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Literature, Theory, and the Temporalities of Neoliberalism

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Historians and theorists commonly trace the economic and political origins of neoliberalism to the early 1970s, when conjoined crises of energy and accumulation prefaced a constellation of transformations that have reshaped the world in the decades since: the intensification of crude forms of dispossession, the innovation of various mechanisms of "flexible" production and financial speculation, the declension of the welfare state, the clarification of new rationalities of the responsible and entrepreneurial self, and the general expansion and deepening of market logics.[1]

If the term "neoliberalism" implies a distinct periodization, though, the neoliberal present is composed of — its defining features correspond to and derive from — multiple temporalities. In the moment of primitive accumulation, ongoing processes of extraction, trafficking, and enclosure are enabled by forms of state (or extra-state) violence. In the moment of expanded reproduction — wherein "growth," the reinvestment of the surplus, remains a primary objective and outcome of accumulation — the maintenance and perpetuation of capitalist social relations is guaranteed by the "silent compulsion" of the market. And in the moment of what I want to call "accumulation by fabrication," the synthetic creation and subsequent assimilation of an outside to capital — through the devaluation of assets and labor or privatization of public services and resources — contributes to the waning efficacy of ideology and heightened importance of state repression.

One key task of contemporary critique is to simultaneously distinguish between the three temporalities of neoliberal capital — the unique rationalities of governance and accumulation that are paradigmatic to each — and evince the dynamics of their contingent interrelation. In the pages that follow, I delineate each of these temporalities, and the theoretical frameworks to which they correspond, in turn, conforming first of all to the abstraction of their progressive linearity before gesturing toward their concrete synchrony in the present conjuncture. I then move to an examination of how primitive accumulation, expanded reproduction, and accumulation by fabrication are figured in recent works of fiction. The majority of the theoretical and literary works that I address privilege one of these moments above the others — and thus help to elucidate their distinction. There are, though, historical and contemporary texts — notable examples of which I enter into dialogue with — that illuminate instead their structural combination. It is the latter critical current that this essay aspires to join and advance.

Primitive Accumulation

In the final part of *Capital*'s first volume, Karl Marx undertakes a suggestive meditation on the notion of "so-called primitive accumulation": the violent "divorcing of the producer from the means of production," but also "the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of [America]…the conquest and plunder of India, the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of black skins."[2] As the modifier "so-called" suggests, Marx was keen to highlight the ideological content of the concept of "primitive accumulation," as it was theorized by classical political economy and narrated by the "bourgeois historians." He

placed a particular accent on the contradictory emancipation signified by the figure of the "free worker"— the wage-laborer who had been liberated from the feudal relation but also "freed" from "any means of production of their own."[3] The history of this expropriation, Marx wrote, is written "in letters of blood and fire."[4] The enclosure of the commons and other "terroristic laws" worked to "set free" the small farmer — to transform the agricultural population into an industrial proletariat. This process was justified, by the philosophers and legislators of enclosure, via appeal, not simply to its liberatory consequences, but to its ameliorative contributions to the material security of the political community. Marx cited one sup- porter of enclosure, J. Arbuthnot, who argued that "if, by converting the farmers into a body of men who must work for others, more labor is produced, it is an advantage which the nation should wish for."[5] Enclosure, in other words, is imagined, in this ideological framework, as hastening not the disappearance of society's common stock but its expansionary enrichment. There is an evident continuity here with neoliberal ideology, which extols the emancipatory effects and material benefits of the declension of the social commons.

The "improving" effects of enclosure — the gift of dispossession to the common stock of humanity, including the dispossessed — were also invoked by intellectual arguments for the settler-colonial theft of indigenous lands. The settler who encloses "the wild woods and uncultivated waste of America," John Locke opined, "and has a greater plenty of the conveniences of life from ten acres than he could have had from a hundred left to nature, may truly be said to give ninety acres to mankind."[6] In Marx's formulation, this and other forms of colonial plunder enabled the advent of industrial capital in the Old World. "The treasures captured outside Europe," Marx wrote, "by undisguised looting, enslavement and murder flowed back to the mother country and were turned into capital there."[7] The capital provided by colonial dispossession and chattel slavery combined with the "free and rightless" proletariat engendered by domestic processes of enclosure. This alchemy of the two primary sites or moments of primitive accumulation, Marx observed, made possible the genesis of industrial capitalism.

Though accenting the terror of capital's birth, Marx shared with classical/liberal political economy an understanding of primitive accumulation as a *specific* moment in the emergence and evolution of the capitalist mode of production. He did not, in other words, devote a great deal of attention to the not simply primordial but perpetual importance of "so-called primitive accumulation" to the reproduction of capital and its attendant social relations. In *Capital*, the foundational terror of primitive accumulation gives way to the "silent compulsion" of the market. This is a protracted process, unfolding over centuries even, but a finite one. "In its embryonic state, in its state of becoming," Marx wrote, "capital cannot yet use the sheer force of economic relations to secure its right to absorb a sufficient quantity of surplus labor, but must be aided by the power of the state." In time, however, "the 'free' worker, owing to the greater development of the capitalist mode of production, makes a voluntary agreement, i.e. is compelled by social conditions to sell the whole of his active life."[8]

Later thinkers, however, did develop empirical and theoretical treatments of the ways in which primitive accumulation remains central to the maintenance, and continuous reinvention, of capitalism. "The original sin of simple robbery," as Hannah Arendt observed, "must be repeated lest the motor of accumulation suddenly die down."[9] Arendt's insight borrowed from Rosa Luxemburg, who highlighted capitalism's dependence on "non-capitalist social strata." In order to survive, Luxemburg argued, capital must constantly find and expropriate spaces outside of its dominion. Luxemburg, along with Marxist theorists of imperialism such as Rudolf Hilferding and V.I. Lenin, was responding to an

epoch in the history of capitalism that Marx himself did not live to witness — the late-nineteenth-century highpoint of modern European imperialism, which evinced with a particular clarity the "spatial fix" to conjoined crises of over-production and under-consumption. This moment and the theoretical interventions it provoked, that is, revealed the enduring importance of primitive accumulation and coercive state violence within a mature stage of capitalism that Marx himself imagined as defined by expanded reproduction and the "silent compulsion" of the market.

The connection between this fin de siècle moment and our own neoliberal era is not merely analogic but genealogic. In India, for example, the 1894 Land Acquisition Act governed the dispossession of small holders until 2013. Putting a neoliberal accent on this old colonial law, the Indian government has transformed lands acquired through the Act into Special Economic Zones (SEZs) — spaces of economic exception that oil the machinery of corporate rule and financial speculation. In some cases, these expropriations appear to model the same processes of enclosure and proletarianization described by Marx. In West Bengal, for example, the government has sold forcibly acquired lands — at a price exponentially above the compensation offered to the land's previous owners — to the Tata Motor Company, the factories of which entrap the producer divorced from the means of production.[10] But as Marx himself was careful to emphasize, enclosure always creates not only the wage laborer but the masses of unemployed. The proletariat formed by the "forcible expropriation of the people from the soil," Marx observed, "could not possibly be absorbed by the nascent manufactures as fast as it was thrown upon the world."[11] The uniqueness of neoliberal primitive accumulation is defined in part by the shifting balance between the waged and "wageless" subjects of dispossession.[12] Those displaced by state land grabs — as by free trade agreements and the structural adjustment programs that have reversed progressive land reforms in the global South — move toward the assembly line, but their migration is more likely to terminate in the informal rather than formal sites of economic production. Importantly, though, the "wageless" are still structurally entangled with the factory, as the expansion of the "reserve army" degrades wages and thereby increases the rate of exploitation.

Expanded Reproduction

In the moment of its genesis, Marx argued, capitalist production is enabled by state violence. But once the primitive accumulation of capital has been achieved, the mechanisms of valorization are guaranteed rather by the "natural laws of production." If the production of capital is made possible by crude force, that is, its expanded reproduction is, in Marx's formulation, guaranteed rather by the less visible workings of culture, by "education, tradition, and habit," which ensure the willful participation of the worker in a system that is premised on their exploitation.[13]

Over the course of the past century or so, the vocabulary that guides the theorization of this "silent compulsion" has been various — from Max Weber's concept of "spirit," to Louis Althusser's critique of "ideology," to Michel Foucault's elaboration of "governmentality." In the current moment, the Foucauldian framework is ascendant — in large part because Foucault was an early and prescient theorist of neoliberal rationality. Foucault's account, which was composed in the late 1970s, locates neoliberalism within the longer history of what he terms the "liberal art of government." Whereas in classical liberalism, Foucault observed, the state conferred legitimacy upon the market, in neoliberal order this relationship is reversed; the market legitimates the state. And whereas in classical liberalism the social and the economic were imagined as separate spheres, each conforming to its own rationality, under neoliberal governance the distinction between the social and the economic, society and the market, is blurred or dissolved completely. Finally, whereas the tradition of eighteenth and nineteenth century liberalism imagined the workings of the market — its mechanisms of competition and

exchange — as a given of nature, the original neoliberals — the postwar German ordoliberals especially — disavowed the naturalism of laissez faire as naïve. They understood competition, to borrow Foucault's words, as a "historical objective of governmental art and not as a natural given that must be respected."[14] (As Karl Polanyi put it, "laissez faire was planned.") In this, the ordoliberals shared with Marxist thought an understanding of laissez faire as an ideology imposed upon human social relations rather than a truth deduced from them.

The concept of governmentality describes the "conduct of conduct"— a technology of power that operates not through explicit command but by compelling the individual subject, from a position of invisible remove, to internalize and act in conformity with a particular logic of governance. Foucault's elaboration of "governmentality" helps to define the distinction be- tween the classical liberal tradition and its neoliberal transmutation. In the eighteenth century, Foucault observed, *homo oeconomicus* is "the person who must be left alone…the subject or object of *laissez-faire*." According to neoliberal rationality, by contrast, *homo oeconomicus* is "someone who is eminently governable…the correlate of a governmentality which will act on the environment and systematically modify its variables."[15] In the neoliberal context, in other words, the rational behavior of *homo oeconomicus* is not a precondition of government but something that must be produced, or conditioned, by it. And as Wendy Brown, writing in the contemporary moment, has contended, if in classical liberalism *homo oeconomicus* naturally resides in the economic sphere, in the neoliberal moment the boundaries of his habitat encompass all spaces of public and private life. "Neoliberal rationality," she notes, "disseminates the model of the market to all domains and activities…and configures human beings exhaustively as market actors, always, only, and everywhere." As a result, Brown argues, the demos — the space of democratic imaginaries, forms, and subjectivities — is narrowed to the point of disappearance.[16]

Though Brown acknowledges that neoliberal policy is occasionally imposed through violence, she contends that it is "more often enacted through specific techniques of governance, through best practices and legal tweaks, in short, through 'soft power' drawing on consensus and buy in." Neoliberalization, Brown contends, "is more termitelike than lionlike…its mode of reason boring in capillary fashion into the trunks and branches of work- places, schools, public agencies, social and political discourse, and above all, the subject."[17] The emphasis here is on what Althusser termed the "ideological state apparatuses." And indeed, the most visible contributions to the historiography of neoliberalism — from David Harvey's *Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005) to Daniel Stedman Jones's *Masters of the Universe* (2014) — highlight precisely this circulation of neoliberal ideas through think tanks, educational institutions, churches, and so on. The substance of this pervasive ideology is distinguished by its particular understanding of freedom. According to neoliberal rationality, the freedom of the individual — the entrepreneurial subject — is conditioned by the freedoms of the market and liberty (qua security) of the private property that is accumulated therein. For Brown, this relocation of freedom from the political to the economic sphere ensures the inequality of the latter; market freedom is not just a diversion from the demos, but an agent of its undoing.[18]

The question of how neoliberal rationality is naturalized has also provoked explicitly Weberian responses. Beyond his particular inquiry into the enabling affinity between Calvinism and boundless accumulation, Weber's more fundamental insight in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) was that people require ethical and moral reasons for participating in capitalist processes. The "spirit" of capitalism, as the French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello define it, is simply "the ideology that justifies engagement in capitalism." Bringing this problem to bear on the neoliberal moment, Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005) focuses on the central

importance of the *cadres* — a sort of managerial proletariat — to the legitimation and reproduction of post-Fordist capitalism in France. The *cadres* occupy a liminal space within the capital–labor binary. Afforded a modest security by capital, they are tasked in exchange with convincing first themselves and then the workers that they manage that "the prescribed way of making profit might be desirable, interesting, exciting, innovative or commendable."[19] Since the 1990s, Boltanski and Chiapello observe, the exigencies of "flexible" accumulation have corresponded to the innovation of a managerial lexicon that emphasizes the ideals of self-organization, creativity, and "intrinsic motivation." In one sense, then, the undoing of the Fordist archetype of the centralized hierarchical firm — and its displacement by the horizontal and spatially diffuse "network"— signals the redundancy of the managerial class to the reproduction of capitalist social relations. If workers are self-governed and self-mobilized, the *cadres* are a drain on the surplus rather than one of its key conditions. But in another sense, the "autonomous teams" of workers that replace the verticality of the firm represent, not the disappearance of the managerial class, but its universalization.[20] On the neoliberal shop floor, all workers are managers.

I am concerned to stress here that the imbricated theorizations of governmentality, ideology, and spirit belong to the temporality of expanded reproduction. They privilege spaces of putative economic or political belonging — the workplace, the marketplace, and the enfranchised public sphere — rather than exclusion. Even if the rabble in the shanty town are structurally necessary to the mechanisms of profit generation, their ideological consent is not required.

Accumulation by Fabrication

That the perpetuation of capital requires non-capitalist strata, Luxemburg contended, is evidence of capitalism's mortality. When there is no longer an "outside" to capital — non-commoditized spaces or non-integrated markets — accumulation will cease.[21] Primitive accumulation is a finite process, in other words, because the planet — its land, resources, and people — is finite. Luxemburg, though, did not anticipate neoliberalism's ingenious solution to this seemingly immutable contradiction: in the absence of an outside, one must simply be created. This fabricated outside, as Harvey has outlined, is achieved via a multiplicity of means: financialization (in particular the speculative claim to a future surplus rather than direct investment in pro- duction), the privatization of public assets and services, and the deliberate devaluation of assets and labor (so as to enable their later seizure by currently idle capital).[22] Importantly, the social and economic consequence of these processes is magnified by their imbrication. When the bubbles created by liberated financial capital burst, the resultant crisis justifies the imposition of austerity and further rounds of privatization and devaluation. This regressive redistribution of wealth — which consolidates the power of the capitalist class, but which discourages meaningful economic growth — corresponds to the generalization of social and economic precariousness. The expansion and deepening of insecurity, meanwhile, occasions a breakdown of consent, not simply within the working classes, but, increasingly, the putatively secure middles classes as well. Crises of accumulation, in other words, occasion crises of governmentality. And as the market and its compulsion are denaturalized, the repressive apparatuses of the state reenter the governmental foreground.

Harvey's concept of "accumulation by dispossession" joins original forms of primitive accumulation to latter-day technologies of synthetic depredation. Marx, too, was keen to illuminate the connections between the former and the latter. His treatment of primitive accumulation not only addressed the enclosure of common lands and plunder of bodies and resources; it also highlighted the fundamental contributions of "stock-exchange gambling and the modern bankocracy," as well as the "expropriation of the expropriators" (a phrase that nicely captures the asset-stripping methods of

contemporary private equity).[23] I am eager to emulate Harvey's insistence on the genealogical and structural connections between these two moments of accumulation by dispossession. I also want to insist, though, on their distinction — the unique spaces in which they unfold, and the particular subjects that are proper to each. Focusing on the moment of primitive accumulation, we are drawn to agrarian regions — of the global South in particular — and the migratory routes traveled by the dispossessed farmer to the informal spaces of the expanding metropolis. Privileging the moment of accumulation by fabrication, we are directed rather to the unemployment office, or to spaces of newly insecure employment and habitation — the driver's seat of an Uber, occupied by the downsized autoworker; the room of an Extended Stay hotel, occupied by the evicted or foreclosed upon family.

Beyond the work of Harvey and others on mechanisms of privatization and devaluation, the neoliberal iteration of accumulation by fabrication has provoked an especial theoretical interest in the conjoined problems of precarity and affect. In one simple definition, "precarity" names the "structure of affect," to borrow Lauren Berlant's phrase, of generalized insecurity. Though the forms and spaces of vulnerability to which "precarity" corresponds are in theory myriad — encompassing both the migrant farmworker and the free-lance graphic designer — its analytic currency is conditioned by the effects of neoliberalization upon formerly secure populations. It is continuous, Berlant has argued, with patterns of social and economic transformation that expose the bourgeoisie to "ordinary contingencies of material and fantasmatic life associated with proletarian labor-related subjectivity."[24] So if, in one sense, neoliberalism makes managers of us all — self-governing and self-surveilling — so too does it generalize the proletarian condition, the quotidian insecurities of working-class life. One expression of this is the way in which the material and affective labor of security is increasingly out- sourced by the state. The unpaid work of "care" or "love" in the domestic sphere — a mode of exploitation long the target of feminist critique — has acquired a more universal dimension, as the low-waged sectors of "care" and "service" grow in social and economic significance.[25] This latter expansion of care work corresponds to the retreat of the welfare state, as capital abandons any attempt to mitigate its destructive effects. The theorists of "precarity" are interested in the political potentiality of this pervasive insecurity — the recognition of our shared vulnerability and ethos of mutual care that it provokes. "As bodies," Judith Butler writes, "we suffer and we resist and together . . . exemplify that form of the sustaining social bond that neo-liberal economics has almost destroyed."[26] The Occupy movement worked, in this spirit, to render the insecurity of neoliberal crisis visible, and to enact the possibilities of a radical politics founded upon our shared precariousness. The term "affect" captures this duality — the individual and paralyzing burden of neoliberal disappointment, and the collective volition to which that waning optimism might give way (if not give rise).[27]

If processes of primitive accumulation are enabled by crude state violence, and if the expanded reproduction of capital is made possible rather by the "silent compulsion of economic relations" (the spirit or ideology that compels market participation), accumulation by fabrication is facilitated by a synthesis of coercion and consent. The consultants and managers that facilitate the downsizing of the firm are still keen to invoke the virtues of efficiency and flexibility. And the newly adrift worker might maintain a hopeful belief, however threadbare, in the liberatory possibilities of the "sharing economy." But growing insecurity inevitably gives rise to acute cultures of repression. In the advanced capitalist world, the increasing scarcity of secure employment and privatization of the social commons has coincided with the militarization of public and private police, who suppress the precariat's collective action, occupy communities left behind by capital — communities of color most especially — and facilitate the project of mass incarceration. As the authors of *Policing the Crisis* (1978), writing at the neoliberal end of the 1970s, put it, in the moment of crisis, "the masks of liberal consent and popular

consensus slip to reveal the reserves of coercion and force on which the cohesion of the state and its legal authority depends."[28]

Today, in the context of pervasive and recurring economic and political crises, the temporality of "accumulation by fabrication" appears ascendant. And indeed, its core political and economic forms — heightened state repression, synthetic forms of dispossession — are often read as synonymous with neoliberalism broadly conceived. But as I am keen to stress, the distinctiveness of neoliberalism, as a global systemic phenomenon, lies not merely in the relative centrality of "accumulation by fabrication," but in the contingent articulation of the latter with the extant temporalities of primitive accumulation and expanded reproduction.

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To this point, I have sketched a kind of temporal succession. The moment of primitive accumulation prefaces and founds the moment of expanded reproduction, the crises of which then provoke — and are deepened by — processes of accumulation by fabrication. If we limit our geographic focus to one national space — to Marx's "classic" example of England, say — there is a certain, if limited, plausibility to this sequential narrative. But when we bring the broader world-system of capital into sharper focus, it becomes clear that these three temporalities are — historically and in the neoliberal context — synchronous.

Frantz Fanon, in a suggestive moment in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), contrasted the mechanisms of capitalist governance in the metro- pole and in the colony. In the metropole, he observed, exploitation of labor was enabled by the "structure of moral reflexes…[and] aesthetic expressions of respect for the established order," which create around the worker an "atmosphere of submission." In the colony, by contrast, "the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge."[29] Put slightly differently, the primitive accumulation of capital in the colonies was enabled by the "language of pure force" (also Fanon's phrase); and the reproduction of capital in the metropole was made possible by various ideological apparatuses and ingrained moral sentiments. Fanon's account, though, implied the interrelation of and not simply the distinction between colony and metropole. Violent forms of colonial dispossession fueled processes of expanded reproduction within the metropole, and accelerated the social-democratic development therein of the ideological state apparatuses. The racialized negation of the colonized subject, meanwhile, helped guarantee the interpellation of the white worker back home. In the putative aftermath of the colonial period, these interrelations mutated in pace with the exigencies of accumulation, as synthetic forms of dispossession — what Guy Debord and Henri Lefebvre termed the "colonization of everyday life"— joined with neocolonial processes of ex-tractive industry to renew the ideal and reality of economic growth.

In the late-neoliberal present, these dynamics persist. Expanded reproduction continues to be enabled by outright dispossession. And the efficacy of capitalist ideology in the global North continues to be ensured in part by the enactment of crude state violence in the global South (or peripheral spaces within the North). That the "reserves of coercion and force" are applied with an especial intensity on the other side of the tracks ensures the potency of the "structure of moral reflexes" on this side. Rendered insecure by processes of accumulation by fabrication, the "white working class" amplifies its appeal toward "law and order"— and the militarization of borders, impunity of racist police violence, and aerial bombardment of foreign lands appear as plausible forms of redress. But if this resurgent nativism is one expression of capitalist ideology, it is also symptomatic of its crisis. And as

the compulsion of the market becomes yet less compelling and yet more audible, new political possibilities — the positive determination of a planetary rather than nationalistic precariat — might come into view.[30]

The Mexican small farmer driven off her land by NAFTA migrates toward the Maquiladoras of Juarez or the meatpacking plants, corporate fields, and service industries north of the border. The outsourced American worker, meanwhile, takes a job at Walmart, where she earns a fraction of her former wage selling the same commodities she used to produce. One urgent imperative of contemporary theory is to elucidate both the sameness and difference that define these emergent spaces of shared precariousness. The factions that might make up the collective subject of resistance to neoliberalism will enunciate a particular critical vocabulary, and deploy a particular tactical imagination, depending on the time-space of contemporary capital that they currently inhabit or from which they hail. Novels, to which I now turn, can help us distinguish the substance of these unique imaginaries of struggle — while also, perhaps, clarifying the potentiality of their affiliation.

Literature

When the contemporary novel engages the neoliberal reenactment of original methods of primitive accumulation, it most often does so obliquely, by way of analogy. But this analogic approach is possessed of a certain critical efficacy, as it evokes the routes of continuity between historical and latter- day forms of capitalist unfreedom. Novels such as Marlon James's *The Book of Night Women* (2009) and Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (2008) highlight the "language of pure force" that guarantees processes of primitive accumulation; and these texts evince in turn the Fanonian insistence that the violence of colonial dispossession will only yield when confronted with a reciprocal and greater violence.

In James's *Book of Night Women*, the Jamaican planter class dismisses the prospect of mass slave revolt as ontologically impossible. The black appeal to the ideal of freedom is unthinkable, to the plantation aristocracy, precisely because it marks the slave as a human being. The night women themselves, enacting G.W.F. Hegel's dialectic of master and slave, articulate their claim to freedom and personhood through violence. "We not getting free," the slave Homer puts it, "we taking free."[31] Freedom is understood here, that is, not as a political right bestowed or denied by the state — but as the reflexive affirmation of human selfhood that follows from the negation of a negation.

In *The Book of Night Women*, the faith of Jamaican planters in the infra- human being of their slaves is shook by the news of revolution emanating from Saint Domingue. The reverberation of that event across the West Indies and planet at large, coupled with the subsequent abolition of the slave trade by the empires of Britain and France, encouraged the innovation of new forms of capitalist bondage. Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* traces the latter transformation, shifting the focus from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth, from the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean, from the sugar plantation to the trade in coolies and opium. In the India of *Sea of Poppies*, the British reliance on opium — to balance its trade deficit with China and fuel its imperial expansion — has displaced practices of subsistence farming with monocultural production. The transition toward the latter is not voluntarily embraced by the farmers themselves, but imposed by the English sahibs, who force cash advances on small producers, demanding they grow only poppies to fuel the factory's "never sated" appetite for opium.[32] Many farmers struggle each year to repay this compulsory credit. Others who fail to do so exchange one form of indenture for another, joining the growing ranks of bonded migrant workers bound for southern Africa and the West Indies.

Ghosh's Mr. Burnham, a consummate exponent of the British Empire, laments the closure of the Middle Passage. "The African trade," he remarks in earnest, "was the greatest exercise in freedom since God led the children of Israel out of Egypt." But fortunately, "when the doors of freedom were closed to the African, the Lord opened them to a tribe that was yet more needful of it — the Asiatick."[33] Like slavery, indenture is freedom. As *Sea of Poppies* reveals, though, in the moment of primitive accumulation it is the overseer's lash, rather than his rhetoric, that ensures in the last instance the realities of capitalist unfreedom. And in the novel's penultimate scene, on board the *Ibis*, the whip is snatched from midair by the coolie Kalua and re- turned to the subedar who wields it, coiling around his neck and ending his life. In this novel too, then, freedom is conditioned by the absolute negation of an absolute negation.

Though drowned out by the report of the whip or rifle, Mr. Burnham's paean to the liberatory powers of capital does gesture toward the increasing efficacy of the market's "silent compulsion." The war with China looming on the horizon, he insists, will be waged, not for opium, but "for a principle: for freedom — for the freedom of trade and the freedom of the Chinese people."[34] One can hear, in Mr. Burnham's words, an anticipatory echo of ideology's preeminence in later capitalist eras — the conjoined ideals of "free labor" and "free trade" that today work to mask the violence of the wage relation and assimilate the individual subject to the rationalities of the commodity form.

The contemporary ascent of this ideological lexicon is illuminated with a particular clarity by novels that inhabit the time-space of expanded reproduction — texts that focus on the governing ideology of the workplace (the office or retail counter more often than the assembly line, in these post-Fordist times), and texts that evince more broadly the saturation of neoliberal rationality throughout the social sphere. Belonging to the latter category, novels such as Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom* (2010) or Benjamin Kunkel's *Indecision* (2005) — to summon two examples of an expansive corpus — bring into relief the often-invisible patterns of thought that orient our relationship to the market. The bourgeois characters that people theses novels experience freedom, the ethos of "choice," as a sort of oppression. Here, for example, is Franzen's Patty Berglund elaborating the implications of the novel's title: "By almost any standard, she led a luxurious life. She had all day every day to figure out some decent and satisfying way to live, and yet all she ever seemed to get for all her choices and all her freedom was more miserable. The autobiographer is almost forced to the conclusion that she pitied herself for being free."[35] Plagued by a similar ennui, the protagonist of Kunkel's *Indecision*, Dwight Wilmerding, is prone to meditating on the "Uses of Freedom." Faced with the possibility of a trip to Ecuador, in pursuit of an unrealized love, Dwight reflects that, "I was trembling. After all here was a new place, therefor a new life, and hence an occasion for some quaking at the prospect of doing right away, if you want to, and can make up your mind, a wide variety of things in this world."[36] The antidote to this conception of freedom as oppressive superfluity is, in Kunkel's novel, commitment to the conjoined ideals of love and democratic socialism — the reclamation and revivification of the demos invoked by Brown. *Indecision*, like *Freedom*, makes the compulsion of the market audible. But it also betrays a growing crisis of governmentality amongst not merely the working classes but the bourgeoisie as well.

This cultural crisis is today deepened by crises of accumulation that threaten to cast broad swathes of the middle classes into the realm of the in- secure. A constellation of recent novels — texts such as Dave Eggers's *A Hologram for the King* (2013) and Raphael Chirbes's *On the Edge* (2016) — tell stories of redundancy and precarity amongst the bourgeoisie. These books illuminate forms of neoliberal devaluation. The temporality they inhabit and critique, then, is that of accumulation by fabrication. Set adrift by the whims of the market, the white men of a certain age that people these narratives struggle for psychological integrity and financial solvency. Freelance consultant Alan Clay, the hero

of Eggers's novel, is "virtually broke, nearly unemployed," which is to say he's neither broke nor unemployed, but symbolic of each of these states and the existential as well as economic crises they signify.[37] Alan — having just missed out on a crucial deal to provide the blast-resistant glass to lower Manhattan's nascent Freedom Tower — finds himself in pursuit of a hypothetical it contract for a chimeric city in Saudi Arabia. Alan's underemployment finds no cure in the Gulf though, and the aimless, idle days he spends waiting for a promised meeting with King Abdullah prompt him to reflect that: "This wasn't the freedom [he] sought. He wanted to be free to give his presentation, to get confirmation of the deal."[38] The freedom he imagines, in other words, can only be realized through capitalist belonging, rather than in the transcendence of commodity rationality or relations. For Alan, the silent compulsion of the market persists, even when he himself has been cast into the growing ranks of the lumpen bourgeoisie. But the fragility of that nostalgic fidelity — both its subject and its object — is, in Eggers's novel, made perfectly plain.

It is, too, in Chirbes's *On the Edge*, a novel of the economic crisis in Spain. *On the Edge* is set in the near-inland village of Olba, the current malaise of which is owed to the deflation of the housing bubble. The identikit developments recently thrown up along the coast — homes constructed with cheap materials and financed by fictive capital, now unoccupied or uncompleted — obscure the village's view of the sea. And they signal the redundant vocation of the novel's narrator, Esteban; dispossessed of his modest carpentry work- shop after an ill-timed real estate investment, Esteban mourns the passing of a working life he had never embraced. He reflects,

> You discover the irritating calm of mornings with no alarm clock going off, the day like a meadow stretching out toward the horizon, limitless time, an unbounded landscape, no flocks graze in that infinite space, not a building to be seen, not even the silhouette of a tree. Just you walking in the void. Hell is a derelict warehouse, a silent hangar filled only with a terrible emptiness. In the end, the divine curse of earning our daily bread seems almost agreeable, the sound of alarm clocks, water gushing out of faucets or showers, the bubbling of the coffee pot, the hustle and bustle of morning traffic.[39]

Esteban shares this sense of emptiness with his former employees, whose resentment he feels acutely. "They hate me," he recognizes, "because I've smashed the milk jug they were carrying on their heads…but I'm not to blame for their dreams, I didn't encourage them…I exchanged money for labor…No dreams were in the contract."[40] Esteban highlights here the futility of his workers' ethical investment in their labor. And he perceives, more broadly, the declining efficacy of capitalist ideology in the current conjuncture. "A century ago," he reflects, "[business] signified action and progress, but now it's a synonym of other words heavy with negative energy: exploitation, egotism, wastefulness."[41]

Esteban's sensitivity to the ebbing spirit of capital is bound up in his own descent from security to insecurity. "What about *my* fragile state" he asks, "does anyone care about that?"[42] In the new order brought about by the crisis, there are two classes — one "proudly leave[s] the mall with bulging shopping bags," while the other "[rummages] around in the dumpsters"[43] — and Esteban increasingly feels a part of the latter. The crisis, he reflects, "has made us all equal again, brought us all down to the same level, everyone on the floor."[44] The "us" here excludes the rarified denizens of the mall. And it includes the underemployed migrant worker (compelled toward Spain by the consequences of primitive accumulation on the periphery), the exploited laborer, and the fallen members of the middle classes — the subjects, in other words, of neoliberal capital's three temporalities. This shared insecurity, though, does not, in *On the Edge*, translate into a politically effective solidarity. When

Esteban invokes the class struggle — a deep element of his familial inheritance; his father was a socialist radical who fought for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War — it is always with a question mark, and in the past tense: "Wasn't it the determining factor that impregnated and marked everything? The engine of world history?" If his father "still believes we're in the middle of a war and…the most interesting battle is yet to come," Esteban is rather more skeptical.[45] He is resigned to his nightly card game at the bar, and the constant litigation of how it all went wrong.

Though absent from *On the Edge*'s narrative, the potentiality of resistance is evinced by the novel's form. Esteban's testimony is occasionally interrupted by other voices, which join with, rather than displace, his own. As they accumulate, these solos acquire a kind of choral quality, even if the social realities they convey are defined by dissonance rather than harmony. A newly unemployed carpenter reflects that "I don't know exactly what I would be capable of doing to you — to you, who've got everything — but I do have a rifle at home."[46] "Where are the Euros of yesteryear?" the fallen entrepreneur laments: "What became of those lovely purple notes? They fell as fast as dead leaves on a windy autumn day and rotted in the mud."[47] Another of Esteban's former employees recounts his earlier turn as a garbage collector, a job that afforded him a privileged insight into the "smell of the twenty-first century," the overflowing trash can, which mingles and melds with the fragrances of gasoline and lush, floral gardens. Just as these distinct odors become "a single smell," the brief "I" interludes that intersect with Esteban's narrative constitute a differential unity that, while expressing (like the superfluity of waste) decay and decomposition, evokes, as well, the multiple vectors and dialects of contemporary anti-capitalist critique.

In Olba, this critique remains latent; the term "struggle" signifies, there, private suffering rather than collective rebellion. But as Esteban ruminates over his beer, the *Indignados*, in their multitudes, are occupying the squares of many Spanish cities — affirming the idea that the most interesting battle is still to come.[48] The possibilities of this imminent (or immanent) struggle are explored with a particular urgency by Rachel Kushner's novel *The Flamethrowers* (2013). Set against the backdrop of neoliberalism's 1970s emergence, *The Flamethrowers* connects processes of accumulation by fabrication in postindustrial Manhattan to crises of capitalist ideology in the Italian auto industry and the primitive accumulation of rubber in Brazil. Illuminating the three temporalities of contemporary capital, the novel brings into view as well the manifold modes of resistance that are articulated therein.

The abandoned industrial spaces of lower Manhattan have been con- verted into lofts occupied by artists and those keen to derive economic or cultural capital from their work. The crew of artists and gallerists that the novel's protagonist Reno run with all affect a vaguely anti-capitalist air. Sandro Valera — estranged heir to an Italian tire and motorcycle empire — works in a minimalist idiom, constructing large aluminum boxes, empty and gleaming. The objects evoke the assembly line, but also elide it. The boxes were fabricated by hand at a boutique facility in Connecticut and their ex- change value has nothing to do with the labor that was put into them or any practicable utility they might have. Another artist, Sammy, completes a heroic performance piece, presumably designed to impress the tyranny of industrial time, in which he punches a clock every hour on the hour for a year. Gordon Matta-Clark (the actual historical figure), re-enchants abandoned factories, warehouses, and piers by carving holes into their exteriors — transforming them into "cathedral[s] of water and light."[49] Each of these artists critiques the violence of the commodity form from a position of self-conscious remove. "I don't make a *wage*," Reno's friend Ronnie puts it. "I'm an artist, I'm not part of the system."[50] None of them reckon with their complicity in the transformation of the cityscape — a process of social and economic dispossession, facilitated by financial elites and enabled by the

city's bankruptcy in 1975, which pushed the underclasses to the margins of the metropolis. Nor do they meditate on the fate of those displaced or devalued by the city's deindustrialization. There is one exception: Burdmoore, erstwhile member of the real late-60s activist group the Motherfuckers, longs for the day "when the people of the Bronx wake up, the sisters and brothers out in Brooklyn," and reclaim their right to the city.[51]

When Reno, herself an aspiring artist, travels to Italy with her lover Sandro, the peripheral and dispossessed enter the foreground. Uncomfortably immersed in the Valera world, Reno begins to learn more about the history and present of the company and its cultures of production. In the postwar moment, "'everyone [had] his own little auto, put-putting around, well enough paid at Valera to buy a Valera, and tires for it, and gas."[52] As this Fordist idyll fades, its ideological armature is also diminished. Sandro's brother Roberto has instituted particularly punitive shop-floor policies. The workers live in squalor; and "their wives and children put together Moto Valera ignition sets at the kitchen table, working all night because they were paid by the piece, whole families contracted under piecework, which was practically slave labor."[53] Though many of the factories remain open, the post-Fordist paradigm — spatially and temporally diffuse forms of production; devalued labor — is taking hold. In response, the workers are in revolt — halting the assembly line and joining leftist youths in the streets.

The piecework performed in the home —"practically slave labor"— resembles the debt peonage of the Indians in Brazil who have long harvested the rubber for Valera tires. The Tappers run "from tree to tree, coated in sweat and jungle damp, zigzagging until…you are ready to collapse, feeling like your head is in a cloud of ammonia, dizzy, confused, pain shooting up your spine, muscles twisted into torn rags."[54] This brutal regime of labor — overseen by a patrão whose tools are "the cheap muzzle-loader, mock drownings with water poured over a facecloth"[55] — helped fuel the "postwar miracle" in Italy and furnished the Brazilian government with enough money to construct from nothing the "all-inclusive concrete utopia" of Brasilia.[56] While Fordism gives way to post-Fordism in Italy and across the advanced capitalist world, the primitive accumulation of rubber in the Amazon persists, and the ranks of the tappers continue to grow, as the conditions of indenture are passed from one generation to the next. The patrão has a monopoly on the instruments of violence —"by the laws of harmony, you cannot both have guns"— so the only route of resistance available to the tapper is escape: "The green tree ferns pound into and out of view, branches scrape you, your feet are numb. You trip, you fall, you get up, you keep running."[57]

The tappers themselves are not represented in the 1977 movement in Italy. But the subjects of primitive accumulation, and the methods of resistance available to them, are. Italy's Northern bourgeoisie, Antonio Gramsci observed in the 1920s, reduced the South to an "exploitable colon[y]…enslaved to the banks and the parasitic industrialism of the North."[58] The Valera workers both within the factory and beyond it — on the assembly line and at the kitchen table — are migrants from the agrarian South, compelled toward the industries of the North by extractive forms of land rent. In the movement, industrial laborers — displaced by primitive accumulation, exploited by expanded reproduction, and increasingly degraded by accumulation by fabrication — are joined by a diversity of contingents: the university students ("bespectacled and grave"), and ragtag bands of youth from peripheral slums — kids who "have no part in bourgeois life." In keeping with the Autonomist tradition, members of the movement set their own prices for commodities and services —"their own rent, their own bus fare"— and occupy spaces abandoned by capital. The factory workers carry their tire irons to the barricades, using the tools of their trade to resist the creeping redundancy of their trade. The ragged youth paint their faces and chant ironic slogans: "We want nothing! More work, less pay! Down with the people, up with the bosses!"[59]

Finding herself entangled in the movement in Rome — after taking flight from the unfaithful Sandro — Reno is struck by "the 'we' of it," the adhesive intimacy of the disparate bodies that converge in the square. But she is sensitive too to the different demands invoked and different tactics deployed by the different "sections" that comprise the collective body of the demonstration. Some are more open to violence than others (though everyone is armed: "The gun was a tool like the screwdriver was a tool, and they all carried them").[60] Some desire the bourgeois security that has been promised them, and others work — in spiritual accord with the fleeing tapper in Brazil — to evade capture by any capitalist rationality.

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The neoliberal present is composed of multiple temporalities, wherein different forms of accumulation and governance are paradigmatic. The contemporary critique of capital is limited when it elides this complexity and assumes instead one unitary neoliberal rationality. As I have argued here, we need to clarify both the distinction between and interrelation of the moment of primitive accumulation, the moment of expanded reproduction, and the moment of accumulation by fabrication. Defining this interrelation is less a question of synthesis than of "articulation"— a joining wherein the constitutive elements maintain their difference. The three temporalities of neoliberalism form, in this sense, what Althusser termed a "complex unity," and this phrase also captures the dynamics of any pan-temporal opposition to the logics of capital. The dispossessed small farmer in Bengal and laid-off carpenter in Spain — the indentured tapper in Brazil and underemployed IT contractor in the United States — are separated by thousands of miles, as by divergent experiences and aspirations. However stark, these contradictions do not occlude the possibility of meaningful solidarity. In our eagerness to conjure the latter, we appeal to the universalisms of the "precariat" or the "multitude," anticipatory imaginaries that carry an urgent resonance. But even as we enunciate this provisional vocabulary of collectivity, we must remain attuned to the unique languages of critique emanating from the unique moments of contemporary capital — the discordant and accordant sounds of their articulation.

Notes

[1] Though the historiographic literature tends to locate the political and economic origins of neoliberalism in the 1970s, Michel Foucault, in his 1978–1979 lectures at the Collège de France, notably highlighted the proto-neoliberal significance of the ordoliberals in postwar Germany, who imagined the market and its rationality as the foundation for the reconstituted German state. The intellectual history of neoliberalism, meanwhile, has even deeper origins. In the 1930s, economists and philosophers such as Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises formulated a critique of Keynesianism that associated the latter with "totalitarian" forms of collectivism such as Nazism and communism. Government planning, these "Austrian School" thinkers avowed, ultimately led to the negation of individual freedom. The realization of that freedom, Hayek, von Mises, and the other attendants at the famous 1947 Mont Pelerin meeting insisted, required the liberation of market forces and generalization of market logics. While the Keynesian consensus prevailed in the immediate postwar period, neoliberal thinking took root in and spread throughout think tanks and other ideological state apparatuses; when the postwar political-economic order was thrown into crisis in the early1970s, the already insidious ideology of neoliberalism found concrete political expression.

[2] Karl Marx, *Capital* Volume One, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1990 [1867]), 915.

[3] Marx, *Capital*, 874.

[4] Marx, *Capital*, 875.

[5] J. Arbuthnot, *An Inquiry into the Connection between the Present Price of Provisions, etc.*, 124, 129, cited in Marx, *Capital*, 888–889.

[6] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (New York: Hafner, 1947 [1689]), 139.

[7] Marx, *Capital*, 918.

[8] Marx, *Capital*, 899.
[9] Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1951), 148.
[10] Pratyush Chandra and Dipankar Basu, "Neoliberalism and Primitive Accumulation in India," *Radical Notes*, February 9, 2007. http://www.countercurrents.org/chandra090207.htm.
[11] Marx, *Capital*, 896.
[12] I borrow the term "wageless" from Michael Denning; see Michael Denning, "Wageless Life," *New Left Review*, 66 (November — December 2010), 79–97.
[13] Marx, *Capital*, 899.
[14] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Picador, 2008), 120.
[15] Foucault, *Biopolitics*, 270–271.
[16] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 31, 35.
[17] Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 35–36.
[18] Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 41.
[19] Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2005), 8, 58.
[20] In keeping with this rhetorical shift, one common anti-union tactic of contemporary firms is to reclassify jobs as "managerial" so that they exist outside of the bargaining unit.
[21] Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, trans. Agnes Schwarzschild (New York: Routledge Classics, 2003 [1913]), 257.
[22] See David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 137–82.
[23] Marx, *Capital*, 919, 1125.
[24] Lauren Berlant, "Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roundtable with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana Cvejić, Isabell Lorey, Jasbir Puar, and Ana Vujanović," Jasbir Puar, ed., *TDR: The Drama Review*, 56:4 (Winter 2012): 166.
[25] Gabriel Winant, "We Found Love in a Hopeless Place: Affect Theory for Activists," *n + 1* 22 (Spring 2015). https://nplusonemag.com/issue-22/essays/we-found-love-in-a-hopeless-place/.
[26] Judith Butler, "For and Against Precarity," *Tidal* 1 (December 2011). http://tidalmag.org/pdf/tidal1_the-beginning-is-near.pdf.
[27] See Laurent Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 1–51.
[28] Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1978), 217.
[29] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963 [1961]), 38.
[30] Some of the phrasing in this paragraph is reproduced in another essay of mine "Historicizing Repression and Ideology," *Mediations*, 30: 2 (August 2017).
[31] Marlon James, *The Book of Night Women* (New York: Riverhead, 2010), 71.
[32] Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* (New York: Picador, 2008), 28–29.
[33] Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, 78.
[34] Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, 112.
[35] Jonathan Franzen, *Freedom* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), 181.
[36] Benjamin Kunkel, *Indecision* (New York: Random House, 2005), 10–11.
[37] Dave Eggers, *A Hologram for the King*, 4.
[38] Eggers, *A Hologram for the King*, 184.
[39] Raphael Chirbes, *On the Edge*, trans. Margaret Jull Costa (New York: New Directions, 2016), 210–211.
[40] Chirbes, *On the Edge*, 268.
[41] Chirbes, *On the Edge*, 212.
[42] Chirbes, *On the Edge*, 225.
[43] Chirbes, *On the Edge*, 224.
[44] Chirbes, *On the Edge*, 225.
[45] Chirbes, *On the Edge*, 225, 273.
[46] Chirbes, *On the Edge*, 73.
[47] Chirbes, *On the Edge*, 397.
[48] The Spanish boom of the early 1990s was concentrated in cities such as Barcelona and Seville; "all the money," Esteban observes, "flowed down those two great drains" (246). The cities themselves, though, are not simply sites of generalized prosperity, but spaces wherein the contradictions of capital are clarified and contested. The absorption of the surplus through urbanization, as David Harvey highlights, has always depended upon processes of "creative destruction" that evict and degrade the city's poorer residents. In the city, in other words, the intimacy of expanded reproduction and accumulation by fabrication is brought into stark relief. And it precisely this intimacy, and the inequities of its effects, that the *Indignados* are resisting.

[49] Rachel Kushner, *The Flamethrowers* (New York: Scribner, 2013), 97.
[50] Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*, 201.
[51] Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*, 166.
[52] Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*, 266.
[53] Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*, 250.
[54] Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*, 215.
[55] Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*, 214.
[56] Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*, 367.
[57] Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*, 217.
[58] Antonio Gramsci, *The Southern Question*, trans. Pasquale Verdicchio (Chicago: Guernica, 2005 [1926]), 70.
[59] Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*, 275–276.
[60] Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*, 288.