

Transcription for Episode 7: “Feminist Perspectives on Living a Rhetorical Life in a Transnational World”

Run Time: 57:39

AH: Allison Hitt (co-executive producer, host)
JP: Jess Pauszek (introduction)
RD: Rebecca Dingo (guest speaker)
DO: Dana Olwan (guest speaker)
Anna: Anna Hensley (guest speaker)
TD: Tim Dougherty (guest speaker)
ES: Eileen Schell (respondent)
BK: Ben Kuebrich (co-executive producer)

AH: You’re listening to This Rhetorical Life, a podcast dedicated to the practice, pedagogy, and public circulation of rhetoric in our lives.

Cue music: “Stay the Same” by Bonobo.

AH: The interviews we have are always special, but this week’s episode is a particularly special event. On March 22nd, the Composition and Cultural Rhetoric Graduate Circle—a group of PhD students here at Syracuse—hosted our first live-recorded podcast event: “Feminist Perspectives on Living a Rhetorical Life in a Transnational World.” Jess Pauszek, a first-year CCR student offered a more thorough introduction of the meaning, purposes, and goals of this theme.

JP: In this podcast initiative, we think of the phrase “rhetorical life” to include all the daily and scholarly means of persuasion. Our podcast theme today, Feminist Perspectives on Living a Rhetorical Life in a Transnational World, sprang from the emergence and growth of transnational feminist work in the field of rhetoric and composition. This work has been highlighted through various platforms: in 2008, *College English* the special issue was on feminist transnational research; at the biennial Feminisms & Rhetorics Conference—this year called “Rhetorics, Feminisms, and Global Communities”; and by key scholars like Rebecca Dingo, Eileen Schell, Wendy Hesford, and others.

In rhetorical studies, feminist scholars are taking up transnational work by examining such issues as international policies and arguments, pedagogies and classroom writing assignments, and methodologies for rhetorical genealogy, archival work, and engagement with communities.

Beyond our own field, though, Women's and Gender Studies scholars have been engaging with transnational feminist work for even longer. This research has taken up transnational feminism through seeking to understand social movements and solidarity building; critiquing international politics as gendered activities; and examining women's lives, experiences, and histories as cross-cultural struggles. In both of these fields of study, transnational feminism seeks to understand how complex networks of linguistic,

economic, geographical, political, and cultural factors flow across local, national, and international borders affecting real people and real communities.

So this podcast event today is an effort to engage with some of these interdisciplinary conversations. Our panel aims to join the multiple perspectives in order to engage in a feminist dialogue about where we can go next with our teaching, our research, and our daily lives. To be sure, this panel promises to present diverse and even perhaps contradictory views and implications for feminist transnational approaches. But at the foundation of this discussion is the acknowledgment in transnational feminist work that borders are porous and extend beyond the United States, and that our work should move past U.S.-centric and Western world narratives. Transnational feminism moves beyond internationalization and globalization, and beyond comparative and contrastive rhetorics that place Western traditions at the center while deeming rhetorics of other nations as the periphery. Instead, we seek to understand the interactions and intersections among geographic, economic, social [and] linguistic structures, as well as cultural ideologies. To do this, we must rethink what it means to be transnational, how movements of texts, knowledges, and peoples happen across and beyond borders of nation-states, and how we as scholars and citizens can act rhetorically in a transnational world.

For this discussion, we've asked our panelists to talk about how they engage rhetorically as feminists in their work and day-to-day lives: From a feminist perspective, what does it mean to live a rhetorical life in a globalized world? Why is a feminist perspective productive for 2013? What are important sites and lived spaces in which we need to be rhetorical? How do you bring a feminist perspective that highlights a transnational world into your teaching, your administrative duties, your service work, your field commitments, personal life, and your activism? How do you locate transnational issues and sites that are important? And finally, how do you enact a feminist transnational method?

These questions are only a starting point, and we know that each panelist will take them up in varying insightful and productive ways. So let us continue the conversation as we seek to make meaning in a transnational world and construct new spaces of agency as feminists within this rhetorical life.

AH: To facilitate this conversation, we invited a range of diverse speakers with different areas and levels of expertise on transnational feminism and rhetorical studies. First, you'll hear from featured speaker Rebecca Dingo—Associate Professor in English and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Missouri. The next speaker is Dana Olwan—Assistant Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Syracuse. Next are two PhD students here in the Composition and Cultural Rhetoric Program: Anna Hensley, an ABD doctoral fellow and Tim Dougherty, a third-year doctoral student. The respondent for the discussion is Eileen Schell—Associate Professor of Writing and Rhetoric at Syracuse.

First up is Rebecca Dingo.

RD: To lead a rhetorical life in a globalized world for me is to always explore beyond what

appears on the surface of discourse as normal and everyday face-value, to look past isolated moments of rhetorical persuasion to the dynamic cultural, political, and economic powers present that are not so obviously present in a given moment—and it is within the recognition and analysis of how these forces intersect that I am compelled to act. This approach may sound somewhat obvious, but this sort of work is oftentimes common in the field of feminist rhetorical studies, which so often focuses on individual women’s rhetorical acts within a specific moment of time. Rather than focusing on an isolated moment or action, a transnational feminist model emphasizes that the category of “woman,” or indeed her words, are entangled within a variety of connections.

To understand women’s oppression, I consider not only specific speech acts or local circumstances but how that specific speech act and circumstance relate to and are informed by contexts of the current moment: supranational polices, colonial history, global economic structures, and very complicated power relationships between 1/3 and 2/3s worlds. Following Shari Stone-Mediatore, I situate “language practices within far reaching political and economic systems.” Ultimately, deep, meaningful rhetorical work, then, requires recognizing the centrality of gender, race, sexuality, ability, *and* geopolitics in understanding the spoken and resulting material effects of discourse.

So *living* a rhetorical life for me means constantly (re)cultivating a transnational literacy. At its basic definition, literacy includes reading and writing practices that are used to interpret and evaluate knowledge. Yet, as Deborah Brandt points out, literacy can be a powerful “economic, political, intellectual, and spiritual resource” that offers new ways of understanding our world. As such, as Kim Donehower, Charlotte Hogg, and Eileen Schell point out, literacy practices must promote thinking and writing about and acting upon the complex interrelated economic, social, political, and cultural systems that create inequalities. For transnational feminist and cultural studies scholars, literacy additionally means considering affective economies (which is part of the study of my next book) and how cultural systems have schooled how we receive, react to, process, understand, and then *act* upon that information. What I mean by a transnational literacy, then, is cultivating reading and pedagogical practices—and in this case I mean both pedagogies within the classroom and in pedagogy’s broader sense of what Raymond Williams has described as “permanent education”—that advances literate understandings of how we fit into complicated and overlapping global systems and ideologies. Transnational literacy is a way of reading and actively responding to the complex networks where rhetorics travel and are deployed as well as to the external social, economic, and geopolitical influences that serve as exigencies.

Let me offer you a few brief examples:

As I began in my book *Networking Arguments*, if as rhetoricians we take at face value Hilary Clinton’s call to empower and mainstream women into policy affairs at the 1995 Beijing conference on women, then we might assume that her call to empower women and her recognition of women’s poverty across the globe ended up having positive results for those very women. As my work shows, however, unless we unpack and explore the pretext of her words and then follow the material work of her words, we might not have

learned how other policy makers picked up that very rhetoric of mainstreaming and empowerment to create policies imbued with neoliberal notions of personal responsibility and neocolonial notions of the backward and helpless so-called third world woman *at the expense* of recognizing structural violence—for example structural adjustment policies, economic migration, environmental degradation, colonial history, and political and cultural economies to just name a few.

Additionally, in the last few years I have become a bit obsessed with what I have come to call “armchair activism”—which is also part of the study of my next book—which I see arising out of what Wendy Brown has called “neoliberal governmentality,” where wealthy and mostly US citizens are asked to participate from afar in ending some sort of oppression in the so-called developing world—and oftentimes this takes place via social media. Some examples that you might have heard of include the Half the Sky movement, The Girl Effect, Stones to Schools, Kiva, KONY 2012, and TOMS shoes. These examples demonstrate to me the need to develop a transnational literacy that firstly seeks to identify the collective affects and structures of feeling present in the 21st century that impel citizens to participate in anti-oppression movements in order to, secondly, offer new reading and writing pedagogies or transnational literacy practices that work to re-orient, as Sara Ahmed calls it, these common narratives away from a politics of pity and monetary exchange and instead connect them to the historical yet ever-present geopolitical and local structures that constrain women’s agency. This literacy project seeks not only to lay bare the structural violence that is hidden, but it also seeks to lay bare the affective economies that keep structural violence hidden.

These examples demonstrate the connection between language, the circulation of texts, knowledge, ways of knowing and feeling, and resources in a globalized political economy. But more importantly, they demonstrate that traditional forms of rhetorical analysis—ones that maintain static notions of speaker, audience, and context—can no longer contain all the influences at play within a rhetorical exchange. Therefore, as a practicing rhetorician I often consider *how* to do ethical feminist work as 21st century feminist rhetorician. What does this approach look like? What kind of literacies do I need as a scholar before I act and do I need as an activist before I act? What do I need to understand about the contexts that shape people’s lives in a globalized world?

Let me end by attempting to show this approach by quickly drawing on a common touch point many of us shared recently: the 4Cs in Last Vegas last week. If we are talking about the feminist practice of networking and reading connections between things that might not appear to be connected transnationally, we can of course look at how texts circulate as I do, but we can also look at how *locations* and *spaces* are continually rhetorically constructed through transnational power relationships. For example, in Las Vegas we see the legalization of sex work by the state (and then this is advertised along corners all along the strip) by laboring (mostly of color and possibly immigrant) men standing on street corners wearing shirts that advertise the ability to “order women” in 20 minutes (much like food delivery) and handing out photos of topless women. The state supposedly manages sex work, so sex work is public. Yet, as Elizabeth Bernstein and Alison Brysk each have noted, sexual exploitation happens both out in the open through

structural violence (through images and everyday practices) and in the private—in domestic work in homes and hotels, in sweatshops, on farms, in state-sanctioned prostitution activities. State-sanctioned rhetoric can hide the various violences that circulate under the radar of the so-called safety of the state.

In Las Vegas, where the display of women's bodies for consumption is normalized, transnational feminism shows us how the normative display of women's bodies as objects is linked to a larger continuum of gendered violence with material results, like the Steubenville case. Transnational feminism can link how the status of women as objects of casual staring makes it easier to exploit them and their labor. This exploitation of labor is especially true for immigrant or migrant women who are shaped by a transnational political economy and who are drawn to Vegas to work in the service industry. Ultimately, developing a transnational feminist literacy offers us nodes on the network where we can act, and it reveals to us the rhetorical and material structures we must take into account as we act and communicate and write. Thank you.

AH: Next you'll hear from Dana Olwan.

DO: To start, I'm going to say that I'm inspired by the initiator's desire to re-connect our words with our worlds and help us understand how what we say shapes and informs what we do in a transnational context. So in response to the questions that they asked regarding the intersections of rhetoric and transnational feminist theory and practice, I want to engage seriously the challenge they pose to feminist rhetoricians and practitioners that "we must rethink what it means to be transnational." So I would like to address the urgent call in two very brief parts. In the first, I will question what the transnational means, what it entails, and how it gets enacted through a focus on the indigenous movement for dignity struggle and sovereignty, known as Idle no More. In the second part, I'll engage some of the rhetorical and political challenges experienced by feminist academic work through narrating my own research experience as someone who studies honor-related violence and crimes in local and transnational contexts. My focus throughout this response is in articulating both the possibilities and limits for forging material alliances, connectivities, and activities in a transnational and increasingly transnationalized world.

I can already see the links between what we're talking about. So let me begin by speaking to the transnational. As is well known by now, transnational feminist theory has emerged out of a commitment on the part of feminist scholars in general and feminist scholars of color in particular, to address what Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar call the "asymmetries of globalization." So the term, which has a specific articulation and origin—a genealogy, if you will—is rooted in a desire to articulate a feminist vision and politic that is not constrained by and contained within the borders of the nation-state. So in addition, the term reorders feminist priorities by decentering their primary place accorded to US and first-world geopolitical, racial, socioeconomic, and gendered and sexual interests and concerns. In this way, transnational feminist theory conceptualizes itself, contradistinctively from global and international feminisms. Methodically, it is often posited as a panacea for US feminism's hegemonic powers: its gaps and fissures.

Transnational feminist theory, as Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Jacqui Alexander explain, is a radical praxis—a vision that is articulated through “a commitment to work systematically and overtly against racialized, heterosexist, imperial corporatist projects that characterize North American global adventures.” While radical and revolutionary in principle and rhetoric and spirit, the transnational has—as Mohanty and Alexander concede—normativizing potentials.

So I want to ask then, in 2013 what does the transnational stand for? Who and what does it encapsulate? Who does it make visible and at what expense? What diverse geopolitical interests and expanses does it perverse, and how does it sometimes further—rather than subvert—the exclusionary education and gendered logics of the states it seeks to transcend? What are the vocalizations and silences embedded in the transnational, drawing on Inderpal Grewal’s critique of human rights regimes, I want to ask about the regimes of the transnational. In other words, I want to think about the transnational—sorry, I want to think about what the transnational renders legible and intelligible and how and why. How does the transnational also become a totalizing discourse? In its focus on the global, what are the occlusions it secures at the local level?

So in asking these questions, I do not mean to dismiss the usefulness or necessity of a radical transnational theoretical framework, rhetoric and practice. After all, it is precisely this vision drawn from the work of various first world and third world transnational feminist activists and scholars that informs my own transnational political affinities, intellectual pursuits and cultural practices. Rather, I ask these questions to suggest that a focus on the transnational alone may obfuscate the role of the local in shaping the global.

So a look at Idle No More can help make this more visible. Emerging from a very local Canadian context of targeted legislative attacks on indigenous governance and sovereignty, Idle No More is shaped in response to Canada’s particular past and ongoing legacy of colonialism of indigenous lands, lives, and bodies. So this movement offers an alternative to the vision of economic extraction accompanied by environmental destruction driving Canadian state interests in and utilization of indigenous lands.

Idle No More, as indigenous academic activist Leane Simpson tells us, is an alternative based on deep reciprocity. It is respect, it is relationship, it is responsibility, and it is local. So through multipoint cultural rhetorical and political strategies, the movement confronts exclusionary state policies and practices and reimagines Canada’s borders and boundaries. Linking a critique of global capitalism with the contestation of settler colonialism, Idle No More teaches us about decolonialization in a time of war and empire. So as a movement encompassing a series of acts, Idle No More is designed to contest conditions of colonialism and occupation. It thus brings our attention to the situated context in which oppression becomes articulated and resisted. Rather than look over there, it teaches us to ground ourselves in the over here, to understand both our collusions with and contestations of hegemonic power right here right now.

So on the surface this movement may appear to be a local, regional and isolated one. But its effects as many have seen have already traversed the borders of Canada, connecting

indigenous communities across vast spaces, including Australia, New Zealand, China, Nepal, Egypt, and Palestine. So what one might ask does a movement located in the particularities of our neighbor to the south—sorry, to the north, I just moved from Canada [*laughter*—so what does a movement located in the particularities our neighbor to the north have to do with the realities of the United States? But to pose this question, to entertain it even, one must actively or tacitly forget the very local context and reality of past and ongoing native struggle and survival against the overwhelming odds of the US nation-state. So in this way then, our focus on the global can override the particularities of the local. It can conceal the injuries on which the nation-state is founded. It can gloss over struggles within the spaces we live in. It can, in an effort to suture the wounds of global, render invisible the imperative for solidarities within the very communities in which we live, work, grow, and play.

So in conclusion, let me turn briefly to the discursive and rhetorical—and I don't claim to be a rhetorician, so feel free to question me later. [*laughter*] I study honor-related violence in four interrelated transnational sites of Canada, the US, Jordan, and Palestine. In my work, I think about the ways in which honor-killing discourse is informed by international legislative and human rights bodies, including the United States and amnesty international—sorry, the United Nations and amnesty international. So in addition to this global context, I look at the local discourse surrounding these crimes, I study the local and global relationally, and I define honor crimes by placing them within a broader continuum of gendered and sexual violence—the very broader continuum that Rebecca spoke about earlier. So in writing against honor killings, I'm often asked questions about my own cultural, racial, national, and religious backgrounds. I'm often put in a position where I must rhetorically, politically, and intellectually contest crimes that I neither tolerate nor condone. So in my research and writing, I think through the interconnected racial, socio-economic, national, and transnational discursive and material logics through which the crime is understood, articulated and even enacted. Because these crimes are often placed outside of a broader continuum of gendered violence, and without intention to the local manifestations of violence, including state and interpersonal violence that deliberately target the lives of racialized and indigenous women on this continent, my work troubles the exclusive focus on this crime and its rhetorical mobilization by nation states. In challenging these dominant scripts, I believe—and you may not agree—but I engage in what Wendy Hesford and Eileen Schell describe as a transnational rhetorical analytic.

So in my writing, I ask what narratives can we imagine, construct, and author that can help us fight gendered violence in intersectional, material, connected and historical ways? What rhetorical feminist theories and practices can connect the structure of violences of settler colonialism, migration, and globalization with the personal, intimate, bodily experiences of gendered and sexual violence? So to answer these questions, I thus seek to produce work that neither occludes the competing stakes and visions in discourses of transnationalism nor accept the transnational as a free floating rhetorical signifier. For me, transnational feminist practice is deeply rooted in the connections between the local and the global, the particular and the abstract, the collective and the personal, the invisibilized and the spectacularized, the word and the world. Thank you.

AH: The next speaker is Anna Hensley.

Anna: So I'm going to start in the abstract. My work starts with Jay Dolmage's definition of rhetoric as "the circulation of discourse through bodies." In the third Octalog, Dolmage argued that "studying any culture's attitudes and arguments about the body always connects us intimately with attitudes and arguments about rhetorical possibility. That is, to care about the body is to care about how we make meaning." In other words, looking at the way a culture talks about the body and looking at which kinds of bodies and embodiments a culture values indicates who is seen as a subject and who is granted the status of being a "fit" rhetor—of being someone assumed to have the agency to speak and to be heard.

I think the definition of rhetoric as the "circulation of discourse through bodies" lends itself nicely to feminist work given feminism's long history of concern with the varied and intersecting ways that bodies are marked and with the way these demarcations affect agency. But I think a transnational feminist lens calls us to remember that the way we talk about the body is neither static nor culturally contained. As it encourages us to recognize networks, to trace circulations of power, and to pay attention to relationships, transnational feminism reminds us that bodies—including our own bodies—exist in neoliberal, globalized economic framework where capital, ideology, and even bodies themselves are continually moving across borders, shifting in meaning and having varied material affects as they circulate.

To put it differently, a story about a body is never just a story about a body. It's always a story about a body in relation to others and thus invokes a whole set of discourses and values that we need to be paying attention to.

Transnational feminism reminds us that stories about the body have always played a powerful role in Empire, outlining parts for various actors to play and dividing the world into clean categories—civilized and uncivilized, moral and immoral, masculine and effeminate, colonizer and colonial subject.

Narratives about the body are powerful precisely because they are pedagogical. They teach us how to think about ourselves and our experiences. They teach us how to orient ourselves to one another. They teach us ways of treating other bodies, other people. They teach us our "place," whether a place of privilege or subjugation, and they teach us our proper way of acting within that place.

But the stories we tell about the body can also be tricky because they have a tendency to hide their motives and cover over their ideological foundation. I believe that transnational feminism calls us to uncover and trace the circulation of ideology in the stories we tell about our bodies in order to highlight the logics of power at work in neoliberalism and Empire.

I'm going to move to something more specific now. I should say this is an example I picked because it popped up in my news feed yesterday and I picked it precisely because it's not remarkable; it's just the kind of thing that's happening now.

So starting May 1st, employees of CVS Pharmacies will be asked to submit to the collection of their weight, BMI, and blood glucose levels if they are part of the company's health insurance plan. The company insists that the new program is voluntary. However, those who opt out of the new data collection will have a \$50 fee added to their insurance bills every month—making the cost of opting out a \$600 annual charge. CVS believes that their program is not far off from programs instituted by other companies that try to incentivize healthier practices. I would argue that CVS is woefully fuzzy on the distinction between an incentive and a punishment. More disturbing is the fact that there's been no word yet on how the data collected from employee health profiles will be used, but it seems very likely that this information could serve as the basis for assessing employees higher premiums based on their weight.

The new CVS program is rooted, of course, in ongoing discourses about the “obesity epidemic” or the “war on obesity”—here, you have your choice of panic-inducing phrases. These discourses thrive on the construction of crisis because crisis and panic work powerfully as justifications for invasive measures that increase surveillance and discipline the body. When someone criticizes CVS for compromising the privacy of its employees and coercing them into submitting to health profiles, a multitude of voices are quick to defend the measure by saying that the crisis is so great, that something must be done no matter how drastic, no matter how invasive.

But this story carries with it a couple of different lessons about the body at work that I want to focus on. First, there are very specific bodies being invoked by this program, even as CVS works to universalize the bodies of their employees. While there are of course people working in management positions who are on the CVS health plan, the majority of CVS employees are no doubt service workers being paid minimum wage. Low wage service-sector jobs tend to be jobs where women and people of color are over-represented. The story the CVS program tells us is that the employees affected by the new program—employees who are implicitly raced and gendered—somehow present a greater health threat, are in greater need of surveillance, and have less ground on which to resist the program. This is part of a much larger discourse scapegoating poor people for the state of health in the U.S.

But there is also a larger discourse coming into play here about labor and productivity that, in the face of continuing anxieties about the state of the U.S. economy and the position of the U.S. in a global economy, argue that America is burdened with a fat, unproductive labor class that threatens our standing as a world power. We're taught to fear an overseas workforce that is not only cheaper, but more fit, and we're told that if we're deemed unfit to do our jobs, it's our fault if we lose them. If we want to restore the power of the U.S., we're told, we need to properly discipline the body to ensure that we're not only ready and able to work according to the demands of neoliberalism—but that we need to be ready to fight and defeat our enemies. This isn't just a story about

companies saving money on health care—it's a story about the strength and productivity of the American body working in service of the free market.

But this isn't by any means the only example of a powerful story being told about the body, right now in this moment, right? Recently actress Michelle Williams appeared in redface in a photo spread for *AnOther* magazine. Stop and Frisk laws are on trial in New York City. Legislation recently proposed in Arizona would make it illegal for trans people to use a bathroom that doesn't match the sex designated on their birth certificates, so remember to bring *that* to the bathroom with you. [laughter] Disabled Iraq war vet Tomas Young wrote a "last letter" to George W. Bush and Dick Cheney blasting them for their roles in the Iraq war before deciding to end his life. And we have the juxtaposed coverage of high profile rape cases like the recent Stuebenville convictions with the coverage of gang rapes in India, and those are sort of mutually educating.

We need to pay attention to ideologies, to linked logics of power that mutually construct bodies along multiple axes. Because the point is not to recuperate a single identity at a time but to fight a larger logic of power acting on multiple bodies in multiple ways across multiple borders. To that end, I want to close with a set of questions to ask as we confront these stories about the body:

When is the body made visible and when is it allowed to disappear? When is the body made hypervisible and when is it deliberately eclipsed? How is the body marked and what kinds of values does this marking point to? What kinds of emotion do stories about the body invoke and what kinds of actions are they meant to elicit? What groups or subject positions are being invoked, implicitly or explicitly when we talk about the body? How does a story about one kind of body mutually construct other bodies in other places or in other subject positions? What is the lesson we're being taught through these stories? What's the didactic endgame? And most importantly, how do we begin to create new stories and new vocabularies for talking about the body that resist a colonizing logic and find rhetorical possibility in difference?

AH: Next up is Tim Dougherty.

TD: I step to this mic today with trepidation, not only because I'm humbled by the incredible work being done by the folks at this table, but also because I see a number of folks in this audience—many of them my antiracist, feminist mentors—who are infinitely more qualified to testify on this topic than me. But I also step with excitement, honored to join the long overdue, and largely feminist-led, transnational turn in rhetorical studies.

As I do so I'm trying to step with determination and perspective, seeking to work in alliance with Black and Two-Thirds World Feminists like Joy James who have long called the academy to "pivot the center" of knowledge production and have long led the way of transnational organizing to oppose all forms of oppression.

But I step first with a story:

Almost 12 years ago, not long after we fell in love, Tara and I took a weekend to go hang out with my parents. That first night, after my Mom went to bed, Tara and I got into a spirited discussion with my dad about politics, economics, the future. I was really energized by the exchange, and my Dad and I continued to banter for a while after Tara went to bed. I felt like a proud peacock who'd performed well for both my new partner and my parent alike, but when I joined Tara upstairs to say a quick goodnight—separate bedrooms for the unmarried in my Irish Catholic household, of course—I was shocked to learn that the conversation that so energized my Dad and me had completely frustrated Tara. From her vantage point, she'd been merely a spectator to the argumentative posturing of two loud Dougherty dudes. What I had experienced as a fun conversation, she'd experienced as an exhausting and futile effort to get a word in edgewise. This gulf between our experiences of the very same moment—energized vs. exhausted, authorized vs. frustrated—coupled with my utter obliviousness to her side of this shared story to become the first of many invitations in our relationship to check my male privilege, to trouble my all-too-easy whitely and male understandings of the goodness of my good intentions and my unreflexive attempts at rhetorical identification in the world.

It has become one of a number of cringeworthy experiential memories that I now carry in my body, memories wherein I have parroted the discourse or practices of white and/or male supremacy. These memories of solidarity missed or epistemological violence wrought spur me these days to try to practice Krista Ratcliffe's "rhetorical listening" in order to make more conscious and accountable identifications across race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation in a world that is becoming increasingly connected even as it becomes less and less habitable for more and more people under the centralizing accumulation dynamics of global capitalism.

I must admit that it feels dizzying to make this lightning quick move from a story about kitchen table white patriarchy to the global and glocal dynamics of capitalist exploitation in the name of "development." But these are the dizzying shifts of scale demanded of a 21st century transnational feminist politics—from a macro solidarity with those most marginalized by capitalism's search for accumulation to a micro politics of decolonial love that starts, quite literally, at home. As Chandra Mohanty argues in her "Under Western Eyes' Revisited" anticapitalist transnational antiracist feminist solidarity still proceeds from "an analytic framework that is attentive to the micropolitics of everyday life as well as to the macropolitics of global economic and political processes" (230), rooted in a methodology that "draws on historical materialism and centralizes racialized gender" (231). Indeed, Incite! Women of Color Against Violence's most recent collection is entitled *The Revolution Starts at Home*, and provides resources for challenging and transforming domestic and sexual abuse within radical activist communities. This is a micro politics engaged in the messy work of building a liberated world for all people from the ground up, all the while armed with a clear-eyed analysis of the power dynamics structuring the global heteropatriarchal political economy.

The challenge for a transnational feminist rhetoric, one profoundly taken up by Professors Dingo and Olwan, Wendy Hesford and Eileen Schell, as well as fellow Syracuse alums Mary Queen, Jen Wingard, & Gale Coskan-Johnson among others, is to

re-shape the critical analytical, performative, historiographical and pedagogical tools of feminist rhetorical studies in order to trace the connections and dissonances as rhetoric moves through these interarticulated scales from the intensely local to the profoundly universal, to trace how cherished tropes and topoi like democracy or empowerment deform and mutate across & within borders to serve the interests of capital and powerful Imperial nation-states like our own. More pressing than analysis alone, though, we rhetoricians are also called to forge new languages to provide connective tissue necessary for solidarity and action across and despite these militarized borders and seemingly disconnected scales of everyday life.

So, I'm seeking to put my shoulder to the wheel at the level of history. Wendy Hesford tells us in her bibliographic essay "Global Turns and Cautions in Composition Studies," that "the global pivot calls for new questions about and new perspectives on the relation between past and present prototypes of globalization" (795). Following Hesford, I am trying to practice historical listening and accountability logic by studying the rhetorical history of prior transnational justice movements, specifically the decolonial and transnational constitutive rhetorics of Irish Nationalism in 19th century North America in the years post-Potato Famine. As I seek to understand how a politicized, justice-seeking people who perceived their own colonization at the hands of British settler colonialism and industrial capitalism worked to sustain a liberation movement for their people in the face of overwhelming odds, I also marvel sheepishly at the ways their borrowed Republican Nationalist rhetorics helped them conveniently forget their own complicity with settler colonialism and white supremacy in their new host country. These dynamics in the Irish case raise some questions for me today that I'll close with concerning proximity and distance, complicity and solidarity. And these kind of echo questions that we've already brought forward:

1. In what ways might our own avowed antiracist and transnational feminist rhetorical practices collude with and obscure ongoing participation in settler colonialism, right here in Onondaga Country, but all over the Americas and beyond? And how might transnational feminist rhetorical methods productively re-turn to North America's own contested palimpsest borders of settler states and indigenous Nations in order to decolonize our justice rhetorics rather than occupying a new round of settler activism?
2. Similar to the ease with which Irish in Ireland could clamor for American abolition of slavery while Irish in America—feeling the heat of their own economic marginalization—largely chose to refuse to identify with abolition or in solidarity with the African diaspora in North America, how might transnational feminist rhetorics today help us to trouble the ease with which those of us in the 1st world clamor against poverty in distant places—like Professor Dingo was talking about—of the 2/3 worlds out there, while avoiding the difficult work of building alliances across race, class, and colonialization right here in our own neck of the woods?
3. Finally, knowing how the masculinist 19th Irish emancipation politics invisibly relied on women for lots of the organizing work, they called themselves the Fenian Brotherhood but women were forefront organizers erased from that history. How might we men take

responsibility for permanently abolishing rape culture and dismantling the white male supremacy encoded into our national, institutional, and kitchen table conversations, but in solidarity rather than appropriation? Thanks.

AH: Our respondent to the panelists is Eileen Schell, who you'll hear next.

ES: In 2007, Susan Jarratt asked me if I would put together a workshop on labor and transnationalism for the Rhetoric Society of America summer institute at Rensselaer Polytechnic University. When she asked me to take this on, I immediately thought of partnering with Rebecca Dingo, whom I had heard speak at various conferences at feminism and transnationalism. I really thought that Rebecca's work was among the most important work going on in our field on that topic. So Rebecca and I came together and assembled a workshop on rhetoric and transnationalism that examined how current economic and political structures were influencing what we called "the cultural flow of people, labor, capital, and knowledge across borders, thus making it necessary to re-examine the relationship between citizenship, nationalism, identity, and geopolitical location." And I'm quoting right there from the workshop proposal we put together.

The workshop drew a wide variety of scholars in rhetorical studies who were attracted to this notion of pairing rhetorical studies with transnationalism. And a number of them were working to understand how their studies of language and literacy could account for the transnational. They were doing projects that they had sort of considered to be in domestic contexts, whether it was in the U.S. or the European context. But many of them were trying to think about how do I branch out? How do I move from sort of thinking within the confines of the West to thinking to other geopolitical locations and how do we understand the interconnectivity between different geopolitical locations?

Now, the workshop drew a wide variety of people and a lot of conversations happened which we at the time were very valuable at that moment. But our emphasis in the workshop was also on how rhetoric can be a productive partner in examining how arguments and movements circulate and are diffused through transnational networks, and we really wanted to emphasize that rhetorical studies has a set of tools and abilities and conceptual frameworks that can be brought to transnationalism that will be very, very productive for transnationalism. There's a tendency to think, *Oh, we have to go outside to other fields, bring those theories to our field, and we don't really have anything to offer other than we're going to bring these theories to our field.* But we wanted to emphasize the productivity and the possibilities of rhetorical studies of transnationalism.

As Rebecca's argued in her book, *Networking Arguments*, we have to examine how rhetorical concepts travel—how they're circulated, reframed, and remade for different purposes, different organizations, and also contexts. And as rhetoric and rhetors travel across contexts and borders, they're connected to the material conditions of their circulation. My own work on transnationalism has addressed how environmental activists, such as Indian feminist Vandana Shiva and late Kenyan feminist-activist Wangari Maathai, have worked transnationally on issues of bio-piracy and sustainable development especially for women using both national organizations and transnational

networks of activists— and also scrolling between languages, different languages, different locations, and different contexts, using all of the available means of persuasion at their grasp to struggle for sustainable development policies for women in their home nations and also internationally— and also as they educate larger publics and help them try to acquire the transnational literacy to understand how development works in a local situation, a regional situation, nation-state situation, and an international situation.

More specifically, I'm interested in how discussions and activist work about the environment are being forwarded from the two-thirds world by women in the global South instead of organizations in the U.S. or Canada or Europe.

How does Maathai and Shiva's geopolitical location shape how they see environmental rhetoric and environmental activism? How does feminist work on women and development shape their thinking and their activism from their local situation to thinking regionally, nationally, internationally, transnationally? And how do they reach across borders to build alliances with organizations across the globe?

So I don't have time to develop that, but one of the things I want to say is, what is a key question we have to ask always when we teach or write in a transnational world: How are social relations imbricated by flows of people, labor, capital, and knowledge across borders? There's a materiality to this work, and I think there's a tendency for people to think, *Okay, transnational, this is a theory*. But transnationalism is really about that materiality—where do people, goods, materials and knowledge come from and how do they get *here* or there? How are they or we produced by policies and structures that go beyond a single nation-state context?

And this kind of thinking has perhaps come to me over many years through growing up in the global fruit industry where the product that we grew in eastern Washington—many of you know that I grew up on a family farm, an orchard—the product that we grew, apples and pears was grown locally, picked by migrant farm workers from Mexico and central America. Many of them left their countries because agricultural policies and development policies made it *impossible* for them to stay on their small farms. Our crop was then shipped to Asia, to Japan and Taiwan, some of it making its way to the U.S. domestic market. You can buy Washington apples by the way over at Tops [Friendly Market]. There was a very local, very regional culture on that family farm. But a transnational flow of labor and goods all connected to trade policies and immigration policies. These forces acted upon all of our lives and upon the land as a monoculture. My white middle-class farm family was able to stay put on our land for 83 years until the farm crisis came and then there was displacement at that point. And there was also the history of the land.

The land was wrenched away from the Wenatchi people, the Native Americans who lived in that region, who gathered the camas roots up on the mountainsides, who fished for migrating salmon in the Columbia River and hunted deer in the canyons that now hold the large apple orchards. The Homestead Act and Indian Removal policies effectively consolidated the Wenatchi people on the Colville Reservation, which was far away from

that land that they were used to occupying. To this day the Wenatchi people have not been granted the fishing reservation that was promised to them by the U.S. government. So even in what many would consider to be a very local situation—an apple orchard, local food—you can read the larger transnational culture. Our bodies, as Anna has put it, have histories—embedded power relations in their circulations, migrations, and in some cases their ability to stay put.

And in ending I want to go back to some of the questions that were asked by the panelists that I think could open up some interesting discussions for all of us. How might the discourses of the transnational have totalizing effects? This is a question that Dana was asking. What is made visible and vocal through the transnational? What and who is made *silent* through the transnational? How can the transnational obfuscate the local from the global, as well as make that visible? What narratives can we imagine to address gendered violence? How are stories and narratives about the body pedagogical? What groups and subject positions are evoked when we talk about the body? What is the didactic endgame? And this is directly from Anna. And also coming from Tim, but also in terms of thinking about Rebecca's work on public works [and] on public policy, what are the histories of transnational movements for social change? What alliances are made possible? And also I want to get back to something that's been really, really important about Rebecca's work over many years: What's the role of studying public policy in our work in rhetorical studies? How have we taken up that challenge of looking at public policy and how governments and international bodies make policies and how those policies circulate and have effects that might be very different in different contexts? So I think that's one of the things that she's really done in pushing forward our work in rhetorical studies is really bringing that lens of public policy as well as transnational feminist rhetorical studies. So thank you, I hope we can engage in further discussion and I just really appreciate being part of this.

Cue music: "Stay the Same" by Bonobo.

AH: We knew this panel would offer invigorating and insightful discussion and raise important questions about transnationalism, feminism, and rhetoric, so we wanted to give speakers an opportunity to respond to each other. This last bit, then, are responses from Rebecca, Dana, and Anna that tease out the tensions between the transnational and the local, examine labor within political economies, and ground this conversation into the material space of the classroom.

RD: I think one thing I noticed happening I think across all of the papers is the tension between the notion of the transnational and the local. And Dana, you, I mean, really, I think you made that clear, and it's something that I've been thinking about, and some questions people have asked me about my work is that how do we look at the local and the transnational and I'm going to not answer that question right now, but I'm going to throw that out I think for more conversation, I think that's a productive conversation to have. But I think that, in a lot of ways, Anna, you offer us an answer to that by looking to the body, which is so local. And I think it's really the way that you're thinking about the body within the visceral and then also within the discursive and within the transnational

is really useful for us to think about those scales and those layers.

And then also-- I think one of the other core questions that, Eileen you just asked this too, is how is it that the transnational is obscuring the local? And I think that what is happened I notice in a lot of scholarship that I have seen on transnational, and this is coming also from my next book project when I'm looking at these kind of what I'm calling, for lack of better words right now, armchair activist or web 2.0 activism, where I think I think the transnational is very present and it's all over our Facebook feeds, it's all over Twitter, and whatnot, and it's a way to kind of have us have quick information about what is happening across the globe, but also oftentimes that is completely without a connection of what is happening here within the United States.

And so, as I think it was Tim I think that you had said that what does it mean that we are willing to give a woman \$25 as a micro loan to help start a business, but yet perhaps the business around the corner has failed because of the movement of Wal-Mart, and so I think that it's really important to think about the way it's easy to give \$25, and we can feel really good about that but not necessarily involved with our own communities. And so, I'm going to leave it there to open up that conversation between the tensions between the transnational and local, then.

DO: I don't know that I have much to add, but I'm really inspired by this conversation, and it makes me want to go home and write and be excited to be living in this place, because I felt displaced for a while since I got here. So, one thing that I want to emphasize and one thing that's really energizing for me is listening to the links between our work. We haven't even talked, and we've been able to say things that actually spoke to one another; we could hear one another without meeting one another. So I think that speaks to the power of the transnational as a radical practice in a way that Talpade Mohanty and Alexander imagined. So that is really exciting. It means we're taking the transnational really seriously and engaging it for all its possibilities and limits, and that's really inspiring.

So, some of the links that I saw all through our talks was when all of us were talking about forms of gendered and sexual violence. So we were talking—we're trying to make links between the rape in Steubenville and what's happening in India. We're trying to see what are the gendered and sexual logics, and what are the patriarchal logics, under which such violence becomes possible, logical, narratable? So that's really interesting that we were doing that already; we were mapping the national and transnational and making these connections visible.

The other thing that was really interesting in hearing all of our talks is how much the native was centered in all of our analysis, how much the local is actually already present. So that's really exciting as well. And for me, that's really inspiring because what we were talking about isn't a form of spiritual, political, or cultural appropriation. What we were talking about is a form of actual respectful solidarities and even moving beyond that, what does the respectful solidarity actually mean? What does it look like? How is it enacted? So that's really cool.

The materiality of this work, that this was not simply—I was really nervous when I was invited. I was like, *I don't know what they mean by rhetoric, does rhetoric foreclose the material. Can I talk about both?* So it's clear to me that none of you think of the rhetorical without actually exploring the material. None of you think that that's possible, and that's really an important lesson for all feminists; that's actually one of the first lessons of feminist theory.

Migration—thinking about borders. So one of the things that transnational feminist theory gets us to do is think about how borders are porous, how ideas can travel and why they travel in the ways that they do, why they circulate in the ways that they do. But, the other thing that we might want to think about is how borders get reified at the national level, at the nation-state level. How are they being securitized, at what expense, at what cost? Who's allowed in, who is locked in, who is locked out? These are some of the questions I was thinking about listening to all of your talks.

The other very important part to the all of our talks is the focus on labor and transnationalism or the political economies, the affective political economies underpinning our interest in the transnational. So how does the cultural flow of capital and labor and people affect, transform the transnational, the relations between it and the relations outside of it. Language, the power of language, how does language articulate the transnational? How does it help visibilize the transnational, the local, and the global and the relations between them, and how can it also be complicit in invisibilizing the transnational?

The interconnectivities are really inspiring and important, and that's something that we might want to think about. So, if we're trying to imagine what a rhetorical feminist, transnational feminist practice may look like, it's clear that it's based in an understanding and appreciation for interconnectivities. So I guess my last point that I'm going to make is actually another question maybe we can take on. So in all of our talks we're talking about these links between the academic work that we do and the activism that we do or imagine ourselves doing so when we talk about armchair activism, so I guess what I'm asking is how do we render the academy, the place from which we are all living, some of us thriving, some of us dying, accountable to the transnational? And I'm here not talking about the transnational imagined through let's send students over there to learn about the cultures of the other in a three-week condensed program, I'm talking about getting the academy to be accountable to the precise links and linkages through which many of us are trying to talk and speak. So I'll end there.

Anna: And I just want to respond by sort of synthesizing some of the things I've heard across the panel in response to one of the questions that was part of our prompt, which is how do these things manifest into our classrooms or how do we take them into account as feminist teachers. So I think there are a lot of different points that have come up, different points of emphasis within transnational feminism that can definitely come to bare in the classroom. A highlighting of materiality. A focus on affect and the role that emotion plays. A focus on local action and on local solidarities, especially as way to counter act a sense of I think despair among students that there's nothing that can be done or there's

nothing that's happening.

Attention to connectivities, but also an attention to dissonance. Work to uncover ideology that is often hidden or obscured. A focus on creating or looking to people who are working to create alternative narratives, again, to sort of get out of that place of despair. A resistance to seeing things as static, understanding things as circulating and circulating through porous borders. And I would also add to this talking with students about questions of access in the University, what are the politics who actually gets to be in the classroom, or how one has to behave in the classroom to be able to get something out of that space. I think that when we're looking at these things, these points of emphasis within transnational feminism, thinking about how they manifest in the classroom, it's not a question about content, about bringing particular kind of content into the class, but emphasizing these things as process and as method and as creating encounters for students that allow them to engage in these things as method and that's process.

So less about, you know, making sure that all of the readings stack up correctly and especially within the context of a writing class, creating investigative opportunities or creating opportunities for students to ask critical questions and to engage in research processes that don't have kind of discrete end. That don't necessarily come together in the way that we might traditionally imagine them. Maybe raise more questions than they provide answers, and sort of operating on faith that those will kind of continue to grow as students take them beyond the class.

And so that that demands a very different kind of classroom. That sort of assumes that students are going to learn through what Robert McRuer calls in his book *Crip Theory* a process of decomposition. So that we're not demanding the students remain unified liberal subjects who never break, never have any moments where things kind of fall apart. And allow that moment of falling apart, allowing that moment of things being too big, too great or messy and having to really grapple with them, allowing that to be the kind of crux of the learning process.

Cue music: "Stay the Same" by Bonobo.

AH: Thank you to all of the amazing speakers who participated in this panel, to the Writing Program and Syracuse RSA chapter for co-sponsoring this event, and to all of you for listening in on this exciting discussion. I'm Allison Hitt, and you've been listening to This Rhetorical Life.

BK: This Rhetorical Life is brought to you by graduate students in the Composition and Cultural Rhetoric Program at Syracuse University. Executive Producers of this Rhetorical Life are Ben Kuebrich and Allison Hitt with additional production and editing from Karriann Soto, Tamara Issak, and Seth Davis.