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Date: April 28, 2026

The Capitalist Spatial Matrix:
A Political Theory of the Built Environment

A dissertation presented

by

William Conroy

to

the Department of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

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William Conroy

Dissertation Advisor: Neil Brenner

Abstract: The Capitalist Spatial Matrix: A Political Theory of the Built Environment

This dissertation develops a theory of the built environment and its role in the reproduction and stabilization of capitalist society. It begins by demonstrating that despite consistent engagement with that problematic, the past fifty years of critical socio-spatial scholarship has yet to produce an adequate account of that relationship. To develop one, the dissertation then proceeds in two parts. The first part of the dissertation is pitched at a high level of conceptual abstraction and considers the place of the built environment in capitalist society across three conceptual axes: crisis, articulation, and interpellation. Through dialogues with key figures in the history of political and social thought—ranging from Johann Heinrich von Thünen and G.F.W. Hegel to David Harvey and Stuart Hall—it demonstrates that the built environment should be understood as central to (1) the production and resolution of crises that arise across capitalism's normatively differentiated abodes of social and ecological work; (2) the articulation of capitalist society's necessary and contingent parts, especially the articulation of racialized and gendered forms of ascriptive hierarchization in capitalist contexts; and (3) the interpellation of differentiated capitalist subjectivities.

Part II of the dissertation concretizes the theoretical agenda developed in Part I, turning to a close reading of two episodes in the history of American heterodox political economic thought to do so. First, it engages the "black belt debate" of the 1930s, which sought to make sense of the survivals of slavery after Reconstruction and the potentiality of black self-determination in the US south. In so doing, it attends specifically to the spatial presuppositions and implications of that debate, and to what it reveals regarding the role of the built environment in mediating capitalist

crises. Second, it engages the US iteration of the "domestic labor debate" of the 1970s and 1980s. The dissertation argues that several participants within that debate relied heavily on spatial concepts and categories, and that their interventions help to demonstrate the role of the built environment in the articulation of race, gender, and capitalism's constitutive dynamics, as well as the built environment's role in the interpellation of differentiated capitalist subjectivities. The dissertation then concludes with a brief discussion of the normative implications of this account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society.

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"Modes of production write history in time; social formations write it in space."
– Milton Santos

"*[S]ocial facts possess this property of resistance. Far from their being a product of our will, they determine it from without. They are like moulds into which we are forced to cast our actions. The necessity is often ineluctable.*"
– Emile Durkheim

"*It is the future which decides whether the past is living or dead.*"
– Jean-Paul Sartre

Preface

Prior to the 1970s, the archive of scholarship in political and social thought had given relatively short shrift to the built environment. Of course, there were moments in which the built environment appeared in that archive, sometimes rather plainly. This is particularly true of the landmark texts that defined the middle part of the twentieth century. Hannah Arendt, in her 1960 essay "What is Freedom," argued that freedom was not "an attribute of the will," but "an accessory of doing and acting" that required its own "space of appearance"—or its own built environment.[1] And Martin Heidegger, to name but one additional example, famously suggested in *Being and Time* (1927) that "the 'subject' (Dasein)" is "ontologically" spatial.[2] He argued that human existence has its "*Being-in-the-world as its essential state*," and, as such, that the built environment supports it in its average everydayness.[3] But these invocations hardly constitute serious or extended engagements with the built environment itself. And moving further back in the history of political and social thought, the visibility of the built environment becomes only more opaque.[4] A generous reader could attempt to identify moments in which the built environment is present *in its absence* prior to the twentieth century. We can read texts like Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and consider how the built environment shapes the processes of habituation that make virtuousness. We can read the long history of political

[1] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 1968), 154 and 165.

[2] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 146.

[3] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 80, emphasis original.

[4] The most significant exception here is Plato's *Laws*.

and social thought on liberty and consider how the built environment subjects the body to a "will other than its own."[5] But in so doing, we would only further substantiate our point.[6]

Since the 1970s, however, the built environment has become a key object of intellectual and normative concern, at least in some corners within the broad domain of political and social thought. In fact, a cohort of dissident scholars emerged in the 1970s and 1980s that took the built environment itself as their point of departure. Mostly located in the then emergent fields of radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory, this motley group turned to Marx, and to critical social theory more broadly, in order to make the case for the centrality of the built environment in the reproduction of modern life—in the stabilization of capitalism, specifically, and in the reproduction of relations of power and inequality, more broadly.[7] These scholars produced accounts of the built environment that went on to profoundly shape a range of fields in their wake, informing subsequent engagements with the built environment and the production of space in geography, urban studies, sociology, anthropology, political theory, and beyond. There is much to recommend in this scholarship. Its pioneering figures—David Harvey, Henri Lefebvre, Manuel Castells, Doreen Massey, and Edward Soja, among others—will all be engaged in the pages to come, as will much of the work that has followed in the fifty years since their earliest interventions. And yet, in this dissertation I will argue that despite the turn to the built environment that this work occasioned in the 1970s and 1980s, we continue to lack an adequate theory of the built environment and its role in

[5] Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 27.

[6] For additional context, see Duncan Bell and Bernardo Zacka, "Introduction," in *Political Theory and Architecture*, eds. Duncan Bell and Bernardo Zacka (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 1-17.

[7] This work will be engaged in more depth below. Here we should note that contemporaneous with these engagements was a more phenomenological approach to space and place, best represented by Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977). In that work, Tuan considers, among other themes, how the built environment "continues to exert a direct impact on the senses and feeling" (p. 116).

the reproduction of capitalist society. We continue to lack a political theory of what I will refer to throughout this dissertation as *the capitalist spatial matrix*.[8]

Indeed, in what follows I will argue that the built environment—which I define as the relatively fixed and immobile environment that surrounds us, and that was produced *in the service of* particular forms of use—is central to the reproduction of capitalist *society*, which I will be at pains to differentiate from capitalism's "laws of motion" and from power and inequality, broadly conceived. These latter objects of inquiry have received sustained attention by several scholars in the post-1970s period. But capitalist *society* has, I will argue, fallen from view. This might appear a rather insignificant distinction at first glance. Nevertheless, as I will stress in the pages to come, the implications of this distinction are quite striking. What I aim to capture with this minor linguistic addendum—in my move from capital and capitalism to capitalist *society*—is that the built environment is not merely a "humble mediator" in the reproduction of capitalism's constituent parts[9]; but, rather, that the built environment is the means through which those abstract-theoretical elements that define *all* capitalist contexts come to be contingently materialized, concretized, and reproduced. A central claim of this dissertation, in other words, is that it is through the built environment that capitalism—a theoretical abstraction—is concretized and becomes capitalist society, as well as those violent variants of capitalism that we have come to know so well: *racial* capitalism, *patriarchal* capitalism, *fossil* capitalism, and the like. It is through the built environment that capitalist society's inherent and recurrent crises are produced and resolved; that the necessary and contingent parts of capitalist society are conjoined and articulated; and through which differentiated, and historically contingent, capitalist subjectivities are produced.

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[8] Cf. Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: Verso, 2000).

[9] Cf. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 195.

The built environment is thus not simply another name for the environment in general, even if it has long since been impossible to distinguish between environments that bear the imprint of human sociality and those that do not.[10] It is certainly the case that "nature," if it ever did exist, no longer does, and that the entirety of what surrounds us bears the mark of human life. And yet, the built environment is, in my account, but a specific part of the environment at large—it is that relatively fixed and immobile part that was produced in the service of specific forms of individual and/or collective use. The built environment maintains a distinctive temporality: it preempts and interpellates us.[11] It includes plantations and conservation areas just as much as sidewalks and apartment complexes, but it excludes the atmosphere, rain, and the squirrel outside of my window. And, as I will argue in the pages to come, the built environment stands at the center of the mediation, materialization, and concretization of that conceptual abstraction that has occupied so much of our thought within political and social theory: capitalism. Without the built environment capitalism is a theoretical abstraction; through it, it becomes capitalist society.

The implications of this account are more than "merely" theoretical. The theoretical armature that I will develop throughout this dissertation sheds critical light on longstanding debates on the history and geography of capitalist development, just as it does empirical scholarship on the built environment within geography, urban studies, sociology, and beyond. In reimagining the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society, this dissertation recasts empirical work on topics ranging from housing and homelessness to segregation and the potentiality of "sustainable urban development." It holds crucial normative implications too. The basic insight that

[10] Steven Vogel, *Thinking like a Mall: Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015).

[11] Paul Robbins, *Lawn People: How Grass, Weeds, and Chemicals Make Us Who We Are* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007).

emerges from what follows is that if we want to attend to any expression of capitalist specificity, tamper its most violent excesses, or transcend them altogether, the built environment demands our attention. We must consider how and why we are implicated in the production of the capitalist spatial matrix, and how we might produce another kind of space anew.

The detour of abstraction

If you consider the vast archive of scholarship on capitalism and its reproduction for long enough, a curious feature begins to appear. It becomes clear that this literature, which is now (at least) a century and a half old, and which spans nearly all domains of humanistic inquiry, does not take very seriously the fact that capitalist societies invariably contain relations that make them capitalist—by dint of the fact that they are, indeed, describable as "capitalist"—and relations that do not. In fact, upon close reflection, scholarship within this domain tends to not simply obscure the fact that capitalist societies always contain necessary features that *define them as capitalist*, and contingent features that do not; but, going further still, it tends to fall into one of three intellectual camps, each implicated in this broader tendency, albeit in a distinctive way. Accounts of capitalism and its reproduction tend to be either (1) "obscurantist," (2) "essentialist," or (3) "reductionist." The first cohort of scholars—"the obscurantists"—obscure the fact that capitalist societies are always constituted by necessary features and logically contingent dimensions. This scholarship engages the reproduction of capitalist society *in name*, but when read closely it does not provide an account of the abstract-theoretical (or necessary) features that define capitalist society, or a "theory of capital," at all. These scholars attend to the "complex states of causal codetermination" that comprise capitalist societies, and to the remaking of these states over time.[12] And yet, in so doing, they obscure any clear distinction between which aspects of their "abstracted unit" are necessary to its definition as capitalist, and which are not.[13] They concern themselves with the making and remaking of complex totalities that appear to be comprised of elements that "have no immediate or necessary

[12] Jamie Peck, "Practicing Conjunctural Methodologies: Engaging Chinese Capitalism," *Dialogues in Human Geography*, online first, 1.

[13] Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 65.

correspondence"[14]; but they do not make clear which parts of their totality maintain an "expressive homology" and which do not.[15]

The second cohort of scholars is—for lack of a better term—"essentialist." To be clear, by this I do not mean that this group falls into the trap of Cartesian reductionism, or that it suggests that the world is comprised of self-constituted and ontologically bounded atomistic bits that are both unchanging in their essence and which pre-exist their relations.[16] Rather, in stark contrast to the obscurantists, this second group of scholars simply focuses exclusively on capitalism's *essential* relations—on identifying and accounting for the reproduction of the essential or necessary relations that define capitalist society, without any attention to capitalist society's contingent dimensions at all.[17] Rather than obscuring the necessity/contingency distinction that follows any really existing capitalist context, essentialists jettison contingency altogether, and attend strictly to the *essential core of capital* and to the reproduction of those constituent relations. This tendency arguably defines Marx's project in *Capital*, and his effort to make sense of capital's reproduction in its "ideal average." But it has long remained integral to political and social theory, and has defined work well beyond the Marxist tradition too. Work in this vein does not simply attempt to grasp the enduring forms of "continuity and regularity" that define our social world, but to make sense of the reproduction of those features that define all capitalist contexts. It does not focus simply on the ways in which the

[14] Efthimios Karayiannides, "Stuart Hall, Development Theory, and Thatcher's Britain," *Modern Intellectual History*, online first, 2.

[15] Stuart Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 197.

[16] See, for context, Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin, *The Dialectical Biologist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

[17] See Noel Castree, "From Spaces of Antagonism to Spaces of Engagement," in *Critical Realism and Marxism*, eds. Andrew Brown, Steve Fleetwood, and John Michael Roberts (New York: Routledge, 2002), 206-207.

past "mak[es] itself present in practices structured according to its principles," but, more specifically, on how the essential aspects of capitalist society are reproduced.[18]

The final cohort of scholars that one encounters in this vast archive of scholarship on capitalism and its reproduction are the "reductionists." While this cohort might gesture toward an awareness that capitalist societies invariably maintain both necessary and contingent features and dynamics, they go on to suggest that erstwhile contingencies are made into functional necessities in those contexts. *Society* is reduced to nothing more than an *appendage* of capital in this work. There are several ways in which scholars of capitalist reproduction arrive at this kind of reductionist position. Some explicitly argue that within a capitalist society all putatively contingent relations vis-à-vis the imperatives of accumulation are re-articulated, reformatted, and absorbed into "capital's production relations," such that they no longer remain contingencies at all.[19] Others offer the seemingly more nuanced claim that at a specific historical moment (now passed) capital came to exercise "an absolute domination" over the social whole—an image associated with work on the "real" or "total" subsumption of capitalist society.[20] And yet, whatever path they take, what is occluded in such reductionist accounts is the fact that capitalist societies are never structured by a single line of determination; that they are constituted by "different levels of articulation…in different combinations"[21]; and, most importantly, that they come to be "combined through an articulating

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[18] Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 82.

[19] Kevin Cox, "Massey, Marx, and Human Geography: Disjunctures and Provocations," *Human Geography* 14, no. 1 (2021): 11.

[20] Endnotes, "The History of Subsumption," *Endnotes* 2 (2010): 142; see also, Jacques Camatte, *Capital and Community* (London: Unpopular Books, 1988); Antonio Negri, *Marx and Foucault: Essays, Vol. 1* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017); Mario Tronti, *Workers and Capital* (New York: Verso, 2019).

[21] Stuart Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 2* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 32.

principle," *precisely because* their elements do not logically depend upon one another as essential relations.[22]

While this brief typology is best read as a rough and ready heuristic, it is relatively easy to slot the central reference points of political and social theory within one of these three categories. In the pages to come I will engage much of that scholarship in considerable depth. In the present context, we can briefly consider this heuristic in relation to sources that do not figure centrally in what follows (if only to avoid repetition). Take three intellectual behemoths of the twentieth century: Antonio Gramsci, John Maynard Keynes, and Georg Lukács. Each is undoubtedly a crucial reference point in discussions on the reproduction of capitalism. And yet, upon further consideration, each is also easily read as either obscurantist, essentialist, or reductionist as well. Gramsci attended in his prison notebooks to the "conditions under which…'intellectual, moral and political hegemony' is established," offering a range of conceptual binaries for grasping that process—good sense versus common sense, war of position versus war of maneuver, organic intellectuals versus traditional intellectuals—all while *obscuring* the distinction between the *necessary and contingent* aspects of capitalist society.[23] And Keynes and Lukács offered essentialist and reductionist accounts, respectively, with the former attending narrowly to the reproduction of (what we might refer to as) capitalism's constituent features, developing a critique of Say's Law and the ideal that "supply creates its own demand"[24]; and the latter reducing "every aspect" of capitalist life to the "structure of reification."[25]

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[22] Stuart Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 191.

[23] Gramsci quoted in Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 213.

[24] Keynes quoted in Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 230.

[25] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 249.

Put differently, Gramsci productively worked across his writings to transform the philosophy of praxis, and to "purge[]" it of every "residue of mechanism and fatalism,"[26] all while obscuring the distinction between capitalist society's necessary and contingent features, in the first instance. Keynes attended closely to the inherent crisis tendencies of capitalist society—and to the necessary dynamics that inhibit the "special case" of "effective demand associated with full employment"[27]—albeit in a way that attended only to those "immanent, mutually reinforcing relational dynamics" that define capitalist society, bracketing more complex and contingent factors.[28] And Lukács insisted upon the imperative of totality to Marxist thought, albeit in a way that claimed the "all-pervasive supremacy of the whole over the parts,"[29] leaving his readers with a reductionist theorization in which reification "cover[ed] every manifestation of life in society."[30] Each provided engagements with the reproduction of capitalist society that were, therefore, either obscurantist, essentialist, or reductionist, as I have put it above. Each failed to address the reproduction of capitalist society with attentiveness to capitalism's constituent features, which only become visible through a process of conceptual abstraction[31]; and with an understanding that those constituent features always emerge in practice in and through historical-geographical contingency.

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[26] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 107.

[27] John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (Cambridge: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 25.

[28] Geoff Mann, *In the Long Run We Are All Dead: Keynesianism, Political Economy, and Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2017), 233.

[29] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 27.

[30] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 92.

[31] Bertell Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

This general failure amongst scholars of capitalism to theorize the reproduction of capitalist society with an awareness of its necessary and contingent parts is not only surprising, but intellectually disappointing too. After all, many of the most forceful disagreements surrounding capitalism and its reproduction seem to call forth a clear and coherent engagement with that distinction. Take those debates that have defined the last decade and a half of scholarship in the critical social sciences. From debates on the meaning and usefulness of "racial capitalism," to feminist concerns with social reproduction and "intersectionality," to more recent critiques of "class abstractionism," and well beyond, many of our most significant political and intellectual disagreements of the post-2008 conjuncture have turned precisely on what exactly constitutes "capitalism" itself, and how and why capitalism comes to be mediated by modes of hierarchization that *may or may not* be integral to its reproduction.[32] At the core of a range of contemporary debates within social and political thought is a *largely unstated and unengaged* disagreement regarding the necessary features that define capitalism as such; and, going further still, a *largely unstated and unengaged*

[32] See, for context, Tithi Bhattacharya, "Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction Theory," in *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, ed. Tithi Bhattacharya (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 1-20; Vivek Chibber, *The Class Matrix: Social Theory after the Cultural Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022); Sue Ferguson, "Intersectionality and Social-Reproduction Feminisms: Toward an Integrative Ontology," *Historical Materialism* 24, no. 2 (2016): 38-60; Søren Mau, *Mute Compulsion: A Marxist Theory of the Economic Power of Capital* (New York: Verso, 2023); Michael McCarthy and Mathieu Hikaru Desan, "The Problem of Class Abstractionism," *Sociological Theory* 41, no. 1 (2023): 3-26; Charles Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); William Clare Roberts, "Class in Theory, Class in Practice," *Crisis & Critique* 10, no. 1 (2023): 249-262; Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Class, Race, and Capitalism," *Political Power and Social Theory* 15 (2002): 275-284. For my own engagements, see especially, William Conroy, "Race, Capitalism, and the Necessity/Contingency Debate," *Theory, Culture & Society* 41, no. 1 (2023): 39-58; William Conroy, "Background Check: Spatiality and Relationality in Nancy Fraser's Expanded Conception of Capitalism," *Environment and Planning A* 55, no. 5 (2023): 1091-1113; William Conroy, "Spatializing Social Reproduction Theory: Integrating State Space and the Urban Fabric," *Review of International Political Economy* 31, no. 3 (2024): 955-977.

disagreement regarding how the necessary features of capitalist society—however defined—are imbricated with, and reproduced through, *processes to which they have no necessary relation*.[33] These debates demand, though they do not provide, a theorization of the abstract-theoretical relations that constitute capital, and a theorization of the reproduction of capitalist society, in all of its contingency and complexity. One would be hard pressed to find an account within those debates that *explicitly states* what is necessary to capital's reproduction, and how and why those necessary features come to be articulated to, and reproduced through, processes with which they are not "logically inter-linked."[34]

This kind of disagreement—which raises the specter of capitalist society's necessity/contingency distinction (or the distinction between capitalist society's necessary and contingent elements), but which does not engage it directly—is hardly new. It is also unlikely that such disagreements will wither away any time soon. The list of qualifiers used to describe capitalism only continues to grow, with new phrases—"surveillance capitalism," "crack-up capitalism," "capitalism without capital," and "carceral capitalism," among others[35]—sparking debate seemingly every day, albeit without much effort to clarify what makes those formations capitalist and what does not. In fact, our ongoing ecological crises have rightly called forth a pressing engagement with "fossil capitalism," too. Given the intellectual and normative urgency of the climate crisis, "fossil

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[33] See, for context, Neal Harris and Gerard Delanty, "What is Capitalism? Toward a Working Definition," *Social Science Information* 62, no. 3 (2023): 323-344.

[34] Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London: Verso, 2011), 10.

[35] See, for context, Jonathan Haskel and Stian Westlake, *Capitalism without Capital: The Rise of the Intangible Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Quinn Slobodian, *Crack-Up Capitalism: Market Radicals and the Dream of a World Without Democracy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2023); Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism* (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2018); Shoshanna Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2019).

capitalism" arguably constitutes the central problematic of humanistic and social scientific inquiry at the present moment. And yet, despite this significance, there remain strikingly few engagements with that problematic that self-consciously proceed with attention to the necessity/contingency distinction at all. If Louis Althusser once remarked that discussions of "totality" were generally united only by "(1) a word; (2) a certain vague conception of the unity of things; and (3) some theoretical enemies"[36]; within the critical scholarship on capitalist reproduction, we appear to be in an even worse state still. After all, in that context, we generally lack a shared set of "enemies," insofar as we have avoided a clear and direct effort to develop a theory of the reproduction of capitalist society that is aware of both its necessary and contingent parts. If we oppose "capitalism" it is not exactly clear what we oppose, and how it relates to other forms of hierarchization, inequality, and injustice.

In this dissertation I will chart a different course. I will develop an account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society that is attentive to the fact that capitalist societies are always comprised of both necessary features, which constitute them as capitalist, and contingent relations, which do not. In fact, I will argue that *any* effort to properly theorize the reproduction of capitalist society with the necessity/contingency distinction in view *must engage the built environment itself*. A core presupposition of this project is that we cannot avoid the parsing of necessity and contingency when we discuss the reproduction of capitalist society, even if we might try. As Karel Kosík notes, building directly on Marx, "[i]f the phenomenal appearance and the essence of things were to coincide directly," abstraction would be unnecessary.[37] But they do not,

[36] Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (New York: Verso, 2005), 203.

[37] Karel Kosík, "Dialectic of the Concrete Totality," *Telos* 1, no. 2 (1968): 24.

and thus abstraction *must exist*.[38] Because the world appears to us immediately as an "obscure and chaotic whole," it (only) becomes "comprehensible through the mediation of the abstract."[39] And, in what follows, I will push this insight further still. I will maintain that knowledge always involves the isolation of phenomena and the parsing of their necessary elements from their logically contingent ones and phenomenal appearances. It requires what I will refer to as the "detour of abstraction,"[40] which stands as "a condition of possibility of cognition" itself.[41] And, moreover, I will insist that any effort to develop a theory of the reproduction of capitalist society that is attentive to both its constituent parts and its logically contingent determinations must *proceed with reference to the built environment*, or through an engagement with what I will refer to as *the capitalist spatial matrix*.

In other words, while the "detour of abstraction"—and the isolation of phenomena and the parsing of their necessary and contingent features—is an inevitability in our efforts to think through capitalism and its reproduction, it has not been taken very seriously in the long history of scholarship on that theme. Whether as obscurantists, essentialists, or reductionists, scholars have generally failed to theorize how the reproduction of capitalist society—and its necessary *and* contingent parts—takes place. And in what follows I will thus proceed along this necessary "detour of abstraction." I will begin from an abstract-theoretical account of capitalism and its constituent parts, and I will suggest that capitalist society is never simply "'acted out' in the real world in pure

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[38] Kosík, "Dialectic of the Concrete Totality," 24; see also Paul Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development: Principles of Marxian Political Economy* (London: Dobson Books, 1962), 12.

[39] Kosík, "Dialectic of the Concrete Totality," 35.

[40] cf. Gregory Elliot, *Althusser: The Detour of Theory* (Boston: Brill, 2006); Alberto Toscano, "The Detour of Abstraction," *Diacritics* 43, no. 2 (2015): 68-90.

[41] Andrew Sayer, *Realism and Social Science* (London: Sage, 2000), 128; cf. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

form."[42] With this in view, I will demonstrate that the built environment plays a central role in both mediating the reproduction of capital's essential relations, and in "constrain[ing], shap[ing], channel[ing]"' how the contingent dynamics of capitalist society are reproduced.[43] I will not only develop a theory of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society, but I will suggest that we require a political theory of the built environment if we are to properly grasp the reproduction of capitalist society at all. In short, I will demonstrate that it is through the built environment that the necessary and contingent aspects of capitalist society are conjoined, concretized, and reproduced.

A critique of geographical political economy

The traditions of radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s are crucially important in my effort to develop an account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society. There are critical resources in that tradition—not least in the thought of Andrew Sayer and Milton Santos—to support the claim, central to what follows, that capital forms not "as a 'general process,' somehow disengaged from any context…[which] then collides with concrete, local, contingently related circumstances"; but that "[c]apital is always constituted from the start in particular places" and times.[44] In other words, thinkers like Sayer and Santos—and, to a lesser extent, Allan Pred[45]—have helped to underscore that

[42] Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 17.

[43] Stuart Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2, no. 2 (1985): 96.

[44] Sayer, *Realism and Social Science*, 138; see also, for context, Andrew Sayer, "Radical Geography and Marxist Political Economy," *Progress in Human Geography* 16, no. 3 (1992): 343-360; Eric Sheppard, "Site, Situation, and Social Theory," *Environment and Planning A* 28, no. 8 (1996): 1339-1343.

the necessary and contingent aspects of capitalist society *meet and materialize at one and the same moment* in space.[46] And going further still, they have productively demonstrated that geographical space is integral to our study of the reproduction of capitalist society insofar as "the pattern of spatial relations extant at any time, created in the context of particular previous interactions of social processes, influences the subsequent development of patterns of spatial relations"[47]; or, in comparable terms, insofar as "social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others."[48] This is, in the words of Milton Santos, the "*differentia specifica* of space," naming the "specificity of the historical existence of space at a given moment."[49] And this insight will also inform my engagement with the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society in the pages to come.

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[45] See Allan Pred, "The Social Becomes the Spatial, the Spatial Becomes the Social: Enclosures, Social Change and the Becoming of Places in the Swedish Province of Skåne," in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, eds. Derek Gregory and John Urry (London: Macmillan Press, 1985), 337-365.

[46] For Santos, who distinguishes between the "mode of production" and the "social formation" (*formação sócio-econômica*), we cannot speak of the latter "outside space"; in other words, social formations are necessarily "socio-spatial formations." On this theme, see Milton Santos, *For a New Geography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 151; see also, for context, Bruno Moreira Riani Costa, "A inserção do espaço geográfico de Milton Santos na matriz althusseriana de interpretação da totalidade social: uma estrutura como as outras?" *Geousp* 27, no. 3 (2023); Thiago Adriano Machado, "Da formação social em Marx à formação socioespacial em Milton Santos: uma categoria geográfica para interpretar o Brasil?," *Arquivos* 18, no. 38 (2016): 71-98; Rogério Rego Miranda, "Formação econômico-social (FES) e sua dimensão geográfica," *Boletim Goiano de Geografia* 43, no. 1 (2023); Cláudio Smalley Soares Pereira, "A categoria 'formação socioespacial' na obra de Milton Santos: usos, significados e desdorbamentos analíticos," *Revista da Anpege* 19, no. 38 (2023): 3-42; Maria Laura Silveira, "Geografía y formación socioespacial: por un debate sustantivo," *Estudios Socioterritoriales* 16, no. 2 (2014): 141-168.

[47] Richard Peet, "Spatial Dialectics and Marxist Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 5, no. 1 (1981): 108.

[48] Lefebvre quoted in Santos, *For a New Geography*, 115.

[49] Santos, *For a New Geography*, 115, emphasis original.

And yet, as useful as the history of radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory might be for my purposes, what follows is best read as a critique of the accounts of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalism that appeared throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and which have remained highly influential in the critical literature on the built environment in the decades since. Turning to central figures in the development of those fields—like David Harvey, Henri Lefebvre, Manuel Castells, Doreen Massey, and Edward Soja—demonstrates quite clearly that this scholarship can be understood as falling prey to the pitfalls that follow the larger discourse on the reproduction of capitalism that I sketched above, and thus as largely inattentive to the distinctive place of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist *society's* necessary and contingent parts. Take, to begin, Harvey's landmark work on the spatiality of capitalist crisis, first articulated in the 1970s.[50] In that work, Harvey notes that capital "in general" turns toward its spatial environment as a "set of use values for enhancing the production and accumulation of capital."[51] The relatively fixed social and physical infrastructures that constitute this spatial environment are a necessary precondition for the production, circulation, and exchange of commodities, such that it is effectively "impossible to imagine" those processes without reference to such a "rational landscape."[52] And Harvey argues that capital tends toward crises—and crises of overaccumulation in particular—which

[50] On the overwhelming influence that Harvey has had on Anglophone geography, see Noel Castree, Greig Charnock, and Brett Christophers, *David Harvey: A Critical Introduction to His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2023); Eric Sheppard, "Geographical Political Economy," *Journal of Economic Geography* 11 (2011): 319-331; Richard Walker, "The Spectre of Marxism: The Return of *The Limits to Capital*," *Antipode* 36, no. 3 (2004): 434-443.

[51] David Harvey, *The Urbanization of Capital: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 168.

[52] David Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 22.

arise due to the simple fact that the imperatives of accumulation lead capital as a whole to collectively "push the dynamic of aggregative accumulation away from a balanced growth path."[53]

In other words, Harvey offers from the outset of his account two fundamental abstract-theoretical insights. First, he argues that a rational spatial landscape is a precondition for profitable accumulation; and second, that capital tends toward crisis. And, with these claims in view, Harvey goes on to point out that this process of crisis formation does not happen on the head of a pin. The dynamism of capitalist production leads toward moments in which capital can no longer be reinvested profitably—that is, "at the average rate of profit (or, worse, any profit)" at all—within its original geographical parameters.[54] Investments fixed in the land that support and enable capital accumulation at a particular historical moment are understood to ultimately hinder and inhibit the profitable circulation of capital in times of mounting crisis. The "crowning glory of past…development" will no longer support the expanded reproduction of capital in moments of overaccumulation.[55] And here is where Harvey's most original and influential insight appears: capital tends, he insists, to find its solution to this spatialized contradiction in and through the production of space itself. In such moments extant landscapes produced in the image of capital are junked in favor of "new transport and communications systems and physical infrastructures, new centres and styles of production and consumption, new agglomerations of labor power, and modified social infrastructures"—in short, in favor of a new set of space relations and a new built environment.[56] It

[53] Harvey, *The Urbanization of Capital*, 172.

[54] Bob Jessop, "Spatial Fixes, Temporal Fixes and Spatio-Temporal Fixes," in *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*, eds. Noel Castree and Derek Gregory (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 149.

[55] Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 83.

[56] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 296.

is this dynamic that structures the rhythms of geographical change, and the rhythms of "'long waves' [of] investment in the built environment."[57]

There is much to be said regarding what I take to be the "immense theoretical revolution" that Harvey initiated with these claims; I will engage his work extensively in the pages to come in my own effort to theorize the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society.[58] Nevertheless, what is most significant to underscore is that his account, when taken as a whole, provides precisely what we aim to avoid: an abstract-theoretical account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital, largely unattuned to the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist *society*. In other words, Harvey's landmark account explicitly and self-consciously avoids the "extra-economic dimensions of the capital relation," and thus fails to provide an account of the role of the built environment in the mediation and materialization of capitalist society's necessary *and* contingent parts.[59] And this is precisely what we find in Lefebvre and Castells as well—Harvey's French and Catalan counterparts. Take, for example, the work of Lefebvre. At first glance it might appear that it has more to say regarding the reproduction of capitalist *society* than Harvey's. Lefebvre quite famously sought to demonstrate that the "survival of capitalism" had come to rely upon "the production and occupation of a fragmented, homogenized, and hierarchically structured space."[60] And in work like *The Urban Revolution* (1970), in particular, Lefebvre argued that

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[57] Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 77.

[58] Cf. Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: Verso, 1970). Althusser uses the phrase "immense theoretical revolution" in relation to Marx's innovative—albeit largely implicit—approach to causality.

[59] Jessop, "Spatial Fixes, Temporal Fixes and Spatio-Temporal Fixes," 161.

[60] For this quote, and an overview of Lefebvre's approach in general, see Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 92; see also, Henri Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Production* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976).

the secondary sector or "circuit" of capital had become the primary locus of capitalist valorization at his time of writing.[61]

In other words, Lefebvre identified "urban society" as a distinctive phase in the historical-geographical evolution and reproduction of capitalism—albeit a "virtual object" at the time of his writing, visible only through "transduction"—calling attention to the centrality of space to capitalist reproduction in the historical period that "results from industrialization."[62] He attended to the spatiality of capitalist reproduction, and he did so—it would seem—with more interest in (historical) contingency than Harvey himself. And yet, when read closely what becomes clear is that while there are no doubt critical resources for our task embedded within Lefebvre's urban-theoretical interventions—and in his efforts to situate the urban fabric as a mediating "level" (*niveau*) in the social totality (between global forms of power and everyday life), and to "urbanize hegemony," specifically[63]—his analysis is, in the last analysis, generally concerned with how the production of space enables the reproduction of capital's constituent parts, not unlike Harvey's itself. Of course, Lefebvre made great strides in pioneering a non-reductionist approach to the production of space under capitalism, broadly conceived. As he put it quite plainly, "[e]ach mode of production has had its space *but the characteristics of space cannot simply be reduced to the general characteristics of the mode of production*."[64] And in his work on the state, Lefebvre also demonstrated that capitalist space is always

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[61] For a productive engagement and sympathetic critique, see David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 312.

[62] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 2.

[63] Alex Loftus, *Everyday Environmentalism: Creating an Urban Political Ecology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 113.

[64] Henri Lefebvre, "Space and the State," in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, eds. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 234, emphasis added; see also, Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 86.

intricately intercalated with *state space*, which quite often moves *against* the interests of capital, inhibiting the production of a "'properly' capitalistic space" in order to stave off capitalist catastrophe.[65]

But with all of that said, there is very little in Lefebvre's oeuvre that specifically considers the role of geographical space in concretizing and reproducing the contingent relations that define complex capitalist totalities. Space arrives on the scene of Lefebvre's theoretical corpus because it is through the production of space that capital is able to modify and reproduce its relations of production *without transforming them*; to find "inspiration," as he put it, in "real estate speculation, capital projects (inside and outside the city), [and] the buying and selling of space."[66] We rarely get beyond this insight—or this focus on the *reproduction of capital's essential relations of production*—in the service of the agenda above. The reproduction of those features that are immanent and integral to capitalist society—and the reproduction of capital's essential relations of production—is the "dominant" and "determinant" aspect of Lefebvre's account, and what is lost is thus an account of the production of space in the articulation and disarticulation of the logically necessary and contingent features that define capitalist society.[67] What is lost, in other words, is precisely what concerns us here: the role of the built environment in concretizing and reproducing the *social formation*, defined by Étienne Balibar as "a totality of instances articulated on the basis of a

[65] Lefebvre, "Space and the State," 244.

[66] Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 15 and 155.

[67] Cf. Richard Peet, "Materialism, Social Formation, and Socio-Spatial Relations: An Essay in Marxist Geography," *Cahiers de géograhpie du Québec* 22, no. 56 (1978): 150.

determinate mode of production"[68]; and composed, we might add, of many features which have no necessary (logical) relation to the reproduction of capital at all.[69]

A comparable critique can be leveled at Manuel Castells, whose landmark work, *The Urban Question* (1972), is often read as a renunciation of Lefebvre and his account of "urban society." While *The Urban Question* represents a provocative attempt to spatialize Althusserianism, Castells ultimately identifies the "spatial unit" of the urban with the simple and extended reproduction of labor power itself—and thus ultimately focuses rather narrowly on the role of that spatial unit in the reproduction of the imperatives of capital, and not capitalist society or the complexly structured social formation per se.[70] The urban became, in that account, not only a single scale on a scalar ladder, but functionally reducible to its role in the reproduction of laboring subjects. It came to name a spatial unit that was the site of an "increasing collectivization of the conditions underlying" the reproduction of labor power in advanced capitalist societies.[71] Of course, Castells had much else to say on this theme. He argued that the social organization of space is mediated in profound ways by "politico-juridical" and "ideological" elements and by the "ecological spatial forms created by earlier social structures."[72] The urban unit is always "articulated with other units that form the

[68] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 207.

[69] As Tony Burns has productively underscored, "social formation" is a contested concept in the history of Marxism, which emerges clearly in the work of Marx (as *Gesellschaftsformen*) and which was central to the French structuralist Marxism of the 1960s and 1970s (as *formation sociale*). For more on the complex and conflictual history of this term, see Tony Burns, "Marx and the Concept of a Social Formation," *Historical Materialism* 32, no. 3 (2024): 158-187.

[70] For a productive engagement with, and critique of, Castells, see Neil Brenner, *New Urban Spaces: Urban Theory and the Scale Question* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 93.

[71] Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 431.

[72] Castells, *The Urban Question*, 127.

[socio-spatial] process as a whole."[73] Nevertheless, in the last instance, the urban was rendered as an "economic unit" in Castells' account.[74] He had, ultimately, little to say about the role of geographical space—or the built environment—in the mediation and materialization of capitalist society's necessary and contingent parts.

In fact, it seems fair to suggest that Edward Soja and Doreen Massey—at least among the formative figures in radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory—come closest to speaking to the agenda identified here; that is, to my concern with the specificity of the built environment in concretizing and reproducing complexly structured capitalist social formations. After all, for Soja, building on the Greek sociologist Nicos Poulantzas, space is not simply the "presupposition/medium" and "embodiment/outcome" of relations of capitalist production within capitalist societies; but rather of *social relations and social life* itself. In his own words: "[t]he production of spatiality in conjunction with the making of history can thus be described as both the medium and the outcome, the presupposition and embodiment, of *social action*."[75] And for Massey, the core problematic was always, in some ways, how the economic processes of capitalist society took shape in and through political and ideological articulations, and in and through transformations in spatial structure. In Massey's corpus there is no "raw" world of economics to speak of—"the economy" is always structured by multiscalar specificities in the present and by the "accumulated results" of history as well.[76] As Althusser famously put it, the "economic dialectic is never active in [a] pure

[73] Castells, *The Urban Question*, 431.

[74] Castells, *The Urban Question*, 235.

[75] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 127, emphasis added.

[76] Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour*, 117 and 228; see also, Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," *Soundings* 44 (2010): 57-71.

state."[77] And, with that in view, Massey argued that the specificities of the social totality not only "influence/encourage/restrain/mold the operation of each other"[78]; but, going further, that they leave their mark on space, giving shape to future "rounds" of investment and capital accumulation through a process of combination.[79]

In turning to the work of Soja and Massey we can glean the ways in which complexly structured economic processes and forms of power more generally are spatialized; and how those spatial patterns structure the dynamics of historical-geographical development in a process of reciprocal co-constitution. But as useful as these insights might be, what this work continues to lack is a clear expression and delineation of those logically necessary (and logically contingent) features that define capitalist society, and of the distinctive role of the built environment in structuring their articulation, reproduction, and disarticulation over time. While Massey and Soja were interested in attending to the reproduction of capitalist society in its complexity, in their work we tend to fall, in the last analysis, into the domain of "obscurantism," as we have put it above. We are left with claims that echo those of structuration theory, and its broad insistence that "the dialectical bonds connecting everyday practice and the structural relations between individuals, collectivities, [economic processes,] and institutions are [] always temporally and spatially specific" and spatially reproduced.[80] What remains out of view is the question that concerns us here: the role of the built environment not simply in the reproduction of capital; but its role in articulating the ever-present

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[77] Althusser, *For Marx*, 113.

[78] Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour*, 316.

[79] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 110.

[80] Allen Pred, "Social Reproduction and the Time-Geography of Everyday Life," *Geografiska Annaler* 63, no. 1 (1981): 16; see also, Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

contingencies of capitalist society to the abstract-level imperatives of capital, and its role in structuring the ways in which those contingencies come to be re-articulated over time. What this work largely precludes is a theory of the role of the built environment in the mediation, materialization, and reproduction of capitalist society that is attentive to the constitutive features of capitalism and their relation to historical-geographical contingency.

If all these foundational engagements within radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory are deficient for our purposes, are there resources in the scholarship that followed in its wake—in scholarship produced after this initial wave of interest in the spatiality of capitalist reproduction in the 1970s and 1980s? Unfortunately, there are not. In the aftermath of the above-sketched accounts, radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory only moved *further away* from the agenda that defines this dissertation—from an effort to theorize the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society's necessary and contingent parts. This was not due to this heterodox literature's newfound commitment to the "spurious scientificity of positivism."[81] Nor was it because thinkers within radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory somehow learned to produce knowledge *in spite* of conceptual abstraction. "The theoretical problem of individuation is," after all, "resolved by people in their daily practise."[82] All cognition relies upon conceptual abstraction, and—in that sense—thinkers cannot avoid the labor of abstraction, or the necessary work of drawing "a set of provisional boundaries in [their] relational world," so as to attain an understanding of the "significant elements of change and interaction" that stand at the center of

[81] See Andrew Sayer, "Foreword: Why Critical Realism," in *Critical Realist Applications in Organisation and Management Studies*, eds. Steve Fleetwood and Stephen Ackroyd (London: Routledge, 2004), 6; see also, Andrew Sayer, "Postmodernist Thought in Geography: A Realist View," *Antipode* 25, no. 4 (1993): 320-344.

[82] Ollman, *Alienation*, 38.

their investigation.[83] That said, the fields of radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory simply put the kind of "abstract political economic analysis" that I am concerned with here "on the back burner," and engaged more concrete matters of concern from the late 1980s onwards.[84]

As Noel Castree reflectively put it in the late 1990s, radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory undertook a steady move *away* from explicit efforts to develop a "cognitive map of capitalism's basic structure" in light of the pioneering work outlined above[85]; and—in the process—shifted toward "middle range theory and empirical studies."[86] Not all thinkers within radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory were interested in *rejecting* general theorizing in the post-1980s period. But nearly all converged on this commitment to more concrete matters, and moved even further from developing a general account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society. As early as 1989 Neil Smith could proclaim that abstract theory was "rightly gone" in lieu of "empirical research."[87] And even if some of the work that emerged in this period generally left "ambiguous" whether it was "intended to leave behind more abstract social theories or whether [these empirical studies] were meant to build on them," what was clear was a turn to the empirical nonetheless.[88]

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[83] Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic*, 5-6.

[84] Noel Castree, "Envisioning Capitalism: Geography and the Renewal of Marxian Political Economy," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24, no. 2 (1999): 142.

[85] Castree, "Envisioning Capitalism," 142.

[86] Sayer, *Realism and Social Science*, 6; see also, Richard Peet and Nigel Thrift, "Political Economy and Human Geography," in *New Models in Geography – Volume 1*, eds. Richard Peet and Nigel Thrift (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 3-29.

[87] Neil Smith, "Dangers of the Empirical Turn: Some Comments on the Curs Initiative," *Antipode* 19, no. 2 (1987): 59-68.

[88] Sayer, *Realism and Social Science*, 6.

Indeed, some scholars within this broad shift were interested in moving beyond abstract-level theorization, all while maintaining a tacit or implied understanding that capital maintained certain constituent features. This orientation would describe much of the work on regimes of accumulation and state rescaling pursued throughout the 1990s and 2000s.[89] In that work, there was not a renunciation of abstraction per se—nor a renunciation of the attempt to disaggregate the "component processes and relations" that define capitalist space, and the effort to make sense of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society[90]—so much as an attempt to consider what we might refer to as "meso-" and "concrete-level" questions.[91] For others, however, the turn toward the concrete (in the wake of the foundational texts sketched above) was propelled by a more pronounced or pitched renunciation of what is often colloquially glossed as "grand theory." For this cohort the kind of question that concerns this dissertation is doomed to failure—it is necessarily haunted by "the impossibility of closing off the differing and deferral of meaning."[92] This scholarship sought to suggest that there was something ungraspable about capitalism and capitalist space itself—that it had "no essential or coherent identity," that it was "different from itself," and that it was open to infinite "possibilities of alterity."[93]

[89] Rachel Bok, "'By Our Metaphors You Shall Know Us': The 'Fix' of Geographical Political Economy," *Progress in Human Geography* 43, no. 6 (2019): 1087-1108.

[90] Castree, "Envisioning Capitalism," 143.

[91] On these distinctions, see Neil Brenner, *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 19.

[92] Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (London: Verso, 1988), 11.

[93] J.K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 15; see also, Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

Scholars in this latter group turned toward the concrete in the 1990s and 2000s because they took issue with presentations of capitalism and capitalist space as "a structural and systemic unity," suggesting that they blocked out "diversity and disunity."[94] They embraced a hallmark of what Trevor Barnes has referred to as "post-prefixed" theories, suggesting that attempts to grasp large-scale theoretical dynamics are irredeemably flawed because they are hopelessly associated with masculinist ocularcentrism and its totalizing pretensions.[95] For these thinkers, efforts to develop an account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society were plagued by a totalizing, masculinist, and Eurocentric "panoramic view."[96] And in this context we thus find a rejection of large-scale political economic theorizing not in favor of scholarship attentive to the extra-economic or non-economic "embeddedness" of the economy, and "the spatially and temporally variable forms that capitalist economies and their development trajectories can take"[97]; but, more radically, a renunciation of talk of "capitalism" as a systemic unity—echoing, incidentally, much mainstream work within political economy.[98]

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[94] Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism*, 255 and 260.

[95] Trevor Barnes, *Logics of Dislocation: Models, Metaphors, and Meanings of Economic Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 1996); cf. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 222.

[96] Cf. Verónica Gago, *Feminist International: How to Change Everything* (London: Verso, 2020), 4. See, for additional context, Michelle Buckley and Kendra Strauss, "With, Against and Beyond Lefebvre: Planetary Urbanization and Epistemic Plurality," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, no. 4 (2016): 617-636; Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); Gillian Hart, "Relational Comparison Revisited: Marxist Postcolonial Geographies in Practice," *Progress in Human Geography* 42, no. 3 (2018): 382; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Doreen Massey, "Flexible Sexism," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no. 1 (1991): 31-57.

[97] Ray Hudson, "On What's Right and Keeping Left: Or Why Geography Still Needs Marxian Political Economy," *Antipode* 38, no. 2 (2006): 381-382.

[98] For work that renounces the coherence of "capitalism," see Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, "The Rise and Decline of the General Laws of Capitalism," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 29, no. 1 (2015): 3-28; Bernard Harcourt, "For Coöperation and the Abolition of Capital, or, How to

There is thus much to distinguish the scholarship that emerged in the decades following the canonical interventions on the built environment undertaken within radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory in the 1970s and 1980s. When taken together, however, what all of this work demonstrates is (1) a general turn toward the empirical and the concrete within that domain, and away from the attempt to grasp "those major relations which are not open to direct observation," but which constitute capitalist society itself[99]; and (2) a general move even further away from my present agenda—my effort to develop a general account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society.

Argument, structure, method

So far, I have provided an initial critique of the broad literature on capitalist reproduction, and an initial critique of the received literature within radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory. I now turn to an overview of how I will answer the central question of this dissertation: that is, how I will theorize the role of the built environment in the mediation, materialization, and reproduction of capitalist society. This dissertation is structured in two parts, one primarily theoretical and one primarily intellectual-historical, with the latter aiming to concretize and clarify the theoretical arguments developed in Part I. The first part of the dissertation is comprised of three chapters, with each speaking to a distinctive role that the built environment plays in the reproduction of capitalist society, as it is conceived here. Chapter two, titled "Crisis," sets out to provide an account of the necessary dimensions that define all capitalist contexts, and of the role of the built environment in their reproduction. To do so, I will take up a critical reading of David Harvey's landmark account, briefly sketched above, which I take to be the most influential effort to

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Get Beyond Our Extractive Punitive Society and Achieve a Just Society," *Columbia Public Law Research Paper* no. 14-672 (2020).

[99] See, for context, Ollman, *Alienation*, 64.

make sense of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital that has emerged since the 1970s. I will place Harvey in a long tradition of efforts to spatialize crisis theory, and I will demonstrate not only what Harvey's account reveals regarding the role of the built environment in reproducing the constituent features of capitalist society, but what his account *holds from view*.

Building on figures like the political philosopher Nancy Fraser (among others), I will argue that capitalism—at the highest level of conceptual abstraction—*is not simply an economic system* defined by the exploitation of waged labor, as it appears in Harvey's account; but that it is an *institutionalized social order* that relies upon and presupposes *coerced, unwaged, and expropriated social and ecological work* to facilitate its reproduction. These largely *non*-commodified forms of work take place in (normatively differentiated) "hidden abodes" *behind* Marx's famous "hidden abode of production"—that is, within (at times overlapping and) mutually constituted spheres that are obscured by an analytical overemphasis on the realm of waged work.[100] And, going further, I will argue that capitalist crises are not only structured by capital's integral or necessary tendency toward the overproduction of commodities, capital, and labor within the primary circuit of production, as Harvey would have it; but rather, by capital's tendency toward both the overproduction of capital, commodities, and labor, and its tendency to underproduce and exhaust its necessary forms of unwaged and/or under-capitalized social and ecological work—its own hidden abodes.[101]

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[100] See Nancy Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode: For an Expanded Conception of Capitalism," *New Left Review* 86, Mar/Apr (2014): 58; see also, for reference, Nancy Fraser, "A Triple Movement?" *New Left Review* 81, May/June (2013): 119-132; Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (New York: Verso, 2013); Nancy Fraser, "Can Society be Commodities All the Way Down? Post-Polanyian Reflections on Capitalist Crisis," *Economy and Society* 43, no. 4 (2014): 541-556; Nancy Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care," *New Left Review* 100, July/Aug (2016): 99-117; Nancy Fraser and Rahel Jaeggi, *Capitalism: A Conversation in Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018); Nancy Fraser, "Climates of Capital," *New Left Review* 127, Jan/Feb (2021): 94-127; Nancy Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2022).

[101] In developing this argument, I draw heavily on the ecological Marxism of Jason Moore, James O'Connor, and Michael Perelman; see, for context, Jason Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology*

Put differently, my account adheres to elements of Harvey's approach. The capitalist built environment—or the capitalist spatial matrix—continues to name the relatively immobile infrastructures that enable and reproduce capital accumulation; and I will continue to insist that these infrastructures are periodically re-spatialized and remade in times of crisis, primarily in the name of profitability. But I depart from this account in critical respects as well. I will argue that the built environment within capitalist contexts must not only enable the profitable exploitation of labor power; but, more fully, that it must functionally reproduce the unwaged, under-capitalized and coerced forms of work upon which exploitation relies. The built environment in capitalist society is produced in the service of foreground spaces of exploitation and background spaces of socio-ecological theft, and it is subject to periodic re-organization and transformation. And I will underscore, in chapter two in particular, that these transformations do not exist in a relation of chronological or mechanical causality with the reproduction of capital. In the spirit of Poulantzas's writing on the capitalist spatial matrix, I will suggest not only that the built environment is "a 'concrete abstraction' in which the contradictory sociospatial relations of capitalism are at once territorialized…and generalized"[102]; but, moreover, that the built environment is "a 'logical priority' (what Marx termed *Voraussetzung*)" of accumulation that manifests "'*at the same time*'" as its "presupposition," such that it is not remade alongside but through the remaking of the relations of production in the face of crises of either over- or underproduction.[103]

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and the Accumulation of Capital (New York: Verso, 2015); James O'Connor, "Capitalism, Nature, Socialism: A Theoretical Introduction," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 1, no, 1 (1988): 11-38; Michael Perelman, "Marx and Resource Scarcity," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 4, no. 2 (1993): 65-84.

[102] Cf. Neil Brenner, "Theses on Urbanization," *Public Culture* 25, no. 1 (2013): 95.

[103] For the specific quotes above, see Edward Soja, "The Spatiality of Social Life: Towards a Transformative Retheorisation," in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, eds. Derek Gregory and John Urry (London: Macmillan Press, 1985), 95-96, emphasis added.

In chapter three, "Articulation," I will extend this account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constituent features in order to make sense of the reproduction of capitalist society in all of its complexity; and, more specifically, in order to place the capitalist spatial matrix at the center of the articulation of capital and what I will argue are logically contingent forms of ascriptive differentiation and hierarchization in capitalist society: race and gender. I will begin by providing a broad and brief introduction to the concept of "articulation," tracking its emergence and development in the work of Althusser in the 1960s; its reception by later economic anthropologists in the context of the "modes of production debate" in the 1960s and 1970s; and sketching its uptake and extension in the 1970s and 1980s by Stuart Hall. With a reading of Hall's highly influential and enduring approach to the articulation of capital and difference in view, I will then develop a sympathetic critique of his account, teasing out what it obscures and how a spatialized approach to the articulation of capital and difference—in and through an engagement with the built environment—might help to address some of his most significant lacunae. I will highlight, that is, not only how the built environment within capitalist contexts—or the capitalist spatial matrix—enables the articulation of capital's constituent features and logically contingent patterns of racialized and gendered difference, but how it might be understood, more broadly, as a spatial moment in the reproduction of capitalist social formations *that are never simply expressions of invariant structures*.[104] Finally, this chapter will then conclude by extending my account once more, attending to how the state is implicated in this spatial process of articulation and reproduction.

Part I of the dissertation will then conclude with chapter four, titled "Interpellation." If the preceding two chapters focused on the role of the built environment in producing and resolving capital's inherent crises, and on its role in materializing and facilitating the articulation of capitalist

[104] See Burns, "Marx and the Concept of a Social Formation."

society's necessary and contingent elements, this chapter asks how the capitalist spatial matrix is implicated in the differentiated production of historically contingent forms of capitalist subjectivity and political agency. Put otherwise, in this final chapter of Part I, I will engage how the built environment is not only implicated in the reproduction and articulation of those contingent forms of race and gender that often structure capitalist society, but in the making of differentiated forms of capitalist subjectivity as well; and in structuring social action, and thus those ongoing struggles to remake capitalist space and capitalist society tout court. To do so, I will develop a distinctive theorization of the role of the capitalist spatial matrix in the interpellation of subjects, pursuing a re-reading of both Louis Althusser and Frantz Fanon. And, going further still, I will turn to the question of agency directly via what I will refer to as the "geography of history" in Fanon's own account. More specifically, I will develop a reading of Fanon's Sartrean inheritance—most visible in his spatialized departure from Hegel's philosophy of history—which I will deploy to develop my own understanding of agency and the making and remaking of the capitalist spatial matrix and the necessary and contingent elements of capitalist society. By the conclusion of this chapter, we will have thus engaged the role of the built environment in the mediation, materialization, and reproduction of capitalist society across three axes: crisis, articulation, and interpellation. We will have established the lineaments of a theory of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society.

As some readers might note, what all of this means is that Part I of this dissertation threads something of a needle. It starts from the perhaps controversial claim that to grasp the role of the built environment in the reproduction of the "definite totality of historical laws of motion" that define the capitalist mode of production, we must go beyond the tendency to associate that mode

with a single form of exploitation.[105] It insists that in addition to waged exploitation, we must attend to capitalism's unwaged and/or under-capitalized conditions of possibility—its necessary but largely occluded hidden abodes. *And yet*, Part I also maintains that this does not mean—as someone like the historian Jairus Banaji might have it—that the inherited distinction between the "mode of production" and the "social formation" should be done away with altogether.[106] I will argue that we must continue to speak of capitalist society and of capitalist social formations, not to claim that "the capitalist world economy is an *articulated system of capitalist, semi-capitalist and pre-capitalist relations of production*"[107]; but rather, in order to suggest that capital's laws of motion emerge in and through—that they are shaping of and shaped by—the fabric and frictions of concrete conjunctures. [108] I will argue that the necessary features of the "mode of production" emerge in societies and social formations that maintain dynamics to which capital has no necessary relation. And, in that context, I will argue that the built environment itself is a critical articulating mechanism that joins together the necessary and the contingent, and that plays a foundational role in determining how those relations are "sedimented and solidified by real historical development over time."[109]

Following from this capacious theorization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society, Part II will then turn to the problem of concretization, engaging two critical debates in the history of American heterodox political economic thought to do so. In

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[105] Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History: Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 60.

[106] Banaji, *Theory as History*; to further contextualize this claim, see Ernesto Laclau, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America," *New Left Review* 67, May/June (1971): 19-38.

[107] Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1976), 48-49, emphasis original.

[108] Brett Neilson and Sandro Mezzadra, *The Politics of Operations: Excavating Contemporary Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

[109] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 203.

chapter five, I will begin by thinking more closely about the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constituent features; or, by attending to the inherent spatiality of the reproduction of capital at the highest level of abstraction. More concretely, I will turn to the history of the so-called "black belt debate" in the 1920s and 1930s, which took place within and around the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) and which sought to determine whether or not black Americans constituted an oppressed nation in the southern United States with a right to national self-determination. As I will demonstrate, several of the core theoreticians of the black belt debate were centrally concerned not only with this political problematic, but with mapping the shifting geographies of accumulation that emerged in the decades following Reconstruction; and, in so doing, they brought into clear view the role of the built environment in the mediation of capital's *inherent* crisis tendencies. In this chapter I will turn specifically to the writings and archives of Harry Haywood and James S. Allen—two key figures within the CPUSA and the black belt debate—and, finally, to the subsequent splintering of the debate and its re-articulation via concepts like "internal colonialism" and "intercommunalism." My contention here is that this specific debate was not only profoundly shaped by critical—and often overlooked—socio-spatial concerns. It is that it tells us something about the capitalist spatial matrix as well, and its role in mediating those inherent crisis tendencies that plague capitalism's constitutive hidden abodes.

In chapter six I will then attend to the problem of articulation and interpellation—to the role of the capitalist spatial matrix in the articulation of capital and logically contingent patterns of ascriptive difference and in the interpellation of social subjects. Indeed, not unlike chapter five, I will engage a critical debate in the history of American heterodox political economic thought: the US iteration of the domestic labor debate in the 1970s and 1980s, which played a crucial role in the development of the feminist thought of that period. After providing a brief outline of the debate in general, I will tune my focus to how some of the domestic labor debate's core figures invoked

categories related to the built environment. I will attend to what their engagement reveals regarding the role of the built environment in processes of articulation and interpellation; and, more broadly, regarding the role of the built environment in the mediation and materialization of capitalist society. I will turn my attention to Silvia Federici, Angela Davis, and Dolores Hayden in order to demonstrate what their engagements with spatial categories like the suburb, the ghetto, the prison, and the household revealed. Finally, in the dissertation's concluding chapter, I will briefly reflect on my arguments' implications vis-à-vis the politics of the built environment today. My claim is certainly not that the ideas articulated in this project will themselves constitute a "revolutionary weapon"; as Marx had it, "[i]deas can never lead beyond [the] old world order but only beyond the ideas of the old world."[110] Nevertheless, it is my hope—and claim—that my account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society does have something to offer those that desire more just socio-spatial relations.

With this said, one might wonder about my turn, in Part II of the dissertation, to the history of US heterodox political economic thought. One might ask, for example: on what basis can we claim that these *particular debates* in twentieth century US political economic thought allow us to speak broadly to the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society? After all, several of the figures that animate the pages below—and whose prose and politics I will excavate—were primarily concerned with what I have referred to as meso- and concrete-level concerns. Several were primarily (if not exclusively) interested in understanding "the relatively durable institutional arrangements, regulatory frameworks, and territorial configurations that underpin[ned] distinct periods of historical development" in the United States; and, at times even more specifically, with understanding the "contextually specific political-economic frameworks and territorial

[110] Marx quoted in Mau, *Mute Compulsion*, 324.

configurations through which everyday social reproduction" unfolded.[111] And, to make matters even more complicated, the overwhelming concern of several of the figures engaged in the second half of this dissertation was not an intellectual agenda, nor social-theoretical development at all. Their concern was immediately and eminently political: the question to be answered was how "we" might intervene in and transform the topography of American imperial power in its conjunctural specificity. My agenda is thus not only at a different level of conceptual abstraction, but pitched in a different key. Is it possible to move from these conjunctural articulations up the ladder of conceptual abstraction? Can we deploy these debates in our effort to make sense of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society?

In engaging this question, I would insist that we first acknowledge that no knowledge ever offers us, as literary and political theorist Jasper Bernes has recently put it, "the clarity of the Olympian view from above."[112] There is no Archimedean point from which the whole can be seen, or from which unmediated knowledge can be produced. Theory is only ever a cognitive map made *in situ*—or made from inside an emergent totality that is always being made and remade, and from which one cannot escape (desperately as they might try).[113] It emerges from *specific contexts*, and from the disorientation that confronts us when we face down the "congealed and opaque appearances" of our *contextually specific worlds*[114]; and, of course, it is for precisely this reason that critical social science

[111] Brenner, *New State Spaces*, 20-21.

[112] Jasper Bernes, "Logistics, Counterlogistics and the Communist Prospect," *Endnotes* 3 (2013): 174.

[113] See, for context, Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992); Fouad Makki, "Reframing Development Theory: The Significance of the Idea of Uneven and Combined Development," *Theory and Society* 44, no. 5 (2015): 471-497; Philip McMichael, "Incorporating Comparison Within a World-Historical Perspective: An Alternative Comparative Method," *American Sociological Review* 55, no. 3 (1990): 385-397.

[114] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 2*, 310.

and critical theory (broadly conceived) have long maintained as a core tenet the rejection of positivistic, metaphysical, and transcendental knowledge.[115] With that in view, I would suggest that the intellectual agenda pursued here is decidedly less fraught. My project emerges not only from a particular historical-geographical location, but with reference to a specific set of historically determinate debates on the nature of US capitalism and imperial power that emerged over the course of the twentieth century. I will simply use that material—as best I can—to support a theorization of the capitalist spatial matrix, and its role in the reproduction of capitalist society. Like any exercise in theory construction and concept formation, I will depart with a specific history and geography in view, even if I intend to speak beyond it.

And yet, even if a wide range of empirical circumstances might provide fodder for my arguments, there is a certain strategic rationality behind my engagement with the political economic debates that I briefly sketched above. What follows is concerned to identify, as Ernest Mandel might put it, the "constituent abstract elements" that define capitalist society; the "decisive general connections between [those] elements"; and to identify how the capitalist spatial matrix emerges through and reproduces the broader contours of capitalist society at large. With that agenda, *the specific intellectual histories that follow are of particular note.*[116] They highlight no less than three dynamics that are fundamental to my agenda throughout this dissertation: (1) the persistence of unwaged, coerced, and expropriated work *across the history of capitalism*; (2) the recurrent and endemic re-spatialization of capitalist society's constitutive foreground and background abodes in response to capital's inherent crisis dynamics; and (3) the periodic re-articulation of race and gender and the

[115] Neil Brenner, "What is Critical Urban Theory?," *City* 13, no. 2-3 (2009): 202; see also, Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Continuum, 2002), especially "Traditional and Critical Theory."

[116] Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, 16-17.

abstract logics of capitalist society. And in this sense, I take a somewhat instrumental approach to the black belt and domestic labor debates. My claim is that these debates provide an especially rich ground from which we can pursue the "*conceptual reanimation*" of the terms of political and social theory.[117] Given their emphases on the three points above, these debates are particularly useful in my present effort to pursue the construction of both new "generalizable analytic categories" and new approaches to old ones. They are particularly relevant to my interest in "stretch[ing] and transform[ing] [our] inherited categories" of socio-spatial thought and in making visible the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society.[118]

Indeed, the actors that I read in chapters five and six did not always or necessarily deploy concepts that were "developed and refined reflexively through social theory and research."[119] In many instances, they deployed everyday concepts that were burdened with a heavy "affective load."[120] And yet, my claim is that we can use this history of heterodox political economic thought and debate in the United States—and even these informal invocations—to develop "good" or "rational" abstractions about the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society. We do not need to develop a "symptomatic" reading of the above-sketched debates. We can simply read them with an eye toward what they reveal regarding the capitalist spatial matrix and how it functions to hold together "a unity of diverse determinations."[121]

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[117] Adom Getachew and Karuna Mantena, "Anticolonialism and the Decolonization of Political Theory," *Critical Times* 4, no. 3 (2021), 372, emphasis original.

[118] Cf. Getachew and Mantena, "Anticolonialism and the Decolonization of Political Theory," 376 and 380.

[119] Cf. Neil Brenner, "Theses on Urbanization," 96; David Wachsmuth, "City as Ideology: Reconciling the Explosion of the City Form with the Tenacity of the City Concept," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 31 (2014): 75-90.

[120] Andrew Sayer, "Defining the Urban," *GeoJournal* 9, no. 3 (1984): 283.

Totality

With this project's structure and basic argument in view, there is one final point that remains to be addressed before proceeding. And it is to do with a particularly vexing concept of social analysis that informs what follows: namely, "totality." To this point, I have drawn relatively freely on the language of "totality," and I have done so in a relatively uncontroversial way. I have deployed the concept of totality throughout this chapter in order to suggest that *society itself* is an internally related whole—and to suggest that the parts that constitute this whole are constantly being made and remade as a result of their "ceaseless dialectical interactions" with other parts.[122] Indeed, up until this point I have deployed the language of totality as immanent to the concept of dialectics itself, and I have done so while attempting to *stave off* (1) the notion that history is a "longitudinal totality" moving inexorably toward a predefined historical destination (like enlightenment or "absolute knowing"); (2) the notion that society is an "expressive totality" in which each part within the whole is an expression of a single historical logic or rationality; and (3) the notion that there is an epistemically privileged subject of history that is uniquely positioned to "grasp" this totality, or to see the "isolated facts of social life as aspects of the historical process and integrate[] them in a *totality*."[123] I have largely re-articulated the approach to totality found in some of the founding texts of radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory, echoing Lefebvre's insistence on the "demands of totality" and "the impossibility of accepting fragmentation and confirming separation"[124]; and

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[121] Andrew Sayer, "Abstraction: A Realist Interpretation," *Radical Philosophy* 28 (1981): 9.

[122] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 13.

[123] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 8, emphasis original; see also, George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics* (Durham: Duke, 2017); Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

[124] Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 68.

implicitly rejecting the Sartrean suggestion that totality names "a static concept, a concept of being rather than of process, and one governed by analytic rather than by dialectical reason."[125]

Nevertheless, in the closing moments of this introductory statement, I will endeavor to put a finer point on my approach to totality; a point that is fundamental to understand my conceptualization of the role of the built environment in the concretization and reproduction of capitalist society in the pages to come, and which is particularly pertinent given the status of "totality" as a kind of conceptual specter within radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory itself.[126] Indeed, in this context, I should underscore that the approach to capitalist society in what follows—and my understanding of *capitalist society as a totality*—not only reflects key insights developed by the progenitors of radical geography, but that it is most directly indebted to the reading of Marx offered by Louis Althusser and his followers throughout the 1960s and 1970s. What that means is that I will insist throughout this dissertation on the relational-dialectical language of totality; and, moreover, that I will do so with the specific understanding that capitalist society itself is a totality comprised of various levels and "instances," which "derive from" the imperatives of accumulation, but which maintain "their own consistency and effectivity."[127] I will insist not only that each instance within the social whole is relatively autonomous—and thus irreducible to the demands of accumulation or any other essence. But, moreover, that the "dominant, leading

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[125] See Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 2009), 230; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Vol II* (New York: Verso, 1991).

[126] It seems fair to suggest that radical geography has gotten stuck—far more than other fields—in the now decades-old debate surrounding totality, and the potentiality that we live in an "untotalized reality, a reality…of 'holes' rather than 'wholes,'" as Martin Jay put it in *Marxism and Totality*, 516. See, for context, William Conroy, "Constitutive Outsides or Hidden Abodes?: Totality and Ideology in Critical Urban Theory," *Urban Studies* 61, no. 10 (2024): 1827-1848.

[127] Althusser quoted in Christian Fuchs, "Revisiting the Althusser/E.P. Thompson-Controversy: Towards a Marxist Theory of Communication," *Communication and the Public* 4, no. 1 (2019): 7.

contradiction and structure" within the social whole need not even be the economic level at all.[128] Even if the economy is determinative "in the last instance"—and fundamental in determining what the "structure in dominance" *might be*—throughout this dissertation I will maintain that other structures within society can come to the fore in particular conjunctures. This is a matter of the prevailing combination or articulation of the totality's parts, not something that can be known *a priori*.[129]

I will also draw heavily on two tightly related concepts in my engagement with capitalist society, both implicitly and explicitly: "overdetermination"—which entered Althusser's conceptual lexicon from Freud (by way of Lukács)—and "structural causality"—which traces its lineage to Spinoza. The significance of these concepts can be stated quite plainly. If, as Resnick and Wolff have put it, "classical economic determinism holds that the contradictions between the [economic] base's relations and forces of production govern social changes elsewhere" within society, overdetermination and structural causality suggest a fundamentally different form of determinacy. What they conceptually identify is that every process within a social formation is the "site of different effectivities emanating from all the other social processes." Each is "both cause and effect" of all the others. In this sense, "no one process"—no part within society—"can be deduced from any [other] process" within the social whole.[130] Embedded within these concepts is a rejection of both "transitive causality" (following from Galileo and Descartes), and the Hegelian image of

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[128] Althusser quoted in Fuchs, "Revisiting the Althusser/E.P. Thompson-Controversy," 7.

[129] Robert Paul Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 39; on the "structure in dominance," see also, Althusser's "On the Materialist Dialectic" in *For Marx*.

[130] Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, "Dialectics and Class in Marxian Economics: David Harvey and Beyond," *New School Economic Review* 1, no. 1 (2004): 63; see also, Althusser, *For Marx*, 101.

"expressive causality."[131] In their place we find that every instance and contradiction is *constituted by and expressed in the others*, *and in the social totality itself*, rendering reductionism impossible: "[t]he ensemble of contradictions assigns a place and a function to individual practices, but the contradictions within each individual practice will exercise in turn an effect on the ensemble and hence back eventually on each individual practice and contradiction, including its own."[132]

Indeed, through these concepts I will attempt to move beyond the "pluralist truism" that everything is related to everything, and to underscore "the importance of patterns of dominance and subordination within the unity" that is the complex whole.[133] I will suggest that the social totality is "immanent in its effects in the Spinozist sense of the term."[134] The whole is, famously, the *absent cause*, present in every part.[135] And yet, I will *also* insist that this Althusserian language allows us to see that the whole is not merely always present in its parts; but, rather, comprised of "a parallelogram of forces," each of which "bear[s] within itself the imprint of its conditions of existence," while also being irreducible to, distinct from, and *hierarchically/differentially* positioned vis-à-vis all of the others.[136] While each instance within society is produced by—and productive of—all of the other

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[131] Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 50; see also, "Marx's Immense Theoretical Revolution" in Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*.

[132] Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 62.

[133] Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 52.

[134] Althusser and Balibar quoted in Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 50; more generally, see "Marx's Immense Theoretical Revolution" in Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*; Asad Haider, "The Human Mask," *Radical Philosophy* 2 (2021): 117-122.

[135] This claim famously informed Althusser's approach to subjectivity, agency, and humanism—and, more precisely, his sense that "the *structure* of the world" itself operates as an absent cause in the experiences of people, "their gestures and even their experience of freedom." See, for one engagement with this theme, Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 164.

[136] Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 51.

instances, this should not lead us to reduce all instances into merely expressions of the same essence, nor to conceive of them as equally related to each other and equally impactful on the structure of the whole itself.[137] If each part within the whole is the site of different effectivities, it is also productive of its own effects—effects which will be *more or less* aligned with the interests of capital and the imperatives of accumulation depending on how that "part" or process is positioned in relation to (and constituted by) all of the other processes within the whole.[138]

I raise these concepts not to muddy the conceptual water. I raise them because they are fundamental to my own conceptualization of capitalist society as a totality, and to this dissertation's attempt to develop a theory of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society. Indeed, while it may appear that I use the terms "society" and "social formation" throughout this dissertation in a somewhat ambiguous way, I take those terms to rather specifically connote a complex totality of many unevenly developed processes, each of which interacts with all of the others, all while retaining its own relative autonomy due to the nature of its overdetermination. In what follows I will take up this Althusserian theorization, that is, in order to suggest that social formations are "'structures of structures' integrated or articulated into a meaningful whole," each with its own place in a "hierarchy of determinations"[139]; and in order to suggest that these structures or instances within the "totality of instances" are unevenly developed—with each accorded its own rhythm and "differential history"—and variously related to the imperatives of capital itself.[140] And, with that broad conceptualization in view, I will insist that while

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[137] Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 50, emphasis added.

[138] See also, Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, "The Theory of Transitional Conjunctures and the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism in Western Europe," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 11, no. 3 (1979): 6.

[139] Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 35.

each instance within capitalist society bears the "ever pregivenness" (*toujours déjà donné*) of all of the other social structures within that whole, *some are quite clearly not logically necessary to capitalist society at all*"[141]; they do not constitute what Étienne Balibar referred to as the "invariant formal characteristics" of all capitalist social formations.[142] I will trace the role of the capitalist spatial matrix in materializing and reproducing these necessary and contingent parts, and its role providing the "'limits of variation' within the social formation as a structured whole."[143]

With all of this said, my usage of Althusserian language should not be taken as blind allegiance to every aspect of Althusser's project. In what follows below I articulate an enduring interest in his project's capacity to find a way between "mechanistic determinism" and "pluralistic indeterminacy," and to grasp the social totality as a whole of relatively autonomous parts.[144] But I maintain little interest in many of those claims that have come to define Althusser's legacy, not least regarding the nature of science and Marxism's scientificity, the precise emergence of a new problematic (present in its absence) in Marx's work and his break with Hegelian humanism, and much else.[145] I simply consider the language of totality offered by Althusser—and by subsequent Althusserians—as indispensable for my purposes. It is with it, I will argue, that we can uncover not

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[140] Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 65; on the "differential history" of distinct structures, see, especially, Althusser's "The Errors of Classical Economics: Outline of a Concept of Historical Time" in *Reading Capital.*

[141] Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 54.

[142] Balibar quoted in Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 88.

[143] Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 40.

[144] Resch, *Althusser and the Renewal of Marxist Social Theory*, 38.

[145] For a closely allied approach to Althusser and Althusserian thought, see Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology," 96. For context, in addition to the texts cited above, see Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87* (New York: Verso, 2006); Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (New York: Verso, 2014).

only the role of the capitalist spatial matrix in the reproduction of capital, but its role in the production and reproduction of *real life*.[146]

[146] See Friedrich Engels, "Letter to Joseph Bloch (Engels) (1890)," in *Marx and Modernity: Key Readings and Commentary*, ed. Robert Antonio (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 72.

Part I

Crisis

Capitalism, as a social and ecological system, does not simply produce a world in its own image. It produces, in the words of British Marxist and state theorist John Holloway, a "law-bound world." Of course, there is no reason why such a law-bound world should exist. As Holloway notes, "[t]here is no inherent reason why the production of wealth should follow any set of laws." Our shared social life and the process of producing goods to facilitate our material reproduction can proceed in any number of ways, so long as it meets the corporeal demands of bodily reproduction—an argument that Holloway himself also makes. And yet, in the *capitalist* world, things are decidedly different. In this world, we do not simply produce "wealth," but "wealth" *in the form of commodities*. Because these commodities are "produced for exchange," this process "imposes the need to produce them with labour that is socially necessary, [creating] a whole world of functional necessities, [and] of social determinations that operate as laws independent of any conscious control." In capitalist contexts *we collectively* produce a world in which *we collectively* have relatively little say regarding its contours or determinations; a world that is so "law-bound" that our wants, needs, and desires—at least as they pertain to the reproduction of the material world itself—are almost beside the point. Within capitalist contexts, we produce "a world of alien determination," which structures how "human capacities [are] developed."[147] The "laws" of capital operate largely behind the backs of social actors who are evermore crushed by the weight of abstract labor and its necessary preconditions, even as it emerges from, and takes shape through, their concrete work and everyday practices of production and social reproduction.

[147] This paragraph draws heavily on the work of John Holloway, and more specifically, on Holloway's "Read *Capital*: The First Sentence, Or, *Capital* Starts with Wealth, Not With the Commodity," *Historical Materialism* 23, no. 3 (2015): 10 and 14. For more on these themes, see also, Diane Elson, "The Value Theory of Labour," in *Value: The Representation of Labour in Capitalism*, ed. Diane Elson (London: CSE Books, 1979), 115-180.

No scholarly effort to make sense of these laws—and of this law-bound world—has been more influential and incisive than the one pursued by Marx in his mature critique of political economy. And yet, what concerns me in the present context is not the attempt to make sense of the internal relations that constitute this law-bound world *as such*—or the laws of capitalist motion alone, which were so central to Marx's investigative effort and immanent critique. Rather, in this first substantive chapter in my engagement with the role of the built environment in the reproduction and stabilization of capitalist society, I am concerned to ask: What is the place of the built environment in this law-bound world? Or, how does the built environment mediate and structure the reproduction of capital's invariant laws of motion? And in that context, it is not Marx that has had the most to say on the subject, but his most influential interpreter and popularizer of the last half-century: David Harvey. Beginning in the early 1970s, and continuing through the opening decades of the twenty-first century, Harvey has developed an entire oeuvre of scholarship predicated upon the notion that capitalism is not only a law-bound world, but that the built environment is *logically and historically integral* to the mediation, materialization, and expanded reproduction of these laws. Harvey has, for better and worse, taken up an "essentialist account" of capitalist society—as I put it in the previous chapter—attending to the reproduction of capital's essential relations by way of the built environment (or what I have referred to as the capitalist spatial matrix).

Indeed, Harvey has set as his intellectual agenda not only the development of abstract-theoretical "proposals for more precisely delineating the constituent features of [capitalist] spaces, processes, transformations, and struggles."[148] But, going further, the articulation of an abstract-theoretical account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital, which attends to the fact that capitalist reproduction is itself governed by abstraction, or by the "prosaic activity of

[148] Brenner, *New Urban Spaces*, 41.

commodity exchange and its grounding in practically abstract labour."[149] Harvey has attempted to explicitly isolate the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's laws of motion, and he has done so with the understanding that abstract processes structure the production of capitalist space itself, processes which are "previous to and external to [] thought."[150] He has aimed to transcend those "bad abstractions" regarding capitalist space that are "bequeathed to us…by the dominant forms of capitalist society," and to develop an abstract-theoretical account of the relationship between the built environment and the reproduction of capital.[151]

As such, this chapter will attend directly to Harvey's theorization of the relationship between the built environment and the reproduction of capital's laws of motion, which emerges from his understanding of the inherent spatiality of capitalist crisis. And it will do so with the express agenda of critically engaging Harvey's relationship to (what I will refer to as) the hidden abodes of capitalist space; or, to demonstrate his *general occlusion* of the unwaged, expropriated, and coerced forms of social and ecological work that constitute capitalism *as an institutionalized social order* and the role of the built environment in their reproduction. To that end, I will proceed in several relatively circumscribed parts. First, I will begin by tracing a history of attempts to spatialize crisis theory within (geo)political economy, focusing on several critical figures within that tradition that informed and inspired Harvey's account. I will move from G.F.W. Hegel, and his writing on the political economy of crisis in 1821's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*; to Johann Heinrich von Thünen, and his

[149] Alberto Toscano, "The Culture of Abstraction," *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no. 4 (2008): 70.

[150] Toscano, "The Culture of Abstraction," 70; see also, Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1978); Łukasz Stanek, "Space as Concrete Abstraction: Hegel, Marx, and Modern Urbanism in Henri Lefebvre," in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, eds. Kanishka Goonewardena, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom, and Christian Schmid (New York: Routledge, 2008), 67; Alberto Toscano, "The Open Secret of Real Abstraction," *Rethinking Marxism* 20, no. 2 (2008): 273-287.

[151] Toscano, "The Culture of Abstraction," 66.

writing on the "frontier wage" in the second book of *The Isolated State* (1850); and, finally, to the work of both Rosa Luxemburg and V.I. Lenin, two of the most influential theorists of capitalist imperialism in the twentieth century. In so doing, I will insist that situating Harvey in this tradition allows us to not only grasp the genuine theoretical revolution that he inaugurated by way of his account of the relationship between the built environment and capitalist crises, but—more importantly given our purposes here—to clarify what exactly his landmark account *holds from view*.

After taking stock of Harvey's conceptualization of the relationship between the built environment and the reproduction of capital in this way, this chapter will then turn to teasing out these occluded relations. Building directly on the work of political philosopher and critical theorist Nancy Fraser, I will demonstrate that the built environment not only mediates the reproduction of a law-bound world—and that it is not only central to the mediation and resolution of capitalist crises—but that it is constituted by and constitutive of capital's *necessary* forms of unwaged, expropriated, and coerced social and ecological work as well. The recurrent and endemic remaking of the built environment is consistently (if not exclusively) propelled by capital's inherent tendency to undermine its own unwaged and/or under-capitalized hidden abodes behind the abode of production. By the conclusion of this chapter, we will thus have an abstract-theoretical account of capitalism's essential relations, and a theorization of the role of the built environment in their reproduction.

Spatializing crisis theory: Hegel, von Thünen, Luxemburg, and Lenin

The four figures named above—Hegel, von Thünen, Luxemburg, and Lenin—were not chosen at random. Not only are each of these figures critical reference points in the history of attempts to spatialize crisis theory—and in geopolitical economy more broadly—but they were also central to Harvey's earliest efforts to grasp the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital at the highest level of conceptual abstraction. Hegel and von Thünen were taken up by

Harvey directly in his 1981 classic, "The Spatial Fix: Hegel, Von Thunen, and Marx"; and so too were Luxemburg and Lenin in his 1975 landmark, "The Geography of Capitalist Accumulation: A Reconstruction of the Marxian Theory," among other foundational texts.[152] All are positioned, in other words, as critical interlocutors by Harvey in some of his most important—and earliest—work on the inherent spatiality of capitalist crisis. Each is presented as part and parcel of a long history of efforts to spatialize crisis theory, and as preempting and structuring Harvey's own engagement with that problematic. And, in that spirit, each of these figures will be reviewed here so as to situate Harvey's account of the spatiality of capitalist crisis within a longer tradition; to make sense of the revolution he inaugurated vis-à-vis previous efforts to spatialize crisis theory; and, ultimately, to demonstrate what his account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constituent dynamics holds from view.

In "The Spatial Fix," for example, Harvey calls attention to the spatialities present in Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1821) and in von Thünen's second book of *The Isolated State* (1850). He recalls that Hegel, specifically, identifies a set of contradictions at the heart of civil society.[153] In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel calls attention to the "increasing accumulation of wealth at one pole and the increasing mass of the impoverished at the other as the fulcrum of social disruption" within civil society, while also noting that within this context production tends to outpace or overstep the demands of consumption.[154] And, as Harvey also notes, Hegel suggests that this "inner dialectic"—or this inner tendency toward social disruption within the bounds of civil society—is potentially

[152] For more of Harvey's reflections on these figures, see, for example, Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*; David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982); David Harvey, *Marx, Capital, and the Madness of Economic Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[153] David Harvey, "The Spatial Fix – Hegel, Von Thunen, and Marx," *Antipode* 13, no. 3 (1981): 1.

[154] Harvey, "The Spatial Fix," 2.

resolvable through a set of geographical techniques. The contradictions of civil society can be mitigated against by prying open new markets in geographies that are "deficient in the goods" that have been overproduced; and they can be circumvented through forms of settler colonialism capable of absorbing the increasingly immiserated mass of surplus populations that sit at one side of the aforementioned "pole," and who can no longer "secure the satisfaction of their needs by their own labour."[155]

In von Thünen's work, Harvey identifies a comparable attempt to develop a spatialized approach to crisis theory as well. In *The Isolated State* he locates the question of how "harmony" and stability might be maintained in an economy that is prone to both the intensification of poverty and the escalation of inequality. And he notes that in response to that question von Thünen suggests, much like Hegel before him, that colonial "outer transformations" could provide a kind of solution. In his late work on the frontier wage, von Thünen insists that the only way in which the "patriarchal bond" between capital and labor can be reestablished is by first establishing a "*just share* of labor in the product that labor creates"[156]; and, moreover, that this "just share" is visible if we turn to the space of "the frontier"—to that (real and imagined) geography in which "land is to be had in unlimited quantities" such that "neither the arbitrariness of the capitalists nor the competition of the workers nor the magnitude of the necessary means of subsistence determines the amount of wages, but the product of labour [itself]." Indeed, what Harvey finds embedded in von Thünen's account is the suggestion that a just wage is precisely that which *stops* would-be settlers from "setting up a colony," and thereby ensures that they "continue to work for their former master for wages."[157] It is

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[155] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 151 and 278.

[156] Harvey, "The Spatial Fix," 3, emphasis original.

[157] Von Thünen quoted in Harvey, "The Spatial Fix," 3.

this wage at which *class struggle and crisis are ostensibly resolved*. But, of course, what that means in practice is that colonization can also function, for von Thünen, as a critical tool for establishing social harmony. In the absence of an effort to reconstruct civil society in the name of justice, settler colonialism and the "existence of a freely accessible and open frontier" for settlement is understood to provide it. Colonization can alleviate social struggle in the face of inequality.[158]

Lest there be any confusion, neither Hegel's account of the geographical dynamics of crisis, nor von Thünen's account of the frontier wage, are central to their intellectual projects. In Hegel this discussion is a blip in a process of dialectical unfolding, a moment in his social and political philosophy prior to his more full throated discussion of the state—that "stage of ethical life and…of mind in which the prodigious unification of self-subsistent individuality with universal substantiality has been achieved."[159] Hegel's discussion of civil society's tendency "to push beyond its own limits and [to] seek markets…in other lands" is quite neatly nestled in the penultimate section of the *Philosophy of Right*; and it is given relatively little consideration before he ultimately arrives at the conclusion that the "natural element for industry, animating its outward movement, is the sea."[160] Von Thünen's account of crisis formation and the frontier wage is similarly secondary. Colonization—as a geographical fix to capitalist crisis—is not even von Thünen's primary concern in his discussion of the frontier wage itself. If von Thünen notes that colonialism might provide a "laboratory" for the working out of a just wage in practice, even this discussion is wrapped up in a more abstract explication of how to guarantee forms of justice in contexts in which colonization *is not a possibility*. His consideration of the prospect of a colonial fix to capitalist crisis is embedded

[158] Harvey, "The Spatial Fix," 4.

[159] Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, 234.

[160] Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, 151-152.

within a larger discussion of how a just wage might be achieved in situations in which the frontier *has been closed*.[161]

Nevertheless, both Hegel and von Thünen did prove to be critical interlocutors for subsequent theorists interested in the spatial dimensions of crisis formation and resolution; and, more specifically, in Harvey's own abstract-theoretical attempt to develop an account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital. But of course, to properly situate Harvey we must not stop here. To adequately contextualize his account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constituent dynamics, we would do well to turn to Marxist efforts to spatialize crisis theory as well—and to Luxemburg and Lenin more specifically. Luxemburg, to begin, is perhaps most readily associated with the "underconsumptionist" approach to crisis theory within the Marxist canon; with the claim that crises are not driven by the overaccumulation of capital as a result of falling rates of profit per se, but by patterns of consumption, and the tendency for demand to fall in the face of capitalist dynamism and immiseration.[162] There is nothing definitively Marxist about the underconsumptionist approach, broadly speaking. Underconsumptionist thought was central to the reactionary political economic theorization of Thomas Malthus, just as it was to the (non-Marxist) radicalism of Simonde de Sismondi. For Malthus underconsumption was an always present potentiality, which emerged as a result of the disruption of a "sustainable" rate of growth under capitalism, or the excessive savings of capitalists. In the case of Sismondi the problem was that "capitalism restricts the consumption of the masses by

[161] Von Thünen quoted in Harvey, "The Spatial Fix," 3. With this being said, it is worth underscoring that according to von Thünen the just wage had actually "been attained" on the American frontier in the nineteenth century; see, on that theme, von Thünen's translated material in Bernard Dempsey, *The Frontier Wage: The Economic Organization of Free Agents* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1960), 328.

[162] Anwar Shaikh, "An Introduction to the History of Crisis Theories," in *US Capitalism in Crisis*, ed. Union for Radical Political Economics (New York: URPE, 1978), 222.

keeping them in poverty," a problem that he suggested was accentuated with the historical development of capitalism itself.[163]

What is perhaps most significant in the present context, however, is that Luxemburg came to represent a critical figure in the Marxist turn toward underconsumptionism in the years following Marx's death, and that she did so by focusing sharply on the spatial implications of this claim—or via the contention that spaces that were geographically external to the capitalist system might produce "sources of consumption demand."[164] Luxemburg came to prominence in the closing moments of the nineteenth century and opening moments of the twentieth by advocating for the claim that "actual capitalist accumulation can be explained only through some forces external to 'pure' capitalist relations"; and by suggesting, going further still, that capital requires not only markets *within* an internally constituted capitalist world-market, but a so-called *non-capitalist strata* in order to secure its reproduction—a "strata *of buyers* outside of capitalist society who continually buy more from it than they sell to it" in order to resolve the underconsumption problem.[165]

In this sense, Luxemburg did not simply re-capitulate the underconsumptionist theories of figures like Malthus or Sismondi. Animating her thought in political terms was a rejection of the claim (associated with both Mikhail Tugan-Baranowsky and Rudolph Hilferding) that economic planning would "eliminate crisis" and provide a parliamentary road to socialism; and in intellectual terms she was informed by the assertion that while Marx's conceptualization of expanded reproduction is "algebraically possible" it remains "socially impossible" insofar as it fails to answer the question of where new consumers for the ever-growing mass of produced commodities under

[163] Shaikh, "An Introduction to the History of Crisis Theories," 224.

[164] Shaikh, "An Introduction to the History of Crisis Theories," 225.

[165] Shaikh, "An Introduction to the History of Crisis Theories," 228, emphasis added.

capitalism will emerge from.[166] From this position, Luxemburg argued that capital requires a set of spatial strategies to circumvent the putatively "impossible task" of realizing surplus value in contexts in which society is comprised entirely of either capitalists or workers; and in which it is impossible to maintain requisite levels of consumption to enable capital's reproduction.[167]

This is not the only reason that capital might pursue re-territorialization. As Luxemburg noted, capital might spatially expand to secure access to the so-called "facilities afforded by nature and soil"—or, more simply, in order to secure access to natural resources that might lower the cost of production.[168] It might also pursue such a process of expansion into non-capitalist space in order to secure new sources of labor, or to guarantee the "natural increase of the working class."[169] But what is most central in Luxemburg's account—and thus what typically drives this process of expansion and re-territorialization—is capital's endemic need to find new sources of effective demand and to "find productive employment for the surplus value" that capital itself has created.[170] This is a dynamic that for Luxemburg animates the kinds of violent force that are so central to capital accumulation and which suture the relationship between capital and inter-imperialist rivalry. It is this imperative to find productive outlets for surplus value in the form of a non-capitalist strata that stands as the central contradiction in capitalist society in Luxemburg's account. In their spatialized move to address the problem of underconsumption—and to colonize the non-capitalist

[166] Shaikh, "An Introduction to the History of Crisis Theories," 228.

[167] Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 330.

[168] Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, 338.

[169] Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, 341.

[170] Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, 338.

strata—imperialist states (acting on behalf of capital) introduce capitalist relations into non-capitalist spheres[171]; and, in so doing, they undercut the conditions of possibility for capitalist reproduction.[172]

Lenin develops quite a different understanding of capitalist crisis and of capitalist space. Indeed, where Luxemburg concerned herself with the problem of low rates of consumption in advanced capitalist contexts, Lenin attended primarily to the barriers thrown up by monopolist concentration and integration, and the super-profits that centralized firms accumulated over and above "non-combined" enterprises.[173] Further still, where Luxemburg attended to the structural centrality of imperial expansion to capital as such, Lenin made sense of imperialism as an historical phase of capitalist development, which coincided with the rise of monopoly capital in the 1860s and 1870s, and which was putatively realized in full in the first decades of the twentieth century.[174] It was this historical phase that concerned Lenin most, which he suggested was witness to the uneven movement of monopolization and concentration across capitalist sectors; and which he understood to have culminated when the "'personal union' between the banks and industry"—described in work like Hilferding's *Finance Capital* (1910)—was "completed by the 'personal union' between both and the state," giving birth to state-backed imperial expansion beyond the advanced capitalist world.[175]

Central to Lenin's account of the relationship between crisis formation and the production of space was thus not a theorization of the necessity of imperial expansion in all capitalist contexts.

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[171] Shaikh, "An Introduction to the History of Crisis Theories," 228-229.

[172] At her clearest, Luxemburg writes that as soon as the non-capitalist strata has been absorbed by capital, "accumulation must come to a stop. The realisation and capitalisation of surplus value become impossible to accomplish"; see Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, 397.

[173] Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Mansfield Centre: Martino Publishing, 2011).

[174] Lenin, *Imperialism*, 22.

[175] Lenin, *Imperialism*, 42.

His focus was on the claim that capital had reached a specific historical "threshold" in the waning decades of the nineteenth century, such that capitalist production had become almost completely socialized all while the appropriation of profit remained privatized.[176] Capitalists were being effectively "dragged…into a new social order"—"a transitional social order from complete free competition to complete socialisation."[177] And yet, because these transformations did not organically give way to socialism, the advanced capitalist countries faced down a crisis of monopolistic overaccumulation, which impelled them to export capital to dependent countries, giving rise to inter-state struggles over "spheres of influence." The problem in this specific context was what Lenin referred to as the "superabundance of capital" in core states, which required export in order to be put to productive use.[178] As he puts it, "under the old capitalism, when free competition prevailed, the export of *goods* was the most typical feature. Under modern capitalism, when monopolies prevail, the export of *capital* has become the typical feature," effectively necessitating imperialism.[179] Production and capital were increasingly concentrating into the hands of fewer and fewer capitalists and fewer and fewer financiers, and this led to a situation in which the economies of the imperialist states were increasingly "parasitic" upon production elsewhere.[180]

David Harvey's immense theoretical revolution

David Harvey has quite clearly situated his own account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constitutive dynamics in relation to this history of efforts to

[176] Lenin, *Imperialism*, 25.

[177] Lenin, *Imperialism*, 25.

[178] Lenin, *Imperialism*, 62.

[179] Lenin, *Imperialism*, 62, emphasis original.

[180] See Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey* (London: Routledge, 1990), 116-123.

spatialize crisis theory. And yet, as I will demonstrate below, he has done so in a way that breaks sharply with these received accounts, inaugurating what we might refer to as an "immense theoretical revolution"—to use the language of Louis Althusser, albeit with tongue in cheek—vis-à-vis these received attempts. Indeed, like each of the figures named above, Harvey departs from the understanding that capitalism is a "disequilibrium economy"—or that it tends toward crisis.[181] But what that means, in his telling, is quite notably distinct. In his conceptualization, each individual capitalist faces the pressures of inter-capitalist competition, and the "mute compulsions" of the market.[182] And in the face of this pressure, each individual capitalist is compelled to increase the productivity of labor, and to expand production in an effort to reduce costs below the levels attained by their competitors.[183] It is a sensible strategy, and one that not only accords with the law-bound world of capital, but is locked into place by it.[184] That said, because each individual capitalist is compelled by the pressures of capitalist society to appropriate as much profit as possible in precisely this way, they tend also to produce—on an aggregate level—a *structural tendency* toward the overproduction of commodities and the overaccumulation of capital.

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[181] Castree, Charnock, and Christophers, *David Harvey*, 53; see, for additional context, Ståle Holgersen, "Economic Crisis, (Creative) Destruction, and the Current Urban Condition," *Antipode* 47, no. 3 (2014): 691.

[182] Mau, *Mute Compulsion*.

[183] Mau, *Mute Compulsion*, 306. On the "subjective irrationality" of capitalists, see Simon Clarke, "The Marxist Theory of Overaccumulation and Crisis," *Science & Society* 54, no. 4 (1990): 442-467.

[184] In this context, we would do well to recall the reading of Marx offered by German economist Michael Heinrich, if only because of the clarity with which he summarizes this point. Per Heinrich, the "*intrinsic laws of capital*"—including those that compel technological transformations and increases in productivity—"are independent of the volition of individual capitalists" and their interests. And "as a result, every [individual] capitalist puts the screws on all other capitalists, just as he himself is subject to the same pressure." See Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012), 108, emphasis original.

In other words, Harvey begins from the premise that capitalists recurrently produce a situation of disequilibrium in which surpluses of both material and monetary wealth accumulate, but without profitable outlets for their use.[185] The pressures of accumulation induce technological transformations to increase the productivity of labor, which undercut the possibility of balanced growth, and lead to moments in which capital is faced not only with surpluses of commodities, but with surpluses of money, productive capacity, and of labor power as well.[186] Surpluses of capital *and* labor sit side by side in such moments precisely because capitalists are driven not only to revolutionize production, but to "economize in the use of living labour and the elements of constant capital," throwing more and more workers out of productive work.[187] To be clear, in his emphasis on overproduction and overaccumulation Harvey is not entirely unique. Keynesians have explained overproduction as "based on erroneous expectations," and Schumpeterians "as induced by the opportunities for surplus profit offered by innovations."[188] And more than a few Marxists—particularly since the 1970s—have also insisted on the centrality of overproduction and overaccumulation to the recurrent crisis dynamics of capital.[189]

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[185] Castree, Charnock, and Christophers, *David Harvey*, 53.

[186] Harvey, "The Spatial Fix," 7.

[187] Simon Clarke, "The Marxist Theory of Overaccumulation and Crisis," 455. In the third volume of *Capital*, Marx refers to this process with reference to capital's tendency to produce "a permanent apparent surplus working population"; see Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume III* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 330.

[188] On this theme, see Simon Clarke's "The Marxist Theory of Overaccumulation and Crisis," University of Warwick, accessed September 13, 2023, http://homepages.warwick.ac.uk/~syrbe/pubs/sands.pdf. This text is nearly identical to the one cited above (of the same name), albeit with some minor variations.

[189] Simon Clarke, *Marx's Theory of Crisis* (London: MacMillan Press, 1994), 4.

However, Harvey's approach is quite clearly distinct from such accounts insofar as it takes up the spatial inclination of figures like Hegel and von Thünen, and suggests that this is necessarily a spatial process. In developing these claims Harvey notes not only that value is a social relation, "impossible to measure except by way of its effects."[190] He also notes that abstract social labor does not exist outside of the "concrete activities of production and exchange which give rise to it," and that those concrete activities necessarily take place within a spatialized "structured coherence"[191]—within an absolute space with its own natural resource endowments and its own social and physical infrastructures to facilitate and support the accumulation of capital. Capital presupposes, in other words, a geography of built forms and logistical networks of transport, communication, and social reproduction, which maintain "an active influence over profit rates" and the prevailing place-specific determination of the value of labor power itself.[192] The crises of overaccumulation that Harvey describes are thus formed not in the productive sphere alone; they are formed in the context of particular built environments. The "tendency for capital to accumulate over and above what can be reinvested profitably in the production and exchange of commodities"—the tendency for crises to emerge within the realm of commodity production—*presupposes a geography*.[193]

What turns out to be most significant are thus not simply the basic parameters of overproduction and overaccumulation sketched above, but Harvey's subsequent claim that these

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[190] David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 141.

[191] David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism*, 76.

[192] Eric Sheppard, "David Harvey and Dialectical Space-Time," in *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*, eds. Noel Castree and Derek Gregory (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 126; see also, for a discussion of the differential value of labor power, Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, 94-95.

[193] Giovanni Arrighi, "Spatial and Other 'Fixes' of Historical Capitalism," *Journal of World-Systems Research* 10, no. 2 (2003): 528; see also, Jessop, "Spatial Fixes, Temporal Fixes and Spatio-Temporal Fixes."

crisis dynamics always play out *in situ.* As Harvey puts it, capital's tendency toward crisis in the productive sphere "is manifest in a variety of guises." These include: "1. Overproduction of commodities—a glut on the market. 2. Falling rates of profit (in pricing terms, to be distinguished from the falling rate of profit in value terms which is a theoretical construct). 3. Surplus capital which can be manifest either as idle productive capacity or as money capital lacking opportunities for profitable employment. [And] 4. [s]urplus labour and/or [a] rising rate of exploitation of labour power."[194] The pressures of market competition produce a structuring imperative such that each individual capitalist must accumulate evermore capital, incentivizing investment in productive technology, driving down the aggregate rate of profit, and leading to a situation in which too much capital (in its various forms) is produced "in the aggregate relative to the opportunities to employ that capital."[195] And, in the first instance, Harvey extends these insights to demonstrate that this tendency toward overaccumulation within the realm of commodity production is necessarily a spatial process.

Indeed, with this spatial presupposition in view, Harvey goes one step further. He emphasizes not only this dynamic of spatialized crisis formation, but the ways in which such crises are resolved in space as well. He notes that capital "relies upon fixed capital (including that embedded in a specific landscape of production)" in order to "revolutionize the value productivity of labour" and maintain profitability in the face of competition; and, further still, that this dynamic ultimately finds its culmination in the re-spatialization of the built environment, insofar as capital's inherited geography poses a "barrier to be overcome." As surpluses mount within the context of

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[194] David Harvey, "The Urban Process Under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2, no. 1 (1978): 106.

[195] Brett Christophers, "Revisiting the Urbanization of Capital," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 101, no. 6 (2011): 1360; see also, Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 188-189.

these geographical parameters and crises erupt, capital is incentivized to "break with past technological mixes and spatial configurations," and to produce *new spaces for accumulation*. These new spaces establish a new set of physical and social infrastructures that will speed up the circulation time of capital, mop up the surpluses of capital and labor produced in and through the aforementioned crisis, and reestablish the basis for growth.[196] In such moments capital produces not only the conditions for renewed accumulation, but a new "geographical grounding [for] that process through the patterning of labor and commodity markets, [and the] spatial division of production and consumption."[197] It produces a new "rational landscape" for capital's circulation and capital mobility in the commodity form, while leaving a landscape of devalorization in its wake.[198]

How these dynamics manifest in practice is variegated and quite difficult to predict. According to Harvey, the endemic and integral pressures of capitalist society might be momentarily "resolved" through either the "external" reconfiguration of space, or through "internal" socio-spatial reorganization. In the case of the former, capital might turn to overseas or distant geographies in order to (1) lend money abroad "as a means of payment to buy-up surplus commodities produced domestically"; (2) to send surpluses of money "to create fresh productive powers there"; and/or (3) to "access overseas-based reserves of labour and put them to work."[199] While this spatial fix to capital's crisis tendencies need not necessarily bring with it imperial domination, it quite often does. Efforts to create external markets for consumption, "to implant fresh productive powers in new regions and to bring all labor, everywhere, under the dominion of

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[196] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 394; see also, Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, 296.

[197] Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 22.

[198] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 380. For Marx's reflections on capital's capacity to find "momentary, violent solutions [to its] existing contradictions," see Marx, *Capital: Volume III*, 357.

[199] Castree, Charnock, and Christophers, *David Harvey*, 98; see also, Harvey, "The Spatial Fix."

capital," tend also to bring with them inter-imperial rivalry and violent forms of territorial domination.[200] And yet, capital's efforts to resolve crises of overaccumulation may involve the internal reconfiguration of capitalist space as well; and the internal reorganization of the inherited built environment, understood by Harvey to name "a complex composite" made up of "roads, canals, docks and harbors, factories, warehouses, sewers, public offices, schools and hospitals, houses, offices, [and] shops."[201]

Indeed, across Harvey's corpus he attends to a wide range of internal and external socio-spatial strategies that capital might pursue to mitigate the effects of crisis, all of which implicate the built environment. For him, the crisis dynamics sketched above give a kind of rhythm to the making and remaking of the built environment under capitalism, tout court. Waves of investment in the built environment tend to take place, according to Harvey, somewhere between the ten-year ebbs and flows of the business cycle and the fifty-year waves of growth and collapse first identified by Kondratieff in 1922's *The World Economy and its Conjunctures During and After the War*.[202] These waves of investment allow for overaccumulated capital within the productive sphere to be "syphoned off" and moved into fixed capital investments (or "difficult to alter, [] immobile…lumpy investments" in space[203]); and, more broadly, into new geographies of production, consumption, and exchange within and beyond the received geography of accumulation.[204] A new rational landscape of

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[200] Harvey, "The Spatial Fix," 7.

[201] Harvey quoted in Christophers, "Revisiting the Urbanization of Capital," 1349; see also, Castree, Charnock, and Christophers, *David Harvey*, 100.

[202] For an account of Kondratieff cycles, see Richard Day, "The Theory of the Long Cycle: Kondratiev, Trotsky, Mandel," *New Left Review* 99, Sept/Oct (1976): 67-82.

[203] Harvey, "The Urban Process Under Capitalism," 115-116.

[204] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 233.

accumulation is produced in such moments which effectively overcomes received barriers to profitable accumulation by absorbing overaccumulated capital (and unemployed labor), and by providing new avenues of capital mobility.[205] Nevertheless, as Harvey also underscores, the ever intensifying need for capital to accumulate—and to speed up the circulation of capital itself—leads to "massive devaluations" in *even this newfound geographical configuration*.[206] "Thus does capital constitute barriers to its own dynamic within itself."[207]

As should be relatively clear, this broad theorization of the built environment thus goes far beyond the received attempts to spatialize crisis theory that Harvey himself invokes—and the work of Hegel, von Thünen, Luxemburg, and Lenin, specifically—constituting a crucial reconceptualization of the inherent spatiality of capitalist reproduction and the role of the built environment in that context. Take Hegel and von Thünen to begin. With secondary scholarship on Hegel's political economy in view, it is quite clear that his account of "mature civil society" is capable only of identifying the role of ostensibly *external* geographies in absorbing overproduced commodities and surplus populations; and that it is, as such, ill-equipped to conceptualize the compulsions that drive crisis dynamics, their relation to geographical reorganization within inherited landscapes of accumulation, and the extent to which geographical "solutions" to capitalist crisis might stabilize accumulation in the long run.[208] In other words, Hegel, as Harvey himself notes, is

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[205] Throughout his corpus, Harvey typically exemplifies this point with reference to Second Empire Paris (between 1852 and 1870) and post-World War II USA.

[206] Harvey, "The Urban Process Under Capitalism," 123. As Harvey puts it in *Marx, Capital, and the Madness of Economic Reason* (p. 150): "[f]ixed capital investment, particularly of an independent kind in the built environment, can provide temporary relief from problems of overaccumulation and relieve stress during phases of crisis when surpluses of capital and of labour exist side by side without otherwise profitable sources of employment."

[207] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 123.

[208] See Albert O. Hirschman, "On Hegel, Imperialism, and Structural Stagnation," *Journal of Development Economics* 3 (1976): 1-8; Raymond Plant, "Hegel and Political Economy (Part I)," *New*

rather restrictively focused on "geographical expansion"—and the production of external geographies—and he is "not clear" on whether or not such processes of expansion would even serve to "stabilise matters" in the medium to long term.[209] And in relation to the work of von Thünen, Harvey again provides much needed theoretical clarity. After all, for von Thünen, the frontier appears as a source of normative orientation that might compel capitalists to temper inequality and pauperization. But why an equilibrium wage is so rarely produced, and why capital is so consistently compelled to revolutionize its geographical parameters of accumulation in ways that far exceed settler colonialism, goes entirely unaddressed in his account.

Indeed, if these are the problems that Harvey's approach allows us to supersede in Hegel and von Thünen, there are several in Luxemburg and Lenin too. With Harvey once again in view, we gain not only an account of the "transformation rules" that structure the remaking of capitalist space. But, contra both Luxemburg and Lenin, we gain an explanation as to why the periodic re-spatialization of the parameters of capital accumulation is *endemic and ongoing* within capitalist society, rather than merely a moment in the stagist historical-geographical evolution of capitalism, or a process that implicates non-capitalist space (until it has been wholly dissolved).[210] Harvey allows us to move beyond the teleology and eschatology found in Luxemburg and Lenin, and to suggest that the rhythm of crisis formation and resolution is *a cyclical one*, with the making and remaking of the socio-spatial infrastructures of accumulation mediating the formation and resolution of capitalist

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Left Review 103, May/June (1977): 79-92; Lucia Pradella, "Hegel, Imperialism, and Universal History," *Science & Society* 78, no. 4 (2014): 426-453.

[209] Harvey, *Marx, Capital, and the Madness of Economic Reason*, 133.

[210] While Lenin's text is often mistranslated as suggesting that imperialism is the "highest stage" of capitalist development—when it names, in fact, imperialism as the "latest stage" in that process—there is no avoiding the "stagism in Lenin's approach," as Salar Mohandesi has put it. On this theme, see Salar Mohandesi, "The Specificity of Imperialism," *Viewpoint Magazine*, February 1, 2018, https://viewpointmag.com/2018/02/01/the-specificity-of-imperialism/

crises over time. Harvey also productively moves beyond the relatively uncomplicated geographies that Luxemburg and Lenin presuppose. We come to learn, from his account, that a contradiction of fixity and motion is immanent to capitalist economies, and that the forms of spatial fix that ultimately "resolve" that contradiction implicate not only external geographies in the form of imperial expansion, but the received geographies of capitalist space, tout court.

In other words, Harvey's oeuvre suggests that those that follow Luxemburg and Lenin are not so much wrong as misguided. Luxemburg is correct insofar as she argues that "capitalist development *may* become contingent upon other modes of production"; or, insofar as the reproduction of capital may come to hinge, in particular contexts, upon markets in non-capitalist societies (if they do in fact exist).[211] And Lenin, for his part, is correct insofar as his account helps to draw attention to the phenomenal socio-spatial forms "assumed by capitalism during a particular stage of its development."[212] The problem arises, however, when the spatiality of capitalist reproduction is conceived "*solely* in these terms."[213] Luxemburg and Lenin run into problems, in Harvey's view, because the former posits the *necessity* of imperial expansion into a non-capitalist strata, and the terminal barriers to accumulation that the dissolution of non-capitalist space throws up; and because the latter largely reduces the problem of capitalism's spatiality to "the phenomenal appearance of imperialism" that he traces via a reading of the first years of the twentieth century.[214] What they both obscure, in so doing, is the radical flexibility of capital and its capacity to reproduce

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[211] David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 260, emphasis added. (This is a reprint of Harvey's 1975 article "The Geography of Capitalist Accumulation: A Reconstruction of the Marxian Theory.")

[212] Harvey, *Spaces of Capital*, 261.

[213] Harvey, *Spaces of Capital*, 260, emphasis original.

[214] Harvey, *Spaces of Capital*, 261.

itself in ways that go well beyond these strategies to stave off terminal decline. What they obscure are capitalism's variegated spatialities and the role of the built environment in the recurrent reproduction and stabilization of capitalism over time.

Harvey's account of the spatiality of capitalist crisis constitutes a theoretical revolution vis-à-vis these received approaches insofar as it expands our view beyond putatively external geographies and beyond the role of space in historically specific crisis conditions. The vast set of socio-spatial strategies that capital might pursue to "create fresh room for accumulation" are engaged in his account, not just imperialistic practices.[215] And, moreover, Harvey is able to productively demonstrate that capital is not simply doomed to collapse "without an external solution to its market imbalances and its resource constraints."[216] The production of the built environment in all of its forms appears as central to the *ongoing* production and resolution of crises of overproduction and overaccumulation, which emerge primarily as a result of dynamism within the realm of commodity production. Harvey offers an account of capitalist space and the built environment, which insists on the claim that to make sense of it we must peer beyond the site of exchange, so as to see "not only how capital produces, but how capital is itself produced"[217]; and which notes the centrality of the "internal" and "external" built environment in the reproduction of capital itself. This account thus constitutes a theoretical revolution not insofar as it crosses "the threshold of scientificity and attains cognitive autonomy" (as Althusser described Marx's scientific break); but simply because it insists on the *enduring* role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital at a high level of conceptual abstraction.[218]

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[215] Harvey, *Spaces of Capital*, 260.

[216] Harvey, *Marx, Capital, and the Madness of Economic Reason*, 134.

[217] See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 280.

The hidden abodes of capitalist space

This chapter has developed a relatively straightforward argument. I have suggested that Harvey inaugurated a theoretical revolution beginning in the 1970s in and through his theorization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital and its constituent dynamics. In his understanding of capitalism's spatial fix, Harvey was able to break crisis theory out of the "a-spatial mould" in which it is often cast, and to move beyond even those spatializations provided by figures like Hegel, von Thünen, Luxemburg, and Lenin.[219] My contention is thus surely not that Harvey's theorization should be dismissed out of hand. That said, in the remainder of this chapter, I will develop a critique of it. I will move beyond Harvey's emphasis on the relationship between the built environment and the hidden abode of production—which is Harvey's primary concern, insofar as he attends narrowly to crises of overaccumulation that have their roots in the realm of commodity production—and turn our focus to its relation to the hidden abodes *behind* the abode of production as well. I will insist that to make sense of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital at the highest level of conceptual abstraction, we must make sense of its place within capitalism as an *institutionalized social order* that is necessarily constituted by both foreground and background abodes. We must revisit our understanding of the necessary dimensions and dynamics that constitute capitalism at a high level of abstraction, and the built environment's relation to them. But, with that said, we must now ask: what exactly does it mean to posit capitalism as *an institutionalized social order*, constituted by *multiple* hidden abodes?

To answer this question, we would do well to turn to the political philosopher and critical theorist Nancy Fraser. Fraser has worked tirelessly over the last decade to establish the claim that capitalism is not—as it might appear in Harvey's account—merely an economic system; but rather,

[218] Elliot, *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*, 82.

[219] Harvey, "The Spatial Fix," 10.

an institutionalized social order comprised of economic *and* non-economic domains. Indeed, for Fraser, in addition to the so-called "formal economy"—or what we have referred to above as the hidden abode of production—capitalism *definitionally presupposes* background conditions of possibility. These are the hidden abodes "behind markets in labor power and other major direct inputs to commodity production, behind private property in the means of production and private appropriation of surplus, and behind the dynamic of self-expanding value."[220] And these abodes become clear when we "move from the front-story" told about capitalism—with its focus on waged exploitation—"to the back-story" of unwaged, non-commodified and/or under-capitalized work, so central to dissident literatures within Marxist thought.[221] More plainly put, Fraser suggests that capitalist society not only maintains a foreground abode of waged work, but that it necessarily rests upon a set of tightly inter-related and mutually constituted background abodes, including the spheres of (gendered) social reproductive work, (racialized) expropriation, and ecological theft.[222] Capitalist society—in Fraser's quasi-Polanyian formulation—"cannot be commodities all the way down," precisely because commodification and exploitation "rest[] on *another level of social reality*."[223]

In tracing the contours of this complex topography of capitalist society, Fraser typically engages these hidden abodes, or background spheres, one by one. The first, in that spirit, is that of social reproduction. "Variously called 'care,' 'affective labor,' or 'subjectivation,'" the work

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[220] Jaeggi in Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 29.

[221] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 29.

[222] Two points are worth noting here. First, there is a state-theoretical moment in Fraser's account as well, which allows her to posit the state as an additional and integral background abode or condition of capitalist production. I am, however, going to bracket the problem of the state here. I will return to it in chapter three. Second, in what follows I will reject the strongest version of Fraser's "quasi-Polanyian" claim: I will not insist that capital relies upon non-commodified work in general, but rather upon non-commodified *and/or under-capitalized inputs*.

[223] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 30, emphasis added.

undertaken within the background abode of social reproduction "forms capitalism's human subjects, sustaining them as embodied, natural beings, while also constituting them as social beings." As Fraser notes, within capitalist society "much"—though, crucially, not all—"of this activity goes on outside the market" and the wage nexus, and takes place in the context of "households, neighborhoods, civil society associations, and a host of public institutions." Waged labor itself would be a logical and historical impossibility without the existence of this kind of (often) non-commodified work, which functions to both produce workers, and reproduce and "replenish existing generations."[224] And following a range of sources within Marxist feminism—from the autonomous Marxism of Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James to the structuralist Marxism of Juliet Mitchell—Fraser notes that such social reproductive work has long been the disproportionate burden of women, who are enlisted in both the labor of bodily reproduction, and in the "making and remaking of…the various swaths of intersubjectivity that human beings inhabit."[225] Fraser underscores that capital presupposes a distinction between productive and reproductive work, and that much of the latter category (though not all) falls outside of "direct market mediation" and is tightly linked to (and in fact roots) the oppression of women within capitalist societies.[226]

If Fraser casts a relatively wide net in articulating her influences—gesturing, again, toward figures like Mitchell, Dalla Costa, and James—we should not overlook the specificity of her account. Indeed, while Fraser suggests an affinity with these authors (among others), we might recall that for Mitchell the place of women within capitalist society emerges as a result of the articulation of four distinctive structures: production, reproduction, socialization, and sexuality. The key to

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[224] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 31.

[225] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 32.

[226] Endnotes, "The Logic of Gender: On the Separation of Spheres and the Process of Abjection," *Endnotes* 3 (2013): 56-90.

understanding "woman's condition," that is, lies in situating that question in relation to these separate structures, "which together form a complex—not a simple—unity."[227] And, for figures like Dalla Costa and James, the subjugation of women is, contrastingly, understood in relation to the claim that capitalist relations are generalized beyond the abode of production, *rendering all of social life* "productive in the manner of manufacture."[228] As Kathi Weeks reminds us, the tradition of autonomist thought that produced Dalla Costa and James is rooted in a politics of refusal: "a refusal of the privatization and depoliticization of the personal, a refusal of the naturalization of allegedly nonproductive domestic practices, and a refusal of the gendering of the division between production and reproduction."[229] And at the core of that politics of refusal is the claim that the norms of commodity production have been effectively diffused across every realm of society, rendering domestic work as *directly* productive of surplus value.

Fraser, however, takes up a different tack. In her account, women's oppression is rooted not in a combination of relatively autonomous structures, nor in domestic labor's neat subsumption within the capitalist "social factory," but rather in women's particular association with the (largely non-commodified) background abode of reproduction. This sphere of activity enables waged exploitation, to be sure, but it continues to maintain its own relative autonomy as a result of its status as a distinctive abode of capitalist society, largely located beyond the wage nexus. In other words, in Fraser's engagement with this literature, she posits a distinctive account of the nature of capitalist reproduction in general.

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[227] Juliet Mitchell, "Women: The Longest Revolution," *New Left Review* 40 (1966): 16.

[228] See Joshua Clover, "Subsumption and Crisis," in *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, eds. Beverly Best, Werner Bonefeld, and Chris O'Kane (London: SAGE, 2018), 1574.

[229] Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 140.

From this engagement with social reproduction, Fraser then turns to her second hidden abode *behind* the abode of production—to a second presupposition of waged exploitation. She turns to the sphere of ecological "work." In discussing this background condition, Fraser engages the problematic of non-human nature, or of capital's necessary "annexation (*Landnahme*) of nature, both as a 'tap' to provide 'inputs' to production and [] as a 'sink' to absorb the latter's waste."[230] She emphasizes that non-human nature is not solely necessary for the reproduction of capital. After all, "owners, producers, reproducers, and expropriated or colonized subjects" all rely upon a socio-ecological web of life.[231] Nevertheless, Fraser also underscores that capital in particular relies upon non-commodified, "cheap," or under-capitalized ecological inputs, whose "value is both presupposed and disavowed" in the process of accumulation.[232] Indeed, according to Fraser, capitalism inaugurates a strict distinction "between [the] natural realm, conceived as a free, unproduced supply of 'raw materials,' available for appropriation"; and—on the other hand—the "economic realm, conceived as a sphere of value, produced by and for human beings."[233] She helps to demonstrate that capitalism's value form "qualitatively and quantitatively abstracts from nature's useful and life-giving characteristics, even though value is a particular social form of wealth—a particular social objectification of *both nature and labor*."[234] She argues that capital is a "monetized

[230] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 35.

[231] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 36.

[232] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 35.

[233] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 36.

[234] Paul Burkett, *Marx and Nature: A Red and Green Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 80, emphasis added.

abstraction engineered to self-expand," and that, moreover, capital disavows the material and ecological world through which it proceeds.[235]

But if capital relies upon nature while simultaneously disavowing it—and if "capitalism represents wealth by a purely quantitative, socio-formal abstraction: labor time in general"—Fraser is also quick to emphasize that non-human nature cannot remain "free" for good.[236] The dynamism attendant to capitalist economies—and the treadmill effect produced by the temporal determination of value—incentivizes the rapacious consumption of non-human nature, accelerating its depletion, and raising the cost of production.[237] Fraser recalls, in other words, that capitalist firms are incentivized to "really subsume" nature, and to "take hold of and transform natural production" in order to lubricate the process of valorization.[238] And she also notes that this ultimately leads to the increasing capitalization of nature, the escalating externalization of waste, and the rising cost of production as a result. Each round of accumulation tends to bring with it new articulations of the nature/society relation, precisely in order to resolve this contradiction. Capital periodically remakes the boundary between nature and society so as to reestablish the conditions for profitable

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[235] Nancy Fraser, "Climates of Capital: For a Trans-Environmental Eco-Socialism," *New Left Review* 127, Jan/Feb (2021): 100. With that said, Fraser's suggestion that capital "disavows" its reliance upon nature arguably obscures the fact that it is capital's "economic forms" that are "independent from the material world"; see, for additional context, Kohei Saito, "Marx in the Anthropocene: Value, Metabolic Rift, and the Non-Cartesian Dualism," *Zeitschrift für kritische Sozialtheorie und Philosophie* 4, no. 1-2 (2017): 289.

[236] See Burkett, *Marx and Nature*, 82.

[237] See Ilias Alami, Jack Copley, and Alexis Moraitis, "The 'Wicked Trinity' of Late Capitalism: Governing in an Era of Stagnation, Surplus Humanity, and Environmental Breakdown," *Geoforum* 153 (2024): 1-13; Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1993).

[238] For this quote, see William Boyd, W. Scott Prudham, and Rachel Schurman, "Industrial Dynamics and the Problem of Nature," *Society and Natural Resources* 14, no. 7 (2001): 557; for Fraser's engagement with the real subsumption of nature, see Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 37.

accumulation, and to mitigate against rising costs in its ecological background sphere. Drawing on the language of Kohei Saito, we might say that Fraser's account underscores that ever greater "increases in [] social productivity are accompanied by a decrease in natural productivity" due to the robbery of nature.[239]

Finally, with the hidden abodes of reproduction and of ecology in view, Fraser then turns to what she refers to as the hidden abode of (racialized) expropriation. Once again understood as a prerequisite for profitable accumulation, Fraser suggests that expropriation, including in the form of imperialism and colonial domination, is an "abode behind the abode" of production, "which makes exploitation possible."[240] If exploitation is pursued in capitalism's foreground "under the guise of a free contractual exchange, expropriation[—its necessary precondition—]dispenses with all such niceties in favor of brute confiscation," with this latter economic process typically carrying with it a fairly rigid set of racialized status distinctions.[241] Here we should underscore that for Fraser expropriated work need not be *fully* un-commodified. Much like capital's hidden abodes of social reproduction and ecological work, the hidden abode of expropriation maintains an uneasy and unstable relation to commodification and the wage nexus. Capital prefers for these inputs to be as cheap as possible, but the boundary between exploitable and expropriable work is in a constant process of flux. And yet, whereas "purely" exploited work is typically paid the full cost of its reproduction in wages, expropriated work is, for Fraser, seized "without [capital] paying for [its] costs of reproduction."[242] To use the parlance of Ruy Mauro Marini, we might thus say that much

[239] Kohei Saito, *Marx in the Anthropocene: Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 29.

[240] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 40.

[241] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 40.

[242] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 41.

expropriated work is "superexploited."[243] Expropriation suggests in such contexts a "reduction of wages" to the point that "the labourer's necessary consumption fund" is transformed into "a fund for the accumulation of capital."[244]

In developing these arguments regarding capitalism's necessary hidden abode of expropriated work, Fraser relies upon and diverges from a (relatively ambiguously defined) tradition of "black Marxism," in which she includes scholars as distinctive and divergent as C.L.R. James, Barbara Fields, Cedric Robinson, and Adolph Reed Jr., among many others.[245] It is hard to precisely identify the commonalities within that category of thought, and how it informs Fraser's theorization. After all, for a figure like Robinson, racism and racialization are not simply structural features of capitalist society—or of capitalism as an institutionalized social order—but situated at a higher level of conceptual abstraction than capitalism itself. "Racialism" is conceived by Robinson as a necessary and integral part of Western civilization, and as only surmountable through the "confrontation of an African consciousness."[246] And figures like Barbara Fields and Adolph Reed Jr. are similarly divergent in their approach to the problematic of race and capitalism. Fields, for example, is principally concerned with the rituals and ideologies that make "race in its characteristic American form" and assign it causal significance[247]; and Reed Jr. with the relatively anti-theoretical assertion

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[243] Jaime Osorio, "Dialectics, Superexploitation, and Dependency: Notes on the Dialectics of Dependency," *Social Justice* 42, no. 1 (2015): 96. To be clear, Fraser herself avoids the language of superexploitation on the basis that it obscures the "status differential" attendant to expropriation.

[244] Marini quoted in Osorio, "Dialectics, Superexploitation, and Dependency," 96.

[245] Nancy Fraser, "From Exploitation to Expropriation: Historic Geographies of Racialized Capitalism," *Economic Geography* 94, no. 1 (2018): 1-17.

[246] Asad Haider, "The Shadow of the Plantation," *Viewpoint Magazine*, February 12, 2017, https://viewpointmag.com/2017/02/12/the-shadow-of-the-plantation/

[247] Barbara Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* 181, May/June (1990): 97.

that we must attend strictly to the conjunctural combinations of racially mediated labor relations in thinking about race and capitalism—and not the question of capitalism's necessary features.[248] In fact, Fraser's account of expropriation situates her perhaps closest to a figure like Immanuel Wallerstein, for whom "race" is functionally imbricated in "the axial division of labour in the world-economy."[249]

Regardless of how we might situate Fraser within a broader literature, what is crucial for our purposes, however, is that the spheres or abodes that she outlines sit together in her account within the same socio-spatial totality. Each abode is imprinted or "impress[ed]" by the "stamp" of the market and the hidden abode of production, which operates as a kind of gravitational field, shaping the nature of the other background abodes.[250] And yet, each abode is also home to its own distinctive and relatively autonomous social ontologies and normative grammars. In this sense, Fraser maintains the dialectical language of totality, all while rejecting the image of capitalist society as a "single totalizing system"—an image often associated with Georg Lukács, and his suggestion that a "ubiquitous" commodity logic "supplie[s] a template for objects in general and for all subject-object relations."[251] She insists that the abode of social reproduction, for example, harbors "ideals of care, mutual responsibility, and solidarity," and that the abode of ecology maintains values such as "sustainability, stewardship…and justice between generations."[252] She is not naïve or saccharin about the politics that follow from these relatively autonomous normative grammars; they are laden with

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[248] Adolph Reed Jr., "Rejoinder," *Political Power and Social Theory* 15 (2002): 301-315.

[249] Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 79.

[250] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 26.

[251] Jaeggi in Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 48-49.

[252] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 50.

hierarchy and parochialism. But Fraser nevertheless insists that these distinctions persist, and constitute capitalism as a normatively differentiated totality of foreground and background relations. She goes as far as suggesting that each abode provides the possible home for distinctive forms of anti-capitalist struggle.

If there appears to be a Habermasian tenor to this song, we should emphasize that Fraser sharply rejects the system/lifeworld framework as "far too dualistic and dichotomizing."[253] In the place of a distinction between an "exploitative system and an innocent lifeworld," she insists that capitalist society is constituted by *several* normative orders and ontological grammars, each of which is associated with a distinctive background abode, but which can also move uneasily across different moments of social life.[254] As she puts it, "there are sedimented patterns of action and interpretation, which are themselves subject to contestation, disruption, and transformation."[255] And, moreover, Fraser insists that putatively capitalist logics do not simply "colonize" these background spheres as Habermas's system colonizes its lifeworld; rather, capitalism is *constituted through these variegated abodes*. "Each of these spheres," as Fraser puts it, "is permeated with [a] normativity"; and each has its own progressive "normative surplus" that might function in the service of anti-capitalist struggle.[256] What Fraser provides is thus a sharp departure from the model of capitalism supplied in Harvey's above-sketched account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital. Capitalism appears as a social order that contains *within it* an economic foreground of waged exploitation (as it

[253] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 52; see also, for context, Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical About Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender," *New German Critique* 35 (1985): 97-131.

[254] Caitlín Doherty, "Topographies of Capital: Gender, Class and Nature in Fraser's Critical Theory," *New Left Review* 143, Sept/Oct (2023): 34.

[255] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 52.

[256] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 147 and 152.

does in Harvey's account). But Fraser identifies a range of hidden abodes behind that abode as well. These abodes are not external to capitalism but "embedded in the very texture" of capitalist life.[257]

It is little exaggeration to suggest that Fraser has produced a fundamentally new theorization of the constitutive contours of capitalist society, and inaugurated a break with those accounts of capitalism that focus solely on the foreground of production. As promised by Fraser herself, she inaugurates a shift as momentous as Marx's shift from the realm of circulation and exchange to the hidden abode of production; and she lays bare the hidden abodes that are hidden further still behind that abode. She continues to suggest that the capitalist value form is a purely social, immaterial but objective form that is consolidated in and through the act of exchange; and yet, rather than suggesting that exploitation and exchange uniformly "determine[] the connection of every social fact," she provides a radically distinctive mode of abstraction—one attentive to the differentiated character of the capitalist totality and its multiple normativities.[258] Of course, with that said, Fraser's project has predictably attracted critique since its first formulation, and not without reason. Scholars like Caitlín Doherty, Chris O'Kane, and Kohei Saito have respectively emphasized, among other concerns: the relative opacity of Fraser's organizing metaphors, her lingering Habermasian inheritance, and her version of "left arithmetic," which fails to account for the relational constitution of her "abodes," or, "how they actually relate to each other and how they constitute a totality under capitalism *in a multi-stranded manner*."[259] And this is to say nothing of those numerous scholars that

[257] Fraser and Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, 179.

[258] Cf. Riccardo Bellofiore and Tommaso Redolfi Riva, "The Neue Marx-Lektüre: Putting the Critique of Political Economy Back into the Critique of Society," *Radical Philosophy* 189 (2015): 25.

[259] Saito, "Marx in the Anthropocene," 284, emphasis added; see also, Doherty, "Topographies of Capital"; Chris O'Kane, "Critical Theory and the Critique of Capitalism: An Immanent Critique of Nancy Fraser's 'Systematic' 'Crisis-Critique' of Capitalism as an 'Institutionalized Social Order,'" *Science & Society* 85, no. 2 (2021): 207-235.

have underlined Fraser's relatively cavalier engagement with the literatures named above—with black Marxism, Marxist feminism, and ecological Marxism—among other areas of concern.

Nevertheless, in the pages that follow I will insist that Fraser's account constitutes—whatever our critiques might be—not only a key reference in our effort to push beyond Harvey's spatialization of crisis theory; but, in fact, the lynchpin of a revised approach to the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constituent dynamics. This is perhaps a surprising theoretical move. After all, not only is Fraser's account decidedly *a-spatial*, but it is also relatively weak on the problem of crisis. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, how capitalist crises are produced and resolved in space is almost entirely absent from Fraser's account.[260] She suggests, in a quasi-Wallersteinian gesture, that capitalist history is divisible into four regimes of accumulation: mercantile capitalism, competitive liberal capitalism, state-managed monopoly capitalism, and financialized-neoliberal capitalism. And she argues that each of these regimes culminates with so-called "boundary struggles" which entail a negotiation and re-stabilization of the relationship between the foreground and each of her hidden abodes—between production and reproduction, nature and society, and exploitation and expropriation. *The crisis dynamics that propel such boundary struggles*—and which ultimately give birth to these new regimes of accumulation—remain, however, almost entirely opaque.

Fraser insists that capital's foreground of exploitation effectively "cannibalizes" its background conditions of possibility—that the "drive for profits" ultimately "ravag[es] the 'non-economic' realms" that she so painstakingly traces.[261] She argues that this dynamic gives rise to struggles, or normative conflicts, "between these realms on the level of 'social action,'" which

[260] Conroy, "Background Check."

[261] Doherty, "Topographies of Capital," 47.

resolve in the making of new regimes of accumulation.[262] But this is hardly a complete social-theoretical account of the nature of crisis, let alone of its production and resolution in space. We are left rather ambiguously with the image of capitalist destabilization, which takes place, at least in large part, because of the encroachment of capitalist dynamism and the norms of capital's foreground of exploitation into the background abodes that constitute its conditions of possibility. It is not clear what exactly propels this process of destabilization, and—further still—how this account relates to Harvey's suggestion that the built environment plays a critical role in both the production and resolution of capitalist crises. Considering Fraser's theorization, we are left to wonder: What would it look like to extend Harvey's genuinely revolutionary reconceptualization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital by way of Fraser's account of capitalism's multiple abodes? Is it possible to take up Fraser's language in order to suggest a revised account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital at the highest level of abstraction?

While we are perhaps at risk of putting the cart before the horse, my contention in what follows is that the solution to this question of synthesis—and our path toward a better theorization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's necessary laws of motion—is to be found in the lexicon of "underproduction." It is to be found in the claim that capitalist development tends over time to produce situations not only of overproduction and overaccumulation within its received geographical parameters, as Harvey suggests; but also, that it tends to produce situations in which it is increasingly difficult for capital to secure its necessarily non-commodified and/or under-capitalized social reproductive, ecological, and expropriative background conditions, raising the cost of production. It is this latter dynamic that often forces a re-territorialization of the received built environment, and a re-articulation of the relationship between

[262] O'Kane, "Critical Theory and the Critique of Capitalism," 219.

capital's foreground and its various (normatively differentiated) background spheres.[263] Indeed, in what follows I will argue that the built environment in capitalist contexts—or what I have called the capitalist spatial matrix—constitutes the "material frame" that is *produced through* the reproduction of capitalist society; that it is the material presupposition and product of the ever-evolving "social division of labour."[264] It "appear[s] at the same time as [its] presupposition,"[265] and is not a distinct moment in the reproduction of capitalist life, but the material manifestation of that phenomena. And, going further, I will suggest that the making and remaking of the capitalist built environment is driven not only by crisis dynamics within the hidden abode of production—or within the foreground of exploitation and its received geographical parameters—but by capital's tendency to undermine the abodes that sit behind the hidden abode of production as well.

In using the language of underproduction in this way, I am not entirely unique. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, the political economist and state theorist James O'Connor developed the claim that capitalist economies not only tend toward crises of overproduction (of capital, commodities, and (idle) laborers), as Harvey (and many more) would have it; but that they also tend to underproduce what he referred to as the conditions of production (or production conditions), particularly without the concerted involvement of the state. O'Connor, in an effort to establish a theoretical grounding for ecological Marxist analysis and politics, turned to how capital throws up its own barriers to value realization as a result of its dynamism in production; and, moreover, to its tendency to "impair[] its own social and environmental conditions, hence increasing the costs and

[263] For an allied theorization, see Álvaro Sevilla-Buitrago, *Against the Commons: A Radical History of Urban Planning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022).

[264] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 98.

[265] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 99.

expenses of capital, and thereby threatening capital's ability to produce profits."[266] O'Connor was sharply attuned to the fact that each individual capitalist is incentivized to contribute to those dynamics that produce crises of underproduction for capital in general, exacerbating the development of these crises and compounding their growth over time. He reintroduced scarcity back into an account of capitalist crisis (albeit in decidedly non-Malthusian terms), engaging the compounding effects of putatively "rational" firm-level calculations on not just the natural environment, but on labor power and the spatial parameters of accumulation as well.[267]

And even more closely related to my agenda here is the work of Jason W. Moore, a key interlocutor and inheritor of O'Connor's legacy, and of his lexicon of underproduction. Moore's underproductionist account of crisis is particularly relevant insofar as it attends directly to the underproduction of "cheap inputs" beyond the domain of waged exploitation. In his account of capitalist society, the "substance of value" remains "socially necessary labor-time," meaning that "[t]he drive to advance labor productivity is fundamental to competitive fitness."[268] However, this alone is not the end of the story. Abstract social labor—the *value form* under capitalism—requires for its reproduction a *greater* set of non-commodified or under-capitalized socio-ecological *value relations*.[269] It requires the "appropriation" of unpaid work/energy, without which the "costs of production would rise, and accumulation would slow."[270] According to Moore, this is also precisely

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[266] James O'Connor, *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996), 159.

[267] O'Connor, *Natural Causes*, 166.

[268] Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 62.

[269] In a useful turn of phrase, which resonates with Fraser's theorization, Moore writes that "[w]hile Marxist political economy has taken value to be an *economic* phenomenon with systemic implications, the inverse formulation may be more plausible: value-relations are a *systemic* phenomenon with a pivotal economic moment." See Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 64, emphasis original.

where all regimes of accumulation end up. Capital's historical and logical *non-identity* (or necessary disequilibrium) of value form and value relation is periodically and necessarily undermined and undercut as capital exhausts, depletes, and capitalizes those relations that "extend[] beyond the immediate process of production" and stand behind the wage nexus, joining up "definite 'modes of production' and definite 'modes of life' in concrete historical unities."[271] These forms of non-commodified or under-capitalized work tend toward underproduction, signaling a "rising value composition of capital, and the inflection point of decline for a given production complex."[272]

I take inspiration from this account of underproduction and its role in the production and resolution of capitalist crises. It enables us to see that capitalist crises are driven not only by capital's tendency toward overproduction within the realm of commodity production (or within the hidden abode of production); but to see that capital also tends toward the underproduction of its non-commodified and/or under-capitalized inputs and conditions of possibility. Either tendency can become dominant within a particular conjuncture, but they are internally related due to capital's propensity to both revolutionize production in the name of increased labor productivity and to undercut its capacity to "yield a rising stream of unpaid work."[273] And yet, the understanding of the capitalist built environment that I am developing here—which explicitly aims to go beyond the theoretical revolution initiated by Harvey so as to attend to the hidden abodes of capitalist space—takes up the language of underproduction in a rather distinctive way. After all, alongside my turn to the language of underproduction as a means of extending Harvey's genuinely revolutionary

[270] Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 64.

[271] Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 71.

[272] Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 75.

[273] Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 75.

conceptualization of the built environment is the contention that we must retain Fraser's suggestion that capitalist society is *constituted by various normatively differentiated hidden abodes*, and that we must attend to their underproduction in the face of capitalist dynamism specifically. What I am suggesting, therefore, is that while crises of the overaccumulation of capital—which are constitutively spatial, or "*always particular to a place*"[274]—arise either as a result of capital's tendency toward overproduction *or* underproduction (following Moore), Fraser's account allows us to see that the former tendency finds its roots in the intensification of production within *capitalism's foreground*, and the latter in rising costs in capitalism's *background abodes,* due to the effects of exhaustion, depletion, over-capitalization, or normative contestation.[275]

In fact, if existing engagements with the underproduction of capital's conditions of possibility have noted the centrality of the non-commodified or under-capitalized work of "women, nature, and colonies" (following Maria Mies) in this dynamic, Fraser allows us to go further still. She enables us to see that if capital eventually and invariably underproduces the *geographically specific inputs* upon which it relies, it does so unevenly and distinctly across its normatively differentiated background spheres.[276] For example, it is quite clearly the case that the *underproduction of non-human nature*—or of Fraser's ecological background sphere—is rooted in capital's tendency to both exhaust and eventually capitalize its ecological resources, raising the cost of production in general. The competitive dynamism of capitalist production in the foreground of exploitation and the temporal determination of value leads to situations in which ecologies are exhausted, increasing the cost of production in a fairly linear dynamic. And yet, with Fraser's understanding that capitalist society is

[274] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 378, emphasis original.

[275] See, on the conflation of overaccumulation and overproduction in Marxist thought, Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 98.

[276] See Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 103.

comprised of several differentiated abodes in view, we see also that the underproduction of the other (non-ecological) background abodes generally proceeds according to a different logic. The underproduction of expropriated racialized work (by way of imperial plunder) and social reproductive inputs (by way of gendered domination) have historically not been driven by the rising tide of capitalization in the face of exhaustion, but by the normative struggles of colonized subjects and by women themselves. In those contexts, the dynamism of capitalist production is often mitigated against not by increasing capitalization (and raising the cost of production directly), but by intensifying existing forms of expropriation and theft. The competitive pressures of capitalist competition typically compel capitalists to cut costs via hyper-expropriation and social reproductive squeeze. And, as such, the problem of underproduction in those spheres typically arises only by way of normative contestation.

More plainly, Fraser's language of capitalist society's constitutive spheres or abodes helps to bring into view the notion that capital tends toward both crises of overproduction in the foreground of exploitation; and, moreover, that it is often plagued by the underproduction of its background abodes, *albeit unevenly and in distinctive ways*. While the dynamism of capitalist production—and the tendency toward overproduction in the foreground of exploitation—is tightly linked to the underproduction of capital's background abodes, how and why those abodes are underproduced is quite variegated. Their underproduction might be driven by depletion and exhaustion, but—in the case of the reproductive and expropriative abodes especially—it is more typically driven by normative struggles against the prevailing distribution of the burdens of accumulation and the intensification of expropriation in light of a falling rate of profit. We might even say that insofar as these spheres are relatively autonomous and distinct, Fraser's account enables us to see that transformations in one abode might lead to transformations in another in relatively unpredictable ways. And taken together, this broad conceptualization of crisis is crucial to our account of the role

of the built environment in the reproduction of capital for two reasons. First, we can now underscore that capital does not simply tend toward place-specific forms of overaccumulation as a result of its dynamism in the productive sphere. It is driven to location-specific crises by the effect of distinctive and interacting forms of underproduction across capitalism's background abodes as well. Second, we can suggest that the re-territorialization of the built environment is profoundly linked to the re-establishment of profitability *across capitalism's foreground and background spheres*, which are often plagued by distinctive (if interrelated) crises.

In other words, the remaking of the built environment occurs not simply when capitalists fail to secure outlets for profitable accumulation within the established geohistorical parameters of exploitation, or within the existing spatialization of capital's foreground of production. More completely, it occurs in those contexts in which capital can no longer find profitable opportunities for investment given the established spatialization of its foreground and background abodes (or given the received spatialization and conditions of production, reproduction, expropriation, and ecological plunder). The re-spatialization of the built environment is typically pursued in order to renew the conditions for profitable investment in moments of crisis, and this is undertaken not only because capital is in need of a new "technological and organizational mix" that will speed up the turnover time of capital and "increase the physical and value productivity of labour" in production[277]; but because the articulation and spatialization of capitalism's constitutive abodes is functioning to inhibit capitalist reproduction. The re-spatialization of the built environment functions to absorb or "mop up" surplus capital that has been overaccumulated, and to mediate its movement into new geographies of production, consumption, and circulation; and, also, to chart out and secure new sites of racialized expropriation and cheap sources of social reproductive work (in

[277] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 189 and 307.

which normative struggles are more easily suppressed or circumscribed), and new geographies of ecological plunder. The capitalist spatial matrix is the presupposition of capitalist reproduction; it "*appear[s] historically as the product of [] struggle*" around capitalism's constitutive abodes.[278]

The precise nature of this moment of re-territorialization in the face of crises of overaccumulation will vary in practice for a host of reasons, including whether overproduction or underproduction is the dominant tendency within a given historical-geographical conjuncture; and depending upon the specific location(s) of underproduction across the background abodes. The movement of crisis across capitalism's various abodes is, again, an uneven and variegated process. The received spatialization of ecological expropriation might prove too costly as a result of ecological exhaustion and rising rates of non-human capitalization within the established geographical parameters of accumulation; normative conflicts might arise over capital's efforts to intensify racialized expropriation in particular geographies, a practice that is "[a]dvantageous" in "normal times," and which becomes "especially appealing in periods of crisis, when competition is intense…and/or rates of profit fall below what are considered acceptable levels"[279]; or struggles might emerge in response to squeezes on social reproductive capacities, as capital tries to maintain profitability in and through practices that "stretch" social reproduction to a "breaking point," such as intensified exploitation, expropriation, and/or "forced underconsumption."[280] And yet, *what is certain regardless of context* is that capital tends toward crisis as a result of overproduction, and/or as a result of its tendency to decrease its access to its own background conditions of possibility; and the

[278] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 115, emphasis added.

[279] Fraser, "From Exploitation to Expropriation," 5.

[280] Fraser, "Contradictions of Capital and Care," 105; Farshad Araghi, "Food Regimes and the Production of Value: Some Methodological Issues," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 30, no. 2 (2003): 41-70.

capitalist spatial matrix is the presupposition and result of that crisis dynamic. These two moments—of overproduction and underproduction—are both interlinked and spatially constituted, and together they explain the overaccumulation of capital and the periodic re-spatialization of the built environment.

The built environment is thus not only the presupposition and result of "multifaceted transformation[s] of sociospatial relations" pursued to support the accumulation of capital across scales.[281] It is the material result of struggles over capital's abodes, and of the profoundly uneven, "spatially polymorphic," and invariably fraught effort on the part of capital to maintain a profitable articulation of its abodes during times of "normalcy" and to regain it in times of political economic crisis.[282] The capitalist spatial matrix is produced through the contested transformation of socio-spatial dynamics that seek to enable the expanded reproduction of capital and stave off crises of both over- and underproduction. Depending on the specificities of the crisis at hand, the re-spatialization of the built environment might be principally geared toward the absorption of surplus capital, commodities, and/or laborers; or the expropriation of new sources of socio-ecological work across capital's background abodes. Nevertheless, what is certain is that the built environment is the presupposition and result of these dynamics.

Indeed, the language of Nicos Poulantzas once again aids in our understanding of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constituent parts. For him, the "apparatuses" of capitalist life are "never anything other than the materialization and condensation of class relations," such that they "presuppose" class relations "so long as it is understood" that this does

[281] Brenner, *New Urban Spaces*, 70.

[282] Brenner, *New Urban Spaces*, 71.

not imply "a relation of chronological causality."[283] For us, the capitalist spatial matrix is best understood—at its core—as the presupposition and effect of the contested struggle over capitalism's necessary abodes, and not as a moment that exists in a relation of chronological causality. Crises of overaccumulation are always geographically specific, but that is not only because accumulation is contingent upon "long-lasting and often immovable social and physical infrastructures" that enable the profitable exploitation of labor power within capitalist society's foreground.[284] It is because crises of underproduction are constitutively spatial as well. Capitalism's background spheres emerge through and are constituted by the sedimentation of social and physical infrastructures that enable the reproduction of labor power, the expropriation of racialized subjects, and the metabolism of non-human nature. And crises of underproduction emerge unevenly across these abodes when the established social and physical infrastructures that constitute them come to "impose costs," restraining the profitable accumulation of capital.[285] The received spatialization of capitalism's background spheres might come to pose such significant "costs of maintenance (relative to competing [geographies])" that capitalists are incentivized to break with that geography.[286]

As Harvey at one point correctly argued, "[t]he social geography shaped to capital's needs at one moment in history is not necessarily consistent with later requirements"; "it can become a "barrier to be overcome."[287] And in the account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital that I have provided here, this geography is not made strictly in the image of

[283] Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (London: New Left Books, 1975), 25.

[284] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 383.

[285] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 403.

[286] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 403.

[287] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 403.

capital's foreground of exploitation. It is made in relation to capitalism's requirements as an institutionalized social order.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out to articulate several closely linked arguments. It began by taking stock of David Harvey's conceptualization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constituent dynamics. It situated Harvey—as he himself has done—in a long history of efforts to spatialize crisis theory, which spans the work of Hegel and von Thünen, and Luxemburg and Lenin. It emphasized the genuine theoretical revolution that he inaugurated relative to those sources with his conceptualization of the built environment. With his account in view, the re-spatialization of capital emerged as endemic (well beyond the historical moment of imperialism and settler colonialism), and as hardly limited to the forms of external re-territorialization that are propelled by the "external coercive" determinations of capital.[288] This chapter then developed an account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's necessary or constituent parts that takes seriously those normatively differentiated background spheres that constitute capitalism as an institutionalized social order, and that fall from view in Harvey's account. I argued that the capitalist spatial matrix emerges through—or appears at the same time as—the ongoing and uneven re-articulation of capitalism's foreground and background abodes. Integrating the language of underproduction into our lexicon, I suggested that capitalist crises are driven either by overproduction in the foreground of exploitation and/or by the underproduction of non-commodified and/or under-capitalized inputs produced via capitalism's background abodes. And, ultimately, I argued that both of these crisis tendencies are spatially constituted and resolved,

[288] Marx quoted in Harvey, *Spaces of Capital*, 238.

providing a distinctive account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's invariant laws of motion.

By way of conclusion, however, there is one additional point to underscore. If the preceding pages have demonstrated the usefulness of Fraser in bringing into view a revised theorization of the capitalist spatial matrix, I want to emphasize that the lineaments of my theorization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's necessary dynamics are not only gleaned in Fraser's work alone. In fact, an outline of this theorization of the built environment appears as an *absent presence* across a range of texts within Marxist geopolitical economy—even within work that takes up a rather conventional account of capitalism's relation to its background conditions, not least in the work of Harvey himself. To demonstrate this point, we can turn first to some of the most rigid contributions to the so-called "modes of production debate," which sought—among other things—to tease out the relation between the capitalist mode of production and waged exploitation. Take, for example, the work of Ernesto Laclau. In the mid-1970s, Laclau submitted one of the most enduring and significant contributions to that debate. With dependency theorist Andre Gunder Frank as his primary interlocutor and target of critique, Laclau pushed back against the claim that Latin America had been (uniformly) "capitalist" since its conquest and colonization by European powers in the sixteenth century, as putatively evidenced by the fact that these countries participated in forms of generalized commodity exchange that facilitated the accumulation of capital in metropolitan states.[289] Laclau suggested that while certain forms of economic activity in Latin America—particularly forms of unfree and/or under-capitalized work—could hardly be described as outside of the world market, these "pre-capitalist" modes of production persisted well after the

[289] Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism*, 164; see also, Andre Gunder Frank, "The Development of Underdevelopment," *Monthly Review* 18, no. 4 (1966).

colonial moment, and were actually intensified by, and articulated to, the expansion and growth of production for the sake of accumulation.[290]

Of course, there is much to be said regarding Laclau and his debate with Gunder Frank in general. And yet, what is most significant in the present context is that even this intervention—rooted, as it is, in a relatively *conservative theorization* of the centrality of waged labor within capitalist contexts—concedes that putatively non-capitalist forms of production can "participate in the general movement of the capitalist system without…their mode of production being capitalist."[291] And indeed, in his claims, Laclau went even further still, suggesting that such superexploited, unfree, and/or relatively un-capitalized work is best understood as fundamental to the ongoing and expanded reproduction of capital, and to staving off crises of a falling rate of profit, which for Laclau was an always present potentiality. In a passage that is strikingly similar to one that we might find in my own theorization of capitalism's hidden abodes and the capitalist spatial matrix, Laclau writes that "what seems to be the key to a sustained process of accumulation is the expansion…of productive units in which either low technology or super-exploitation of labour makes it possible to counteract the depressive effect on the rate of profit."[292] Laclau does not, therefore, only push back against the work of figures like Gunder Frank, but (at the very least) *hints* at the necessary disequilibrium of the value form and its value relations in the expanded reproduction of capitalism; or, capital's reliance upon various hidden abodes behind the abode of waged exploitation as well. As Karayiannidds recalls, for Laclau the "declining rate of profit [in] the metropole…forces Western capitalists to seek productive units in which either the organic composition of capital is low or

[290] Laclau, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America," 30.

[291] Laclau, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America," 27.

[292] Laclau, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America," 36.

super-exploitation of labor is possible – or both."[293] His terminology is distinct, but this observation is very much related to our attempt to reconceptualize capitalism as an institutionalized social order, and our effort to make sense of the capitalist spatial matrix in that context.

I would even go so far as suggesting that we find glimpses of the hidden abodes of capitalist space not only in this relatively orthodox approach to the modes of production debate, but in the work of Harvey—and in Marx as well. To be sure, Harvey does not reproduce our argument in any straightforward sense. If he did, our entire undertaking in this chapter would be pointless. But he does help to underscore our theorization's validity insofar as he gestures toward, *inter alia*: the persistence of the family form "as an island of relative autonomy within a sea of [capitalist] bondage, *perpetually adapting to the shifting currents of capitalist urbanization*," and fulfilling the demands of capitalist social reproduction[294]; the "quantitatively unlimited character of the goal of monetary capital accumulation," and the tendency of capital to "drive[] competing enterprises to constantly seek out qualitatively new ways to appropriate and process natural conditions"[295]; and, more generally, the "formally 'noncapitalist' aspects of social life [that] articulate with and facilitate the dynamics of capital accumulation through expanding market exchange and commodification."[296] In fact, since the 1990s in particular, Harvey's work has turned from a rather narrow focus on the capacity for the

[293] Karayiannides, "Stuart Hall, Development Theory, and Thatcher's Britain," 14.

[294] Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 238, emphasis added; see also, for his engagement with Marx on the reproduction of labor power, Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 163.

[295] For these quotes—which I take as representative of Harvey's conceptualization as well—see Burkett, *Marx and Nature*, 87 and 98. For Harvey's engagement with capital's contradictory relation to nature, see Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* and David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), ch. 16.

[296] Michael Ekers and Scott Prudham, "Towards a Socio-ecological Fix," *Environment and Planning A* 47 (2015): 2439; see also, David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

production of space and the built environment to resolve crises of overaccumulation, and toward a more expansive emphasis on capital's relation to putatively "non-capitalist" space and ecological contradiction.[297] Harvey has gestured toward—or, perhaps more accurately stated, *run up against*—the hidden abodes behind the abode of production, and their role in the historical-geographical evolution of the capitalist spatial matrix, even if his theorization remains incapable of integrating these background conditions into an account of capitalism as an institutionalized social order.

Harvey obliquely notes not only that capitalist society relies upon those background conditions that Fraser engages, but that it also persists in a contradictory relation to them. As he puts it at one point, the "space-time of factory labour conflicts with that of family time, child-rearing and the reproduction of labour power," in addition to those temporalities that shape the ecological conditions of accumulation as well.[298] And, as he notes, with this in view we "come to see capitalism for what it truly is: a perpetually revolutionary mode of production, constantly labouring under the social necessity to transform itself from the inside, while it just as constantly presses up against the capacities of the social and physical world [that] sustain[s] it,"[299] leading to the re-territorialization of accumulation. In other words, while it is certainly not the case that Harvey attends to the background conditions of possibility that define capitalist society with the emphasis that we have here, it is also clear that he has consistently been forced to confront the fact that capitalist crises are

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[297] Here we would do well to recall Harvey's relatively chaotic concept of "accumulation by dispossession," which has become increasingly central to his theoretical apparatus over the past two decades, naming capital's dependence upon, *inter alia*, the privatization of land, the commodification of labor, the "appropriation of assets," the "monetization of exchange and taxation," "the slave trade," and usury as well, as Harvey catalogues in his *Spaces of Global Capitalism*, 43. For further critique of the concept, and of its relatively grab-bag conflation of both exceptional and normal aspects of capitalist history, see Robert Brenner, "What Is, and What Is Not, Imperialism?," *Historical Materialism* 14, no. 4 (2006): 79-105.

[298] Harvey, *Marx, Capital, and the Madness of Economic Reason*, 137.

[299] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 96.

not only made in the productive sphere. They are not only made, as we have argued, in the foreground of exploitation, as a result of the competitive pressures of inter-capitalist competition, but, rather, across capitalist society's hidden abodes. These crises give way not only to revolutions in the technological and social organization of production—and revolutions in transport relations to reduce the turnover time of capital—but to the remaking of the built environment tout court; competition gives way to new "spatial configurations of production," *and* to the re-spatialization of those "value relations" that stand behind the capitalist value form.[300]

Marx's engagement with the hidden abodes of capitalism is arguably even more direct. While a number of scholars have taken up the question of how Marx confronts problems like social reproduction, ecological theft, and racialized expropriation across his corpus, we can turn directly to his infamous crisis theory, and to his so-called "general law of underproduction," to demonstrate this point.[301] After all, within the third volume of Marx's *Capital*—and in the chapter on "The Effect of Changes in Price," specifically—he suggests not only that "the rate of profit is inversely proportional to the value of the raw materials," but also that capitalist dynamics lead the "portion of

[300] Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 393.

[301] This literature has exploded over the last two decades. For a sample, see Kevin Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Jairus Banaji, "Modes of Production," in *The Elgar Companion to Marxist Economics*, eds. Ben Fine and Alfredo Saad-Filho (Chetenham: Edward Elgar, 2012), 227-232; Paul Burkett, *Marx and Nature;* Paul Cammack, "Marx on Social Reproduction," *Historical Materialism* 28, no, 2 (2020): 76-106; John Clegg, "A Theory of Capitalist Slavery," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 33, no. 1 (2020): 74-98; Conroy, "Background Check"; John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000); John Bellamy Foster, Hannah Holleman, and Brett Clark, "Marx and Slavery," *Monthly Review* 72, no. 3 (2020); Martha Gimenez, "Capitalist Social Reproduction: The Contradiction Between Production and Social Reproduction Under Capitalism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Karl Marx*, eds. Matt Vidal, Tony Smith, Tomás Rotta, and Paul Prew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 321-340; Matthew Huber, "Value, Nature, and Labor: A Defense of Marx," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 28, no. 1 (2017): 39-52; Kohei Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism: Capitalism, Nature, and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2017).

constant capital that consists of fixed capital…[to] run significantly ahead of the portion consisting of organic raw materials, so that the demand for these raw materials grows more rapidly than their supply."[302] He argues that capital's tendency toward crisis is intimately associated with its tendency to *underproduce its requisite inputs*. And in fact, as Michael Perelman emphasizes, Marx's theory of the falling rate of profit was also *centrally* concerned with underproduction and scarcity, and emerged in and through Marx's specific empirical consideration of the so-called Cotton Famine of the 1860s, sparked on by the American Civil War.[303] Even in that most contested topic within Marx's oeuvre we encounter the specter or trace of the hidden abodes behind the abode of production; and more precisely, of the imperative for capital to stave off the underproduction of inputs from those domains.[304]

Again, Marx is certainly not Fraser—and neither is Laclau nor Harvey. As already noted quite plainly above, these thinkers do not offer us a coherent theorization of capitalism's hidden abodes, let alone of the capitalist spatial matrix and its remaking in the context of boundary struggle and crisis. And yet, I raise them here to underscore that even in these seemingly orthodox accounts, we continue to encounter—if only as an absent presence—the non-commodified and/or under-capitalized background conditions of possibility for capitalism's reproduction, as well as capital's

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[302] Marx quoted in Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 99-100.

[303] Perelman, "Marx and Resource Scarcity," 65-84.

[304] And we might even go further still. Across Marx's corpus we not only encounter capital's tendency to undermine its own background conditions or hidden abodes, but the fact that crises of underproduction can be driven by normative conflicts and (what we have referred to above as) boundary struggle as well—and the notion that the underproduction of one background sphere might even be offset (if only momentarily) through intensified patterns of exploitation, expropriation, and/or forced underconsumption *elsewhere*, or, in other hidden abodes. After all, how else should we understand Marx's insistence—in both volumes one and three of *Capital*—that the cotton famine provoked by the American Civil War produced new forms of absolute and relative surplus value extraction, immiseration, and starvation in the industrial core?

enduring and endemic tendency to undermine those hidden abodes. While figures like Laclau, Harvey, and Marx do not name these hidden abodes or grapple with them in a coherent or consistent way—due to the limitations of their processes of abstraction, wherein "the relationship of capital and wage-labour determines the whole character of the mode of production"—these hidden abodes continue to haunt their theorizations.[305] In reading these figures we find but more evidence for our theorization—more support for our claim that capitalism presupposes a broad institutionalized social order, including a range of non-commodified and/or under-capitalized background conditions of possibility; and, moreover, more support for our distinctive theorization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital. And with this account in view, we can now turn to the role of the built environment in the reproduction of social formations that are comprised of more than merely "necessary" relations.

[305] See Marx, *Capital: Volume III*, 1019.

Articulation

It is unlikely that capitalist society *requires* "race" or "gender" for its expanded reproduction. Even if capital's requisite background conditions of possibility, sketched in the preceding chapter, have long been tightly linked to the oppression of racialized and gendered subjects—such that those forms of distinction within capitalist society invariably carry the weight of that historical association—it hardly seems conceivable that capital necessitates *specific forms* of ascriptive difference in any respect. Following Julian Go's brief but highly influential intervention on the tensions at the core of the "racial capitalism" debate, we might say that insofar as scholars have arrived at that position—at the claim that capital requires race and gender as distinctive forms of ascriptive differentiation—they have done so in a way that is troublingly inattentive to the distinction between a *theory of capital* and a *theory of capitalism*. As Go puts it, a *theory of capital* is principally concerned with the development of "a formalized and abstract representation of the inner workings of capital…its contradictions, and its necessary demise through a series of central categories that capture the key elements of the capitalist system." And, by contrast, a *theory of capitalism* aims at precisely the opposite. It intends to speak directly to "capitalist development and dynamics in their empirical specificity. It is meant to explain and describe specific capitalist formations and developments as they really exist in the world, not their abstract conceptual form."[306] And with this distinction in view, the suggestion that capitalism necessarily carries with it processes of racialization and gendered hierarchization—that they are necessary to a *theory of capital*—appears to simply reproduce a kind of "ex post facto functionalism" in which the centrality of those forms of difference in capitalist history is read as proof of their place in the "inner workings of capital" itself.[307]

[306] Julian Go, "Three Tensions in the Theory of Racial Capitalism," *Sociological Theory* 39, no. 1 (2021): 42.

In other words, while it is common to encounter the claim that capitalist society is necessarily mediated by forms of racialization and gendered hierarchization, this is an exceedingly difficult claim to substantiate in practice. Arriving at it typically involves identifying the functional imbrication of race, gender, and the "laws of capitalist motion" within particular historical-geographical contexts; and, subsequently, shifting that pattern of functional imbrication up the ladder of conceptual abstraction, thus holding from view the manifold combinations of racialization, gendered hierarchization, and capital accumulation that are quite plainly visible at other scales of analysis and across capital's uneven history in the *longue durée*. Søren Mau, in a closely allied formulation, puts it as follows: "[b]y vacillating between different levels of abstraction," scholars that pursue this kind of theoretical move "inadvertently 'ontologise' historically specific systems of [race and] gender rather than explain the relationship between capitalist production and the oppression of [racialized minorities and] women."[308] In suggesting that capitalist society requires race and gender for its reproduction, these scholars trans-historicize the meaning and significance of those categories of difference and the specific functional role that they have come to play in certain historical-geographical contexts. Some go even further still, arguing that these categories are the *result of capital*, "slip[ping] into a functionalist and reductionist account of capital as an omnipotent subject creating the social differences it needs in order to function."[309]

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[307] I discuss these issues at length in Conroy, "Race, Capitalism, and the Necessity/Contingency Debate," which is itself a longer version of the argument articulated in William Conroy, "Uneven and Combined: Some Reflections on the 'Racial Capitalism' Debate," *Society and Space*, May 2, 2022, https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/uneven-and-combined-some-reflections-on-the-racial-capitalism-debate. On "ex post facto functionalism," see Brenner, *New Urban Spaces*, 61.

[308] Mau, *Mute Compulsion*, 160. For perhaps the strongest counterclaim offered in the literature, see Charles Post, "Racism and Capitalism: A Contingent or Necessary Relationship," *Historical Materialism* 31, no. 2 (2023): 78-103.

[309] Mau, *Mute Compulsion*, 162. For more context on functionalism—and its use and abuse within Marxism specifically—see Jon Elster, "Marxism, Functionalism, and Game Theory: The Case for

But of course, if it is in fact the case that race and gender are best understood as logically contingent forms of ascriptive hierarchization within capitalist society, a set of questions immediately arises. How should we describe the relationship between those patterns of ascriptive difference and capitalist reproduction? And, moreover, how might we explain the enduring character of their combination—or the simple fact that much (perhaps all) of capitalist history has been mediated by distinctive forms of racialized and gendered domination, albeit in conjuncturally specific ways? It seems to me that precisely because race and gender are logically contingent vis-à-vis the laws of motion of capitalist society, their consideration thrusts us to the center of a set of debates regarding the connection of capitalist society's necessary and contingent parts, and the reproduction of capitalist society in all of its complexity.[310] Precisely because these forms of difference are not necessary to a theory of capital and cannot be "conceptually derive[d]…from the capital form," we are left to wonder about the conditions of their combination and their enduring (if variegated)

Methodological Individualism," *Theory & Society* 11, no. 4 (1982): 453-482; Anthony Giddens, "Commentary on the Debate," *Theory & Society* 11, no. 4 (1982): 527-539. For a version of the claim that capital requires a specific form of ascriptive difference, we might turn to Leopoldina Fortunati's landmark work *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1995) insofar as she suggests, in that text, that "male/female inequality, far from being a relic of barbarism, is inherent, inborn and necessary for the functioning of the capitalist mode of production" (p. 39).

[310] I should underscore two points regarding my usage of "necessity" and "contingency" in this context. First, I should note that my primary objective in using this language is to differentiate "good abstractions" from "chaotic conceptions." Chaotic conceptions "arbitrarily divide[] the indivisible and/or lump[] together the unrelated and the inessential, thereby 'carving up' the object of study with little or no regard for its structure and form." In other words, chaotic conceptions lump together the necessary and the contingent, whereas good or rational abstractions do not. (On this point, see Andrew Sayer, *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 138.) Second, I should underscore that, in my usage, "contingency" is dissociated from terms like "local," "insignificant," "haphazard," and/or "random." It is my view that "to describe a relation as necessary…or contingent…is to say something about the conditions of existence of the relata; in the first case that the very existence of the relata is interdependent, in the second case that it is not." It is to say nothing regarding the scale or persistence of a phenomena. (On this point, see Andrew Sayer, "Beyond the Locality Debate: Deconstructing Geography's Dualisms," *Environment and Planning A* 23 (1991): 292.)

reproduction within capitalist societies—and, perhaps, to consider the reproduction of all of those contingencies that shape capitalist society, tout court.[311]

In the present chapter I will attend to these questions, and—in so doing—I will extend my account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society's necessary and contingent parts. I will argue that the built environment is central not simply to the reproduction of capital's necessary foreground and background abodes—as I demonstrated in the previous chapter—but that it sits at the core of the reproduction of capitalist societies that are defined by much more than their constituent economic relations, including those capitalist formations that are defined by racism and gendered domination. To do so, I will turn to the tradition of Althusserian Marxism, and to the specific language of "articulation" that it offered throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and into the 1980s. This is not an entirely surprising move. Within the longstanding debate on capitalism and ascriptive difference, there is a relatively clearly defined "articulationist" strand, one which emerged from the tradition of Althusserian Marxism, and which has allowed thinkers to consider racialized and gendered difference not as logically necessary in capitalist society, but as part and parcel of a broader capitalist whole in which "contingent connections between different practices, ideological elements, social forces, and social groups are seen to be in a constant process of aggregation, assemblage, and change."[312] That said, in what follows I will argue that we must

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[311] Mau, *Mute Compulsion*, 168.

[312] Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 284. See also, for context, Sharad Chari, "Three Moments of Stuart Hall in South Africa: Postcolonial-Postsocialist Marxisms of the Future," *Critical Sociology* 43, no. 6 (2017): 831-845; Conroy, "Race, Capitalism, and the Necessity/Contingency Debate"; Michael Dawson and Emily Katzenstein, "Articulated Darkness: White Supremacy, Patriarchy, and Capitalism in Shelby's *Dark Ghettos*," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (2019): 252-268; Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Marcel Paret and Zachary Levenson, "Two Racial Capitalisms: Marxism, Domination, and Resistance in Cedric Robinson and Stuart Hall," *Antipode*, online first.

undertake a critical rereading of the received literature on articulation in order to make visible the *built environment as a modality of articulation*; and to make visible the role of the built environment as, to use the language of Stuart Hall, a critical "line of tendential force," which materializes and sutures the connection of elements that have no necessary belongingness within capitalist social formations over time.[313]

Indeed, in what follows I will argue that the built environment connects or links up patterns of race, gender, and capital that have no necessary relation, and that it renders their disarticulation more difficult as well. To develop these arguments, this chapter will proceed in several parts. I will begin by providing a broad and brief introduction to the concept of articulation, tracking its emergence and development in the work of Althusser in the 1960s; its reception by economic anthropologists in the context of the "modes of production debate" in the late 1960s and 1970s; and sketching its uptake and extension in the 1970s and 1980s (and beyond) by Stuart Hall—the most influential, insightful, and enduring theorist in the aforementioned articulationist tradition on ascriptive difference and capitalist society. Then, I will develop a highly sympathetic critique of Hall's theorization to make plain how exactly the built environment materializes and articulates capitalism's necessary relations and logically contingent forms of racialized and gendered difference—and to demonstrate how the materiality of the built environment functions to hold those relations together in time and space. Finally, I will then turn to the work of Nicos Poulantzas and his account of the capitalist state and state space. Via Poulantzas, I will engage the state's

[313] It is perhaps worth noting here that in referring to the "articulationist" school on ascriptive difference I am *not* referring to work that posits racism and sexism as *wholly autonomous* from capitalism, such that each of those systems can be addressed without at all effecting the others. See, for what I take to be an illustration of that position, Walter Benn Michaels and Adolph Reed Jr., *No Politics But Class Politics* (London: Eris, 2022).

relation to the built environment and its role in the spatial condensation and articulation of contingent forms of racialized and gendered difference in capitalist society.

Revisiting "articulation": from Althusser to Stuart Hall

The conceptual history of "articulation" can be told in several ways. In the opening pages of his recent overview, *Power of Articulation* (2023), Matti Kortesoja indicates as much indirectly. Therein, he moves swiftly from the concept's invocation in anatomy, to phonetics, to Saussure's notion of "articulated speech" ("*gegliederte Sprache*"), and well beyond, tracking its use across a range of disciplinary contexts and historical-geographical conjunctures.[314] In considering the articulation of capital and ascriptive difference, however, the most relevant place to start is surely with the work of Louis Althusser. After all, it was Althusser that first latched onto Marx's use of "*Gliederung*" (rooted in the German for limb, "*Glied*"); rendered it as "articulated whole" or "articulated combination"; and situated the concept at the center of his reading and explication of Marxist philosophy and critique of Hegelian dialectics. It is this usage that has come to structure the articulationist literature on the problem of ascriptive difference—not least Stuart Hall's enduring and highly influential account. If we want to make sense of—and go beyond—Hall's landmark theorization of the articulation of capital and logically contingent processes of ascriptive hierarchization, we would thus do well to begin by turning our attention to the development of the concept of articulation in the work of Althusser. We would do well to begin, more specifically, with Althusser's earliest uses of the term—and with texts like "On the Materialist Dialectic" (first published in 1963), "Marxism and Humanism" (first published in 1964), and *Reading Capital* (first published in 1965).[315]

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[314] Matti Kortesoja, *Power of Articulation: Imagery of Social Structure and Social Change* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 7.

[315] Althusser sketches his understanding of the intellectual and political context of this work in "Is it Simple to be a Marxist in Philosophy?," a key moment in *Essays in Self-Criticism* (London: New Left Books, 1976).

In "On the Materialist Dialectic," Althusser sets as his task the *theoretical expression* of the Marxist approach to dialectics, which had until that point only been resolved or expressed (he claimed) *in practice*.[316] And, in so doing, Althusser demonstrates that at the core of Marxist philosophy and its approach to dialectics is a set of concepts that emerged not from the inversion of Hegel's dialectic, but through the abandonment of that ideological problematic, and with the establishment of a "new, scientific" one.[317] Althusser insists that within Marxism there is no "essential, original process" or contradiction that structures the social whole, such that more complex processes are only "complications of it"—a notion with decidedly Hegelian roots. There are, rather, only "complex processes," which "are never anything but given complexities."[318] The social whole is always "a structured social whole" of many relatively autonomous parts, and "every 'simple category' presupposes the existence of the structured whole of society."[319] Even if Marxists invoke the image of Hegel's "original unity which develops within itself by virtue of its negativity" for the sake of simplicity, *true Marxist practice* rejects such a reading of the social whole.[320] "What Marxism refuses," according to Althusser, "is the (ideological) philosophical pretension to coincide exhaustively with a 'root origin.'"[321]

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[316] Althusser, *For Marx*, 180.

[317] Althusser, *For Marx*, 193. While it is not my concern here, "On the Materialist Dialectic" also contains a wide-ranging discussion of the production of scientific knowledge, or—in Althusser's own language—of the production of "scientific generality" out of "ideological generality."

[318] Althusser, *For Marx*, 195.

[319] Althusser, *For Marx*, 195-196.

[320] Althusser, *For Marx*, 197-198. The "true" Marxist practice of figures like Lenin is situated by Althusser in opposition to the political practice of many of the parties of the Second International, which were defined by their "mechanistic, economistic and evolutionist relationship to Marxist theory." See, for context, Louis Althusser, *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists & Other Essays* (London: Verso, 1990), 63.

Indeed, most crucially for our purposes, Althusser suggests in that 1963 text that what Marxism offers in the place of the Hegelian account of dialectics is the image of the ever-pregivenness of a complex whole that can *be articulated in manifold ways*; or, the image of a complexly structured and overdetermined social whole that is not defined by a single contradiction or structure—by "the 'womb' of the Hegelian dialectic"—but by many contradictions and structures, one of which is necessarily in dominance, and all of which are held together *through a process of articulation*.[322] It is in this discussion of the complexly structured whole—and in this theoretical reconstruction of the Marxist approach to dialectics—that Althusser first invokes the concept of articulation, noting that the "unity is not and cannot be the unity of a simple, original and universal essence"; and, moreover, "that the unity discussed by Marxism is *the unity of the complexity itself*, that the mode of organization and articulation of the complexity is precisely what constitutes its unity."[323] If difference is "alien" to the Hegelian totality, it is integral to Althusser's. Althusser's totality is a "'structure of structures' comprising a '*plurality* of instances' (composed of a multiplicity of distinct practices)," and it is held together through a process of articulation.[324]

And yet, if all of this is quite clear in "On the Materialist Dialectic," Althusser's engagement with the concept of articulation did not end there. As noted above, it continued in "Marxism and Humanism" the following year, which turns more directly to Marx's so-called epistemic break with "theoretical humanism," and "with every theory that based history and politics on an *essence of man*"

[321] Althusser, *For Marx*, 198.

[322] Althusser, *For Marx*, 199.

[323] Althusser, *For Marx*, 201-202, emphasis original.

[324] Elliot, *Althusser*, 135, emphasis original.

and the notion of abstract "*human nature*."[325] In that text, Althusser argues that Marx did not only break with theoretical humanism in his mature work, but that he "replaced the old postulates" of "empiricism/idealism of the subject, empiricism/idealism of the essence" with an "historico-dialectical materialism of *praxis*: that is, [with] a theory of the different specific *levels* of *human practice…in their characteristic articulations, based on the specific articulations of the unity of human society*."[326] Althusser suggests therein that the subject of history is radically rewritten in Marx's mature works such that the abstract "human subject" is replaced by an overdetermined totality that is complexly articulated and comprised of three distinct and relatively autonomous levels: the economic, the political, and the ideological. The concept of articulation appears as a constitutive dimension of Marx's founding of "the *science of history* of social formations."[327] Althusser insists that through this concept Marx breaks with humanism, inaugurating a new science that allows us to think history as a process without a subject.

And the concept of articulation is even further developed in *Reading Capital*, a collaborative project jointly authored by Althusser and his students, and published in 1965. Therein, Althusser specifically sets out to identify the presence of a philosophy in Marx's mature critique of political economy, "but absent from his discourse."[328] He develops a method of symptomatic (*symptomale*) reading—ostensibly the same method that Marx developed in his engagement with classical political economy—which reveals the *absent presence* of the "concept (and of all the sub-concepts) o*f the effectivity of a structure on its elements*" in Marx's mature work; and a "knowledge of the '*Gliederung'* (the

[325] Althusser, *For Marx*, 227, emphasis added.

[326] Althusser, *For Marx*, 229, emphasis added.

[327] See Louis Althusser, *Politics and History: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Marx* (London: New Left Books, 1972), 166, emphasis original.

[328] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 30.

articulated, hierarchized, systematic, combination)" that is capitalist society.[329] Althusser returns to the concept of articulation in that text by way of the notion of symptomatic reading, and suggests that it was central to Marx's own effort to produce the image of a social totality comprised of distinctive and relatively autonomous parts, including a structure in dominance.[330] He argues that articulation was central to Marx's effort to imagine a totality that is *both* overdetermined and determined in the last instance by the economic level, which provides "an absolute precondition for the necessity and intelligibility of the displacements of the structures in the hierarchy of effectivity."[331] Articulation provides, in *Reading Capital*, yet another means for rejecting Hegel's "*essential section*" (*coupe d'essence*) in which "all the elements of the whole" are discovered to be in "immediate relationship with one another."[332] And it provides a means for engaging the reciprocal interaction of each of the levels of the social whole, while remaining attentive to the problems of dominance and determinacy.

Still, if this much is largely established across Althusser's earlier writing on articulation, we should underscore that the concept seems to provide something else in *Reading Capital* too. Articulation is deployed in that context in order to suggest not only the articulation of relatively autonomous levels, but the *articulation of temporalities* as well—in order to think through the structured co-existence of distinctive "type[s] of *historical existence*."[333] Within *Reading Capital* Althusser not only rejects the image of Hegel's "essential section" and its expressivity, but he also rejects the

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[329] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 29 and 64, emphasis original.

[330] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 48.

[331] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 99.

[332] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 94, emphasis original.

[333] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 99, emphasis added; see also, for context, Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities* (Boston: Brill, 2013).

"homogenous and continuous ideological time" that it necessarily carries with it, offering—by contrast—a totality in which "different structural levels *of temporality* interfere, because of the peculiar relations of correspondence, non-correspondence, articulation, dislocation and torsion which obtain" between the instances.[334] For Althusser this does not mean that these differential histories are "*independent* of the whole."[335] They continue not only to be articulated together, but to maintain their relative autonomy as a result of "a certain articulation in the whole, and therefore [as a result of] a certain type of *dependence* with respect to the whole."[336] With that said, Althusser insists in *Reading Capital* that this articulation of distinctive rhythms and temporalities in a complex whole is not the articulation of "discontinuities in [a] continuity," or the articulation of temporalities that are departures from an *established* "base time."[337] Each temporality is a result of the whole, but each also remains a distinctive temporality nonetheless.

This broad line of argumentation regarding articulation was immediately influential. For scholars working in and on the peripheries of the capitalist world-system, in particular, it provided not only a break with the developmentalist image of linear temporality (presupposed in much modernization theory), but a new means of thinking unevenness, "survivals," and the notion of underdevelopment itself.[338] Of course, in the 1960s and 1970s there were a number of efforts to challenge the presuppositions of developmentalist thought, and many scholars did so with relatively little (if any) engagement with the Althusserian language of articulation. For the likes of Samir Amin,

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[334] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 108, emphasis added.

[335] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 100, emphasis original.

[336] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 100, emphasis original.

[337] Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 106.

[338] See Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital*, 105.

underdevelopment was not a form of historical delay, but rather the result of a distinctive kind of integration into the capitalist world economy—one defined "by [the] production of luxury goods and exports and the consequent lack of importance of internal mass markets."[339] For Andre Gunder Frank, underdevelopment was the result of the peculiar character of capitalism itself, constituted—as it ostensibly was and is—"by a uniform hierarchy of metropolis and satellite, expropriating and appropriating surplus upwards and outwards, nationally and internationally."[340] And for Jairus Banaji, so-called underdevelopment could not be understood in relation to the "linear succession" of distinctive modes of production, each defined by specific forms of exploitation, but rather grasped only in relation to the model of "*combined* development," wherein relations of production and forms of exploitation are combined together and structured by the laws of motion of the governing economic system.[341]

Nevertheless, for many others writing in this context, Althusser's language of articulation, as it is sketched above, provided an immediate resource for engaging the "problem" of underdevelopment itself. Drawing on Althusser's understanding of articulation, uneven development, and overdetermination, a cohort of economic anthropologists inaugurated in the late 1960s and 1970s what came to be known as the "modes of production debate," which revolved around a rejection of those very linear models of development intimated above, and which engaged the so-called "articulation of modes of production." Crucially, the "articulation of modes of

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[339] Samir Amin, "Accumulation and Development: A Theoretical Model," *Review of African Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1974): 9.

[340] Aidan Foster-Carter, "The Modes of Production Controversy," *New Left Review* 107, Jan/Feb (1978): 49.

[341] Banaji, *Theory as History*, 358, emphasis original. For a more extended discussion of this kind of thinking on unevenness and temporality outside of the Althusserian paradigm, see Harry Harootunian, *Marx after Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

production" does not—as a phrase—appear within the work of Althusser.[342] Althusser does underscore, in texts like "On Theoretical Work" (1967), that "abstract production, does not exist (Marx), but only this or that concrete-real conjunction-combination of *hierarchically structured modes of production in this or that determinate social formation*."[343] But he does not directly speak of "articulation" in this precise context. That said, in and through his writing on articulation—not least in and through those landmark texts sketched above—Althusser quite clearly provided an opening for this debate.

In its broadest register, Althusser's language of articulation enabled figures like Claude Meillassoux to make sweeping claims regarding capital's vested interest in the *maintenance* of "agricultural self-sustaining communities" within "underdeveloped countries."[344] It also enabled more pointed (and geographically specific) arguments as well, such as Harold Wolpe's claim that South African Apartheid represented an attempt to maintain (and transform) non-capitalist relations in a context "in which the conditions of reproduction…of that labour-force [were] rapidly disintegrating"[345]; as well as Ernesto Laclau's observations regarding the "substantial elements of feudalism" that persisted in Latin America "not [as] exogenous to capitalism, nor as pockets of decline, but as an intrinsic and structured part of a wider system."[346] Althusser's language of articulation—and his periodic assertion that social formations are a combination or condensation of

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[342] Foster-Carter, "The Modes of Production Controversy," 54.

[343] See Althusser, *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists & Other Essays*, 46, emphasis added.

[344] Claude Meillassoux, "From Reproduction to Production: A Marxist Approach to Economic Anthropology," in *The Articulation of Modes of Production: Essays from Economy and Society*, ed. Harold Wolpe (London: Routledge, 1980), 197.

[345] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap-Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," in *The Articulation of Modes of Production: Essays from Economy and Society*, ed. Harold Wolpe (London: Routledge, 1980), 296.

[346] Foster-Carter, "The Modes of Production Controversy," 50.

several distinct temporalities and modes of production—provided a means for a generation of economic anthropologists to further extend his understanding of difference and its persistence in the context of capitalist society.[347]

Of course, not all participants in the modes of production debate would break with the received teleologies of developmentalist thought, and full-throatedly embrace the language of difference offered by Althusser and his notion of articulation. Pierre-Philippe Rey, in his widely read and debated *Class Alliances* (1973), quite clearly remained wedded to a kind of mechanism and teleology, insofar as he posited three discrete "stages of articulation" that defined the relationship between capitalism and pre-capitalist modes of production, and which ultimately culminated—in his account—in the "total disappearance of the precapitalist mode" (even if that stage was almost "nowhere evident" except in the United States at his time of writing).[348] For most participants in this debate, however, Althusser did indeed come to facilitate a mode of *thinking in and through difference*—a rejection of not only Hegelian historicism and humanism, but of all kinds of reductionism and mechanism. And, most importantly for our purposes, it is in precisely this context that Stuart Hall entered the fray—not only as a reader of Althusser, but of Althusserianism broadly, and of the debates it provoked on uneven development, difference, and the articulation and combination of temporalities and modes of production in the 1960s and 1970s.[349]

Indeed, Hall's most influential and widely read engagement with the relationship between capitalism and ascriptive difference—published in 1980 as "Race, Articulation, and Societies

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[347] See also, Vicente Montenegro, "Stuart Hall and the Introduction of Althusser in Cultural Studies: A Thinker of Difference," *Theory, Culture & Society*, online first.

[348] Foster-Carter, "The Modes of Production Controversy," 56; see also, Pierre-Philippe Rey, "Class Alliances," *International Journal of Sociology* 12, no. 2 (1982): 52.

[349] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 2*, 250.

Structured in Dominance"—came by way of a direct engagement with Althusser, this broader Althusserian moment, and the concept of articulation that it offered. In that text, Hall turns explicitly to the language of articulation not only to pursue a counter-reductionist Marxism, but—more precisely—to thread the needle between economistic accounts of racism, which "command all differences and specificities within the framework of a simplifying economic logic"; and pluralistic accounts, which "lack an adequate theorization, and which in the end are descriptive rather than analytic."[350] What Hall ultimately comes to endorse—setting the stage for subsequent articulationist writing on this theme—is not only allied with Althusser, but with some of the more sophisticated Althusserian approaches to the modes of production debate as well. After surveying the work of a litany of scholars—including many of those named above—Hall suggests that "the emergent theory of the 'articulation of different modes of production'…deliver[s] certain pertinent theoretical effects for an analysis of racism at the social, political, and ideological levels. It begins to deliver such effects—and this is the crucial point—not by deserting the level of analysis of economic relations (i.e., mode of production) but by posing it in its correct, necessarily complex, form."[351]

Hall insists that through "articulation" we are able to thread the needle between economism and pluralism, and to suggest that while race is a logically contingent phenomenon in capitalist society that is variously articulated within and across distinctive capitalist social formations, the material conditions of society effectively determine "the mode of combination and the placing of each instance in an articulated relation to the other elements."[352] Racism has no "universal structure"—no transhistorical belongingness within capitalist society.[353] And yet, it is not entirely

[350] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 176.

[351] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 193.

[352] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 198.

unmoored from the relations of production either. Insofar as it is present, race mediates each level of the social totality, but precisely how it will do so cannot be known *a priori*, beyond the fact that the material conditions of society will play a determining role in its effectivity. Because racism "is not necessary to the concrete functioning of all capitalisms"—because it is logically contingent—it must be "shown how and why racism has been specifically overdetermined by and articulated with certain capitalisms at different stages of their development."[354] We must probe precisely how race sorts "economic agents at the level of economic practices, and [mediates] the class struggles which result from it"; how it is constituted through and structuring of the "means of political representation…as political forces in the 'theatre of politics'"; and how it structures the articulation of the working class "as the collective and individual 'subjects' of emergent ideologies"—among many other things.[355]

Throughout his corpus, Hall is relatively consistent in this approach to race and racism, and in this approach to the problem of the articulation of capital and difference more broadly. Despite the insistence of some scholars to the contrary, throughout his oeuvre Hall maintains a clear commitment to the aforementioned relationship between determination and articulation. In "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism Without Guarantees" (1986), he underscores that "the economic aspect of capitalist production processes has real limiting and constraining effects (i.e., determinacy)" on the social totality, "setting the limits" within which potential articulations can be made, even if it does not guarantee correspondence across all of the levels of the social whole or the "one-way transmission of effects from base upwards."[356] And, moreover, in work that both preempted and

[353] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 211.

[354] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 213.

[355] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 215-216. This argument is repeated, almost verbatim, in Hall's co-authored *Policing the Crisis* as well.

[356] Stuart Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 155.

followed the publication of his essay on "societies structured in dominance"—like 1978's jointly authored *Policing the Crisis*, 1981's "The Whites of Their Eyes," and even 2000's "The Multicultural Question"—Hall continues to frame racism as an articulated set of social practices embedded *within this* "*net of [material] constraints*," which is itself a site for the overdetermined reproduction of race and racism as well.[357] He continues to suggest that racism assumes a range of appearances—including its "overt," "inferential," biological, and culturalist forms—across the levels of the social totality[358]; and he also maintains that racism has its own effectivity that is determined by "material production and its relations."[359]

In developing this highly Althusserian account of the relationship between capital and ascriptive difference, Hall does not endorse every single aspect of Althusserianism, nor even every aspect of the Althusserian approach to articulation. While he largely accepts Althusser's method of symptomatic reading, he cautions against the temptation to mobilize such a method "like a theoretical guillotine," cutting off any concept or indeterminacy that "stray[s] from [the] appointed path," finding only what we set out to find.[360] And while Hall largely agrees with the results of Althusser's symptomatic reading of Marx—finding in texts like *The Class Struggles in France* (1850) and *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (1852) the beginnings of a rejection of the notion that the "contradictions in the 'base'" unfold in a unilinear way, producing corresponding effects in the "superstructures"—he offers a more modest account of Marx's so-called epistemic "break."[361] He identifies an expressive

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[357] Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism*, 155, emphasis added.

[358] See Stuart Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 102 and 105; see also, Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 2*, 112.

[359] Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism*, 67.

[360] Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism*, 94.

[361] Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism*, 67-68.

totality in texts like *The German Ideology* (1846) and a "differentiated unity" in Marx's more mature work, but he cautions against the "severe and finalist manner" of Althusser's periodization.[362]

Even more significantly for our purposes, however, is the fact that Hall also tends to push back against Althusser's "silences" as they pertain to "the development of conscious struggle and organization."[363] He draws on Althusser's own concept of relative autonomy to make the case for the active capacity of social subjects to disarticulate prevailing social formations, or to disarticulate concepts from within certain chains of resonance and to insert them into other kinds of ideological discourse so as to facilitate or hinder the development of the economic "base."[364] Hall rejects the notion that people are merely "supports for class relations."[365] And he demonstrates that hegemony is not given but is rather always produced and complexly articulated, "weld[ing] together" distinctive class fractions and multiply articulated populations along the axes of race, gender, and "status symbolization."[366] In Hall's hands, ideology is a critical dimension of this process of articulation, functioning as a kind of "cement" that itself must be secured out of a contested and complexly articulated discursive domain—a "differentiated terrain" comprised of multiple "discursive currents."[367] And, moreover, Hall insists that the distinctive convergences of race, gender, and capital that are held together by this "cement" are always potentially open to re-articulation by way of social struggle.

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[362] Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism*, 94.

[363] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 64.

[364] Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism*, 121, 131, and 228.

[365] Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism*, 100.

[366] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 38; see also, Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, 152.

[367] Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, 320.

Lines of tendential force

Thus far, this chapter has taken several discrete steps. After recalling the enduring debate surrounding the relationship between capital and ascriptive difference, it suggested the usefulness of the language of articulation in our effort to make sense of the presence and persistence of logically contingent patterns of racialization and gendered hierarchization in capitalist society. It turned to Stuart Hall's distinctive approach to the problem of the articulation of capital and difference—and his reading of both Althusser and the modes of production controversy—suggesting that it represents a particularly fertile and highly influential theorization in the present context. Indeed, my contention, if it is not already entirely clear, is that Hall's account—while generally focused on the problem of race and racialization—represents perhaps *the* most critical effort to theorize the articulation of racialized *and* gendered difference in capitalist society, insofar as it allows us to demonstrate: (1) the relative autonomy of those phenomena and their structuring force across all levels or instances of the social totality; (2) their determination *in the last instance* by "material production and its relations," relations that are themselves profoundly shaped by patterns of racialized and gendered hierarchization[368]; and (3) the potentiality for race and gender to be re-articulated in relation to the complex topography of the social whole, and remade into new forms of racism and sexism over time. While gender is hardly one of the primary considerations in Hall's writing on the problem of articulation, my contention is that Hall's analysis speaks to a range of forms of ascriptive difference and hierarchization, not least gendered differentiation as well.

And yet, as clarifying as this account might be as a means of describing the contingent association of capital and ascriptive difference within capitalist society, it seems to me that more than a few open questions remain in light of this theorization. With Hall's landmark account in view,

[368] Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism*, 67.

what is unclear is no longer whether race, gender, and capital are contingently related—*they certainly are*; nor whether these phenomena might combine and condense in a number of contingent ways, producing conjuncturally specific mediations—*they certainly can*.[369] Rather, what remains unclear is *how* and *why particular articulations and combinations* of capital and ascriptive difference emerge, in the first instance; and, moreover, the structural determinations and parameters that constrain the articulation of capital and difference over time and space as well (beyond the elusive invocation of economic determinacy in the last instance). Put differently, if it is in fact the case that capital is only contingently related to racialized and gendered ascription and differentiation—and that there are no transhistorical articulations, but only conjunctural racisms and sexisms in combination with capital's invariant structures and its "logical" or "abstract" core[370]—we are still left to contemplate several of those critical questions that we raised at the start of this chapter: how is capital connected, in the first instance, to these logically contingent forms of ascriptive difference? How do specific connections or articulations come to be made, unmade, and remade anew over time? And, finally, how might we explain the enduring character of certain articulations across both time and space?

Here we would do well to recall that Hall *does* provide a kind of theoretical *opening*—if not a theorized response—to this set of questions across nearly all of his work on articulation. After all, in nearly all of his writing in an Althusserian mode, Hall is at pains to emphasize that "historical connexions"—or "*the terrain of past articulations*"—"are peculiarly resistant to change and transformation," thereby shaping the nature of subsequent articulations and combinations in

[369] See, for a sense of this articulationist tradition, Chari, "Three Moments of Stuart Hall in South Africa"; Conroy, "Race, Capitalism, and the Necessity/Contingency Debate"; Dawson and Katzenstein, "Articulated Darkness"; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Paret and Levenson, "Two Racial Capitalisms."

[370] See, for context, Beverley Best, "Wages for Housework Redux: Social Reproduction and the Utopian Dialectic of the Value-Form," *Theory & Event* 24, no. 4 (2021): 896-921.

capitalist society.[371] In a relation not dissimilar to the relation that persists between the economic base and the other levels of the social totality—that is, in its relation of "modal determinacy"—Hall consistently notes that historical "traces" set the limits within which present and future articulations of all sorts are made.[372] He even develops a specific vocabulary to describe this dynamic, in and through his notions of "lines of tendential force" and "magnetic lines of tendency."[373] Across some of his most widely read texts, Hall argues that "lines of tendential force" or "magnetic lines of tendency" structure the parameters, set the limits, or define the "*givenness* of the historical terrain," thereby ensuring that specific articulations—which are not "inevitable, necessary or fixed forever"—are more favorable and available than others.[374] These historical lines of tendency "define the horizon of possibilities" in the present and the future, shaping how open it is to new combinations and articulations, and how closed it is as well.[375] As Hall puts it in one of his strongest formulations, certain lines of tendential force embed specific articulations so deeply that it would be almost "idiotic to think" that one could fully "detach" them.[376]

Again, this notion of historical lines of tendential force is an opening, not a response, to the questions posed above. It enables us to underscore that while certain articulations—not least certain

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[371] Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, 102, emphasis added.

[372] See, for context, Hall's "Marx's Notes on Method: A 'Reading' of the '1857 Introduction'" and "Rethinking the 'Base and Superstructure' Metaphor," both featured in *Selected Writings on Marxism.*

[373] See, on this theme, John Clarke, "Stuart Hall and the Theory and Practice of Articulation," *Discourse* 36, no. 2 (2015): 275-286 and Jennifer Daryl Slack, "The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996), 112-127.

[374] Hall, *Selected Writings on Marxism*, 153, emphasis original.

[375] Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, 307.

[376] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 236.

logically contingent articulations of race, gender, and capital—are not necessary nor inevitable, they are also far from "free-floating."[377] Race and gender are not "potentially articulatable with anything" within capitalist society, precisely because of how they have been inserted and embedded in the social formation historically.[378] As Hall puts it, following both Engels and Lenin on the political foundations of capitalist society, these forms of difference have become "*sedimented and solidified*" in their articulations "by real historical development over time."[379] But with that said, we still do not know very much about these lines of tendential force, nor do we have a precise sense of how articulation takes place in the first instance. We know that lines of tendential force hold articulated relations together over time (at least to a certain extent). That phrase provides us with language for describing the enduring reproduction of race, gender, and capital's constituent dynamics. But we have not actually cracked open the black box of articulation, to theorize how and why articulated relations like race, gender, and capital come together in the first instance. And, with this in view, my contention is that we would do well to consider the built environment itself as *a modality or mechanism of articulation and line of tendential force* that brings together capital's necessary dynamics and ascriptive modes of hierarchization over time and space.

In saying as much, I am not simply recasting the arguments of otherwise highly compelling work in socio-spatial theory on articulation and the production of space, such as Thomas Cowan's recent contention that the agrarian/urban nexus represents a site of compromise, contestation, subsumption, and articulation.[380] Rather, I am suggesting that the built environment is itself central

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[377] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 236.

[378] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 240.

[379] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 203, emphasis added.

[380] Thomas Cowan, "Urbanization Without Guarantees: Articulation, Rentier Capitalism and Occupancy on the Agrarian Urban Frontier," *Urban Geography*, online first.

to the articulation of capital's necessary dynamics and logically contingent forms of racialized and gendered difference in the two senses in which Hall uses that term: (1) it "brings forth" or expresses certain relations or combinations that otherwise would not exist—or which would only exist in some radically different form; and (2) it connects patterns of racism and sexism to capital's necessary features, despite the fact that these relations have no inevitable permanence.[381] Going further, I am also suggesting that the materiality and fixity of the built environment ensures that it operates as a critical line of tendential force that structures the continuity of contingent articulations of race, gender, and capital; renders their disarticulation more difficult over time; and shapes the limits or parameters within which future articulations of those phenomena are made, as well as the "speed and direction" of those re-articulations themselves.[382] The material fixity of the built environment literally establishes the "lay of the land"—to deploy a useful turn of phrase which Hall only metaphorically invokes—or the historical "grooves" that constrain the re-articulation of capital's necessary features and logically contingent forms of ascriptive difference.[383]

To substantiate these claims, we must first recall the central arguments of chapter two: (1) that the built environment is integral to the reproduction of capital at the highest level of abstraction, and represents the presupposition and result of struggles over capitalism's *constituent* foreground and background abodes; and (2) that the remaking of the built environment *appears at the same time* as the periodic and recurrent reorganization of capital's *requisite* and normatively differentiated abodes, mediating (dialectically interrelated) crises of both overproduction and socio-ecological underproduction. In other words, we would do well to recall that the built environment in

[381] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 234-235.

[382] Slack and Wise quoted in Clarke, "Stuart Hall and the Theory and Practice of Articulation," 280.

[383] Hall, *Essential Essays, Vol. 1*, 236.

capitalist contexts is "a 'net of uneven mesh' in and through which the spatial practices…of capitalist [accumulation] are stretched."[384] This mesh is made through and necessarily presupposes not only the domination of abstract labor, "objectified as value"[385]—or the "immaterial but objective, historically emerging social compulsion that comes to function in capitalist society like a force of gravity"[386]; but via spaces and forms of concrete domination and socio-ecological theft as well. The capitalist spatial matrix is not only produced by and productive of "wage imbalances," but unevenly intercalated with spaces of non-commodification to enable the relative disequilibrium of the value form and its value relations.[387] The built environment is the presupposition and result of capital's *necessary* forms of waged and unwaged (and/or under-capitalized) work.

Indeed, with this foundational theorization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's necessary features in mind, several crucial claims—regarding the articulation of capital and difference—become clear. We can now quite confidently say that even while capitalist built environments have often historically presupposed and produced spaces of unwaged *racialized and gendered* expropriation, and—correspondingly—intermeshed and overlapping spaces of relatively *non-racialized and non-gendered* waged work, there is no necessary relation to that association. The necessary spatialization of capitalism's constituent abodes in and through the built environment "implies a particular division" of labor in space, but it "says nothing [inherently] about which groups in society will actually perform those functions" and emerge in and through those

[384] Brenner, *New Urban Spaces*, 70.

[385] Elson, "The Value Theory of Labour," 174.

[386] Best, "Wages for Housework Redux," 899.

[387] Bernes, "Logistics, Counterlogistics and the Communist Prospect," 195.

spaces.[388] And, going further still, insofar as we have rejected the notion that specific populations have an "ontologized" position vis-à-vis "global value relations," we can now also see that while the re-spatialization of the capitalist built environment and the crisis-induced restructuring of capitalist space are coterminous with the reorganization and re-spatialization of capital's *necessary foreground and background abodes*, the contingent identities of those that come to be associated with those abodes (and their forms of work) in the face of reorganization are not logically preordained.[389] New rounds of accumulation entail new spatializations of production and reproduction.[390] But the social identities of those assigned to perform specific kinds of work, located in specific places across the capitalist built environment, are not logically predetermined.[391]

And yet, this is not all. To substantiate our claim that the built environment operates as a mechanism or modality of articulation, we must also recall an additional insight that has informed several generations of scholarship within critical socio-spatial theory, but which has remained irrelevant for our purposes thus far, given our interest in abstract-theoretical relations to this point.

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[388] Doreen Massey, "Uneven Development: Social Change and Spatial Divisions of Labor," in *Reading Economic Geography*, eds. Trevor J. Barnes, Jamie Peck, Eric Sheppard, and Adam Tickell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 113.

[389] See Sarika Chandra and Chris Chen, "Remapping the Race/Class Problematic," in *Totality Inside Out: Rethinking Crisis and Conflict Under Capital*, eds. Kevin Floyd, Jen Hedler Phillis, and Sarika Chandra (New York: Fordham University Press, 2022), 156-157.

[390] See Faranak Miraftab, "Faraway Intimate Development: Global Restructuring of Social Reproduction," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 31, no. 4 (2011): 399; see also, for further context, Liz Bondi and Damaris Rose, "Constructing Gender, Constructing the Urban: A Review of Anglo-American Feminist Urban Geography," *Gender, Place & Culture* 10, no. 3 (2003): 229-245; Genevieve Lebaron, "The Political Economy of the Household: Neoliberal Restructuring, Enclosures, and Daily Life," *Review of International Political Economy* 17, no. 5 (2010): 889-912; Ann Markusen, "City Spatial Structure, Women's Household Work, and National Urban Policy," *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): 22-44; Linda McDowell, "Towards an Understanding of the Gender Division of Urban Space," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 1, no. 1 (1983): 59-72.

[391] See also, Mau, *Mute Compulsion*, 162.

We must recall that *in concrete conjunctures* the built environment is not simply the presupposition and result of capital's constitutive or necessary dynamics, but that it is actively implicated in the production and reproduction of *contingent forms of ascriptive differentiation* too. In fact, we must underscore that in *concrete conjunctures* the built environment typically gives shape to capital's necessary dynamics *as well as* contingent forms of ascriptive difference *at one and the same moment.* In making this claim, I am drawing on the longstanding observation within critical socio-spatial theory that within specific historical settings (and thus not at the highest level of conceptual abstraction) "[u]rban form and process and locational differences within [and between] cities *actively construct* gender [and race] as well as other social relations," and are not simply the site of their pre-formed appearance.[392] Spaces are not only retrospectively associated with certain forms of identity—though that does occur.[393] Rather, certain built environments—and certain established socio-spatial forms like "the ghetto," "the plantation," "the kitchen," "the suburb," and "the colony"—participate in the iterative construction of categories of identity like race and gender too. Those categories of identity are much more than spatially produced. Nevertheless, how an individual or a group occupies and relates to "a particular space and time" informs how that individual or group comes to be differentiated and ascribed, much as "being in the 'wrong' place or time can [] challenge [] roles themselves."[394]

In other words, categories of ascriptive differentiation like race and gender are the *result* of socio-spatial forms. And once this is clear—and this claim is positioned alongside our broad conceptualization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constituent features—the built environment's status as a modality of articulation becomes quite plain. After all,

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[392] Bondi and Rose, "Constructing Gender, Constructing the Urban," 232, emphasis added.

[393] Loïc Wacquant, *Bourdieu in the City: Challenging Urban Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2022), 164.

[394] Sayer, *Realism and Social Science*, 116.

we now know (1) that logically contingent ascriptive identities like race and gender are produced and reproduced spatially within capitalist society; and (2) that so too are the constitutive dynamics of capitalist society, like capitalism's value form and those processes that define it. These are not two distinctive moments in the reproduction of capitalist life, but concurrent ones. We do not at one moment reproduce our ascriptive identities in and through the built environment and at another the constituent features of capitalist society. Rather, we iteratively live our ascriptive identities in and through the built environment, and we also *simultaneously* live capitalism's constituent features. These processes are produced at one and the same moment, and are *thus articulated together via the built environment*. Certain spaces are not only implicated in the production and reproduction of categories of difference, but they are "always already" constituted by and productive of forms of work that define capitalist society at a high level of abstraction. While "the colony," for example, gives shape to the meaning and significance of race in a particular context, it is also always already constituted by and productive of particular forms of exploitation and expropriation. And "the colony" is thus itself a medium or mechanism through which race is produced and—*at one and the same moment*—articulated to certain necessary features of capitalism. The built environment that constitutes the colony as a socio-spatial form articulates an overdetermined form of race to particular constitutive aspects of capitalist reproduction.

In making the case for the built environment as the mechanism, medium, or modality through which contingent patterns of race and gender are articulated in capitalist society, my language is distinct, but there is much established work to support this claim. Consider, for reference, Linda McDowell's classic work on the gendered division of urban space in Britain. As she notes in that context, "the division of urban space *both reflects and influences* the sexual division of labour, women's role in the family, and the separation of home life from work that developed in the period of capitalist industrialisation. *Gender divisions are made concrete and further strengthened* by land-use

policies that[, for example,] segregate 'nonconforming' uses."[395] In that work the "division of urban space" is not productive of gendered hierarchies in one moment and of capital's constituent division between productive and reproductive work in another. Rather, it makes gender *via* "the separation of home life from work that developed in the period of capitalist industrialisation," even if gender is also made through other means as well. And, crucially, we glean the same insight from classic work on race and racialization in American urban sociology, albeit in a different idiom. Loïc Wacquant, for example, writes that "the ghetto" is—much like other socio-spatial forms—a "'*race making' institution*[], which is to say that [it does] not simply process an ethnoracial division that would somehow exist outside of and independently from [it]. Rather, [it] *produces (or co-produces) this division (anew)* out of inherited demarcations and disparities of group power and inscribes it…in a distinctive constellation of material and symbolic forms."[396] The ghetto, per Wacquant, does not produce race in a void, but "in a distinctive constellation" of forms of work, which includes those forms of work that define capital at a high level of abstraction.

What these references help to demonstrate is that in concrete contexts the built environment is centrally implicated in the construction of hierarchized social identities and, in precisely the same moment, *in connecting those identities to forms of work and capital's constituent features.* The built environment does not, therefore, "only" play a role in the production of race and gender. It plays a role in the production of those categories of difference and, in practice, in their simultaneous articulation to particular constituent features of capitalist life. And, going further, the built environment is also *reciprocally implicated* in the production of what come to be understood as racialized and gendered

[395] McDowell, "Towards an Understanding of the Gender Division of Urban Space," 62, emphasis added.

[396] Loïc Wacquant, "Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh," *Punishment & Society* 3, no. 1 (2001): 116-117, emphasis added.

patterns of social behavior; and *reciprocally implicated* in the production of group differentiated ideologies and narrative structures regarding the "dynamic material limits to the possibility of [social] change."[397] This final insight is captured in both mainstream and heterodox traditions of socio-spatial thought, in work ranging from William Julius Wilson's writing on ghettoization and the production of the norms that prevail amongst the "new urban poor"[398]; to Ruth Wilson Gilmore's enigmatic invocation of the "infrastructures of feeling" that materially ground or "underlie[] our capacity to…select and reselect liberatory lineages."[399] Categories of difference—and their relation to capital's abstract or constituent features—are produced not only through the built environment at precisely the same moment in practice, but so too are our forms of life, social behaviors, and (utopian) political imaginaries.

The necessary aspects of capitalist society are concretized through the built environment, and so too are logically contingent patterns of ascriptive hierarchization. The built environment is "always already" implicated in how categories of difference are positioned vis-à-vis *all* aspects of capitalist life, and to the reproduction of capitalism's constituent features.[400] Those categories of difference do not exist outside of their spatialized expression and connection to capital's necessary relations. And the built environment is, in these terms, a modality of articulation. The production of space appears as a critical factor—if not the only one—in determining how identities and social groups are *linked* to the economic, political, and ideological dimensions of capitalist society—to

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[397] Gilmore, *Abolition Geography*, 489.

[398] See William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

[399] Gilmore, *Abolition Geography*, 490.

[400] See Chibber, *The Class Matrix*, 174.

"social location and life chances."[401] "Habitus"—as Bourdieu would have it—is spatially structured, such that groups in different places have different "patterned practices, representations, and emotions…at ground level."[402] And so too is the relationship between distinctive populations—categorized by, among other things, race and gender—and all aspects of the capitalist totality. The built environment does not linearly determine the meaning and significance of categories of identity like race and gender, nor is it the only means through which those categories are made and remade. The built environment is not the only modality of articulation. And yet, race and gender are often only conceivable with reference to their enactment in space, and in their enactment, they are always already articulated to capitalist society's constituent relations.

Still, if the capitalist built environment is indeed among the "field of forces and dynamics that produce and follow from the linkage between body and social location," we have one more point to underscore in this section.[403] Thus far we have established that the built environment functions as a modality of articulation, linking certain categories of difference and (logically contingent) patterns of racialized and gendered hierarchization to specific necessary relations within the capitalist social totality. We have also argued that the inherent crisis dynamics of capital periodically induce the reorganization of the built environment and the geography of commodification and non-commodification. It follows that the relationship between capital's foreground and background shifts "over time and space, as does the social construction" and spatialization of "gender and patriarchal domination" and race and racist brutality. "[T]he particular form of these [racialized and gendered] divisions and [their] consequences for social relations…are

[401] Taylor quoted in Chandra and Chen, "Remapping the Race/Class Problematic," 145.

[402] Wacquant, *Bourdieu in the City*, 167.

[403] Taylor quoted in Chandra and Chen, "Remapping the Race/Class Problematic," 145.

neither inevitable nor constant'"[404]; they are re-made in and through the remaking of the built environment, and re-articulated vis-à-vis the social totality and the wage nexus in the process. And now we must emphasize that the built environment itself acts as a key line of tendential force in structuring how *subsequent* articulations of capital and logically contingent patterns of ascriptive difference are made. We must recall that the built environment shapes the parameters within which subsequent articulations occur.

Indeed, my final contention (in this section) is that while the meaning and significance of race and gender will almost certainly be remade with the crisis-induced reorganization of the built environment, the *embedded materiality of the extant built environment* effectively ensures that the re-articulation of race, gender, and the necessary features of capitalist society will take place within a fairly circumscribed *spectrum of possibility*; that it will take place within a spectrum of possible combinations—as Balibar might have it—and not in a totally open field, providing a certain degree of continuity to the reproduction of the complexly structured social formation over time.[405] "The organization of space tends to reproduce its principle lines of force."[406] What this means is not simply that the distribution of human settlement has some continuity over time, but that the relationship between particular populations, particular physical and social spaces, and the spatialization of capitalist society's constituent dynamics is relatively continuous too. "Space as a form…is not phantasmagoric."[407] The complex and contingent features of any capitalist society manifest spatially; geographical space always registers the *social formation* or "the mode of production

[404] McDowell, "Towards an Understanding of the Gender Division of Urban Space," 62.

[405] Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 40.

[406] Santos, *For a New Geography*, 98.

[407] Santos, *For a New Geography*, 112.

in its *concrete coming into being*."[408] Once this materialization has occurred, produced space operates as a "dynamic inertia" that shapes future historical-geographical evolution.[409]

In saying as much, I am emphasizing—if only indirectly—the well-established claim within radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory that the development of capitalist space takes place through a process of layering and re-layering. Capitalist "regions occupy unique positions within wider divisions of labor, their political cultures and class, [race,] and gender profiles reflecting *(in 'sedimented' form) the cumulative effects of the succession of historical roles* that those places ha[ve] played in different production networks…and 'rounds of accumulation.'"[410] And I am suggesting that these historically "sedimented" profiles constitute an "objective constraint" on the remaking of the relationship between capitalist society's constituent dynamics and logically contingent forms of ascriptive difference in particular.[411] "The sobering reality," as Ann Markusen notes, is that the place of race and gender in the social whole is "literally constructed in brick and concrete."[412] The articulation of these forms of difference in the whole presupposes "the material ordering of social space."[413] And as such, while the relation between race, gender, and capital's hidden abodes—and, indeed, the socio-spatial totality in general—can be remade in the face of crises of both over- and

[408] Santos, *For a New Geography*, 104, emphasis added.

[409] Santos, *For a New Geography*, 103.

[410] Jamie Peck, "Uneven Regional Development," University of British Columbia, accessed March 15, 2024, https://blogs.ubc.ca/peck/files/2015/02/Uneven-regional-development.pdf, emphasis added; see also, Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour*, 114.

[411] Lipietz quoted in Soja, "The Spatiality of Social Life," 98.

[412] Markusen, "City Spatial Structure, Women's Household Work, and National Urban Policy," 36.

[413] Nikhil Pal Singh, "Black Marxism and the Antimonies of Racial Capitalism," in *After Marx: Literature, Theory, and Value in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Colleen Lye and Christopher Nealon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 36.

underproduction, what comes before in space establishes the parameters and potentialities for what will be made next.

My intention here is not to provide an extensive illustration of how this dynamic functions empirically. Still, we might recall—if only to concretize this claim somewhat—that the shifting spatialities of capitalist reproduction and the reweaving of the built environment in and beyond the United States in the 1970s not only partially dislodged the articulation of racialization, expropriation, and industrial superexploitation; but, moreover, that it re-articulated and solidified the relationship between black racialization, specifically, and another constituent dynamic of the capitalist system: expulsion, wagelessness, and devalorization. Global deindustrialization and the emergence of the so-called "long-downturn"—to say nothing of the logistics revolution and the suburbanization of employment—meant, in the United States, that "the vast majority of uneducated blacks [were consigned] to economic redundancy."[414] And, crucially for our purposes, the *inherited socio-spatial structure of the ghetto*, broadly speaking, played a profoundly significant constraining role in this dynamic of re-articulation, operating as a "key structural factor[]"—in the language of Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton—"responsible for the perpetuation [and reorganization] of black poverty" in that context.[415] "The ghetto" gave way to the "hyperghetto" in this moment of transformation, which produced a new expression of "race." And the physical, social, and "organizational structures" of the hyperghetto were not simply made "in accordance with the law of value," but made from the geographical conditions of the previous society.[416] While a new form of

[414] Wacquant, "Deadly Symbiosis," 105; see also, Bernes, "Logistics, Counterlogistics and the Communist Prospect."

[415] Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 9; see also, Wilson, *When Work Disappears.*

[416] Cf. Harvey, *Limits to Capital*, 373.

race was produced with the remaking of the built environment in this transitional moment, it was one profoundly shaped by the existing urban fabric.

If the built environment has functioned as a critical means of constructing, articulating, and constraining the nature of ascriptive difference in the context of US capitalist society—determining the relation between ascriptive identity and, *inter alia*, "residential and school segregation, mortgage and insurance redlining, taxation and transportation policies, [and] the location of environmental amenities" and ills—this dynamic is hardly observable in that context alone.[417] Daniel Nemser's *Infrastructures of Race* (2017) is relevant here, if only to once again provide an abbreviated illustration of the theorization above, beyond the US context. Tracking what he refers to as a "genealogy of concentration," Nemser demonstrates that the spatial techniques and material infrastructures of colonial governance in sixteenth century Mexico produced the racialized category of "the Indian" within a "grid of intelligibility."[418] These spatial practices and forms rendered distinctive races as "thinkable," articulating them to specific "machineries of extraction and accumulation," processes of Christian "salvation," and forms of tribute at the moment of their construction.[419] As Nemser notes, the early colonial state worked to centralize and concentrate indigenous communities into "orderly towns" organized "along a regular, orthogonal grid."[420] And between roughly the "founding of Vasco de Quiroga's 'hospital-towns' in the early 1530s and…the official prohibition of the labor

[417] George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 5.

[418] Daniel Nemser, *Infrastructures of Race: Concentration and Biopolitics in Colonial Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 2.

[419] Nemser, *Infrastructures of Race*, 3, 5, 31, and 35.

[420] Nemser, *Infrastructures of Race*, 20-21.

draft known as *repartimiento* in 1632," these infrastructures effectively made the category of "the Indian" in the process.[421]

In fact, Nemser underscores two additional points, which are critical to the present argument. First, he notes that the remaking and articulation of gender was also profoundly implicated in this history. The "reterritorialization" of indigenous people not only produced the paradoxically "deterritorialized" notion of "the Indian," but new spatially specific forms of gender too, which were "embedded in the architectonic structure."[422] Second, Nemser notes that these infrastructures of race and gender established the parameters for future articulations of those forms of difference, given that infrastructures "tend[] to cohere around the accretions that precede [them]," and which weigh "like a nightmare on the circulation of the present."[423] In other words, Nemser effectively demonstrates through his genealogy of concentration how the capitalist spatial matrix functions outside of the US context as (1) a modality of articulation that mediates the condensation of capital's necessary features and logically contingent patterns of ascriptive difference; and (2) how it operates as a line of tendential force that structures and constrains how patterns of difference are re-articulated as well.

There are antecedents to the line of argumentation that I am developing here, in both the theoretical literature traced above, and beyond it. To provide just one example, we might note that Althusser himself, in his late work on the *Philosophy of the Encounter* (posthumously published in English in 2006), develops a conception of historical geography which rejects any notion of the directionality of history, while also emphasizing—following Lucretius's materialism—that once a

[421] Nemser, *Infrastructures of Race*, 27, emphasis original.

[422] Nemser, *Infrastructures of Race*, 40 and 58.

[423] Nemser, *Infrastructures of Race*, 19-20.

"world is born" out of the "pile-up and collision-interlocking" of elements, *what comes next is "determined…by the structure of the encounter.*"[424] Althusser suggests in that late intervention that even if there is no rationale for any originary combination of contingent elements—or even if there is "no law [that] presides over the encounter in which things take hold"—what follows will always be "subject to rules and obey[] laws," while being simultaneously open to contestation and change.[425] There is much to recommend in such an account, suggesting—as it does—a relatively sophisticated approach to the problem of path-dependency that does not budge on the original question of history's movement. Althusser is here interested in developing an account of something like the historical endurance of "contingent necessities"—so central, incidentally, to Bob Jessop's early critique of Althusserianism and its received language of determinacy—"whose own necessity originates only in and through the contingent coming together of…causal chains in a definite context."[426]

With that said, my specific theorization of the built environment's role as a modality of articulation and line of tendential force remains decidedly different from this late Althusserianism, and rather more specific still. Not only is my assertion that "[t]he construction of the system of spatialities" that defines the capitalist spatial matrix "a prime means to articulate power systems" that might only be contingently related or aleatorily combined.[427] But, moreover, that possible racisms and sexisms—as contingently articulated phenomena in capitalist society—are circumscribed by how

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[424] Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter*, 191, emphasis added.

[425] Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter*, 194-195.

[426] Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting Capitalist States in their Place* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 11.

[427] Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 249.

certain subjects and ascriptive groups have been geographically produced by and positioned in the built environment during previous rounds of accumulation as well. My claim is not simply that the past persists, "depositing in every present its residual traces."[428] It is that the capitalist spatial matrix is "a produced space that does *more* than represent. It guides."[429] And this is thus also not simply a reformulation of the notion of "duality of structure," or another means of suggesting that "'the structural properties of social systems'…'are both medium and outcome of [the reproduction of] the practices that constitute those systems,'" and that this dynamic takes place in space.[430] It is a necessary prerequisite for a spatial reading of Marx's own contention in the *Grundrisse* that it is *out of the ruins* of the articulated "structure [Gliederung] and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations" *that later social formations emerge.*[431]

Indeed, my argument is that racialization and gendered hierarchization are articulated to capitalist society's necessary dimensions via the built environment. They are enacted in space; they are "historical and specific" and—more importantly in the present context—"*cumulative and territorially distinct*."[432] And, as such, when the built environment is remade—and capital's "gender-blind" and "race-blind" foreground and background abodes are recast in relation to market mediation and the wage nexus[433]—capital does not find these ascriptive relations simply "available as

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[428] Harootunian, *Marx After Marx*, 17.

[429] Don Mitchell, "New Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Paying Attention to Political Economy and Social Justice," in *Political Economies of Landscape Change*, eds. James Wescoat Jr. and Douglas Johnston (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 44, emphasis original.

[430] Giddens quoted in Pred, "Social Reproduction and the Time-Geography of Everyday Life," 8.

[431] Marx quoted in Kortesoja, *Power of Articulation*, 46.

[432] Gilmore, *Abolition Geography*, 115, emphasis added.

historical raw material to leverage in [any] opportunistic way."[434] Instead, it encounters forms of ascription that were made through their relation to sedimented spaces, and formed in relation to a previously structured social formation. Race and gender are not posited by, or the result of, capitalism's foreground and background abodes, but remade through their re-spatialization. At times, racism and gendered hierarchization might enable the valorization of value and strengthen the power of capital. At other times they might "crimp[] economic development."[435] And yet, what is certain in all cases is that how their re-articulation takes place will be structured by the cumulative layering and re-layering of capitalist life.

Nicos Poulantzas, the built environment, and state space

To this point, this chapter has made two moves. First, I established the conceptual history of "articulation," sketching its movement from Althusser to Hall, and underscoring its usefulness in the context of contemporary debates on the relationship between capital and ascriptive difference. Second, I developed a sympathetic critique of Hall's highly influential and enduring account of the articulation of capital and ascriptive hierarchization, highlighting the role of the built environment as a modality of articulation and line of tendential force. Now, I will engage the problem of the capitalist state to demonstrate how it is implicated in the spatial condensation and articulation of capital's constituent dynamics and contingent forms of racialized and gendered difference. To engage this final problematic, I will return to the sociologist and state theorist Nicos Poulantzas and his account of the capitalist state and state space.

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[433] See, for context, Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: A Debate on Class and Patriarchy*, ed. Lydia Sargent (London: Pluto, 1981); see also, Mau, *Mute Compulsion*, ch. 7.

[434] Best, "Wages for Housework Redux," 906.

[435] Loïc Wacquant, "Resolving the Trouble with 'Race,'" *New Left Review* 133/134, Jan/Apr (2022): 82.

Poulantzas's engagement with the capitalist state begins from the claim that it is not simply an exterior object of class power, wielded by the dominant class as an appendage of control. The capitalist state is, rather, *the material condensation of a relationship of forces*—of class struggle itself—such that the "conflictual unity of the alliance in power and the unstable equilibrium of compromise among its components" is quite literally "inscribed" in the "institutional materiality" of the state.[436] Indeed, putting the same point in a slightly different register, Poulantzas begins from the claim that the capitalist state does not sit "outside" of class struggle, but is "delimited" by the relations of production and by patterns of class struggle, and present "in the constitution and reproduction of the relations of production" themselves.[437] Class struggles "go beyond" the apparatuses of the state, to be sure.[438] Nevertheless, they condense in the form of the state as well, giving it a degree of "relative autonomy" vis-à-vis any single class or class fraction. The state's relative autonomy is guaranteed by the fact that it is not "a simple tool or instrument of the dominant class."[439]

With this foundational set of claims in view, Poulantzas goes on to make several additional and closely linked arguments. He notes that the capitalist state plays a critical role in establishing the leadership or hegemony of "one class or fraction" within a larger hegemonic bloc, and he notes that this relation of dominance is constituted in highly complex ways *across* the institutional apparatuses and branches of the state itself.[440] As he puts it, "[e]ach state branch or apparatus and each of its respective sections and levels…frequently constitutes the power-base and favoured representative of

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[436] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 126-127.

[437] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 17 and 25

[438] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 45.

[439] Nicos Poultantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London: New Left Books, 1978), 256.

[440] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 127.

a particular fraction of the bloc, or of a conflictual alliance of several fractions opposed to certain others."[441] The state is defined by "diverse, contradictory measures" given that "each of these classes and fractions" is embedded in distinctive and often rival institutions and apparatuses, and enabled to pursue its own agenda.[442] And Poulantzas also demonstrates that the capitalist state is always part and parcel of a broader, and unevenly developed, imperial chain. He emphasizes that precisely how a state is constituted depends not only on the condensation of class relations and class struggle in its institutional apparatuses. It depends, more broadly, on its place in an international system of states. States in general are not acted on from the outside in this account. Instead, external forces maintain influence "*by way of their internalization*," or through their articulation with internal transformations within national social formations.[443]

Indeed, upon reading Poulantzas's account we are left with three core observations regarding the capitalist state: (1) that "[t]he state is not an instrumental entity existing for itself, it is not a thing, but the condensation of a balance of forces"; (2) that the state maintains its relative autonomy due to the fact that it organizes "hegemony with respect to the social formation as a whole," and due to the fact that it unevenly institutionalizes contested class interests across its apparatuses[444]; and, (3) that the materialization and uneven institutionalization of class struggle within the apparatuses of state power is not simply determined within the territorial borders of the nation, but rather in the context of a "domestic field already structured by inter-imperialist" and multiscalar "contradictions."[445]

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[441] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 133.

[442] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 135.

[443] Nicos Poulantzas, *The Crisis of the Dictatorships: Portugal, Greece, Spain* (London: New Left Books, 1976), 22, emphasis added.

[444] Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, 98.

[445] Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, 75.

These are the most basic aspects of Poulantzas's theorization of the capitalist state. And yet, what is most significant in Poulantzas's theorization *for our purposes* is not simply how he conceives of the state and its relation to class forces. Rather, it is how he *extends* these basic insights to conceive of the state's materiality and durability over time, and its role in the reproduction of society at large. What is most significant for our purposes is his understanding of the capacity of the capitalist state to not only preserve itself and its own internal relations over time, but to preserve and maintain the broader set of articulated social relations that constitute it as well. In his account, the state functions as a line of tendential force in the reproduction of capitalist society as a whole. This idea is present throughout his work in at least two registers.

First, it is present in his oft repeated invocation of the "specific materiality of the state," which—for Poulantzas—ensures the state's relative continuity over time and ensures that the capitalist state "exhibits an opacity and *resistance of its own.*"[446] In several key texts, Poulantzas notes that "[t]he relations that characterize the state power also pervade the structure of its apparatus," such that the transformation of state power cannot simply take place through the replacement of state personnel or even neatly through transformations in the balance of forces in society at large.[447] While "change in the class relationship of forces always affects the State," Poulantzas insists that such changes do "not find expression in the State *in a direct and immediate fashion*."[448] In order to truly transform the state—and thus, to truly transform society given their reciprocal relation—it is necessary to pursue a radical transformation of the state's apparatuses as well.[449] In one of his

[446] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 130, emphasis added.

[447] Poulantzas, *The Crisis of the Dictatorships*, 92.

[448] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 130, emphasis added.

[449] See, for more detail on the "inertia" of the state's economic apparatus, Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 195.

clearest expressions of this idea of the state's specific materiality in *State, Power, Socialism* (1978), Poulantzas notes that "not only is a shift in the relationship of forces within the State insufficient to alter that materiality, but [that] the relationship itself can crystallize in the State only to the extent that the apparatuses of the latter undergo transformation."[450] The materiality of the state ensures its durability and continuity; and, most crucially, this allows the state to function as a line of tendential force that sets the limits within which class struggle and social life are played out at large. Transformations in the prevailing articulated relations that constitute the social formation will affect the state, but given its specific materiality or durability, these effects will be indirect, limiting the transformation of society itself.

This is, again, only one of the ways in which Poulantzas raises the specter of the state's continuity and of the state's own role as a line of tendential force in capitalist society. The second way he does so is in and through his reading of the spatial and temporal matrices of capitalist life that are, in his account, both the presupposition and result of the capitalist state and the division of labor under capitalism.[451] Largely developed, once again, in *State, Power, Socialism*, this notion of spatio-temporal matrices is initially introduced by Poulantzas to suggest that shifting "representations of space-time" over the *longue durée* are not simply lodged in the "ideological-cultural domain," but are rooted in a "*real substratum*" of materiality.[452] And yet, in developing this argument, Poulantzas demonstrates—quite significantly for our purposes—that capitalist space and time are distinctive from "their counterparts in previous modes of production," and that these

[450] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 260.

[451] Here I should emphasize that I use the phrase "the spatial matrix" to refer to the built environment throughout this dissertation. My usage is thus distinct from, albeit inspired by, Poulantzas's usage of that phrase.

[452] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 98, emphasis original.

changes—these distinctive forms of temporality and spatiality—are written into the land, while also "bring[ing] into being the modern nation and the nation State" itself.[453] What we ultimately come to learn is that these matrices are not produced by the relations of production or the social formation in a dynamic of mechanical causality, but are "implied by" those relations, appearing at the very same moment as their constitution. These matrices provide the "material framework of the given State, structuring the modalities in which its power is exercised," while also being "established through" the state and its "networks of domination and power."[454] These spatial and temporal matrices are not only imbricated in the production of the state itself; they are the result of the prevailing articulation of class struggle and state power as well.

In Poulantzas's hands, the precise nature of the spatio-temporal matrices that define capitalist society and the capitalist state are quite opaque. We learn from his account that the spatial matrix is "*serial, fractured, parcelled, cellular and irreversible*," and that the temporal matrix is, correspondingly, "*segmented, serial, equally divided, cumulative and irreversible*."[455] What exactly that means is far from clear. What is nonetheless quite plain from his account is that these matrices enable the "remarkable endurance and resistance of the modern nation" insofar as they give it spatial "roots."[456] The spatio-temporal matrices that are both presupposition and result of the modern state provide a kind of materiality, durability, and continuity for the state itself, such that it is not simply recast and remade by the transformation of state personnel. These matrices also ensure that the state plays an enduring structuring role in the reproduction and relative continuity of capitalist society at large. It is

[453] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 97.

[454] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 99.

[455] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 103 and 110, emphasis original.

[456] Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 120.

through state space that capitalist society becomes materialized in the "external world" or "fixed on material supports."[457]

It is in relation to this argument—and in relation to what Poulantzas has to say about the continuity of the capitalist state and its role as a line of tendential force in capitalist society more broadly—that we can turn back to our question at hand: to the role of the capitalist state in the spatialized articulation and reproduction of capitalist society's necessary dynamics and contingent forms of racialization and gendered hierarchization. To put my final argument directly, my contention is that with Poulantzas's broad account of the nature of the capitalist state and its socio-spatial constitution and continuity in view, we can make several key arguments regarding articulation, the built environment, and the state: (1) the capitalist state is shaped by and shaping of all kinds of relations and struggles within capitalist society, including struggles around capitalist society's necessary and logically contingent dimensions; (2) the capitalist state maintains a particular durability which informs the reproduction and continuity of capitalist society in general, not least as a result of its "specific materiality" and spatial constitution; (3) the capitalist state informs the production of, and is spatialized through, the fixity of the built environment; and (4) the capitalist state, given its materialization in and through the built environment, is central to the spatialized articulation of race, gender, and capital, and to their enduring articulation over time.

In making these arguments I am drawing, to a certain extent, on the claim of neo-Lefebvrian scholarship that the extended urban fabric is "not simply a product of state spatial strategies, but serves as an important infrastructural scaffolding, medium, and expression of state power…as it is unevenly extended across the entire planet."[458] I am recalling that states not only deploy the

[457] Cf. Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 278.

[458] Brenner, *New Urban Spaces*, 76.

"privileged instrument of the production of space" as they wield their power, but that they are bound to space and take shape spatially as well.[459] State power is not only spatialized through the provisioning of infrastructure and the regulation of the built environment, but insofar as the state "facilitate[es] or hinder[s]" accumulation in certain places "via income support, taxation laws of inheritance, and policies toward labor, firms, and housing…via schooling, certification, and the allocation of cultural amenities."[460] And I am extending that claim—via Poulantzas—to argue that the state is not only materialized in and through the built environment, but to underscore that it shapes the contested materialization and spatialization of capitalist society's necessary relations, as well as their relation to contingent forms of ascriptive differentiation like race and gender, in the process. The built environment is central to the state's own role in articulating race, gender, and capital, and in maintaining their endurance over time.

Indeed, even if there is no necessary relation between the capitalist state and patterns of racialized and gendered hierarchization, the capitalist state can nonetheless *become* a "racial state" or a "gendered state."[461] The capitalist state emerges through the determinations of capital, which are, as Norbert Guterman and Henri Lefebvre would have it, "at once abstract and terribly concrete."[462] It emerges through a range of struggles—not least struggles over the prevailing articulation and spatialization of social and ecological work across capitalism's foreground and background abodes, and the profitability of capitalist reproduction. And given its spatialization in and through the built environment, the capitalist state is also often a factor in the spatial articulation of logically contingent

[459] Christian Schmid, *Henri Lefebvre and the Theory of the Production of Space* (London: Verso, 2022), 464.

[460] Wacquant, *Bourdieu in the City*, 164.

[461] See, for context, Alberto Toscano, *Late Fascism* (New York: Verso, 2023), 66.

[462] Guterman and Lefebvre quoted in Toscano, *Late Fascism*, 91.

patterns of racialization, gendered hierarchization, and capitalist society's necessary forms of compulsion. It *structures and constrains* race and gender's continued pertinence (even in nominally colorblind and gender-blind contexts) over time, due in part to the materiality of its apparatuses and their sedimentation in and through space.[463]

The state is thus not an unchanging container within which social activity unfolds, but a spatially polymorphic and multiscalar structure that is periodically remade both on its borders and within the parameters of its territorial jurisdiction as it "coordinate[s] state policies among diverse locations and scales" and guides socio-spatial processes and political economic life.[464] The principle contradiction mediating the spatialization of state power is likely capital's necessary tendency toward over- and underproduction across its normatively differentiated abodes. That said, it is also undoubtedly the case that the spatialization of the capitalist state is profoundly structured by and structuring of logically contingent struggles over racialization and gendered hierarchization, facilitating their articulation within the socio-spatial totality and sedimenting and solidifying their place vis-à-vis capital's constituent relations over time and space. Indeed, against a whole range of potential and competing theoretical approaches to the state—from those that would attempt to logically derive the capitalist state form from the internal and abstract logics of the capital relation, to those which consider ascriptive difference primarily in relation to the imagined and corporeal reproduction of the so-called Volksnation, and well beyond[465]—here I have developed an account of the capitalist state that makes several distinctive claims. I have insisted that the capitalist state is not

[463] Toscano, *Late Fascism*, 66.

[464] Brenner, *New State Spaces*, 92.

[465] See, for context, John Holloway and Sol Picciotto, *State and Capital: A Marxist Debate* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978); Bob Jessop, *The State: Past, Present, Future* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 156.

merely a container of social action nor an institution of ideological coercion and physical repression, but the condensation of class relations and "extra-economic" phenomena and interests; that the capitalist state is spatialized in and through the built environment; and, finally, that the capitalist state is thus central to the spatial articulation of race, gender, and capital and their reproduction and continuity over time.

We are here quite far from a whole host of received conceptualizations of the capitalist state, and from those which prevail in *both* mainstream and critical accounts. The state is quite clearly not conceived, as Hegel might have it, as the "actuality of the ethical Idea," or as "the power of reason actualizing itself as will."[466] Nor is it understood as an instrument of the ruling class, a mechanism of repression and coercion, or as a source of demand for militaristic "instruments of death."[467] In the approach outlined above, the integration of the political parties of the proletariat into the structures and apparatuses of the bourgeois state is not a "mediating moment" in the progression toward the "organic integration" of the working class into "the programmed development of capitalist society."[468] Nor is the state simply a human community that has secured "the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* within a certain territory."[469] Rather, the capitalist state is a condensation of forces, and centrally implicated in the spatialized articulation of capital and ascriptive difference given its reciprocal emergence with the built environment. It is by way of the capitalist state that logically contingent expressions of race, gender, and capital are articulated.

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[466] Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, 155 and 279.

[467] See, for context, Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, 440; Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1980), 4.

[468] Tronti, *Workers and Capital*, 50.

[469] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 310-311, emphasis original.

Conclusion

This chapter has taken up a very specific relation to the concept of articulation. While some scholars writing in the wake of Althusser have suggested that "[t]he social is articulation insofar as 'society' is impossible"—that articulation is a necessary feature of capitalist society precisely because "there is *no identity* which can be fully constituted"—I have argued something rather different.[470] I have suggested that capitalist society is constituted by both necessary and contingent elements, with race and gender falling squarely into the latter category. And I have insisted that in order to properly grasp how the articulation and reproduction of these necessary and contingent elements takes place, we must attend to the built environment. In the language of this dissertation, we must attend to the role of the capitalist spatial matrix—intermeshed with and produced through the capitalist state—in mediating the combination and condensation of these relations, and in shaping how the putatively "raw materials [of] prior interpellations" are remade in the context of subsequent historical epochs and rounds of capitalist accumulation.[471] In this chapter I have thus taken a first step beyond the account of the built environment provided in chapter two, which focused on the built environment's role in reproducing capital at the highest level of conceptual abstraction via the concept of "crisis." I have attended to the built environment's role in the reproduction of capitalist society's *necessary and contingent* parts, with a particular emphasis on its role in the reproduction of racialized and gendered forms of hierarchization in that context.

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[470] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001), 111 and 114, emphasis added.

[471] Cf. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, 179.

Interpellation

In this final chapter of Part I, I will fill what remains a lacuna in my theorization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society. I will consider how the production of subjectivity and agency fits into the story told thus far; or, how the capitalist spatial matrix is implicated in the production of historically contingent and differentiated forms of subjectivity and the making of the uneven capacity for social action in capitalist contexts. After all, I have thus far insisted that capitalist society is comprised of both foreground and background relations—and of both logically necessary and logically contingent parts—which are subject to periodic re-spatialization, re-articulation, and re-combination in and through the remaking of the built environment. We might thus reasonably wonder how exactly that process of transformation and social struggle takes place, and how the capacity for involvement in it is constituted in the first instance. We might wonder how subjectivity and agency are both constituted and constrained. And in this chapter, I will not only attempt to provide an answer to that question, partial as it will necessarily be. But I will also insist that to properly grasp the production of subjectivity and the constitution of agency in capitalist contexts, we must turn once again to the built environment. We must turn squarely to the capitalist spatial matrix's place in the production of historically contingent forms of subjectification and in the constitution of differentiated forms of agency.

There are few questions more vexing in social-theoretical analysis than the one implied above. In a sense, I have set for myself the task of engaging a particular manifestation of the structure/agency problematic. Posing a version of this longstanding question in the present might appear as passé. We are now, after all, some sixty years on from the infamous invitation of Jacques Derrida to reject the dream of "full presence" and the ontotheology of "man and humanism"[472]; or,

[472] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 292; see also, Jacques Derrida, "The Ends of Man," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30, no. 1 (1969): 42.

if you like, from Foucault's contemporaneous suggestion that subjectivities are not given but thoroughly produced by the operations of an "automatic and anonymous power," which penetrates all levels of the social whole as a "permanent and continuous field."[473] Indeed, not only are we well beyond those infamous "postmodern" provocations, which sparked so much debate on the nature and constitution of subjectivity and agency in their time, but we have long since litigated the debates inaugurated by a generation of readers of that work as well. We are well beyond, for example, Judith Butler's contested rejection of the metaphysics of substance in the 1990s, and their additional elaboration that all *doings* are implicated in the performative reproduction of matrices of power, if also—potentially—moments of "displacement" which might swerve from the expectations of regulated repetition.[474] A skeptical reader might reasonably suggest that the question that concerns me here—regarding the role of the capitalist spatial matrix in the constitution and constraint of differentiated forms of subjectivity and agency—has been asked and engaged before, in sophisticated ways.

My contention in response to such skepticism regarding the relevance of this question in the present is, however, that when subjectivity and agency are considered in a spatial register—when we consider the problem of the spatial presuppositions of subjectification in capitalist society—the extant literature within political and social theory and radical geography remains surprisingly unhelpful. Of course, there *is* a spatial dimension to some of the canonical accounts of structure, agency, and transformation, not least to those accounts that defined the latter half of the twentieth century, and to much of the work that it inspired in its wake. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975) Foucault

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[473] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 176-177; see also, Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume One: An Introduction* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[474] See, for context, Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 33 and 40.

famously suggests that the disciplinary methods so central to the modern "micro-physics" of power operate on a spatio-temporal basis. They proceed, he argued, "from the distribution of individuals in space" (and situate the subject in a geographical "field of visibility"), and are articulated through the control of time on both an everyday basis and at the level of the social body in general.[475] And Judith Butler adopts a similarly spatial gesture in their engagement with the aforementioned problematic at times as well. In the concluding pages of *Gender Trouble* (1990) we come to learn that displacement-by-way-of-repetition always involves the "taking up of the tools *where they lie*, where the very [act of] 'taking up' is enabled by the tool lying there."[476] Butler effectively situates the specter of space at the center of their conceptualization of agency, even if space and spatiality are rarely engaged directly.

These provocations are, however, quite far from addressing our concerns in the present context. They hardly provide a sense of how the built environment is implicated in the production and constraint of differentiated forms of capitalist subjectivity and agency, and in shaping struggles to remake capitalist society tout court. And insofar as the problematic of subjectification and agency has entered into radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory, specifically, progress on these questions remains not only limited, but—again—relatively unhelpful considering my agenda here. In fact, if there is an often-latent or underbaked spatial dimension to some of the most infamous engagements with the problem of structure, agency, and subjectification of the last several decades (gestured to above), within that *self-consciously socio-spatial domain*, efforts have focused on simply advancing two relatively straightforward theses. The first is the claim that not only bodily movement and comportment, but consciousness itself is constituted in and through space-time trajectories that entail a "repeated dialectical interplay between [subjects'] corporeal actions and [their] mental

[475] See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 141 and 202.

[476] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 185, emphasis added.

activities," or, "between what [they] physically [do in space and time] and what [they are] able to know and think."[477] In other words, one strand of this discourse takes up the thesis that socio-spatial forms are profoundly implicated in not only the production of bodily movements and dispositions, but in "the constitution, or development, and expression of consciousness" as well.[478]

The second thesis that has defined critical socio-spatial theory's engagement with the spatiality of the so-called structure/agency problematic underscores that the influences that shape such individual and collective forms of subjectification, consciousness, and political practice *in situ* are themselves spatially distributed and often quite difficult to circumscribe. For these scholars what is of interest is not the socio-spatial constitution of (what Georg Simmel once referred to as) "psychic life," and its reproduction in place. It is, rather, the additional observation that the dynamics that constitute subjects are themselves spatially diffuse and open to remaking and recombination. The analysis of those spatially diffuse structures varies depending on the author in question, as do the political or normative implications of this observation. There are nearly innumerable accounts of the complex forces and spatialities that constitute everyday life and the process of subjectification. There are also nearly innumerable accounts of how the actions of subjects—necessarily pursued *in situ*—might contribute to the transformation of the social whole in light of this multiscalar and networked process of subjectification. For some, this diffuse spatiality demands nothing less than "*collective totalization*" to allow for a "globally coordinated social consciousness" comprised of situated individuals and social groups. For others, it might only

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[477] Pred, "Social Reproduction and the Time-Geography of Everyday Life," 11.

[478] Pred, "Social Reproduction and the Time-Geography of Everyday Life," 12; see also, for context, David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: Volume 1, Introduction* (New York: Verso, 1991); and Georg Simmel's classic 1903 essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life," available in Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

demand "the more or less successful temporary management of *partial complexes*."[479] What remains broadly true, however, is that critical socio-spatial theory has overwhelmingly concerned itself with tracking these spatially diffuse forces as they both constitute and constrain subjectivity and agency.[480]

To be clear, these received insights—regarding both the spatiality of consciousness and the spatially diffuse forces that produce and constrain subjectivity *in situ*—are well taken. Indeed, they are developed in some of the most compelling work that critical socio-spatial theory has produced.[481] In the former category, we might situate Henri Lefebvre's classic work in the *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume I* (first published in French in 1947 and translated into English in 1991), insofar as it turns directly to the socio-spatial forms that structure the emergence of alienated consciousness in the context of capitalist society. As Lefebvre argues in that text, the unilinear march toward "progress" has brought with it immense human sacrifice—and "man" has, as a result, been "torn…*from his consciousness*, dragged down and dehumanized by his own social products."[482] Capitalist development and its attendant socio-spatial forms have—according to Lefebvre's unabashed humanism in that text—left human subjectivity "mystified, hoodwinked, annihilated, confused," splitting us from

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[479] István Mészáros, "Dialectical Transformations: Teleology, History and Social Consciousness," *Science & Society* 62, no. 3 (1998): 430-432, emphasis original.

[480] This insight was central to the development of urban political ecology as a disciplinary sub-field. See, for context, Matthew Gandy, "Cyborg Urbanization: Complexity and Monstrosity in the Contemporary City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, no. 1 (2005): 26-49 and Donna Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016). It continues to occupy a central place in that literature (and beyond), as exemplified by texts like Luis Andueza, Archie Davis, Alex Loftus, and Hannah Schling, "The Body as Infrastructure," *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 4, no. 3 (2021): 799-817 and Gediminas Lesutis and Maria Kaika, "Infrastructured Bodies: Between Violence and Fugitivity," *Progress in Human Geography*, online first.

[481] For further discussion, see Derek Gregory, "Suspended Animation: The Stasis of Diffusion Theory," in *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, eds. Derek Gregory and John Urry (London: Macmillan Press, 1985), 296-297.

[482] Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 180, emphasis added.

ourselves, and shaping how we make sense of and imagine the world.[483] And in David Harvey's landmark essay "The Body as an Accumulation Strategy" (1998), we find a clear manifestation of the latter thesis outlined above as well. As Harvey states in that text, "the body is not a closed and sealed entity, but a relational 'thing' that is created, bounded, sustained, and ultimately dissolved in a *spatiotemporal flux of multiple processes.*"[484] In capitalist society subjects and bodies are made and remade by socio-spatial forces that far exceed their control. They are forged through the crucible of *value*, which is an historically specific compulsive force that is "measured through [the] exchange of commodities over space and time and ultimately *on the world market.*"[485]

There is, again, much to recommend in these accounts of the relationship between space and subjectification. And yet, for my purposes, what plagues them is precisely what plagues the more general literature on subjectification and agency in political and social theory: these accounts are simply not very helpful in engaging the problematic at hand. Not only are the specificities of my own conceptualization of the capitalist spatial matrix as a mediating force in the reproduction of capitalist society absent from this work (quite understandably); but so too is any discernable emphasis on how the capitalist built environment structures the production of differentiated forms of capitalist subjectivity and ongoing struggles to remake both capitalist society's necessary and contingent relations. Capitalist society appears as neither an institutionalized social order in this work, nor as a complexly structured totality of necessary and contingent parts. And, going further still, across the above-referenced accounts we have a relatively weak sense of how agency is spatially constrained and of how it is even conceivable in the first instance. We lack an account of the

[483] Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 183.

[484] David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 98, emphasis added.

[485] Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, 108, emphasis added.

spatiality of subjectification within capitalist society, as it is understood here, and of how the built environment structures and constrains capitalist society's remaking.

To engage these problems, this chapter will proceed in several parts, with particular interest in how the work of Louis Althusser and Frantz Fanon might help us to navigate this terrain. First, it will turn to a reading of both Althusser and Fanon in order to tease out how space figures into their respective accounts of interpellation, and to demonstrate why they are of service in our efforts. Then, it will turn to the question of agency. It will engage Fanon's reworking of Sartre and Hegel to demonstrate not only how subjects come to be differently constituted in and through the built environment in capitalist contexts, but to make sense of how they pursue social struggle, in the first instance. More directly put, in what follows I will first develop a reading of the role of the capitalist built environment in the interpellation of differentiated subjectivities via Althusser and Fanon. Then I will develop a reading of Fanon's Sartrean and Hegelian inheritance, which I will deploy to make sense of the endurance of political agency and socio-spatial change in capitalist contexts.

Spaces of interpellation: Althusser and Fanon

As suggested above, a central aim of this chapter is to establish the role of the built environment in the constitution and constraint of differentiated forms of capitalist subjectivity, with the account developed in the preceding chapters in view. And, in that context, it is my contention that we would do well to begin by turning to the concept of interpellation as it is developed in the work of both Althusser and Fanon. Starting from Althusser is quite a natural choice. He is the single figure most readily associated with the concept of interpellation, and its subsequent uptake in materialist accounts of subjectification. Althusser develops his understanding of interpellation—albeit in an elliptical and abbreviated form—in his widely read article "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." That text was first published in French in 1970. It was extracted from a longer manuscript that came to be posthumously published as *Sur la*

reproduction, and it was written in the midst of what Balibar refers to as Althusser's post-1968 effort to develop a "'general theory' of ideologies."[486] And in it, Althusser introduces the notion of interpellation as part of a larger investigation into the reproduction of the relations of production. Interpellation emerges in that text as central to his effort to make sense of how capitalist reproduction takes place through the everyday actions of both workers and bosses alike—and through their active participation in an iterative process of institutionally-mediated subjectification.[487]

There is a certain complexity—even ambiguity—to Althusser's account in that text. He argues that capitalist reproduction is primarily "secured" in and through the "exercise of state power," and in and through what he refers to as both Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses, more specifically.[488] The former are those institutions of the state that operate by violence, such as "the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc."[489] The latter are often putatively private (even if this distinction is itself a product of state power), and include churches, schools, political parties, trade unions, the media, and much more. What is most critical for our purposes, however, is that in developing this argument, Althusser insists that these latter apparatuses operate not by violence but through something resembling "consent," even if that term "is conspicuously absent from the essay and from Althusser's work in general." Althusser suggests, in other words, that the reproduction of the relations of production occurs in capitalist contexts largely, if not exclusively, through

[486] Étienne Balibar, "Althusser's Dramaturgy and the Critique of Ideology," *Differences* 26, no. 3 (2015): 4. On the context and history of Althusser's essay, see Jacques Bidet's introduction ("An Invitation to Reread Althusser") to *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*.

[487] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 236.

[488] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 247.

[489] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 243.

institutionally-mediated forms of "servitude" and everyday practice that appear as "*freely chosen*."[490] Capitalist reproduction, or the reproduction of the relations of production, enlists the ideological state apparatuses, which operate via the ostensibly freely chosen actions of subjects.

With this broad conceptualization of reproduction in view, Althusser offers two additional and closely linked theses. The first is that the ideological state apparatuses—these apparatuses that are so central to "securing" the reproduction of the relations of production—give "material existence" to ideology as such. The ideas of any given subject are *always already* "material in that [an individual's] *ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject.*"[491] The second is that "all ideology hails or interpellates" subjects; that concrete individuals are "*always already* subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition."[492] To put these points differently, Althusser crucially goes on to suggest—from his broad claim regarding the role of "freely chosen" practice in the reproduction of the relations of production—that ideologies are always given a material existence (or that they presuppose a materiality) insofar as subjects live (and constitute) their ideologies in and through material practices. Their ideas and material practices are circumscribed by and constituted through the material existence of ideological apparatuses themselves. And, moreover, he notes that there is no temporal succession of events such that a preexisting concrete individual can be said to be subjected to an ideology from without, precisely

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[490] Warren Montag, "'The Soul is the Prison of the Body': Althusser and Foucault, 1970-1975," *Yale French Studies* 88 (1995): 61, emphasis added.

[491] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 260, emphasis original.

[492] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 263, emphasis original. On the relationship between "interpellation" and "hailing"—and the problems posed by the introduction of the latter term into Althusser's text by his English translator—see Warren Montag's "Althusser's Empty Signifier: What is the Meaning of the Word 'Interpellation,'" *Mediations* 30, no. 2 (2017): 65-70.

because all concrete individuals are always already in the midst of a conjuncture, and always already subject to various forms of ideological interpellation.

Indeed, from Althusser's broad conceptualization of the reproduction of the relations of production, he offers two theses that are not simply central to a materialist account of ideology, but to a materialist theory of the constitution of subjectivity in capitalist society. We come to learn that both the subject and the institutional apparatuses implicated in the reproduction of capitalist society are the *expressions of ideology*; that they are not the material manifestation of a preexisting immaterial ideology, but the existence of ideology in its "actualized state." Much as Spinoza's "God can only be an immanent cause whose will and intentions exist solely in an actualized state," so too is ideology always already materialized in the form of both institutions and concrete individuals.[493] And, going further still, we come to learn that subjects and subjectivity have no existence at all outside of ideological interpellation—"no 'anarchic' freedom" existing in a "void," as Balibar has put it, nor any preexisting existence that might be conceived of as before or beyond interpellation.[494] Given that "we think with and in our bodies, there is, strictly speaking no place for subjectivity in the modern sense" in Althusser's account.[495] There is no available distinction between body and mind—materiality and ideology—and as a result subjects are always already materially reproducing their interpellation. They enact their interpellation in a macro-sociological form as institutional apparatuses, and in a micro-sociological form in and through the dynamics of everyday life.

In fact, not only does Althusser provide a materialist account of subjectification with these claims, but he quite clearly provides a distinctively *spatial understanding* of interpellation and

[493] Montag, "'The Soul is the Prison of the Body,'" 63.

[494] Balibar, "Althusser's Dramaturgy and the Critique of Ideology," 14.

[495] Montag, "'The Soul is the Prison of the Body,'" 69.

subjectification too. In the extended text from which Althusser's 1970 essay was extracted, for example, he emphasizes that "the subject acts insofar as he is acted by the following system (set out in the order of its real determination): ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices regulated by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material acts of a subject acting in all good conscience in accordance with his belief."[496] It is a complex formulation, but what is beyond doubt is that each invocation of "material" might also be restated as "spatial" while remaining faithful to Althusser's argument. In other words, Althusser quite plainly suggests throughout his account of interpellation that "the subject acts insofar as he is acted by the following system (set out in the order of its real determination): ideology existing in a [spatialized] ideological apparatus, prescribing [spatialized] practices regulated by a [spatialized] ritual, which practices exist in the [spatialized] acts of a subject acting in all good conscience in accordance with his belief." As Elspeth Probyn affirms, "Althusser's account of ideology compels us to consider" not only "the material contexts which allow and delimit our individual and collective performance of selves"[497]; but, moreover, the historically and geographically specific ways in which interpellation takes place. He demonstrates the "basic idea that subjectivities are not abstract entities," but are produced and enacted in *material contexts* and "*in situ*."[498]

As Althusser clarifies, this does not mean that geographical context *determines* our actions. Such spatial contexts might continue to produce ideological "by-products," which he identifies as

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[496] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 187.

[497] Elspeth Probyn, "The Spatial Imperative of Subjectivity," in *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, eds. Kay Anderson, Mona Domosh, Steve Pile, and Nigel Thrift (London: SAGE, 2003), 291.

[498] Probyn, "The Spatial Imperative of Subjectivity," 293, emphasis original. Althusser's most interesting reflections on this problem are found in the concluding chapter of his manuscript *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* (titled "On Ideology"), wherein he discusses the different forms of interpellation that a worker is subjected to throughout the course of their daily life—from the factory setting, to the home, and beyond.

"secondary ideologies."[499] And yet, "secondary ideologies"—even class struggle itself—emerge from and occur within the constantly mutating and re-spatializing "material ideological apparatus[es] *from which…[they] derive*."[500] We are always already constituted as subjects as a result of our materially and spatially grounded enactment of institutionally-mediated ideologies. While we might resist our subjectification, we pursue such acts of resistance from within the materialized and spatialized contexts and institutions from which our subjectification derives.

There is much more to say regarding the contours of this account of interpellation and subjectification. But what must immediately be underscored is that—whatever Althusser himself suggested—this process of interpellation never simply produces a subject "*pure and simple*," as Pierre Macherey has put it. It always produces, not least as a result of the aforementioned historical and geographical specificity of this process, "an 'overdetermined' subject, which is to say a subject specified according to the *norms of the situation*, and therefore a subject of a certain type"—a racialized, gendered, and classed subject, among many other kinds.[501] In other words, while we might follow Althusser's contention that we are *all* always already subject to processes of institutionally-mediated interpellation, we are not *all* subjected to the same processes of interpellation in precisely the same way. We are not all "subjects of the same sort."[502] And this is in no small part because, once again, the process of overdetermined interpellation—which produces such variegated subject positions—necessarily takes place in space. It takes place within the context of an uneven geography

[499] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 187.

[500] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 186, emphasis added.

[501] Pierre Macherey, "Figures of Interpellation in Althusser and Fanon," *Radical Philosophy* 173 (2012): 18, emphasis added.

[502] Macherey, "Figures of interpellation in Althusser and Fanon," 19, emphasis added.

of institutionally mediated processes of interpellation and in and through a range of socio-spatial relations.

On this point a handful of figures have offered preliminary insights. Macherey recalls that Althusser's own famous scene of interpellation—with its call of "Hey you, there!"—already signals the existence of a *conjuncturally specific* spatial field. He notes that it is in and through the conjunctural spatiality implicit in that primal scene—with its geographical qualification ("there!")—that we come to see that "to be a subject…is *to take a position in a [specific] field*."[503] Vicente Montenegro, pursuing a reading of Stuart Hall's Althusserianism, develops a comparable claim as well. He notes that the "*specific historicity and spatiality of each different context*…necessarily 'overdetermines' ideological interpellation" itself.[504] What these accounts help us underscore is that if interpellation structures our sense of what does and does not exist; our normative and affective dispositions; and our sense of the possible, or, "our sense of the mutability of our being-in-the-world"[505]; it also takes place in ways that are historically and geographically specific. Interpellation is the specific result of our existence in distinctive historical-geographies and of our reproduction through specific socio-spatial relations.

Indeed, once we have properly grasped the contours of Althusser's materialist account of interpellation and subjectification, we can further suggest that the individualized liberal subject is only one possible effect of interpellation, precisely because of the uneven spatialities and historical-geographies of interpellation itself.[506] There is no reason why interpellation must result in the liberal subject that generally animates Althusser's account—in a subject that is ostensibly "the proprietor of

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[503] Macherey, "Figures of Interpellation in Althusser and Fanon," 13, emphasis added.

[504] Montenegro, "Stuart Hall and the Introduction of Althusser in Cultural Studies," 13, emphasis added.

[505] See Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, 18.

[506] Jodi Dean, "Enclosing the Subject," *Political Theory* 44, no. 3 (2016): 363-393.

his own person or capacities."[507] In many historical-geographical contexts, subjects are subjected to radically different institutionally mediated dynamics of interpellation altogether. The process of interpellation that results in one's "awareness of themselves as unique, (relatively independent), and capable of making choices" is, in fact, far from the only process of interpellation that has defined capitalist history—to say nothing of other political economic regimes—in the *longue durée*.[508] The dynamics that come together to form the subject are "superposed, criss-crossed," and (at times) highly contradictory, such that "the same individual" is "always-already" several subjects.[509] Every subject "lives" multiple relatively autonomous ideologies "at once," with certain ideologies taking dominance over others as they move through daily life.[510] And my additional contention in the present context—which will be elaborated in more depth in the pages to come—is that precisely how subjects are differentially interpellated by such overdetermined factors is, in part, dependent upon (and presupposes) their socio-spatial relations.

More precisely put, what I am suggesting in this very rudimentary introduction and extension of Althusser's account of interpellation and subjectification is that there is no reason why interpellation should result in "modern persons [that] are interpellated as free, equal, and rational."[511] Despite the general emphasis on this specific form of interpellation among both Althusser and subsequent Althusserians, there is no reason why the historically and geographically specific conditions that animate and structure interpellation might not produce something else entirely—a

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[507] MacPherson quoted in Dean, "Enclosing the Subject," 364.

[508] Wingrove quoted in Dean, "Enclosing the Subject," 366.

[509] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 194.

[510] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 199.

[511] Jacques Bidet, "The Interpellated Subject: Beyond Althusser and Butler," *Crisis & Critique* 2, no. 2 (2015): 71.

different figure of subjectivity and process of subjectification. While Althusser focused throughout his writing on the suggestion that "the subject is not only co-originary with that of the individual, but in some sense precedes it," this is almost certainly not the case if we take this to mean that the subject is co-originary with the image of an individuated self that is self-contained, autonomous, and rational.[512] With the exception of the preliminary insights offered by figures like Macherey and Montenegro—referenced above—this claim has remained largely obscured in the otherwise highly productive literature on interpellation, and even in work that has attempted to push beyond Althusser himself. It is, however, crucially important if we are to properly grasp the spatiality of differentiated forms of capitalist interpellation.

Perhaps the most outstanding effort to push beyond Althusser's account of interpellation has been pursued by Althusser's erstwhile student, Étienne Balibar. From Balibar, we provocatively learn that the "constitution of objectivity in fetishism does not depend on the prior givenness of a subject," but that the fetishism of the commodity functions as a *spontaneous form of interpellation* in capitalist contexts that "constitute[s] subjects which are a part of objectivity itself or which are, in other words, given in experience *alongside 'things'*, alongside commodities, and *in a relation to them*."[513] In an account indebted to Soviet legal theorist Evgeny Pashukanis among others, Balibar extends Althusser's understanding of interpellation, so as to suggest that "[c]ommodity fetishism and legal individuation" represent "the spontaneous ideologies of capital," producing the universalization of the image of bourgeois subjectivity.[514] The inherent logic of capital—if we follow Marx's conceptualization of commodity fetishism—"culminates not just in commodities that are imbued

[512] Jason Read, "Ideology as Individuation, Individuating Ideology," *Mediations* 30, no. 2 (2017): 77.

[513] Étienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx* (New York: Verso, 2007), 67, emphasis original.

[514] Read, "Ideology as Individuation, Individuating Ideology," 78.

with value but with subjects that necessarily conduct themselves in the same way with respect to the market," as Jason Read has put it in recent work on the same problematic.[515]

What falls from view in this sophisticated extension of Althusser's account is, however, the simple fact that many concrete individuals in capitalist societies do not "naturally" appear as "bearers of will and subjectivity" at all.[516] Even if we accept the claim that "*isolated individuality*" is the "*appearance*" that emerges as a result of the functioning of certain capitalist social relations, we would do well to recall—as argued throughout this dissertation—that across the historical and geographical contexts that have defined capitalist history, very few (in relative terms) have actually been interpellated in that way.[517] In fact, as established in chapter two of this dissertation, capital relies upon the relegation of certain subjects to a metaphorical and physical space outside of the wage nexus, and upon forms of subjectivity that depart from the image of isolated individuality sketched above, in order to maintain its necessary and enduring relationship of appropriation and capitalization; or, so as to ensure the non-identity or necessary disequilibrium of the value form and its broader value relations. Very few have been able to claim the mantle of bourgeois subjectivity—and to enact that form of subjectification—due in large part to the logical necessities of capitalist reproduction. "Capital's grip," to use the language of Achille Mbembe, grasps us in distinctive ways.[518]

In offering this reading and this set of provisos to Althusser's account of interpellation and subjectification, we are still quite far from establishing an adequate theorization of the role of the

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[515] Jason Read, *The Production of Subjectivity: Marx and Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 295.

[516] Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, 71.

[517] Cf. Étienne Balibar, "Philosophies of the Transindividual: Spinoza, Marx, Freud," *Australasian Philosophical Review* 2, no. 1 (2018): 7, emphasis original.

[518] Achille Mbembe, *Brutalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2023), 32.

built environment in the constitution and constraint of differentiated forms of subjectivity within capitalist society. What we have, at this stage, is the basic understanding that subjectification is a material and spatial process, and that differently constituted subjects are not only differently positioned in space, but that their interpellation informs how they exist in and through space as well. And, in this context, we must now look beyond Althusser and to Fanon. We must now turn to Fanon's understanding of interpellation to more fully grasp the relationship between the built environment and differentiated forms of capitalist subjectification.

Fanon never used the language of "interpellation" directly in his own work. But the process of interpellation and subjectification—which sits at the core of Althusser's most famous essay—is an integral element across Fanon's corpus, nonetheless. Even in Fanon's relatively "minor works"—such as *A Dying Colonialism* (1959), *Toward the African Revolution* (1964), and in his recently excavated political and psychiatric writings in *Alienation and Freedom* (collected in French in 2015)—we find the suggestion that distinctive historical-geographical contexts and socio-spatial relations produce distinctive forms of subjectivity, and distinctive modes of bodily comportment too. We encounter the claim that differentiated processes of interpellation do not first take hold in the ostensibly immaterial domain of ideas, but that they are *always already* materialized in and through the actions and bodies of spatialized subjects themselves.[519] In *A Dying Colonialism*, for example, Fanon recalls that within colonial contexts "[t]here is not occupation of territory, on the one hand, and independence of persons on the other." Rather, colonialism takes shape at the "very center of the…individual" in a differentiated process of "rationally pursued mutilation." He emphasizes that "[i]t is the country as a whole, its history, [and] *its daily pulsation that are contested [and] disfigured*" under colonial regimes, such that the body and its daily reproduction are made by way of this process of

[519] On this theme we might also consider Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment and Spatiality," *Human Studies* 3 (1980): 137-156.

colonial domination. Even breathing becomes, as Fanon famously put it, an "occupied breathing," in such contexts.[520] Colonial domination is not simply imposed but iteratively and reiteratively *lived*.

In *Toward the African Revolution*, Fanon clarifies and extends this understanding of interpellation and subjectification. He suggests that the colonized subject not only "*appear[s] on [a] scene*"—that he not only *"enters into a pre-existing framework*" that is structured by racist domination[521]—but that he is always already "dissolve[d]," emptied of "substance," and subjected to *the overdetermined relations* of the colonial totality, which are not simply relations of racialization, given that racism is "only one element of a vaster [colonial] whole."[522] Colonial society is best understood, he reiterates in *Alienation and Freedom*, as a "web of [] three-dimensional violence, a meeting point of *multiple, diverse, repeated*, cumulative violences." All of these relations are *lived* and *reproduced* not just "on the level of the soul," but in the "muscles" and in the "blood" of interpellated subjects as well.[523] Even within these oft-overlooked texts, Fanon demonstrates a profound concern for what is quite clearly a conceptualization of interpellation. And he attends not just to the production of subjects "pure and simple," but to the realization of differentiated patterns of interpellation in and through the spatialized comportment of subjects themselves. He draws attention to how subjectification takes place and is lived through the corporeal experience and existence of subjects in space, albeit in radically distinctive ways depending on historical-geographical context.

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[520] Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 65, emphasis added.

[521] Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 7, emphasis original.

[522] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 14 and 33.

[523] Frantz Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 654-655, emphasis added.

And yet, what is perhaps most important for our purposes is not only that Fanon is attentive to the differentiated and geographically specific forms of subjectification that capitalist society might produce. It is that in his most classic work—in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)—he clarifies and extends this understanding of interpellation as well. In those texts it becomes clear that interpellation is not simply the process through which subjects live differentiated *ideologies* in distinctive geographies. We come to see, rather, that interpellation presupposes and reproduces the built environment, which materializes and concretizes all of those aspects that define capitalism as a complexly structured social whole—*ideology, political power, economic relations, and beyond.* Indeed, in these classic works, we learn that subjects reproduce ideology in space in and through their subjectification; and, more completely, that all of those dimensions that define capitalist society as a totality—political power, economic relations, ideologies and norms—are materialized and reproduced spatially via the actions of subjects and the built environment as well. The built environment appears in these texts as produced by and productive of political, economic, and ideological practices and norms—of the overdetermined capitalist socio-spatial totality—and as integral to the production and reproduction of spatially differentiated subjectivities.

To clarify this argument, we can turn first to *The Wretched of the Earth.* In that text Fanon demonstrates that the colonial context does not simply cast subjects in a pre-existing *ideological* framework, which touches down on and takes shape through colonized bodies and bodily practice—or their "muscles" and "blood." The colonial context is, rather, a world that is infrastructurally constituted in all of its dimensions—"a world divided into compartments," of "native quarters and European quarters," wherein the "dividing line[s]" between the two "are shown by barracks and police stations."[524] Fanon suggests that how subjects are interpellated in colonial

[524] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 37-38.

contexts—and how they exist in space as a result of this process of iterative interpellation—is to a certain extent the result of the Manichean spatialities of the colony itself. The built environment helps define the brutally violent "language of pure force" so central to coloniality; it produces the sharp distinction between settler and native via the distinction between the "settlers' town"—"a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel"—and the "native town"—a world, as Fanon evocatively puts it, that is "without spaciousness" and "wallowing in the mire."[525] And this built environment is not simply implicated in the materialization, concretization, and enactment of ideology. It is the presupposition and result of political, economic, and ideological relations, all of which shape the differentiated interpellation of subjects.

Fanon suggests, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, that in the colony "the economic infrastructure *is also a superstructure*."[526] While we might quibble with the reductionism of that formulation, what it allows us to suggest is that the built environment (in colonial contexts in particular) contributes to the production of subjects that are spatially "hemmed in" precisely due to its role as the presupposition and result of (racialized) economic relations, and of ideological and political relations as well.[527] The capitalist spatial matrix contributes to the expression of each of these relations, and the cumulative result is that "[t]he white man is *sealed* in his whiteness [and the] black man in his blackness."[528]

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[525] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 38-39.

[526] This line is at times translated so as to render "infrastructure" as "substructure." In French, the original quotation reads: "*Aux colonies, l'infrastructure économique est également une superstructure. La cause est consequence: on est riche parce que blanc, on est blanc parce que riche*." The invocation of "infrastructure" is quite useful for my purposes, and—I think—speaks to the spirit of Fanon's highly spatial account of interpellation. After all, this quote is immediately preceded by the claim that the compartmentalized geography of the colony "parcels out the world" according to "race."

[527] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 52.

[528] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 3, emphasis added.

If these relations are particularly evident in the context of the settler colony, as described by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, these insights are more broadly applicable still, as Fanon's work itself suggests. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, for example, Fanon turns his attention to processes of interpellation within Europe and the black Caribbean—and to the prospect of, as he puts it, "the effective disalienation of the black man" in those specific (non-settler) contexts from "an inferiority complex."[529] Fanon demonstrates that interpellation takes place, even in those settings, through a rich array of mutually reciprocating forces which come together to overdetermine the racialized subject. The racialized subject is made "the eternal victim of an essence, of an *appearance* for which [they are] not responsible" as a result of an ongoing and differentiated process of subjectification, and as a result of their position in and reproduction through a complexly structured social whole.[530] And, most crucially, not only is this process of overdetermination internalized and materialized in the body of the subject in such contexts; but it takes place through, and effectively presupposes, the built environment—with each subject placed on his or her "own side of the street"—which functions as the presupposition and result of political, economic, and ideological relations.[531] In *Black Skin, White Masks* we come to learn that the black subject—well beyond the settler colonial context that animates *The Wretched of the Earth*—is "abraded into nonbeing," and "[s]ealed" in the realm of "crushing objecthood," by the details of thousands of stories and anecdotes; the optical gaze of the other—by "white eyes"[532]; and, most crucially, by the "slow composition of [the] *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world."[533]

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[529] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 4.

[530] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 22, emphasis original.

[531] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 37 and 59.

[532] See Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 82, 84, and 87.

This spatial and temporal world does not simply "impose itself" from without. It is, rather, the "definitive structuring of the self and of the world—definitive because it creates a real dialectic between [body and world]," self and other.[534] While something like race is typically read as the "product of a genetic or biological schema," it is, in fact, the result of a discursive and socio-spatial system; it is imprinted on the subject and lived via a process of "epidermalization" that presupposes the materiality of the built environment and a broad set of embedded or relatively fixed socio-spatial relations.[535] And, lest there be any confusion, it is not only through these processes that the body becomes raced alone. In *A Dying Colonialism* Fanon is sharply attentive to the construction of gendered subjectivity as well, underscoring that the Algerian woman under settler colonialism "suffers twice from spatial confinement," with the structures of colonial apartheid giving shape to a very particular practice and embodiment of womanhood.[536]

When all of this work is taken together, what Fanon provides is thus not simply the image of a "politics of space founded on race rather than economy of time coadunate with class."[537] What he provides is a sense of how differentiated forms of interpellation occur through socio-spatial practices and infrastructures that are the presupposition and result of political, economic, and ideological processes. Fanon demonstrates not simply the epidermalization of race, but the ways in

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[533] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 83, emphasis original. For a brief (and somewhat divergent) discussion of the relationship between *Black Skin, White Masks* and the Althusserian account of interpellation, see the first chapter of Glen Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

[534] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 83.

[535] Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, 346.

[536] Stefan Kipfer, "Fanon and Space: Colonization, Urbanization, and Liberation from the Colonial to the Global City," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007): 712.

[537] Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 77.

which the built environment contributes to the articulation and expression of contingently related political, economic, and ideological processes and gives shape to the lived reproduction of differentiated subjectivities.[538]

Indeed, while we should not overstate the point, what Fanon helps to make clear is that the capitalist spatial matrix is the medium through which raced, gendered, and classed subjectivity is iteratively lived; and, if we want to channel the language of Stuart Hall and his co-authors in *Policing the Crisis* (1978), he helps to demonstrate that it is by way of our relation to and existence within the capitalist built environment that we "*come to a consciousness* of [our] structured subordination," and our relative forms of domination.[539] It is surely not the case for Fanon that the interpellated subject always "heed[s] the call of the Subject."[540] Many subjects in Fanon's account are quite clearly in the category of what Althusser referred to as "bad subjects" whose interpellation is messy, contested, and/or redirected. Nevertheless, even these subjects—*like all subjects—only exist* "by or through their subjection."[541] As we move through space we are interpellated by multiple processes, and the outcome is certainly not the uniform production of the bourgeois subject.

As some readers will note, the problem at the core of Judith Butler's critical reading of Althusser's scene of interpellation—their consideration of the thorny question of the anxious acceptance of a guilty accusation on the part of the interpellated individual (who is not yet a subject)

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[538] For a related account, which engages the "norming of space" and the production of "persons" and "subpersons," see Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[539] Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 347, emphasis original.

[540] Warren Montag, "Between Interpellation and Immunization: Althusser, Balibar, Esposito," *Postmodern Culture* 22, no. 3 (2012): n.p.

[541] Montag, "Between Interpellation and Immunization," n.p.

via "the turn"—thus largely falls from view in the account provided above.[542] In our reading, the interpellated subject (and not just the racialized or gendered subject) is always already interpellated and implicated in their subjectification. They are, as Fanon might put it, always already a subject as a result of their overdetermination from without. They might react differently to the process of interpellation—they may or may not "turn" at all—but they are interpellated nonetheless in no small part as a result of their position in, and movement through, a set of preexisting socio-spatial forms.[543] The built environment itself provides what Elizabeth Grosz has referred to as the "social triggering" that helps to turn indeterminate individuals into subjects and which delimits the "constitution of corporeality."[544] Produced space positions people in relation to labor markets, scales of governance, and ideological information via geographically specific systems of media dissemination. It also structures how people relate to others on an everyday basis—in their homes, workplaces, and routine practices of social reproduction—as well as their most basic "corporeal alignments…and orientations," their "muscular structure," their "nutritional context," and their relation to "sensory and perceptual information."[545]

And yet, if we are now without recourse to a "non-phenomenal 'kernel of interiority'" to ground our conceptualization of social action and struggle—given this understanding of the subjects' interpellation in and through the built environment—then how do we explain the periodic reweaving of the capitalist spatial matrix, specifically, and the re-articulation of capitalist society's

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[542] See Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), ch. 4.

[543] For an account of distinctive forms of racialized interpellation, see Ghassan Hage, "The Affective Politics of Racial Mis-Interpellation," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 7-8 (2010): 121.

[544] See Elizabth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 104 and 108.

[545] Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion*, 108-109.

necessary and contingent relations at all?[546] If all subjects are differentially interpellated in and through their actions within and across the capitalist spatial matrix—whether they actively accept these processes of interpellation or not—are we doomed to reproduce what Anthony Giddens has referred to as the "imperialism of the social object," that ostensibly fatal flaw that attends to structuralist thought?[547] Must we necessarily suggest that subjects are nothing more than docile bodies destined (at best) to parodically re-articulate both their own subjectification and the capitalist built environment by way of minor gestures in the miniscule gap between "free will and determinism"?[548]

The geography of history: Fanon, Hegel, and Sartre

My argument is that our reading of Althusser and Fanon does not leave us doomed to accept the so-called "imperialism of the social object," as Giddens might have it. In fact, Fanon himself provides a critical resource in our engagement with these questions. To demonstrate this point, we must simply turn not to Fanon's above-sketched account of interpellation and subjectification, but to his engagement with the philosophy of history. We must turn to the particular way in which Fanon recasts Hegel's teleology.[549] And yet, to do so, I should first underscore what precisely I have in view when referring to Hegel's teleology. Here, I am referring—in abbreviated terms and broad

[546] Dolar quoted in Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 122.

[547] Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 41.

[548] See, for context, Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 187.

[549] Fanon's relation to Hegel's philosophy of history, and to the concept of "dialectics" itself, has remained a matter of contention within "Fanon studies" for several decades. For opposing positions in this debate, see Gavin Arnall, *Subterranean Fanon: An Underground Theory of Radical Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020) and Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*. For a reading that comes closest to the one I offer here, see Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*. Finally, for an overview of some of the many (other) fractures within "Fanon studies," and a discussion of the problem of reading Fanon in general, see Henry Louis Gates Jr., "Critical Fanonism," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 3 (1991): 457-470.

strokes—to that central idea within Hegel and Hegelian thought that world history is "ruled" by Reason and is, therefore, "rational in its course," with each particular instance serving these ends[550]; and, moreover, to the notion that Reason is systematically manifest in the actual world "as a series of external forms"—manifest in distinctive populations and within distinctive geographical and temporal parameters—only to be subsequently overcome by a higher, more actualized, manifestation of that pre-determined goal.[551] I am referring to Hegel's contention that the actualization of Reason structures the unfolding of world history; to his claim that this unfolding manifests materially in space and time; and to his claim that the actualization of Reason is subsequently overcome as Reason itself emerges "rejuvenated from the ashes of its embodiment."[552]

I raise this central theme in Hegelian thought here because it is in relation to it that Fanon develops his own distinctive—and distinctively spatial—account of the possibility of political agency in the face of interpellation and subjectification.[553] Of course, I am not the first to draw attention to Fanon's relation to Hegelian thought, and Hegel's philosophy of history in particular. Several scholars have emphasized Fanon's enduring skepticism regarding Hegel's image of the unilinear unfolding of history as rationality. In the words of Geo Maher, we find a sharp rebuke across Fanon's corpus—and across the broader tradition of thought from which he emerged—of the notion that the "insatiable passions of Europe were but the errant weft spreading murder and

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[550] G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to The Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1988), 12.

[551] Hegel, *Introduction to The Philosophy of History*, 83.

[552] Hegel, *Introduction to The Philosophy of History*, 76.

[553] For a broader discussion of the relationship between Hegel and those thinkers forged by and through the "Black Atlantic," see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), ch. 2.

torture across the globe in the name of a higher progress."[554] Stuart Hall also crisply recalled that in Fanon we can identify a "blockage which detotalises the Hegelian 'recognition' of the One by the Other…[and which] arises from the historically specific, specular structure of racism, not from the general mechanism of self-identification."[555] More plainly, what Fanon's readers have made clear is that for him there are no guarantees to the process of historical unfolding, as Hegel might have it. In racialized/colonial contexts in particular—which presuppose and produce what Fanon refers to as the racialized, *sub-ontological zone of nonbeing*—historical movement is itself *stalled or blocked*.[556]

There is good reason to call attention to this dynamic in Fanon's work. Central to Fanon's intellectual project is the aforementioned specter of *nonbeing*, which prevents the process of dialectical unfolding in the racialized/colonial context, and the mutual recognition of equals that it presupposes and which propels it. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, for example, Fanon emphasizes that the racialized subject "has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man," not as a result of any specific action of their own, but because of the way in which the racist "*creates his inferior*"; "ontology," for Fanon, "is made unattainable in a colonized and civilized society."[557] This process of ontological exclusion means that the dialectical unfolding of History is effectively "blocked from the outset"—"from entering into motion to begin with."[558] Excluded from what Kojève identifies as

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[554] Geo Maher, *Anticolonial Eruptions: Racial Hubris and the Cunning of Resistance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022), 10.

[555] Hall, *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*, 350, emphasis original.

[556] See Ethan Kleinberg, "Kojève and Fanon: The Desire for Recognition and the Fact of Blackness," in *French Civilization and its Discontents*, eds. Tyler Stovall and Georges Van Den Abbeele (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), 121.

[557] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 69, 82, and 83, emphasis original.

[558] Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, 53

that struggle over recognition which is "nothing but" the unfolding of "universal history,"[559] the racialized subject is "sealed" in an existence of "crushing objecthood," and relegated to a *pre-dialectical paralysis*.[560]

If "the historical 'dialectic' *is the* 'dialectic of Master and Slave,"[561] in the colonial context what we find, according to Fanon, is a relation of objectification not a relation of "absolute reciprocity."[562] "[T]he master," as Fanon put it, "laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants…is not recognition but work."[563] And thus, the relations that ground Hegel's historical teleology—"two simple self-consciousnesses in pursuit of a truer self-consciousness"[564]—are quite simply absent. The racialized subject is locked in a position of thinghood through a process of overdetermination from without, denied the capacity for self-consciousness in the eyes of the colonizer, and thereby "denied access into [] historical progression," which is another name for the linear march of universal self-consciousness.[565]

And yet, if this relation of historical paralysis is relatively well observed within the scholarship on Fanon, what is most important for our present purposes—given our interest in what his account reveals regarding the potentiality for agency in the face of spatialized interpellation—are two closely related points, which have largely fallen from view in the extant literature. The first is the

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[559] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 9.

[560] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 82.

[561] Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 9, emphasis added.

[562] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 169.

[563] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 172.

[564] Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, 54.

[565] Kleinberg, "Kojève and Fanon," 122.

simple fact that this relation of "absolute difference and radical irreciprocity"—this relation of seemingly pre-dialectical fixity—is spatially produced or "made manifest in *space*."[566] The zone of nonbeing, specifically, is manifest in and produced through "a Procrustean space of fixed positions" in Fanon's account.[567] The second is the observation that in departing from Hegel's teleology Fanon reveals something quite profound regarding our capacity for agency and social action even in the most violent of contexts—regarding our capacity to transform our social worlds in contexts of crushing objectification and spatialized interpellation.

In taking the first point first, we would do well to underscore that not only does Fanon provide a departure from Hegel's teleology across his corpus, but he does so in and through the above-sketched account of the role of the built environment in the interpellation of differentiated subjects. The ontological asymmetry between colonizer and colonized that results in dialectical—or historical—stasis emerges as a result of a particular set of relatively fixed socio-spatial relations.[568] Such dialectical stasis is produced not only by blunt relations of force—"by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons"[569]—but in and through a material architecture and set of spatial forms that divide the world "into compartments," and which relatively clearly delineate the "lines on which a decolonized society will [have to] be reorganized."[570] The colonial capitalist world is, per Fanon, a world defined by two *non-complementary* socio-spatial zones, "opposed, but not in the service of a

[566] Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, 72, emphasis original.

[567] Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience*, 80.

[568] William Conroy, "Fanon's Mobilities: Race, Space, Recognition," *Antipode* 5, no. 4 (2023): 1128-1151.

[569] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 36.

[570] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 37-38.

higher unity."[571] And, as such, the colonial world presupposes and produces not simply a kind of "motionless, Manicheistic" geography, but a world in which the motion of historical progress is almost entirely foreclosed. "The native is a being *hemmed in*" in a condition of quasi-motionlessness via the geographies of colonial apartheid.[572] The ultimate result is the socio-spatial production of nonbeing, which inhibits precisely what Hegel presupposes—"universal *Grund*" or that "smooth plane of guaranteed Being" required for the dialectical movement of History.[573]

However, following from our second point established above, this ontological and historical "petrification"—violent and all-encompassing as it might be—does not foreclose the possibility of political action or agency. The above-sketched process of interpellation and subjectification in and through the built environment can only produce, in the last instance, what Fanon at one point refers to as "pseudo petrification,"[574] insofar as "pre-dialectical struggle" remains an ever-present potentiality.[575] Even in Fanon's account of the subterranean realm of nonbeing—that most violently produced and overdetermined space—there is still room for radical maneuver. The colonized subject can propel the dialectical movement of history into motion and emerge from the zone of nonbeing by establishing the ground for an authentic confrontation. "Lacking the reciprocity necessary for the dialectic to enter smoothly into motion, these disqualified nonbeings" can articulate (or "initiate") a counterontological force and make themselves known as subjects of mutual recognition, or simply, as human beings.[576]

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[571] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 38.

[572] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 52, emphasis added.

[573] Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, 55-56, emphasis original.

[574] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 54.

[575] Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics.*

Indeed, according to Fanon, not only is the spatially produced and "extraordinarily sterile and arid region" of nonbeing a space for political maneuver, but it is also precisely "where an authentic upheaval can be born."[577] While this zone of nonbeing surely persists in certain contexts of nominally formal equality and of nominal "postcolonial independence"—not least through the incorporation of the language of recognition in the service of domination—it is always potentially surmountable via a process of making oneself known.[578] Such counterontological assertions are without the guarantees of Hegel's teleology—without the "comfort of Reason in history"—but they are, nonetheless, never far from view.[579] A new humanity remains not only on the political horizon, but an ever-present potentiality, even in those most arid and sterile zones. If for Hegel recognition names the "intersubjective condition[] required for the *realization of human freedom*"[580]—and for the progressive movement of history itself—for Fanon such a movement depends upon a prior assertion of the humanity of the racialized/colonized, which is always bubbling beneath the surface, and which is capable of pushing beyond the "*assimilative lure* of [post]colonial recognition."[581] Counterontological assertion is always a possibility. Even the specter of what Orlando Patterson has famously dubbed "social death" is not incapacitating, but "generative," in certain senses, of political "activity."[582]

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[576] Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, 58.

[577] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 2; see also, Maher, *Anticolonial Eruptions*, 20.

[578] On the resonances of Fanon's argument in the present, no text is better than Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks*.

[579] Maher, *Anticolonial Eruptions*, 104.

[580] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 28, emphasis original.

[581] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 43, emphasis added.

What we see by way of Fanon's departure from Hegel is that while we are indeed all subject to differentiated forms of socio-spatial interpellation, this does not preclude the possibility of political agency and action. Even for those subject to the most overwhelming forms of subjectification—those relegated to the zone of nonbeing—action is always a potentiality. Still, if this is the case, a question continues to linger in relation to the problem of agency and socio-spatial subjectification: why, *exactly,* does Fanon have such reason to be hopeful? How does he understand the enduring potentiality of counterontological assertion in the first instance? And, moreover, how exactly does this potentiality for agency relate to the built environment and its central role in differentiated forms of interpellation and subjectification?

The answers to these questions are not found in Fanon's relation with Hegel, but with Sartre. They are present in Fanon's engagement with Sartre's conceptualization of the fundamental and constitutive freedom of human being. While many scholars have considered Fanon's relation to Sartre—emphasizing his fraught relation to Sartre's infamous reading of negritude and its project of "self-affirmative recognition" above all[583]—as it pertains to Fanon's understanding of the potentiality for political agency even in the face of spatialized interpellation, what is most important is not where Fanon departs from his French contemporary. What is most important is where they seem to find common ground—in their shared contention that human being is "absolutely nothing" and that being is the "very escape" from being itself.[584] Indeed, while Fanon offers a profound

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[582] On agency and "social death," see, among many other texts, Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1244; Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 113-124; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[583] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 144.

[584] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 260.

theorization of the interpellation and spatialized production of subjects in and through the spatial matrix, he *also seems to maintain*—alongside Sartre—that "to be human means to live one's existence as a precedence to one's essence,"[585] precisely because, as Sartre puts it, "[h]uman freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible," leaving all humans "suspended in [their] freedom."[586] Neither Fanon nor Sartre suggest that we are free to do anything we like. The world "imposes a certain content on the future towards which it is transcended."[587] But in the last analysis, it is up to us to determine how we respond to "facticity." Freedom is the "stuff" of being. It provides us with the potentiality to nihilate "what [we are] in the form of 'having-been.'"[588]

Sartre develops this claim in numerous ways throughout his work. In *Being and Nothingness* (1943) he recalls that "although brute things (what Heidegger calls 'brute existents') can from the start limit our freedom of action, it is our freedom itself which must first constitute the framework, the technique, and the ends in relation to which they will manifest themselves as limits."[589] And Sartre "cashes out" this assertion in various concrete contexts throughout his work as well. The fundamental freedom of human being—or the recognition that our existence precedes any essence—sits at the core of his reading of negritude in "Black Orpheus" (1948), and his contentious claim therein that the assertion of black identity will function as the "up-beat [un-accented beat] of a dialectical progression."[590] This understanding of human freedom also grounds his dubious claim, in

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[585] Lewis Gordon, "Sartre and Fanon on Embodied Bad Faith," in *Sartre on the Body*, ed. Katherine Morris (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 194.

[586] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 25.

[587] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume One* (New York: Verso, 2004), 235.

[588] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 439.

[589] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 482.

[590] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus," *The Massachusetts Review* 6, no. 1 (1964): 49.

Anti-Semite and Jew (1945), that anti-Semitism is merely epiphenomenal—"that it could not exist in a classless society"—and thus that the task of political action in the face of anti-Semitism is simply to "change the perspective of choice," and to abolish the class dynamics that produce anti-Semitism through a form of proletarian struggle.[591]

My claim is not that Fanon and Sartre find common ground on each of these specific political claims, nor on the relation between freedom and concrete struggle at all. And yet, what remains the case is that such thinking on the fundamental freedom of being almost surely enables Fanon's conceptualization of agency in the face of our inevitable interpellation and subjectification in and through the capitalist spatial matrix. My contention is that at the core of Fanon's thinking is the notion that there is always the possibility for a "rupture"—or for what Sartre referred to as "the upsurge of an ekstatic temporalization"—with respect to our differentially ascribed and spatially produced subjectivities, even if we have no control over the factical situation of our interpellation.[592] There are no guarantees that our actions will manifest in the result we desire, and these actions are always formed by and in response to the situation we find ourselves in. The "discovery," as Sartre puts it, of ourselves and of our freedom is made in a context of "intersubjectivity."[593] But we are still "condemned to freedom," nonetheless, and the inessentiality of our being is visible in the differentiated character of interpellation itself. At the very least, we maintain the capacity to produce a different kind of built environment and different forms of spatialized interpellation.

In Fanon's consideration of freedom and political agency such moments of "rupture" often carry with them the language of violence. Political assertions that enable the movement of history

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[591] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken, 1995), 148-149.

[592] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 468.

[593] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 41-42.

from a condition of stasis—and the establishment of the ground for relations of mutual recognition—constitute a counterontological force that disrupts the forms of ontological dehumanization that attend to the modern colonial-capitalist world.[594] The dissolution of the zone of nonbeing requires, in other words, a counterontological assertion. And if we follow Lewis Gordon's reading of Fanon, such a counterontological assertion, which seeks to establish the conditions for mutual recognition, is always violent (as Fanon understands the term) insofar as appearance itself is violence in a world in which "appearance is illegitimate."[595] Violence is not dependent on the use of weapons and physical force, but immanent to any attack on "the ontological hierarchy and inequality" that defines the racialized/colonial context and that produces the zone of nonbeing.[596]

That said, what is more interesting is that for Fanon such counterontological violence is also understood to require a break with the inherited spaces that structure or delimit interpellation and the production of nonbeing itself. What we finally come to see in Fanon's account is that not only is political action possible in the face of spatialized interpellation; but that, for those confined to the zone of nonbeing specifically, a counterontological force always involves the concurrent re-spatialization of inherited socio-spatial relations, because of the role of socio-spatial forms in the sociogenetic construction of nonbeing itself. If Sartre attended to spatiality in his account of freedom by recalling the ways in which space "informs [us] of [our] choice"[597]—of our own desires and freedom in and through the barriers that it throws up—Fanon makes clear something else entirely. He demonstrates that the abolition of the zone of nonbeing will require an active process of

[594] Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, 61.

[595] Gordon quoted in Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, 61.

[596] Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*, 62.

[597] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 463.

re-spatialization, and the initiation of a material re-organization of the built environment, insofar as the capitalist spatial matrix is structuring of the interpellation of subjects and of nonbeing itself.

In tracing this final point, we can turn first to *Black Skin, White Masks*. It is there that Fanon notes, perhaps for the first time, that the potentiality of human agency is present in the zone of nonbeing—that "utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born."[598] It is also where he argues that an authentic upheaval—or "disalienation"—will occur "to the degree to which things, *in the most materialistic meaning of the word, [] have been restored to their proper places*."[599] Despite the language of "restoration" and "disalienation" above, Fanon suggests that this process of upheaval will not entail a movement back to a fundamental human essence, nor a return to pre-colonial socio-spatial forms, but a movement toward a new set of *socio-spatial relations* which will bring with them a new humanity or a new humanism. Disalienation represents the confirmation of our singular Sartrean "duty": "not renouncing [our] freedom through [our] choices."[600] And it also requires, in the context of nonbeing, forms of political action that break the extant spatial matrix.

If this line of argumentation is present in *Black Skin, White Masks*, it is even more forcefully developed elsewhere in Fanon's corpus. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon plainly suggests that the creation of a new "species" of humanity will emerge through a process of *spatialized* counterontological violence. The production of what Fanon refers to as the "whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth" will occur only when "the native," "embody[ing] history in his own person, [] surges into the forbidden quarters" of the colonial city and begins to remake the socio-spatial forms that structure his [sic] overdetermination from

[598] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 2.

[599] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 5, emphasis added.

[600] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 179.

without.[601] And, going further still, in texts like *A Dying Colonialism* and *Alienation and Freedom* the transformation of humanity and the transformation of the capitalist spatial matrix often appear at the very same moment or in the very same breath. In the former text we learn that "men change *at the same time* that they change the world."[602] In the latter we learn that history's "momentum and rhythm" will be set in motion precisely when the masses "break with the structures that had kept them riveted to their immobility and passivity"; it will begin when they shake up the "social edifice, *whose foundation they [are]*."[603] Each of these texts speaks to what we might call Fanon's "geography of history"—to his account of the relationship between historical progression, political agency, and socio-spatial change.

My arguments in this and the preceding section are complex. But what I have established above are several interrelated points, which can be stated directly. First, I have suggested that interpellation and subjectification are not simply ideological processes that shape already existing human subjectivities from the outside. They are socio-spatial processes, and our differentiated interpellation and subjectification happens in and through our socio-spatial relations. We live our differentiated subjectification in and through the built environment, which is the presupposition and result of political, economic, and ideological relations. Second, I have argued that *while all of this is true*, we still maintain the potentiality for forms of political action that exceed the parodic, and which are capable of initiating a reweaving of the built environment itself. I have argued that *we are the stuff of freedom*, which means that we have the capacity to reject and transform our "factical situations." Even in the most brutal conditions we can remake our socio-spatial relations and, in the very same

[601] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 40 and 313-314.

[602] Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 30, emphasis added.

[603] Fanon, *Alienation and Freedom*, 582, emphasis added.

moment, remake ourselves. In so doing, I have thus offered an account that departs from Hegel, as Fanon himself did in his rejection of Hegel's belief that "[s]elf-consciousness achieves its satisfaction" teleologically and predictably in and through its engagement with another *equal and independent* self-consciousness.[604] And I have, going further, suggested that we can identify the enduring potentiality for political agency, and our capacity to remake even the most violent socio-spatial relations, in and through this break with Hegelian thought.

Still, what continues to remain partially out of view—and what must be taken up in the final section of this chapter—is how my specific understanding of the capitalist spatial matrix relates to this account. If we have now established how differentiated subjectivities are produced in and through the built environment, and demonstrated how we might account for the capacity for political action and the remaking of the built environment in the first instance, what continues to remain unanswered is how the specific account of the built environment traced in the preceding chapters of this dissertation might be positioned in this context. How does the capitalist spatial matrix—as I have described it—shape the differentiated interpellation of subjects?

Nature's metabolism

In engaging this final question, the concept of "metabolism" provides a useful point of departure. Indeed, we can begin by recalling that human beings always exist in a relation of metabolic interchange with their environments. The concept of metabolism has recently attracted

[604] Hegel quoted in Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 183. As is clear at this stage, I am not interested in developing a sympathetic reading of Hegel's philosophy of history. In fact, I would go beyond the ambivalence that defines certain moments in Fanon's own engagement with Hegel. At its best, Hegel's account requires what I take to be the outlandish claim that historical events "conform to some purpose or design, or that they happen of necessity to realize a purpose"; see Beiser, *Hegel*, 264. At its worst, it is rooted in an expressive, teleological, and Eurocentric understanding of the social totality and of world history. With that said, there are more charitable readings of Hegel available, for those interested. The most significant of recent years is Terry Pinkard's *Does History Make Sense?: Hegel on the Historical Shapes of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).

widespread interest within and beyond the critical social sciences. In no small part due to the pioneering work of ecological Marxists like John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett, and more recent commentators like Kohei Saito, Marx's specific understanding of "metabolism"—a concept he deployed to describe both the universal interchange between humans and their non-human world, as well as the specific "destructive modifications of the material world [wrought] by the reified logic of capital"—has become a fully developed research area unto itself.[605] As this work notes, Marx's writing on the relationship between humans and non-human nature moved from an early humanistic concern with the potentiality for a "genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man," or the "transcendence of self-alienation" via a "true reconciliation of humanity and nature"[606]; and toward a much more concrete and grounded engagement, in *The German Ideology* (1846) and later texts, with the "kinds of social relations" that "make nature undergo various modifications in an antagonistic and alienated manner," and which disturb the metabolism of non-human nature under the capitalist mode of production.[607] It is this later engagement with ecology—by way of the specific concept of metabolism (*Stoffwechsel*)—that has placed Marx at the core of many contemporary ecological debates.

With that said, I raise the specter of Marx here, and the notion of metabolism specifically, not to enter into a set of debates on Marx's intellectual biography. I am interested in what the concept of metabolism brings into view regarding our account of interpellation and the capitalist built environment. In light of the questions sketched above, it is my contention that the capitalist spatial matrix—as it has been theorized thus far—helps to give shape to bodies and subjectivities by

[605] Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism*, 19.

[606] Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism*, 44.

[607] Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism*, 60.

establishing the accreted material conditions through which we must undertake our metabolic interaction with our environments—through which we must make ourselves and our more-than-human surroundings. More precisely, my final argument of this chapter is (1) that the cumulative force of history—of political, ideological, and economic processes—is literally inscribed in space; that "[w]e can look at the politico-economic system of the world as something like a water management system, a web of aqueducts that spans the globe, channeling, instead of water, advantages and disadvantages from one place to another"[608]; (2) that the built environment structures the "inertias, gravities, pressures, and bottlenecks that bound and channel the endless flow of the present"[609]; (3) that the built environment differentially structures the interpellation of subjects, orienting their relation to capitalism's constitutive abodes, and their relation to the logically contingent and state-mediated forms of social differentiation sketched in chapter three; and (4) that our metabolic interaction with our environments under capitalism is thus not merely structured by the "reified movement of capital," [610] but by our differentiated positions within and reproduction through the built environment as well.

This account of the built environment allows us to move beyond the truism that the past is always "mingling with the present."[611] It allows us to argue, more specifically, that the capitalist spatial matrix materializes and carries forward this residual past, and differentially structures our interpellation as subjects. It structures our relation to the forms of exploitation and expropriation that necessarily define capitalist social totalities, and our relation to those logically contingent yet

[608] Cf. Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 20.

[609] Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations*, 21.

[610] Cf. Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism*, 133.

[611] Harootunian, *Marx After Marx*, 17.

state-mediated forms of ascriptive differentiation that so often structure them as well. In this context it is useful to consider Marx and his understanding of metabolism, if only to demonstrate the specificity of our account. There is no doubt that Marx considered how subjectivities are made and remade through their metabolic interactions with the more-than-human world. But there is also little doubt that, for him, the mutual interpenetration of human beings and their environment was primarily considered in relation to the wage nexus. Metabolism was largely understood in relation to the ostensibly "capitalist form of labor, that is, 'wage labor.'"[612] And what I am suggesting, by contrast, is that subjects are always already interpellated *in situ*; and, moreover, that this process of interpellation structures the interchange between their "organic" and "inorganic body" insofar as it situates them in specific relation to the wage nexus, capital's ever-shifting expropriative dynamics, and/or the forms of differentiation that are constituted by and constitutive of those processes. What the built environment structures is not merely a metabolic relation via waged exploitation, but a vast set of relations to the "means of life" more broadly. It structures our interchange with the "sensuous external world" in general.[613]

Of course, the forms of interpellation and subjectification that occur in and through the built environment position some people in relations of metabolic interchange that are directly structured by the wage nexus. They situate them in a wage-mediated "industrial battle" that transforms their "muscles" and "nervous system."[614] But for others, interpellation in and through the built

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[612] Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism*, 196.

[613] Judith Butler, "The Inorganic Body in the Early Marx: A Limit-Concept of Anthropocentrism," *Radical Philosophy* 2, no. 6 (2019): 9.

[614] Marx, *Capital,* 548 and 552; see also, Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998); Søren Mau, "The Body," in *The SAGE Handbook of Marxism*, eds. Beverly Skeggs, Sara Farris, Alberto Toscano, and Svenja Bromberg (London: SAGE, 2022), 1268-1286; Nate Holdren, "Social Murder: Capitalism's Systematic and State-Organized Killing," in *Marxism and the Capitalist State: Towards a New Debate*, eds.

environment largely *inhibits* participation in waged work. It leads to relations of metabolic interchange defined by *persistent wagelessness*, either as a result of capital's tendency to "shrink[] the very foundation on which new value is introduced to circulation,"[615] and/or due to their relegation to capital's constitutive spheres of unwaged social reproductive and expropriated work which sit behind the wage nexus and function as its conditions of possibility.[616] One's subjectification via the capitalist spatial matrix will structure their relation to "the presence or absence of work," and to "forms of work that sustain or wreck bodies."[617] And it will also shape their relation to state spatial policies that help to construct not simply abstract labor, but concrete laborers, and the forms of ascriptive differentiation that determine their relative value and the rhythms of their daily lives.[618]

As we know from our reading of Fanon, these metabolic relations are open to contestation and change. In fact, Fanon himself provides an illustration of what piecemeal change and revolutionary transformation entail in the context of spatialized interpellation, and a sense of the kinds of metabolic relations that those transformations might produce. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon shows how struggles can produce minor re-articulations in the relation between capital and difference. He describes a situation in which a newly independent nation emerges from colonial domination, only to find itself stuck *within the established socio-spatial forms* that defined the preceding round of accumulation, because "[t]he colonial regime ha[d] carved out certain channels and they

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Rob Hunter, Rafael Khachaturian, and Eva Nanopoulos (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 185.

[615] Best, "Wages for Housework Redux," 902.

[616] See, for context, Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004); Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor* (London: Zed, 2014).

[617] Butler, "The Inorganic Body in the Early Marx," 15.

[618] See Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, 94.

must be maintained or catastrophe will threaten."[619] Fanon describes a situation in which political struggle gives way to modified articulations of capital and difference—"vulgar racism" gives way to "subtler" forms of racist domination, for example—albeit without much transformative change in existing metabolic relations in no small part because of the endurance of the extant capitalist spatial matrix and the forms of interpellation and subjectification it brought with it.[620] However, at critical moments throughout Fanon's corpus he also attends to the capacity of subjects to remake their spatial matrix, instantiating radically different metabolic relations and corporeal structures as well. He not only demonstrates that the spatial matrix is implicated in and constituted through the uneven interpellation of subjects—"identifying particular regions [and subjectivities] for production," others for expropriation and social reproduction, "and others for neglect"—but describes moments in which spatial practices produce different kinds of subjects with radically different metabolic relations.[621]

These are moments of re-spatialization that enable the reciprocal interaction between self and other, and which "no longer serve the purpose of segregating and sequestering people" along the lines of race or gender, "but [] instead introduce dimensions of mutuality and reciprocity into human relationships."[622] Begüm Adalet's reading of Fanon is instructive for our purposes here. As she points out, "the material elements of the revolution…occasion[] the emergence of a new individual" in Fanon's account.[623] In moments of revolutionary transformation there is a *simultaneous*

[619] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 100.

[620] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 35.

[621] Lowe quoted in Begüm Adalet, "Infrastructures of Decolonization: Scales of Worldmaking in the Writings of Frantz Fanon," *Political Theory* 50, no. 1 (2022): 14.

[622] Adalet, "Infrastructures of Decolonization," 17.

[623] Adalet, "Infrastructures of Decolonization," 18.

"transformation of the earth and workers" and that transformation takes place through the remaking of the built environment.[624] Indeed, what Fanon suggests—and Adalet underscores—is that in emancipatory moments a new kind of subjectivity appears that exists in a new metabolic relation to its means of subsistence and means of life, and this occurs through a conscious restructuring of the spatial matrix and through a remaking of socio-spatial relations. After all, the racializing and gendering schema described by Fanon "do[] not fall from the sky." They are "held in place by…entire landscapes" and by socio-spatial practices which make those categories and their relation to capitalism's constitutive dynamics of exploitation, expropriation, and social reproductive theft.[625] And as such, Fanon argues that to change ourselves and our metabolic relations, we must also transform the capitalist built environment.

Conclusion

This chapter has proceeded in several parts. First, it recapitulated the fundamental Althusserian conceit that subjectivities always act through their "subjection and via practices imbedded in apparatuses," noting the spatiality attendant to that observation and noting that the process of subjectification is decidedly less straightforward than Althusser himself might have supposed.[626] Underscoring that both Althusser and subsequent Althusserians have largely focused on the relationship between interpellation and the production of individuated bourgeois subjects—which are not simply "concrete individuals" but concrete individuals "inscribed into a symbolic field of recognition," and afforded "self-possession" and "agential freedom"—I turned to Fanon to

[624] Adalet, "Infrastructures of Decolonization," 23.

[625] Arun Saldanha, "Skin, Affect, Aggregation: Guattarian Variations on Fanon," *Environment and Planning A* 42 (2010): 2411 and 2414.

[626] Alex Dubilet, "A Political Theology of Interpellation: On Subjection, Individuation, and Becoming Nothing," *Cultural Critique* 122 (2024): 145.

demonstrate these complexities.[627] With Fanon in view, I demonstrated that the built environment not only materializes and concretizes political, economic, and ideological relations, but that it is produced by and productive of a range of subjectivities, some of which depart entirely from the image of the bourgeois subject. Finally, I then turned directly to the problem of agency and the potentiality for subjects to remake their socio-spatial relations and remake themselves. I suggested that Fanon allows us to see that human beings—as the stuff of freedom—can always remake social space and the built environment, and their own metabolic relations with (what the early Marx referred to as) "inorganic nature." Plainly, I deployed a reading of Fanon to highlight both the spatiality of differentiated forms of interpellation within capitalist society, and the enduring potentiality for social subjects to remake the capitalist built environment too.

[627] Dubilet, "A Political Theology of Interpellation," 138.

Part II

The "black belt"

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s a debate occupied some of the core theorists of American communism. The "black belt debate," as it came to be known, considered whether African Americans in the post-Reconstruction south constituted an *oppressed nation* within the borders of the United States. The debate largely took shape within the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), and its proponents suggested that the so-called black belt—or "the soil stretching from East Texas to Virginia, with its heartland in the prairies of Alabama and Mississippi"—was not only an oppressed black nation, but a nation "which had the right to demand *self-determination*."[628] This position reached its popular zenith in the early 1930s, following a series of resolutions adopted by the Third International, which recognized "Negroes in the 'black belt' counties of the American South" in precisely those terms.[629] Of course, the black belt debate was largely waged in theory. The emergence of an autonomous black nation in the US south was never practically in view. And yet, even if its material implications were indirect, the black belt debate stands, at least for our purposes, as a critically revealing episode in the history of American political economic thought. From its intellectual emergence via the ideals of Lenin in the 1910s[630]; to its consolidation as an official party line in the late 1920s and early 1930s; to its formal abandonment in 1935 by the CPUSA, in its effort to "build a 'popular front' against fascism"[631]; the black belt debate has much to teach us.

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[628] Asad Haider, "The Shadow of the Plantation," *Viewpoint Magazine*, February 12, 2017, https://viewpointmag.com/2017/02/12/the-shadow-of-the-plantation/, emphasis added.

[629] Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 49.

[630] See, for context, Minkah Makalani, "Internationalizing the Third International: The African Blood Brotherhood, Asian Radicals, and Race, 1919-1922," *The Journal of African American History* 96, no. 2 (2011): 151-178.

[631] Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, 50.

Indeed, in what follows I will take a first step in *concretizing* our theory of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society by attending to the black belt debate specifically. I am not the first to turn to this historical episode with lofty ambitions. But while others have engaged the black belt debate to think through the freedom dreams of the black radical tradition or to consider the promises and pitfalls of identity politics in the present, my contention is rather distinct. My claim is not only that the black belt debate represents a fascinating if anachronistic attempt to think through the trajectory of political and economic life in the decades immediately following the failures of Reconstruction. But, moreover, that the debate itself laid bare the role of the built environment in the production and resolution of capitalist crises—and its role in the reproduction of capital's *constituent* parts. The thinkers implicated in the black belt debate did not position their thought in this way. The black belt debate emerged in a different "problem-space," to use the language of David Scott, or in response to a different set of "historically situated questions" for which only an historically situated set of answers was available.[632] Nevertheless, in rereading the black belt debate, we can concretize the role of the built environment in mediating those constitutive crisis tendencies that structure capitalism as an institutionalized social order, and its role in resolving crises that emerge across capitalism's constitutive foreground and background abodes. Through the black belt debate, we can further clarify our account of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society at the highest level of conceptual abstraction.

In the pages that follow I will attend to the oeuvre produced by key participants in the black belt debate throughout the 1930s, and to the work of CPUSA members James S. Allen and Harry Haywood, especially. These thinkers did more than consider the case for black self-determination in

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[632] Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 77; for a more extended discussion of what Scott means by a "problem-space," see David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

those contiguous southern counties where African Americans constituted a numerical majority. They attended closely to the spatiality of capitalist crises—and, in the process, to the role of the built environment in structuring accumulation within and beyond the black belt in the decades following Reconstruction. Finally, in concluding this chapter I will turn to the eventual demise of the black belt debate, and to the re-emergence of the colonial analytic, via concepts like "internal colonialism" and "intercommunalism," in the second half of the twentieth century. I will briefly suggest not only that the black belt debate provided a window onto the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital, but that so too did its re-articulation in other idioms of black anti-imperial thought after 1960.

Lenin, the Comintern, and the survivals of slavery

Before proceeding, we would do well to situate the black belt debate within its intellectual-historical context, and to outline its primary contours and political and theoretical stakes. In the first instance, we would do well to recall that the black belt thesis was adopted by the CPUSA in the late 1920s, in no small part because of the intellectual and political concerns of Lenin, which well predated the thesis' entry into US political debate. Lenin was long interested in the condition of African Americans and with the enduring "survivals of slavery" (as he put it) in the US south following the American Civil War. In 1913, Lenin drafted his first text on that subject. It was a short article titled "Russians and Negroes"—and it was not published until 1925 in *Krasnaya Niva*, following his death—but it represented a clear effort to think through the "feudal remnants" that structured the Russian social formation of his time by way of a consideration of the enduring survivals of slavery in the American south. He continued to develop these comparative concerns throughout the 1910s. In 1915 Lenin published "Capitalism and Agriculture in the United States of America," which broadly considered the encroachment of capitalist forms of life and development in agriculture across the United States, and which returned several times to the specific case of post-

Reconstruction southern sharecropping. Lenin described sharecropping as a "*typically Russian…labour service system*," and as one which left even ostensibly "emancipated" African Americans "hemmed in, isolated and deprived of fresh air."[633] Indeed, even in 1917 Lenin made time to draft a text titled "Statistics and Sociology," which dealt again with African American life, feudal remnants, and agrarian conditions in the south more specifically.[634]

In other words, throughout the 1910s the problem of African American oppression and its relation to putatively non-capitalist forms of domination was, for Lenin, a central intellectual concern. But the *political stakes* of this engagement only truly emerged in 1920. After several years of reflection on the survivals of slavery, in 1920 Lenin wrote up his "Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Question," which he presented at the second congress of the Comintern. Therein, he moved beyond the historical and comparative gestures that defined his earlier writing on the survivals of slavery, and suggested that "all Communist parties should render direct aid to revolutionary movements among the *dependent and underprivileged nations* (for example, Ireland, the American Negroes, etc.)." As he understood it, the movement toward global communism should work to stamp out "reactionary and medieval elements in backward countries" and assist the "bourgeois-democratic liberation movement" within nations where "feudal or patriarchal" relations were dominant.[635] Lenin argued that "American Negroes"—the subject of so much of his study over

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[633] Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Collected Works, Volume 22* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 25 and 27, emphasis added; see also, Joe Pateman, "VI Lenin on the 'Black Question,'" *Critique* 28, no. 1 (2020): 77-93.

[634] See Oscar Berland, "The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the 'Negro Question' in America: 1919-1931: Part One," *Science & Society* 63, no. 4 (1999-2000): 415.

[635] Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Collected Works, Volume 31* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 148 and 149, emphasis added. For a more complete discussion of the critical response Lenin's draft theses provoked from M.N. Roy, Lao Hsiu-Chao of the Chinese Socialist Workers Party, and the Communist Party of Korea's Pak Chin-sun, see Makalani, "Internationalizing the Third International," 164.

the preceding years—constituted a *dependent nation defined by its feudal remnants*, or a nation that had not yet achieved a "bourgeois" revolution. Upon making this provocative (and rather brief) assertion, Lenin had his detractors. John Reed, the head of the Communist Labor Party's delegation to the second congress in 1920, responded immediately by insisting that "the only proper policy…is to consider the Negro first of all as a laborer."[636] Against the invocation of African American nationality, Reed suggested that black Americans "were part of the American people, though underprivileged, and [that] they wanted to be accorded their rightful place as such, with full equal rights."[637] In fact, even the drafting of these "Draft Theses" was a contested process, one which situated Lenin in pitched disagreement with the Bengali communist M.N. Roy.[638]

Still, the basic political provocation that Lenin put forward at the second congress—his claim that African Americans constituted a dependent nation specifically—ultimately proved influential, nonetheless. This understanding of black oppression shaped the thought of figures like Otto Huiswoud and Claude McKay in its immediate aftermath—if only by way of their disagreement.[639] Born in Dutch Guinea and Jamaica respectively, Huiswoud and McKay emigrated to the United States in the 1910s, and served as the first black delegates to the Comintern at the

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[636] Reed quoted in Berland, "The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the 'Negro Question' in America, Part One," 417.

[637] James Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South: A Communist's Memoir* (Minneapolis: MEP Publications, 2001), 14.

[638] As Arun Kundani reminds us, "[t]he Comintern also adopted Roy's own supplementary theses along with Lenin's draft." See Arun Kundani, *What is Antiracism?: And Why it Means Anticapitalism* (New York: Verso, 2023), 62; see also, for context, John Haithcox, "The Roy-Lenin Debate on Colonial Policy: A New Interpretation," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 23, no. 1 (1963): 93-101; Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: An Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978).

[639] For a more detailed account of the relationship between Huiswood, McKay, and Lenin, see Berland, "The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the 'Negro Question' in America, Part One," 421.

fourth congress in Moscow in 1922.[640] Upon their arrival in Moscow they were "treated like celebrities" given the rising international profile of the "black question."[641] And while there, they built on, contested, and complicated Lenin's formulations on black nationhood in the United States, engaged in exchanges with figures like Sen Katayama—a Japanese revolutionary that was exposed to African American oppression during his studies in Nashville, Tennessee[642]—and "articulat[ed] an intercolonial internationalism through Comintern policy debates."[643]

In fact, even those that ultimately rejected what came to be known as the black belt thesis—sketched in more depth below—were forced to grapple with Lenin's claims regarding African American oppression and the survivals of slavery in the years following his death in 1924. The Trinidadian historian and Marxist C.L.R. James could hardly be accused of succumbing to CPUSA orthodoxy on matters of racial oppression in the United States. As he at one point put it, the CPUSA line on black national self-determination—which fashioned itself as a continuation of Lenin's writing on that theme—was "economically reactionary," "politically false," and effectively offered a form of "inverted segregation."[644] Black people in the United States did not "need the party Lenin knew," let alone the kind of party practice imagined by the CPUSA and its black belt thesis.[645] Nevertheless, even James stressed the importance of Lenin's thinking on the survivals of

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[640] Berland, "The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the 'Negro Question' in America, Part One," 418.

[641] Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, 47.

[642] Mark Solomon, *The Cry was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 41.

[643] Makalani, "Internationalizing the Third International," 172; see also, Charisse Burden-Stelly, *Black Scare/Red Scare: Theorizing Capitalist Racism in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023), 90.

[644] J.R. Johnson, "Preliminary Notes on the Negro Question," *Socialist Workers Party Internal Bulletin* 9 (1939): 4. (J.R. Johnson was commonly used as a pseudonym by James.)

slavery in the US south, and its centrality to many communists in their subsequent efforts to make sense of African American oppression. As he put it, "it is impossible to get a real grasp of the social classes in the agricultural South and their development…without a close study of Lenin's analysis of Southern agriculture, and his brief but pregnant presentation of the Negro question."[646] Lenin's writing on the survivals of slavery established the terrain for subsequent communist engagements with black oppression in the United States, and for what came to be known as the black belt debate.

What is sketched above is, however, only a pre-history of that debate. While Lenin's elliptical and enigmatic understanding of black national oppression gained currency throughout the 1910s and the early 1920s, the black belt debate emerged in earnest in 1928. It was then that the Nebraska-born black communist Harry Haywood (born Haywood Hall Jr.) and the Siberian communist Charles Nasanov took up a reading of Lenin's provocations, and successfully led a campaign within the Comintern in support of a formal resolution on black nationhood and self-determination in the US south. Haywood had come to socialist politics in the early 1920s, by way of his older brother Otto Hall. He was briefly a member of the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), led by the Caribbean-born radical Cyril Briggs, and, in that context, he was almost certainly exposed to debates on black nationalism, not least to Briggs' own black nationalist line, which he developed in opposition to Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association as early as 1917 in the *Amsterdam News*.[647] However, it was only in 1928 that Haywood came to endorse—and effectively came to represent and embody—the view that African Americans in the black belt of the US south constituted an

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[645] C.L.R James, "Revolution in the 20th c." (p. 7), 1970s-1980s, Box 5, Folder 1, C.L.R. James Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Libraries.

[646] J.R. Johnson, "One-Tenth of the Nation," *Labor Action* 11, no. 2 (1947): 2.

[647] Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 124. For a much more detailed account of the relationship between Briggs and Garvey, see Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

oppressed nation with a right to self-determination. By that point Haywood had spent several years as a member of the CPUSA, and—more importantly—several years studying at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East and at the Lenin School in Moscow, under the instruction and influence of Nasanov.[648]

Indeed, Haywood and Nasanov—erstwhile student and teacher—inaugurated the black belt debate by introducing the idea of black nationhood in the US south to Comintern debate at the six congress of the Comintern in 1928; and, going further, by securing the adoption of a formal resolution on black national self-determination in the black belt, following an internal discussion among a "special sub-committee on the Negro question."[649] While the exact authorship of the final resolution formally adopted by the sixth congress is somewhat opaque, what is certain is that Haywood and Nasanov were central to its drafting and its earliest and most forceful advocates.[650] The final draft that was adopted by the Comintern emerged—as Cedric Robinson has put it—from "resolutions and discussion papers drafted by Haywood and Nasanov."[651] And in that sense Haywood and Nasanov effectively gave rise to the black belt debate, helping to "defin[e] the status of the Negro as that of an oppressed people striving for freedom"; and raising African American oppression in the black belt of the US south "to the center of the fight for democratic advance along the road to socialism."[652]

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[648] Michael Goldfield, "The Decline of the Communist Party and the Black Question in the US: Harry Haywood's *Black Bolshevik*," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 12, no. 1 (1980): 47.

[649] On the composition of this sub-committee and the research it undertook, see Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 228.

[650] Oscar Berland, "The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the 'Negro Question' in America: 1919-1931: Part Two," *Science & Society* 64, no. 2 (2000): 199.

[651] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 224.

The 1928 resolution formally adopted by the Comintern began from a set of demographic observations. It noted that "[t]he bulk of the Negro population (86%) live[d] in the southern states"; that "of this number 74[%] live[d] in the rural districts and [were] dependent almost exclusively upon agriculture for a livelihood"[653]; and that roughly half of these "rural dwellers" lived in the black belt, or that geographical area of the US south wherein African Americans comprised a majority of the population. It then proceeded to argue that in the black belt region, African Americans were subject not only to the "most ruthless exploitation and persecution," but to specific forms of social domination of a "semi-slave character," which were functional to the expropriation and extraction of "super-profits."[654] These were hardly the documents' sole concerns. The 1928 resolution also discussed practical matters like trade union work and the "working out" of a "definite program of immediate demands" that would "serve as the rallying slogans for the formation of [] peasant organizations."[655] Nevertheless, the 1928 resolution began with the above-sketched demographic and political economic claims in view. And it went on to argue that African American emancipation would be achieved in and through the "right of the Negroes to national self-determination in the southern states, where the Negroes form[ed] a majority of the population," and where they were subjected to specific agrarian forms of superexploitation and "semi-slave" domination.[656]

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[652] Cf. James Allen, "Working Material For A C.P. Discussion Resolution on Theoretical Aspects of the Negro Question" (p. 1), 1956-1959, Box 4, Essays on the Negro Question, James S. Allen Papers, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries.

[653] *The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States* (Washington, DC: Revolutionary Review Press, 1975), 13.

[654] *The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States*, 13.

[655] *The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States*, 21.

[656] *The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States*, 14.

The 1928 resolution was not the final word on these matters, nor was it even the final formal document produced by the Comintern on the black belt thesis. A 1930 resolution was adopted to move beyond some of the opacities that lingered in the 1928 text. Among other clarifying claims, the 1930 resolution emphasized that no forthcoming "industrial revolution" would do away with the remnants of slavery and the forms of superexploitation that defined the black belt.[657] Rather, the black belt demonstrated both the complementarity and contemporaneity of slavery—"in the literal sense of the word"[658]—and industrial capitalist production, a relation that would not naturally wither away over time. The 1930 resolution also underscored that the demographic and political economic situation in the black belt demanded the "complete and unlimited right of the Negro majority to exercise governmental authority in the entire territory of the Black Belt, and to decide upon the relations between their territory and other nations," including its degree of "governmental separation" vis-à-vis the United States.[659]

This latter point provided a critical clarification. It made plain that the call for self-determination in the black belt was not *necessarily* a call for independence from the United States; it was not a call for "complete secession" as Joseph Stalin had put it in "Marxism and the National Question" (1913).[660] Self-determination was, rather, a demand for the "Negro majority and not the white minority in the entire territory" of the black belt to exercise "the right of administrating governmental, legislative and judicial authority."[661] There was no guarantee as to *how* this authority—

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[657] *The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States*, 22.

[658] *The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States*, 24.

[659] *The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States*, 30.

[660] J.V. Stalin, *Works, Volume II* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 321. As Stalin puts it, "[a] nation has the right to arrange its life on autonomous lines. It even has the right to secede. But this does not mean that it should do so under all circumstances" (p. 323).

once secured—would be wielded. As James Forman later summarized, to exercise self-determination "an oppressed nation does not have to exercise the right of independence; a particular oppressed or dependent nation has the right to reject the status of an independent nation and elect to federate itself with another nation or group of nations."[662] Self-determination might thus produce any number of political, territorial, and/or juridical outcomes.

For the practically minded, in the wake of the 1928 and 1930 resolutions there was little more to discuss. As James Allen later recalled, many African Americans living in poverty in the black belt in this period were more "concerned with how they were going to get through the winter" than with abstract-theoretical discussion regarding self-determination and the economic forms at the root of black oppression.[663] And for many of those that were concerned with this condition, the formal endorsement of the 1928 and 1930 resolutions simply provided a rationale to take up new forms of "everyday" organizing in the black belt. In the words of the historian Mark Solomon, "the power of self-determination [laid] not in its theoretical validity, but in its pragmatic implications."[664] The CPUSA-backed Sharecroppers' Union (founded in 1931) grew dramatically in the aftermath of the 1930 resolution. It "claimed 12,000 members" by the fall of 1935 and was focused on advocating on behalf of "landless, debt-ridden and racially persecuted farmers" in the rural south.[665] Other activists turned more directly to anti-lynching advocacy in light of the 1928 and 1930 resolutions, situating

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[661] *The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States*, 31.

[662] James Forman, *Self-Determination & the African-American People* (Seattle: Open Hand Publishing, 1981), 4.

[663] Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South*, 51.

[664] Solomon, *The Cry was Unity*, 87.

[665] Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 403.

lynching as a "weapon of national oppression" in the black belt that guaranteed "*super-profits for [the] capitalist landlords and bosses*." Following the resolutions on the black belt, lynching was understood as integrally linked to black national oppression, as a method through which "capitalist rulers" enlisted white workers to "defend" their profits, and as a concrete injustice that could be struggled against.[666]

Others, however, argued that the black belt thesis demanded further intellectual investigation if it was to move beyond mere "sloganeering."[667] Many wondered, for example, how exactly the black belt constituted a nation. The official line, expressed directly by Haywood, was that "the formation of peoples into nations [was] an objective law of social development"; and, moreover, that nations were communities that maintained "common territory, a common economic life, a common language and a common psychological makeup…manifested in common features in a national culture."[668] In this understanding of nationhood, the influence of Stalin's aforementioned "Marxism and the National Question" was quite plain. As Stalin put it in that text, "*[a] nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture*."[669] But this official line hardly answered the many lingering questions that persisted around the black belt and its status as a nation. Did the black belt really constitute a nation by those principles? Should those principles inform struggles

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[666] Harry Haywood and Milton Howard, "Lynching: A Weapon of National Oppression," *Viewpoint Magazine*, January 9, 2017, https://viewpointmag.com/2017/01/09/lynching-a-weapon-of-national-oppression-1932/, emphasis original; see also, Harry Haywood, *The South Comes North in Detroit's Own Scottsboro Case* (League of Struggles for Negro Rights: New York, 1934). Interestingly, in roughly this same historical moment Ho Chi Minh developed a comparable account of lynching in his text "Lynching: A Little Known Aspect of American Civilization" (1924). For a discussion, see Pateman, "VI Lenin on the 'Black Question.'"

[667] Goldfield, "The Decline of the Communist Party and the Black Question in the US," 52.

[668] Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 157.

[669] Stalin, *Works, Volume II*, 307, emphasis original.

surrounding nationhood and nationality in the black belt, in the first instance? Did the struggle for national liberation inadvertently play into the "white chauvinism" of segregationists?[670] These questions all remained hotly contested in light of the 1928 and 1930 resolutions and subject to debate.

The black belt thesis also raised the vexing question of the relationship between national self-determination in the southern United States and the struggle of African Americans outside of the black belt. These struggles were understood as related, in some way or another, by those that drafted the 1928 and 1930 resolutions. Haywood—in texts like 1933's "The Struggle for the Leninist Position on the Negro Question in the United States" and "South Comes North" (an address delivered in Detroit in 1934)—attempted to tease out this relation explicitly. As he put it in the former text, "[t]he Negro poor farmers and farm laborer fleeing from the misery and starvation of the Southern plantations to the industrial centers of the North, do not thereby obtain freedom"; rather, "at their heels follows also the heritage of plantation slavery resulting in lower wages, worse living conditions, discrimination in social life even in the 'liberal' North."[671] Following from this position, Haywood argued that an "agrarian revolution" capable of stamping out poverty and the "vestiges of slave bondage" in the south via a politics of national self-determination, "this, together with the general struggle for democratic rights" for black people "all over the country," constituted the primary dimensions of the "black national liberation movement in the USA."[672] But how this all hung together—how *exactly* self-determination in the south related to the struggles of African

[670] R.S. Fraser's "For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle," published in 1955 in the *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, captures several of these concerns.

[671] Harry Haywood, "The Struggle for a Leninist Position on the Negro Question in the U.S.A.," *The Communist* 12, no. 9 (1933): 888-889.

[672] Haywood, "The Struggle for a Leninist Position on the Negro Question in the U.S.A.," 889.

Americans in the north—was rather opaque. It was asserted by proponents of the black belt line that "Negroes in the North are very much interested in winning the right to self-determination" in the black belt.[673] But how exactly they would benefit from—and relate to—self-determination in the south was not clear.

The 1928 and 1930 resolutions also carried with them a certain ambiguity regarding the relationship between the black belt struggle and anti-imperial struggles abroad. For some, the black belt thesis situated African Americans at the cutting edge of global black revolution. That kind of US-centrism had existing roots in African American political thought. In 1922, the Program of the African Blood Brotherhood stated that "[i]t is the Negroes resident in America…who are destined to assume the leadership of our people in a powerful world movement for Negro liberation." In that account, the United States constituted a "base for easy contact with the whole world," such that "the United States is destined, until the Negro race is liberated, to become the center of the Negro World Movement."[674] Many of the theorists of the black belt thesis thought similarly. In a context in which global anti-imperialism was on the agenda,[675] it was understood by some that the "Negro peasantry of America must enter into the struggle against [global] American imperialism"[676]; and, beyond that claim, that African Americans in the black belt would "*influence and direct* the revolutionary movement

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[673] *The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States*, 23.

[674] "The Programme of the African Blood Brotherhood," *The Communist Review* 2, no. 6 (1922): 454.

[675] E. San Juan Jr., "African American Internationalism and Solidarity with the Philippine Revolution," *Socialism and Democracy* 24, no. 2 (2010): 32-65; Margaret Stevens, "Hands off Haiti!": Self-determination, Anti-imperialism, and the Communist Movement in the United States, 1925-1929," *The Black Scholar* 37, no. 4 (2008): 61-70.

[676] James Ford, *Negro's Struggle Against Imperialism* (New York: Provisional International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, 1930), 15.

in all parts of the world where the Negroes [were] oppressed by imperialism."[677] And yet, the resolutions of 1928 and 1930 hardly built consensus around these points. Whether or not African Americans in the black belt should lead those "under the iron heel" of US imperialism abroad remained up for debate.[678]

In short, as influential as these resolutions were in their re-articulation and popularization of Lenin's understanding of black oppression and the survivals of slavery, they raised as many questions as they answered. They gave way to sprawling intellectual debate—and pragmatic political action—in the years following their adoption. Figures like Otto Hall—Harry Haywood's brother, and a critical interlocutor on the question of black oppression from within the CPUSA—raised several of the concerns outlined above. He ultimately concluded that "the historical development of the American Negro has tended to create in him the desire to be considered a part of the American nation," rather than a citizen of an autonomous nation.[679] And beyond the CPUSA, critiques of the black belt thesis were often more direct. The American Trotskyist Max Shachtman argued in his 1933 pamphlet *Communism and the Negro* that the "national Negro urban population…has risen uninterruptedly each decade since 1890," throwing into question the forms of agrarian superexploitation that stood at the heart of the black belt thesis.[680] In his view, only two forces working in tandem could lead the "progressive struggle for the emancipation of the Negro: the

[677] C.I. Resolution quoted in Jos Prokopec, "Negroes as an Oppressed National Minority," *The Communist* 9, no. 3 (1930): 214, emphasis added.

[678] Ford, *Negro's Struggle Against Imperialism*, 8.

[679] Hall quoted in Berland, "The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the 'Negro Question' in America, Part Two," 201.

[680] Max Shachtman, *Race and Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2003), 31-32.

white proletarian leading the poor white farmer behind him, and the Negro proletarian occupying the same relationship towards the Negro in agriculture."[681]

In fact, while the black belt thesis reached its popular zenith in the early years of the 1930s, the tenuous consensus that developed around it within the CPUSA following the 1928 and 1930 resolutions slowly unraveled throughout the decade that followed. The CPUSA came to be a voice against the "legal lynching" of the Scottsboro boys in 1931, which radically increased the profile of its work on matters of black oppression and racial justice. In taking up that case the CPUSA was "responding," as Oscar Berland has put it, "to a directive issued by the Communist International a few years earlier to put the 'Negro question' high on its agenda."[682] But by the mid-1930s interest in the black belt thesis within the CPUSA was on the decline. By 1935, party leaders that sought to align the organization with mainstream currents in US politics in the face of global fascism formally abandoned their endorsement of the black belt thesis. And, in the aftermath of the Popular Front, the CPUSA came to be dominated by "Browderism"[683]—a conciliatory and reformist ideology pursued under the direction of Earl Browder—which not only oversaw the renunciation of the black belt line but, ultimately, the complete dissolution of the CPUSA in 1944. Indeed, while a "reconstituted Communist Party" eventually expelled Browder—and walked back his

[681] Shachtman, *Race and Revolution*, 65-66. For a critique of Shachtman from outside of the CPUSA, see Christopher Taylor, "Sharing Time: C.L.R. James and Southern Agrarian Movements," *Social Text* 30, no. 2 (2012): 75-98.

[682] See Berland, "The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the 'Negro Question' in America, Part One," 412; see also, on the practical implications of the black belt thesis, Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

[683] Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 530-531. The basic contours of "Browderism" were laid out by Browder during a speech delivered in Bridgeport, Connecticut on December 12, 1943.

"abandonment of the fight of the Negro people for self-determination"[684]—by the mid-1940s the black belt thesis was largely abandoned.[685]

The institutional history of the black belt line, and its shifting fate throughout the 1930s and beyond, is thus a complicated one. With that said, it is not my intention to provide a comprehensive account of the black belt thesis and its movement from Lenin's work in the 1910s to its short-lived and ill-fated resurrection in the post-Browder moment. Rather, what I have sought to demonstrate thus far is simply that the history of the black belt thesis speaks to the rise and fall of a distinctive set of questions within an historically and geographically situated problem-space. With that in view, what I will argue in the remainder of this chapter is that if we attend closely to key submissions into the black belt debate—and to their readings of the post-Reconstruction south from the vantage of the 1930s in particular—we can gain a clearer sense of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constitutive abodes.

Reconstruction and the capitalist spatial matrix

Despite the ambiguities and controversies surrounding the black belt thesis, a keen spatial sensibility runs through its uneven history. Several participants in the black belt debate were concerned not only with making sense of the role of "peonage, share-croppage, [and] the abuses of landlordism" in shaping life in the black belt, but with situating those forms of labor in relation to a much broader (and persistently shifting) economic geography. [686] They attended not simply to the problem of black self-determination, but to the remaking of capitalist space within and beyond the

[684] Quoted in Forman, *Self-Determination & the African-American People*, 61.

[685] For a highly unsympathetic reading of the CPUSA's shifting position on the black belt during the above-sketched period, see Herbert Hill, "The Communist Party—Enemy of Negro Equality," *The Crisis* 58, no. 6 (1951): 365-424.

[686] Ford, *Negro's Struggle Against Imperialism*, 8.

black belt, and to the variegated crisis tendencies that propelled its remaking in the decades after Reconstruction. And in that sense, several of the most prominent activist-intellectuals involved in the black belt debate provide crucially important accounts in relation to our investigation of the built environment and its role in the reproduction of capital's foreground and background abodes.

Take, to begin, the influential American communist James S. Allen, who wrote *The Negro Question in the United States* in 1936, ultimately coming down on the side of the proponents of the black belt line. That text started from the observation that "[t]he slave plantations" of the US south "nourished the textile industry of England and New England during the period of its first development." It began by linking Mississippi and Manchester, positioning them as part and parcel of a single economy. Given Marx's well-known assertion in *Capital* that putatively patriarchal slave relations were transformed via their integration into "a 'calculated and calculating system,'" there was nothing particularly surprising about that claim.[687] And yet, Allen extended this observation regarding unwaged work and its articulation within a capitalist economy in critical respects. He went on to argue that the black belt was, in the decades following slavery, "a well-defined area of Negro majority in a territory where outmoded, antiquated and semi-feudal forms of agriculture prevail[ed]"—one which was "essentially the same area on which the mass of Negroes were enslaved by King Cotton."[688] Allen noted, that is, the *endurance* and *continuity* of unwaged work in the black belt well after the formal end of plantation slavery. And, as we will see below, he attended to capital's crisis-induced efforts to facilitate accumulation in and through the re-spatialization of waged and unwaged work after Reconstruction as well.

[687] James Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1936), 121.

[688] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 14 and 24.

Like other participants in the black belt debate, Allen positioned Reconstruction as a failed project of bourgeois revolution. He understood radical Reconstruction, as it was pursued under the auspices of the "Sumner-Stevens group," as a project to "smash[] the slavocracy and its economic and political power" in the south; as one which ultimately failed to "complete the bourgeois democratic revolution" that began "with the War of Independence in the eighteenth century"; and, finally, as one which culminated in 1877, via the Hayes-Tilden agreement, with a compromise between the northern bourgeoisie and the "former ruling class of the South."[689] But rather than taking this failure as evidence of the *unvarying* continuity of slavery in the decades following Reconstruction, Allen offered a more discriminating and discerning position. He focused on the persistent *remaking and re-spatialization* of the "semi-slave agrarian economy," and on how those processes of remaking and re-spatialization "*conditioned and shaped industrialization*," patterns of urban agglomeration, and waged exploitation.[690]

Indeed, Allen argued from the vantage of the 1930s that the forms of expropriation that defined the slave economy did not simply persist after Reconstruction, nor did they simply wither away. The inherited relations of racialized expropriation that defined the slave economy were *granularly re-spatialized and reconstituted* in support of renewed forms of accumulation, leading to the production of a new built environment. The remaking of the agrarian economy "determined the nature and extent of industrialization," its geography, and its labor markets—just as it was conditioned and shaped by it.[691] As Allen pointed out, in the years between 1860 and 1880 the

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[689] Shachtman, *Race and Revolution*, 19. Of course, this is itself a specific, and contested, reading of radical Reconstruction, one that we might contrast with Du Bois's famous suggestion that in its most radical form, reconstruction represented a "dictatorship of labor." In the above reading Reconstruction is not understood to have reached that point.

[690] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 9, emphasis added.

[691] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 127.

number of southern farms grew by 128% and the size of southern farms fell dramatically, reflecting the "establishment of plantation tenancy" in the aftermath of slavery and the making of a new socio-spatial regime.[692] During the post-Reconstruction period, formerly enslaved people were drawn back into various forms of forced labor, such as share-cropping, share-tenancy, and cash-renting. Newly founded "vagrancy and apprenticeship laws"—or "black codes"—enabled forms of expropriated work that, unlike "free wage-labor," did not capture surplus in a way that left that surplus "hidden in the money-wage."[693] And these new forms of expropriated work provided a background condition for waged exploitation, which was also remade as capitalists sought out strategies for profitable accumulation. Expropriation in the agrarian hinterland enabled northern industrialists, as Allen put it, to "enter into peaceful collaboration with the overlords of the plantations."[694]

In fact, Allen's account in *The Negro Question in the United States* did not only recall the re-articulation of racialized expropriation following the failures of Reconstruction. It also suggested that this process of reorganization and re-spatialization was part and parcel of a systemic effort to benefit "the chief participants" of American capitalism at the time. With this new socio-spatial regime, "the plantations were allotted the sphere of semi-slave labor and the bankers who had direct interests both in the cotton trade and in the textile industry, were assured a cheap and plentiful cotton."[695] The continuation of expropriated and superexploited work in the black belt—albeit in a new and re-spatialized guise—operated in the interest of southern plantation elites *and* industrial capitalists, so long as the latter maintained access to cheap migrant labor in the north and cheap

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[692] According to Allen, "the average farm in the North in 1850 contained 65.4 acres of improved land, and 100.3 acres in 1910; while in the South the respective figures were 101.1 acres in 1850 and 48.6 acres in 1910." See Allen, *The Negro Question*, 37.

[693] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 47 and 63.

[694] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 121.

[695] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 121.

white labor in the south. Even as a textile industry slowly emerged in the south, it only emerged on the periphery of the black belt, so as not to disturb the newly reorganized and re-articulated forms of expropriated work that formed the backbone of this compromise. The industrial agglomerations that eventually appeared in the south were largely "sprawled around" the "borders of the plantation country," standing as "guardian[s] over the feudal elements which [] survived [in] the countryside."[696] The "slave-empire cities" within the black belt—cities like Atlanta, Memphis, Richmond, Augusta, and Savannah—did not industrialize. They chiefly functioned in the years following Reconstruction as "centers of the cotton trade"; they were "warehousing, ginning, cotton-seed, shipping centers."[697]

In fact, insofar as a textile industry developed in the south in the decades following Reconstruction, it largely did so, according to Allen, by "drain[ing] the labor supply from the white up-country."[698] Southern textile-based industrialization relied largely upon the availability of cheap white labor, leaving intact the forms of racialized expropriation that existed in the black belt. It occurred largely in what some in the post-Reconstruction era referred to as the "fringe belt"—in that border space between the black belt and the Mason-Dixon line, so as not to disturb the newly re-constituted and re-spatialized forms of agrarian expropriation that defined the black belt.[699] And if African Americans "were welcomed" into the realm of industrial exploitation at all, it was sparingly and "as unskilled and underpaid workers only."[700] The "shadow of the plantation" followed them into this new type of work, and—by and large—kept them out.[701]

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[696] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 121.

[697] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 122.

[698] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 116.

[699] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 117.

[700] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 148.

Allen's work is not only of interest for its attention to capitalism's background abode of racialized expropriation. In his engagements with the black belt debate, he also attended, alongside Harry Haywood, to capital's tendency to undermine its ecological background conditions of possibility, clarifying the relation between the remaking of the built environment and the underproduction of that ecological hidden abode. Allen commented, in work like *Negro Liberation* (1938), on the rising tide of what came to be known as "plantationitis" in the black belt economy.[702] For him, the post-Reconstruction black belt tended toward a "definite retrogression" in soil fertility and productivity.[703] Harry Haywood developed comparable claims. According to Haywood, "[s]oil decadence" rapidly advanced in the south after Reconstruction, such that "[m]uch of the once-rich land of the region [was] left bare and unprotected from erosion, its fertility syphoned away by the soil destroying methods of cotton culture."[704] He noted that the "plantation single-crop system [was] uneconomic and wasteful" in the decades following Reconstruction, and that by the early 1930s "at least one-third of the Southern land was eroded and that half of all eroded land in the country was in the South."[705]

In fact, both Allen and Haywood noted that this tendency toward ecological underproduction structured the historical-geographical evolution of post-Reconstruction plantation agriculture. Allen was particularly attuned to how this tendency structured the re-spatialization of capitalist investment and, as such, the remaking of the capitalist built environment. "[T]he opening

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[701] Harry Haywood, *Negro Liberation* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), 70.

[702] James Allen, *Negro Liberation* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), 37. On "plantationitis," see Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, 59.

[703] Allen, *Negro Liberation*, 37.

[704] Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, 24.

[705] Harry Haywood, "Toward a Program of Agrarian Reforms for the Black Belt," *Political Affairs* 25, no. 9 (1946): 857.

of new cotton lands" in the West was propelled by capital's tendency toward ecological underproduction, in his account.[706] "Applying machinery and modern methods of cultivation to a virgin soil, the West was able to experience a great and rapid expansion of cotton production," rising from 20% of national cotton production in 1889 to 48% in 1932.[707] The westward movement of investment provided a geographical salve in a black belt context in which fertility was persistently threatened by a single-crop economy and the pressures of market driven competition. And yet, the "serious loss of soil fertility" in the black belt and the "competition of the fresher cotton farms towards the West" only intensified the crisis of productivity and the "general deterioration in the agriculture" of the black belt.[708]

With that said, Allen and Haywood were also aware that certain countervailing forces helped to mitigate against the effects of ecological underproduction and "plantationitis"—and thus to stave off the wholesale movement of capital and the spatial reorganization of production in the black belt. One countervailing factor was the cost of labor in the black belt itself. As Haywood straightforwardly put it, "[t]he presence in abundance of cheap and unfree labor in the plantation regions tend[ed] to make mechanization" and certain forms of re-territorialization "unprofitable" or at least momentarily unnecessary.[709] Because of the availability of cheap expropriable work, the "definite retrogression" of plantation agriculture in the black belt did not lead automatically to large scale mechanization, fixed capital investment, nor to the re-spatialization of production.[710] And in

[706] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 138.

[707] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 92.

[708] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 82.

[709] Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, 114.

[710] Allen, *Negro Liberation*, 37.

addition to the availability of expropriable work, plantation capitalists could also always make their laborers work harder via the burden of debt and the threat of immiseration. "[G]reater ruin and misery for the Negro peasantry," as Haywood put it, was an ever-present option, and it helped to mitigate against the re-territorialization of production and to ensure some continuity in the capitalist spatial matrix in the black belt.[711]

Even lynching and starvation could function to keep capital in place. As Allen argued, lynching was a method that could "serve to terrorize a whole community of Negro share-croppers, who have shown signs of rebellion"—and it was a method that was particularly common in the face of falling rates of profit.[712] Lynching was not merely a threat directed toward those that "dared to make a living out of their land," or at those that achieved too much success. The "most brutal lynching orgies," rather, often had "some economic purpose" at their root.[713] And, as Haywood added, the specter of ecological underproduction often simply led to "dietary deficiencies and the prevalence of diseases of malnutrition endemic to [the] region, such as pellagra and hookworm."[714] Given the regime of violence that constituted the post-Reconstruction south, malnutrition and starvation constituted available means for maintaining profits in the face of ecological underproduction, and thus functioned to hold the received geography of ecological degradation in place (if only to a certain extent).

The interventions into the black belt debate offered by Allen and Haywood—and briefly sketched above—did not *straightforwardly* speak to the role of the built environment in the

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[711] Allen, *Negro Liberation*, 37.

[712] Allen, *The American Negro*, 26.

[713] Allen, *The American Negro*, 26.

[714] Haywood, "Toward a Program of Agrarian Reforms for the Black Belt," 857-858.

reproduction of capitalism and its constitutive abodes. Nevertheless, what we find in their work is an attentiveness to the remaking of the black belt following Reconstruction; the reworking of entrenched patterns of racialized expropriation; and the looming specter of ecological underproduction and potentiality for capital to re-spatialize in order to circumvent it. What we find in these accounts is that produced space—and the built environment—is the presupposition and result of capitalism's foreground and background abodes, and that these abodes are re-spatialized in the face of those crisis tendencies that afflict capital as an institutionalized social order. And this is not all. Not only did Allen and Haywood demonstrate that the survivals of slavery and ecological expropriation were reworked in the post-Reconstruction moment, but they made clear that these transformations in the black belt occurred in relation to the re-territorialization of accumulation *beyond the contiguous* United States as well. The remaking of the survivals of slavery in the black belt and the emergent built environment of post-Reconstruction capitalist industrialization elsewhere in the United States were not indicative of "two 'economic systems standing at different stages of socio-economic development.'"[715] They were tightly integrated or articulated moments in a shared network of capitalist production; and they were embedded within a broader set of imperialist transformations which brought "capitalist relations into the most remote sections of the earth."[716]

In their engagement with the black belt debate, Allen and Haywood called attention not only to the remaking of the relationship between expropriation, exploitation, and ecological degradation in the contiguous United States; but, more completely, to the multi-scalar transformations of the post-Reconstruction period, as capital sought out new geographies of accumulation and new hidden

[715] Sheik quoted in Harry Haywood, "Against Bourgeois-Liberal Distortions of Leninism on the Negro Question in the United States," *The Communist* 9, no. 8 (1930): 705.

[716] Haywood, "Against Bourgeois-Liberal Distortions of Leninism on the Negro Question in the United States," 705-706.

abodes. In this sense, one of James Allen's shortest essays is his most probing. Titled "Lenin and the American Negro," it was published in *The Communist* on the tenth anniversary of Lenin's death in 1934. In it, Allen situated the post-Reconstruction south in relation to Lenin's thought on the epoch of imperialism as a whole. As he wrote, the Spanish-American War and the US turn toward a new kind of global ambition in 1898 marked "the beginning of the world imperialist era" in Lenin's conceptualization.[717] With that historical break capital increasingly "penetrated every nook of the earth, no matter how remote," often reworking extant "patriarchal or feudal soil."[718] And, as he went on to underscore, this process gave "to the proletariat of the oppressing countries"—at one and the same moment—"a powerful ally in the national-revolutionary movement of the colonial and semi-colonial world," *including black Americans in the US south*.[719] Allen argued, by way of Lenin, that the turn of the century marked the onset of a new epoch of global capitalist relations and global capitalist spatialities; and he situated the black belt of the United States as a "vital point[] for attack" in this re-territorialized and interdependent geography of imperial accumulation.[720]

In this relatively brief text Allen did not simply note that Lenin's insights on southern agriculture "opened a way to a new interpretation" of the post-Reconstruction south and the survivals of slavery—a point that he consistently made throughout his life, and which is relatively familiar to us at this point.[721] He also situated "the Negro question in the United States…within the

[717] James S. Allen, "Lenin and the American Negro," *Communist* 13, no. 1 (1934): 54.

[718] Allen, "Lenin and the American Negro," 53.

[719] Allen, "Lenin and the American Negro," 54.

[720] Allen, "Lenin and the American Negro," 54.

[721] James Allen, "Black Self-Determination" (p. 4), n.d., Box 5, Folder 9, James S. Allen Papers, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries.

scope of the world-wide national movements of oppressed peoples against imperialism."[722] He argued that transformations in the black belt—such as the institutionalization of "redeemer" governments in local legislatures, and the remaking of labor relations through the re-instantiation of expropriation in a new guise—were part and parcel of systemic transformations in the entire world-system as capital sought to establish a balanced growth path.[723] On a domestic scale, the American economy was remade after Reconstruction: the "post-Reconstruction legislatures and state courts moved to sort out the complexities of the staple-crop economy," and the plantation capitalists gave way to the "almost unchallenged control" of the "manufacturing and financial interests of the North."[724] And Allen situated that claim in direct dialogue with the observation that western powers, the United States centrally among them, set about remaking accumulation beyond their borders in the same moment. "[B]y 1914 'as a consequence of this new expansion…the colonial powers, their colonies, and their former colonies extended over approximately 85 percent of the earth's surface."[725]

In linking the re-spatialization and reorganization of accumulation in the black belt to the vast remaking of US imperial geographies, some of Allen's contemporaries were even more direct. Harry Haywood, in his widely read "The Struggle for the Leninist Position on the Negro Question in the U.S.A." (1933), suggested straightforwardly that in Lenin's "epoch of imperialism…the Negro

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[722] Cf. Allen, "Working Material For A C.P. Discussion Resolution on Theoretical Aspects of the Negro Question" (p. 1).

[723] See Sven Beckert, *The Empire of Cotton* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 287; see also, Hannah Holleman, *Dust Bowls of Empire: Imperialism, Environmental Politics, and the Injustice of 'Green' Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

[724] Steven Hanh, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggle in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 441 and 413.

[725] Magdoff quoted in Holleman, *Dust Bowls of Empire*, 56.

question in the United States must be conceived as part of the national colonial problem, or, in other words, [as] part of the general *world-wide* problem of freedom of the oppressed and dependent peoples from the shackles of imperialism."[726] The south's "cheap semi-feudal labor and its cheap cotton" became, as he put it elsewhere, a space of investment for "gigantic capital surpluses," much like those imperial geographies occupied by the United States after 1898.[727] And Herbert Aptheker, the most widely read of these figures, similarly argued that "when monopoly capitalism turned its attention seriously to overseas investments and to the appropriation of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines, it simultaneously turned its attention seriously to investments in the South and to the establishment of terrorist domination of the Southern masses and especially the Negro people."[728] While these figures did not present this multiscalar process of socio-spatial transformation as a reworking of the built environment per se, what appears in their work is a multiscalar transformation of the capitalist spatial matrix—a remaking of the built environment *in and beyond* the contiguous United States in the service of the reproduction of capitalism's hidden abodes.

To use the language of Aptheker, this connection—between the reorganization and re-spatialization of accumulation in the black belt, and the remaking of the built environment abroad—was "not simply one of time; it was one of cause and effort."[729] The two processes were tied together by the reciprocal interaction between domestic and international forms of "white

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[726] Harry Haywood, "The Struggle for the Leninist Position on the Negro Question in the U.S.A.," *The Communist* 12, no. 9 (1933): 889, emphasis added.

[727] Haywood, "Toward a Program of Agrarian Reforms for the Black Belt," 863.

[728] Herbert Aptheker, "American Imperialism and White Chauvinism" (p. 2), 1950, Box 1, Folder 11, Harry Haywood Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library.

[729] Aptheker, "American Imperialism and White Chauvinism" (p. 2).

chauvinism"; by the political alliances of imperialist Republicans and Bourbon Democrats; and, most importantly for our purposes, by the efforts of capitalists to seek out new sites of surplus investment and sites of racialized and ecological expropriation. Capital flowed into, and reorganized, both the black belt and occupied territory abroad at the turn of the century in order to facilitate further accumulation. Between 1880 and 1890 the "quantity of timber taken from Southern forests more than doubled"; bituminous coal production "leaped" from six million to fifty-two million tons; and between 1880 and 1890 the "number of textile mills…increased three and a half times."[730] In short, the US south "was subjected," following Reconstruction, "to a sustained and continuously accelerated penetration by Northern capital."[731] And, crucially, this same dynamic took place overseas, connecting expropriable black workers in the South and "imperialism's colonial serfs in other parts of the world."[732] The post-Reconstruction period was one defined by new scales and new geographies of accumulation, and the remaking and re-spatialization of capitalism's constitutive abodes both at home and abroad. Through these dynamics a new built environment was produced.

To this stage, we have seen how several participants in the black belt debate—not least James Allen and Harry Haywood—drew attention to the production and resolution of capitalist crises in space. In the 1930s these figures engaged the aftermath of Reconstruction in (and beyond) the black belt, and called attention to capital's efforts to reestablish growth by re-organizing and re-spatializing waged exploitation and socio-ecological expropriation in that context. In light of the theorization developed over the preceding chapters, these accounts allow us to see how a new built environment—understood here as much more than the "tenant houses scattered all over the

[730] Aptheker, "American Imperialism and White Chauvinism" (p. 3).

[731] Haywood, "Toward a Program of Agrarian Reforms for the Black Belt," 863.

[732] Haywood, "Toward a Program of Agrarian Reforms for the Black Belt," 857.

plantation" that emerged after the "slave rows were broken up"[733]—was produced by crisis dynamics that plague capitalism as an institutionalized social order. And yet, one question, as it pertains to the spatiality and spatial presuppositions and results of capitalist crisis, remains unanswered to this point: what of the constitutive domain of reproductive work? What, that is, did participants in the black belt debate, particularly in the 1930s, have to say about the remaking and re-spatialization of the hidden abode of reproduction following Reconstruction?

Once again, several of the most vocal theorists of black nationhood underscored that the post-Reconstruction black belt was constituted through and constitutive of distinctive forms and geographies of reproductive work. Harry Haywood, perhaps above all, identified this clearly. As he put it, the "essential features of sharecropping" in the post-Reconstruction south rested upon "the family system, i.e. the unpaid labor of women and children," both in the field and in the home.[734] And Haywood also demonstrated that social reproductive strategies were far from static—that they were the subject of political contestation and available for regular remaking. He catalogued the novel methods that were taken up to reduce reproductive costs in the black belt—strategies like limiting "croppers' subsistence," scaling back educational opportunities, and eliminating (as much as possible) free time.[735] And Haywood even demonstrated that reproductive strategies in the black belt presupposed and produced a built environment that helped to support the region's "ruinous single-crop system."[736] As he recalled, tax increases "for education, health, and roads" only made "costs higher for the absentee owner" in the black belt. As such, these kinds of reproductive

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[733] See Claudia Jones, *An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!* (New York: National Women's Commission, C.P.U.S.A., 1949), 8.

[734] Haywood, "Toward a Program of Agrarian Reforms for the Black Belt," 860.

[735] Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, 114.

[736] Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, 120.

interventions—which often directly implicated the built environment—were avoided, much like "[r]eforestation, conservation, [and] crop diversification."[737] Haywood demonstrated that black belt capitalists circumvented reproductive interventions that raised costs of production, leading toward a distinctive kind of built environment in the region; and, moreover, he revealed that as social reproductive costs rose, and unwaged inputs in the production process entered into the domain of direct market mediation, capitalists in the black belt were often "forced" to pursue new socio-spatial strategies to mitigate against that dynamic.

Haywood's interventions help to emphasize that the primary agenda of capitalists in the black belt was to reduce costs of production *wherever possible*—across capitalism's constitutive abodes. His work demonstrates that not only did these efforts presuppose a geography, but they also produced one as well. These efforts produced new geographies of production, reproduction, and expropriation. They produced, in the words of Haywood himself, a spatial matrix, "a division of labor between city and country…linked by a unified system of transportation and communication."[738]

The great migration and the shadow of the plantation

As stated at several points in this chapter, my argument is not that participants in the black belt debate were consciously engaged in theorizing the spatiality of capitalist reproduction. Figures like Allen and Haywood were not consciously attuned to how crises of capitalist reproduction emerged across capitalism's foreground and background spheres, nor were they centrally concerned with how crises were resolved in and through transformations in the built environment. And yet, we can nonetheless identify these dynamics in their accounts of the post-Reconstruction black belt. We

[737] Mezerik quoted in Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, 55.

[738] Haywood, *Negro Liberation*, 145.

can use their accounts to trace how the built environment mediates the crisis tendencies of capital. And, in this final section of this chapter, I want to take this provocation one step further. While the black belt thesis ultimately fell out of favor after its high water mark in the early 1930s, a tradition of heterodox political economic thought continued to make sense of the condition of African Americans through the colonial analytic in the decades that followed, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. And, as I will argue in what remains of this chapter, these debates similarly carried with them an attentiveness to the spatial preconditions and results of capitalist crisis. When figures like James Boggs and Huey Newton deployed the language of coloniality to make sense of African American oppression in the 1960s and 1970s, they did so—yet again—in a way that highlighted the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital at a high level of conceptual abstraction.

There were many reasons for the fall of the black belt thesis after its pinnacle in the early 1930s. The most straightforward, however, was the Great Migration of African Americans out of the south and to the urban north throughout the early twentieth century. The most ardent supporters of the black belt thesis were slow to acknowledge these demographic transformations as they progressed over the 1910s and 1920s. For some, the causes of black migration during that period were "transitory" and "not a permanent feature of capitalism in the United States."[739] This wave of black migration was, in their view, driven by "a very specific set of circumstances that coalesced in the mid-1910s, chiefly as a result of the First World War."[740] For other skeptics, black migration in the early twentieth century was simply part and parcel of a history of migration that stretched back to the 1830s. That history had manifested in a variety of guises—from the "exodus" to Kansas organized by "Pap" Singleton and Henry Adams in 1879, to the establishment of black

[739] Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 137.

[740] Hanh, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 466.

towns in the 1890s in places like Promised Land, South Carolina.[741] Black migration out of the south in the 1910s and 1920s was, from this perspective, just more of the same. Eventually, however, "[m]ass migration and the formation of an urban black working class" became impossible to ignore, rendering the black belt thesis harder to maintain.[742] By the end of the 1930s critics of the black belt line pointed out that if an autonomous state in the black belt were achieved, "the black belt [state would] have almost as many white 'aliens' as colored 'natives'"[743]; and by 1950, "only 32% [of African Americans] lived in the Black Belt."[744]

And yet, if the Great Migration ultimately rendered autonomous black nationhood in the US south implausible, the colonial analytic that structured the black belt debate did not fall out of circulation in its wake. The claim that African Americans maintained a colonized existence in the United States re-emerged in the decades that followed. By the 1960s several scholars had taken up the colonial motif at the center of the black belt thesis, this time in their efforts to make sense of black urbanization and the "black ghetto," specifically. In 1962 Harold Cruse put forward the notion of "domestic colonialism" in the journal *Studies on the Left*; in 1965 Kenneth Clark attempted to argue that "the political, economic, and social structure of Harlem was essentially that of a colony"[745]; and

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[741] Hanh, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 321.

[742] Samuel Klug, *Making the Internal Colony: Black Internationalism, Development, and the Politics of Colonial Comparison in the United States, 1940-1975* (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 2020), 9.

[743] George Streator, "The Color Line: *The Negro Question in the United States*," 1936-1937, Box 4, Reviews of Negro Question in the US, James S. Allen Papers, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries.

[744] James Allen, "Appendix: Changes in the Black Belt" (p. 37), 1959, Box 4, Theoretical Aspects of the Negro Question in the United States (Supplementary to Party Affairs), James S. Allen Papers, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries.

[745] Robert Blauner, "Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt," *Social Problems* 16, no. 4 (1969): 394; see also, Ramon Gutiérrez, "Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race," *Du Bois Review* 1, no. 2 (2004): 281-295.

in 1967 Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton published *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, which asserted that black Americans, often confined to "the ghetto," "stand as colonial subjects in relation to the white society."[746] Indeed, crucially for our purposes, the colonial analytic was engaged in these years in ways that once again called attention to the role of the built environment in the production and resolution of capitalism's constitutive crises across its foreground and background abodes.

In this respect, the two most illuminating invocations of the colonial analytic were produced by James Boggs and Huey Newton. Boggs—an organic intellectual who worked in the Chrysler-Jefferson plant in Detroit—developed a widely read critique of industrial restructuring in the United States in this period, which rethought the "revolutionary possibilities" offered by the prospect of a "postindustrial America."[747] He suggested that industrial capitalists faced down the specter of overproduction in the closing moments of Fordist capitalism and he demonstrated the revolutionary effects of that crisis dynamic on black Americans, who constituted "the most oppressed and submerged sections" of the working class, and who largely existed in a kind of colonized status.[748] Indeed, Boggs noted that technologically-induced overproduction was tightly linked to the racialized abandonment of many US cities in the 1960s. And he argued that African Americans, who were largely left out of the pact between capital and labor to "humanize relations in production" following World War II, were being "rendered obsolete" by this process, situating them in a colonial

[746] Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power*: *The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 5.

[747] Cedric Johnson, "James Boggs, the 'Outsiders,' and the Challenge of Postindustrial Society," *Souls* 13, no. 3 (2011): 305.

[748] James Boggs, *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook* (New York: Monthly Review, 1963), 85.

relation to the United States.[749] In that context, African Americans were not simply free of their own means of subsistence and free to sell their labor for a wage; they were, rather, "freed to reject the system" of industrial production that they had been so precariously integrated into in the preceding decades, and free to wage war with "all the values and legalities of white America."[750]

In developing these claims, Boggs attended closely to the role of the built environment in the production and resolution of capital's constitutive crises. To be sure, he was not centrally focused on what we have identified as the background conditions that define capitalism as an institutionalized social order. Nonetheless, he attended to the remaking of capitalism's foreground of waged production and its spatiality by way of his reconceptualization of revolutionary subjectivity. He demonstrated that "[r]apid technological development" and the shifting geography of production—pursued in the name of profitability—worked together, "caus[ing] the city to become a graveyard."[751] And in drawing attention to these dynamics, Boggs made clear that crises of overproduction in the formal waged economy arose in the context of specific built environments, and that they produced built environments too. He noted that overproduction in capital's foreground led to automation and overseas reinvestment, and that both processes left their mark on the "physical environment."[752] In this account not only were African Americans increasingly "expendable to the economy," geographically disconnected from production, and "liberated…for the first time in their history" insofar as it was no longer necessary for them "to work on behalf of

[749] James Boggs, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook: A James Boggs Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 204-205 and 208.

[750] Boggs, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook*, 208.

[751] Boggs, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook*, 328.

[752] Boggs, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook*, 225.

white development."[753] They were, going further, subjected to that position precisely because of the relationship between crises of overproduction and the built environment.

Huey P. Newton's late reflections on "intercommunalism," or his effort to grasp the "new social geography of empire" which he first introduced in 1970, spoke even more directly to the relationship between capitalism's constitutive abodes and the built environment.[754] Newton developed his analysis of intercommunalism in what Cedric Johnson has referred to as his "most fruitful but sadly short-lived phase of intellectual activity," between roughly 1970 and 1972.[755] In developing the concept, he called attention to the forms of technological advancement, overproduction, and re-territorialization that defined so much of Boggs's work over the preceding decade. Newton argued that the moment of post-Fordist unraveling and de-industrialization described by Boggs ensured that Americans increasingly faced the threat of unemployment as a result of the conjoined effects of automation and the movement of productive capital overseas. And yet, if that is where Boggs generally concluded, Newton pushed this insight further still. In his writings on intercommunalism—and the new forms of colonialism that African Americans experienced in the 1970s—he also insisted that emergent transformations in the global economy drew upon new forms of imperial power that were not linked to the conquest of territory per se, but reliant on a form of US hegemony that ostensibly proceeded "with minimal control of foreign

[753] Boggs, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook*, 208.

[754] Cedric Johnson, "Huey P. Newton and the Last Days of the Black Colony," in *African American Political Thought: A Collected History*, eds. Melvin Rogers and Jack Turner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 652; see also, Delio Vasquez, "Intercommunalism: The Late Theorizations of Huey P. Newton," *Viewpoint Magazine*, June 11, 2018, https://viewpointmag.com/2018/06/11/intercommunalism-the-late-theorizations-of-huey-p-newton-chief-theoretician-of-the-black-panther-party/

[755] Johnson, "Huey P. Newton and the Last Days of the Black Colony," 651.

territories."[756] And, more importantly in the present context, he demonstrated that these transformations brought with them a scrambling of the spatiality of capitalism's conditions of possibility in order to reestablish the basis for capitalist growth.

In his late work on intercommunalism, Newton insisted that the tenuous post-War compact was not only frayed by the early 1970s, but that it was breaking down through "a fundamental change in the nature of capitalist domination" on a global scale.[757] This new form of capitalist domination entailed the re-spatialization of certain forms of industrial production "from the First World to the Third"; efforts to "mitigate the problem of capitalist over-production by developing a world market and a global base of labour and consumption" outside of the rich countries[758]; and new forms of political, ecological, and social reproductive control, which emerged alongside the putative "deterioration of nationalism as a potentially liberatory political ideology."[759] Newton demonstrated that the remaking of capital accumulation in this period was not simply about remaking and re-spatializing production in capital's foreground. It was, more broadly, about the reorganization of capitalism as an institutionalized social order (as I have put it). Of course, Newton's account of intercommunalism was not faultless. But as was the case with figures like Allen and Haywood, in turning to Newton's writing on intercommunalism—and his contemporaneous social reproductive concerns and his writings on ecology[760]—we can see glimpses of the remaking of capital's constituent abodes in and through the built environment.

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[756] Klug, *Making the Internal Colony*, 287.

[757] John Narayan, "Huey P. Newton's Intercommunalism: An Unacknowledged Theory of Empire," *Theory, Culture & Society* 36, no. 3 (2019): 63.

[758] Narayan, "Huey P. Newton's Intercommunalism," 63.

[759] Vasquez, "Intercommunalism."

Conclusion

This chapter has developed a single argument. It has suggested that the black belt debate—taken as a critical moment in the history of heterodox political economic thought and anti-imperial politics in the United States—provides an archive of thinking on the spatiality of capitalist crisis. Key participants in the black belt debate were centrally concerned not simply with the politics of black self-determination in the US south, nor even with the relationship between waged labor and capitalist crisis. They were concerned, more capaciously, with tracking the constitutive crisis tendencies of capital across its foreground and background abodes, and the concurrent re-spatialization of the capitalist spatial matrix. Of course, Allen and Haywood would have described their work in radically different terms. But insofar as they attempted to make sense of the political economic, political-ecological, and reproductive regimes that emerged in the aftermath of Reconstruction, they engaged with striking consistency—if not necessarily analytical clarity—the spatiality of capitalist crisis and its relation to the built environment at a high level of conceptual abstraction. And in turning finally to the work of figures like James Boggs and Huey Newton, I have suggested—albeit briefly—that the colonial analytic continued to provide a window onto the spatiality of capitalist crisis in the decades that followed the black belt debate. These later figures deployed the language of colonialism in ways that called attention to the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capital's constituent crisis dynamics. They attended—in their own terms—to the recurrent and endemic re-spatialization of capitalist society's constitutive hidden abodes.

[760] Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 353; see also, George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye* (New York: Random House, 1972), 70.

The "social factory"

In the context of the domestic labor debate of the 1970s and 1980s, Silvia Federici and Angela Davis would seem to share little in common. After all, the domestic labor debate revolved around the question of whether or not "households were sites of production with labor processes…that produced value for capital"—and whether or not capital could be reproduced without unwaged domestic work.[761] In relation to that question, Federici and Davis pursued distinct, indeed divergent, positions. Federici—who immigrated to the United States via Italy in 1967 and founded the New York Wages for Housework Campaign in the early 1970s—approached the problem of housework with the tradition of Italian *operaismo* (workerism) in view. She followed Mario Tronti's landmark claim in *Workers and Capital* (first published as *Operai e capitale* in 1966) that at its most advanced level of development, all capitalist social relations stand as "*moment[s]* of the relation of production"; that "society becomes an *articulation* of production, the whole society lives in function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive dominion over the whole society."[762] And she extended that argument. She argued that capital had always "mystified the social function of the family" and gendered domestic work, and obscured the "subordination of all social relations to the 'cash nexus.'"[763] Federici insisted that the wage form did not simply rely on relations of production beyond the factory in the context of advanced capitalism, but that it obscured the requisite work of social reproduction that took place within the home in all capitalist contexts. The

[761] Katrina Forrester, "Feminist Demands and the Problem of Housework," *American Political Science Review* 116, no. 4 (2022): 1278-1292.

[762] Tronti, *Workers and Capital*, 26, emphasis original.

[763] Nicole Cox and Silvia Federici, *Counter-Planning From the Kitchen* (New York: New York Wages for Housework Committee, 1975), 9.

work of women was obscured insofar as women traditionally "consumed their life, their labour power, in producing [] labour power."[764]

Angela Davis, however, took a different tack. Reflecting on the nature and significance of domestic work within capitalist contexts, Davis put critical pressure on the idea that "the housewife is actually a secret worker" that is present across all capitalist production processes.[765] She rejected the notion that the unwaged labor of domestic work was analogous to waged labor under capitalism—that it was but another domain of productive labor—and that such work constituted a hidden domain that was obscured by and continuous with exploitation within the wage nexus. Drawing on a reading of the place of domestic labor in apartheid South Africa in particular, Davis argued that capitalist employers were—at least in some contexts—"not concerned in the least about the way labor-power [was] produced and sustained," but only in its presence and availability for exploitation.[766] The forms of work that concerned Federici were, in other words, "superfluous" in certain settings. While "women's procreative, child-rearing and housekeeping roles make it possible for their family members to work" in some contexts, capital does not rely on any specific expression of domesticity.[767] And thus, if Federici made her reputation by arguing that capital depends both logically and historically upon the hidden work of women's domestic labor behind the wage nexus, Davis offered a rather different position. She suggested that capital is not committed to any one form of unwaged social reproductive work, but that it "is only concerned [with labor power's] availability and its ability to generate profit."[768]

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[764] Cox and Federici, *Counter-Planning From the Kitchen*, 5.

[765] Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 234.

[766] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 234.

[767] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 234.

[768] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 234.

And yet, in spite of this gap between Federici and Davis on the specifics of capitalist reproduction, a central argument of this chapter is that we can read both—and a vast spectrum of participants in the US iteration of the domestic labor debate of the 1970s and 1980s—in the service of our effort to make sense of the capitalist spatial matrix. Indeed, despite the disagreements that shaped the domestic labor debate, in what follows I will argue that key figures within it maintained a shared interest in the built environment, and regularly invoked spatial categories like the suburb, the ghetto, the prison, and the household to think through the debate's core themes; and, in doing so, they brought several of this dissertation's central arguments into view. I am not the first to take stock of the spatial sensibility that animated the domestic labor debate, or to point out that it "demand[ed] changes to material culture and to the spatial design of homes, neighbourhoods, and cities."[769] Several scholars within political and social theory have highlighted the spatial imaginaries that informed the debate.[770] But in the present chapter, I will push this insight further still. I will not only argue that seemingly opposed figures within the domestic labor debate were concerned with geographical space and the built environment. I will argue—in addition to that claim—that in their engagement with socio-spatial categories, they helped to demonstrate (1) how the built environment is implicated in the articulation of capitalist society's logically necessary and logically contingent parts, and (2) how it figures in the differentiated interpellation of capitalist subjectivities.

Put differently, in this chapter I will undertake a reading of the US iteration of the domestic labor debate throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and I will do so to further clarify and concretize our theorization of the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist *society*. I will argue

[769] Elise Thorburn, "'Every Moment of Our Reproduction As a Moment of Struggle'—The New York Wages for Housework Archive," *Spheres* 6 (2020): 6.

[770] See Katrina Forrester, "Capitalism and the Organization of Displacement: Selma James's Internationalism of the Unwaged," *Political Theory*, online first.

that whatever else the debate might have accomplished, in its invocation of the "ghetto" and the "prison," it called attention to the role of the built environment in the articulation of capital's necessary dimensions and logically contingent patterns of ascriptive hierarchization, as argued in chapter three of this dissertation; and, in its engagement with the "suburb" and the "household," it underscored the spatiality of interpellation, and the role of the built environment in producing differentiated subjectivities, as argued in chapter four. A central point of convergence among several US participants in the domestic labor debate was that much of what is considered nature is in fact acquired, developed, and reproduced over time, and that the spatial parameters of our lives "confine[] us, define[] us and shape[] our relationships."[771] And in developing this claim, these figures demonstrated that the built environment is central not simply to the reproduction of capital, but to the reproduction of capitalist society in its racialized and gendered complexity as well.

Domestic labor: from Inman to operaismo

Before we engage the spatial content of the US iteration of the domestic labor debate, we would do well to briefly establish both its historical antecedents and its basic contours and disagreements. Indeed, we would do well to recall that debate on domestic labor and its place in capitalist society did not, as it happens, begin with the domestic labor debate of the 1970s and 1980s. Within the United States in particular, there was an established tradition of thought that preempted the domestic labor debate and its claim that "behind every factory, behind every school, behind every office or mine is the hidden work of millions of women."[772] While it occupied only a minor point of reference in the 1970s and 1980s, the problem of women's work in the home was a matter of contested discussion within the CPUSA dating back to the 1930s.[773] Throughout the first years of

[771] Selma James, *Sex, Race, and Class—The Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings, 1952-2011* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 177.

[772] Cox and Federici, *Counter-Planning From the Kitchen*, 5.

that decade, the Party sought to increase its membership among proletarian women. As Kate Weigand writes in her definitive history of this period, the CPUSA "actively encouraged rank-and-file women's efforts to organize women's councils and neighborhood committees."[774] And, alongside those efforts, some members of the organization began to think through the relationship between women's oppression and domestic work in a more theoretical idiom. Mary Inman, whose *In Woman's Defense* was serialized in the *Daily People's World* in 1939, and published as a standalone book in 1940, was the most significant theorist to emerge in that context.[775] In that text and elsewhere she asked a question that was as direct as it was complex: Why does capital allow "22 million housewives" to be "maintained out of the proceeds of industry"?[776]

Indeed, Inman not only endorsed the CPUSA's effort to expand its membership among proletarian women in this historical moment, but she attempted to think through—and theorize—the nature of women's oppression beyond the workplace as well. She argued that "millions of women in homes, who do the greater part" of the socially necessary (albeit unwaged) work of reproducing workers, "render[] an indispensable service to the present method of producing and distributing commodities."[777] The housewife—even if her work was not waged—was an essential part of the production process under capitalism. In developing these claims, Inman courted her

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[773] See Lise Vogel, "Domestic-Labour Debate," in *Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism*, eds. Wolfgang Fritz Haug, Frigga Haug, Peter Jehle, and Wolfgang Küttler (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 275-284.

[774] Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 23.

[775] Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 32.

[776] Mary Inman, "The Role of the Housewife in Social Production," *Viewpoint Magazine*, October 31, 2015, https://viewpointmag.com/2015/10/31/the-role-of-the-housewife-in-social-production-1940/#:~:text=The%20housewife%20does%20not%20cook,number%20of%20hours%20like%20teachers

[777] Inman, "The Role of the Housewife in Social Production."

share of controversy, and she was eventually forced to resign from the CPUSA as a result. Some of her contemporaries feared that her account could be read as "'glorif[ying]' housework"; that it might ultimately function to reinforce reactionary efforts to *keep* women in the isolation of the home.[778] Other detractors were more straightforwardly misogynistic in their rejection of her claims. For them, the seriousness with which Inman engaged unwaged domestic work within the home was simply an unfortunate and unwarranted theoretical detour in the history of Marxist thought. And yet, in and through her account Inman nonetheless helped to popularize the view that women's oppression in the home demanded intellectual and political attention; she imagined a society in which we live "communally with the benefits of round-the-clock nurseries, socialized house-cleaning systems, and centralized laundry and cook facilities."[779] Inman provided, some thirty years prior to the domestic labor debate, an account of the relationship between the unwaged domestic labors of women and the domain of waged work.

In fact, in developing her account, Inman preempted two of the core disagreements that went on to structure the domestic labor debate decades later. First, she considered whether we should conceive of work outside of the realm of "direct market mediation" as "productive" of value for capital[780]; and second, she asked whether women's oppression was rooted in their association with the unwaged work of reproducing workers under capitalism. In considering the first problematic, Inman was keenly aware of the specificity of work that took place within the household. She understood that housework was undertaken with much more autonomy than work pursued within the factory or the office block. It was "performed under relations completely

[778] Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 29.

[779] Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 35.

[780] Endnotes, "The Logic of Gender."

different, in both appearance and reality, from those of [direct] capitalist commodity production." The "standards of and time spent on housework" varied quite dramatically, in large part due to the relative autonomy that it was typically afforded "under the housewife's own control."[781] And yet, even with that in view, Inman argued that housewives undertook productive work "when we take into account the entire *system* of production."[782] She argued that despite its relative autonomy, the domestic work undertaken by women in the home was productive insofar as it was instrumental to "the present method of producing and distributing commodities."[783]

In making this argument regarding the productivity of domestic work, Inman was aware of—and eager to push back against—an earlier tradition of thought on the "woman question" and the reproduction of labor power within the history of Marxism. Her work contains a range of references to Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and its various translations into English. Comparisons abound in her archive between, for example, the 1902 translation published by Kerr & Company and the 1942 translation of International Publishers. Inman was also attuned to Lenin's famous contention that "…petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades [women], chains [them] to the kitchen and to the nursery, and wastes [their] labor on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-racking…and crushing drudgery."[784] Still, regarding the question of the productivity of unwaged reproductive work, Inman called for a revised reading of

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[781] Cf. Susan Himmelweit and Simon Mohun, "Domestic Labour and Capital," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 1, no. 1 (1977): 16.

[782] Mary Inman, *In Women's Defense* (Los Angeles: The Committee to Organize the Advancement of Women, 1940), 137, emphasis original.

[783] Inman, *In Women's Defense*, 143.

[784] Lenin quoted in Mary Inman, "The Family as an Economic Unit of Society: Its Significance for the Liberation of Women" (p. 5), n.d., Carton 3, Folder 105, Papers of Mary Inman, Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute.

the "social function" of motherhood—and of traditional Marxist conceptualizations of domestic work—nonetheless. She underscored that what "*determines the value of labor-power itself is the average socially necessary labor required to produce it*."[785] For her, this claim was overlooked in much Marxist thought, and without it "Marx's labor theory of value, the very essence of Marxism, loses its validity."[786] In fact, Inman argued that domestic labor was not only productive, but *more degrading* than waged labor insofar as it was "branded as dependent" and deprived of the forms of social recognition or "credit" that waged labor received.[787]

As noted, Inman was also concerned with identifying the "root cause" or "fundamental principle" of women's oppression, preempting debates that were later rehashed in the 1970s and 1980s. In *In Women's Defense*, for example, Inman rejected the claim that women's oppression arose from "biological difference," rather than "social conflicts and artificial training."[788] And she also rejected the notion that men in general benefited from the oppression of women as a sex-class. Instead, she put forward the historical assertion that women's oppression had its roots in policies pursued for the benefit of a "numerically small class that was so powerful economically and politically that it could pass and enforce laws harmful to the majority of the population."[789] This "numerically small class," according to Inman, helped to instantiate the legal oppression of women under feudal systems and to "bind[] [them] anew to subjugation" with the emergence of capitalism. The oppression of women was thus rooted in a feudal class project that benefited feudal lords, and it

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[785] Mary Inman, "Maternity as a Social Function" (p. 57), 1973, Carton 3, Folder 104, Papers of Mary Inman, Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute, emphasis original.

[786] Inman, "Maternity as a Social Function" (p. 59).

[787] Inman, *In Women's Defense*, 146.

[788] Inman, *In Women's Defense*, 28.

[789] Inman, *In Women's Defense*, 43.

was taken up by capitalists insofar as they became the "owners of the value of [women's] toil."[790] Women's oppression was not distinctive to capitalism, but within capitalist contexts it was rooted in their disproportionate role in social reproductive work, which benefited the capitalist class. From this broad structure subsidiary oppressions were produced.[791] There were "minor acts of injustice" that affected women, which Inman compared to "small pebbles" in their shoes.[792] And yet, these injustices were not entirely unrelated to the work of social reproduction either. The "basic cause" of women's oppression in capitalist contexts lay, according to Inman, "in the relation of housewives' work to social production," and in their relation to the capitalist class.[793]

The two claims sketched above echoed and reverberated throughout debates on the "woman question" in the United States in the years that followed. They were directly taken up and rebuked by some of Inman's immediate interlocutors, particularly within the CPUSA in the years after her resignation from the Party. The most scathing critique developed in that context was Avrom Landy's *Marxism and the Woman Question*, an extended polemic aimed at some of Inman's core claims and published in 1943. Landy conjured the authority of Engels to reject Inman's claim that domestic labor constituted "useful, socially necessary work."[794] Other figures within the history of Marxist thought in the United States complicated Inman's account of women's oppression in the 1950s and 1960s as well—albeit indirectly and oftentimes with Inman herself only peripherally in view. C.L.R. James, prior to his departure from the United States in 1953, devoted some time to the specific

[790] Inman, *In Women's Defense*, 17.

[791] Inman, *In Women's Defense*, 43.

[792] Inman, *In Women's Defense*, 62.

[793] Inman, *In Women's Defense*, 135.

[794] A. Landy, *Marxism and the Woman Question* (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1943), 8.

condition of "the Negro woman," and argued not only that it is "[t]he Negro woman [who] struggles the most," but that—as a result—she will "lead the vanguard struggle for a human existence for women and all workers." Black women were, in James's eyes, "closest to the solution implicit in the problems of all working people."[795] In making this claim James not only moved beyond Engels's received assertion that the capitalist family produces a distinctly (and uniformly) capitalist form of gendered hierarchization[796]; he complicated Inman's rather undifferentiated approach to the root causes of women's oppression too.

Still, what is most significant for our purposes is that the two arguments sketched above not only reverberated in the decades that followed Inman's intervention, but that they reappeared and structured the US iteration of the domestic labor debate of the 1970s and 1980s. Much changed in the three decades between the time of Inman's writing and the domestic labor debate. Not only did "the percentage of mothers with children under 18 years involved in wage-labour" rise from "9% in 1940 to 38% in 1967" in the United States[797]; but many reproductive functions moved from the household into the realm of direct market mediation as well, such that they were now "produced [directly] under capitalist relations or provided by the [capitalist] state."[798] Nevertheless, the productivity of domestic work and the root cause of women's oppression remained central matters of concern in the domestic labor debate. More explicitly than ever, feminists took up these questions, asking: Was work that was "not directly mediated by the form of value"—and not

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[795] C.L.R. James et al., "On the Woman Question: An Orientation [discussion held on September 3rd, 1951]," *Marxists Internet Archive*, accessed March 7, 2025, https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1951/09/woman-question.htm

[796] Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1902), 89.

[797] Himmelweit and Mohun, "Domestic Labour and Capital," 23.

[798] Himmelweit and Mohun, "Domestic Labour and Capital," 16.

immediately structured, in its organization and granular rhythms by the compulsions of socially necessary labor time—"productive" nonetheless?[799] Was the definition and condition of womanhood reducible to that population's association with housework? Were "women" nothing more than "that group of people who are responsible for the production of simple use-values in those activities associated with home and family"?[800]

As briefly intimated above, the US iteration of the domestic labor debate of the 1970s and 1980s engaged the first question—regarding the ostensible productivity of domestic work—in no small part via a dialogue with the tradition of Italian *operaismo*, a current of Marxist thought that rose to prominence in Italy "following the communist world crisis of 1956," and which focused centrally on recasting the meaning, significance, and geographical bounds of "productive labor."[801] Mariarosa Dalla Costa is perhaps the most integral bridge to cite in this context. During the late 1960s Dalla Costa encountered the then dominant current of *operaismo* in her native Italy via left journals like *Quaderni Rossi* and *Quaderni Piacentini*, and via her own work as a research assistant for Antonio Negri.[802] In the years that followed, she pushed that literature in a feminist direction, situating women's oppression as a "unique form of class exploitation."[803] Dalla Costa's essay "Women and

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[799] Endnotes, "The Logic of Gender," 62; see also, for context, Wally Seccombe, "The Housewife and Her Labour Under Capitalism," *New Left Review* 83, Jan/Feb (1974): 3-24.

[800] Margaret Benston, "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation," *Monthly Review*, September 1, 2019, https://monthlyreview.org/2019/09/01/the-political-economy-of-womens-liberation/#:~:text=Benston's%20article%20is%20widely%20known,as%20the%20domestic%20labor%20debate; see also Zillah Eisenstein, "Constructing a Theory of Capitalist Patriarchy and Socialist Feminism," *Critical Sociology* 25, no. 2-3 (1999): 196-217.

[801] Maud Ann Bracke, "Between the Transnational and the Local: Mapping the Trajectories and Contexts of the Wages for Housework Campaign in 1970s Italian Feminism," *Women's History Review* 22, no. 4 (2013): 626.

[802] Bracke, "Between the Transnational and the Local," 634.

the Subversion of Community" represented a particularly significant turning point in the development of her thought.[804] In that work she did not simply engage the argument that the capitalist mode of production increasingly "invade[d] the totality of social relations," as Mario Tronti had previously put it[805]; she argued that the unwaged work of women within the social factory had always been directly productive of value. Family relations were capitalist relations, as Leopoldina Fortunati later put it, and they "only appear[ed] to be interpersonal relations."[806]

This value-theoretical argument was taken up and re-articulated in the US context by Silvia Federici, who helped to establish the terms of debate regarding the productivity of domestic work in the United States following her participation in an international meeting of feminists in Padua in 1972. Federici—who was living in the United States and studying for a philosophy PhD at the time—established the New York Wages for Housework Committee upon her arrival home. In her analysis of housework, she followed the arguments of Dalla Costa directly, and her claim that the household—and "the community" as well—were part and parcel of "capitalist organization," another "area of hidden capitalist exploitation, *the other, hidden, source of surplus labor*."[807] It was not entirely novel to suggest, in the 1970s, that forms of social power spread across the social field and well beyond the factory gates. It was in this moment, after all, that Michel Foucault was developing his account of the "ontology of actuality," and his attempt to map the forms of governmentality—

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[803] Martina Gabrielli, "'Wages for Housework': The Evolution of the Debate in the 1970s Italian Women's Movement," *Modern Italy*, online first, 4.

[804] Louise Toupin, *Wages for Housework: A History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972-1977* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2018), 220.

[805] Tronti, *Workers and Capital*, 24.

[806] Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction*, 129.

[807] Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of Community* (London: Falling Wall Press, 1975), 11, emphasis original.

"in the very wide sense of the term"—that had taken shape over the preceding centuries and through which the self had come to construct *itself*.[808] Foucault was famously interested, in this same historical moment, in "how relations of subjugation can manufacture subjects," and in how subjects themselves actively participate in their subjugation.[809]

Nevertheless, what Federici brought to the US iteration of the domestic labor debate was a particular conceptualization of the "social factory." She recognized the pervasiveness of relations of power across the social field, and she simultaneously underscored the productivity of unwaged domestic work within social formations dominated by the compulsions of abstract labor. Like Dalla Costa, Federici engaged the understanding of the social factory developed by Tronti in works like "Factory and Society" (1962) and "The Plan of Capital" (1963).[810] And she extended that account, participating in a broader effort to rethink the "form of value" in capitalist contexts.[811] Federici argued that the entirety of the social field within the United States was dominated by relations of capitalist production not simply because it was shaped by an historically impermanent form of value, but because it was *actively implicated in the production of value for capital.*[812] Federici's claim was not, as later Marxists argued, that the capitalist value form was being challenged by a new epoch of

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[808] Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 139.

[809] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (New York: Picador: 2003), 265.

[810] See, for context, Neil Gray and Nick Clare, "From Autonomous to Autonomist Geographies," *Progress in Human Geography* 46, no. 5 (2022): 1185-1206; Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

[811] Werner Bonefeld, "Capital as Subject and the Existence of Labour," in *Open Marxism: Volume III, Emancipating Marx*, eds. Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn, John Holloway, and Kosmas Psychopedis (London: Pluto Press, 1995), 197.

[812] See, for context, John Holloway, "From Scream of Refusal to Scream of Power: The Centrality of Work," in *Open Marxism: Volume III, Emancipating Marx*, eds. Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn, John Holloway, and Kosmas Psychopedis (London: Pluto Press, 1995), 155-181.

production, one in which capital was no longer "able to reduce value to measure."[813] This was not a *conjunctural* transformation, emergent as a result of capital's efforts to "re-establish profits that could no longer be obtained in the factories."[814] Rather, what she argued was that the received distinctions between "productive, reproductive, and unproductive labor" should be subject to scrutiny tout court.[815]

These value-theoretical claims engendered considerable controversy within the US iteration of the domestic labor debate. In fact, for those that take a narrow definition of its scope, the *entirety* of the domestic labor debate revolved around "the precise meaning and application of Marxist categories" and the ostensible productivity of unwaged domestic work[816]; and it was, in no small part, inaugurated by the importation of concepts from autonomous Marxism into American feminist discourse by figures like Federici. It would be impossible to survey all of the work that engaged that problematic here. Nevertheless, among the most rigorous engagements with the ostensible productivity of women's domestic work in the context of the domestic labor debate were found in Lise Vogel's 1983 book *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*, and in the widely read edited volumes *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (1979) and *Women & Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (1981). Running through all of these texts was not only the specter of the unwaged work implicated in the reproduction of workers, but a struggle over the language and categories used to describe that work. All were concerned with problems that Federici raised, asking (among other questions): Is unwaged social reproductive work productive insofar as

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[813] See, for context, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 402.

[814] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 112.

[815] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 402.

[816] Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*, 22.

the productive and reproductive domains "reverberate upon one another and frequently occur in the same social, physical, and even psychic spaces"[817]? Is the household merely a site of the "social relations of consumption"?[818] How should we conceive, theoretically and historically, of these relations?

As noted above, this was not the only dimension of the domestic labor debate that was preempted by Inman. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, participants in the US iteration of the domestic labor debate also turned directly to the "root cause" of women's oppression; they returned, knowingly or not, to Inman's question of how to make sense of the most significant source of women's oppression in (and beyond) capitalist society. The radical feminist Shulamith Firestone stood at one extreme end of that disagreement, and articulated her position as early as 1970 in her controversial book *The Dialectic of Sex*. Therein, not only did Firestone reject the view that women's oppression was reducible to their putatively shared place within capitalist society—reducible to their relation to the unwaged labor of housework under capitalism—but she suggested that *all other forms of oppression* had their "roots in the biological division of the sexes." She argued that the "sexual class system" formed "the model for all other exploitative systems, and thus [is] the tapeworm that must be eliminated first by any true revolution."[819] Over the course of the next decade and a half a number of other US-based feminists developed their own accounts on these matters, taking up divergent positions on the root cause of women's oppression. Azizah Al-Hibri, for example,

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[817] Rosalind Petchesky, "Dissolving the Hyphen: A Report on Marxist-Feminist Groups 1-5," in *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, ed. Zillah R. Eisenstein (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 376.

[818] Batya Weinbaum and Amy Bridges, "The Other Side of the Paycheck: Monopoly Capital and the Structure of Consumption," in *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, ed. Zillah R. Eisenstein (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 191.

[819] Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, 37.

presented capitalism in 1981 "as an advanced stage of patriarchy,"[820] while the economist Heidi Hartmann famously took a different tack in 1979. Rather than finding the root cause of women's oppression in biology or in capitalist society's constitutive features, Hartmann argued that patriarchal and capitalist relations constituted two relatively discrete systems, such that "*changes* in the one aspect of production" did not necessarily imply "changes in the other."[821]

Indeed, throughout the 1970s and 1980s participants in the domestic labor debate regularly considered the "[f]undamental conflict in society," and the root cause of the conflict "between men and women."[822] For some, the question of the productivity of women's unwaged work—and questions like "What do women produce? What is the social meaning of their labor? How is this labor to be understood as a part of the capitalist mode of production"?[823]—were so tightly related to the question of the root cause of women's oppression that they could only be asked and answered together. These two questions structured the core disagreements within the US iteration of the domestic labor debate in the 1970s and 1980s. And in what remains of this chapter, I will turn from this broad overview of the domestic labor debate—and its antecedents in the work of Inman in the 1930s and 1940s—to identify how the built environment appeared in this conversation. I will turn from the domestic labor debate's basic contours to how participants in the domestic labor debate shed light on the role of the capitalist spatial matrix in the articulation of capital and difference and the interpellation of differentiated subjectivities.

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[820] Azizah Al-Hibri, "Capitalism is an Advanced Stage of Patriarchy: But Marxism is Not Feminism," in *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: A Debate on Class and Patriarchy*, ed. Lydia Sargent (London: Pluto, 1981).

[821] Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism," 17, emphasis original.

[822] Cf. Dalla Costa and James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of Community*, 23.

[823] Lise Vogel, "The Earthly Family," *Radical America* 7, no. 4-5 (1973): 23.

The prison and the ghetto: geographies of articulation

As briefly noted above, it is not entirely novel to suggest that spatiality was a concern within the US iteration of the domestic labor debate. Some figures, like the architectural historian and urbanist Dolores Hayden—discussed in more depth below—organized their engagement with that debate in explicitly and exclusively spatial terms. Across a series of articles and books, Hayden attempted to sketch the parameters of what she called a "non-sexist city"—to develop "a new paradigm of the home, the neighborhood, and the city"—and to track historical examples of socio-spatial forms that had supported more equal gender relations.[824] Hayden underscored, for example, that the residentially zoned dwelling was "almost invariably organized around the same set of spaces: kitchen, dining room, living room, bedrooms, garage or parking area"[825]; and she suggested that this spatial structure not only presupposed certain norms of private domestic work, but—given the relation of women to that domain—contributed to the production of womanhood as well. Even beyond the contributions of Hayden, it was common to encounter a concern for the spatial isolation of women across the US iteration of the domestic labor debate. Across that debate, spatial isolation appeared in a variety of guises—women's "isolation within the four walls of the house, isolation of waged workers in relation to houseworkers, isolation of daycare activists from one neighbourhood to another."[826] Some even argued that "woman" was "crystallized" in and through this pattern of spatial isolation.[827]

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[824] Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Look Like?: Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work," *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): S171; see also, Dolores Hayden, "Redesigning the Domestic Workplace," in *New Space for Women*, eds. Gerda Wekerle, Rebecca Peterson, and David Morley (New York: Routledge, 1980), 101-121.

[825] Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Look Like?," S174.

[826] Toupin, *Wages for Housework*, 56.

[827] Toupin, *Wages for Housework*, 62.

In what follows below I will extend this observation—regarding the place of spatiality in the domestic labor debate—along two conceptual axes. First, I will take up a reading of invocations of the "prison" and the "ghetto" by Angela Davis specifically, arguing that in her consideration of those spatial categories, she helped to clarify the role of the built environment in the *articulation* of ascriptive difference and the constituent features of capitalist society. I will argue that Davis demonstrated, more specifically, that "gender" did not exist in isolation or in the abstract, but was always differentially enacted via the built environment and articulated in an overdetermined socio-spatial whole. And second, I will suggest that we can read invocations of the "household" and the "suburb"—in the work of Silvia Federici and Dolores Hayden, respectively—to grasp the constitutive spatiality of differentiated patterns of *interpellation*, or the role of the built environment in the interpellation of social subjects and the depth of their interior lives. In other words, I will not only highlight the presence of spatial categories and concepts across the domestic labor debate. Rather, I will draw attention to the invocation of specific categories related to the built environment in light of this dissertation's broad problematic. I will demonstrate that in and through their engagement with these four spatial categories—the prison, the ghetto, the household, and the suburb—a disparate and often divergent array of thinkers associated with the domestic labor debate brought the role of the built environment in the reproduction of capitalist society—in all of its complexity—into view.

Let's turn to the prison—and to the question of articulation—first. Angela Davis, of all those figures associated with the domestic labor debate, was unsurprisingly the most attuned to the spatiality and material architecture of the prison. Her personal experience of imprisonment—which followed from her involvement in the defense of the Soledad Brothers and her arrest in 1970—loomed large in her writing. The steel bars, the "white tile walls and light-colored linoleum floor[s],"

the "seatless toilet[s]," and the "[l]ong metal benches" that lined the walls[828]—all of these features appeared in her writing, as did her experience with the architecture of the broader punitive arm of the state.[829] But Davis's reflections on the spatiality of the prison were not limited to her autobiographical writing alone. Throughout her writing Davis substantiated Foucault's dictum that the prison "produces delinquents" in a very material sense; that it is implicated not only in making the contours of crime and criminality, but in making subjectivities as well.[830] And throughout her work she rendered visible an additional point that was absent from the Foucauldian corpus, and which spoke directly to the concerns of the domestic labor debate. She demonstrated that womanhood was not a static or singular category, and that it was always differentially enacted, "construct[ed] and affirm[ed]" *in situ*, including within the architecture of the prison itself.[831] In short, in her writing in and around the domestic labor debate, Davis demonstrated that the category of "the woman" was always overdetermined and articulated in the context of a complex totality, and lived in and through distinctive built environments—like the prison.

In developing this reading of the role of the prison in the articulation of gender and capitalist society's broader dynamics, Davis drew on her observation that the category of "woman" had long been contested and overdetermined terrain. She first developed that argument outside of the context of the prison, via the observation that "the economic system of slavery fundamentally relied upon

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[828] Angela Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 30.

[829] See Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 33; see also, Angela Davis, *An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1988).

[830] Angela Davis, "Incarcerated Women: Transformative Strategies," *Black Renaissance* 1, no. 1 (1996): n.p.

[831] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 91.

alienated and fragmented maternities," as well as a paradoxical relation to domestic work.[832] Indeed, one of Davis's most widely known arguments is that the experience of enslavement "pressed" enslaved people "into the mold of beasts of burden" regardless of their gender, all while situating black women at the heart of domestic space wherein they were uniquely positioned to pursue the "retrieval of…their fundamental humanity."[833] In that work, she convincingly demonstrated that in the context of the slave economy a particular form of womanhood emerged.[834] "The slave holding class expressed its drive for profit by seeking the maximum extraction of surplus labor in utter disregard to the age or sex of the slave"; and the "[e]xternal economic compulsions" of slavery paradoxically brought black women "into an equal partnership in oppression with the man," while also enabling a particular relation to the relative autonomy of enslaved reproduction.[835] In Davis's view, a particular form of womanhood was produced through these dynamics; and, more specifically, through the spatialities and material architectures of enslaved life.

In other words, elsewhere in Davis's work she noted that the meaning and significance of womanhood was not static, and that it took shape differentially and geographically. In the context of enslavement, it took place through the relations of different subjects to the spaces of the plantation. And in her writing on the spatialities that constituted the late twentieth century prison, she pushed that claim further still. In that work Davis demonstrated that there was no meaning to categories of gender outside of their enactment in space; and that the late twentieth century prison contributed to a long process of "marking" populations of women at odds with the "nuclear family as paradigm,"

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[832] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 212.

[833] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 115.

[834] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 116, emphasis added.

[835] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 171.

thus producing a differentiated—or overdetermined and complexly articulated—form of womanhood in the process.[836] Her most explicit invocation of the role of the prison in the articulation of an overdetermined form of womanhood is found in "Surrogates and Outcast Mothers," which was not published until much of the dust had settled on the domestic labor debate, in 1994. In that context, Davis called attention to the "strategic role of domesticity in the structure and correctional goals of women's prisons"; to federal prisons like Alderson Federal Reformatory for women in West Virginia and "state institutions like the California Institute for Women and Bedford Hills in the state of New York," which sought to "architecturally – albeit mechanistically – evoke family life" and correct (and thereby produce) deviant forms of womanhood.[837] These places plainly participated in an effort to "encourage and ingrain 'appropriate' gender roles" in those subjects that lacked them, and they did so in and through their spatial design.[838] More plainly, these places produced an overdetermined ("deviant") form of womanhood via their spatiality. This was a form of womanhood that was "always already" articulated to other aspects of the social whole given its material enactment in space.

Elsewhere in her work Davis demonstrated the more subtle ways in which the "unmitigated totalitarianism" of the prison enabled and shaped the enactment of particular forms of racialized femininity as well; how the "repetitive routine" and "imposed anonymity" of the prison—as well as its material architecture and built form—helped to produce forms of racialized womanhood that did

[836] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 70.

[837] Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 218.

[838] Belknap quoted in Angela Davis, "Public Imprisonment and Private Violence: Reflections on the Hidden Punishment of Women," in *Frontline Feminisms*, eds. Marguerite Waller and Jennifer Rycenga (New York: Routledge, 2001), 9.

not exist in the abstract but only in their overdetermined articulation.[839] In developing these observations, capitalist society *in general* was not read by Davis as implying particular relations of racialization and gendered hierarchization.[840] Instead, socio-spatial configurations—like the late twentieth century prison—were understood to give shape to distinctive racialized patterns and practices of gendered life in capitalist contexts. It was not only the "ideological construction of crime" that was "complemented and bolstered by the material construction of jails and prisons," but forms and practices of racialized gender too.[841] Recalling her time in jail in Marin County, Davis demonstrated the banal ways in which this worked. As she put it, the "stubborn presence of the washing machine" was presented as an "outlet" for incarcerated women in that context, all while the work of "washing and ironing" was differentiated according to race. Women were, unlike their male counterparts, provided with a washing machine and with a "clothes dryer and ironing paraphernalia which, discounting the metal tables and backless tools, were the sole furnishings of the day room."[842] And yet, womanhood was not uniformly enacted in relation to this built environment.

Indeed, in Davis's telling these amenities were understood to represent "an essential part of the [] existence" of women, and were thus central to the reproduction of feminine existence in the space of the jail.[843] And yet, "[w]hen, out of boredom, many women volunteered to do the washing, black women were consistently rejected. [And] when no one volunteered, black women were ordered to do it."[844] This example might seem relatively minor, at first glance. But what it helps to

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[839] Angela Davis, *If They Come in the Morning…Voices of Resistance* (New York: Verso, 2016), 44.

[840] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 173.

[841] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 69.

[842] Davis, *An Autobiography*, 309.

[843] Davis, *An Autobiography*, 309.

demonstrate is that the production of womanhood in and through the space of the jail was, in Davis's telling, racially differentiated. In a certain sense, "the encroachment of racism" helps to "illuminate[] the deeper meaning of sexism" itself.[845] The encroachment of racism makes visible the fact that the object of sexism—womanhood—was both spatially reproduced and differentiated *at once*. And in Davis's other work, she makes plain that black womanhood at the end of the twentieth century was not only articulated and enacted through the built form of the prison, or in and through the different socio-spatial relations that constituted life inside of it. It was articulated and enacted, more broadly, in and through the geographical landscapes of African American life—through the "vicious circle linking poverty, police courts, and prison in an integral element of ghetto existence."[846]

In fact, a reading of Davis's oeuvre—and its critique of key aspects of the domestic labor debate and its conception of "womanhood" in the 1970s and 1980s—demonstrates that if, for her, racialized forms of gender were enacted and articulated in and through the space of the jail and the prison, they were hardly produced there alone. The prison was not the only built environment through which the "ideological barriers" of ascriptive difference were erected, naturalized, and reproduced.[847] It was, rather, but a node within a more expansive geography that emerged with the convergence of US deindustrialization in the latter half of the twentieth century and the concurrent political turn toward what Herbert Marcuse referred to as "preventive fascism"; a political turn, according to Davis, under which "[t]he sharp edge of political repression" cut through the entirety

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[844] Davis, *An Autobiography*, 309.

[845] Angela Davis, "Rape, Lynching and Housework [first sketch]" (p. 6c), n.d., Box 24, Folder 5, Papers of Angela Y. Davis (1937-2017), Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute.

[846] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 49.

[847] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 67.

of the social landscape, and necessarily "pour[ed] over into the contained world of the prison where it understandably acquire[ed] far more ruthless forms."[848] In addition to the prison, Davis was particularly attuned to the "overall scenery of oppression" that constituted the late twentieth century ghetto—"its drabness, its poverty, its brutality."[849] Capital began to move, in Davis's language, with increasing "ease across national borders" in the late twentieth century in search of "cheap labor pools," leaving "entire communities in shambles, consigning huge numbers of people to joblessness, leaving them prey to the drug trade…affecting the education system, social welfare," and thus "turning the people who live in those communities into perfect candidates for prison."[850] And these socio-spatial conditions did not simply produce "candidates for prison," but new enactments and articulations of race and gender as well. They produced the conditions through which race, gender, and capital were *simultaneously* enacted and articulated.

In engaging these broad political economic transformations and their impact on the working class, Davis was far from alone. Noel Ignatin spoke strikingly to the impending sense of doom that was brewing during this period—to the panic that accompanied the broad conjuncture that animated Davis's writing on the ghetto. In this moment he wrote that the "dying days" of "US imperialist rule" were upon us, and that we were witness to its effects: "the barbarous wars of extermination launched against colonial and semicolonial peoples, the murder by starvation, the mass insecurity, the fascist clamp being tightened on the American people, the trampling on culture and the contempt for the decent aspirations of humanity."[851] And James Boggs described the same

[848] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 47-48.

[849] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 48-49.

[850] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 67.

[851] Noel Ignatin and Ted Allen, "White Blindspot," *Marxists Internet Archive*, accessed March 7, 2025, https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1/whiteblindspot.pdf

broad conjuncture, taking up a more strategic and direct tenor in his writing on industrial stagnation, deindustrialization, and the remaking of the American working class. Writing in the aftermath of the urban rebellions of the mid-1960s, Boggs called attention to emerging patterns of industrial re-location, which "pitt[ed] individuals against one another and the workers of one country against those of other countries," and to technological advancements that rendered certain factions of the working class redundant.[852] He also emphasized the geographical imprint that these twinned processes produced. Cities were being transformed into "reservations" for the racialized under-employed; society, in the formerly industrial cities of the United States, was becoming "rapidly deindustrialized."[853]

What was particularly apparent in Davis's writing on the ghetto, however, was that the geographies produced by the above-sketched processes were—once again—productive of overdetermined forms of gender. They were implicated in the production of forms of gender that were "always already" articulated to other modes of ascriptive differentiation and the constituent features of capitalist society. While some, like the authors of the "Fourth World Manifesto," argued in roughly the same historical moment that there was a "basic sameness of the male-female cultural split," Davis suggested something quite distinct.[854] This historical moment of deindustrialization and ghettoization was implicated in the production and enactment of differentiated and radically divergent practices of gender (or of "maleness" and "femaleness"), which were fractured along the

[852] Boggs, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook*, 333.

[853] Boggs, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook*, 333 and 338; for context, see Sam Klug, *The Internal Colony: Race and the American Politics of Global Decolonization* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2025).

[854] Barbara Burris, "Fourth World Manifesto" (p. 18-19), 1971, TAM 210, Box 5, Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon Research Files on Women's Liberation, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries.

lines of race, among other dimensions. This did not mean, to be clear, that Davis was hopeless in her reading of the ghetto and its gender making functions, nor did she presuppose that the built environment of the ghetto rendered articulations of race, gender, and capital *permanent*. Davis grappled with the "interstices" of capitalist life, and with the "non-reified modes of behavior that continue[d] to exist" within contexts of ghettoization. Davis highlighted the forms of love that persisted in bourgeois society, for example, which could *become* political via "a socio-political mediation [that draws] love and tenderness into the revolutionary continuum."[855] But she was not romantic regarding the resources that the ghetto provided for this kind of transformation. After all, personal, loving relations were "woven into the warp and woof of capitalist relations as a whole" and could actually "presuppose them and foster their continuance."[856]

In fact, in attending to ghettoization and the spatialized articulation and enactment of race, gender, and capital, Davis was particularly attuned to what she at one point referred to as the "dialectics of liberation." The "dark side" of the economic transformations that gave shape to the ghetto were quite dark. Between 1979 and 1984 11.5 million jobs in the United States were "permanently lost due to cutbacks in production"[857]; and between 1960 and 1980 the "percentage of employed adult Black men plummeted from approximately 75 percent to 55 percent."[858] Insofar as the post-War industrial economy remained afloat, Davis argued that it was because of the rising tide of militarization. As she put it in her "Reflections on Fascism" (n.d.), while "true that the military has always exercised an important function through the development of capitalism, never has it been

[855] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 179.

[856] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 180.

[857] Angela Davis, *Women, Culture & Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 86.

[858] Davis, *Women, Culture & Politics*, 80.

situated at the very center of the economy as has been the case since W.W.II. The U.S. economy like that of Nazi Germany, has become a permanent war economy."[859] "U.S. military sales abroad amount[ed] to less than a half billion dollars in 1960," but by 1967 they had already reached an estimated 5.4 billion dollars annually.[860]

In other words, Davis correctly diagnosed that the emergence of the ghetto was indissoluble from processes of deindustrialization and the emergence of both the service economy—which employed 68 percent of the work force as early as 1968—and the military economy.[861] And she argued that those dynamics produced a structural tendency toward fascism in the post-War United States; that fascist tendencies in the United States were "strengthened by [the] growing militarization of the economy."[862] These were the general conditions that supported the enactment and articulation of distinctive forms of racialized gender in the context of the ghetto as a socio-spatial form. "Substandard schools, medical care hardly fit for animals, overpriced, dilapidated housing, a welfare system based on a policy of skimpy concessions, designed to degrade and divide…this is only the beginning of the list of props in the overall scenery of oppression which, for the mass of Blacks, is the universe."[863] It was through these conditions that race, gender, and capital were articulated.

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[859] Angela Davis, "Reflections on Fascism" (p. 49), n.d., Box 24, Folder 8, Papers of Angela Y. Davis (1937-2017), Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute.

[860] Davis, "Reflections on Fascism" (p. 65).

[861] Sara Evans Boyte, "Out of the Frying Pan—Into the Fire: Women in the Last 30 Years" (p. 7), 1972, TAM 210, Box 5, Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon Research Files on Women's Liberation, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University Libraries.

[862] Davis, "Reflections on Fascism" (p. 65).

[863] Davis, *If They Come in the Morning*, 39.

Nevertheless, that was only one side of the "dialectic of liberation." On the other side, Davis remained relatively hopeful. Because "the human need for affective bonds cannot be eliminated beyond an absolute minimum," the ghetto continued to harbor basic forms of love and "interpersonal emotions in general."[864] The emotions and sentiments produced in those contexts could be excavated for their political potential, not solely put to work in service of the generalization of the "contractual character of human relationships."[865] To be sure, the sedimented socio-spatial forms of the ghetto "render[ed] some actions…improbable." Lines of tendential force held specific articulations in place, and "constrain[ed] and enable[d] action through practical/corporeal experience."[866] But Davis insisted that a different set of socio-spatial relations remained *available*; that the ghetto, and the articulations of race, gender, and capital it brought with it, could be unmade.

The household and the suburb: geographies of interpellation

In the preceding section I provided an argument regarding the relationship between the built environment and the articulation of race, gender, and capital. My concern was not with how space becomes racialized and gendered per se. It was not with the so-called "norming of space and the person" via the ideological norming of space and the imprinting of individuals with the "characteristics of a certain kind of space," and vice versa.[867] Rather, what I attempted to demonstrate was that particular forms of ascriptive identity—which are logically contingent to the functional reproduction of capital—are articulated within the capitalist socio-spatial whole via their enactment in the built environment. Ascriptive identities do not precede their overdetermined

[864] Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 177.

[865] Marcuse quoted in Davis, *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 178.

[866] Clarissa Rile Hayward, "On Structural Power," *Journal of Political Power* 11, no. 1 (2018): 64-65.

[867] Cf. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 41-42.

enactment in space; instead, they are articulated within the socio-spatial whole by way of specific built environments, and—though this was less of a concern in the preceding section—held in place by those environments over time as well. "[T]he dynamic inertia that space is endowed with ensures its tendency to reproduce the overall structure from which it originates," as the geographer Milton Santos has argued.[868] I drew on Davis's engagements with the prison and the ghetto to substantiate these claims. In her writing on the prison and the ghetto, Davis made visible that these socio-spatial forms were implicated in the production and articulation of forms of racialized gender in the final decades of the twentieth century. And in this final section, I will take our argument one step further still. Turning to the invocation of the spatial categories of the household and the suburb in the work of Silvia Federici and Dolores Hayden, respectively, I will press further not only on the place of the built environment in the domestic labor debate, but on what these two participants in that debate revealed regarding the role of the built environment in the interpellation of differentiated capitalist subjects and their interior lives as well.

Silvia Federici's work in the mid-1970s, written in the midst of her five-year association with the international Wages for Housework campaign, represents a particularly clear engagement with the geographical aspect of interpellation and the depth of capitalist forms of subjectification. Across a string of sole- and co-authored texts produced during that period, Federici highlighted not only that the "attributes of femininity" were socially produced, and thus not the natural attributes of a particular population; but that they were, rather, "work functions" that were reconstituted on a daily basis, and made possible in and through the built environment of the single family home.[869] Indeed, across these texts Federici not only suggested that the single family household presupposed and

[868] Santos, *For a New Geography*, 112.

[869] Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Zero Point: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 8.

produced a specific form of womanhood, but that the architecture and isolation of the home structured even those aspects of our selves that are most taken for granted—the "nearly involuntary domains of somatic and sexual life" as well.[870] Those seemingly innate and internal features of our lives—including our "neuroses" and sexualities, our emotions and the aspects of our inner lives that "supposedly com[e] from the depth" of our "character"—were, for housewives, the effects of isolated work in the home; they were *brought into being* by the single family home and its socio-spatial form, and in some cases they were best understood as the manifestation of "occupational disease."[871] In Federici's words, "[o]ur faces have become distorted from so much smiling, our feelings have got lost from so much loving, our oversexualization has left us completely desexualized."[872]

Of course, Federici was not unique in her engagement with the profound depth of the internal transformations wrought by the single family home in the mid to late twentieth century. Betty Friedan, in her landmark work of American feminism, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), attempted to give shape and name to the feeling of incompleteness, exhaustion, and desperation that accompanied isolated housework—to that feeling "which had no name," but which afflicted housewives and was preyed upon by advertisers and department stores to sell home goods that might "satisfy the yearning" they have, "alone in [their] house."[873] Friedan even argued that the spatial layout of the "split-level house" or contemporary "ranch"—which had "no true walls or doors" and forced women to remain always in their "beautiful electronic kitchen" and without any privacy—was an architectural form in which it was impossible for the housewife to "forget her own

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[870] Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 96.

[871] Federici, *Revolution at Zero Point*, 15-16.

[872] Federici, *Revolution at Zero Point*, 19-20.

[873] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 320.

identity."[874] Simone de Beauvoir similarly suggested that women's political mobilization—and political consciousness—was limited by their socio-spatial relations. Women did not have "their own space" insofar as they "live[d] dispersed among men, tied by homes, work, economic interests, and social conditions to certain men—fathers or husbands—more closely than to other women."[875] Nevertheless, what Federici made uniquely clear was that women's relegation to a "seemingly separate compartment[]" of social life was integral to their interpellation and constitution as gendered capitalist subjects[876]; that women's consciousness and somatic experience within capitalist society emerged to a significant extent through their spatial interpellation within the single family home.

An overlooked text written by Federici in 1970, and thus prior to her involvement in the international Wages for Housework campaign, seems to hold important insight into her conceptualization of the relationship between spatiality and interpellation. A study of the Vietnamese philosopher Tran Duc Thao, it was published in the fall 1970 issue of *Telos* under the title "Viet Cong Philosophy: Tran Duc Thao." In it, Federici undertook a reading of Thao's unique effort to bridge Marxism and phenomenology, and his effort to develop "a theory of consciousness and a theory of language based on labor and historical becoming."[877] Indeed, what she found in Thao's analysis was the claim that consciousness "originates organically as language, generated in

[874] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 348.

[875] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 8.

[876] The Power of Women Collective (London), "The Perspective of Wages for Housework," in *Wages for Housework Notebook, No. 1*, ed. Montreal Power of Women Collective (Montreal: Montreal Power of Women Collective, 1975), 10.

[877] Silvia Federici, "Viet Cong Philosophy: Tran Duc Thao," *Telos* 6 (1970): 2.

turn from the development of material conditions constituted in human activity"[878]; that, according to Thao, "*the intersubjective relations developed in collective work are an essential condition for the formation of consciousness*…and hence, for the constitution of all social values."[879]

To be clear, my claim is not that Tran Duc Thao's account of consciousness directly informed Federici's later writing within the women's movement in any immediate or straightforward sense. (A closer reading of Federici's philosophical and political writings would be necessary to substantiate that point.) Nevertheless, at precisely the same moment that she published that text, Federici began to consider how particular social forms and spatial practices might produce a "leap in [women's] consciousness few books had ever produced"[880]; and, more broadly, how subjectivity and distinctive forms of consciousness were spatially produced in and through the isolation of the single family home. There is a clear resonance between Federici's reading of Tran Duc Thao's claim that "consciousness is to matter as the *figure* to its *background*, distinct but not separate from it, since only the background allows it to be distinguishable," and her later conceptualization of the forms of subjectivity and consciousness that were interpellated via the isolation of the single family home.[881] In her own work, the problem of women's consciousness became indissociable from women's relegation to the bounds of the single family home and to their practice of reproductive work therein. "Craziness" was, Federici claimed with Rhona Rothman, "the other side of housework," and it was "forced" upon women and simultaneously considered their "natural destiny."[882] "It is our

[878] Federici, "Viet Cong Philosophy," 6.

[879] Federici, "Viet Cong Philosophy," 7, emphasis added.

[880] Silvia Federici, "Putting Feminism Back on its Feet," *Social Text* 9/10 (1984): 343.

[881] Federici, "Viet Cong Philosophy," 9, emphasis original.

[882] Silvia Federici and Rhona Rothman, "Our Mental Health Begins With the Struggle Against Housework" (p. 2.), 1975, Box 2, Wages for housework: healthcare and mental health efforts, Silvia Federici papers (1922-2019), Feminist Theory Archive, Brown University Library.

isolation in the home" that is so productive of "constant madness that often even the mental hospital appears as a relief."[883]

In a theorization that (at the very least) echoed Tran Duc Thao's Marxist phenomenology, Federici highlighted the role of isolated work in the reproduction of capitalism and in the formation of a distinctive form of consciousness and subjectivity. The problem was not simply that "women live in the workplace, and can't leave at night," such that they are always effectively at work.[884] It was that women lived "the ideology of female inferiority" in and through their existence in the isolation of the single family household.[885] The wage form produced the appearance of separation. It functioned, at least in part, to "devide [sic] the factory and the community, social labor and personal service, worktime and leisure time, economic activity and sexuality, public and private, personal and political."[886] However, capitalist subjectivities were not only enacted and interpellated in the factory alone. The housewife's life was "commanded" by the wage form, and she enacted a gendered form of capitalist subjectivity in and through her actions within the isolation of the home.[887]

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[883] Federici and Rothman, "Our Mental Health Begins With the Struggle Against Housework" (p. 3).

[884] Jackie Greenleaf, "Wages for Housework: A Revolutionary Socialist Feminist Perspective" (p. 11), 1974, Box 1, SC 25, Chris Bose Wages for Housework Research Collection, Barnard Archives & Special Collections, Columbia University Libraries.

[885] Selma James, "Sex, Race and Class with contributions from Barbara Beese, Mala Dhondy, Darcus Howe and correspondents to Race Today" (p. 29), 1974, Box 1, SC 25, Chris Bose Wages for Housework Research Collection, Barnard Archives & Special Collections, Columbia University Libraries.

[886] N.A., "Theses on Wages for Housework" (p. 3), 1974, Box 2, Wages for Housework: founding documents, Silvia Federici papers (1922-2019), Feminist Theory Archive, Brown University Library.

[887] Silvia Federici, "Women and Welfare [internal discussion document]" (p. 2), 1975, Box 2, Wages: notes re: NY Wages for Housework committee, Silvia Federici papers (1922-2019), Feminist Theory Archive, Brown University Library.

In fact, for Federici the single family home did not only produce consciousness, but it brought bodies into being too. Moving from the psychological to the somatic, Federici argued that the simple fact of wagelessness inhibited women's "real control over [their] bodies."[888] Housewives' lives and bodies were controlled by the "expectations and requirements of the husband" and his work; "[t]he demands of *his* work largely determine[d] how the housewife organize[d] her time" and her existence within social space.[889] And she pushed these claims further still, arguing that "[n]ot only" were housewives' lives "commanded by the same alarm clock that sends her husband to punch in and her children to school, but more fundamentally, her uterus, her sexuality, her whole body are placed at the service of production."[890] At her most forceful Federici argued that housewives' physical health was structured by their relation to gendered domination and their interpellation by way of the isolation of the single family home. Their bodies were produced in and through their relation to a built environment that was made in the service of a particular form of gendered capitalism; and Federici would argue, albeit reductively, that health care itself was "organized," quite simply, "to fit the goals of production."[891]

In attending to the centrality of the single family home in the production of both interior lives and bodies themselves, Federici was, again, elaborating claims that had some currency within the US iteration of the domestic labor debate. Barbara Ehrenreich, in her 1976 text "What is Socialist Feminism," developed several closely related points. She argued that the "day to day"

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[888] Federici, "Women and Welfare [internal discussion document]" (p. 2).

[889] Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 130, emphasis original.

[890] Federici, "Women and Welfare [internal discussion document]" (p. 2).

[891] Silvia Federici, "Health Care and Health Problems [notes from group discussion on health care]" (p. 2), 1976, Box 2, Wages for housework: healthcare and mental health efforts, Silvia Federici papers (1922-2019), Feminist Theory Archive, Brown University Library.

reproduction of the system of "sex and class domination" was enabled not only by "the threat of violence" or "material deprivation"—it was reproduced by way of social and geographical atomization. Much in the way that separated and segregated neighborhoods fractured working class solidarity, "privatized and inward-looking" domestic life did too.[892] While it was "women who [were] most isolated in what has become an increasingly privatized family existence," the conditions of socio-spatial isolation that enabled and facilitated that privatized existence served to support "class atomization" as a whole.[893] Tom Kaufer and Katherine Christoffel complimented this argument. They underscored that the socio-spatial regime of gendered US capitalism produced the view that "women 'belong' in the home, and [that] it is their biologically determined nature to be full-time mothers, housekeepers and helpmates."[894] They also noted that this socio-spatial regime—and the single family home specifically—gave shape to affects, desires, and norms, or to "tastes and buying habits" and "social and work patterns."[895]

Perhaps the most relevant figure to recall in relation to Federici, however, is Dolores Hayden. Hayden drew attention not only to the role of the single family home in the interpellation of social subjects, but to the role of the neighborhood and the city in the making of gendered subjectivities too. In work like *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities* (1981) Hayden observed that beginning in the 1920s, and particularly following Herbert Hoover's National Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership in 1931,

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[892] Barbara Ehrenreich, "What is Socialist Feminism?" *Marxists Internet Archive*, accessed March 20, 2025, https://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/ehrenreich-barbara/socialist-feminism.htm

[893] Ehrenreich, "What is Socialist Feminism?"

[894] Tom Kaufer and Katherine Christoffel, *The Political Economy of Male Chauvinism* (Boston: New England, 1970), 1.

[895] Kaufer and Christoffel, *The Political Economy of Male Chauvinism*, 1.

there was a concerted nationwide effort to facilitate white suburbanization and the inculcation of "respectability, consumption, and female domesticity" within the confines of the "single-family suburban house on its own lot."[896] And yet, rather than stopping her account of subjectification at the bounds of the single family lot, Hayden underscored that the entire urban fabric was implicated in the interpellation of gendered subjectivities throughout the twentieth century. As she put it, "[b]y the 1960s, the suburban rings of cities held a greater percentage of the national urban population than the old city centers"; and "[b]y the 1970s, there were fifty million small houses and over one hundred million cars."[897] This extended geography, in which more than three quarters of AFL-CIO members were invested in their homes in the form of long term mortgages, produced the crisis that had no name so vividly described by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*.[898] It was not only the isolation of the home that produced women's subjectivity, but the fact that "[l]arge-scale plans for public space and social services were sacrificed to private acreage."[899] Suburbanization *as a whole* provided an "architecture of gender."[900]

Indeed, the contours of this expansive geography of interpellation are particularly visible in Hayden's text *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* (1984). In that work she argued that the household was but "a physical space designed to mediate between

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[896] Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 23.

[897] Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, 25.

[898] Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, 26.

[899] Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work, and Family Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 8.

[900] Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, 17-18.

nature and culture, between the landscape and the larger urban built environment."[901] As a result, the single family home did not only presuppose a range of products that contributed to the interpellation of women's capitalist subjectivity—"a car, a stove, a refrigerator, a vacuum cleaner, a washer," and so on.[902] It also presupposed a broader built environment at the scale of the neighborhood and at the scale of the city that was implicated in the interpellation of social subjects. The single family home was but one part of what Hayden referred to, quoting the sociologist Jessie Bernard, as a broader "female world."

What Hayden's work helps to illustrate is that the processes of gendered interpellation described by Federici were not only enacted inside the over 50 million "small homes" that scattered the American landscape in "class-segregated areas" by 1980. They were also enacted via the freeways that "crisscrossed" these areas, and the "shopping malls and commercial strip developments" that supported them.[903] Gendered interpellation did not only occur in the isolation of the home, but over the course of the "journey to work," which averaged nine miles in both directions in 1975 and 1976, and across the broader geographies of social reproduction.[904] At her most imaginative, Hayden provided a practical map of how we might transform these spaces, and produce new kinds of gendered subjectivity as well. In "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like?" (1980) Hayden stated plainly that the problems of sexism and gender hierarchy could only be resolved through radical socio-spatial change—through socio-spatial transformations that extended well beyond the architecture of the home. She suggested, *inter alia*, "experimental residential centers, which in their architectural design and economic organization [would] transcend traditional definitions of home,

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[901] Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, 40.

[902] Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, 34.

[903] Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Look Like?," S171.

[904] Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Look Like?," S171.

neighborhood, city, and workplace."[905] These would include "community facilities such as children's play areas, dial-a-ride garages, [] laundries," kitchens, grocery depots, food cooperatives, and community gardens.[906] At the center of these transformed neighborhoods would be pooled land, and existing buildings—"private porches, garages, tool sheds"—would be remade for collective use.[907]

Conclusion

While the previous chapter turned to the history of the black belt debate to give shape to our theorization of the role of the built environment in the production and resolution of capitalist crises, in this chapter I have attempted to further substantiate my claim that the built environment has a central role to play in both the processes of articulation and interpellation. What I have argued is that, despite the disagreements that constituted the US iteration of the domestic labor debate in the 1970s and 1980s, several key participants within that debate invoked spatial categories to develop their arguments, revealing crucial insights in the present context. In the work of Angela Davis, we see clearly that gender itself is not static or stable, but always overdetermined, enacted, and articulated in the context of a broader socio-spatial whole and via the built environment; and in the work of Silvia Federici and Dolores Hayden we see that the built environment is implicated in the process of subjectification in the most intimate sense—in the construction of a "lifeworld," and a sense of "the way things are and will be."[908] In other words, in each of these thinkers the built environment appears as central not simply to the reproduction of capital's constitutive features, but to capitalist *society*—to its necessary and contingent parts.

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[905] Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Look Like?," S181.

[906] Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Look Like?," S183.

[907] Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Look Like?," S183.

[908] Forst quoted in Hayward, "On Structural Power," 58.

Conclusion

While the long history of political and social thought has given relatively short shrift to the built environment—albeit with a few notable exceptions, particularly since the 1970s—the built environment itself is hardly absent in contemporary political debate. We find it at the center of many of the pressing political questions of the day, whether or not it is framed in precisely that way. Commentators writing about the green transition, to name but one area of political concern, often note that "we are not starting from scratch"—and that we must grapple with the existing built environment.[909] Within the scholarship in that broad domain, it is well understood that the fossil economy emerged in tandem with a particular kind of built environment, or—as Adam Hanieh has recently put it—"a specific form of urbanism – high density and energy intensive towns and cities, filled with concentrated areas of residential and industrial facilities powered by fossil fuels"[910]; and, moreover, that each subsequent era in the development of the fossil economy required its own built environment, which was layered atop the preceding strata of built space. For contemporary political commentators this simple fact contributes to the complexity of the politics of "asset stranding," and to the complexity of the move away from fossil fuels. The stranding of existing fossil fuel infrastructure will necessarily implicate not just a few nodal points within an interconnected geography, but the entire built landscape which "imparts inertia to capital."[911] "Over the living," the

[909] Brett Christophers, *The Price is Wrong: Why Capitalism Won't Save the Planet* (New York: Verso, 2024), 156.

[910] Adam Hanieh, *Crude Capitalism: Oil, Corporate Power, and the Making of the World Market* (New York: Verso, 2024), 18.

[911] Andreas Malm and Wim Carton, *Overshoot: How the World Surrendered to Climate Breakdown* (New York: Verso, 2024), 107.

dead labor embedded in the built environment constitutes "a mute and stifling power" that will have to be engaged if we are to move beyond fossil fuels.[912]

This kind of critical engagement with the built environment is welcome, as are the comparable and overlapping discussions that take place on themes like housing, transportation, segregation, and the like. In the face of the crises of the present, we will undoubtedly have to grapple with the contours of the really existing built environment, and engage its pertinence within several specified policy domains. Nevertheless, this kind of political engagement with the built environment admittedly sits somewhat awkwardly in relation to the theorization that I have developed throughout this dissertation. After all, across the preceding pages, I have made sense of the built environment in terms that are both broader and more abstract than even the most capacious engagements with that topic in the realm of policy and politics today. Rather than attending to policy-oriented debates on the fossil economy, housing, segregation, or any other domain, I have taken the critical literature on capitalist reproduction as my primary intellectual foil, rejecting its tendencies toward "obscurantism," "essentialism," and "reductionism." I have emphasized that it is through the built environment—or through that relatively fixed and immobile environment that surrounds us, and that preempts particular forms of use—that capitalist society's necessary and contingent dynamics are materialized, concretized, and reproduced. Indeed, by way of a reading of the history of heterodox political economic thought in the United States, I have argued that the built environment mediates capitalism's inherent and recurrent crises, articulates capitalist society's necessary and contingent relations, and interpellates historically differentiated capitalist subjects. I have positioned the built environment not as a site of policy intervention per se, but as a key moment in the reproduction of capitalist society in its conjunctural specificity and complexity.

[912] Malm and Carton, *Overshoot*, 219.

Of course, the political implications of this account have not gone *entirely* unaddressed. In my theorization of the capitalist spatial matrix, I have done my best not to "bestow a cohesiveness" upon it which it "utterly lacks."[913] I have emphasized that the built environment in capitalist contexts is open to contestation, remaking, and change. I have also suggested that this general account of the built environment is necessary if we are to address some of the most pressing and politically-contested debates within contemporary social thought, not least those surrounding the relationship between capitalism and ascriptive differentiation—on "racial capitalism," "patriarchal capitalism," "class abstractionism," and beyond. Given that those debates often turn on an unstated and unengaged disagreement regarding the constitutive relations of capitalist society and regarding how and why those relations relate to forms of ascriptive differentiation, my theorization of the capitalist spatial matrix has much to recommend in that context. With the preceding chapters in view, we are well positioned to identify the constitutive dynamics that define capitalist society, and to explicate their reproduction in and through space. We are also well positioned to consider how and why capitalist society comes to be racialized and gendered, why it remains so over time, and how exactly the articulation of race, gender, and capital might be struggled against. With that said, we are, nonetheless, still quite far from the concrete questions that animate contemporary engagements with the built environment within the realm of policy and politics today. Not only does my account sit awkwardly in relation to debates on, *inter alia*, fossil fuel infrastructure, transportation, housing, segregation, and the like, but one might reasonably wonder how my account sheds light on those concrete matters of concern at all. How does this dissertation speak to concrete concerns regarding the politics of the built environment?

[913] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 11.

In response to such a question, my concluding claim is not that the arguments of this dissertation provide a straightforward path forward, much less a practical guide to policy making regarding the built environment in the present. In fact, my claim is just the opposite. What follows from the preceding pages is not a concrete political agenda, but the observation that *any* discussion of the built environment is *but a window into a much broader set of ethical and normative considerations that must be engaged*. Throughout this dissertation, I have suggested that the built environment is at the core of the reproduction of capitalist society, in spite of the fact that it has been relatively overlooked in the long history of political and social thought, and generally misapprehended by the post-1970s traditions of radical geography and critical socio-spatial theory. And what follows from my core claims is that what we imagine and what we struggle for is always conditioned by the built environment in capitalist contexts; that the built environment itself contains the trace of our freedom or the "movement of transcendence."[914] Indeed, the built environment is the "given," as Simone de Beauvoir puts it, that defines our freedom and that must be remade in our movement toward the future.[915] How we choose to live and reproduce our built environment will shape the forms of economic life we will have, the processes of hierarchization that will (or will not) define our society, and the kinds of subjectivities that we will be. In reproducing the capitalist built environment, we not only reproduce our economic system, but life more generally; we produce conditions that "allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, [and] influence" certain kinds of life, and inhibit others.[916]

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[914] Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume One*, 236.

[915] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (New York: Citadel Press, 1976).

[916] Cf. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 72.

The built environment is integral to the reproduction of—as Manuel Castells put it—the "specific laws regarding the conversion of capitalist social relationships."[917] But it is also much more than the materialization of capital's laws. It is the medium through which the necessary and contingent relations of capitalist society are concretized and condensed. And as such, any engagement with the built environment entails a decision regarding what we want to maintain and what we want to transcend. The political or normative lesson of this dissertation is that any engagement with the built environment raises the *question* of what we are *struggling against*, and what we are *struggling for*.

[917] Cf. Manuel Castells, *City, Class and Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 28.

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