STUDIES IN SOCIAL JUSTICE
Volume 14, Issue 2, 429-453, 2020

"Theorizing Our Place": Indigenous Women's Scholarship from 1985-2020 and the Emerging Dialogue with Anti-racist Feminisms

ELAINE COBURN
York University, Canada

ABSTRACT *In this article, I review contemporary Indigenous women's scholarship, describing transformations from 1985 to the present, first to characterize this scholarship on its own terms and second to situate this literature with respect to recent, nascent dialogues with anti-racist feminisms. What is the focus and range of Indigenous women's scholarship, from 1985 until today? What does this work seek to* do*, that is, what are the intertwined political and scholarly aims of this scholarship? I suggest that Indigenous women's scholarly writing is concerned with* resilience*, or survival,* resistance *or challenges to colonial power and relationships, and* resurgence*, or a turning-inward to renew Indigenous knowledges and practices. In the discussion, I briefly consider how the increasingly rich and diverse field of Indigenous women's theorizing and praxis informs an emerging dialogue with anti-racist feminist scholars within the academy and in the broader context of colonial Canada.*

KEYWORDS anti-racist feminisms; Indigenous epistemologies; Indigenous feminisms; resistance; resurgence

> "How can we theorize our "place," when the place itself is stolen?"
> (Razack, Smith & Thobani, 2010, p. 2)

To answer that question, posed by three prominent anti-racist feminists, demands engagement with Indigenous perspectives. Towards those ends, I review contemporary Indigenous women's scholarship from 1985 to the present, exploring the following questions:

- What is the focus and range of Indigenous women's scholarship, from 1985 until today?
- What does this scholarship seek to do, politically and analytically?

Correspondence Address: Elaine Coburn, Centre of Feminist Research, York University, Toronto, ON, M4N 3M6; Email: ecoburn@glendon.yorku.ca

ISSN: 1911-4788

- What are the different ways that Indigenous women's scholarship has begun to enter into dialogue with anti-racist feminisms?

I seek to highlight Indigenous women's scholarly voices in their diversity, contradictions and individuality, since, as LaRocque observes, "we were most assuredly 'human,' and how best to know this but by our uniqueness?" (2010, p. 155).

In its diversity, I suggest that Indigenous women's social scientific writing is concerned with *resilience*, or survival, *resistance* or challenges to colonial power and relationships, and *resurgence*, or a turning-inward to renew Indigenous knowledges and practices.[1] Each emphasis suggests different forms of solidarity with anti-racist feminisms, and moments when such solidarities are complicated, in an unequal, racialized gendered colonial context that shapes relationships within and beyond the academy. After defining key concepts, I describe three successive, overlapping "waves" of Indigenous women's research, and conclude by discussing the emerging dialogue with anti-racist women scholars within the academy and in the broader context of colonial Canada.

Colonialism and Indigenous Women's Scholarship: Some Definitions

As Green (2003) describes, "colonization is not only about the physical occupation of someone else's land, but also about the appropriation of others' political authority, cultural self-determination, economic capacity, and strategic location" (p. 52), for the benefit of the colonizer at the expense of the colonized. In Canada, colonization began over five hundred years ago and persists into the present, as the colonial state appropriates and occupies Indigenous lands. With some hard-fought exceptions – often gained through the juridical system, where the colonial state is at once party and judge – the colonial state presumes its political, legal and cultural authority over Indigenous peoples, who may be consulted but who are nowhere accepted as fully self-determining polities, much less as having authority over colonial actors.

Indigenous people are "original settlers, in the sense of being a deeply rooted and settled indigenous presence on this land we now call Canada" (LaRocque, 2010, p. 7). As Métis scholar Chris Andersen describes (2014, p. 15), Indigenous people have a precolonial presence, that is, presence prior to the formalization of the colonial state. In addition, they are subordinated across their traditional lands but nonetheless maintain a will to perpetuate and further develop their own ways of being, knowing and doing. Today, across lands claimed by Canada, there are more than one hundred different peoples, including the Nuu-chah-nulth, Métis, Huron-Wendat, Cree, Saulteaux and

[1] I do not examine Indigenous women's creative writing. For a rich discussion of Indigenous literature, much of it by Indigenous women, see LaRocque (2010).

diverse Inuit polities, among others. Further, as Lawrence and Anderson (2003) describe, Indigenous women's experiences include "reserve residents and urban women, those with Indian status and those without, those who identify as mixed-bloods, those who call themselves Métis,[2] and those who identify unequivocally as "Indian," (pp. 11-12). Inequalities cross-cut these communities, along the axes of class (Menzies, 2018, pp. 4-5; Alook, Hussey & Hill, 2019), gender (Green, 2017; Suzack et al., 2011), sexuality (Belcourt, 2016; A. Wilson, 2008), disability (Demas, 1993) and more. Indigenous actors, like all human beings, are diverse and may be complicit in unjust inequalities, whether endogenous or exogenous to Indigenous communities.

Indigenous scholarship, a recent subset of Indigenous knowledges, is writing produced by Indigenous academics in university press books and scholarly journals, intended mainly if not only for academic audiences (see also Coburn, 2016). This does not exhaust Indigenous knowledges, as these have developed, in a wide range of forms, over thousands of years, prior to and outside of the creation of universities (Battiste, 1998). Further, Indigenous ways of knowing are transforming understandings of scholarship beyond this working definition (see, e.g., S. Wilson's (2008) *Research is Ceremony*).

In this essay, I consider scholarly writing that Cheryl Suzack of the Batchewana First Nation describes as feminist, because it "analyses how gender injustice against Indigenous women emerges from colonial policies and patriarchal practices that inscribe gendered power dynamics to the detriment of Indigenous women" (2015, p. 261). Suzack's description might be augmented by Cree/Saulteaux scholar Gina Starblanket's observation that (some) Indigenous feminisms, further, "see[k] to shed light on Indigenous women's experiences of heteropatriarchal and colonial oppression" (2017, p. 21), challenging men's power over women and the institutional suppression, marginalization and pathologizing of same-gender relationships by the heteronormative colonial state and within Indigenous communities. As Starblanket observes, the most liberatory Indigenous feminisms support the "resurgence of ways of being that are free from heteronormative logics of empowerment" (2017, p. 21), including questioning land-based knowledge practices that limit women and men to relatively rigid roles in the name of tradition (2017, pp. 28-33). Conceptualizing such approaches as feminist is contentious for some Indigenous scholars who write about Indigenous women and gendered power, but do not identify with feminism, seen as commensurate with white liberalism (for a helpful discussion see St Denis, 2017, and Monture-Angus, 1995, below).

Finally, as a practical limit on this essay's scope, I consider Indigenous women's scholarship within the Canadian context. The aim is neither to reify

[2] Métis is sometimes used, problematically, to denote "mixed heritage" (Gaudry & Leroux, 2017). In this essay, I follow Métis scholars Jennifer Adese (2016) and Chris Andersen (2014), among others, in emphasizing Métis peoplehood as political belonging grounded in a distinct culture, historically rooted in the Red River region.

colonial borders nor to elide common dynamics with Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Sweden, and other settler states.[3] Rather, this recognizes the specificities of the colonial histories and present of the Canadian political economy and culture, including within scholarly traditions.

Indigenous Women's Scholarship: The Colonial Context and the Academy

The current context for Indigenous women includes ongoing genocide against Indigenous peoples through forcible dispossession of lands and access to waterways, deliberate starvation, intergenerational trauma from the separation of children from families in the residential school, and the sundering of kinship relationships through contemporary social welfare systems. This includes, too, the systemic underfunding of Indigenous housing, education, and health, chronic lack of access to clean water in many Indigenous communities, and the uninvestigated murders of Indigenous women and girls (National Inquiry into Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls: Supplementary Volume on Genocide, 2019). To write that the political and social context for Indigenous feminism is hostile is therefore to badly understate the circumstances. Ongoing unjust inequalities, not least systemic violence, translate into "a scarcity in emotional and material resources, both personal and collective" (LaRocque, 2010, p. 144). Indigenous women are often in a reactive struggle for survival.

In the academy, Indigenous persons and knowledges are notable for their centuries-long absence. As Cree and Saulteaux scholar Margaret Kovach and her colleagues observe, "given that the first university in Canada, Laval University opened its doors in 1663 followed by the oldest English language university, the University of New Brunswick in 1785, one could interpret the integration of an Indigenous presence as constituting a short period of inclusion within a long history of exclusion" (Kovach et al., 2015, p. 23). Indeed, under an 1880 amendment to the *Indian Act,* Status Indians who obtained university degrees were forcibly enfranchised – they lost Indian Status, and, given the patriarchal provisions of the *Act*, so did their wives and children. Although in the 1970s, Indigenous faculty began to enter the academy in greater numbers, today, Indigenous persons remain radically underrepresented as faculty, where they make up less than 2% of the professoriate (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2018, p.2), compared to nearly five percent of the Canadian population.

[3] See Mohawk intellectual Audra Simpson (2014) for a sustained challenge to the colonial border between the United States and Canada. For Indigenous feminist theorizing that attends to similarities across a range of settler states within a globalizing, colonial, capitalist, patriarchal system, see, among others, Sámi scholar Rauna Kuokkanen (2008) and Maori and Scottish professor Makere Stewart-Harawira (2005).

Contemporary institutionalized divisions of intellectual labour further marginalize Indigenous scholarship. Hence, Indigenous knowledges are "specialized," meaningful within "Native Studies" but supposedly without relevance to whitestream, canonical knowledges. Familiarity with Indigenous scholarship is rarely a requirement outside of Native Studies, although that may be slowly changing as a consequence of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (but see Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). Further, and uncomfortably, Indigenous women's voices are often marginalized within Indigenous scholarship. As Green (2007b) bluntly observes, "In Canada, since the 1970s, the academic literature has been strengthened by the emergence of a cadre of Aboriginal intellectuals, most of whom were gender-blind or hostile to gendered analysis" (p. 14). If many Indigenous women critically analyze the intersections of race, gender and colonialism from diverse political, cultural and individual perspectives, they do so against the grain of much colonial and Indigenous scholarship and despite a broader patriarchal, colonial and genocidal context.

Finally, Indigenous scholarship develops within an academic context in which anti-racist feminisms have been absented from whitestream canons (for a survey of anti-racist feminisms up to the 2000s, see Dua, 1999, pp. 8-9, 17). Nonetheless, in the 1980s, anti-racist feminisms made visible and critiqued the whiteness foundational to Canadian society (Dua, 1999, p. 14), including social construction of "women of colour" as Others against naturalized white citizens (Bannerji, 2000; Carty & Brand, 1993). Anti-racist feminists, including Sedef Arat-Koç, Himani Bannerji, Tania Das Gupta and the late Roxana Ng, among others, described and analysed the concentration of racialized women in low-paying employment (Dua, 1999, p. 14) within a socialist feminist political economy framework. Black and African feminists in Canadian universities describe and analyse resilience and diversity among francophone and Anglophone women in the diaspora, from slavery through to today (e.g., McKittrick, 2006; Mianda, 1997; Wane, 2009). Yet white women's scholarship dominates feminist contributions (Carty, 2014; Henry, 2015). In this way, the academy (re)produces the insights of "women of colour" – those women principally responsible for developing anti-racist feminisms – as marginal, rooted in their racialized, gendered and classed marginalization within the Canadian political economy, as a whole, and within the university, specifically (Dua, 1999, p. 19; Henry et al., 2017).

In short, both Indigenous faculty and faculty racialized as "women of colour" are underrepresented, their scholarship marginalized. If this means there are shared reasons to challenge the whitestream status quo, this dialogue has to be actively sought out and created outside of the ordinary academic (re)production of knowledge. As the late Mohawk scholar Patricia Monture[4] (Monture-Angus, 1995) observes, in a context in which white women and

[4] Patricia Monture published as Patricia Monture, Patricia Monture-Angus and Patricia Monture-Okanee.

men dominate the academic conversation, "we do not know what the differences are between a Black woman's experience and an Indian woman's experience because we have never had the chance to talk about it" (p. 23). This dialogue must be achieved with limited resources, further complicated because Indigenous and racialized women scholars' energies are diverted into coping with and combatting those everyday and institutional racisms they experience personally (Monture-Angus, 1995, Ch. 1; Cote-Meek, 2014; Henry et al., 2017, Ch. 6 & 7). In the discussion below, I consider how this dialogue is nevertheless emerging.

Contemporary Indigenous Feminisms: Resilience, Resistance, and Resurgence

Imperfectly and with some "slippage" across conceptual categories (Dua, 1999, p. 10), Indigenous women's writing, since 1985, is concerned with Indigenous women's resilience, resistance and resurgence.

Resilience means struggles for survival despite the genocidal colonial context. Borrowing from Lawrence and Anderson (2005), Indigenous women's resilience is "about how we are 'still walking' in spite of some of the abuses that we have endured" (p. 6). As Gail Guthrie Valaskakis (Chippewa), Madeleine Dion Stout (Kehewin First Nation) and Eric Guimond (Mi'kmaq) (2009b) describe, "'resilience' means getting along, getting through, and getting out of a difficult situation" (p. 2), an emphasis on Indigenous women's agency that deliberately counters dominant "deficit" narratives focussing on Indigenous women's victimhood. As Cynthia C. Wesley-Esquimaux (Chippewa of Georgina Island First Nation) (2009, p. 28) observes:

> Instead of telling only the stories about trauma and victimization and pain, let us talk about our survival and our undeniable strengths. It is essential for us to articulate the strengths that we have, not only in a way that validates our survival, but in a way that validates and "victorizes" our ability to take control of our lives and be, in spite of past pain and present dysfunction.

Indigenous feminisms insist on Indigenous women's agency, strength and survival despite the ongoing violence of colonial, patriarchal power.

Indigenous women's decolonizing *resistance* means, further, "challenges to the undemocratic, sexist, unrepresentative and colonial impulses" that are part of normalized, institutionalized relations and discourses across colonial Canada (Green, 2017b, p. 173). For some, traditional knowledges and practices are a powerful source of resistance, rooted in matriarchal relationships (Monture-Angus, 1995). Others emphasize the need for a critical uptake of Indigenous traditions, insofar as some reproduce patriarchal relations of power (Green, 2017b; LaRocque, 2017) and heteronormative ideologies (Starblanket, 2017) rooted in naturalized but actually historically

contingent and colonial male-female gender binaries (A. Wilson, 2008; Hunt, 2016, pp. 5-9). As Indigenous feminists Maile Arvin (Kanaka Maoli), Eve Tuck (Unangax), and Angie Morrill (the Klamath Tribes) (2013) describe, Indigenous feminisms challenge "social systems in which heterosexuality and patriarchy are perceived as normal and natural, and in which other configurations are perceived as abnormal, aberrant and abhorrent" (p. 13) and hence rightfully destined for elimination. If Indigenous women's resilience is about Indigenous women's literal survival, resistance is about their self-conscious opposition to the reproduction of oppressive (hetero) patriarchal relationships, institutions and commonsense ideas that normalize heterosexuality and men's power and authority over Indigenous women.

By *resurgence*, I follow Kahnawake Mohawk scholar Taiaike Alfred and Tsalagi professor Jeff Corntassel (2005), in describing a turning-inward to draw upon and renew diverse Indigenous worldviews, here with the aim of supporting Indigenous women and girls' self-determination.[5] As Starblanket (2017) observes, Indigenous women's resurgence "allows Indigenous peoples to shift our focus beyond Western liberal political institutions or actors and attribute ourselves with a greater degree of political agency to shape, and be shaped by, the world we live in" (p. 34). For many Indigenous women, this means attentiveness to "everyday" relations and practices, challenging the de-politicitization of supposedly private "women's issues," including domestic violence (Starblanket, 2017, p. 35). Resurgence is about renewing everyday relationships "with others, with our languages, our spirituality and the lands we inhabit" (p. 34) to support Indigenous women's well-being.

Indigenous women's scholarship describes and participates in Indigenous women's resilience, resistance and resurgence. Performatively, Indigenous women's academic writing demonstrates resilience by enacting the survival of Indigenous knowledges in (and beyond) the academy, albeit often at the margins. Much of this scholarship is "resistance literature" creating a "counter-discourse" to dehumanizing Eurocentric, hate literature (LaRocque, 2010, pp. 3-5), including by challenging damaging stereotypes created and reproduced through supposedly objective but actually colonial historiography, anthropology, sociology and other disciplines (Smith, 1999; Coburn et al., 2013; Walter & Anderson, 2013; Hunt, 2014). This literature may not be heard – as LaRocque (1990) has written, "here are our voices – who will hear?." Nonetheless, this literature exists and may be drawn on by those seeking to learn from it. Finally, by theorizing from diverse Indigenous worldviews, rooted in "an ethic of care towards each other and the rest of

[5] Alfred and Corntassel (2005) describe resurgence as about reconstructing, reshaping and actively living "the teaching of our ancestors" (p. 612). As they write, "we do not need to wait for the colonizer to provide us with money or to validate our vision of a free future; we only need to start to use *our* Indigenous languages to frame our thoughts, the ethical framework of *our* philosophies to make decisions and to use *our* laws and institutions to govern ourselves" (2005, p. 614, italics in original). Resurgence is a turning away from the colonizer and a turning inwards towards diverse Indigenous worldviews and practices.

creation" (Starblanket, 2017, p. 35), Indigenous women's writing participates in the resurgence of Indigenous knowledges through and beyond the specific genre writing of the academy.

First Wave of Resistance Literature (1985-1995): Indigenous Women Challenge the Indian Act

The first wave of Indigenous women's academic literature, roughly from 1985 to 1995, centres on analyses and support for legal struggles against sexist provisions in the *Indian Act.* Enshrining patriarchal, Eurocentric cultural traditions as law, the *Indian Act* of 1876 stipulated that Status Indian men who married non-Status women granted these women Status. Conversely, Indigenous women who married non-Status men were forcibly "enfranchised," that is, both the women and their children and descendants lost federally recognized "Indian" Status. As Simpson (2008) argues, such legislation indigenized white women, while Indigenous women and their children, now without Status, were obligated to leave the reserves on which they grew up and where, often, their families still lived. This gendered, forcible enfranchisement destroyed matriarchal traditions, where they existed, and created a new social reality, making outsiders of these women, their children and descendants (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1073), unable to live or even be buried on reserve lands with their families and ancestors (Green, 1985, p. 94, fn 14).

For Indigenous women, this created a long, difficult struggle in which they faced opposition from the colonial state and many men in their own communities. In the context of limited financial resources, pressures on inadequate reserves lands and male-led band councils,[6] the National Indian Brotherhood (now the Assembly of First Nations) opposed Indigenous women's legal struggle to re-instate Indian Status for forcibly enfranchised women and their children (Lawrence & Anderson, 2005, pp. 2). Scholarly writing thus joined with Indigenous women's legal struggles, which sought to turn the state's juridical apparatus against itself, to make broader arguments against colonial and Indigenous patriarchies and for Indigenous women's resurgent political, social and spiritual authority.

In *Native Studies Review*, Green (1985) observes that the *Indian Act* presumed the colonial state's right to decide membership on Native reserves and did so in patriarchal terms, reflecting the fact that, "European societies were patrilineal and patriarchal" (pp. 82-83). Against this, Green argues for the absolute right for self-determining Indigenous government, including the right to decide citizenship. For Green, this means rejecting "violent and

[6] Until 1951 only men could vote in and stand for band council elections, according to the *Indian Act* (Cannon, 2019, p. 16). Today, these band council positions continue to be dominated by men (Lawrence & Anderson, 2005).

emotional" (p. 90) rhetoric mobilized by some Indigenous male leaders against Indigenous women, accused of "watering down Indian genes and destroying culture" by out-marrying – charges she observes were not leveled against out-marrying men (pp. 90-91). At the same time, Green argues that Indigenous polities prepared to carry out responsibilities as nations are required to meet international obligations to gender equity, including with respect to citizenship (p. 92). In this way, Green's analysis of legal struggles is the entry point into a deconstruction of patriarchal logics, both colonial and Indigenous, and an argument for Indigenous nationhood.

In the same year, Cree scholar Verna Kirkness (1986) unfavourably contrasts the sexist provisions of the *Indian Act* and the patriarchal Christian norms that inspired the legislation, with prior, gender-egalitarian Indigenous practices. In asserting women's voices as equals to men, Kirkness argues that Indigenous women are restoring traditional matriarchal authority systematically destroyed by the colonizers: "Native women are emerging in search of the equality once enjoyed by women within Indian society" (Kirkness, 1986, p. 415). In her writing, Kirkness draws on oral traditions that colonial scholars have typically ignored or discredited, insisting upon the validity and usefulness of this form of knowledge. Epistemological and methodological innovation – bringing songs, for instance, into the annals of legal scholarship – combines with a call for resurgent gender-equal practices within traditional matriarchal societies, in which women and men are equally valued as complementary social and spiritual partners (p. 411).

Mary Ellen Turpel (1989), another Cree legal scholar, highlights the efforts of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) to challenge sexist colonial legal principles, "based on the inherent jurisdiction of First Nations to make laws for their own peoples" (p. 155). Pointing to the limits of the colonial language of human rights, Turpel roots Indigenous women's self-determining struggles in the "Four Directions" teachings. For Turpel, these teachings emphasize responsibilities, respecting principles of kindness, honesty, sharing and strength (p. 155). What might today be called "resurgent" Indigenous knowledges and ethics are repositioned, in the stead of colonial worldviews, as the normative principles underlying Indigenous women's voice and relationships of responsibility.

In *Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out*, Janet Silman (1987) of Scottish Métis descent, published interviews with women from the Tobique Reserve in New Brunswick. Silman was invited to write the book as an academic liaison, so enabling "lay" Indigenous women's activists voices to be heard, as they fought the legal battle against the *Indian Act's* forcible "enfranchisement" of Indigenous women (Silman, 1987, pp. 15-16).[7]

[7] Likewise, the organization "Indian Rights for Indian Woman" cooperated with the Advisory Council on the Status of Women to publish a book by Kathleen Jamieson (1978), *Indian Women and the Law in Canada: Citizens Minus.* Given the relative paucity of Indigenous women in the academy, Indigenous women's associations strategically mobilized non-Indigenous scholars to bring their voices into scholarly literature.

Silman's interviews are life-histories: women sharing their experiences growing up, their interactions with family, both French and Indigenous, and their encounters with the Catholic Church and a "white society" that seeks to take away their languages and knowledge practices (Juanita Perley, in Silman, 1987, p. 52). Foregrounded are critiques of and resistance to Euro-Canadian, Christian patriarchal tradition, including for how these inform the *Indian Act*'s sexist provisions. Performing the resistance that they describe, these women recall the intergenerational transmission of land based knowledges, in their own words, so honouring their ancestors' and their own insights and challenging the monopoly of white "expert" voices.

Finally, if not exhaustively (see e.g., Battiste, 1989; Johnston, 1989; McIvor, 1995), *Canadian Woman Studies* published an article by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC, 1992), linking ongoing legal struggles by Indigenous women with new movements asserting their right to participate on their own behalf in constitutional discussions with the federal government. Stating bluntly that, "so far, Aboriginal men and male organizations have not represented our interests" (p. 14), the NWAC insisted that, "negotiating a right to self-government does not mean recognizing and blessing the patriarchy created in our community by a foreign government" (p. 15). Thus, the NWAC challenged patriarchal racisms in the colonial state and male domination in Indigenous communities, including through the institutionalization of (male) band council chiefs. Patriarchy is represented as an exogenously imposed system of inequity, reproduced by contemporary Indigenous men's leadership. The article concludes with an assertion of resurgent Indigenous women's agency and the urgency of attending to their insights: "our voices must be heard" (p. 17).

In these essays, the emphasis is on the politically urgent task of resisting colonial law and asserting Indigenous women's self-governing agency, often arguing that this is a renewal of Indigenous women's traditional authority. Several scholars emphasize that Indigenous polities are self-governing nations, with Green arguing that, as nations, Indigenous governments must uphold international commitments to gender equity in citizenship and other rights. If spurred on by the specific struggles against gender discriminatory clauses in the *Indian Act,* these Indigenous women's analyses are broader, challenging colonial governance and patriarchal practices. In so doing, these Indigenous women scholars innovate from traditional Indigenous epistemology, ethics and methodologies. Turpel draws on insights from four directions teachings and Silman, like Kirkness, brings in oral histories so challenging colonial scholarly traditions that dismiss such knowledge as amateur, folkloric, biased or simply inferior (Battiste, 1998). All insist on Indigenous women's self-determining authority against patriarchy, as enshrined in sexist clauses in the *Indian Act*, in male dominated band council governance and in constitutional negotiations with the colonial state that disregard Indigenous women's representation and participation.

Second Wave of Resistance Literature in the 1990s: Diversification of Indigenous Women's Voices

Overlapping the first wave of resistance literature (see Green, 1992, and Turpel, 1993), what Mohawk intellectual Audra Simpson (2014, p. 196) describes as the "second wave" of Indigenous women's writing emerged in the 1990s. New voices emphasize Indigenous women's diversity against homogenizing and dehumanizing stereotypes. Some argue for the resurgence of traditional valorizations of Indigenous women, said to hold distinct (often maternal) responsibilities, while others advocate for a critical engagement with tradition, as not necessarily emancipatory for Indigenous women. Less usually, two authors describe struggles for survival by Indigenous women facing "triple jeopardy" given racism, sexism and homophobia or ableism, so challenging Indigenous communities to make a place "in the circle" for all Indigenous women and girls (A. Wilson, 2008, p. 178), as integral to Indigenous resurgence.

In her book, *Iskwewak--kah' ki yaw ni wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princess Nor Easy Squaws,* Janice Acoose/Misko-Kìsikàwihkwè (1995) writes against "white-eurocanadian-christian-patriarchy," referred to in an abbreviated shorthand as "weccp" (p. 21) – left deliberately un-capitalized to diminish this tradition's historical authority. Acoose is concerned with literal physical survival despite murderous violence against Indigenous women, resistance to dehumanizing, sexist colonial ideologies in Canadian fiction and resurgence through the revitalization of Indigenous worldviews by Indigenous artists, with a view to supporting a realistically complex portrayal of historical and contemporary Indigenous women.

Drawing on diverse Indigenous women scholars, including Maria Campbell and Jeanette Armstrong, Acoose argues that animalizing, reductionist imagery distorts and attacks Indigenous women's humanity. Such stereotypes deny the complex realities of Indigenous women's lives, making them targets of murderous violence:

> Stereotypic images of Indian princesses, squaw drudges, suffering helpless victims, tawny temptresses, or loose squaws falsify our realities and suggest in a subliminal way that those stereotypic images are us. As a consequence, those images foster cultural attitudes that encourage sexual, physical verbal or psychological violence against Indigenous women. (Acoose, 1995, p. 55)

In an Indigenous literary renaissance or resurgence, Acoose turns to Indigenous artists as leaders, informed by maternal-centric Indigenous languages and cultures, in the vital struggle for Indigenous women's empowerment against "weccp."

In a collection of her essays, *Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks*, Monture (Monture-Angus, 1995) – one of the best-known voices from this period – argues forcefully that whitestream women's political ambitions for equality are inadequate compared to the traditionally powerful,

and not merely equal standing of women in Haudenosaunee culture (see also Monture-Okanee, 1992, 1993). As she famously expresses this idea, "equality is not a high standard in my way of thinking" (Monture-Angus, 1995, p. 179). In making claims "under the box of sex" (p. 141) whitestream feminism mobilizes a conceptual vocabulary that falsely universalizes white women's experience; this is as inadequate as the English language for describing what it means to live specifically as *a Mohawk woman* (p. 140). Monture thus disavows "(w)hite, well-meaning, middle and upper-class feminists" (p. 20), especially those who appropriate her painful experiences and turn them into an object of expert analysis, so furthering their own scholarly careers. Despite rejecting feminism, thus characterized, Monture insists on the imbrication of indigeneity, class and gender in the production of colonial knowledge and colonial law.

Innovating what today would be called an intersectionalist perspective, Monture wrote, "I can locate my own experience… as both an Aboriginal and a woman" (Monture-Angus, 1995, p. 139). This social location informs an experiential knowledge that Monture mobilizes to describe the oppression and violence that Indigenous women suffer. As she explains with characteristic directness, under colonial relationships, "Aboriginal women have been victims of abuse" (p. 145). At the same time, Monture questions the ability of colonial law, including the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, to protect Indigenous women from harm, since these Declarations do not acknowledge "colonialism and colonization" (pp. 146-147), much less their implication in Indigenous women's oppression. Critiquing NWAC's decision to engage with the Charter, all while recognizing "the heart-felt emotion of their response" (p. 146), Monture summed up her position bluntly: "Canadian law is not my Aboriginal solution" (p. 147). Against colonial laws made by (white) men, Monture emphasizes the Indigenous women's unique authority: "Women are at the heart of it. Women are at the centre of it" (p. 262) with specific responsibilities for the making of laws (p. 263) that allow all peoples to "retai[n], teac[h] and maintai[n] good relationships" (p. 258). Indigenous women's resistance to patriarchy means turning away from colonial worldviews, including as these are legally institutionalized as rights, towards specifically Mohawk relations of responsibility led by women.[8]

An anthology published in this second wave of resistance scholarship, *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom and Strength*, edited by Christine Miller, Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksikaitsitapi), and Patricia Chuchryk (1996), insists on Indigenous women's "power, wisdom and strength" as the title emphasizes. The editors mobilize diverse Indigenous women's voices – as well as white activists and scholars – to counter

[8] Monture does much more, bringing her perspective to concerns as varied, but related as Indigenous children being separated from their families and communities by the colonial social welfare system and unmasking the injustices of the colonial juridical system and the incarceration of Indigenous women.

portrayals of Indigenous women as homogenous blocs.[9] They resist scholarly and popular narratives that describe Indigenous women as victims and in homogenizing ways: "we have maintained our commitment to diversity and our belief that in the diversity of women's voices we can find strength and wisdom" (Miller & Chuchryk, 1996, p. 6). The collection includes scholarly historical explorations of Métis, Saulteaux and Prairie women, from archival sources, as well as shorter chapters, some just a few pages long, drawing on knowledges passed down orally from one generation of women to the next. As Betty Bastien (1996), from the Peigan First Nation, observes, despite "racism and cultural annihilation," "we must not forget" those ways of situating "ourselves" that honour "the interdependencies of self and others" (p. 128). For Bastien, recalling Indigenous peoples' place within "the web of creation" (1996, p. 128) recalls Indigenous women's ongoing relationships with the natural world, relationships the colonial state has systematically sought to destroy.

The collection features diverse, even divergent perspectives. Beverly Hungry Wolf (1996), emphasizes complementary roles for women and men, maintaining that, "as givers of life, we women have special relationships to the Earth" (p. 81) and so must teach children, Indigenous communities and the broader public about responsibilities to the natural world. In contrast, LaRocque (1996) recognizes the usefulness of much traditional knowledge, but calls for more sceptical engagement, suggesting that, "as women we must be circumspect in our recall of tradition" (p. 14). Respect and honour towards women, she warns, cannot substitute for difficult questions: "we must ask ourselves wherein lies our source of empowerment" (p. 14) and be prepared to critique and move beyond traditions harmful to and constraining upon women's agency. Neo-traditionalist approaches, centered on women's maternity confront Indigenous feminisms that argue for critical engagement with traditions, as the way forward for women surviving "the chaos, despair, hostility and death" brought about by colonial patriarchal rule (Armstrong, 1996, p. xii).

In this period, two interventions draw attention to the marginalization of Indigenous women within their own communities, further complicating whitestream assumptions about the socially constructed category of "Indigenous women" as unified, while contextualizing this marginalization within the violence of the colonial context. In 1993, Doreen Demas, a blind disability activist from the Canupawakpa Dakota Nation in Manitoba, published a still-rare article from an Indigenous feminist disability standpoint. Demas' concern is to indigenize white disability services while ensuring that Indigenous feminists support disabled women within their own communities. A lack of clear jurisdictional responsibility between colonial and Indigenous

[9] The contributors include Rosemary Brown, a white anti-racist activist, not to be confused with Rosemary Brown, the first Black woman to be elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly in British Columbia.

authorities, she warns, combines with chronic underfunding of Indigenous agencies to produce "triple jeopardy" for disabled Indigenous women, their needs unmet by both governments.

In a similarly path-breaking article, Alex Wilson (1996), from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, writes about the then-recent resurgence of "two spirit" Indigenous persons from across North America. The concept of "two-spirit" is used "by many Cree and other Aboriginal lesbian, gay, bi, and trans people" (A. Wilson, 2008, p. 193), Wilson explains, to situate themselves as holding both masculine and feminine characteristics within spiritually charged relationships "deeply rooted in our cultures" (A. Wilson, 1996, p. 304). For lesbian, gay and bisexual Indigenous persons, Wilson argues, racial and sexual identity are indissociable, given the simultaneous experiences of colonial racisms and homophobia. Neither whitestream LGBT politics nor anti-racist LGBT struggles can address the specific existential and social realities of two-spirit persons. Instead, the renewal of (diverse) Indigenous spirituality and ethical commitments, like an Ethic of non-Interference that allows for a wide range of gender and sexual practices, support the distinctive sexual and gender expressions of Indigenous two-spirit persons as they "come in" to their communities (A. Wilson, 2008).

This second wave scholarship recognizes the devastation of patriarchal colonialisms, but contrapuntally affirms Indigenous women's resilience, their capacity to survive genocidal erasure and to write specifically, for instance, as Mohawk and/or two-spirit Indigenous women. This means resisting dangerously dehumanizing stereotypes about Indigenous women as sexually available "squaws" while challenging the invisibilization and marginalization of Indigenous women with disabilities. Resurgent traditional knowledge is an important source of insight and support, as when A. Wilson (2008) invokes an Ethic of non-Interference to create space for two-spirit ontologies purposefully destroyed by colonial powers and now stigmatized by some in Indigenous communities.

In this second wave, reflecting the growing number of Indigenous women's voices in the academy, both diversity and divergences within Indigenous women's politics appear. Some second wave scholars argue that Indigenous women play especially powerful roles in challenging colonial patriarchies as mothers and grandmothers, while others, notably LaRocque (1996), caution that some resurgent traditionalisms discipline rather empower women and therefore require critical evaluation, with women's well being the ultimate standard against which any practice or norm must be judged. This resurgence of a range of Indigenous women's standpoints, countering reductionist stereotypes and rearticulating cultural knowledge for the present in ways supportive to Indigenous women, deepens with the third wave.

The 2000s Third Wave of Resurgence Literature: Strengthening and Broadening the Field of Indigenous Women's Scholarship

Since the early 2000s, a third wave of Indigenous women's scholarship has developed, which, especially in the last decade, is now so vast and important as to defy any easy, much less comprehensive, description. During the first decade of the 2000s, critical Indigenous women's contributions include the publication of five edited collections: Lawrence and Anderson's (2003a) *Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival*; Green's (2007a), *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*; Valaskakis, Stout and Guimond's (2009a) *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community and Culture*; Monture-Angus and Patricia McGuire's (Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek) (2009a) *First Voices: An Aboriginal Women's Reader*; and Suzack, Shari Huhndorf (Yup'ik), Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman's (2010) *Indigenous Women and Feminism*: *Politics, Activism, Culture*. These collections alone brought nearly one hundred Indigenous women's voices – including activists, traditional knowledge keepers, writers and artists – into the scholarly conversation through texts, interviews, and in some cases, poems and photographs.

There is some tension across these collections. Many contributors emphasize Indigenous women's vitality and strength but eschew to identify as feminist, while others specifically embrace Indigenous feminisms, as a political commitment and source of necessary insight into racism, colonialism and patriarchy. As Monture-Angus and McGuire (2009b, p. 2) emphasize, there is "a great diversity of Aboriginal women. Not only do we come from different nations, each of whom have their own traditions, ceremonies, laws and languages, but Aboriginal women also act in the world in multiple ways." Whatever the differences in argument, theme and approach, however, the third wave of Indigenous women's scholarship builds upon and affirms Indigenous women's knowledge and agency – on their own behalf and with respect to transforming relationships beyond current patriarchal colonial institutions, practices and ideologies. As Lawrence and Anderson (2003b) explain, Indigenous women grapple with "the fallout of colonization and the challenge to rebuild" (p. 12), and Indigenous scholarship reflects these ongoing struggles.

This generates scholarship about a wide range of concerns. Among them, Kiera Ladner (2000), examines the changing salience of gender within historical and resurgent Blackfoot nationalisms. Lawrence (2004) deconstructs the complexities of the colonial state's social-legal production of new, gendered categories of Indigenous personhood and the consequences for urban Indigenous identity. Zapotec scholar Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez (2013) contributes political economic analyses of Indigenous women's resistance to neoliberal forms of capitalist dispossession, across the continent now called North America. In their edited collection, Anderson, Campbell and Métis artist Christi Belcourt (2018) join more than 20 contributing authors to

describe Indigenous women's resilience against ongoing genocidal violence, in a persistent return to Indigenous women's ongoing struggles against murderous colonialisms and for reconfigured relationships on bases respecting Indigenous women's humanity.

Other Indigenous women scholars diversely theorize the meanings of critical relationships, especially those with the land, and associated concepts like "place." Cree scholar Karyn Recollet (2015) investigates and celebrates urban spatial "glyphs" that perform solidarity and repossess cityscapes, while protesting violence against Indigenous women. For their part, Starblanket and Heidi Stark (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe) (2018) refuse the Western colonial idea of land, whether urban or rural, as "bounded territories in which only our primordial practices can permeate so long as they are understood as temporally and spatially fixed" (pp. 190-191). Instead, "it is our mobility, our movement across the lands and waters that activates our relationships and responsibilities" (p. 192), demanding attentiveness to and the nurturing of expansive kin relationships, in recognition of those humans, plants and animals "who came before us, who already governed the territories we came to inhabit" (p. 193). In a related discussion, Lawrence and Anderson (2003b) ask what it means to "come home," when land and associated cultural knowledges have been lost, or when home is a site of patriarchal oppression and must be struggled for and re-established as "a place where we have the respect, authority and freedom that are due us as Native women" (p. 15).

Across multiple, complex conversations that can only be gestured to briefly here, the emphasis is on Indigenous women's agency, challenging the dominance of victim-centered narratives. As Valaskakis, Stout and Guimond (2009b) argue, "women are guardians of indigenous traditions, practices, and beliefs – and agents of change for their families and nations" (p. 2). As Sarah Hunt (Tłaliłila'ogwa) emphasizes, this includes the resilient presence of two-spirit Indigenous persons who decolonize with and through the revitalization of two-spirit sexualities and genders (Hunt & Holmes, 2015; Hunt, 2016). Pragmatic and "future-oriented," they grapple with and seek to move beyond "historic trauma" to act for health and healing, including through artistic, cultural and language revival or resurgence (Guimond, Valaskakis, Stout, & Guimond, 2009b, p. 3). Recognizing the hard realities of ongoing colonial violence co-exists with a contrapuntal emphasis on Indigenous women's and, as Hunt underlines, two-spirit agency and possibility.

For Green (2007b), rebuilding Indigenous relationships against patriarchy, including within Indigenous communities, is a feminist task. In the most forthright statement of Indigenous feminist commitments in the scholarly literature up to that time, she writes:

> Aboriginal feminists. They exist; they choose the label, the ideological position, the analysis, and the process. Aboriginal feminists raise issues of colonialism, racism, sexism, and the unpleasant synergy between these three violations of human rights. Aboriginal feminists illuminate topics that but for their voices, would not be raised at all. (Green, 2007b, p. 20)

Such theorizing of the intertwinings of colonialism, racism and sexism is not always welcome within Indigenous communities, construed as a betrayal of Indigenous women's solidarity with men or dismissed as white women's politics (Green, 2017b, pp. 12-13). Feminist analysis is said to be "divisive" within Indigenous communities and Indigenous women who challenge patriarchy may be labelled untraditional, a powerful way of delegitimating their arguments in a context in which tradition is often insulated – dangerously, in Green's view – from critique (p. 13).

Indigenous feminisms persist because they are deeply connected with Indigenous women's broader struggles for justice and creative assertions of presence against colonial genocide. As Huhndorf and Suzack (2010) observe, "Indigenous feminism…has arisen from histories of women's activism and culture that have aimed to combat gender discrimination, secure social justice for Indigenous women and counter their social erasure and marginalization" (pp. 5-6). A sharp political edge informs Indigenous women's scholarship, especially explicitly feminist Indigenous resurgence that challenges historical and contemporary power inequities rooted in gender and sexuality (Starblanket, 2017, pp. 25-28)

Collectively, third wave Indigenous women's scholarship describes and analyses Indigenous women's resilience despite genocidal colonial violence, marginalization and erasure, while celebrating resistance against the colonial foreclosure of Indigenous women's futures and challenging dispossession in both country and urban spaces. Indigenous feminists support resurgence – at once scholarly, activist and artistic – contributing to the well-being of Indigenous women, their families and communities. Towards these ends, some, like Monture (Monture-Okanee 1992, pp. 251-266), eschew the feminist label, while others emphatically embrace a new Indigenous feminist politics, placing questions of gender, sexuality and power at the centre of resurgence movements and renewed responsibilities to each other and the land. This increasingly broad and richly diverse Indigenous feminist scholarly conversation draws strength from Indigenous women's movements across politics, economics and culture. The nascent dialogue with anti-racist feminisms emerges in this context.

"Constellations of Co-Resistance": Towards Indigenous and Anti-racist Feminist Solidarity

Since the 2000s, Indigenous women have explicitly theorized the relationship between Indigenous and anti-racist feminisms, complicating narratives about existing or possible solidarities. Lawrence and anti-racist feminist Enakshi Dua's (2005) path-breaking, "Decolonizing Anti-Racisms" contends that anti-racist feminists fail to recognize the ongoing colonialism of Indigenous peoples on lands claimed by Canada (p. 122) – or problematically integrate

Indigenous feminisms as "single issue" topics rather than as vitally informing all anti-racist analyses. Refusing a political "race to innocence" (Fellows & Razack, 1998), Lawrence and Dua argue for frank recognition of racialized migrants' occupation of Indigenous lands, whether voluntary or involuntarily, and so their functional implication in colonial dispossession. Consequently, there is no easy structural alignment of interests or automatic solidarity across Indigenous and racialized women. Instead, significant political and scholarly labour lies ahead, beginning with forthright acknowledgement of "the complex histories of interactions between peoples of color and Aboriginal peoples" (Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p. 136), in moments of cooperation and conflict.

A few years later, Zainab Amadahy, an African American scholar-activist with Cherokee ancestry, and Lawrence (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009) published a dialogue exploring Black and Indigenous relationships, including often-occluded Black indigeneity. Observing that "both Black and Indigenous peoples have experienced unique global levels of devastation as races" (p. 106) through the global slave trade and genocide in the Americas, they warn that devastating histories may nonetheless be taken up unproductively – fueling antagonistic claims of the primacy of suffering of one community, while failing to acknowledge and challenge anti-Black racisms in Indigenous communities and the erasure of Indigenous peoples in many Black liberation narratives. Further, urgent life and death struggles across Black and Indigenous communities maintain both in "a perpetual state of crisis" (p. 131), with little energy to divert into dialogue with each other. Despite such challenges, Amadahy and Lawrence argue for the importance of relationship-building between Indigenous and Black scholars, including feminists, for future generations and for the future of the earth that sustains us all.

In more recent years, there have been further constructive efforts by both Indigenous and anti-racist scholars to develop analyses informed by commitments to solidarity, although not all are specifically feminist.[10] Among them, anti-racist scholars Corey Snelgrove and Rita Dhamoon with Corntassel (Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Corntassel, 2014) argue that solidarity demands recognition of the incommensurability of diverse Indigenous worldviews and other knowledge paradigms. This demands that "we" hear Indigenous women scholars *in their own voices* (Antjie Krog repurposed by Huron Wendat political philosopher Yann Allard-Tremblay, 2019, p. 2), as they bring unique ways of knowing into the academy – knowledges violently suppressed in the genocide against Indigenous peoples. Monture writes as a Mohawk woman scholar, for instance, with insights unique to her person but at the same time, deeply informed by Haudenosaunee culture. Rather than being inserted into existing scholarly knowledge paradigms, whether colonial

[10] There have been unhelpful interventions, as well. If these must be deconstructed, I choose not to do that work given limited space here. See Coulthard and Simpson's (2016) critique of "anti-Native sentiment," in theorizing by some contemporary anti-racist scholars (pp. 252-253).

or anti-racist, her theorizing necessarily begins with an appreciation of the distinctive character and grounding of her scholarly-political contributions.

This does not mean accepting Indigenous women's knowledge uncritically, an impossibility, in any case, given divergent, conflicting views among Indigenous women. Meaningful critical engagement – and possibilities for real solidarity – nonetheless depends on an expansive capacity to hear this knowledge in its own voice, not as raw material to be subsumed into another theory but as theorizing in its own right. As LaRocque (2010) insists, "of course, there are different theories about how we theorize, and there are also conflicting theories among us, but we do theorize" (p. 165). Likewise, responsible engagement requires familiarity with the diversity and debates across and among Indigenous women and feminists, refusing to flatten out a wide range of voices – incompletely and partially gestured to here – into a monolithic pan-Indigenous bloc. As anti-racist scholars, whatever our social location, our relational responsibility to Indigenous colleagues means becoming familiar with Indigenous women's literature in its range and depth, contradictions and common arguments.

In pointing to recurrent themes of resilience, resistance and resurgence over three waves of increasingly rich, diverse scholarship by Indigenous women, this essay seeks to encourage such familiarity. In so doing, I join an existing Indigenous feminist and anti-racist scholarship. This includes, for instance, Dhamoon's (2015) characteristically insightful exploration of Indigenous and critical race theorizing, which explores the "context of colonial formations of heteropatriarchal, racial capitalism and concurrent systemic implications in settler colonialism" (p. 34) and her innovation, with Davina Bhandar (Bhandar & Dhamoon, 2019), of a "colonial analytic" (p. 15) that seeks to simultaneously address dynamics articulated in both post-colonial and contemporary colonial contexts. In a different, but equally useful approach, Robyn Maynard's (2017) analyzes state violence in *Policing Black Lives*. If Maynard focuses on the specificities of systemic anti-Black hatreds, she consistently points to similarities and differences in the colonial policing of Indigenous peoples, consciously opening up space for Black-Indigenous solidarity. Short dialogues, like the conversation among Simpson, Black theorist Rinaldo Walcott and Coulthard (Simpson, Walcott & Coulthard, 2018) about the Indigenous movement Idle No More and Black Lives Matters, alongside longer edited collections like the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation through the Lens of Cultural Diversity* (Mathur, Dewar & DeGagné, 2011), allow racialized and Indigenous scholars to think through their relationship and responsibilities to each other amidst and against white supremacy, colonialism and associated violences and injustices.

In opening up and pursuing these conversations and relationships, Anishinaabe public intellectual Leanne Simpson (2016) writes about "constellations of co-resistance," envisioned as "flight paths or doorways out of settler colonial representation and thought" (p. 27, drawing on insights by

Jarrett Martineau). In developing such flight paths, solidarity can mutually reinforce relatively marginalized groups, strengthening both across the margins – and this is necessary to survival in contexts of violence, exploitation and oppression. At the same time, scholarly theoretical and analytical vocabularies must express the specificities of harms and the distinctiveness of diverse knowledges, against a context in which Indigenous peoples' knowledges have been deliberated, violently erased and racialized women's knowledges systematically marginalized.

To borrow from Lawrence and Anderson (2003), Indigenous women's resilience, resistance and resurgence are existential and political projects that "explor[e] what we need to know about who we are and where we have come from as Native women…to look at where our communities are now and where we want them to go" (p. 11). In surviving and resisting heteropatriarchal colonialism, Indigenous scholars and actors share both common and distinct experiences of white racisms, institutionalized and personal, with anti-racist feminists. In turning away from colonial powers and inward to renew diverse Indigenous knowledges, Indigenous women innovate through their own distinct cultures and individual self-expression, while creating relations of responsibility to other peoples and to the natural world that may offer new political possibilities for solidarities across difference and inequities rooted in gender, race, sexuality and colonialism.

If this essay has made any single overarching argument, it is that in "theorizing our place," there is now a rich, diverse Indigenous women's scholarship with insights that may be appreciated on their own terms and more recently, with an aim to building relationships with anti-racist feminisms on lands that sustain us all. There is no neat end-point to such conversation, now or into the future, but only a commitment to a growing dialogue that, at its best, is rooted in Four Directions principles of kindness, honesty, sharing and strength (Turpel, 1989, p. 155). As Monture (Monture-Angus, 1995) might observe, this is a process that stretches through to responsibilities in the present, for the seven generations to come and even beyond: "this story does not have an end. It goes on and on and on" (p. 23).

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Soma Chatterjee and Tania Das Gupta for inviting me to contribute this piece and for editorial advice, and to Ena Dua, Joyce Green and Emma LaRocque for conversations informing this article in different ways. I acknowledge two anonymous reviewers for suggestions on a very early, inadequate draft of this paper. I hope this responds to their important concerns. Responsibility for the arguments here remains mine.

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