Cuerpo-Territorio: Towards Feminist Solidarities in the Americas

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Abstract: This article is an intervention into our collective thinking about solidarity between and among women/feminists in the Americas. We consider the concept of *cuerpo-territorio* in relation to feminisms in Anglophone North America and Latin American Indigenous communitarian feminism. After providing an overview of *cuerpo-territorio*, we argue that these scholarly bodies of literature and the embodied practices they discuss share the following concerns and analyses: (1) colonialism is inherently patriarchal, (2) violence against the body is intimately linked to violence against the land, in particular the violence of extractivism, and (3) human life exists in connection with the land, non-human animals, plants, and other beings. By looking more closely at theorizations and enactments of *cuerpo-territorio* and related concepts, we aim to contribute to an emerging South-North dialogue among feminists in the hemisphere, especially about the challenges and possibilities of solidarity.
Keywords: cuerpo-territorio; Indigenous feminisms; solidarity.

Cuerpo-Territorio: Rumo a Solidariedades Feministas nas Américas

Resumo: Este artigo é uma intervenção em nosso pensamento coletivo sobre solidariedade entre mulheres/feministas nas Américas. Consideramos o conceito de corpo-território em relação a ideias análogas em inglês, colocando em discussão diferentes literaturas: feminismos indígenas na América do Norte anglófona e feminismo comunitário indígena latino-americano. Argumentamos que essas literaturas acadêmicas e as práticas incorporadas nelas discutidas compartilham análises, a saber, (1) o colonialismo é inerentemente patriarcal, (2) a violência contra o corpo está intimamente ligada à violência contra a terra, em particular a violência do extrativismo, e (3) a vida humana existe em relação à terra, animais não humanos, plantas e outros seres. Ao olhar mais de perto as teorizações e promulgações do corpo-território, ("*cuerpo-territorio*") e conceitos relacionados, pretendemos contribuir para um nascente diálogo Sul-Norte entre feministas no hemisfério, especialmente sobre os desafios e possibilidades da solidariedade.
Palavras-chave: corpo-território, cuerpo territorio, feminismos indígenas, solidariedade.

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Introduction

> *Feminist communitarian thought and action have led me to see the importance of weaving together thoughts with other women, whether they are Indigenous from various Indigenous peoples, or 'Westerners,' because I believe it benefits everyone when we promote spaces of self-reflection and tear things down collectively to disobey power and build proposals for a new life. If we listen to each other, recognize our differences, and rethink how to build thoughtful, moving, and respectful dialogues, we will be able to continue weaving together threads from wherever we are, as long as we act with intention against patriarchies and against hegemonies that surround us in our own body, in bed, in the community, on the street, in the city and in the world.* (CABNAL, 2010, p. 133).

With such a clarion call from Indigenous communitarian feminist Lorena Cabnal (Q'eqchí, Xinca) as our point of departure, we design this article as an intervention into our collective thinking about solidarity between and among women/feminists in the Americas. Not incidentally, this co-authored article exemplifies such a collaboration in a microcosm. While we both currently live in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, we write from different social locations with Lorna Quiroga hailing from Argentina, and Carol Lynne D'Arcangelis, from the United States. Nonetheless, we share the starting premise that in the face of unprecedented climate catastrophe, ongoing Indigenous dispossession, and seemingly intractable patterns of gender-based violence, the need for feminist solidarity across differences has never been more profound. To broach the topic, we consider the concept of *cuerpo-territorio* in relation to analogous ideas in English, thereby reading across bodies of literature that are rarely, though increasingly, brought into conversation: Indigenous feminisms in Anglophone North America and Latin American Indigenous/decolonial feminisms. In so doing, we enter a burgeoning South–North[3] dialogue about, amongst other things, the parameters of anti-/decolonial feminisms in the "Americas" (ANDERSON *et al*., 2019; D'ARCANGELIS, 2020; LUGONES, 2007; MENDOZA, 2016). Thus, by looking more closely at

[3] Inspired by Raewyn Connell (2015), we intentionally invert the usual order of these terms to upset, if temporarily, the global division of labor in knowledge production that generally privileges the Global North. For Connell, theorists and practitioners all over will be better off if we can reconceptualize knowledge production and operationalize that reconceptualization. Regarding gender theory in particular, Connell writes that "The problem is not a deficit of ideas form the global periphery—it is a deficit of recognition and circulation. This is the structural problem in feminist thought on a world scale" (CONNELL, 2015, p. 52).

how diverse feminists theorize and enact *cuerpo-territorio* and related concepts, we hope to contribute to emerging dialogues, particularly those concerning the challenges and possibilities of feminist solidarity in the hemisphere.

Following Janet Conway and Nathalie Lebon's concerns about how the category of "popular feminisms" might create and sustain "elisions of racial and colonial difference", we wonder if certain understandings and applications of *cuerpo-territorio* might eclipse the specificities of Indigenous (or Black/Afro-descendant) struggles (CONWAY; LEBON, 2021, p. 8). To lay part of the foundation for assessing this risk, this article offers a preliminary look at Indigenous communitarian feminist understandings and applications of *cuerpo-territorio*, as well as other ideas that might be similar, but not necessarily equivalent, in the Indigenous feminist theory and practice across Turtle Island (North America). On the one hand, what might such a comparative analysis reveal about the possibilities and challenges of feminist solidarity between Indigenous feminist communitarian scholars and activists, and, on the other hand, among Latinx, Afro-descendant, and/or white (Euro-American) scholars and activists? Bearing this and other questions in mind, we begin with some brief reflections about our respective loci of enunciation (WALSH, 2018, p. 21).[4]

Lorna Quiroga

My story is one of immigration. My parents moved to Buenos Aires from the "el interior" of Argentina and Paraguay. Then, I migrated to Paraguay where I worked for many years with a human rights NGO providing legal advice to Indigenous land claims in the Chaco. The years of conversations with my Indigenous friends from the Enlhet-Enenlhet and Yshir nations in the Naxma and the Yrmo (their territories) changed me in many ways — to the point where I decided to go back to university. I felt that the terms I was using to translate their stories and relationships with their territories were collaborating with a narrative that continually collapsed the incommensurability of their worlds into homogenous terms. The so-called modern science had imposed these terms since the colonization of the Americas, which was something that became evident to me when I tried to bring Indigenous women's practices into debates about territorial struggles. When I came to study at Memorial University in St. John's, I found myself caught in

[4] A broader question that remains beyond the scope of this article is what we might understand about the salience of anti-/decolonial feminism as an analytic by juxtaposing the varied uses of c*uerpo-territorio* and related concepts.

similar colonial webs as my Indigenous friends, but with different challenges. Dr. D'Arcangelis, at that time my supervisor, immediately understood that I was lost in translation and invited me into her long intellectual project to create dialogues across different bodies of literature from South to North in the "Americas."

Carol Lynne D'Arcangelis

I grew up on Kanien:ke (Mohawk), a territory that is now called Upstate New York — the youngest of eight siblings to second-generation Italian American immigrants. I knew little about Kanien'kehá꞉ka (Mohawk people), and less about feminism, despite having several siblings who modeled feminist values. Perhaps that is why the following scene has remained lodged in my memory nearly 30 years later. Safely tucked into a bucket seat in the back, I was struggling to understand the rapid-fire Spanish coming from the front. My interlocutor (and the driver) was a Mexican feminist who also worked with MINUGUA (United Nations Mission in Guatemala), although she was further ahead in both her career and feminist identity. I distinctly recall her response to my hesitancy about attending an upcoming feminist encounter. "After all," I told her, "I've never been to a feminist gathering or explicitly called myself a feminist!" She had none of it: "Of course you should go! You are absolutely a part of the feminist movement!" The memory surfaces whenever I (need to) reconsider my "place" among other feminists. As a white settler feminist woman and academic who has researched and worked in solidarity with Indigenous women, the question is never far from my mind. While this article is not about me, it is indelibly influenced by my desire to move ethically in the terrain of feminist movements — a goal that has long been part of my intellectual/activist journey.

Deepening South–North Feminist Dialogues

Our article enters a vibrant and increasingly hemispheric-wide conversation among feminists — scholars and activists thinking and writing across and within the South–North divide, particularly in the Americas — about anti-/decolonial theories and praxes. For example, Kim Anderson (Métis), Elena Flores Ruíz, Georgina Tuari Stewart (Māori), and Madina Tlostanova (Adyghe) (2019) consider which insights the South–North coalitions and dialogue might facilitate

when it comes to "indigenizing" the academy, particularly concerning Indigenous feminisms. There have also been encounters such as the "Plurifeminisms across Abya Yala Symposium", at the University of Washington, in May 2022.[5] The gathering brought together a diverse range of feminist actors from across Abya Yala (the Americas) to think through "issues such as Indigenous sovereignty, plurinationalism, land defense, violence, sexuality, reproductive justice, and the relationship between music, art, and activism."[6] In fact, this list speaks to some of the central issues associated with the concept of *cuerpo-territorio*, while also alluding to the myriad organizing modalities that people use to redress those issues.

For some, Argentinian-born feminist philosopher María Lugones both sparked this South–North conversation and highlighted the importance of bringing Indigenous feminist anti-/decolonial thinking into the mix. In fact, Lugones (2007) draws on the work of Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna/Sioux) (1992) to theorize the coloniality of gender — a central conceptual pillar of decolonial feminist thought. Honduran-born mestiza scholar Breny Mendoza (2016) also cites Gunn Allen along with Indigenous feminist thinkers from South America in developing a genealogy of decolonial feminism. Decolonial feminist scholar Catherine Walsh (2018), a self-described "immigrant from the North to the South" [7], cites Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Nishnaabeg) as a foremost decolonial thinker. Building on her study of Indigenous-white solidarity in Canada (D'ARCANGELIS, 2022), D'Arcangelis (2020) adds to these scholarly efforts with a close reading of Lugones's decolonial resistant subjectivities concerning Simpson's Indigenous resistance/resurgence.[8] D'Arcangelis concludes that while thinkers align in many ways, "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" (D'ARCANGELIS,

[5] For more information, contact the Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington: https://gwss.washington.edu/news/2022/05/17/plurifeminisms-across-abya-yala-symposium-scheduled-may-24-25-2022

[6] In fact, these thinkers broaden the conversation even further to include Aotearoa/New Zealand and post-Soviet Russia. Further, while we acknowledge that the so-called Global South–Global North divide is by no means straightforward, to historicize and complicate that divide is beyond the scope of this article.

[7] As Walsh recounts, "[I] was brought up in a home of Lithuanian/Nova Scotian/Irish descent on land once usurped from the Massachusett/Algonquin nation [and] now identif[y] as an immigrant from the North to the South, residing the last 25 years in Guápulo, Ecuador, once the ancestral *tambo (*commercial meeting place) of the KituKara, Yumbo, and Amazonian peoples/nations". Personal communication, February 18, 2020.

[8] Whereas Lugones uses the term resistance, Simpson (2017) often discusses Indigenous resurgence, appearing to use resurgence and resistance interchangeably. 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.

2020, p. 22). In a sense, we pick up where D'Arcangelis left off by asking: how might *cuerpo-territorio* and related concepts — particularly in Indigenous communitarian feminisms in Latin America and Indigenous feminisms across Turtle Island (North America) —facilitate solidarities among feminist scholar-activists and movements[9] in the hemisphere?

With a similar aim in mind, feminist geographers Sofia Zaragocin and Martina Angela Caretta propose that Anglophone feminist geography engages with the ontological underpinnings of *cuerpo-territorio* — the indivisible relationality of the body and territory — to "advance feminist geographers' methodological and conceptual understanding of the relations between bodies, emotions, space, and place" (ZARAGOCIN; CARETTA, 2021, p. 1505). For Zaragocin and Caretta, this would also lead to "praxical" bridges (LUGONES, 2010) between Latin American decolonial and Indigenous communitarian feminisms, on the one hand, and Anglophone feminist geography, on the other. Zapotec feminist political scientist Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez (2021) goes further. In her article "Indigenous Women Refusing the Violence of Resource Extraction in Oaxaca", she draws on the insights of Northern-based scholars such as Mishuana Goeman (Seneca) (2017), and Melanie Yazzie (Diné) and Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa) (2018) to explain the relational paradigm of *cuerpo-territorio* (see also ALTAMIRANO-JIMÉNEZ, 2020).

With the above conversations in mind, we consider the meaning of *cuerpo-territorio* and some approximate ideas in Indigenous/feminist thought and practice in so-called North America. We begin with an overview of the concept as articulated in a sample of texts by renowned Indigenous communitarian feminist Lorena Cabnal and other feminist thinkers in Latin America.

Cuerpo-Territorio: An Overview

To grasp the importance of *cuerpo-territorio*, one must begin with the broader context from which it emerges — an intensive extractivism met with equally intensive grassroots movements, including land defenders (PORTO-GONÇALVES; LEFF, 2015; SVAMPA, 2019). Attributed primarily to Cabnal but also associated with Indigenous communitarian feminists Julieta Paredes (Aymara) and Adriana Guzman (Aymara), the term more specifically evokes Indigenous women's collective resistance against gendered violence directed at their bodies and lands, particularly the

[9] Troubling what we see as the false binary of theory-practice, we post a perpetual dialogical relationship between the two, i.e., that feminist movements produce theory and that theories inform feminist movements.

violence associated with the extractivist paradigm that has taken hold in Latin America (GUDYNAS, 2014, 2018). Like its colonial and heteropatriarchal antecedents, this neoliberal/neocolonial agenda disproportionately affects women and non-binary gender individuals in Indigenous and peasant communities (GAGO; CAVALLERO; MALO, 2020; GARCIA-TORRES *et al*., 2020; SVAMPA, 2019).[10] In what follows, we provide an artificial distillation of the concept into three interrelated components: *cuerpo-territorio* as political praxis, as analytic, and as an enactment of the relationality between body and land. In the same vein as Marisol de la Cadena's (2015) concept of onto epistemologies, we argue that epistemology and ontology converge in this enactment. Even so, albeit for heuristic purposes, we inevitably separate what are inextricably intertwined aspects of the concept.

Above all, *cuerpo-territorio* is inherently political and "praxical," in María Lugones's lexicon (2010, p. 746).[11] It is a direct response to the intensive patriarchal extractivism alluded to above. For feminist scholar Delmy Tania Cruz Hernandez (2017), co-founder of the collective Miradas Criticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo,[12] the concept is most often mobilized as a political statement rather than as a category of analysis. For Cruz Hernandez, there is an "underlying political demand that emanates from a collective reflection of Indigenous women, [which is] to demonstrate their vision in the defense of their territories" (CRUZ HERNÁNDEZ, 2017, p. 8). As we can see, in this sense, the concept marks the place where Indigenous women experience, organize, resignify, and valorize themselves — and, importantly, think collectively about their actions. In Cabnal's own accounting of the concept, she describes her personal experience of patriarchal violence, which ultimately led her to organize, along with other Indigenous women, against both Indigenous men's violence and their collusion with multinationals who had been exploiting Indigenous territories (CABNAL, 2019). To these ends, she founded the *Tzk'at, Red de Sanadoras Ancestrales del Feminismo Comunitario Territorial desde Iximulew-Guatemala* (Network of Ancestral Healers of Territorial Community Feminism) (CABNAL, 2018). Elsewhere, Cabnal describes the political raison d'être of *cuerpo-territorio*:

[10]Notably, Latin American nation-states increasingly realize this extraction through public-private partnerships with transnational capital (SVAMPA, 2012).
[11] Lugones uses this term to argue that "Decolonizing gender is necessarily a praxical task" (LUGONES, 2010, p. 746), that is, a decolonial embodied practice "grounded in a peopled memory" (LUGONES, 2010, p. 754; see also D'ARCANGELIS, 2020).
[12] The collective's name loosely translated into English is Feminist Critical Views of the Land/Territory.

> One of the reasons why communitarian feminists in the Xalapán mountains have risen up to fight against metal mining is because land expropriation . . . [by the] patriarchal capitalist development model is gravely endangering the relationship that women and men have with the land, with life. (CABNAL, 2010, p. 130).

Here, she alludes to the history and ongoing struggle of Indigenous peoples to "reclaim and defend" their land as a territorial space in which Indigenous lifeways and bodily integrity are guaranteed. In short, *cuerpo-territorio* has been born out of necessity — as a response to the rapaciousness of what Cabnal (2018) describes as colonial, racist, capitalist, and neoliberal patriarchy, which, in turn, has led to women's impoverishment, increased gender-based violence, including femicide, and the criminalization of Indigenous women's resistance.

It follows that *cuerpo-territorio* is also an analysis grounded in praxis. It generates and reproduces a distinct epistemological framework for unpacking the specificities of Indigenous women's experiences of extractivism and includes various assertions about patriarchy. According to Colectivo Miradas Criticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo (2017), colonialism and heteropatriarchy collude with disastrous consequences, creating a potent force that exploits lands and territories, while simultaneously harming the bodies of women in these lands and territories. More specifically,

> the territory becomes masculinized with the arrival of extractive companies, who then start to control, reify, appropriate, and violate both bodies and lands. (. . .) In extractive contexts, nature, like women's bodies, is considered a territory that has to be sacrificed to the reproduction of capital; something that can be exploited, violated, and extracted. (Colectivo Miradas Criticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo, 2017, p. 49).

Following the dictates of Western hierarchical binary thinking, the masculine is linked to the control and exploitation of nature, while the feminine *becomes* that subjugated and subordinated nature, tasked with the reproduction of life "even when ecosystems are being destroyed" (Colectivo Miradas Criticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo, 2017, p. 49). Some refer to this as the (re)patriarchization of Latin American societies (GARCIA-TORRES *et al*., 2020) through the violence of neocolonial extractivist processes (GÓMEZ-BARRIS, 2017). *Cuerpo-territorio*, then, is an analytical diagnostic tool for revealing the patriarchal logic of extractivism and, as discussed further below, a powerful antidote.

Importantly, for Cabnal (2010, 2013, 2018) and several other feminist thinkers in Latin America, including Paredes and Guzman (2014) and Rita Segato (2016), colonial patriarchy encountered local forms of patriarchy. In dialogue with Lugones's notion of the coloniality of gender,[13] they argue that extant patriarchal formations — what Cabnal and Paredes dub ancestral patriarchy, and Segato, low-intensity patriarchy — in the Indigenous communities that they examined were fortified by colonialism. Paredes (2011, 2017) refers to this admixture as a "patriarchal juncture" (*entroque patriarchal*). In concurrence, they assert, in the words of Cabnal, that "all oppressions are an interconnected system with patriarchy at the root" (CABNAL, 2010, p. 121). For Cabnal and Paredes, revealing this patriarchal convergence is at the center of Indigenous communitarian feminist epistemology, starting with the harm caused by ancestral patriarchy's philosophical adherence to heteronormativity (CABNAL, 2010, p. 121). Adding to these analyses, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (Aymara) (2012) explicitly questions the generalizability of Lugones's insights into the coloniality of gender,[14] pointing to a pre-colonial Andean system of heteronormativity organized around complementarity. Cabnal (2010) similarly categorizes the complementarity and duality in Xinca cosmology as heteronormative.

Notably, Xinca feminist Aura Cumes (2019) takes a more positive position on complementarity with a different interpretation of Xinca cosmology. She proposes a closer look at Indigenous cosmologies to understand whether heteronormativity has indeed been a constitutive part of people's ways of relating. At least for Xinca, this is not the case. In her reading, the Xinca creation story gives an account of how people appear on earth, the dualities that are animals-people, and the relationships they must sustain between them and the place where they live.[15] All these elements of the story help to account for the importance of the struggles for territory in the region.

[13] Most simply, Lugones (2007) uses the concept of the coloniality of gender to posit that gender is as much a colonially imposed fiction as is race.

[14] A thorough consideration of the debate about the accuracy and utility of the coloniality of gender is beyond the scope of this article. That said, we agree with Breny Mendoza's (2016, p. 118) position that "whether gender is a colonial construct or an ancestral practice may pose a false dilemma" — in light of the scholarly consensus around the profound effects of European colonialism on precolonial social relations. Mendoza (2016, p. 118) continues by saying that "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". See D'Arcangelis (2020) and Walsh (2014, 2018) for incisive overviews of the debate.

[15] Other ethnographic scholarship that focuses on women from Amerindian perspectives in the Amazon or low lands of Latin America make similar arguments (see DE ALMEIDA MATOS; DOS SANTOS; BELAUNDE, 2019).

Foreshadowing our discussion below of the resonances between *cuerpo-territorio* and related ideas/terms in Indigenous feminist writings across Turtle Island, Altamirano-Jiménez notes that the political utility of the concept spans the continent:

> According to the Native Youth Sexual Health Network and Women's Earth Alliance (2016), in North America, the connection between land, body, and extraction creates a powerful intersection for Indigenous communities, one that threatens their very survival and is often ignored. Similarly, Indigenous women in Latin America use the term *territorio cuerpo-tierra* (body-earth territory) as a political statement that connects the landscape of their bodies to the defense of land territory. (ALTAMIRANO-JIMÉNEZ, 2021, p. 215).

Notably, in this passage, Altamirano-Jiménez uses a different semantic configuration of the concept, also coming from Cabnal (2018). In our appraisal, this alternative phrasing helps illuminate the ontology that underpins *cuerpo-territorio* as an analytic component. The phrase body-earth territory paints an even clearer picture of the interconnectedness between bodies and lands *as territories* subject to the same system of oppressions, i.e., both are territories of violent conquest.

At the same time, *cuerpo-territorio* is about much more than hardship. By bringing together *cuerpo* and *territorio*, Indigenous women not only address neo/colonial, patriarchal violence but also, and perhaps more importantly, convey an ontological understanding of the relationship between bodies and territories that exceeds Western individualist framings. That is, through their activism, Indigenous women enact their obligations and responsibilities towards all beings who form part of their world. In its illumination of the direct experiences of Indigenous women defending life in their territories, the capaciousness of the concept becomes more evident: the struggle is about defending Indigenous lifeways and the environment that sustains them, ensuring reciprocity between all life forms and beings, including, among others, humans, non-human animals, plants, water, and spirit beings. Cabnal alludes to this reciprocal relationality in describing the defense of her body-earth territory: "I reclaim my expropriated body to generate life, joy, vitality, and pleasures, and to construct liberating knowledge for decision making... because I do not comprehend this body of a woman without a space on earth that dignifies my existence, and promotes my life fully" (CABNAL, 2010, p. 131). In short, *cuerpo-territorio* connotes the co-constitution of bodies and land/territory.

Along these lines, Virginia Vargas explains that

> To understand the body as a territory — that is, a complex living system constituted by multiple relationships in which all living beings and natural elements such as water, land, and mountains participate — challenges us to think of our individual and collective bodies as part of a community and a constitutive part of the land. (VARGAS, 2019, p. 185).

In this excerpt, Vargas identifies the final component in our schematic of *cuerpo-territorio* — as a modality of activism, which enacts relationality. Notably, *cuerpo-territorio* by definition is not an individual endeavor; nor is it about securing the rights (and responsibilities) of human beings. It is indivisibly individual and collective, encompassing "a complex living system constituted by multiple relationships." We find it significant, then, that Cabnal (2018) uses the term *acuerpamiento territorial* (territorial gathering) to refer to Indigenous women coming together to defend life and/in the territory. We conceptualize *acuerpamiento territorial* as a way of explaining how women act collectively against injustices and violence suffered by their bodies and territories under ancestral-colonial, capitalist, neoliberal patriarchy.[16]

To set the stage for our emerging thoughts on the implications of *cuerpo-territorio* for women's/feminist solidarity in the hemisphere, we now turn to our assessment of how analogous ideas are conveyed in Indigenous/feminist thought and practice in so-called North America.

Body/Land in Indigenous Feminisms across Turtle Island

While Indigenous feminist scholarship in "North America" has grown exponentially over the past two decades and scholars are always publishing new material, it appears that thinkers do not generally use the precise phrase or equivalent of *cuerpo-territorio* (i.e., body-land, body-territorio, etc.) unless referring to Latin America. Nonetheless, we identify certain resonant ideas in this literature, starting with the fact that this scholarship is rooted in similar struggles — both concerning the violence of gendered colonial disempowerment and dispossession (ANDERSON, 2016; KONSMO; KAHEALANI PACHECO, 2016; KUOKKANEN, 2019; SIMPSON, 2017) and

[16] The phrase *acuerpamiento territorial* is also a very graphic way to explain what Indigenous women have been doing in their territories for a long time — mobilizations, protests, and marches featuring rows of women holding hands in front of a line of police. This ubiquitous image has even led some feminist political ecologists to describe the feminization of ecoterritorial struggles (SVAMPA, 2019; ULLOA, 2016).

mainstream Western feminism and male-dominated self-determination struggles (GREEN, 2007, 2017; SUNSERI, 2000). In this section, we draw heavily on selected works by Indigenous feminists, including Nishnaabeg scholar, artist, and activist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, to provide a necessarily partial take on how Indigenous feminist thought across Turtle Island aligns with the above distillation of *cuerpo-territorio*.[17]

We begin with examples of how Indigenous feminists across Turtle Island are applying an analytic tool that strongly resembles *cuerpo-territorio* to not only theorize colonialism as inherently patriarchal but also to articulate the body-land relationality.

In *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Simpson relates her nation's experiences under settler colonialism in distinctly gendered terms, defining "expansive dispossession as a gendered removal of our bodies and minds from our nation and place-based grounded normativities" (SIMPSON, 2017, p. 43).[18] For us, Simpson's use of expansive dispossession has much in common with Indigenous communitarian feminists' theorizations of the harm done by intensive extractivism. To make our point, we quote Simpson at length:

> The removal of Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg bodies from the land, from the present, and from all of the relationships that are meaningful to us, politically and otherwise, is the meta-relationship my Ancestors and I have with Canada. (. . .) A great deal of the colonizer's energy has gone into breaking the intimate connection of Nishnaabeg bodies (and minds and spirits) to each other and to the practices and associated knowledges that connect us to land because this is the base of our power. This means land and bodies are commodified as capital under settler colonialism and are naturalized as objects of exploitation. This has always been extremely clear to Indigenous women and 2SQ [Two-Spirit and queer] people,

[17] While beyond the scope of this paper, we know that similar ontological understandings of land-body exist outside of the Americas. For example, decolonial feminist scholar Madina Tlostovana describes a belief among her own people, the Adyghe of the North Caucuses, in the "unity of the people and the world, their existence in and through each other" (ANDERSON *et al*., 2019, p. 141). Further, she mentions an indigenizing educational project in which children "engage in geo-body story-telling and healing practices" (ANDERSON *et al*., 2019, p. 141).

[18] In Chapter 7, "The Sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples' Bodies," Simpson (2017) elaborates the gendered dimensions of colonial dispossession. The following excerpt encapsulates many of the key points of the chapter: "Indigenous bodies, particularly the bodies of 2SQ people, children, and women, represented the lived alternative to heteronormative constructions of gender, political systems, and rules of descent. They are political orders. They represent alternative Indigenous political systems that refuse to replicate capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and whiteness. They are the embodied representation in the eyes of the colonizers of land, reproduction, Indigenous governance, and political systems. They reproduce and amplify Indigeneity, and so it is these bodies that must be eradicated—disappeared and erased into Canadian society. The attack on our bodies, minds and spirits, and the intimate trauma this encodes is how dispossession is maintained" (SIMPSON, 2017, p. 41, see also 2014).

> and it's why sexual and gender violence has to be theorized and analyzed as vital, not supplemental, to discussions of colonial dispossession. (SIMPSON, 2017, p. 41).

Simpson's statement evokes at least three dimensions of Indigenous communitarian feminisms. First, she points to how colonial capitalist exploitation is meted out through sexual and gender violence with disproportionate effects on Indigenous women and 2SQ people. Second, she hints at the profound relationality between Indigenous bodies and lands/territories in referring to "the intimate connection of Nishnaabeg bodies" to that land "as the base of our power." Third, she decries the commodification and exploitation of Indigenous lands and bodies under what she calls settler colonial "capitalism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy" (SIMPSON, 2017, p. 36).[19] Throughout the book, in fact, she identifies the myriad forms of sexual and gender violence resulting from this system and emphasizes the need to situate extractivism within its broader context — capitalism (SIMPSON, 2017, p. 76).

Like their counterparts in Latin America, Indigenous feminists across Turtle Island also emphasized Indigenous women's political organizing against the pillaging of capitalist extractivism. One of the most cited sources is a report and toolkit by Erin Marie Konsmo (Métis) and A.M. Kahealani Pacheco (Kanaka Maoli) (2016) — perhaps not incidentally, one of the few works that explicitly use the phrase land/body. In *Violence on the Land, Violence on our Bodies: Building an Indigenous Response to Environmental Violence*, the authors intersperse an analysis of the links between violence against land and bodies with 10 case studies of how Indigenous women-led struggles against mining, toxic chemicals, deforestation, and more. This excerpt describes the effects of colonization on that land/body connection, as well as efforts to mitigate those effects:

> While colonization, forced removal, and continued land dispossession have attempted to stifle or altogether sever this land/body connection, many women and young people continue to stand strong against this estrangement. [The Native Youth Sexual Health Network] has been working at the intersection of the land and our bodies, particularly with Indigenous youth, for almost a decade. That work has shaped the core belief . . . that what happens to the land and the environment around us, whether good or bad, also happens to our bodies and to our communities. (KONSMO; KAHEALANI PACHECO, 2016, p. 11).

[19] The assertion that hierarchical gender relations in North American Indigenous nations are at least partially, if not largely, a colonial imposition is widespread (ANDERSON, 2016; ARVIN; TUCK; MORRILL, 2013; GREEN, 2007, 2017; LAROCQUE, 2007; LAWRENCE; ANDERSON, 2005; NICKEL; FEHR, 2020; PYLE, 2020; SIMPSON, 2017). That said, as in Latin America, scholars debate the extent to which heteropatriarchy and sexism are colonial inventions. Nonetheless, all agree that sex/gender discrimination is now an indisputable reality in Indigenous communities that must be redressed (GREEN, 2007; ST. DENIS, 2007).

In this sense, Konsmo and Kahealani Pacheco (2016, p. 16–17) make explicit what is perhaps an obvious common denominator to the extractivist ravaging of Indigenous bodies and territories — a lack of consent. With this, they build on Indigenous communitarian feminist analyses of the patriarchal dictates of Western hierarchical binary thinking, noting that "traditional cultures of consent have been impacted by entrenched colonial governance systems in Indigenous communities, by patriarchal and paternalistic solutions to issues around their bodies, and by the intense invasion of their lands and bodies themselves" (Colectivo Miradas Criticas del Territorio desde el Feminismo, 2017, p. 16). Here, similarly to Cabnal (2019), Konsmo and Kahealani Pacheco (2016) implicate the male-dominated Band Council leadership of many Indigenous communities in reproducing patriarchal culture (see also KUOKKANEN, 2019, p. 45).[20] Kwagu'ł scholar Sarah Hunt (Tłaliłila'ogwa) (2014) is another prominent feminist voice calling out male "chiefs, language speakers, cultural and political advocates" who promote Indigenous sovereignty while violating the body sovereignty of women and others in their communities. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Simpson (2017) identifies the reclamation of consent as central to what she calls Indigenous resurgence.

Sámi feminist and political scientist Rauna Kuokkanen (2007, 2012) is also a stalwart critic of both sexist Indigenous governance and the patriarchal violence in many Indigenous communities. Following Hunt, Konsmo and Kahealani Pacheco, and Simpson, she broaches the topic of consent, but through the idea of integrity. In theorizing self-determination from an Indigenous feminist perspective, she argues that Indigenous women's individual or personal integrity is a prerequisite for Indigenous nations' collective self-determination, which is "fundamentally a struggle to restructure relations... a vision for freedom from domination, for justice and dignity in all relations" (KUOKKANEN, 2019, p. 59). Like Cabnal, Paredes, and others, she locates heteropatriarchy as the underlying force of domination.

[20] In efforts to assimilate Indigenous nations into so-called Canada, the Canadian government implemented the 1876 *Indian Act*. Among other harmful developments, including residential schools and sexist discrimination, this legislation imposed governance structures called Band Councils on newly created legal entities called First Nations. There are now over 630 such First Nations in Canada, not including non-status "Indians," Inuit and Metis Indigenous populations, who do not fall under the *Act*. The legislation broke up the roughly 50 larger Indigenous nation groupings across "Canada." In so doing, Band Councils displaced existing Indigenous governance models, many of whom went underground to survive. Some are now reemerging. For an overview of the *Indian Act,* visit https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca.

In focusing on integrity, Kuokkanen (2019) also delineates body–land relationality evocative of *cuerpo-territorio*. Drawing on hundreds of interviews with Indigenous women and non-binary folks, along with a few Indigenous men, Kuokkanen identifies upholding integrity in all its dimensions — individual, cultural, collective, territorial, and integrity of the land — as the *key* to self-determination. Particularly relevant for our discussion, she reports that Indigenous women envision the integrity of the individual and the land as mutually constitutive such that "destroying or undermining one radically compromises the other" (KUOKKANEN, 2019, p. 40). In other words, individual integrity and the integrity of the land are relational. Moreover, any violence committed against the land and/or against the body, regardless of source, constitutes a breach of consent and integrity. In line with the *cuerpo-territorio*, Kuokkanen highlights the violence of resource extraction alongside Indigenous women led activist initiatives that "draw attention to how the exploitation of Indigenous lands and bodies, especially bodies of Indigenous women and girls, are intimately interconnected in a number of ways" (KUOKKANEN, 2019, p. 43).

As in Latin America, then, we see epistemology and ontology converge in Indigenous women's orientations toward and enactments of the relationality between body and land. Notably, they often conceptualize this interrelation through the lens of kinship and caretaking kin (thinking in the other direction, we might think of *cuerpo-territorio* as a statement about kin.) In their anti-resource extraction efforts, Indigenous women strive to embody and enact their connections to and responsibilities towards "all our relations," a ubiquitous phrase that reflects the belief that humans have kin ties to "other-than-human relatives" (TALLBEAR, 2016).[21] In fact, Kuokkanen asserts that Indigenous self-determination itself hinges on "ensuring the existence and continuation of 'all our relations', as well as the norms shaping those relations" (KUOKKANEN, 2019, p. 23). For Dakota feminist scholar Kim TallBear (2016), Indigenous women-led movements such as Idle No More and NoDAPL are indeed "caretaking kin" (para. 2) and offering "alternative visions for being better relatives with each other and the planet" (para. 5) when they stand against capitalist extractivist projects. Moreover, in these acts of caretaking, Indigenous women and others recognize

[21] In her historicization of the overlapping "isms" still at work in the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples, disabled people, and Indigenous disabled people in particular (ableism, racism, speciesism, sexism), Hopi disability scholar Vivian Delchamps (2021) also discusses kinship. She contrasts the vastly different attitudes towards and treatment of rattlesnakes — as stand-ins for all nonhuman beings, both animate and less animate — found in Western and Indigenous worldviews.

"the entangled lives of Indigenous peoples and the land upon which our peoplehood depends" (para. 4). [22] This human–other-than-human entanglement is also apparent in Cree feminist scholar Alex Wilson's description of four fundamental Cree principles followed by their English translations:

> kakinow ni wagomakanak (we are in relationship with the land, waters, plants, animals, and other living creatures), a-kha ta neekanenni miso-an (we are all equally important), sakihiwawin (a commitment to act in ways that express love), and mino pimatisiwin (we are responsible to live in conscious connection with the land and living things in a way that creates and sustains balance. (WILSON, 2018, p. 167).

Here, Wilson makes explicit mention of human–water relations as inherent to human–other-than-human entanglements. In fact, some Indigenous scholars use land "as shorthand for land, water, air, and subterranean earth" (TUCK; MCKENZIE; MCCOY, 2014, p. 8).[23] To summarize, in their respective works, Kuokkanen, TallBear, and Wilson, as the Indigenous communitarian feminists discussed above, point to a profound relationality between human bodies and the land (and water) — and much to our collective detriment, a relationality that Western capitalist frameworks and their extractivist pursuits simply do not countenance, and actively undermine.

As in Latin America, Indigenous women's activism is about much more than adversity. This is nowhere more evident than in Indigenous feminist calls for radical resurgence (SIMPSON, 2017). To end this section, we liken these calls and the Indigenous communitarian feminist goal of reclaiming sovereignty over bodies and territories. Before we proceed, however, three points bear repeating. First, as Kuokkanen tells us, struggles for the integrity of the land are inseparable from struggles for the integrity of the individual (in this case, the bodies of Indigenous women). Second, the notion of individual integrity is not the liberal feminist notion of individual autonomy, but rather signifies "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; see also ICAZA, 2019). Finally, above all else, the overarching goal of Indigenous women's struggles throughout the hemisphere is the promotion of life — over profit!

Let us revisit Cabnal's (2018) idea of *acuerpamiento territorial* as how Indigenous women gather *on* the land in their territories to defend life *in* those territories. Apart from the obvious — the

[22] See TallBear (2018) for an elaboration of the notion of "making kin."
[23] For more on water–human relations, including its gendered dimensions, see Georgeson and Hallenbeck (2018), McGregor (2013, 2014, 2021), and Yazzie and Baldy (2018).

gatherings of Indigenous women in marches, rallies, round dances, blockades, occupations, and the like throughout the continent —, we see a profound resonance between *acuerpamiento territorial* and radical resurgence. This resonance is apparent in Simpson's (2017) call for embodied re/engagement on and with the land as a deliberate act of refusal against colonialism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy, and a reconstitution of, in her case, Nishnaabeg's intelligence. The goal is not to repossess the land but to nurture "deep, reciprocal, consensual *attachment*" and "relate to land through connection — generative, affirmative, complex, overlapping, and nonlinear *relationship* [emphasis in original]" (SIMPSON, 2017, p. 43). Consensual attachment happens through a wide range of "embodied resurgent practices," from

> 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. (SIMPSON, 2017, p. 194).

Put into conversation with Latin American Indigenous communitarian feminist thought, one might call these activities examples of what is possible through *acuerpamiento territorial*. As Simpson reminds us, this would include the power of art as a resurgence.[24]

Along with Idle No More and the NoDAPL movement at Standing Rock, Indigenous women, youth, and 2SQ people have also been lead protagonists in Land Back, a broad-based movement across Turtle Island to demand what some Indigenous feminists call the rematriation[25] of Indigenous land. Land Back is complex, multifaceted, and comprehensive. The main goal is to ensure that Indigenous peoples can govern themselves in a way that sustains good relations with the land. In the introduction to a special topic issue of *Briarpatch Magazine*, Nickita Longman, Emily Riddle, Alex Wilson, and Saima Desai (2020), hone in on the essence of Land Back, one that we think speaks to the underlying impetus of *cuerpo-territorio*:

[24] One of our goals moving forward is to catalogue how Indigenous women/feminists in North America use art in their anti-resource extraction activism. As an example, we have the work of Métis artist Christi Belcourt, who has contributed to countless Indigenous social justice movements, including NoDAPL, for which she created the iconic "water is life" art together with Ojibway artist Isaac Murdoch (WEISENSTEIN, 2017). See also http://christibelcourt.com/ .

[25] The term rematriation is used to push back against the limitations and patriarchal connotations of repatriation (TUCK, 2011). *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/).

> But when we say "Land Back" we aren't asking for just the ground, or for a piece of paper that allows us to tear up and pollute the earth. We want the system that is land to be alive so that it can perpetuate itself, and perpetuate us as an extension of itself. That's what we want back: our place in keeping land alive and spiritually connected. (LONGMAN *et al*., 2020, p. 2).

In this passage, the demand for Land Back harkens back to an assumption embedded in *cuerpo-territorio* — Indigenous women in particular, but also men and Two-Spirit people, have a responsibility to caretake "all our relations," including non-human relatives. Simpson puts this beautifully in terms of an "ecology of intimacy" or "web of connections to each other, to the plant nations, the animal nations, the rivers and lakes, the cosmos, and our neighboring Indigenous nations". (SIMPSON, 2017, p. 8).

This brings us to two final important resonances among Indigenous feminist approaches to land defense throughout the hemisphere: while these struggles must be anti-patriarchal with gender at their core, they are always inclusive of the entire community. For Cabnal and others, defending the land starts with "the conscious reclamation of our first territory, the body". (CABNAL, 2010, p. 130). Likewise, Simpson emphatically states that "Indigenous freedom means that my sovereignty over my own body, mind, spirit, and land is affirmed and respected in all of my relationships". (SIMPSON, 2017, p. 94). For Cabnal, Simpson, Kuokkanen, indeed, for all the thinkers cited above, territory carries within it two inextricable, co-constituted elements: to defend and thrive in one's "territory" is simultaneously about defending and thriving in one's body and one's homeland(s).

Final Remarks

In the spirit of dialogue, we have shared our analysis of how Indigenous communitarian feminist thinking around *cuerpo-territorio* resonates with certain key aspects of Indigenous feminist thought across Turtle Island (importantly, we want to be clear that in so doing, we have provided an admittedly partial account of the concept). These scholarly literatures and the embodied practices they discuss share important concerns and analyses when it comes to (1) colonialism as inherently patriarchal, (2) violence against the body as intimately linked to violence against the land, in

particular the violence of extractivism, and (3) a human life as part of a network of relationships that include land, non-human animals, plants, and other beings as relatives.

What might all of this suggest about the possibilities — and pitfalls — of women's/feminist solidarities across differences? First, we submit that these resonances signal ample grounds (pun intended) for more robust solidarities among and between Indigenous women/feminists throughout the hemisphere. This is especially true regarding gender-based violence arising out of the extractivist practices of multinational corporations and their nation-state apologists. Moreover, the concept speaks to how the violence of patriarchal extractivist logic extends beyond Indigenous communities to affect non-Indigenous women of all nations. One need look no further than the epidemic of femicide affecting whole swaths of Latin America (CABREJO, 2022; SOUZA, 2019) and the disproportionate numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people across Turtle Island (FINNEY, 2017; FLOWERS, 2015; MACK; NA'PUTI, 2019). Thus, we would like to acknowledge that diverse groups of women (and men), both indigenous and non-Indigenous in Latin America, especially, have already employed the concept of *cuerpo-territorio*, if not term, in defense of their territories (ALTAMIRANO-JIMÉNEZ, 2020, 2021; BERMAN-ARÉVALO, 2021; GAGO; CAVALLERO; MALO, 2020; KOROL, 2016; LOZANO LERMA, 2019; MILLAN, 2018; MOLLETT, 2021; MOTTA, 2021; MUJERES ZAPATISTAS, 2019). After all, to reiterate, *cuerpo-territorio* provides a robust analytical tool for theorizing the links between extractivist exploitation and violence of and against both lands and bodies.

Indeed, Cruz Hernández encapsulates the promise of *cuerpo-territorio*:

> as a Latin American and Caribbean epistemology made by and from Indigenous women living in community; that is, the body-territory articulation places the community at the center as a way of life. In addition, it helps all other people to look at ourselves territorially from different scales, since it emphasizes the most micro, most intimate scale, which is the body. Where our body is the first territory of struggle. (CRUZ HERNÁNDEZ, 2017, p. 9)

In a sense, then, *cuerpo-territorio* has universal application in so far as women everywhere start to understand their bodies — and attacks against those bodies — as embedded in land, place, space, and/or territory.

Nonetheless, as Altamirano-Jimenez warns us, while feminist scholars have noted "a correlation between violence against women and the brutal territorial restructuring experienced in the region (...) [these] contributions are limited in their accounting of Indigenous women's

embodied experiences of dispossession" (ALTAMIRANO-JIMÉNEZ, 2021, p. 215). As such, they fail to consider the specificities of gendered *colonial* violence and dispossession experienced by Indigenous women. Therefore, we are cautious in proposing an uncritical adoption of *cuerpo-territorio* by non-Indigenous actors. Instead, we call for solidarities that do not disable or homogenize Indigenous women's experiences, collective political aspirations, and worldviews/cosmologies. Put another way, we aspire to the kind of decolonial feminist "deep coalitions" called for by Lugones, coalitions that "never reduce multiplicity" and "span across differences... towards a shared struggle of interrelated others" (LUGONES, 2003, p. 98; see also HUNT; HOLMES, 2015). Additionally, in thinking with Madina Tlostanova's vision of such coalitions vis-à-vis the gendered decolonization of the academy across multiple scales, we invite others to think further with *us* about the usefulness of and *cuerpo-territorio* to provide a basis for "transversal alliances of gendered indigenous knowledges" (ANDERSON *et al*., 2019, p. 141) alongside Afrodescendant, popular, and even white settler feminists.

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