

Feminist Invocations of “the Decolonial”:

Reading Resistance/Resurgence in María Lugones and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

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Abstract

In this article I juxtapose the decolonial agendas of María Lugones and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson to reveal a rich complex of similarities and differences. Situating my work in relation to the field of decolonial feminisms, I discuss how Simpson’s “kweⁱ as resurgent method” accords with Lugones’s conceptualization of decolonial feminist resistance as an embodied, infra-political achievement that deploys the logic of coalitions, and that begins with subjects who inhabit the colonial difference. However, in outlining the ultimate divergence of Simpson’s and Lugones’s respective visions, I expose the importance of a broader mapping of feminist literatures that allude to “the decolonial,” including those beyond the Americas.

Key words

Decolonial Feminisms; Indigenous Feminisms; Modernity/Coloniality; Indigenous Women; Indigenous Resistance/Resurgence; Settler Colonialism; Feminist Solidarity; Leanne Betasamosake Simpson; María Lugones

Given the increasing uptake of all things decolonial in academic settings and in social media, I raise timely questions about the concept’s utility, definitional in/congruity and effects on power relations in and beyond the academy. Inspired by the work of Unangaxⁱⁱ scholar Eve Tuck and settler scholar K. Wayne Yang (2012) on the problems that can ensue when decolonization is used metaphorically, I suggest the importance of asking similar questions about the burgeoning field of decolonial feminisms. Longer standing Indigenous feminist critiques of how transnational and postcolonial feminist analytics can unwittingly erase or eclipse Indigenous struggles also foreground my rationale (Aikau, Arvin, Goeman, & Morgensen, 2015; Byrd, 2011; Lawrence, 2005). With this broad aim, in this article, I consider notions of feminist resistance/resurgence in the works of Argentinian-born feminist philosopher María Lugones and Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson to *begin* to assess the complexity of Indigenous/decolonial feminist imaginaries and the implications for feminist solidarity.ⁱⁱⁱ To be

clear, I conceptualize these imaginaries as overlapping and, by extension, do *not* intend to promote a false separation between “decolonial feminisms” and “Indigenous feminisms” or a reductive reading of either (i.e., with Lugones standing in for decolonial feminism and Simpson, for Indigenous feminism). Instead, I acknowledge and grapple with the overlaps between and multiplicity of these literatures, starting with two of their most influential thinkers.

To this end, I carry out a close comparative reading of the ideas of Lugones and Simpson as an *initial* entry point into a broader analysis of Indigenous/feminist uses of “the decolonial”, particularly in the geopolitical region known as the Americas.^{iv} My analysis thus brings into greater dialogue bodies of scholarship that are increasingly, though still rarely, considered in tandem: Indigenous feminist thought in North America (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013; Green, 2017; Suzack et al., 2010) and decolonial feminist scholarship from Latin America and its diaspora (Espinosa Miñoso, Gómez Correal & Ochoa Muñoz, 2014). In fact, when drawing on the work of Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna/Sioux) (1992) to theorize the coloniality of gender, Lugones (2007) herself paved the way for a conversation that others have continued. Honduran-born mestiza scholar Breny Mendoza (2016), too, cites Gunn Allen along with Indigenous feminist thinkers from South America in developing a genealogy of decolonial feminism, and Catherine Walsh (2018) connects these literatures in recognizing Leanne Betasamosake Simpson as a foremost decolonial thinker. Joining such scholarly efforts, I juxtapose Lugones’s (2010) understanding of decolonial resistant subjectivities with Simpson’s (2011, 2017) theorizing of Indigenous resistance/resurgence.^v

Focusing on the extent to which Lugones and Simpson discuss similar issues when invoking decolonial resistance/resurgence, I reveal major convergences in their thinking. Overall, I argue that Simpson’s vision of Indigenous radical resurgence manifests the decolonial possibilities sought by Lugones (2010), who theorizes resistance “not because I think of resistance as the end or goal of political struggle, but rather as its beginning, its possibility” (p. 746). That is, in *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Simpson (2017) answers a question posed but left unanswered by Lugones (2010) about “the *relation* between resistance or resistant response to the coloniality of gender and de-coloniality [emphasis in the original]” (p. 746). I also consider the implications of a striking tension: matters of place, land and settlement figure much more prominently in Simpson’s depiction of what needs to be resisted (settler colonial expansive dispossession) and how (Indigenous resurgence).

My interest in contributing to a critical appraisal of feminist invocations of “the decolonial” is both personal and political: I am a US-born white feminist scholar-activist living in Canada who has engaged in and written about the “solidarity encounter” between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women in Canada and Guatemala (D’Arcangelis, 2002, 2015). As such, I have a particular investment in this issue: What does it mean to practice a decolonial feminist politic as a privileged white settler? What claims, if any, can I make to decolonial resistant subjectivity? Writing from my “locus of enunciation”^{vi} (Walsh, 2018), I hope to contribute to our collective thinking about the formulation of non-colonizing feminist solidarity in theory and practice.

This article unfolds in four parts. Firstly, to situate my analysis, I enumerate some key threads in decolonial feminist thinking. Secondly, I discuss the complementarity between Lugones’s and Simpson’s depictions of the gendered context of decolonial struggle, which both emphasize the interlocking nature of gender and race in colonial logics. Specifically, I argue that Lugones’s concept of the coloniality of gender helps explain the lasting power of the stereotypes about Indigenous women that continue to hold sway across much of Turtle Island.^{vii} Thirdly, I develop a core aspect of my argument—that Simpson’s vision of Nishnaabeg radical resurgence illustrates what decolonial resistance “grounded in a peopled memory” might look like (Lugones, 2010, p. 754). I contend that Simpson’s account of *kwe*^{viii} as resurgent method, in particular *kwe*’s capacity for “generative refusal,” exemplifies the engine of decolonial feminist resistance described by Lugones (2010) as the “oppressing ←→resisting process at the fractured locus of the colonial difference” (p. 748). Fourthly, I consider the ways in which Indigenous self-determination and relations with the land figure more centrally in Simpson’s decolonial imaginary than in Lugones’s. To conclude, I reflect on the significance of this divergence, arguing that such a profound dissimilarity should give us pause to consider how decolonial feminist aspirations more broadly are not always uniform, and could be potentially at odds.

Part 1: Decolonial Feminist Imaginaries

“The decolonial” is increasingly invoked in academic and activist circles alike to signal an anticolonial theoretical and political orientation, often without explicit reference to scholarly lineage.^{ix} Therefore, I situate this article in relation to the growing field of decolonial feminisms by providing a distillation of three broad, interrelated themes of that literature: the impact of

Eurocentric patriarchal and gender norms on colonized societies; the propositional imperative of decolonial feminisms; and the intertwined topics of subject position and coalition building. My (admittedly limited) conceptual sketch is informed primarily by scholarly pieces that discuss decolonial feminisms in these ways: as an essential strand of anticolonial feminist thought (Mendoza, 2016), as a subset of decolonial praxis writ large (Walsh, 2018), in relation to postcolonial feminisms (Ramamurthy & Tambe, 2017), and on a planetary scale (Maese-Cohen, 2010).

This variety of framings suggests that the boundaries of decolonial feminisms as a field—and therefore its relationality to Indigenous feminisms—are somewhat porous. However, a commonly cited account describes how decolonial feminisms coalesced in the 2000s as a corrective to the masculine-dominated Latin American modernity/coloniality (M/C) group^x and its lukewarm embrace of intersectionality and “lack of attention to gender or its inadequate conceptualization of gender” (Mendoza, 2016, p. 115; see also Lugones, 2007, 2010; Maese-Cohen, 2010). In this genealogy, gender critiques aside, decolonial feminisms adhere to the central premises of the M/C group. These include the insight that modernity/coloniality as a new global model of power begins with the colonization of the Americas and ushers in the “Eurocentricity of world capitalism” (Quijano, 2000, p. 537), which operates in accordance with the “social classification of the world’s population around the idea of race” (p. 533). A correlate is that coloniality, as distinguishable from colonialism, “refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerge in the context of colonialism” (Mendoza, 2016, p. 114).^{xi} Comparing decolonial and postcolonial feminisms, Priti Ramamurthy and Ashwini Tambe (2017) identify a similar geopolitical dimension to decolonial feminism, noting that it “is often associated with Indigenous scholars and those from the Americas, and postcolonial feminism with scholars from South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East” (p. 504). Walsh (2018) likewise characterizes conversations “among Indigenous, Black, and mestiza feminists” in Latin America/Abya Yala^{xii} as “especially vital and centric” to decolonial feminist theory and practice (p. 53, n19). While acknowledging its hemispheric roots, however, Walsh (2018) joins Marcelle Maese-Cohen (2010) in underlining the global purchase of decolonial feminist thinking since its inception.^{xiii}

In a concise, yet thorough mapping of the field, Walsh (2018) considers decolonial feminism its own “terrain of insurgent prospect and praxis” typified by an analysis of the imbrication of gender and race in modernity/coloniality—an analysis that counters Western

rationality and the “hegemonic discourse of white Eurocentered feminism” (p. 39). Relatedly, a central theme of much decolonial feminist writing is the impact of European patriarchal gender norms on the social relations of colonized populations (see Schiwy, 2010). Yet, the particulars of that imposition are the subject of intense debate, with scholars offering a range of hypotheses about what social structures and norms existed, and how colonialism affected those structures and norms. For instance, Walsh (2014, 2018) describes how Indigenous communitarian feminists Julieta Paredes (Aymara) and Lorena Cabnal (Maya-Xinca) critique the generalizability of Lugones’s insights into the coloniality of gender, which posit gender to be a colonially imposed fiction as is race. Instead, they argue that patriarchal and/or gender norms predated European colonialism. As Mendoza (2016) recounts, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (Aymara) also takes issue with Lugones’s theory by pointing to a precolonial Andean system of heteronormativity, albeit organized around complementarity. However, Mendoza also asserts that the debate about “whether gender is a colonial construct or an ancestral practice may pose a false dilemma” (p. 118), given the scholarly consensus about the profound effects of European colonialism on *whatever* gender relations (or lack thereof) existed in a particular society. In this way, Mendoza valorizes a key insight of decolonial feminist scholarship: “Lugones’s conceptualization of the coloniality of gender is useful precisely because it situates gender in relation to the genocidal logic of the coloniality of power” (p. 118). As I suggest below, Lugones’s work on the coloniality of gender resonates deeply with Indigenous feminist analyses of the imposition of heteropatriarchy and a gender binary across Turtle Island (see Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013; TallBear, 2018).

Another defining element of decolonial feminisms and of decolonial approaches generally is a commitment to praxis^{xiv} or self-reflexively generating alternatives to the modernity/coloniality system. Walsh (2018) defines decoloniality as simultaneous doings and undoings “that began with, but also precede, the colonial enterprise and invasion. It implies the recognition and undoing of the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class that continue to control life, knowledge, spirituality, and thought” (p. 17). For Walsh, decoloniality is both “protest and proposition” (p. 25), enactments of a “decolonial for” that counter Western rationality’s universal pretensions and “make evident concrete instances and possibilities of the otherwise” (p. 20). Paola Bacchetta (2010) also finds possibility in the “de” of decolonial feminism, describing it as “an undoing [that] also opens a space for a different kind of

doing” (p. 181). Maese-Cohen (2010) mentions a similar move on the part of decolonial feminists to “undo colonial categories of race, class, and gender” (p. 18) through embracing intersectionality^{xv} and epistemic diversity, thus evoking Lugones’s (2010) call for the colonized woman to “drop her enchantment with ‘woman’, the universal” (p. 753). For Mendoza (2016), all anticolonial theories, including decolonial feminisms, are by definition tied to political projects directed against colonialism or coloniality. However, Mendoza credits decolonial feminisms as especially useful for unearthing the subversive potential of subjugated knowledges due to a focus on “the profound influence of racialization and gendering [which] is essential to an adequate understanding of the past, to efforts to transform the present, and to strategies to envision and produce a different future” (pp. 118–119). As a Nishnaabeg scholar from Turtle Island, Simpson (2017) also emphasizes cultivating such strategies, through, for example, revitalizing Indigenous notions of gender fluidity.

Matters related to the positionality of those engaged in decolonial feminist pursuits are less straightforward. Racialized women are centered as protagonists, given that decolonial feminist theory has emerged out of the embodied, lived experiences of those placed on the so-called dark side of the modern/colonial gender system (see below discussion of Lugones, 2007). For example, Maese-Cohen (2010) draws on Lugones’s work to define decolonial feminisms as above all an “intracolonized” coalitional project. Decolonial feminisms are also depicted as theoretical framings and practices that can be accessed and adopted regardless of one’s social location, though on distinct terms (Bacchetta, 2010). If we concur with Lugones’s (2010) definition of decolonial feminism as “the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender” (p. 747), then it would potentially be open to all, which appears to be the approach of Yuderkis Espinosa, Diana Gomez, and Karen Ochoa when they define decolonial feminism as:

The coming together of the productions of feminist thinkers, intellectuals, and activists, of lesbian feminists, Afro-descendants, Indigenous, and poor mestiza women, as well as some white committed academics, with the task of the historic recuperation of our own naming of an antiracist feminist theory and practice. (cited in Walsh, 2018, p. 39)

In a similar vein, while holding up “the social movements of historically excluded, subalternized, and racialized peoples” (p. 27) as the prime sources of “decolonial insurgencies,” Walsh (2018) stresses that decolonial struggle is not the exclusive domain of such movements. Everyone must enact a decolonial stance consonant to their position in the modernity/coloniality system. It is

noteworthy, however, that though they may grant dominantly positioned subjects (i.e., white women) a role in decolonial feminist struggle, Lugones and Simpson prioritize alliances and coalition building between and among racialized and Indigenous women.

Further, there is consensus that the goal of any “decolonial for” must be to oppose destruction through *promoting* well-being and life. Among the few scholars who explicitly bring Indigenous/decolonial feminist scholarship from throughout the Americas into conversation, Walsh (2018) usefully characterizes what is decolonial about “Indigenous communitarian and decolonial feminist” scholar-activism:

By challenging the idealization of gender duality, parity and complementarity, making visible the present-day simplification and recuperation of these principles by men as mandates to control, order, define, and subordinate women . . . [these] feminists exercise an insurgence of decolonial feminist prospect, understood, in [Julieta] Paredes’s words, as “the struggle and political proposal of life.” Such struggle crosses the Indigenous territories of Abya Yala North and South. (p. 41)

As described by Walsh, these feminists mobilize, deepen, complicate and contest Lugones’s analysis of the modern/colonial gender system in order to promote life-sustaining alternatives, sharing an intersectional analysis that sees gender, race and capitalism as intermeshed.

Beyond this general goal, however, the “what” of decolonial struggle appears even more contentious than the “who” of that struggle. As Mendoza (2016) elucidates, struggle under the anticolonial umbrella—whether associated with intersectional, decolonial or postcolonial feminist perspectives—must be “defined by criteria linked to political projects that lead to decolonization. But the questions, which criteria and political projects lead to decolonization? what counts as decolonization? and which practices succeed in challenging colonialism and colonality? are intensively debated” (p. 103). Here Mendoza incorporates concerns about the use of decolonization as a metaphor in ways that, regardless of provenance, “can similarly be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further settler colonialism” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1). Notably, Mendoza does not differentiate decolonization from decoloniality in this instance. Nonetheless, it is worth asking if the same critique applies—or should apply—to projects of decoloniality throughout the Americas (and beyond): Should decoloniality always be non-metaphorical? Would that mean centering Indigenous women’s/feminist struggles about land, territory and self-determination in decolonial feminist

imaginaries? On the one hand, Ramamurthy and Tambe (2017) link these issues to decolonial feminism, arguing that “we must heed [its] insistence on engaging with the genocidal history of settler colonialism, the current manifestations of the violent dispossession of land, and its constitution of gendered racial capitalism” (p. 505). On the other, Walsh (2018) centers the epistemic element of decolonial insurgent struggles defined “as offensive actions and proactive protagonisms of construction, creation, intervention, and affirmation that purport to intervene in and transgress, not just the social, cultural, and political terrains but also, and *most importantly, the intellectual arena* [emphasis added]” (p. 34). Would an epistemic focus sway too far from the material? Then again, are decolonization and decoloniality distinct, if overlapping projects, with distinct, if overlapping aims and strategies? Broad, provocative questions such as these frame my close reading of the works of Lugones and Simpson. With it, I hope to signal the need for a more rigorous mapping of this growing and increasingly contested intellectual and political field.

Part 2: Convergences of Decolonial Struggle

As feminist thinkers, Lugones’s and Simpson’s respective visions of decolonial resistance converge in their analyses of that struggle as a terrain where gender, race and capitalism are thoroughly intermeshed. Throughout her book, Simpson (2017) emphasizes that heteropatriarchy and, by extension, gender as a social category have always been foundational to settler colonialism. Drawing on Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson’s (2014) concept of bodies as political orders, Leanne Simpson clarifies that some bodies were, and remain, disproportionately targeted by settler colonialism. Laying bare the colonialist/capitalist design behind imposing a hierarchical gender binary, public/private divide and heteronormative gender roles, she writes:

Colonizers want land, but Indigenous bodies forming nations are in the way because they have a strong attachment to land . . . All Indigenous genders as political orders also replicate Indigenous nationhood, but the colonizers are looking through the eyes of heteropatriarchy, so they see Indigenous women’s and girl’s bodies as the bodies that reproduce nations, and they see 2SQ^{xvi} bodies as the biggest threat to their assimilation and [land] dispossession project. (Simpson, 2017, pp. 87–88)

Taking stock of the colonial strategies used to dismantle the basic building blocks of Nishnaabeg society, Simpson (2017) concludes, “Gender violence and the destruction of Indigenous families are the fundamental dividing and dispossessional issues of our times” (p. 54).^{xvii} Accordingly, for

Simpson, the resurgence of Nishnaabeg political systems must center the eradication of this violence and restitution of good relations. Moreover, decolonial resistance starts when Indigenous individuals, families, communities and nations refuse the attempted imposition of the trifecta of capitalism, white supremacy and heteropatriarchy through place-based Indigenous resurgent practices, as discussed below.

Lugones (2007) presents a comparable articulation of power in her analysis of a “modern colonial gender system” wherein “heterosexuality, capitalism, and racial classification are impossible to understand apart from each other” (p. 187). Akin to Simpson, Lugones describes the violent imposition of a hierarchical gender system as inherent to that system. Lugones (2007) provides further insights into the magnitude of the changes ushered in by Eurocentric capitalism in theorizing a system that would permeate all areas of human existence—“sex, labor, collective authority and subjectivity/intersubjectivity [including knowledge production]” (p. 189)—but differentially according to race and class. Expanding on Anibal Quijano’s (2000) concept of the “coloniality of power,” Lugones theorizes the “coloniality of gender” as a system wherein gender and race are created as equally powerful fictions that interact to embed power unevenly across “light” (read: human) and “dark” (read: non-human) populations *on a global scale*. In this sense, the coloniality of gender rests on a hierarchical notion of human/non-human difference. Lugones (2007) paints a vivid picture of the resulting colonial imaginary. On the light side, we find white bourgeois women deemed “fragile, weak in both body and mind, secluded to the private, and sexually passive” (p. 202), and on the dark side, “nonwhite, colonized women . . . characterized along a gamut of sexual aggression and perversion, and as strong enough to do any sort of labor” (p. 203).^{xviii} In this system, gender together with whiteness become markers of the human: only white bourgeois women are permanently ascribed gender whereas “the colonized” are ascribed sex—not merely *identified with* non-human animals, but thought to *be* non-human animals (Lugones, 2007, 2010). Even so, under the false pretenses of a “civilizing” imperative, colonized populations were evaluated based on normative gender constructions and found wanting in order to justify their exploitation. Like Simpson, Lugones (2010) ties the colonial imaginary to a material agenda: “The colonial ‘civilizing mission’ was the euphemistic mask of brutal access to people’s bodies through unimaginable exploitation, violent sexual violation, control of reproduction, and systemic terror . . . Turning the colonized into human beings was not a colonial goal” (pp. 744–745). With this, Lugones identifies the dehumanization of entire populations—

via the creation of a modern/premodern binary, infused with interlocking notions of race and gender—as a central imperative of colonial projects.^{xix}

Such passages resonate with Simpson's (2017) description of colonially derived gender stereotypes as "four centuries-old weapons" (p. 103) still used against Indigenous women "to regulate and control my body and sexual behaviour" (p. 83). The pervasiveness of a litany of pejoratives ("dirty, squaw, bad mothers, lazy, promiscuous, irresponsible") readily invoked to reproduce the belief that Indigenous women "are naturally *less* than our white counterparts [emphasis in original]" (Simpson, 2017, p. 98) validates Lugones's conclusion that humanizing "the colonized" was never a colonial goal. Under these rules, Indigenous women can never achieve the status of "women," since gender status as such is a colonial invention bestowed on those imagined as occupying the "light" side of modernity. Lugones further suggests that colonial enterprises installed a hierarchical gender binary in societies where none necessarily existed pre-colonization. All told, Lugones's conceptualization of the coloniality of gender helps explain the enduringness of the stereotypes wielded to dehumanize Indigenous women. Extending this point, Mendoza (2016) writes, "Lugones's theorization of the coloniality of gender as dehumanizing practice that survives colonization helps make sense of contemporary issues such as feminicide, trafficking, and increased violence against non-European women" (p. 117). In fact, a *raison d'être* behind Lugones's research is to historicize contemporary forms of racialized gender violence as having roots in colonial modernity: "This gender system congealed as Europe advanced the colonial project(s). It took shape during the Spanish and Portuguese colonial adventures and became full blown in late modernity" (p. 206). While not suggesting that their analyses are homologous, I argue that Lugones's and Simpson's resistance/resurgent thinking coalesce in this regard: Lugones's work on the coloniality of gender historicizes the operation of gender in British imperial/colonial pursuits by tracing its antecedents to the earlier period of Iberian Empire (see also Harding, 2017; Mendoza, 2017).

Indeed, as decolonial feminist Rita Laura Segato (2016) points out, modern colonial gender violence is not a thing of the past; it is flourishing. Therefore, Lugones's and Simpson's respective analyses of the coloniality of gender and of "heteropatriarchy as a dispossessive force" (p. 34) remain, unfortunately, topical. In fact, a range of feminist movements in the Americas—including MMIWG2S campaigns across Turtle Island (Mack & Na'puti, 2019), the Argentinian-based *Ni Una Menos* movement (de Souza, 2019) and the recent Brazilian

mobilization *Indigenous Women against Bolsonaro* (Poirier, 2019)—draw implicitly or explicitly on a foundational decolonial feminist premise: “Violence against the colonised female body . . . was never simply private but an expressive manifestation of a certain political imaginary of conquest, the means through which colonial modernity was created” (de Souza, 2019, p. 95). Moreover, MMIWG2S anti-violence coalitions such as “It Starts With Us” purposively look to build community-based solutions as “alternatives to the state,” a move in line with the decolonial feminist aspirations outlined above (Mack & Na’puti, 2019, p. 357).

As for Lugones and Simpson, they both adhere to the decolonial feminist premise that the ultimate goal of decolonial resistance, of the “decolonial for” (Walsh, 2018) is to sustain life. Simpson’s (2017) describes this goal breathtakingly:

The Nishnaabeg conceptualizations of life I found were cycles of creative energies, continual processes that bring forth more life and more creation and more thinking. . . . The structural and material basis of Nishnaabeg life was and is process and relationship—again, resurgence is our original instruction. (p. 23)

Lugones’s (2010) description of this aim and the relationships involved is equally powerful: daily practice must “include affirmation of life over profit, communalism over individualism, ‘estar’ over enterprise, beings in relation rather than dichotomously split over and over in hierarchically and violently ordered fragments” (p. 754). As these passages make evident, Lugones’s and Simpson’s respective decolonial visions prioritize everyday, relational ways of living together that “bring forth more life” (Simpson) and valorize “life over profit” (Lugones).

A shared optimism notwithstanding, Simpson and Lugones avoid romanticizing the prospects of decolonial resistance/resurgence by emphasizing its emergence out of struggle. Lugones (2010) repeatedly references a tension wrought by the modern colonial gender system out of which springs an “adaptive and creatively oppositional” resistant subjectivity (p. 746). Similarly, Simpson (2017) identifies struggle as a springboard for Indigenous resurgence, calling on Indigenous nations to operate from “within our intelligence systems” as the way to create a “decolonial present”:^{xx}

This means struggle. Struggle because we are occupied, erased, displaced, and disconnected. Struggle because our bodies are still targets for settler colonial violence. Struggle because this is the mechanism our Ancestors engaged in to continuously rebirth the world. And our struggle is a beautiful righteous struggle . . . because this way of

living necessarily continually gives birth to ancient *Indigenous* futures in the present [emphasis in the original]. (p. 21)

This passage contains an important ontological foundation of Nishnaabeg resurgence and of other Indigenous resurgences: a comingling of past, present and future sustained through embodied practices with Aki, loosely translated as “land.”^{xxi} For Simpson (2017) this means that “the future is here in the form of the practices of the present, in which the past is also here influencing” (p. 213), and “every embodiment is therefore a mechanism for ancient beginnings” (p. 193). As I discuss further in Parts 3 and 4 below, Simpson (2017) literally grounds, in her case, Nishnaabeg resurgent struggle in place-based, embodied knowledge-production activities undertaken by Indigenous peoples, especially those political orders—the hearts, minds and bodies of Indigenous women, 2SQ and children—expressly targeted by settler colonialism.

Simpson’s (2017) stance on the past, present and future as coterminous reveals another mutual starting point of both scholars: colonialism has not completely erased pre-colonial/Indigenous worlds and therefore the epistemological basis for resistance/resurgence remains, albeit in “strangled” or diminished form (p. 25). Lugones (2010) concurs: “Instead of thinking of the global, capitalist, colonial system as in every way successful in its destruction of peoples, knowledges, relations, and economies, I want to think of the process as continually resisted, and being resisted today” (p. 748). With an explicit nod to what she refers to as Indigenous internationalism, Simpson (2017) goes further by noting “a centuries-old legacy of resistance, persistence, and profound love that ties [Nishnaabeg] struggle to other Indigenous peoples in the Americas and throughout the world” (p. 6). For Simpson, a principle mechanism for regenerating this “resistance, persistence and profound love” is kwe as resurgent method.

Part 3: Decoloniality in the Making: Kwe as resurgent method

By elaborating the concept of kwe as resurgent method, I delve deeper into the complementarity between Simpson and Lugones, arguing that in Simpson we find a rich illustration of what decolonial feminist resistance could look like when embedded in a particular struggle. I argue that Simpson’s work expands Lugones’s (2010) vision of decolonial feminist resistance, which broadly conceived is to “enact a critique of racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexuality gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social” (p. 746). Put differently, kwe as resurgent method exemplifies resistance generated at “the fractured locus of

the colonial difference” (Lugones, 2010, p. 748), that is, from the vantage point of “colonized women” who have been deemed inferior by “the colonizers.”

To conceptualize *kwe* as Lugones’s (2010) emblematic resistant subject, I briefly review a controversial aspect of Lugones’s writings—her assertions that gender and patriarchy are colonial constructions.^{xxii} In different iterations of her argument, Lugones (2007, 2010) draws on the scholarship of Nigerian feminist Oyèrónké Oyewùmí (1997) and Gunn Allen (1992), who discuss precolonial societies with either non-existent or non-patriarchal framings of gender. Thus, Lugones argues that gender and race are constructed through the colonality of gender to delimit the human in ways that did not exist prior to that historical juncture.^{xxiii} Lugones, in my interpretation, accedes to the possibility that precolonial social arrangements differentiated people according to what we might call sex or gender, but under terms quite distinct from the modern colonial gender system.^{xxiv} That is why Lugones (2010) cautions against looking “for a non-colonized construction of gender in indigenous organizations of the social. There is no such thing; ‘gender’ does not travel away from colonial modernity” (p. 746). In other words, one should not analyze such arrangements through a contemporary gender lens with its inevitable modern colonial vestiges.

Instead, Lugones (2010) calls for “bracketing” or suspending our use of concepts such as “man” or “woman” in order to access alternative possibilities of the social:

We need to bracket the dichotomous human/non-human, colonial, gender system that is constituted by the hierarchical dichotomy man/woman for European colonials+the non-gendered, non-human colonized. As Oyewùmí makes clear, a colonizing reading of the Yoruba reads the hierarchical dichotomy into the Yoruba society, erasing the reality of the colonial imposition of a multiply oppressive gender system. (p. 749)

For Lugones (2010), the practice of bracketing reveals both the imposition of oppressive gendered and racialized logics where none may have existed *and* resistance to that imposition by a “resistant subject”—a “theorizer in the midst of people in a historical, peopled, subjective/intersubjective understanding of the oppressing ←→ resisting relation at the intersection of complex systems of oppression” (p. 746). In this way, Lugones gestures toward the “active subjectivity” of resistant presence, which fractures “the locus” of colonial difference. By facilitating access to alternative histories and visions of the social, bracketing opens the way for embodied, “praxical” decolonial measures “grounded in a peopled memory” (Lugones, 2010,

p. 754). In short, resistant responses are embodied responses that emerge out of struggle, involve bracketing modern colonial notions of gender, depend on coalitions, and follow from centuries of decolonial resistance—all perspectives echoed in Simpson’s work.

In my reading, Simpson (2017) effectively brackets “woman” and presents *kwe* on Nishnaabeg terms:

Kwe is not a commodity. *Kwe* is not capital. It is different than the word *woman* because it recognizes a spectrum of gender expressions and it exists embedded in grounded normativity. *Kwe* cannot be exploited. . . . *Kwe* does not conform to the rigidity of the colonial gender binary, nor is *kwe* essentialized. In my mind, *kwe* has the capacity to be inclusive of both cis and trans experiences, but this is not my decision to make, because I do not write from [trans] positionality [emphasis in original]. (p. 29)

In this sense, *kwe* as resurgent method models the potential of bracketing modern colonial understandings of gender. Others including Dakota scholar Kim TallBear (2018) are thinking about “ways of relating that Dakota people and other Indigenous peoples practiced historically” in a manner that would not involve “movement *back* to something purer [emphasis in original]” or a “lineal, progressive representation” (p. 153). I suggest that bracketing facilitates this nonlinear, critical thinking to guard against the oversimplification or romanticization of Indigenous sociopolitical relations past and present.

Thus revealed, Simpson’s *kwe* is the resistant decolonial subject who actualizes the “lived transformation of the social,” which for Lugones (2010) includes everything from the mundane to the sublime and happens in “the production of the everyday . . . as it provides particular, meaningful clothing, food, economies and ecologies, gestures, rhythms, habitats, and senses of space and time” (p. 754). As a subject embedded in a particular struggle, *kwe* is an exemplar of everyday living and resisting at the fractured locus. Simpson (2017) says as much when drawing on her experience as a Nishnaabekwe: “You will find me relying on Nishnaabeg practices as theory, highlighting my own personal practice of Nishnaabeg intelligence and privileging the often painful and uncomfortable knowledge I carry that has been generated from existing as an Indigenous woman in the context of settler colonialism” (p. 31). With this and other passages expressing the personal as political, Simpson corroborates Lugones’s (2010) insight into the co-constitutive nature of oppression and resistance: resistant subjectivity is derivative of “the conflict itself” (p. 748), in this case, settler colonial relations.

As mentioned, however, neither Lugones nor Simpson view resistance as overdetermined by conflict. In Lugones's (2010) words, "In our colonized, racially gendered, oppressed existences we are also other than what the hegemon makes us be" (p. 746). In being aware of how colonial difference marks them, colonized subjects are agents who generate resistance to colonial subjectification. Simpson's account of *kwe* as resurgent method paints a vivid picture of active subjectivity and its dynamics, including its propositional element. In line with Walsh's (2018) take on decoloniality as "protest and proposition" (p. 25), Simpson (2017) writes:

At its core, *kwe* is about refusal. It is about refusing colonial domination, refusing heteropatriarchy, and refusing to be tamed by whiteness^{xxv} or the academy. . . . Within Nishnaabewin, refusal is an appropriate response to oppression, and within this context it is always generative; that is, it is always the living alternative. (p. 33)

In other words, *kwe*'s resistant subjectivity hinges on "generative refusal," a refusal of colonial dispossession *coupled with* a revitalization of nation-specific knowledge, or what Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) calls "grounded normativity" (in this case, Nishnaabewin). Following Coulthard, Simpson (2017) defines grounded normativity as "ethical frameworks generated by . . . place-based practices and associated knowledges" (p. 22). As detailed in Part 4, the concept of grounded normativity illuminates a key divergence between Simpson and Lugones.

Besides concurring on key aspects of resistant/resurgent agency, Simpson's and Lugones's theories dovetail in yet another way. Simpson makes evident the value of Lugones's (2010) fleeting reference to "infra-politics," a politic and form of subjectivity that "marks the turn inward, in a politics of resistance, toward liberation. It shows the power of communities of the oppressed in constituting resistant meaning and each other against the constitution of meaning and social organization by power" (p. 748). Basically, Lugones evokes the power of communities to make "resistant meaning" and define existence on their own terms by collectively turning away from the hegemon. Infra-politics finds its equivalent in the Nishnaabeg concept of *biiskabiyang*, translated from Nishnaabemowin as flight or "a turning inward toward the essence of" (p. 245). *Biiskabiyang* is the operative mechanism of generative refusal, of Nishnaabeg resurgence. As Simpson (2017) explains, "My flight to escape colonial reality was a flight into Nishnaabewin. It was a returning, in the present, to myself. It was an unfolding of a different present. It was freedom as a way of being as a constellation of relationship, freedom as world making, freedom as practice" (p. 18). Mirroring the workings of Lugones's active

subjectivity, *biiskabiyang*'s reference point is not heteropatriarchy or white settler colonial recognition, but rather Nishnaabewin: "Biiskabiyang—the process of returning to ourselves, a reengagement with the things we have left behind, a re-emergence, and unfolding from the inside out—is a concept, an individual and collective process of decolonization and resurgence" (p. 17). Simpson conceptualizes *biiskabiyang*, and thus Nishnaabeg resurgence and nation building, as concurrently individual and collective with decolonizing gender at its core. In this regard, Simpson accords with Sámi feminist scholar Rauna Kuokkanen (2019), who defines individual self-determination as a "precondition for [collective] Indigenous self-determination" and as involving "bodily integrity and freedom from violence" (p. 50). Read in context, Simpson's approach has the effect, not of romanticizing Nishnaabeg social, political, economic and spiritual relations, but of affirming ongoing Indigenous resistance/resurgence in the face of overwhelmingly difficult circumstances—"what my people have always done" (p. 32).

Simpson does more than conjure up Lugones's (2010) resistant being, however. She presents a comprehensive set of decolonial practices that would realize a "lived transformation of the social." Sharing Lugones's emphasis on the quotidian, Simpson (2017) focuses on "everyday acts of resurgence," leading us through a specific set of activities and strategies Indigenous people can undertake in a "city or reserve, in their own territory, with support or not, in small steps, with Indigenous presence" (p. 192). The possibilities are wide-ranging and consist of:

everything from becoming vitally attached to land and place, to learning language, songs, dances, stories and artistic practices; to renewing ceremonies; to engaging in land and place-based practices and ethics; to revitalizing our system of politics, governing, caring, education, and service; to reclaiming birthing, breastfeeding, and parenting responsibilities and death rituals; to regenerating the responsibilities and positions of the 2SQ community. (p. 194)

For Simpson (2017), everyday acts of resistance may "sound romantic, but they are not" (p. 198). They are, however, the substance and process of Indigenous resurgence and in this sense, provide clear answers to the "praxistical questions of the for, the how, and the with whom, and what for" (Walsh, 2018, p. 19). "It became clear to me," writes Simpson, "that *how* we live, *how* we organize, *how* we engage in the world—the process—not only frames the outcome, it is the transformation. *How* molds and then gives birth to the present. The *how* changes us. *How* is the theoretical intervention [emphasis in the original]" (p. 19). Along these lines, Simpson reinforces

Lugones's (2010) point that "decolonizing gender is necessarily a praxical task" (p. 746). Notably, as elaborated below, Simpson goes further in presenting an expansive definition of praxis as kinetics, or the act of doing, which involves the recursive engagement of mind, spirit, body and *place* to generate knowledge.

To theorize her ultimate aim—the collectivization of everyday acts of resurgence—Simpson (2017) takes direction from the Nishnaabeg idea of constellations of stars as "beacons of light that work together to create doorways" or "mappings of Nishnaabeg thought through the night sky and through time" (p. 212). She then develops the notion of constellations of coresistance wherein "constellations . . . become networks within the larger whole" (p. 217). As with individual everyday acts of resurgence, these networks can run the gamut from "small collectives of like-minded people working and living together . . . [to] larger Indigenous nations working within their own grounded normativity yet in a linked and international way" (pp. 217–218). Simpson presents Idle No More (INM), the Canada-based grassroots movement of Indigenous peoples and allies that emerged in late 2012, as an example of a constellation of coresistance that transcends national borders.^{xxvi}

The logic inherent in Simpson's constellations of coresistance resonates in part with the logic of coalition, difference and multiplicity that Lugones (2010) invites feminists of colour in particular to embrace. Lugones writes, "In thinking of the starting point as coalitional because the fractured locus is in common, the histories of resistance at the colonial difference are where we need to dwell, learning about each other" (p. 753). Likewise, the constellations of coresistance Simpson (2017) invokes involve Indigenous people of diverse genders and "Black and brown individuals and communities on Turtle Island and beyond that are struggling in their own localities against these same forces [such as] settler colonialism as dispossession, capitalism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy" (p. 228). Simpson's extension of Lugones's ideas, however, reveals meaningful differences between the two feminist thinkers. Whereas Lugones focuses on coalitions formed by and among humans, Simpson's constellations are decidedly more capacious. This is evident in her summary of *As We Have Always Done* as "a manifesto to create networks of reciprocal resurgent movements with other humans and nonhumans radically imagining their ways out of domination, who are not afraid to let those imaginings destroy the pillars of settler colonialism" (p. 10). Simpson's networks are part of an extensive "ecology of intimacy" (p. 8) that includes nonhumans and the land. In a way perhaps

unexpected, but likely welcomed by Lugones, Simpson exceeds the call to bracket modern colonial understandings of gender to question the legitimacy of the human/non-human hierarchy upon which these understandings rest—an indication of a critical point of departure to which I now turn.

Part 4: Life, Land and Indigenous Resurgence

While agreeing that the primary goal of any decolonial feminist project is to sustain life, Lugones's and Simpson's decolonial aspirations are not equivalent. Simpson's hopes for decolonizing gender and for Indigenous nation-based resurgence conjoin in a way largely unaddressed by Lugones's more macro schematic. While gender, race and capitalism emerge repeatedly in both scholars' analyses of the stakes of decolonial struggle, decolonizing gender relations for Simpson is inextricably linked to achieving "the opposite of dispossession [which] is not possession, [but rather] deep, reciprocal, consensual *attachment* [emphasis in the original]" to land (p. 43) through enacting Nishnaabewin and thus Indigenous radical resurgence.

In fact, for Indigenous feminists in North America, Indigenous self-determination or nation-based resurgence infers decolonizing gender. Kuokkanen (2019) puts it plainly: "For many Indigenous women, the struggle for integrity of the land is indistinguishable from the struggle against patriarchy" (p. 44). Aware that Indigenous self-determination and resurgence struggles have often reproduced the heteropatriarchy that has taken root in Indigenous communities, Simpson joins a long line of such thinkers to insist that these struggles be anticolonial and anti-patriarchal, and center the eradication of sexual and gender violence. Indeed, many contest as false the dichotomy of Indigenous collective rights versus Indigenous women's/individual rights (Kuokkanen, 2012, 2019; Sunseri, 2000). It follows that this notion of individual self-determination is not commensurable with a liberal feminist notion of individual autonomy, but instead encompass "coming to know one's relations in full, including family, clan, and kinship relations as well as relations with and on the land" (Kuokkanen, 2019, p. 52). As Cree/Saulteaux scholar Gina Starblanket (2017) insists, such relations are possible only if undoing patriarchy is "inherent and integral" to Indigenous self-determination struggles—*not* an afterthought: "The subversion of Western domination requires conscious commitment to engage in critical examinations of patriarchal power and privilege within our communities today" (p. 37). Simpson's concept of expansive dispossession allows for just such an examination.

It is widely acknowledged that Canada's heteropatriarchal colonial structure continues to target Indigenous women, children and 2SQ people with the express purpose of usurping Indigenous lands. Expansive dispossession refers to the broad scope of this process, which for kwe includes "the violent extraction of my body, mind, emotions, and spirit and the relationships they house from Nishnaabewin, the relational structure that attaches me to Aki" (Simpson, 2017, p. 43). For Indigenous resurgences to succeed, Indigenous peoples "have to think of expansive dispossession as a gendered removal of our bodies and minds from our nation and place-based grounded normativities" (Simpson, 2017, p. 43). As Kuokkanen (2019) tells us, "a key strategy" of Indigenous women is to seek "the leadership of those groups and individuals who have been most negatively affected by patriarchal relations of domination—Indigenous women, youth, and two-spirit and queer (2SQ) people" in order to contest and eradicate those relations. In this vein, Indigenous women increasingly call for rematriation or the process of "reinstating the political roles and authority of Indigenous women" as a viable way forward (Kuokkanen, 2019, p. 122).^{xxvii} At the heart of rematriation, according to Kuokkanen (2019), lies Indigenous egalitarianism, which "foregrounds the dignity and integrity of all genders and is predicated on the nondomination of all relations" (p. 123). In short, for Indigenous feminists across Turtle Island, and arguably in other parts of Abya Yala as Walsh suggests, to aspire to Indigenous self-determination/resurgence is to aspire to decolonizing gender and vice versa.

This is not necessarily the case in Lugones's work. A close examination of her texts on the coloniality of gender (2007) and decolonial feminism (2010) reveals few explicit references to land in general and to the dispossession of Indigenous lands in particular. All five direct mentions of land appear in "Toward a Decolonial Feminism" (2010), three referring to land in a generic sense, two to the Aymara concept of "living well" and another to Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of borderlands (p. 750). In addition, Lugones seldom addresses the specificity of Indigenous women's concerns, notwithstanding her use of Gunn Allen's work. Instead, she most often includes Indigenous women as part of the undifferentiated category "colonized women" who experience similar oppressions, as in this passage: "I want to follow subjects in intersubjective collaboration and conflict, fully informed as members of Native American or African societies, as they take up, respond, resist, and accommodate to hostile invaders who mean to dispossess and dehumanize them" (p. 748). To be fair, coloniality, not settler colonialism, is Lugones's (2010) primary analytical target: "Unlike colonization, the coloniality

of gender is still with us; it is what lies at the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the capitalist world system of power” (p. 746). Nonetheless, Lugones’s theoretical approach could contribute, however inadvertently, to conflating distinct subaltern struggles, or worse still, to the appropriation of Indigenous identities and territorial relations. Raising precisely these concerns, self-identified “settler Xicana” scholar Aimee Carrillo Rowe (2017) asks Indigenous-identified Xicana feminists such as herself to “center questions of settlement” within their praxis and analyze “the relationships among Chicana identity, indigeneity and land as incommensurate” (p. 525). Admittedly, as it stands, decolonial and Indigenous (feminist) projects are not coterminous. Herein lies my concern: when Indigenous peoples/women are uncritically incorporated into groupings such as people/women of colour, the specificity of Indigenous (feminist) struggles can get lost. At stake, as I suggest below, is the effectiveness of “the decolonial” as an explanatory and emancipatory framework.

At the same time, Lugones (2010) features the disruption of colonized subjects’ relationships to land as one of the societal ambits affected by the modern colonial gender system. In this passage on decolonial resistance, Lugones lists land dispossession (without explicitly referencing Indigenous peoples) as among the many manifestations of being “infiltrated” by coloniality:

As the coloniality infiltrates every aspect of living through the circulation of power at the levels of the body, labor, law, imposition of tribute, and the introduction of property and land dispossession, its logic and efficacy are met by different concrete people whose bodies, selves in relation, and relations to the spirit world do not follow the logic of capital. (p. 754)

In an earlier passage, Lugones similarly touches upon the limitless reach of colonial projects pursued under the guise of civilization: “The civilizing transformation justified the colonization of memory, and thus of people’s senses of self, or intersubjective relation, of their relation to the spirit world, to land, to the very fabric of their conception of reality, identity, and social, ecological and cosmological organization” (p. 745). It is plausible that both the dispossession of Indigenous lands and attacks on Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies fall under Lugones’s broad rubric of concerns. In addition, one could argue that Lugones’s and, for that matter, the M/C school’s numerous allusions to the ravenous forces of modern global capitalism imply a concern about land dispossession. Nonetheless, Lugones does not evoke land as continuously,

centrally or deeply as does Indigenous feminist scholarship emanating from Turtle Island. Land is prominent in Simpson's formulation of radical resurgence precisely because her concern is redressing the expansive colonial dispossession of Indigenous lands and bodies.^{xxviii}

Setting incongruities aside, I find it more useful to argue that the centrality of place in Nishnaabekwe resistant subjectivity gives substance to Lugones's more metaphorical claim that resistance is "grounded in a peopled memory." Lugones (2010) writes, "As I move methodologically from women of color feminisms to a decolonial feminism, I think about feminism from and at the grassroots, and from and at the colonial difference, with a strong emphasis on ground, on a historicized, incarnate intersubjectivity" (p. 746). In my reading, Lugones refers here to the materiality of embodied struggle and not necessarily to actual land/territory. For Simpson (2017), however, "grounded in a peopled memory" would connote knowledge production through "deep reciprocal embodied engagement with Aki, and by participating with full presence in embedded practices" (p. 28). In contrast, Lugones's work contains sparse mentions of the colonial dispossession of Indigenous land, and often fails to link the dispossession of those lands to that of Indigenous bodies.

It is one thing to identify differences between the respective foci of Lugones and Simpson; it is another to account for and assess their significance. In the concluding section, I share my initial thoughts on the matter.

Conclusion

This article juxtaposes the decolonial agendas of María Lugones and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson to reveal a rich complex of similarities and differences. Situating my work in relation to the field of decolonial feminisms, I discuss how Simpson's "kwe as resurgent method" accords with Lugones's conceptualization of decolonial feminist resistance as an embodied, infra-political achievement that deploys the logic of coalitions, and that begins with subjects who inhabit the colonial difference. However, in outlining a critical divergence between Simpson's and Lugones's respective visions, I expose the need for and importance of a broader mapping of feminist literatures that allude to "the decolonial," ultimately including those beyond Abya Yala.^{xxix}

My argument is three-fold. First, I show how Lugones and Simpson agree that the attempted imposition of a hierarchical gender regime was integral to the Eurocentric capitalist

colonial system and that, accordingly, the eradication of an oppressive sex/gender binary and of sexual and gender violence is vital to decolonial feminist agendas. They both embrace an intersectional lens to comprehend colonialism, heteropatriarchy and white supremacy as co-constitutive. Moreover, Lugones's insights into the "dark" and "light" sides of the modern colonial gender system help explain why dehumanizing stereotypes about Indigenous women remain deeply entrenched in North America as Simpson poignantly notes. Additionally, the unfortunate reality is that these theorists' articulations of gendered colonial violence remain relevant to contemporary women's/feminist movements throughout the hemisphere.

Second, I argue that Simpson's radical resurgence manifesto concretizes Lugones's more abstract conjectures about the relationship between resistance and decoloniality by detailing what it could look like to generate alternatives to the destructive logic of white settler heteropatriarchal colonialism. Nishnaabeg radical resurgence, in other words, offers glimpses into the cultivation of "creative ways of thinking, behaving, and relating that are antithetical to the logic of capital" (Lugones, 2010, p. 754). For Simpson, this involves kwe as resurgent method—generating knowledge as an Indigenous woman through place-based practices. In this way, Simpson's vision of Nishnaabeg resistant practices steeped in grounded normativity (Nishnaabewin) gives literal form to Lugones's fleeting metaphor of decolonial feminist resistance as "grounded in a peopled memory" (p. 754).

Third, I conclude that this very resonance reveals the most striking dissonance between the two thinkers—the differential weight given to Indigenous land-based struggles and, by extension, their potential to fulfill the decolonial objective of exceeding capitalism's logic. While Simpson and Lugones both aspire to decolonizing gender and practicing alternative organizations of the social that promote life, they depart when it comes to centering Indigenous nation-based resurgences and the dispossession of Indigenous lands and bodies that remains critical to global capitalist designs. Admittedly, this difference could be a consequence of analytical scale. After all, Lugones provides a macro account of the modern colonial gender system and decolonial feminist resistance to that system, whereas Simpson relates the macro and micro—the attempted expansive dispossession of Nishnaabeg women, children and Two-Spirit people and Nishnaabeg resurgence.^{xxx} It could also be a result of the fact that coloniality, not settler colonialism, is Lugones's primary analytical target. This would help explain why Lugones

often collapses “colonized” peoples into an undifferentiated category with only occasional allusions to Indigenous peoples/women.

All told, the comparison of these two thinkers, and their scholarly and non-academic contexts, raises compelling questions about the intellectual and political terrain of decolonial feminisms, questions that I propose merit further study: What, if any, transversal premises frame feminist uses of “the decolonial”? Do scholars/activists deploy the concept at cross-purposes or in ways that uphold the relations of domination it presumably dislodges? As Walsh (2018) suggests, is it enough to say that the modalities and horizons of decolonial projects are contingent on historical/geopolitical context, and therefore the dispossession of Indigenous lands and bodies is not always or necessarily the focus? Building on Mendoza (2016), what is the “what” of decolonization/decoloniality? Going further, should we differentiate decoloniality and decolonization in the way that coloniality and colonization are sometimes differentiated? Alternatively, are Indigenous struggles eclipsed by metaphorical uses of “the decolonial” that subsume Indigenous peoples into a broader anticolonial agenda? What are the possible repercussions for Indigenous women and their nations’ struggles for self-determination when issues of land, settlement, expanded dispossession and Indigenous resurgence are not always central to decolonial feminist praxis?^{xxxix} Should these issues be primary in a way that they are not—yet or always? Relatedly, what are the implications for Indigenous/decolonial feminist solidarity when Indigenous feminisms are placed under a loosely defined decolonial banner?^{xxxix} I propose that a more thorough tracking of feminist invocations of “the decolonial” may well help us to better evaluate *if, when and why* such questions matter.

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ⁱ Kwe means “woman” loosely translated from Nishnaabemowin.

ⁱⁱ Throughout the article, I adopt the increasingly common practice in North America, the context with which I am most familiar, of identifying Indigenous scholars by their nation. For me, this politics of citation endeavors to make Indigenous scholarship more visible and counter the colonial tendency to homogenize Indigenous peoples. When particularly relevant, I identify the positionality of non-Indigenous scholars.

ⁱⁱⁱ While acknowledging that the Indigenous scholars I cite, including Simpson, may or may not embrace the feminist label, I argue that their work resonates with, engages and/or explicitly employs feminist questions and analyses. In this article, I use the term Indigenous feminisms to refer to this broader, complex enterprise and situate Simpson’s work within it. For more on the history of fraught relations between mainstream (white liberal) feminist praxis and Indigenous women in North America, see Joyce Green (2017), Rauna Kuokkanen (2019) and Luana Ross (2009).

^{iv} While beyond the scope of this article, my longer-term project is to assess more deeply and broadly how feminist scholars/activists throughout the Americas invoke “the decolonial” and related concepts. This would require expanding the analysis to feature other Latin American-based decolonial, Indigenous and/or communitarian feminist scholars, activists and movements, such as Lorena Cabnal, Ochy Curiel, Gisela Espinosa, Yuderkis Espinosa, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, Sylvia Marcos, Julieta Paredes, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Rita Laura Segato and Mujeres Creando (see Schiwy, 2010). For an analysis of these authors’ works in relation to *Feminisms from Abya Yala* more broadly, see Francesca Gargallo (2014).

^v Whereas Lugones uses the term resistance, Simpson (2017) often discusses Indigenous resurgence, appearing to use resurgence and resistance interchangeably. In this article, I follow suit, using resistance/resurgence to indicate an open-ended juxtaposition of their ideas. While beyond the scope of this article, it would be useful to consider the overlapping and discreet meanings attached to resistance vs. resurgence by activists and scholars alike.

^{vi} Elsewhere, I attend more systematically to my positionality as it relates to my research into Indigenous/non-Indigenous solidarities (D’Arcangelis, 2018). I was introduced to the concept of “locus of enunciation” in the work of decolonial feminist thinker Catherine Walsh (2014), who writes, “Ecuador is now not only my home—I identify as an immigrant from the North to the South—but also my place of enunciation, thought, and praxis. It is here in the South, and most particularly through collaborative work with Afro-descendant and indigenous social movements and communities at their request, that I began more profoundly to comprehend the colonial and the decolonial” (para. 6).

^{vii} Many Indigenous peoples refer to North America as Turtle Island. Amanda Robinson (2018) explains, “The name comes from various Indigenous oral histories that tell stories of a turtle that holds the world on its back,” and originates with “Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples mainly in the northeastern part of North America.”

^{viii} Kwe means “woman” loosely translated from Nishnaabemowin.

^{ix} This seemed sometimes to be the case at the NORA Conference, “Border Regimes, Territorial Discourses & Feminist Politics,” in Reykjavík, Iceland on May 22–24, 2019.

^x For differing perspectives on the M/C group as a political and theoretical project, see Arturo Escobar (2007), Kiran Asher (2013) and Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh (2018).

^{xi} In summarizing Quijano, Mendoza (2016) adds, “Surviving long after colonialism has been overthrown, coloniality permeates consciousness and social relations in contemporary life” (p. 114).

^{xii} According to Chickasaw scholar Shannon Speed (2017), “*Abya Yala* is a term in the language of the Kuna indigenous people of Panama for the Americas. Often translated to mean Latin America, it in fact refers to the entire continent” (p. 790, n1). However, people more often use it to refer to Central and South America (Walsh, 2018, p. 21).

^{xiii} Mignolo and Walsh (2018) argue that this expansion has occurred with regards to decolonial ideas more broadly.

^{xiv} Walsh (2018) defines praxis as “reflexive and not merely reflective. It is critical and theoretical, and not merely pragmatic. It is intentional in that it acts upon and in reality to transform it, aware of its own processes and aims” (p. 50).

^{xv} Mendoza (2016) clarifies that intersectional and decolonial thinking are not coterminous, and that “certain inflections of intersectional politics . . . are amenable to a liberal politics of inclusion, which weaken intersectionality’s decolonizing potential” (p. 106).

^{xvi} The acronym 2SQ refers to Two Spirit and queer Indigenous folks.

^{xvii} Simpson identifies the disproportionate numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit people (MMIWG2S) across North America as a major fallout of settler colonial violence. Visit <http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/> to read the 2019 *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report*.

^{xviii} Drawing on postcolonial feminism, Lugones (2007) qualifies her account of a sharp boundary between the so-called light and dark sides of colonial modernity, stating that under its hegemonic imaginary, certain populations are “racialized ambiguously,” including “white women servants, miners, washerwomen [and] prostitutes” (p. 208).

^{xix} Plains Cree Metis feminist scholar Emma LaRocque (2010) also identifies the “CIV/SAV” binary as the preeminent hierarchy of the colonial project. See also Kim TallBear (2016).

^{xx} While intermittently sprinkling phrases like “decolonial present” and “decolonial politics” in her text, Simpson does not reference Lugones or other Latin American decolonial feminist thinkers.

^{xxi} Simpson (2017) defines Aki as having distinctly anti-capitalist connotations: “Aki means land—place, power, relation; it is the opposite of land as commodity. Aki is not capital. Throughout this book I used land-based and place-based interchangeably to denote practices that come from relational reciprocity with Aki” (p. 254, n2).

^{xxii} This controversy unfolded at “Toward Decolonial Feminisms: A Conference Inspired by the Work of María Lugones” at Penn State University in May 2018. Some interlocutors took issue with what they perceived as Lugones’s argument that there were no gender roles in pre-colonial Africa.

^{xxiii} Lugones (2007) states that race and gender “do not stand separately from each other and none is prior to the processes that constitute the patterns. Indeed, the mythical presentation of these elements as metaphysically prior is an important aspect of the cognitive model of Eurocentered, global capitalism” (p. 190).

^{xxiv} Some Indigenous feminists caution that, while colonial projects may have changed gender relations for the worse, 1) categorical claims that oppressive, patriarchal gender relations did not exist in pre-colonial societies are unsubstantiated, and; 2) such claims can be detrimental to redressing patriarchal violence in the present (Kuokkanen, 2007; LaRocque, 2007; Segato, 2016; Walsh, 2016).

^{xxv} Lugones (2010) recommends refusing to be tamed by white liberal feminism: “Isn’t it the case that we already know each other as multiple seers at the colonial difference, intent on a coalition that neither begins nor ends with that offer [of inclusion proffered by white women]?” (pp. 755-756).

^{xxvi} See The Kino-nda-niimi Collective (2014).

^{xxvii} The term rematriation is used to push back against the limitations and patriarchal connotations of repatriation (Tuck, 2007). *Rematriation Magazine* describes it as “a powerful word Indigenous women of Turtle Island use to describe how they are restoring balance to the world. . . . guided by our traditional teachings which acknowledge our connection to water, Grandmother Moon and Mother Earth” (<https://rematriation.com/>).

^{xxviii} To my knowledge, there is little to no scholarship that systematically considers the continuities and discontinuities of Indigenous feminist theories and praxis *throughout* the Americas, and specifically how Indigenous women’s struggles therein do or do not invoke land. There is a general need for comparative research that evaluates if and how women’s/feminist movements throughout the hemisphere prioritize questions of land/territory.

^{xxix} Isis Giraldo (2016) and Madina Tlostanova (2007) provide just two examples of decolonial feminist thought applied to other geopolitical contexts. Admittedly, the broader project I envision would need to analyze texts published in languages other than Spanish and English.

^{xxx} In characterizing Lugones's account as macro, I offer a way to conceptualize the interrelation between her approach and Simpson's, rather than to suggest macro accounts on their own are problematic.

^{xxxi} While acknowledging the diversity of Indigenous nations along geographical, linguistic, cultural, religious and political lines, I emphasize the colonially derived commonalities of these nations across Turtle Island and arguably beyond. As LaRocque (2010) writes, "Native peoples' persevering resistance to colonization has also bonded them and provided them with similarities, similarities intricate in their cultural and political workings. . . . Native peoples' colonial experience is not uni-dimensional or inflexible. But it is there, as Native writers across many demarcations expressively reveal" (p. 10).

^{xxxii} See the *Feminist Studies* special topic issue on postcolonial and decolonial feminisms (Ramamurthy & Tambe, 2017).