. And Japan.

Krin Gabbard: And Japan and, again, how did that affect your scholarship in your way?

E. Ann Kaplan: Well that was extraordinary. It was extraordinary, and it'd been very much a two way street. Again, we did bring material, and ideas, and theories, in the exchange with China. It was four years that Chen Mei set up, and Cheng Jihua. Very exciting, but so expanded my horizon about what fabulous work was going on in these days. We knew Japanese cinema, of course more than we were able to see Chinese cinema. Coming across the Chinese New Work, those '80s series of incredibly directors who have become very famous now. Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige. We met them in a studio, young people doing their work in a studio. Cheng Jihua was president of the ... and got us access to all these ...

E. Ann Kaplan: So absolutely. And then the cinemas have bloomed, of course, since then. Japan already had a wonderful, of course, flourishing cinema, but the thing with Japan was introducing feminist ideas, and China was -

Krin Gabbard: And your work has been translated.

E. Ann Kaplan: Yes, many times.

Krin Gabbard: And have you gotten a reaction? Have you heard from people from the east about reading your material?

E. Ann Kaplan: I get emails all the time from China asking me to allow them to translate this, or translate that. So they're clearly following what we're doing very closely. Japan, less so. This wonderful woman, Noriko Mizuta translated three or four of my books like herself. Then I had the motherhood book. They are watching and listening, and I wish it could be more two way. We're so linguistically provincial.

I tried a little bit to learn Japanese or Chinese. It just would take years, and years, and years. They do it from early on, and can manage it, but yes. Unfortunately, our terrible language inadequacies means that it's too much of a one-way street than I would like. But yes, I have been, whole worlds opened up. Also with Australia, of course, I've also been to Australia many times, and enriched and learned from these international. So I'm glad you asked that question. Yeah.

Krin Gabbard: Anything else?

E. Ann Kaplan: I think that really, I think we've covered the waterfront.

Krin Gabbard: I think you've had an extraordinary career. It's been a delight to talk to you about it. Thanks so much for making your memory bank available to us.

E. Ann Kaplan: Thank you for interviewing me, Krin. It's been great.