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# Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis

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## Cartographies of Knowledge and Power

### *Transnational Feminism as Radical Praxis*

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This essay is one moment in the process of almost two decades of thinking, struggling, writing, and working together in friendship and solidarity as immigrant women of color living in North America. Each of us has been involved in collaborative work in and outside the academy in different racial, cultural, and national sites—and we have worked together in scholarly, curricular, institutional, and organizing contexts. For us, this collaboration, over many years and in these many sites, has been marked by struggle, joy, and the ongoing possibility of new understandings and illumination that only collective work makes possible.<sup>1</sup>

More than a decade ago, we embarked on a feminist collaborative project that resulted in the collection *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (Routledge 1997). Its main purpose was to take account of some of the most egregious effects of the political economic impact of globalization, what we called then capitalist recolonization—the racialized and gendered relations of rule of the state—both its neocolonial and advanced capitalist incarnations, and to foreground a set of collective political practices that women in different parts of the world had undertaken as a way of understanding genealogies of feminist political struggles and organizing. Our methodological task here was quite steep for the inheritance of the “international” within women’s studies, particularly its U.S. variant, provided little analytic room to map the specific deployment of transnational that we intended *Feminist Genealogies* to encapsulate, especially since we saw that the term *international* had come to be collapsed into the cultures and values of capitalism and into notions of global sisterhood. How, then, could we conceptualize transnational to take globalization seriously while at the same time not succumb to the pitfalls of either free market capitalism or free market feminism?

*Feminist Genealogies* drew attention to three important elements in our definition of the transnational: 1) a way of thinking about women in similar contexts across the world, in different geographical spaces, rather than as all women across the world; 2) an understanding of a set of unequal relationships among and between peoples, rather than as a set of traits embodied in all non-U.S. citizens (particularly because U.S. citizenship continues to be premised within a white, Eurocentric, masculinist, heterosexist regime); and 3) a consideration of the term *international* in relation to an analysis of economic, political, and ideological processes that would therefore require taking critical antiracist, anticapitalist positions that would make feminist solidarity work possible (1997: xix).

In the decade since the publication of *Feminist Genealogies*, there has been a proliferation of discourses about transnational feminism, as well as the rise of transnational feminist networks.<sup>2</sup> Within the academy, particular imperatives like study abroad programs in different countries, the effects of Structural Adjustment Programs on public education globally, the (now lopsided) focus on area studies in geographical spaces seen as crucial to knowledge production post 9/11, and the rise of new disciplines like terrorism studies and security studies can all be read as responses to globalization that have concrete transnational contours. Transnational studies in the academy often dovetail with more radical impulses in social movements, and given the place of transnational feminist studies in the academy at this moment, we have embarked on another large collaborative project, this time seeking to map a genealogy or archeology of the transnational in feminist and LGBTTT/queer studies in the United States and Canada.

To this end we pose a set of questions that can probe the definitions of transnational feminism in relation to globalization (local/global/regional) and the operation of the categories of gender, race, nation, sexuality, and capitalism. We want to explore what the category of the transnational illuminates—the work it does in particular feminist contexts—the relation of the transnational to colonial, neocolonial, and imperial histories and practices on different geographical scales, and finally we want to analyze the specific material and ideological practices that constitute the transnational at this historical juncture and in the U.S. and Canadian sites we ourselves occupy. When is the transnational a normativizing gesture—and when does it perform a radical, decolonizing function? Are cultural relativist claims smuggled into the transnational in ways that reinforce binary notions of tradition and modernity?

A number of feminist scholars have distinguished between the categories of global, international, and transnational. Suzanne Bergeron (2001), for instance, argues that globalization is the condition under which transnational analysis is made possible. The transnational is connected to neoliberal economics and theories of globalization—it is used to distinguish between the global as a universal system, and the cross-national, as a way to engage the interconnections between particular nations. Feminist scholars have also defined the transnational in relation to women's cross-border organizing (Mindry 2001), and as a spatialized analytic frame that can account for varying scales of representation, ideology, economics, and politics, while maintaining a commitment to difference and asymmetrical power. Radcliffe et al. (2003), for instance, connect the transnational to the neoliberal through exchanges of power that impact indigenous communities across the globe. Felicity Schaeffer-Gabriel (2006) defines the current form of economics in relation to ideologies of masculinity, examining what she refers to as the "transnational routes of U.S. masculinity."

Our own definitions of transnational feminist praxis are anchored in very particular intellectual and political genealogies—in studies of race, colonialism, and empire in the global North, in the critiques of feminists of color in the USA, and in studies of decolonization, anticapitalist critique, and LGBTTT/queer studies in the North and the South. Our use of this category is thus anchored in our own locations in the global North, and in the commitment to work systematically and overtly against racialized, heterosexist, imperial, corporatist projects that characterize North American global adventures. We are aware that this particular genealogy of the transnational is specific to our locations and the materiality of our everyday lives in North America. Here our interest lies in the connections between the politics of knowledge, and the spaces, places, and locations that we occupy. Our larger project, then, is an attempt to think through the political and epistemological struggles that are embedded in radical transnational feminist praxis at this time.

For this chapter, however, we focus on a particular part of this larger project. Drawing on an analysis of the contemporary U.S. academy and on core women's and gender studies and LGBTTT/queer studies syllabi, we attempt a preliminary map of the institutional struggles over transnational feminist praxis, specifically, the politics of knowledge construction in women's studies and LGBTTT/queer studies in the U.S. academy. Given the privatization and restructuring of the U.S. academy, the hegemony of neoliberalism and corporate/capitalist values and free market ideologies,

the increasingly close alignment of the academy with the “war on terror” and the U.S. imperial project, we ask questions about the objects of knowledge involved in women’s and gender studies and LGBTTT/queer studies. Beginning with a broad mapping of the U.S. academy as a major site in the production of knowledge about globalization and the transnational, we move on to an analysis of the ethics and politics of knowledge in the teaching of transnational feminism. The two fundamental questions that preoccupy us are: What are the specific challenges for collaborative transnational feminist praxis given the material and ideological sites that many of us occupy? And, what forms of struggle engender cultures of dissent and decolonized knowledge practices in the context of radical transnational feminist projects? We believe that at this historical moment it is necessary to move away from the academic/activist divides that are central to much work on globalization, to think specifically about destabilizing such binaries through formulations of the spatialization of power and to recall the genealogy of public intellectuals, radical political education movements, and public scholarship that is anchored in cultures of dissent. Such work also requires acute ethical attentiveness. In addressing herself to the African Studies Association in 2006, Amina Mama (2007: 3) speaks of the need for developing scholarship as a “critical tradition premised on an ethic of freedom.” She goes on to define this: “Such scholarship regards itself as integral to the struggle for freedom and holds itself accountable, not to a particular institution, regime, class, or gender, but to the imagination, aspirations, and interests of ordinary people. It is a tradition some would call radical, as it seeks to be socially and politically responsible in more than a neutral or liberal sense.” Thus, one of the major points of our analysis is to understand the relationship between a politics of location and accountability, and the politics of knowledge production by examining the academy as one site in which transnational feminist knowledge is produced, while examining those knowledges that derive from political mobilizations that push up, in, and against the academy ultimately foregrounding the existence of multiple genealogies of radical transnational feminist practice.

### The U.S. Academy: Mapping Location and Power

The U.S. academy is a very particular location for the production of knowledge. Within a hegemonic culture of conformity and surveillance, many of us experience the perils of being in the U.S. academy. At a time when women’s and gender studies, race and ethnic studies, queer studies, and critical area studies run the risk of co-optation within the neoliberal, multi-

culturalist, corporatist frame of the academy, we bear a deep responsibility to think carefully and ethically about our place in this academy where we are paid to produce knowledge, and where we have come to know that the spatiality of power needs to be made visible and to be challenged. One of the questions we want to raise, then, is whether it is *possible to undo* the convergence between location and knowledge production. Put differently, can transnational feminist lenses push us to ask questions that are location specific but not necessarily location bound? If we take seriously the mandate to do collaborative work in and outside the academy, the kind of work that would demystify the borders between inside and outside and thereby render them porous rather than mythically fixed, it is imperative that the academy *not* be the only location that determines our research and pedagogical work; that we recognize those hierarchies of place within the multiple sites and locations in which knowledge is produced, and we maintain clarity about the origin of the production of knowledge and the spaces where this knowledge travels. And this mandate in turn requires the recognition that knowledge is produced by activist and community-based political work—that some knowledges can only emerge within these contexts and locations. Thus, in not understanding the intricate and complex links between the politics of location, the geographies and spatialities of power, and the politics of knowledge production we risk masking the limits of the work we do within the academy and more specifically their effects on the kinds of pedagogic projects we are able to undertake in the classroom. We attempt to clarify and address some of these links in the second half of this essay. Our intention here is not to reinforce or solidify an academic/activist divide, although we are well aware that these divides exist. It is rather to draw attention to different academic and activist sites as differentiated geographies of knowledge production. Thus, we want to be attentive to the spatialities of power and the ways in which they operate in and through the academy, as well as within political movements whose identities are not constituted within it.

In North America, the binary that distinguishes the “academy” from the “community” or the academic from the activist, that has also made it necessary to pen the qualification “activist scholar,” has assisted in the creation of apparently distinct spaces where the former is privileged over the latter. This process of binary/boundary making is also a fundamental way to (re)configure space and to mask the power relations that constitute that reconfiguration. We can think of this binary as spatial in that it has its own cartographic rules, which according to Katherine McKittrick, “unjustly organize human hierarchies *in place* and reify uneven geographies in familiar, seemingly natural ways” (McKittrick 2006: xiv). Given over two decades of

neoliberalism, privatization, and the accompanying commodification of knowledge that marks academies across the globe, the cartographic rules of the academy necessarily produce insiders and outsiders in the geographies of knowledge production. On the one hand, such cartographic rules draw somewhat rigid boundaries around neoliberal academies (the academy/community divide), and on the other they normalize the spatial location of the academy as the epitome of knowledge production. So what are these cartographic rules that normalize the position of the academy at the pinnacle of this knowledge-making hierarchy? Among them are the making of white heterosexual masculinity consonant with the identity of the institution against which racialized and sexed others are made, imagined, and positioned as well as the diffusion of ways of knowing that are informed by the fictions of European Enlightenment rationality, which heighten political contestation from those knowledges that are made to bear an oppositional genealogy and are rendered marginal once they travel inside the academy. These rules are reinforced through an ideological apparatus that creates the academy/community divide in the first place and that is itself an element in the deployment of power while attempting to conceal that power through other border patrol strategies such as academic-community partnerships and the creation of various offices of community relations; devising strategies of governance that delimit the kind of scholar and the kind of scholarship deserving legitimation, which are at odds with the very community with which it has established relations.<sup>3</sup> These cartographic rules are crucial since they create a hierarchy of place and permit the binary to operate as a verb, demarcating the spurious divide between academy and community while at the same time masking the creation of the divide. We say spurious here not because the creation of boundaries does not have serious effects in creating insiders and outsiders along lines similar to those created by the state, for instance, but because the practices of power within the academy bear close resemblance to the practices of power deployed by its allies such as the state and global capital that participate both materially and ideologically in its day-to-day operation. Ultimately these rules promote a spatial segregation that constructs the "community" as a hyper-racialized homogeneous space; and it is usually not just *any* community but one that has been subject to forced dispossession. This community may or may not be the same as grassroots mobilizations that derive from many sources. To make visible, then, these racialized geographies of dispossession with their own imperatives that do not rely on the academy for self-definition even as the academy summons them, and reifies them in that summoning, in the service of the formation of its own identity is a crucial strategy. This gesture assists us in demysti-

fying the cartographic rules, fragmenting the hierarchy of place that would make them an undifferentiated mass in relation to the academy and thus in identifying the operation of the very idea of the spatialization of power that points to the social formation of multiple uneven spaces, which individually and together make up the power/knowledge matrix. Who resides in which spaces? Who belongs and whom are rendered outsiders? Who is constituted as the knowledgeable and the unknowledgeable? Which knowledges and ways of knowing are legitimized and which are discounted? Settling these questions stands at the core in making hierarchies of place.

This power/knowledge matrix that creates insiders and outsiders, those who know, and those who cannot know, has of course been challenged in multiple spaces by edu-activists. Two examples of political movements that challenge the cartographic rules consolidated by neoliberal, privatized academies include CAFA (The Committee on Academic Freedom in Africa) and the Italian Network for Self-Education founded in 2005. CAFA, founded in 1991, mobilized North American students and teachers in support of African edu-activists fighting against World Bank-initiated Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) aimed at dismantling autonomous African university systems. Arguing that these SAP initiatives were part of a larger attack on African workers, and that they functioned as recolonization projects, CAFA drew attention to the inexorable dismantling of African higher education resulting in the shift of knowledge production *elsewhere* from international NGOs training technocrats under the "African Capacity Building" initiative to U.S. international and study abroad programs. Similarly, the Italian Network for Self-Education was formed in 2005 as a result of a mass mobilization of over 150,000 people in response to the restructuring of academic labor by the Italian parliament. Challenging the spatialization of knowledge and expertise within disciplines, faculties, and the logic of neoliberal university systems, the network claims to traverse the division between teaching and research, education and metropolitan production, and theory and praxis. The self-education movement deconstructs traditional modes of knowledge production and research, unsettling the taken-for-granted cartographic binary of the university/metropole, potentially serving as a device for social transformation.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the spatialities of power that anoint the academy as the pinnacle of knowledge are demystified and profoundly challenged by CAFA and the Network for Self-Education.

For our purposes, however, and in order to wrestle with the gendered, racialized, and sexualized spatialization of power, we would have to come to terms with what McKittrick (2006) calls its material physicality, which, in the context of this chapter, pertains to our own formulations of the objects

of transnational feminist analysis and the potential cartographic rules of syllabi, the spaces where colonialism and race dovetail with the practices of empire, where the academy consorts with state and corporatist projects and where oppositional practices take hold in ways that bend those cartographic rules or make them situationally irrelevant to the practices of hegemonic power. Those physical spaces include: the detention center; the army, the navy, and other institutions of the military-industrial complex; the institutions of state; the corporation, the factory, the export processing zones, the warehouse for secondhand clothing, the home, the brothel; the capsized boat, makeshift homes, the desert; the neighborhood, the street, NGOs, cross-border networks; the university, the boardroom, the classroom.<sup>5</sup> The question we want to ask then is, under what conditions, and for what purpose do particular spaces become dominant in the construction of the transnational?

Almost two decades ago, Jonathan Feldman, Noam Chomsky, and others analyzed the role of the academy in what was then referred to as the military-industrial complex (Feldman 1989). In 2008, the academy continues to figure prominently in the consolidation of Empire, the corporatization of knowledge, and the operation of the national security state. Most visibly, it aids in the surveillance and policing functions of the state via the USA Patriot Act of 2001, which calls for international students, scholars, and their dependents on F and J visas to be registered on SEVIS, a web-based data collection and monitoring system created to link the academy to the Department of Homeland Security, consulates, and embassies abroad, ports of entry into the United States, and other state agencies. The intimate connections between scientific knowledge, corporate power, and profit have now been examined by many scholars.<sup>6</sup> And the earlier discussion of CAFA and the Network for Self-Education points to radical educational movements that challenge the corporatization of the academy and its varied geographies of power in different national spaces.

The social organization of knowledge in the academy, its structures of inquiry, and discipline-based pedagogies are inevitably connected to larger state and national projects. And this is nowhere more palpable as in the mobilization of various disciplines, beyond area studies, to assist the state in the consolidation of empire.<sup>7</sup> They engender their own complicities as well as practices of dissent. Just as privatized academies engender capitalist, market-based citizenship, they also encode stories of the U.S. nation—a presumably “democratic” nation that is simultaneously involved in the project of Empire building. One important aspect of a radical transnational feminist project then involves looking at the way curricula and pedago-

gies mark and become sites for the mobilization of knowledge about the transnational. In what follows we examine syllabi in women’s and gender studies (WGS), and in LGBTT/queer studies, in an attempt to understand the deployment of the transnational. Given our focus on the spatialization of power, we look especially at how those WGS and LGBTT/queer studies syllabi that deploy the transnational organize a set of cartographic rules that define how knowledge production operates in the academy. We look at syllabi in terms of the racial and gendered spatialization of power. This suggests questions like what kinds of hierarchies of place and space get set up; how power gets configured and reiterated; where do teachers locate feminism and queer sexuality in relation to these larger processes of colonialism and imperialism; the organization and presence of the academy and grassroots activism, political mobilizations, and so forth. Put differently, in what ways do syllabi bend or reinforce normative cartographic rules?

### The Politics of Feminist Knowledge: Curricular Maps and Stories

The ethics and politics of crossing cultural, geographical, and conceptual borders in feminist and LGBTT/queer pedagogies in the context of the transnational is a crucial element in analyzing the interface of the politics of knowledge and location in the academy. How we teach transnational feminism in women’s studies is crucial in analyzing the struggles over knowledge and power both within the U.S. academy and outside its fictive borders. The way we construct curricula and the pedagogies we use to put such curricula into practice tell a story—or tell many stories of gendered, racial, and sexual bodies in work and home spaces, prisons and armed forces, boardrooms and NGOs, local and transnational organizations, and so on. We suggest that these “stories” are also anchored in cartographic rules that encapsulate differentiated and hierarchical spatialities, thus foregrounding the links between sites, location, and the production of knowledge about the transnational. “Stories” are simultaneously “maps” in that they mobilize both histories and geographies of power. Thus, just as we suggested there are cartographic rules that normalize the position of the academy in the knowledge hierarchy earlier, we now explore whether similar rules are encoded and normalized in the curriculum, specifically in the syllabi we analyze.

<sup>26</sup> We analyze thirteen core syllabi from WGS and LGBTT/queer studies curricula at a variety of colleges and universities in the United States in terms of these stories and maps. The sample syllabi we chose were from large state universities; private, elite universities; small liberal arts colleges;

and smaller state schools.<sup>8</sup> Each of the syllabi gesture toward transnational feminist praxis in some form or another, and most seem to anchor the core curriculum in women's and gender and LGBTTT/queer studies. We suggest that an examination of the core curriculum can help us understand the politics of knowledge and the spatialities of power in the cross-cultural construction of feminist and LGBTTT/queer studies in the U.S. academy, and to ask questions about the academy as a site for such knowledge production. This analysis allows us to see what it is students are being asked to know within these disciplines at this historical moment, what knowledge is being generated within introductory and upper-level classrooms—those spaces where explicitly oppositional knowledges are being produced. It also allows us to make preliminary connections between the politics of location, differentiated spatializations, and the production of knowledge.

Some of the larger analytic questions we might then ask include: how precisely is the transnational deployed in the core curriculum in relationship to racial and colonial histories and geographies, and to the relationship of the local and global? And what happens with the transnational when it encounters women of color, for instance, or queer communities of color? What productive tensions and contradictions are visible when the transnational emerges? And finally, what cartographic rules pertaining to the transnational can be made visible in this analysis of syllabi? In what ways are curricular stories also curricular maps? And finally, are there convergences and/or divergences in the ways that these transnational maps intersect with the spatialization of power in the academy as a whole?

Specifically, we analyzed six syllabi designated as core introductory courses and seven upper-level courses in the interdisciplinary fields of women's and gender and LGBTTT/queer studies. Examples of these include Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies, Introduction to LGBTTT/Queer Studies, and Introduction to Feminist Studies. We were interested in understanding what categories (e.g., gender, race, nation, sexuality, etc.) animate the transnational, the work it is being called upon to do in the curriculum, the particular histories and spatialities (colonial, neocolonial, imperial) it mobilizes, and the practices that are seen to constitute transnational feminism.

While our selection of these syllabi was intentional, purposive one might say, in that our explicit focus was the transnational, we should also note that there were many upper-level seminars devoted to an exploration of "urgent contemporary issues" of gender or of sexuality in which there was a curious elision of the transnational within the United States, pushing it to operate only elsewhere, outside of the geopolitical borders of the U.S. nation-state.<sup>9</sup> This paradoxical duality of marked absence on the one hand

and of hyper-presence on the other might leave no way for students to negotiate the circuits of travel between the local and the global, or to intuit the precise ways in which the local is constituted through the global. Still, we have to leave open the possibility that such linkages are indeed made. We might, for instance, talk about this particular curricular strategy as the cartographic rule of the transnational as always "elsewhere." This "elsewhere" rule thus suggests a separation of the spaces of the local/national and the transnational.

Overall, the interweaving of the categories of racialized gender and sexuality as well as the attention to non-U.S. feminist geographies was impressive. In many of these courses, there was a marked shift from the ways in which racialized and cross-cultural knowledges were being produced in WGS courses in the 1970s and 1980s. Unlike in most WGS curricula from the 1970s and 1980s, women of color texts, queer texts by men and women of color from different parts of the world, and texts by "Third World" women are central in the syllabi we analyzed. Yet there were many paradoxes. In the case of LGBTTT/queer studies, one of the most complex of the introductory syllabi exposed students to the lives and experiences of U.S. queer communities of color, linking these with racialized colonial histories of immigrant and native communities, and the contemporary effects of globalization. The central actors in this narrative were thus queers of color and the conceptual movement of the course mapped sexuality studies in relation to colonialism, racial formation, nation-states, and finally to globalization. Paradoxically, however, the central "stories" remained U.S.-centric with the USA being defined as a multicultural, multiracial nation in the most interesting of these syllabi. Here is yet another cartographic rule then, one that constructs a hierarchy of place within the transnational: the U.S.- or Eurocentric organization of the syllabus. However, this is very different from the "elsewhere" rule in that it suggests a connectivity of the spaces of the local/national, and the transnational, but always in terms of a hierarchy of place wherein Euro-America constitutes the norm.

Genealogies of sexuality studies remain largely U.S.-centered in otherwise multiply layered courses. Thus, while racial and colonial histories were often threaded through the courses, these histories remained focused on the United States or Europe. In one Introduction to LGBTTT/Queer Studies, designed as an introduction to the academic interdisciplinary field itself, the syllabus drew on the now familiar canon of theorists of sexuality (Foucault, Sedgwick, Butler), yet again mobilizing Euro-American histories of sexuality while referring to the lives and experiences of queer communities of color.

This paradox of foregrounding subjects of color as agents while reproducing a white Eurocentric center has another effect in that the transnational can be deployed in normative rather than critical terms. In one upper-level seminar, the story of the syllabus was to map the impact of globalization on different women in different parts of the world.<sup>10</sup> Marking this difference is clearly important since it moves us away from thinking of globalization as a homogenous or homogenizing project. Yet the emphasis on democratization and equality as a way to understand feminist mobilizations among Islamic, Latin American, or African feminists seemed to perform an odd theoretical move that wished to export democracy and equality from the United States to these different parts of the world. Ironically, the syllabus carried a great deal of resonance with earlier formulations of a global sisterhood, though it did so in terms that were ostensibly different: the terms of “multiple feminisms.” Indeed residing underneath these multiple feminisms was cultural relativism that housed two interrelated elements. One was the creation of a geographic distance through which an absolute alterity was constructed. It was only through greater proximity to the United States and the inherited categories of the West that women’s experiences were most intelligible. The other, implied in the first, was the spatial creation of an *us* and *them* so that Islamic, Latin American, or African feminism could neither be understood relationally nor could they be positioned to interrogate the kinds of feminist mobilizations deployed in the West.<sup>11</sup> The place of Western knowledge was reconsolidated all over again. Here, too, while spatial connectivities are mobilized, there is a clear hierarchy in place.

Our analysis suggests several important trends. First, in spite of its link to racial and colonial histories, the transnational is made to inhabit very different meanings and emerges at different junctures and in different spaces in the overall story of the syllabi we examined. Second, in the introductory courses to gender and sexuality where the writings and theorizations of U.S. women of color and non-Western women’s movements were central, the stories these syllabi dealt with were of complex feminisms anchored in different racial communities of women and queers. However, not only were U.S. and Eurocentric histories mobilized, for instance, the linear periodization of first-, second-, and third-wave feminisms, but also very visible were the genealogies of feminist thought that once again foregrounded narratives of European liberal, socialist, and postmodern theory. Cartographically, then, the transnational was either placed elsewhere or positioned Eurocentrically or within the United States as theoretically normative.

Transnational feminism also emerged in all of these courses in relation to singular and often isolated categories and contexts. Thus, for instance, it was

made visible only in relation to discussions of work and globalization, or human rights, or gay diasporas, or cross-border mobilizations. The majority of the readings and topics in the syllabi remained U.S.-centric. Thus, transnationalism might emerge, for instance, only in relation to queer diasporas and the effects of globalization, with only two out of fourteen weeks devoted to “gay diasporas and queer transnationalism,” rendering it an exceptional or theoretical option. In other words, the “local” remained intact, and somewhat disconnected from cross-border experiences. Transnationalism was then anchored only outside the borders of the nation (the “elsewhere” rule). Thus, it seems that the transnational has now come to occupy the place that “race” and women of color held in women’s studies syllabi in the 1990s and earlier. We have now moved from white women’s studies to multiracial women’s studies (in the best instances), but the methodology for understanding the transnational remains an “add and stir” method, and the maps that are drawn construct the transnational as spatializing power either “elsewhere” or as within the United States and/or Europe.

Thus, a focus on diaspora, globalization, and colonial discourse as well as on feminist and LGBTT/queer communities in different national contexts often seems to stand in for what the courses describe as a “transnational perspective.” Transnationalism, if identified at all, is understood only in the context of contemporary globalization, or in some rare cases, with nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms that fuel cross-border masculinist and heterosexist state practices. Given our interest in the politics of knowledge and the place of transnational feminisms in the academy, we were especially intrigued by the fact that none of these introductory courses raised questions about the ethics of cross-cultural knowledge production, or about the academy at all. This curious absence of the academy as the space many of us occupy every day, given the larger political battles that often shape our curricula and pedagogy seems all the more problematic from the point of view of understanding the spatiality of power in terms of the academy and its relationship to other institutions of rule like the state, and corporate interests. After all, being attentive to the ethics of knowledge production requires bringing questions of identity, epistemology, and method to the forefront of our scholarship and teaching. If the academy as a political space is absent from our syllabi, even as experience remains central to feminist thinking, surely there is a major contradiction here. We may be erasing our own experiences (and the profoundly material effects of our locations) at our own peril. For instance, as Amina Mama (2007: 6) argues, “our intellectual identities—and the ethics that we adopt to guide our scholarly practices—are informed by our identifications with particular communities



and the values they uphold." Thus, if we take the connections between the politics of knowledge and the politics of location (identity) and of space seriously, we may need to take on broad institutional ethnography projects that allow a materialist understanding of academic spaces as mobilizing and reproducing hegemonic power. While some courses touched on urgent transnational issues like HIV/AIDS, and war and militarism, there was no mention of the U.S. imperial project or, say, the prison industrial complex as a site of analysis or feminist debate, thus begging the question of what particular (transnational) issues women's and gender studies and LGBTTT/queer studies curricula speak to in the world we now occupy. Interestingly then, syllabi may serve unwittingly to reinforce and even naturalize the university/community divide in terms of hierarchies of location, identity, and sites of knowledge.

One upper-level seminar, however, was notable in terms of its explicit engagement with some of the ethical conundrums associated with cross-cultural comparison, which seemed crucial in light of its attention to the methodological politics of doing cross-cultural work. The story of this syllabus was a complex one, attempting to map the ways in which sex, sexuality, and gender operated within local and global processes that are at once transnational since the rapid dispersal of peoples and reading and interpretive practices operated everywhere. Within the construction of "queer diaspora" and the making of queer historiography, the social actors were specific communities that included cultures of two-spirit, cross-dressing women in U.S. Civil War; the *fa'afafine* of Samoa; and gay, lesbian, and transgender communities in different geographies, thus resisting the impulse to create a queer universal subject, and engendering a map that was attentive to different spatializations in the construction of sexualities. The syllabus asked explicit questions about when comparisons were useful or when they participated in reproducing the kind of discursive violence that comes with imposing U.S. social categories on cultural configurations that were not U.S. based. It was also interested in having students see themselves as intellectuals with ethical responsibilities: "What is our responsibility," it asked, "as students of gender and sexuality studies to be aware of the politics of making 'queer' travel?" Thus, this particular syllabus also engaged partially with the U.S. academy as a contested site in the production of knowledge.

Finally, all of the upper-level seminars we examined signaled the transnational through some political economic pressures of globalization, diaspora, and migration. Importantly, racial and colonial histories marked the transnational in all instances. For example, in one course the story of transnational feminism was one in which the politics of women of color in

the United States was linked to feminist movements among "Third World" women, attempting to map genealogies of feminism by asking how these feminisms had reshaped mainstream U.S. feminist praxis. While racialization functioned primarily in relationship to women of color, transnational feminist theory seemed hesitant, however, to engage women of color or "Third World Women" as sexual subjects or interpolated within sexualized projects pertaining to the state and/or global capital. Most often gender and sexuality were positioned either as theoretical strangers or distant cousins, once again reinforcing a separation of constructs of race and sexuality in the organization of knowledge about transnational feminisms.

This distancing of sexuality from questions of transnational feminism or rather the practice of deploying an uninterrogated heterosexuality within transnational feminist analyses both cedes the domain of sexuality to LGBTTT/queer studies and renders an incomplete story of the ways in which the racialized gendered practices of neoimperial modernity are simultaneously sexualized. Some of the methodological cues for probing these links have been laid out by Jacqui in earlier work, where she stages a political conversation between transnational feminism and sexuality studies by examining the complicity of state and corporate practices in the manufacture of heterosexual citizenship and nation-building structures practices as seemingly disparate as welfare, structural adjustment, and discursive legal practices such as Domestic Violence in the Caribbean, the Defense of Marriage Act, and the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy of the U.S. military.<sup>12</sup> She suggests one possible analytic strategy by bringing these practices into ideological and geographical proximity to one another and by foregrounding heterosexual regulatory practices as those of violence. Thus, she is able to bring sexuality within the racialized gendered practices of the state and capital both within and across formations that have been separately designated as colonial, neocolonial, and neoimperial and conceive of the transnational across a wide range of ideological, political, economic, and discursive practices straddling multiple temporalities and multiple interests. This question about the connectivity of multiple though unequally organized geographies, temporalities, and interests bears on the question that is at the heart of our consideration, that is the relationship between the politics of location and the politics of knowledge production and who is able, that is, legitimized, to make sustainable claims about these links. And it raises additional questions about the analytic and political consequences of deploying an either/or framing: either connectivity or separation. Hierarchies of space and place mark what we have called the cartographic rules of the transnational in the syllabi we examined. Thus, while the transnational

as elsewhere signals the spatial separation of sites of knowledge, the transnational as U.S. or Eurocentric signals connectivity, but on the basis of a hierarchical spatialization of power

### Multiplying Radical Sites of Knowledge

Let's now consider the antiviolence and political mobilizations to abolish prisons that dovetail with antiglobalization and antimilitarization campaigns. Activists in these global networks have examined how punishment regimes, including the prison, are intimately linked to global capitalism, neoliberal politics, and U.S. economic and military dominance (Sudbury 2005). More specifically, however, it is the incarceration of increasing numbers of impoverished women of color that enables us to track the links between neoliberal privatization, the U.S. export of prison technologies, organized militarization, dominant and subordinate patriarchies, and neocolonial ideologies. As Sudbury argues, "Women's testimonies of survival under neoliberal cutbacks, border crossing, exploitation in the sex and drug industries, and life under occupation and colonial regimes provide a map of the local and global factors that generate prison as a solution to the conflicts and social problems generated by the new world order" (2005: xiii). One of those social problems is the massive migration of impoverished women and men from the global South instigated by neoliberal globalization, who are now disproportionately criminalized together with Indigenous and Aboriginal women from Canada and the United States to Australia.

Sudbury's collection, *Global Lockdown*, is significant for thinking through these relationships refracted through the transnational spatialization of power for several reasons. First, it is located within critical antiprison and antiviolence projects such as Critical Resistance, the Prison Activist Resource Center, the Arizona Prison Moratorium Coalition, and Social Justice. Second, the contributors to the collection, in Sudbury's words, are "intellectuals both organic and intellectual, former prisoners, political prisoners, activists, women in recovery, former sex workers, immigrants and indigenous women" (xi), who by virtue of their differentiated locations point to the gaps that ensue when political struggle is not attentive to connectivity. Third, to take seriously the insights of differently positioned intellectuals is not to argue that prison intellectuals or sex workers have knowledge too; rather it is to say that their location engenders an epistemic advantage that researchers not similarly positioned have been unable to mobilize. It helps us to explain why scholars "have yet to locate race, citizenship and national status at the center of the prison boom" (xviii). And fourth, it enacts different border

crossings of geography and the nation-state; of time and the continued, albeit discontinuous, traffic between the colonial, the neocolonial, and the imperial; among and between different colonized spaces; of different yet related political mobilizations at the center of whose praxis is the labor of building connectivity not only to upset the cartographic rules that would position the prison and the brothel as separate and unrelated spaces and the women within them only as "objects of scholarly study and state rehabilitation" (xxiv) but to redraw and therefore reiterate through practice the connectivity of those spaces and ultimately of the political struggles that make that connectivity possible. What then is the ethical responsibility of the teacher in the university classroom who wishes to teach about globalization and privatization, militarization and the racialized gendered global lockdown?

If to talk about space is to talk also about geography, then to talk about geography is to talk also about land and the fierce contestations over land that are at the center of both neoimperial and colonial land appropriation. And if we think the ways in which the colonial traffics in the neoimperial, then it becomes possible to delineate the many ways in which white settler colonization continues to be an important dimension of the spatialization of power at this very moment in history. It also explains why struggles for sovereignty and the retrieval of stolen lands figure so centrally in Aboriginal, First Nations, and Indigenous politics.

Aboriginal, First Nations, and Indigenous activists and scholars together have written and organized at the fragile border between the master histories of legislated inclusion and the always disappeared, the twin ideological companions of the material practices of genocide. Locating this matrix within the context of white supremacy, Andrea Smith (2006: 68) has argued that "[the logic of genocide] holds that indigenous peoples must disappear. In fact they must *always* be disappearing in order to allow non-indigenous peoples' rightful claim over this land." In *Conquest*, Smith pulls from the lived experiences of Native Women to draw links between this disappearance and the organization of a colonial patriarchy that deployed sexual violence against Native women—and other women of color—who were and continue to be positioned as "rapable," and "violable," in much the same way in which land is appropriated, raped, and violated. In this formulation, it is not so much the elsewhere cartographic rule that is at work—*elsewhere* as in outside the boundaries of modernity—but rather absence, that "present absence," as Kate Shanley (cited in Smith 2006) calls it, which in this ideological script has presumably no knowledge to possess. Thus, fashioning political struggles in ways that refuse these contradictory divides provides

insight into how and why struggles for sovereignty and for land are simultaneously political, physical and spatial, metaphysical and spiritual.<sup>13</sup> Of course one central question that emerges here has to do with the ways in which that disappearance in the colonial and imperial geography travels within the academy and manifests as negligible numbers of Native students, teachers, and administrators and, as significantly, their disappearance in curricular and other pedagogical projects in the classroom.<sup>14</sup>

We noted earlier that the hierarchies of place position a “community” that is racially homogeneous and otherwise undifferentiated. But mapping community from an understanding of the differentiated and heterogeneous colonial spaces of “containment, internment and exile” (Burman 2007: 177) creates the possibility of a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the subjects who are positioned to stand outside of modernity, presumably outside of citizenship, displaced from land in the same way that, for instance, the “deportable subject,” the “admissible subject,” “the present absent subject,” the suspect subject are positioned by the state against the exalted national subject (the term is Thobani’s) within the segregated landscape of transnational modernity. It is the *combined* work of activists and scholars that has brought these meanings to our understanding of occupied territory within white settler states.

Thinking through the outlines of a radical feminist project at a time when U.S. imperialism, genocide, incarceration, militarization, and empire building have significantly deepened is both tough and necessary.<sup>15</sup> While a “multiple feminisms” pedagogical strategy may be more analytically viable than the “Euro-American feminism as the normative subject” of feminist and LGBTT/queer studies curricula, the specter of cultural relativism remains intact. Transnational feminist solidarities and ethical cross-cultural comparisons attentive to the histories and hierarchies of power and agency cannot be premised on an “us and them” foundation. Our conceptual foci would need to shift and that might be possible when different cross-border practices, spaces, and temporalities are brought into ideological and geographic proximity with one another in ways that produce connectivity and intersubjectivity (albeit a tense or uneven one) rather than an absolute alterity. We would need to be attentive to how we think the object of our research, for what the antiprison/antiglobalization mobilizations suggest is that solidarity work provokes us to pay close attention to the spaces of confinement that warehouse those who are surplus or resistant to the new world order (Sudbury 2005: xii). “Multiple feminisms” would need to be anchored in ways of reading that foreground the ethics of knowledge production and political practices across multiple borders—both those that are hypervisible

and those that are somewhat invisible—within hierarchies of domination and resistance. And questions of responsibility and accountability need to be central to this pedagogy, as do ethnographies of the academy as sites of struggle and contested spaces of knowledge.

What might a map of a radical, nonnormative transnational feminist solidarity pedagogy that is attentive to the genealogies and spatializations of power across multiple borders look like? Clearly syllabi are crucial spaces for thinking the reconfiguring of knowledge, spatial practices, and for respatializing power. So perhaps the first element in this map making is making the underlying epistemological assumptions visible and tracking that visibility throughout the life of the course. This requires making three interrelated moves. The first is to demystify and destabilize the old cartographic binaries set up by the academy and by the pedagogic and spatial practices within our syllabi so that we can think about the transnational, specifically transnational feminism, by looking at the ways cultural borders are crossed and the way hierarchies of place are normalized. The second attends to the hyperracialization and sexualization of the various “elsewheres.” Precisely because the academy fetishizes these elsewheres in the service of its own identity formation, race and sex must be central to our thinking about the transnational. And the third would require that we ask very specifically what kinds of border crossings we want and what are their ethical dimensions? This is a tough question, for it has to do not necessarily with the question that there are, according to Richa Nagar, “varying forms of knowledge evolving in specific places,” but more crucially, “what we are in a position to do in producing knowledge, namely, constitute ourselves as political actors in institutions and processes both near and far” (2006: 154). Fundamentally, then, we are talking about breaking the “epistemological contract” (the term is Sylvia Wynter’s [1995]) that consigns the hierarchy of space and positions only those at the top as capable of producing and disseminating that knowledge. And breaking that epistemological contract would necessarily entail disinvesting these academic identities from the will to power, moving beyond a liberal “policy neutral” academic stance to actively developing a radical ethic that challenges power and global hegemonies.

This map requires that we take space and spatialization seriously. To think the transnational in relation to the inherited uneven geographies of place and space would require holding in tension questions of power, gender, race, and space. Who resides where and what kinds of knowledges do these residencies generate? We would examine those oppositional spatial politics that are not in the first instance invested in reconstituting insides and outsides, the citizen and noncitizen. The spatial links that the transnational makes

visible need always to be emphasized so as not to reinscribe the normative cartographic rule of the transnational as elsewhere and therefore recycle colonial cartographies that support the mandate for conquest. It is these politics of spatialization, with their attendant ethical imperatives, that allow us to understand colonial/imperial racial and sexual underpinnings of border crossings "without losing ourselves" or privileging an elsewhere. Location matters in this model of a feminist solidarity transnationalism.<sup>16</sup> And we can learn how to be location specific without being location bound.

Based on this analysis then, our earlier definitions of the transnational in *Feminist Genealogies* would need to wrestle with the following: 1) the links between the politics of location, the spatiality of power, and that of knowledge production; 2) the physicality and materiality of space in terms of contestation over land; 3) a sharper focus on the ethics of the cross-cultural production of knowledge; and 4) a foregrounding of questions of intersubjectivity, connectivity, collective responsibility, and mutual accountability as fundamental markers of a radical praxis. Indeed it is the way we live our own lives as scholars, teachers, and organizers, and our relations to labor and practices of consumption in an age of privatization, and hegemonic imperial projects that are at stake here.

Clearly the world has undergone major seismic changes that might have been difficult to imagine almost a decade ago. It may well be that the contradictions between the knowledges generated in the classroom and those generated within grassroots political mobilization have been more sharpened given the increased institutionalization of oppositional knowledges and the increased embeddedness of the academy within the imperial militaristic projects of the state. And yet it's clear to us that without our respective involvement in political work outside (and sometimes in the in-between spaces within) the academy, it would be almost impossible to navigate the still contested spaces we occupy within it, spaces where we are called upon to be consistently attentive to our spiritual and psychic health. And so we continue to do this work across the fictive boundaries of the academy, constantly wrestling with its costs, and knowing that the intellectual, spiritual, and psychic stakes are high, but believing that it is imperative to engage in the struggles over the production of liberatory knowledges and subjectivities in the belly of the imperial beast.

#### Notes

Many thanks to Richa Nagar, Amanda Lock Swarr, Linda Peake, Jigna Desai, and Katherine McKittrick for invaluable feedback on this essay.

1. We are now situated in academic contexts in the USA and Canada, although much of our work emerges from in our location in the U.S. academy for over two decades.
2. See especially Valentine Moghadam, *Globalizing Women* (2005). We should also note that the transnational is not always already a radical category or one that speaks to a transformative or liberatory praxis.
3. Witness the struggle of women of color faculty denied tenure at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (Conference on Campus Lockdown: Women of Color Negotiating the Academic Industrial Complex, Ann Arbor, 15 April 2008); witness also the struggle over the inclusion of "scholarship in action" as part of tenure and promotion guidelines at Syracuse University (2007–2008).
4. Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis, "CAFA and the 'Edu-Factory,'" contribution to the edu-factory online discussion, 5 June 2007, and "Rete per l'Autoformazione, Roma" edu-factory discussion, 11 March 2007. Chandra was part of this discussion in 2007. For more information contact info@edu-factory.org.
5. In this materialist reading we do not pose the question about whether the sacred cajoles us into thinking space differently. To think about the sacred in relationship to space and to bending these cartographic rules, see McKittrick and Woods's (2007: 4) discussion of the Atlantic Ocean as a "geographic region that . . . represents the political histories of the disappeared," and at the same time a place of the unknowable. Coupling this tension between the "mapped" and the "unknown," they suggest that "places, experiences, histories and people that 'no one knows' do exist, within our present geographic order."
6. See Chandra's earlier work (Mohanty 2003: chap. 7), where she argued for an anticapitalist feminist project that examines the political economy of higher education, defining the effects of globalization in the academy as a process that combines market ideology with a set of material practices drawn from the business world. See also Jacqui's examination of the curricular effects of academic downsizing, the failures of normative multiculturalism and liberal pluralism, and the critical imperatives we face at this moment to teach for justice (Alexander 2006: chaps. 3 and 4).
7. See, among others, Sunera Thobani (2007).
8. Many thanks to Jennifer Wingard for research assistance for this project. Most of the research for this essay was conducted in early 2006, and the syllabi we analyze were all accessed electronically. We deliberately chose not to use our own syllabi, or even to discuss the curricula at our own institutions.
9. This was true of all the syllabi, except for an introductory course to LGBTT/queer studies, in which colonial, immigrant, and native histories of queers of color indicated a recognition of the transnational within the United States without identifying it as such (the terms used here were diaspora and globalization).
10. Often, globalization was used to signify the transnational, and sometimes the terms were used to signal the same phenomena.
11. See Alexander (2006: chap. 5) for a detailed discussion of cultural relativism in the context of the transnational feminist classroom.
12. See Alexander's chapter five, "Transnationalism, Sexuality, and the State: Modernity's Traditions at the Height of Empire" (2006).
13. Winona LaDuke (2005); Pinto (2003).

14. See "Diversity in Academe," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 26 September 2008, Section B; Smith (2005); Ward Churchill and Winona LaDuke (1992); Sarah Deer, "Federal Indian Law and Violent Crime," in Smith (2006: 32-41).
15. In Chandra's earlier work (2003: chap. 9) describing three pedagogical models used in "internationalizing" women's studies, she suggested that each of these perspectives was grounded in particular conceptions of the local and the global, of women's agency, and of national identity, and that each curricular model mapped different stories and ways of crossing borders and building bridges. She also suggested that a "comparative feminist studies" or "feminist solidarity" model is the most useful and productive pedagogical strategy for feminist cross-cultural work, claiming that it is this particular model that provides a way to theorize a complex relational understanding of experience, location, and history such that feminist cross-cultural work moves through the specific context to construct a real notion of universal and of democratization rather than colonization. It is this model that can put into practice the idea of "common differences" as the basis for deeper solidarity across differences and unequal power relations.
16. We are indebted to Katherine McKittrick for this formulation.

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