

# "Thinking Beyond Borders"? A Transnational Feminist Critique of Discourses of Internationalism in Canada

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## Abstract

This paper presents a transnational feminist critique of discourses of internationalism in Canada by analyzing a speech delivered at the 2008 Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences. The paper explores how feminist discourses are sometimes mobilized in defense of dominant (inter)national narratives and argues in support of transnational feminist interventions.

## Résumé

Cet article présente une critique féministe transnationale des discours sur l'internationalisme au Canada en analysant un discours présenté au Congrès des humanités et des sciences sociales de 2008. Cet article explore la façon dont les discours féministes sont parfois mobilisés pour la défense d'exposés de faits (inter)nationaux dominants et milite pour le soutien d'interventions féministes transnationales.

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During the first week of June, 2008, close to 10,000 researchers and academics gathered at Vancouver's University of British Columbia (UBC) for the 77th annual Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. This event, held each year at a different Canadian university, attracts delegates from over seventy scholarly associations across the country and has been described as "a national celebration of intellectual life in Canada" (CFHSS 2008). Although Congress is founded upon the sharing and showcasing of Canadian scholarship, the 2008 conference theme, *Thinking Beyond Borders - Global Ideas: Global Values*, invited attendees to transcend national and disciplinary divides. In the official welcome contained in the *Congress 2008 Delegate's Guide*, UBC president Stephen J. Toope described the conference theme as "a wonderful opportunity to explore what it means to be global citizens" (CFHSS 2008, 2).

During the conference, Toope offered his own thoughts on the meaning of global citizenship in a keynote address entitled "Canadian Universities and a New Internationalism." Here, the UBC president drafted a vision for Canada's role in fostering global flows of knowledge. Toope's speech was passionate in delivery and potentially controversial in content, for it positioned an urgent call for internationalism within a platform of social justice, and named racism and neocolonialism as pressing problems for Canadian scholarly analysis. At the same time, however, this vision left unchallenged specific assumptions that upheld many of the power relations it sought to redress. The talk also prompted a lively critique, in which two attendees asserted that in efforts to think globally, Canadian scholars must not sacrifice the country's values, particularly the

progressive feminist values that preserve gender equality in Canada.

As an audience member, I wondered what this conversation suggested about the ways that internationalism is conceived in Canada. How could Toope move seamlessly between the language of social justice and that of national competitiveness? How "new" was this "new internationalism," and from what past was it distinguished? How could gender be omitted from Toope's discussion of global citizenship, and then foregrounded in the defense of Canadian values? How was feminism both absent from, and implicated in this conversation, and in the relations of power that it served to uphold?

This paper explores these questions by taking Toope's speech and the ensuing discussion as a site from which to examine a set of internationalist discourses that circulate widely in Canada. Although the analysis centres on this particular address, it is not written as a personal critique of Toope's speech; rather, I analyze this speech as an expression of the tensions at work in efforts to imagine a transnational scholarly practice. Just as it would be naïve to romanticize the Congress theme of *Thinking Beyond Borders* as evidence of a critical transformation, it is also unhelpful to dismiss the stated commitment to border crossing as only an instrumentalist expression of the neoliberal academy. In an effort to tease apart the complex interconnections between the competing discourses of transnational social justice and national economic prosperity, the paper demonstrates how genuine efforts to achieve social justice can be constrained by particular historical, material and discursive conditions. In doing so, the paper charts a relevant site of struggle within the politics of academic work in Canada and suggests that transnational feminist scholarship provides a powerful resource with which to contest these dominant conceptions. The fact that this sort of contestation is already happening is clear from the abundant transnational feminist scholarship cited throughout this paper. My intended contribution to this work is to conduct a close reading of one articulation of

internationalism, in order to analyze the workings of this discourse and to make specific suggestions about the usefulness of transnational feminist interventions.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first and second present my analysis of Toope's speech, structured thematically in relation to issues of nationalism and global citizenship. These sections interrogate internationalist discourses critically through the lens of transnational feminism. The third section examines the panel response to Toope's address, and explores how these thematic tensions are articulated through gendered rhetoric regarding the need to protect Canada's feminist values. Here, I explore how feminist discourses are sometimes mobilized in defense of dominant national narratives, and argue that critical feminist scholars must challenge this discursive practice. The concluding section situates the analysis within broader debates in transnational feminist theorizing in order to suggest how insights from transnational feminist scholars can guide more critically reflexive ways of conceiving Canada's relationship to global processes.

### **"In Our Own Best Interests": Reproducing the Nation Through Appeals to Internationalism**

UBC President Stephen Toope delivered the keynote address during the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Breakfast Speaker Series, a selection of talks that launched each day of Congress. On this particular morning, as delegates gathered with plates of complementary food, SSHRC President Chad Gaffield offered some brief introductory remarks, explaining that the UBC President's address would be followed by a panel discussion among members of the SSHRC Governing Council. Stephen Toope strode to the platform with bounding steps, a physical expression of the enthusiasm that would soon be conveyed through his passionate address entitled, "Canadian Universities and a New Internationalism."

Toope opened his speech with

reflections on the mutual construction of borders, identity and difference:

Internationalism is of its nature about crossing borders. Yet paradoxically nothing makes me feel more Canadian, more circumscribed, than when I go across an international border. At such moments one feels one's national identity very intensely...Borders can shape identity, but they do so, often, by constraining it - pushing it into pre-established molds, and creating a sense of difference.

(Toope 2008, 2)

Calling into question the identity categories by which we define ourselves and others, Toope stressed "the importance of overcoming our differences" (2008, 4) in order to forge international networks through intellectual practice. Yet, even as he worked to transcend the nation, Toope framed his arguments in reference to a particular Canadian "we" that reproduced the nation as primary, and thus left unchallenged the racial and gendered underpinnings of nationalist sentiments.

Toope applauded Canadian universities for successfully "attracting some of the best scholars from around the world," a trend that he presented as evidence of just the sort of "intellectual internationalism" that he was advocating (2008, 7). Connecting this global circuit of scholars to the Congress theme, he declared that "the search for knowledge should never be circumscribed by borders or nationalities" (2008, 7). However, when the flow of international scholars into Canadian institutions is framed as a form of capital, calls for international relations obscure a lingering nationalism that is defined by neoliberal conceptions of knowledge and market flows. Consider the following excerpt:

The fact is that we *need* to internationalize if we are to achieve and maintain the standing we aspire to as research institutions. Our

research productivity is already dependent on international input: a bibliometric analysis of Canadian research publications across a wide range of fields shows that currently 40% of the papers by Canadian authors have foreign co-authors. (Toope 2008, 10, italics in original)

Note how the contribution of foreign scholars becomes quantified as a form of "international input" that enhances Canada's global economic standing. Toope's passionate appeal to this community of scholars assumes that Canadian academics must be convinced that internationalism is good *for Canada*. Even as borders are transgressed, they are reinscribed by a celebration of the inside.

Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan use the concept of "transnational" in their own work in order to convey the "need to destabilize rather than maintain boundaries of nation, race, and gender" (Grewal and Kaplan 2000, 3). They argue that the term *transnational* "signals attention to uneven and dissimilar circuits of culture and capital," while the term *international* emerges from a history of "existing configurations of nation-states as discrete and sovereign entities" (2000, 3). I explore this distinction between discourses of transnationalism and internationalism throughout this paper, particularly in terms of their implications for conceiving of efforts to achieve more equitable global relations.

Liisa Malkki has demonstrated that appeals to the international realm serve to naturalize what she calls a "national order of things" (Malkki 1994, 42). She argues that internationalism must be examined both as a "transnational cultural form for imagining and ordering difference among people, and as a moralizing discursive practice" accomplished through appeals to a common humanity (1994, 41). Premised upon relations among discrete nations, internationalism reproduces a liberal conception of community that is constructed through othering, even as it celebrates a supposed commonality across difference. For example, Pillai and Kline draw

on Malkki to analyze corporate narratives of global agriculture, and explore "how the internationalist construction of difference, produced through codifications of race, class and gender, is tied to the legitimation of the nation-form" (Pillai and Kline 1998, 595). In pointing to the mutual constitution of nationalism and internationalism, I do not claim to unearth a hidden nationalist agenda within Toope's appeal, nor do I question the integrity of his aims. Rather, I draw on these critiques in order to better understand how genuine efforts to forge international relations can be circumscribed by commonsense understandings of the nation as the natural form for organizing human experience.

This discursive process, whereby the nation is reinscribed through claims to transcend its borders, was most evident in Toope's discussion of the need for more international students in Canadian universities. Toope first distanced himself from economically oriented arguments that frame international students as lucrative imports. He insisted that, beyond generating revenue, "the pursuit of international students is linked to a recognition that, if we are to gain credibility and recognition for our teaching and research, we must become part of the network of learning that encompasses the globe. And in large part that means fostering diversity and global awareness at home by attracting good students from abroad" (Toope 2008, 9). This statement deploys two distinct narratives. The first, that of "credibility and recognition," concerns Canada's national profile on the international stage. The second, "fostering diversity and global awareness at home," appeals to ideals of global citizenship. Here, as elsewhere, the discourse of internationalism weaves together the projects of national prosperity and transnational solidarity, as though they were mutually reinforcing and nearly indistinguishable. Continuing on this point, Toope suggested that "foreign students help to 'internationalize' us internally, which is a real benefit to our classes by enriching debate, and to our professors and students by opening up new perspectives" (2008, 9). Who belongs to the

"us" to whom Toope refers? Do international students become a part of this imagined community when they enter Canadian universities?

Sara Ahmed and Elaine Swan (2006) have explored how the concept of "diversity" operates as a performance measure within new equality regimes in Australian and British universities. They argue that within this process, students of colour are seen to embody diversity, and therefore are expected to do the work of this performance, while institutions and white bodies are absolved of this responsibility. In a similar vein, Toope's suggestion that "foreign students help to 'internationalize' us" can be understood as an historically specific expression of white privilege, as it is clear that Canadian institutions are the intended beneficiaries of this exchange.

These instrumentalist conceptions of diversity amass international students as though they constitute a homogeneous group, and thus reproduce forms of othering that uphold transnational power differentials. These othering practices are furthered within academic research. Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen note that much of the literature on the experiences of international students lacks a gender analysis, and the few feminist studies on this subject tend to privilege liberal notions of access and equity. In their own research on the experiences of postgraduate female international students in Australia and Canada, Kenway and Bullen provide a postcolonial feminist approach, "postulating an educational contact zone created by the globalisation of the contemporary university" (Kenway and Bullen 2003, 10). The notion of the "contact zone," developed by Mary Louise Pratt, refers to a site of colonial encounter. This is an apt concept, for as Julie Matthews and Ravinder Sidhu point out, colonial relations continue to shape the geography and curriculum of international education. In their words, "the legacies of colonialism and the role played by nation-states in their quest to maintain comparative national advantage have created the conditions for spatializing knowledge by

perpetuating the largely unidirectional flow of students from the 'South/East' to the 'North/West'" (Matthews and Sidhu 2005, 58). Analyses that attend to these historical continuities can explore how racialized and gendered subjects are mutually constituted, and how international students' experiences differ in relation to particular political and historical contexts.

Although Toope promotes the admirable goal of transcending a racist fear of difference, his analysis lacks historical context and a critique of power relations. Instead, he evaluates efforts to "internationalize" academic institutions in terms of statistics, citing increases in the number of international students enrolled at Canadian universities as a positive trend that must be pursued further. Ella Shohat has critiqued similar notions within global feminist projects, where women of colour are seen to contribute value as representatives of different nationalities and cultures. She describes this tokenized effort as an "additive approach, which simply has women of the globe neatly neighbored and stocked, paraded in a United Nations-style 'Family of Nations' pageant where each ethnically marked feminist speaks in her turn, dressed in national costume" (Shohat 2002, 68). Missing from this additive account of internationalism is an analysis of the types of relationships formed through this encounter. Given the drastically unequal global conditions that structure international processes, it is highly problematic to legitimize entry into international relations in light of Toope's assertion that "the internationalization of our campuses is in our own best interests" (Toope 2008, 10).

In drafting this vision for Canadian post-secondary education, Toope draws upon a discourse of internationalism that works to re-centre the nation-state, such that the primacy of the Canadian "we" remains unquestioned. Grewal and Kaplan have called for a feminist analysis of nationalism, as "a process in which new patriarchal elites gain the power to produce the generic 'we' of the nation" (2000, 6). The "we" of Toope's speech refers to Canadian academics specifically,

and Canada more generally, but is neither gendered nor racialized, and thus leaves the preferred white, male national subject to occupy its place (Thobani 2007). Yet, as I describe in the next section, this "we" is imbued with a particular set of personal qualities; within this discourse of internationalism, the cross border exchange of knowledge not only fosters national diversity, but also produces global citizens.

### **"Promoting the Ideals of Global Citizenship": Transnational Justice and Western Universalism**

Throughout his speech, Toope consistently asserted that his internationalism is one that views scholarly practice as committed to social justice. Drawing on his own experience as the president of UBC, he spoke of "a growing sense that universities have a strong role to play in furthering the goals of social justice, both at home and abroad" (Toope 2008, 5). The avenue for these changes, he insisted, is rooted in new conceptions of citizenship: "At UBC we speak somewhat idealistically of educating future 'global citizens' who will work towards the attainment of a sustainable and equitable future for all. In practical terms this means encouraging the development of courses and programs emphasizing global awareness and civic engagement" (2008, 5). He gave the example of UBC's Learning Exchange program, where student volunteers provide support work in Vancouver's Downtown East Side. In addition to such focused programming, Toope suggested that by internationalizing the curriculum and diversifying the student body, Canadian universities will cultivate global citizens.

Transnational feminist scholars have problematized this perceived connection between transnational flows and the "rise of feelings and institutions of global solidarity" (Ong 2006, 230). In a study of international education in Australia, Matthews and Sidhu interrogate "the often unquestioned links between globalization, international education and the development of globally oriented citizenships and subjectivities" (Matthews and

Sidhu 2005, 62). They argue that, because discussions of internationalization have neglected the central debates within anti-racist education, these efforts have tended to reproduce historically established relations of domination, albeit through new practices that adhere to discourses of global citizenship. Similarly, in her research on Canadian study/volunteer programs abroad, Rebecca Tiessen shows that pedagogical ideals of fostering global citizenship often go unrealized. Instead, the main beneficiaries of these programs tend to be the Canadian students themselves, in terms of their own personal growth, as well as the Canadian government, which profits from the image of a "kinder, gentler Canada" (Tiessen 2008, 6). In drawing these connections, I do not mean to suggest that Toope's call for global citizens is driven solely by nationalist self-interest. Instead, I hope to map out some of the conditions in which global citizenship becomes conceivable, and to consider how these conditions structure the possibilities for achieving the type of education Toope envisions.

What complicates Toope's entry into this conversation is the fact that he explicitly named racism and colonialism, both past and present, as issues that Canadian universities must confront in order to foster an educational climate that promotes global citizenship. Early in his address, Toope contested the core elements of Canada's self-image as a benevolent, tolerant nation: "Canada prides itself on social understanding, on promoting diversity and multiculturalism; yet we have the recent experience of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission in Quebec before us, which suggests that many people in that province regard immigrants with suspicion and distrust" (Toope 2008, 3). Lest the non-Quebecers in the room consider themselves to be outside of racist relations, he continued:

British Columbia is perhaps the most multi-racial society in the country, yet its history is sadly reflective of racism and chauvinism, largely directed at minority groups of colour from east

and south Asia. And uncomfortably close to home, there is the history of Canada's treatment of its indigenous peoples, a history marked by betrayal and by the sense of moral and social superiority underlying colonial expansion. That is a history that continues to dog us, and that we are attempting - often feebly - to expiate today. (Toope 2008, 4)

The significance of this public assertion from a university president must be noted, particularly in the context of discourses of multiculturalism that make it difficult to speak about racial injustice in Canada (Thobani 2007). Even still, it is important to probe the limitations of approaches to racism and colonialism that emerge from discourses of internationalism.

Toope suggested that one opportunity for creating new forms of international relations - relationships that are mutually beneficial rather than imperialist - is to recognize that "the nations and peoples of the world face common enemies" (Toope 2008, 5). He listed AIDS, poverty, human rights abuses, and several environmental concerns, and concluded that "these are enemies that, whatever their origins, know no national borders" (2008, 5). Despite his acknowledgement of racial injustice, Toope's calls for an international alliance in the face of shared "enemies" is evocative of moralizing appeals to a "common humanity" (Malkki 1994, 41). While these issues do create problems throughout the globe, the "common enemies" formulation homogenizes the unequal ways in which they are experienced. For example, although Western nations are responsible for much of the world's environmental degradation, the damages are felt most gravely in the Global South. Furthermore, among those omitted from this list of "enemies" are transnational corporations that exploit workers and sustain imperial relations. Chandra Mohanty has called for a transnational, anticapitalist feminist critique that recognizes that "it is girls and women around the world, especially in

the Third World South, that bear the brunt of globalization" (Mohanty 2003, 514). Discourses of international solidarity that neglect the racialized and gendered violences perpetrated by agents of corporate globalization have the effect of naturalizing an oppressive capitalist system.

In fact, the narrative of the progressive West emerged more explicitly toward the end of Toope's speech. Clarifying the role that postsecondary institutions must perform in righting these global injustices, Toope stated the following: "In the western world, universities have become the principle engines of discovery in almost every field, and it is no exaggeration to claim that if we are to find the solutions to the social, economic, and environmental problems that loom over us, it is our universities that will almost certainly provide them" (2008, 6). Here, the imagined "we" expands from Canada to "the western world," a move that aligns national interests with an international coalition rooted in imperial histories, and deemed responsible for promoting good throughout the globe. Toope declared proudly that Canadian universities are engaged in numerous international development efforts, and offered the example of UBC's Centre for International Health project that is "helping Ecuador learn to manage its emerging environmental health needs" (15). This salvation narrative has been critiqued by many transnational feminist scholars, who have charted its operation throughout a wide range of Canadian efforts to "do good" abroad, spanning international development projects (Heron 2007) to peacekeeping missions (Razack 2004). Inderpal Grewal demonstrates how the discourse of human rights functions as a form of governmentality that produces the benevolent Western subject and the Third World victim. When Toope calls for an international coalition to "establish the moral and legal foundation for a body of international law capable of protecting people against threats to their rights by corrupt, weak, or indifferent regimes" (Toope 2008, 17), he draws upon this widely circulated salvation discourse; consequently, the two

positions of saviour and victim are sustained as the only available options. While the social justice ideals behind this formulation are genuine, it fails to interrogate the imperial histories that produce these uneven global conditions.

Grewal and Kaplan have called for "much more attention to the power relations of travel - contacts and transactions of all kinds - that are part of the knowledge production through which subjects are constituted" (Grewal and Kaplan 2001, 671). The education of the global citizen is clearly embedded in such power relations, and its construction must be understood in terms of particular historical conditions. According to Ella Shohat, "globalization is not a completely new development; it must be seen as part of the much longer history of colonialism in which Europe attempted to subject the world to a single 'universal' regime of truth and global institution of power" (Shohat 2002, 76). While Toope makes an effort to be accountable to Canada's colonial history, the naturalized terms of Western superiority constrain his vision for transnational social justice. Rather than attempt to assert a discursive break with a racist past, a transnational feminist approach recognizes that liberal efforts to produce tolerant subjects do little to reorganize relations of power (Lunny 2006; Razack 2000; Reilly 2007). Contrary to Toope's insistence that his is a "new" internationalism, analyses that foreground the interrelations of Western privilege and Third World oppression suggest that these histories are not behind us, as they continue to shape the way geographies are imagined, capital is allocated, and subjects are unevenly positioned (Heron 2007; Nestel 2006; Swarr and Nagar 2010).

### **Protecting Canada's Feminist Values: Gender as the Perceived Limit to Thinking Beyond Borders**

A round of thunderous applause followed the UBC President's passionate address. The speaker paused briefly to show his appreciation, then gestured apologetically toward his watch and bounded off the

platform, exiting the large ballroom. Chad Gaffield chuckled as he commented on the busy life of a university president, and explained that because President Toope had to rush off to another engagement, the discussion would proceed in his absence. Members of SSHRC's Governing Council were invited to respond to what they had heard over the past thirty minutes.

The first two speakers responded favourably to the speech, echoing several of Toope's central points, but the third speaker was immediately critical in her response. She took issue with Toope's synopsis of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, and insisted that the UBC president had missed the most critical point in this document: that citizens must be free to defend the central values of Quebec, and of Canada, even as they welcome immigrants from diverse countries and cultures. In elaborating her critique, the speaker immediately invoked the issue of gender as a contested terrain where Canadians must not sacrifice "our values" in efforts to embrace multiculturalism. She did not offer specific details as to how Toope's vision of internationalism might jeopardize gender values in Canada; instead she suggested that those of us in attendance could easily call to mind examples of such conflicts. Apparently, the clash between cultural diversity and feminist values was so commonsensical that it required no explanation.

A woman in the audience joined the discussion in support of these remarks, and recalled working some years prior with an international scholar who was completing a postdoctorate at a Canadian university. She explained that although she had enjoyed rigorous academic debates with this woman, the two quickly learned that they could not discuss feminist issues because they held such different cultural views. The audience member did not name the particular racial or ethnic background of this scholar, nor the questionable gender values she espoused, but we were assured that they were in conflict with "our own." The woman on stage nodded and reiterated her previous point, insisting that

we must not allow "cultural relativism" to threaten progressive feminist values in Canada.

What does this conversation suggest about the relationship between feminist discourses and conceptions of internationalism in Canada? For one thing, it foregrounds the need for interlocking analyses that explore how race and gender are mutually constituted in historically specific ways that uphold transnational relations of power. Sunera Thobani describes how, in recent years, discourses of terror have worked to redefine Canada's civilizing narrative through feminist gender values (Thobani 2007, 222). In this current formulation, citizens are invited to imagine themselves as Western, rational and progressive in contrast to oppressive patriarchal regimes of the non-West. Feminist discourses have played a crucial role in legitimizing this narrative, as a particular stream of feminist theorizing has historically relied upon colonial discourses that work to position Western feminists as superior (Mohanty 1988). Despite Toope's efforts to imagine a genderless universal subject of the "global citizen," this discussion suggests that gender continues to serve as a means of policing racialized distinctions of nationhood and citizenship.

The exchange also reveals how the notion of "values" is deployed within new forms of imperialism. Janine Brodie (2008) demonstrates that the vision of the Canadian state as one that "protects" feminist values has gained a prominent place within national mythologies, such that ongoing gender inequities are obscured through the assumption that "we are all equal now." Within international human rights discourses, Inderpal Grewal (2005) explores how the spread of "American values" secures the moral superiority of the United States as saviours, and locates the origins of supposedly universal values in the progressive "West." Reay *et al.* have shown how these global distinctions are reproduced within local encounters. Their research reveals how white middle-class parents'



positive feelings toward a multicultural education for their children often require that racialized students demonstrate similar values. They conclude that "the multi-ethnic other needs to share in normative white middle-class values in order to be of value" (2007, 1049). Recall as well that the Congress theme of *Thinking Beyond Borders* was accompanied by the subheading Global Ideas: Global Values, suggesting that questions of "values" deserve a central place within conference discussions.

What is especially interesting about how the SSHRC Breakfast Session unfolded is that although the discussion of gender values emerged as a critique of Toope's speech, it actually shares many of the terms that informed his argument, including the priority of the national "we," and the superiority of the West as world leaders. The fact that this passionate disagreement emerged from common assumptions highlights the very limited terms of this debate. Encounters like this one offer fruitful analytical sites as we interrogate the conditions in which transnational scholarship and global justice are conceived in dominant Canadian discourses. My argument in this paper is that we should take seriously the work of transnational feminist scholars as we look toward possibilities for imagining otherwise.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In his closing remarks, Stephen Toope distinguished his vision for a "new internationalism" from those forms that have been historically more common:

Crossing borders can mean simply the act of peering briefly into the way other people live, 'faire du tourisme', a journey that always ends where it began. Or it can mean a more difficult voyage, one in which we transcend social or political barriers to offer others the benefits of our research and learning, and to learn from their work - thus making it possible for us to effect positive changes in *their and*

*our* lives. (Toope 2008, 19, italics in original)

As I stated in the introduction, what drew me toward this particular address were its tensions and complexities. Toope's final remarks are admirable not only for their social justice leanings, but also for recognizing the fact that acts of border crossing are embedded within relations of power. Nevertheless, as I have argued throughout this paper, efforts to imagine "new" possibilities for transnational scholarship are constrained by historically specific conditions. I highlight these constraints not to personally criticize the UBC president, but rather to ask what might be learned from them.

Fortunately, these conditions are neither fixed nor inevitable. What I hope to have shown in this paper is that by analyzing discourses of internationalism that circulate within dominant institutional venues - in this case, the largest academic conference in the country - we can better understand how articulations of nationalism, imperialism and patriarchy continue to shape practices of knowledge production, even within genuine efforts to transcend borders. Transnational feminism has much to offer this project, as evident in the rich body of critical scholarship referenced throughout this paper, which has been generated within and beyond Canadian borders. Grewal and Kaplan suggest that "transnational" studies must "examine the circulation of this term and its regulation through institutional sites, such as academic publishing, conference panels and papers, and academic personnel matters" (2001, 664). Following their lead, feminist scholars ought to undertake studies that track the specific genealogy of transnational theorizing within Canadian academic contexts. This will help to historicize current intellectual projects in terms of their political, institutional and disciplinary antecedents. Transnational feminist scholars do not simply accept the intellectual project of "thinking beyond borders" as the grounds for transnational theorizing; instead, these feminist scholars continue to ask how, on whose terms, and

with what effects this project is imagined and enacted.

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### **Endnote**

1. In February 2007, Quebec Premier Jean Charest established the "Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences," popularly known as the "Bouchard-Taylor Commission," in response to public debates about immigration and citizenship rights in Quebec. (These debates tended to be framed in the language of "reasonable accommodation".) Headed by sociologist Gérard Bouchard and philosopher Charles Taylor, the commission proceeded with a series of public hearings throughout Quebec. The final report was released on May 22, 2008 ([www.accommodements.qc.ca/index-en.html](http://www.accommodements.qc.ca/index-en.html)). Despite depicting itself as a neutral forum for dialogue about identity, the commission and its adoption of the language of "reasonable accommodation" was critiqued by many feminist and anti-racist scholars and activists, who argued that such language reproduced racist boundaries around "insiders" and "outsiders" to the nation (Bannerji 2000; Thobani 2007).

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