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Braiding Liberation Discourses: Dialectical, Civic and Disjunctive Views about Resistance and Violence

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Abstract

This article puts three discourses about resistance and violence, coming from two distinct settler colonial contexts, in conversation, to highlight a distinctive theory of change associated with contemporary Indigenous movements. The first, from South Africa, can be seen in the writings of Nelson Mandela. It offers a dialectical view of resistance, where the oppressor sets the terms of the confrontation and where violence is allowable in the pursuit of change. The second discourse can be seen in the writings of James Tully and offers a theoretical bridge between the first and the third. It focuses on civic citizenship as a nonviolent engagement with terms of governance. The third can be seen in the writings of Indigenous theorists whose work focuses on resurgence. It offers a disjunctive theory of change that centres transgression and prefigurative practices. The conclusion of the article braids these discourses to discuss how they both converge and diverge.

Résumé

Cet article met en conversation trois discours sur la résistance et la violence, provenant de deux contextes coloniaux distincts, afin de mettre en évidence une théorie du changement distincte associée aux mouvements autochtones contemporains. Le premier, provenant d'Afrique du Sud, est tenu par Nelson Mandela. Il offre une vision dialectique de la résistance, où l'oppresseur fixe les termes de la confrontation et où la violence est permise dans la poursuite du changement. Le deuxième discours est tenu par James Tully et offre un pont théorique entre le premier et le troisième. Il se concentre sur la citoyenneté civique en tant qu'engagement non violent avec les termes de la gouvernance. Le troisième discours est celui des théoriciens autochtones dont le travail se concentre sur la résurgence. Il propose une théorie disjonctive du changement qui met l'accent sur la transgression et les pratiques préfiguratives. La conclusion tresse ces discours pour discuter de la manière dont ils se rejoignent et divergent.

This article puts three discourses about resistance and violence, coming from two distinct settler colonial contexts, in conversation, to highlight a distinctive, disjunctive theory of change associated with Indigenous[1] movements of resistance. While collective memory about Indigenous resistance in Canada is marked by the violent events that took place at Oka/Kanehsatà:ke, Ipperwash Provincial Park and Gustafsen Lake in the 1990s (Borrows, 2016: ch. 2), over the last decade armed struggle has, by and large, not been how Indigenous peoples have pursued and enacted their freedom against the ongoing oppressive, dominating, dispossessive and exploitative forces of settler colonialism. I am referring here to mass mobilizations and movements such as the ones associated with Idle No More in 2012–2013 (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective, 2014), the Water Protectors of the Oceti Sakowin and allies who stood ground for the Missouri River in 2016–2017 (Estes, 2019) and the Wet'suwet'en First Nation at the Unist'ot'en Camp who held ceremony while the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) arrested them in 2020 (Unist'ot'en Camp, 2020). These events illustrate the extent to which violence is not part of the current repertoire of strategies adopted by recent Indigenous movements of resistance.

The extent to which violent struggles are absent from what is now Canada and the United States is remarkable considering how easily settler orders respond to Indigenous resistance with violence—the striking image of barking riled-up dogs unleashed on Water Protectors at Standing Rock comes to mind (Goodman, 2016), as well as the RCMP arguing for "lethal overwatch" to intervene in Wet'suwet'en Territory (Dhillon and Parrish, 2019). It is also remarkable considering the use of violence by resistance movements in other settler colonial contexts, such as South Africa under apartheid, that are often presented as modelled on or inspired by settler colonialism in America (Mamdani, 2020). One of the main contributions of this article is disclosing a theory of change—that is, how actors understand the connection between their agency and the changes they pursue, to make sense of this remarkable fact.

To do so, I bring in conversation distinctive theories of change associated with two often analogized settler colonial contexts: South Africa's apartheid and Canada. While settler colonialism took significantly different forms in these two contexts, especially regarding racialization and the role of labour and land, they remain connected by a logic of elimination and dispossession (Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2016; Kelley, 2017). Indeed, there are clear similarities between settler colonialism in South Africa and Canada, some of which are noted by Nelson Mandela in his autobiography (2013: 699). For instance, both states confined Indigenous populations to "reserves" and both relied on pass systems[2] to control their movements (Nagy, 2012). It is also frequently claimed that South African officials visited Canada and the United States to study the reserve system as an inspiration for apartheid (Saul, 2010; Mamdani, 2020: 98). This visit is likely a widely believed myth (Cambre, 2007; Horwitz, 2016), and yet the comparison remains very present in academic and public discourses (Coulthard, 2014: 200–201; LaRocque, 2017).

Nevertheless, it rarely leads to developed comparative engagements, and voices from South Africa are generally absent from Indigenous political theory concerned with transcending settler colonialism, unlike voices from other colonial contexts. For instance, Taiaiake Alfred (2005) refers to Vietnam, India and Mexico and draws in important ways from Mahatma Gandhi, but South Africa and Mandela are absent from *Wasáse*. Similarly, Glen Coulthard (2014) engages with Frantz Fanon to theorize the turn away from the state, but the words of Steve Biko (2002) on black consciousness, though highly significant for thinking about resurgence, are absent. This absence is not restricted to Indigenous political theories. James Tully, for instance, developed a theoretical account of struggles *for* and *of* freedom, which draws on the agency and theories of Indigenous people but also from the words and deeds of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. (Tully, 1995, 1999, 2008, 2014a). Considering that Mandela is one of the best-known figures among contemporary liberation movements, one might expect Tully to appeal to him. Yet he is excluded from Tully's account because he supported armed resistance and was personally involved in the foundation of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military arm of the African National Congress, while Tully favours nonviolence (Tully, 2014a: 99).[3]

This recurrent absence points to a missed dialogue, one that I argue is particularly fruitful to appreciate the role, or absence, of violence—understood as the use or tangible preparation and threat to use physical force to harm[4]—in theories of change developed in settler colonial contexts. Accordingly, I put in conversation three such theories of change, identifiable in the political and theoretical discourses of Mandela and Tully and diverse contemporary Indigenous theorists whose work focuses on resurgence, including Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Jeff Corntassel, Taiaiake Alfred and Glen Coulthard. To enable this comparative engagement, I adopt an expansive view of resistance covering diverse forms of agency that challenge and undermine power, from directly oppositional contentions to transgressive and subversive behaviour. Through this comparative engagement, resistance emerges as (1) dialectical,[5] in Mandela's discourse, when it focuses on pursuing change through oppositional and contradictory forces and actions and when violence is allowable; (2) civic, in Tully's discourse, when it focuses on engaging with terms of governance in nonviolent ways to renegotiate and change the rules of the political game; and (3) disjunctive, in the discourse of Indigenous theorists of resurgence,[6] when it does not seek to directly change a relationship of governance but transcends it by turning away from and transgressing it and when violence is an irrelevant means to produce change.

In comparing discourses, I do not seek to identify fatal flaws or to argue for the overall plausibility of one discourse over the others. I am rather seeking to draw out various perspectives adopted by political actors and theorists looking at a same object—resistance to oppression and domination—from partly but not wholly dissimilar political positions, thereby developing a more complete and complex picture of the relationship between resistance and violence.[7] To use a metaphor often present in Indigenous literature (Borrows et al., 2019), my method is a braiding of discourses. As Oonagh Fitzgerald and Risa Schwartz (2017: 3) explain: "A braid is a single object consisting of many fibres and separate strands; it does not gain its

strength from any single fibre that runs its entire length, but from the many fibres woven together." The practice of braiding reveals each strand as unique and important, yet it emphasizes how a mutual engagement creates a stronger and more complete whole, without merging or erasing the distinct strands.

In that sense, and as I see it, braiding discourses is a nonfoundationalist and nonreductivist method of engagement. It does not aim to assess the conformity of the discourses with some already held norm; neither does it seek to produce a single coherent discourse out of the engagement. Rather, it seeks to achieve a complex synthetic outlook that reveals overlaps and disagreements without merging the discourses, while acknowledging the possibility of irresolvable contradictions. Although it remains a form of critical inquiry that can point to problematic or wrong aspects of one or another of the discourses—when braiding, there are strands that go under the other ones or that are left out because they do not fit the pattern being woven—it ultimately favours diversity and the irreconcilability yet commensurability of contrasting perspectives, against univocal and universal normative theorizing. This is thus a method of engagement that refuses moral absolutes and the desire to adjudicate conflicting claims.[8] It is a decolonial method of investigations (Mignolo, 2021) that embraces pluralism and that validates the importance of contextual/local knowledge and of distinct lifeways in producing knowledges and the discourses engaged with. The final section of this article thus offers a further contribution by looking on these three theories of change as strands that can be braided, to reveal overlaps, missed aspects or disagreements about the relationship each affirms between resistance and violence, and to explore the different, contextual strengths of each.

Finally, this comparison reveals interesting connections with other theorizations of political resistance and violence. As the article progresses, I point to ways in which the views articulated therein connect with (1) a view associated with Gandhi that while means and ends cannot neatly be separated, nonviolent political actions need also to be thought about in realist and practical terms (Mantena, 2012) and (2) a view associated with King that resistance must keep "open the possibility for sharing of power with current oppressors in a transformed democratic future" (Livingston, 2020: 708).

Dialectical Resistance: Violently Producing Change

I focus on Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* (2013) and speeches and writings published in *The Struggle Is My Life* (1990) to identify his position regarding resistance and violence. My engagement with his writing is not intended to be an exegesis of his complete views over the years. I take Mandela as he, consistently throughout these texts, represents his views, specifically those that are relevant to the conversation I am setting up.[9]

The objective of realizing a state where racial oppression will have ended and where white supremacy will have been overthrown guides Mandela's resistance and activism. To achieve this end, Mandela maintains that the means must be adapted to the circumstances and be assessed considering their efficiency. His writing reveals that he was both contextualist and pragmatist regarding the appropriate means to adopt to pursue freedom.

He was contextualist to the extent that he considered the circumstances in which oppression takes place to be determinative in deciding the appropriate means to resist.[10] Activists and freedom fighters must consider the nature of the state, political order, or system in which they find themselves to determine the right course of action. In explaining his progressive turn to violent struggle, Mandela often refers to the nature of the apartheid regime and how its violence rendered nonviolent resistance contextually inappropriate:

> A police state did not seem far off. I began to suspect that both legal and extra-constitutional protests would soon be impossible. In India, Gandhi had been dealing with a foreign power that ultimately was more realistic and far-sighted. That was not the case with the Afrikaners in South Africa. Non-violent passive resistance is effective as long as your opposition adheres to the same rules as you do. But if peaceful protest is met with violence, its efficacy is at an end. (2013: 182–83)

In his opinion, the violence of the state and its commitment to respond with violence to peaceful protest left the oppressed no choice but to respond in kind. This can also be seen in his comparison of the South African freedom movement and the civil rights movement in the United States:

> The conditions in which Martin Luther King struggled were totally different from my own: the United States was a democracy with constitutional guarantees of equal rights that protected non-violent protest (though there was still prejudice against blacks); South Africa was a police state with a constitution that enshrined inequality and an army that responded to non-violence with force. (2013: 620)

Beyond the institutional context, he argues that the actions of other political actors must be considered to determine the appropriate form of resistance. In the face of increasing unorganized political violence, Mandela argued that it would be desirable and prudent for the African National Congress (ANC) to harness, organize and direct this violence: "I mentioned again that people on their own had taken up arms. Violence would begin whether we initiated it or not. Would it not be better to guide this violence ourselves, according to principles where we saved lived by attacking symbols of oppression, and not people?" (2013: 322; 1990: 162).

Second, Mandela was a pragmatist regarding the means of resistance. The efficacy of a mode of resistance, given a specific context, mattered (1990: 69–70). Yet he did not regard all means to be equivalent or see no issue with violence. For one thing, his move to violence was progressive. It became necessary because other means had been ineffective at bringing change: "In the end, we had no alternative to armed and violent resistance. Over and over again, we had used all the non-violent weapons in our arsenal—speeches, deputations, threats, marches, strikes, stay-aways, voluntary imprisonment—all to no avail, for whatever we did was met by an iron hand" (2013: 194); and: "I countered by saying that in fact non-violence had failed us, for it had done nothing to stem the violence of the state or change the heart of our oppressors" (2013: 323). Thus, Mandela does not maintain

a principled commitment to violence or to nonviolence; political means should be assessed in light of their efficacy. As Mandela writes: "For me, non-violence was not a moral principle but a strategy; there is no moral goodness in using an ineffective weapon" (2013: 183). It would even be "wrong and immoral to subject our people to armed attacks by the state without offering them some kind of alternative" (2013: 322). Ultimately, although nonviolence could be useful, desirable and praiseworthy in some contexts, for Mandela, it was "a tactic that should be abandoned when it no longer worked" (2013: 322; 1990: 166).

Mandela's concern for the context of oppression and for the efficacy of means of resistance points toward what I call a dialectical view of resistance. Following this view, resistant political agency is conceived as oppositional and as seeking change through contradictory forces and actions. I believe this to be at the core of his understanding of the relationship between oppression and resistance, and it is a position he consistently refers to throughout *Long Walk to Freedom* and *The Struggle Is My Life*. For Mandela, how the oppressed should resist is dictated by the nature of oppression and by the actions of the oppressor. As he explains: "A freedom fighter learns the hard way that it is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle, and the oppressed is often left no recourse but to use methods that mirror those of the oppressor. At a certain point, one can only fight fire with fire" (2013: 194); and elsewhere:

> I responded that the state was responsible for the violence and that it is always the oppressor, not the oppressed, who dictates the form of the struggle. If the oppressor uses violence, the oppressed have no alternative but to respond violently. In our case it was simply a legitimate form of self-defence. I ventured that if the state decided to use peaceful methods, the ANC would also use peaceful means. "It is up to you", I said, "not to us, to renounce violence." (2013: 641; 1990: 202–3)

This position is dialectical in the sense that it is not merely the contextual efficacy of the means of resistance that must be considered. One must consider, and oppose, the agency of the oppressor. It is correct to affirm that the oppressed should resist in ways that are efficient to terminate oppression; but what is efficient to terminate oppression is greatly determined by how the oppressor acts. In significant ways, the agency of the oppressed is then directed, in response and in opposition to that of the oppressor. This does not mean that the oppressed are merely reacting; it rather means that liberation requires addressing the oppressor, and it is the oppressor that sets the terms of the address. This is why, when Mandela was asked to renounce violence before being liberated from prison, his response was: "If I emerged from prison into the same circumstances under which I was arrested, I would be forced to resume the same activities for which I was arrested" (2013: 621). The oppressed cannot simply change their mode of resistance if the oppressor does not change first; the oppressed should not turn to nonviolence unless the oppressor has already turned to nonviolence.

For Mandela, the choice between violent and nonviolent resistance is dictated by the oppressor. In the case of South Africa, Mandela held that it was the violent and authoritarian nature of the apartheid regime that dictated the need for violent

resistance: "I was candid and explained why I believed we had no choice but to turn to violence. I used an old African expression: '*Sebatana ha se bokwe ka diatla*' ('The attacks of the wild beast cannot be averted with only bare hands')" (2013: 321; 1990: 123). In a different context, nonviolence might have been appropriate.

Mandela was conscious of the associated risks of violent struggle. Resistance is not about destroying the oppressor, but about bringing about the end of oppression. Violence, as a means, can be used for both purposes, and the line between seeking to destroy and seeking to change needs to be treaded carefully. Furthermore, there is an inherent risk in resorting to violent resistance in that it can create resentment, harden the oppressor and lead to a cycle of vengeance and retaliation that is far from conducive to a lasting peace. In Mandela's views, violence is a means on the long walk to freedom, but it cannot by itself lead to it. This requires a transformation of the relationship with the oppressor: "Violence could never be the ultimate solution to the situation in South Africa. . . . Men and women by their very nature required some kind of negotiated understanding" (2013: 630). As such, one should use violence in ways that do not make it impossible to transform the relationship with the oppressor.[11] This is why, for instance, when Mandela is reflecting on the precise modes of violent resistance that should be adopted, he writes: "Because it [sabotage] did not involve loss of life, it offered the best hope for reconciliation among the races afterwards. We did not want to start a blood-feud between white and black. . . . What would race relations be like between white and black if we provoked a civil war?" (2013: 336; 1990: 167). Although he was prepared to turn to guerrilla warfare, terrorism and revolution (2013: 336; 1990: 167), these were not his first choices, since they were not conducive to a negotiated peace. Yet these more extreme forms of violent resistance remained distinct possibilities whose propriety depended on the actions of the oppressor.

Furthermore, violence, in his view, had the potential to change the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed not only by forcing the oppressor to reconsider their actions but by requiring them to engage with the oppressed to put an end to violence. This position can be seen in his claim that "to make peace with an enemy, one must work with that enemy, and that enemy becomes your partner" (2013: 734–35). We can interpret this claim as affirming that violence opens the possibility of the oppressor and the oppressed engaging as free agents in determining how they can move to peaceful interactions. This is because achieving peace requires that all parties come to a common understanding and agree to cease violence, such that the action of negotiating peace is itself the recognition that the other cannot be fully controlled and pushed about by mere force. To make peace and end violence, the other must be acknowledged, to some extent, as free and independent from your power. In a context like that of apartheid or settler colonialism, such a process of negotiating peace is transformative because it turns opponents into participants in a joint endeavour, that of making peace, and thus transcends the oppressor/oppressed dichotomies (Ndlovu-Gatshen, 2016: 33).[12] In the end, this also shows that Mandela's turn to violence was not merely about replacing who was in power while retaining the old structures of domination; it was also informed by a theory of change where the "future reconciliation of races was envisioned from the beginning" and which targeted "symbols of white supremacy and racist oppression" (Ndlovu-Gatshen, 2016: 38).

In sum, Mandela gives a central role to the context of oppression and to the efficacy of means of resistance. He holds a dialectical view of resistance where the oppressor dictates the terms of resistance and where the agency of the oppressed must be directed in response to that of the oppressor. Despite supporting violence as an appropriate means of resistance, Mandela holds that a negotiated, transformative peace is the ultimate aim. Considering this objective, he sees violence as an appropriate means of resistance, since it opens the possibility for the oppressed to become free partners in the process of peacemaking and to transcend the colonial oppressed/oppressor dichotomy.

Civic Citizenship: Nonviolently Changing the Rules of the Game

While change can indeed be pursued by responding to oppression and domination through direct oppositional confrontation, Tully offers a theoretical outlook on political agency that enables us to appreciate forms of resistance that do not directly respond to the oppressor and to situate Mandela's—and, as we will see later, Indigenous theorists' disjunctive views—on a spectrum. To understand Tully's views about resistance and violence, I first turn to his account of civic citizenship before engaging with how this manifests in his engagement with Indigenous resistance to colonialism.

For Tully (2014a), civic citizenship centres the agency, as opposed to the belonging, of political actors. It relies on his view of freedom as an activity—where to be free is to enact freedom (Tully, 1999)—to conceptualize citizenship as the mode of governance in which political actors exercise control over the terms of their governance. Specifically, civic citizenship should be understood as a practice organized around the logic of negotiating terms of governance and bringing them under the shared control of those subject to them. This can be achieved in diverse ways, from formal political participation to extra-institutional political mobilizations. This logic thus informs the behaviour and virtues that political actors should exemplify, within any governance relationship, to enact citizenship.

While civic citizenship is not a categorical imperative—such that freedom may be pursued in other ways—it nevertheless articulates for Tully a normatively attractive mode of governance. Thus, following the logic of civic governance, we can also understand limitations placed on the diverse actions that actors may engage in to bring terms of governance under their shared control. As Tully explains, civic citizens should not engage in violent struggle to the extent that violence is inconsistent with the logic of civic governance:

> Civic citizens are committed ethically to always interacting with others as free in the civic sense: that is, as capable of entering into relationships in which they work out their differences and forms of cooperation through non-violent negotiations and contestation, even if the other initially tries to use violence to settle differences and impose cooperation. . . . To kill the other is not to respect contestation but to end it. (2014b: 291)

Civic governance forsakes command and compliance as the primary mode of interaction between political actors. It seeks instead to create a civic world where power

is exercised together, without unilateral impositions. Any practice of governance that seeks to rely on coercion, command and compliance, instead of collective engagements, is inconsistent with civic governance. As Tully writes:

> Power-with is not only different from but also incompatible with violence and the power of command. It *is* the power of non-violence and connection. This civic form of power and freedom is the living basis of government and citizenship. Violence, power-over and the authority of command can exact compliance and often control dissent, but they cannot bring into being the underlying cooperative and connective relationships of citizenship and governance on which power-over relations of governance depend. (2014b: 279, italics in original)

In sum, civic citizenship is a practice governed by the logic of bringing terms of governance under the shared control of those subject to them in diverse ways, to the extent that these ways are consistent with the logic of "power-with." On this view, coercive violence is essentially uncivic.

Tully notes that civic governance requires both the governed and the governors to act in ways consistent with the logic of this mode of governance. Yet this is not always the case (Tully, 2014a: 50–51). For instance, governors may behave as "unaccountable 'tyrants'" (51) when they do not respect the civic agency of those they govern. In those circumstances, the governed may seek to resist and change the relationship of governance—to "civicize" it by bringing it under their joint control. I explore what theory of change this offers by turning to Tully's engagement with Indigenous resistance to colonialism.[13]

In his work on the struggle of Indigenous peoples against internal colonialism—that is, settler colonial contexts where Indigenous peoples and colonizers are considered part of the same state—Tully (2008) highlights the importance of paying close attention to the nature of oppression in order to adequately understand the agency of any resisting actors and how they seek to bring terms of governance under their control. As he explains, internal colonialism orients the relationship between the settler states and Indigenous peoples toward "the appropriation of the land, resources and jurisdiction of the Indigenous peoples, not only for the sake of resettlement and exploitation . . . but for the territorial foundation of the dominant society itself" (2008: 262). This internal structure of domination dictates various strategies and techniques of governance, including extinguishment and assimilation, that "make up the dominant side of the complex agonistic relation of colonial governance vis-à-vis Indigenous resistance" (264). What is being resisted is then a broad structure of domination, of which governance is part, and its manifestations.

In resisting wished-for elimination, Tully argues that Indigenous resistance takes the form of struggles *for* freedom and *of* freedom. It is *for* freedom when Indigenous peoples struggle to maintain their status as distinct self-determining peoples. It is *of* freedom when their struggle already expresses their freedom to negotiate and appropriate terms of governance, notably when it manifests itself in "quotidian acts of protecting, recovering, gathering together, keeping, revitalising, teaching and adapting entire forms of Indigenous life that were nearly destroyed" (2008: 288). The first focuses on the pursuit of a status denied by a

structure of domination through a civic renegotiation and contestation of the terms of governance. While not necessarily oppositional, change is still pursued in a dialectical manner, in that political actions are directed toward the modification of the rules of the political game[14] in order to synthesize conflicting modes of governance. The second points to what I later refer to as a disjunctive mode of resistance, in that it recognizes a multiplicity of acts that are not always oriented in obvious and direct ways toward modifying the behaviour of the oppressor but that nevertheless transgress and disrupt the logic constitutive of the structure of domination being resisted —extinguishment, in this case.

In both cases, however, the focus is placed on the freedom of political actors to resist and on the ways in which their civic freedom will bring about change by requiring the oppressor to act differently. As Tully writes: "It is a system established and continually modified *in response* to their two distinct types of arts of resistance and freedom: against the structure of domination as a whole, in the name of the freedom of self-determination, and within it, by compliance and internal contestation of the strategies and techniques, in the name of the freedom of insubordination and dissent" (2008: 264–65, italics added). In other words, it is political actors who, by their diverse acts of resistance for and of freedom, force the oppressor to respond and to seek to reassert the broader structure of domination. On Tully's account, it is the civic citizen who ultimately leads, since domineering governors "cannot completely eliminate the interactive and open-ended freedom *of* and *in* the relationship or the room to appear to conform to the public script while thinking and acting otherwise, without reducing the relationship to one of complete immobilization" (2014a: 46–47, italics in original). In leading, citizens should preferably act in ways that are consistent with civic citizenship. That is, they should seek to modify the relationship through agonic struggles that fall short of violence. This is required for them to play the game of civic citizenship; if they resort to violence, they are seeking to command and coerce their opponents and no longer engaged in seeking to realize "power-with."

Unlike Mandela, Tully is not especially concerned with pragmatic or contextualist considerations. He rather focuses on the modality of political actions—civic citizenship—and its potential to change the relationship with governors and bring about a different world. For him, civic citizens should act in ways that already enact the relationship they seek to realize: if we seek to change a command/compliance relationship, we should adopt means that do not reproduce what we seek to eliminate. The means must prefigure the end, and therefore civic citizens should be strongly committed to nonviolence:

> Participants do not see non-violence as a means instrumental to some future end. There is no separation of means and ends. . . . The ethos of non-violence is that the means are everything, as the seed is to the full grown plant. Peace is not an end. Peace is the way. On this view, means are "constitutive" rather than instrumental. Non-violent civic freedom is the only way to a non-violence and democratic future. (Tully, 2014b: 290–91)

While this view is not strictly dialectical, in that it does not proceed through contradictory opposition, it nevertheless still focuses on acting in ways that can change

the other side to achieve a synthetic mode of governance: by thinking and acting differently here and now, we can bring about a world where power-with will be realized. As such, nonviolent resistance still depends on the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor, but who leads the relationship has changed.

In sum, the relationship that Tully sees between resistance and violence is governed by his view that "freedom is the practice of freedom" (Tully, 1999: 162). As such, the focus of his approach is on the active agency of political actors in relationships of governance. Yet he is aware that structures, such as white supremacy and settler colonialism, configure relationships of governance and thus that changing these relationships can be pursued through the fundamental freedom of political actors to negotiate terms of governance. Political actors are thus able to lead and force the oppressor to modify their game.

Indigenous Resurgence: Enacting a Different World

While these theories of change capture aspects of Indigenous resistance, I suggest that the last decade or so of Indigenous resistance, and various movements of revitalization currently animating Indigenous peoples in Canada, disclose a mode of resistance that is not first directed toward changing the relationship with settlers. It rather seeks to enact an alternative that defies the settler colonial present (Veracini, 2015) and prefigures the conditions of a decolonized future.[15] As Michael Elliott explains: "Spaces of resurgence are structured not on but for the principle of reciprocity. They presuppose Indigenous centrality and authority, and in doing so figure settlers as guests: if they are to remain welcome, settlers are under requirement to adapt their behaviour to meet with conditions of hospitality that they have no say in determining" (2018: 73). I refer to this mode of resistance as disjunctive since it is about enacting a transformative alternative rather than confronting the dominant terms of interactions between Indigenous peoples and settlers.

I refer to various Indigenous activists and scholars united by a commitment to a turn away from the state and to resurgence but who do not form a united or univocal movement as Indigenous theorists of resurgence (ITR). I identify broadly shared views while being conscious that the position I expound is not beyond disagreement. Further, I make no claim to represent the full array of Indigenous resistance movements and theories—others may focus more on reconciliation (Asch et al., 2018). My focus is dictated by the contrast their discourse offers in comparison with the previous discourses and by the relevance of this discourse to account for the nonviolence of diverse Indigenous movements of resistance. ITR offer a distinct view of resistance that decentres the dialectical logic present in Mandela and that radicalizes the struggle *of* freedom discussed by Tully.

As with Tully, ITR highlight the structural context that gives rise to Indigenous resistance. This structural context is settler colonialism, such that Indigenous resistance can be understood as resistance to erasure and dispossession, both of "lands and self-determining authority" (Coulthard, 2014: 6–7). ITR thus articulate resistance as a reaffirmation of Indigenous existence *as* Indigenous peoples *on* Indigenous terms through, notably, distinct relationship to lands and through distinct entitlement to sui generis governance. This is called resurgence, and though it

is not confrontational or oppositional, it remains a form of resistance, since it transgresses and disrupts settler colonialism with the ultimate aim of transcending it.
 Nick Estes explains the logic of this resistance:

> [Indigenous resistance] defines freedom not as the absence of settler colonialism, but as amplified presence of Indigenous life and just relations with human and nonhuman relatives, and with the earth. To invoke the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson, the refusal to accept the impossible condition of banishment and disappearance from one's homelands, and outright dispossession, structures the Indigenous political practice of return, restoration, and reclamation of belonging and place. (2019: 248)

The essence of this position is that resisting settler colonialism primarily and principally requires a "decentering of the state and other colonial entities by consciously re-centering Indigenous nationhood and land-based governance" (Corntassel, 2021: 75). Put differently, the "refusal" of the settler order is "generative" (Simpson, 2017: 35; 2021: 10–11): it centres, revitalizes and renews Indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing, on an individual and collective basis and contributes to "reconnecting with homelands, cultures, and communities" (Corntassel, 2012: 97). Through resurgence, the settler state will be displaced and hopefully no longer play the role of defining and recognizing Indigenous rights, status, responsibilities and identities. This means that Indigenous political actors resist settler colonialism by turning away from the state (Coulthard, 2014: 48) and from the settlers as a determinative factor of their political status and identity.

As a mode of resistance, resurgence is then not foremost directed to the oppressor or even concerned with acting to change the oppressor. It primarily transgresses the eliminatory logic of settler colonialism through work on the individual and collective self[16] that leads to transformation in the community (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005: 612). As such, it "explicitly eschews the instrumental rationality central to the liberal politics of recognition"—and, I would add, the instrumental rationality concerned with efficiently pursuing change in the governor; it "instead demands that we *enact* or *practice* our political commitments to Indigenous national and women's liberation in the cultural form and content of our struggle itself" (Coulthard, 2014: 159, italics in original).

This turn away is not, as Elliott explains, "the permanent or absolute cessation of discursive engagement with settler society" (2018: 62). As he describes it, resurgence has a secondary dimension that seeks to rearticulate the relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers; otherwise it would be hard to see it as transformative. Drawing on Alfred, he explains that resurgence pursues such change by "*showing* alternatives to settler society, *provoking* reflection and *motivating* creative confrontation with existing social realities and dominant normativities" (italics in original). As such, Indigenous resurgence only provides "indirect" "guidance" for change (Elliott, 2018: 73). Despite this secondary dimension, Indigenous resurgence is still not fundamentally oppositional or directed to the oppressor. It rather remains a form of resistance that is transgressive, disruptive and disjunctive: it emphasizes the need to refuse the "death dance with the colonizer" (Simpson, 2008: 16; 2017: 101, 115) and

to transcend the existing order by bringing about the world it envisions, without reference to negotiating with the oppressor or wrestling with them for the order to come.

Similar to the way that Tully sees nonviolent resistance as the present actualization of a different future, Indigenous resurgence sees in the turn to Indigenous lifeways a manner of bringing into existence a desired renewed political world through prefigurative practices: "Such practices constitute the ends they seek to bring about; they bring into effect the decolonial forms of life sought in the process of decolonization itself by enacting them" (Aguirre, 2015: 197). This mode of resistance seeks to sidestep the oppressor and to transcend the embedding structure of oppression by reducing the oppressor to insignificance in the life of Indigenous peoples. Resisting colonialism, in this view, is disjunctive because it consists in acting in ways that displace the oppressor from the determinative position in the dialectic of resistance. As Adam Dahl explains, refusal "destabilizes the very ground of sovereign legitimacy claimed by the settler state" (2018: 160). Indeed, the Indigenous resistance literature brings to light how structures of oppression may set up a dialectic between the oppressor and the oppressed but that political actors retain their agency to act differently to (1) refuse this dialectic and transcend it in (2) prefiguring a different world where their actions are neither determined nor oriented to the oppressor. This discloses that resistance can be disjunctive, as opposed to dialectical, when political actors seek to not only rearticulate the terms of governance but also terminate and refuse the oppositional relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed by centring prefigurative practices.

Consequently, violence does not predominantly figure as a strategy in the theories of change of the authors associated with this discourse.[17] This is because their focus is not on the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed but on Indigenous political actors and the work they must do on themselves to disempower and dissolve oppression. Although the resistance of the oppressed consists in a refusal of the oppressor and of the system of oppression with which the oppressor is associated, the actions and responses of the oppressor are not what first concern those who resist. As Leanne Simpson puts it: "There is no demand upon the state or its citizens other than to get out of the way and respect Indigenous self-determination and nationhood" (2017: 237). In sum, since resistance is not dialectical, the effectiveness of violent actions directed to the oppressor as a means for bringing about change is beside the point.

Yet as Corntassel (2021: 75, 80) explains, resurgence does not entail a "complete disengagement" or denial of the need to act "in contention with settler colonialism." Turning away from the state does not mean that actions may never be oriented toward the oppressor or that violence may not be resorted to; but if they are, they should be grounded on and expressing Indigenous lifeways. For this to be the case, resurgence has a kind of lexical priority in that it is the first and essential step that needs to ground any further oppositional contention. As Alfred explains, the struggle will lead nowhere if it is not grounded in Indigenous lifeways: "We must do it *our* way, or risk being transformed by the fight into that (and those) which we are struggling against" (2005: 131, italics in original). Hence, even oppositional and confrontational manifestations of Indigenous resistance should not be read as necessarily engaging Indigenous peoples in a dialectic with the oppressor; they may themselves be setting and reasserting the Indigenous terms of the debate.

As Estes explains regarding the resistance at Standing Rock: "For the Oceti Sakowin, the affirmation Mni Wiconi, 'water is life,' related to Wotakuye, or 'being good relative.' Indigenous resistance to the trespass of settlers, pipelines, and dams is part of being a good relative to the water, land, and animals, not to mention the human world" (2019: 21). On this view, then, Indigenous blockades and active resistance to occupation of their lands do not emerge "in the space between subsistence and proletarianization," as if Indigenous political actors were resisting to address the oppressor to get, for instance, more equitable distribution of resources or access to land, "but from the social and legal orders maintained through Indigenous peoples' connection to the land and to their cultures" (Pasternak, 2017: 76). In other words, such acts of resistance are generative refusals (Simpson, 2017). They refuse the terms of the confrontation set by settlers and affirm a distinct Indigenous world that does not need the settlers as referent or to validate the contention: "Through these actions we physically say 'no' to the degradation of our communities and to exploitation of the lands upon which we depend. But they also have ingrained within in them a resounding 'yes': that are the affirmative *enactment* of another modality of being, a different way of relating to and with the world" (Coulthard, 2014: 169, italics in original). Again, this form of resistance is disjunctive rather than dialectical: it flips the debate in an entirely distinct register and reveals the fundamental antinomies present in the confrontation.

ITR add a disjunctive perspective regarding the relationship between resistance and violence to the dialectical ones identified earlier. They illustrate how resistance can be carried out by flipping the terms of the confrontation and disengaging from the oppressor. As such, the means of resistance are not those that force a change in the oppressor or seek to synthetize contradictions in the relationship but those that transform the oppressed, transgress the relationship of governance and transcend the broader structure of oppression.

Conclusion: Braiding Discourses

At this point, it would be typical to argue in favour of one of the positions, to seek to synthesize all perspectives, or to explain to the reader why one of the discourses is wrong. This is not my intention. I see these discourses as distinct answers offered to local problems informed by unique lifeways. Nevertheless, these problems—settler colonialism and white supremacy—despite the distinctiveness of their local manifestations, have loosely similar structures, and there is thus a sense in which there can be a meaningful encounter of the answers. This encounter can contribute to an explanation of the disagreements and similarities between them, highlight significant elements de-emphasized or overseen due to local circumstances, and offer a perspective about the role of violence in resistance that considers aspects of each of these discourses. This is a braiding of discourses, through which a complex synthetic outlook is pursued, as opposed to a unifying synthesis. I hope such an outlook shows why the often missing dialogue between South Africa and Canada is worth investigating further.

First, I begin by noting that Tully's and ITR's theorizations of resistance are different than the one offered by Mandela in at least two significant ways. First, whereas Mandela highlighted the importance of focusing on the oppressor as

defining the appropriate mode of resistance, Tully and ITR point to the underlying logic of the structure of domination and oppression—extinguishment, elimination and dispossession—as defining transgressive modes of resistance. While Mandela is aware of the complex nature of power as manifested by white supremacy as a structure, his theory of change identified above does not emphasize the diffuse ways in which it can be transgressed and focuses more on direct struggles for freedom. In contrast, Tully's account of struggles *of* freedom and ITR's theorization of resurgence point to the myriad ways in which political actors can challenge power beyond organized political activism or direct challenges to governance.

The distinct focus on dialectical confrontations and disjunctive transgression of unjust structures is one of the key differences between Mandela and ITR. I suggest, however, that we can look at these differences not as contradictory but as diverging perspectives on a similar object and that we can seek to appreciate the reasons that explain the divergence. To achieve this, it is instructive to return to Mandela's claim that "a freedom fighter learns the hard way that it is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle" (2013: 194). While Mandela is clear that white supremacy is being challenged, not white folks themselves, his words paint white supremacy as a personal and concrete structure. This is not without reason: white supremacy under apartheid was a tangible, overbearing, violent presence that responded to challenges "with draconian states of emergency and extralegal measures such as the torture and assassination of political opponents" (Nagy, 2012: 353). This illustrates the need for a space in which actors can engage in transgressive behaviour and prefigurative practices without facing such draconian responses. As Mandela told reporters who were comparing his positions with those of King: contemporary Canada and the United States are constitutional democracies with guarantees of rights, not police states, and this institutional context matters in enabling disjunctive resistance. In other words, acting differently and turning away from the state emerges in a space of opportunity, and part of the reason this space opens up is that the violence of the oppressor—albeit real and with deplorable consequences—is constrained and limited. In many other contexts, the dialectic of resistance violently imposes itself on the oppressed, and even worse, the oppressor sometimes refuses to treat the oppressed with any standing or dignity, such that there is no actual dialectic between the oppressor and the oppressed. In those contexts, the oppressor is not treating the oppressed as an opponent but as a bully, a thug or a "wild beast" would. In sum, Mandela's claim about the role of the oppressor helps to lead to an appreciation of how these different modes of resistance can belong to a spectrum where contextual considerations matter.

Second, while the first point seeks to bring these positions closer together, their distinct perspectives about the necessity of violence moves them apart. For Mandela, violence was inevitable because it was visited upon the oppressed, and the oppressed had no alternative but to resist violently. In contrast, Tully (2014b: 285) does not deny that violence may sometimes be required, but he asks us to focus on the agency of the oppressed and on how they can always bring change on their own terms, if at least in progressive and incremental ways, without violence. He invites us to see that the space of opportunity for struggle of freedom may be wider than generally assumed and to recognize that the oppressed can lead, even in highly oppressive contexts, by modifying their behaviour to civicize the relationship of governance. This is because

there is an ever-existing space of freedom that agents have to resist and contest the application of any rule or norm—all relationships of authority rely on an expectation of compliance and not on absolute physical and mental control—such that political actors can always (re)take some control on how their behaviour is determined.

Furthermore, in emphasizing the importance of using this freedom in the pursuit of resurgence through prefigurative practices, ITR point to the constitutive connection between means and ends. On this view, the inevitability of violence does not thereby make it efficacious in the pursuit of a desired end; in having to resort to violence, it may in fact be the end that is sacrificed. As Alfred explains, violence should be rejected in part because Indigenous struggles need "to remake the entire landscape of power and relationship to reflect truly a liberated post-imperial vision" (2005: 27), not merely adopt means that end up reproducing the same world from which they are seeking to escape. The means through which resistance is enacted cannot neatly be separated from the end they pursue. The view that means can be imbued with substantive transformative concerns is easily eclipsed by the importance given to necessity and efficacy.

Third, while these discourses moved apart on the connection between means and ends, they come back together when we consider that Mandela's turn to violence was not unconditional and that he indeed envisioned a transformed future. While they emphasize this point differently, all three discourses articulate resistance as having an ultimate transformative objective: they all seek to transcend current structures of domination and oppression. Here, I suggest that violence as discussed by Mandela must be understood as a first step toward this transformation, just as resurgence is a first step in—although independent from—the reconfiguration of settler/Indigenous relationships.

It is mainly for contexts where the oppressed are deprived entirely of voice and can no longer speak and when they are subjected to violence that Mandela sees violence as necessary; the words of Chief Luthuli, reported by Mandela, clearly express the exasperation of repeatedly not being heard: "'Who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately and modestly at a closed and barred door?'" (Mandela, 2013: 166). In those contexts, the voice of the oppressed is met with violence, just as the resistance of the slave is met with the whip of the master. Violence can be seen here as a reclamation of the voice of the oppressed before allowing them to engage in negotiation. In those contexts, it is required for the "servile slaves"—to borrow Tully's vocabulary—to reclaim their voices and the efficacy of their speech. Violence is then not a means to achieve compliance but a means to bring about a context where negotiations will be possible, where the oppressed will be able to bring the terms of governance under their shared control and to ultimately transform the political order.

Although it is not at the core of Tully's position, and might ultimately be contrary to his normative preferences, this way of framing the role of violence falls closer to his views (Tully, 2008: 315; Celikates, 2014: 215). Indeed, Mandela is hesitant to resort to violence precisely because of the associated risks for future political relationships, which is similar to Tully's rejection of violence because it is uncivic;[18] the violence that is allowable, according to Mandela, is the one that is a precursor of peace negotiations that performatively realizes, to some extent, Tully's power-with.[19] This nuanced view concerning the role of violence and the

contexts in which resorting to it is appropriate brings the various strands of these discourses closer together than they appeared at first sight.

All of this helps to understand the remarkable avoidance of armed struggle by Indigenous peoples in North America, even in confrontational moments with the settler state. Rather than accounting for this in strategic and dialectical terms, as a response to the significant power differential between the settler state and Indigenous peoples, I suggest that it can be read in light of a disjunctive theory of change. Indigenous resistance is nonviolent because resurgence is not primarily concerned with acting to change the settlers and, more importantly, because political actions need to express and enact the world, informed by Indigenous lifeways, they seek to bring about. Their actions are nonviolent because they enact and disclose an alternative rather than compel compliance. What the engagement with Mandela shows is that attention needs to be paid to the space of opportunity that enables this mode of resistance. It also shows that refusal may appear counterproductive in the achievement of power-with, but that like violence, it can be the precursor of a subsequent joint transformation of the political order.

Notes

1 I use *Indigenous* to refer to First Nations and Native Americans. I focus more on the Canadian context, but the colonial border with the United States does not restrict my engagement.

2 While the pass system in Canada is described by Laurie Barron as "only a weak reflection of what transpired in South Africa," in part because it was never backed by legislation or universally applied, she nevertheless notes that "there is every indication that, had they been able to fashion a pass system entirely to their liking, one solidly backed by the might of the police, they would have created a system of control over Indians analogous in some respects to that for blacks in South Africa" (1988: 39).

3 On Tully and Mandela, see Aletta Norval (2014), Duncan Bell (2014) and Tully (2014b: 310). Mandela's views are not *extensively* engaged with in this discussion.

4 This definition does not deny the significance of more complex analyses of violence, especially when making sense of no less harmful forms of violence such as depravation and symbolic violence. This limited definition comes from my concern for violence as a modality of political agency—that is, as a concrete option in political struggles.

5 This term has strong Marxist and Hegelian undertone, but it can be reclaimed in a general, non-metaphysical sense. Other theorists of Indigenous resistance use this term similarly. For instance, Alfred writes of "the us-versus-them dialectic which is the fundamental defining feature of colonial relationships" (2005: 130), and Kevin Bruyneel contrasts Indigenous enactment of the third space of sovereignty with political actions that would seek "a dialectical engagement or effort to synthesize competing visions of sovereignty" (2007: 21).

6 I consider diverse Indigenous scholars as part of one discourse because their shared focus on resurgence illustrates how Indigenous resistance can be disjunctive.

7 Yet this picture remains limited in scope: it does not extend to the most extreme forms of oppression, domination and state violence, such as ethnic cleansing, where it would be senseless to conceive of resistance as anything more than survival or to imagine nonviolence as anything more than sacrifice. My focus is on circumstances where—without defining precise boundaries—oppositional, transgressive and disruptive behaviours are possible and intelligible as political agency.

8 I thank anonymous reviewers for contributing to this formulation of the method.

9 Mandela does not stand for all relevant discourses about resistance and violence coming from South Africa. Yet he is an undeniably central and important figure whose views are appropriate to consider, even if other discourses should be included for a thorough dialogue between the Canadian and South African contexts.

10 Despite the disagreements between Gandhi and Mandela, they are respectively described as contextualist by Mantena (2012: 457) and me.

11 See also Gandhi's assessment of the inherent risk of violence and corresponding realist commitment to nonviolence (Mantena, 2012).

12 See also King's views about the transformative potential of exercising agency, control and power-with (Livingston, 2020: 701, 706).

13 Tully's work on Indigenous resistance is consistent with the theoretical work on citizenship: Indigenous resistance is a form of civic practice whereby Indigenous peoples oppose and seek to control the terms of governance applied to them.

14 Tully's (1999) views of terms of governance and political rules as (re)negotiable builds on Wittgenstein's notion of language games.

15 This is not a claim that this mode of resistance was not present before, only that it is clearly discernable in various recent events.

16 Resurgence is not individualistic; self-regard is always collective (Barker, 2021: 222–23).

17 Alfred (2005) is an exception, since he offers an extensive discussion of violent struggles.

18 See also Alfred (2005: 51).

19 This brings Mandela closer to Gandhi and King; see Mantena (2012) and Livingston (2020).

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