

# **Imperial Subjugations: Colonialism & Race After Marx**

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## Abstract

Drawing on Foucault's conception of "subjugated knowledges," this thesis attempts to articulate a subjugated anti-colonial reading of Marx so as to interrogate the discursive modifications effected within Marxism after Marx, specifically as those modifications relate to the conditions of possibility regulating Marxist understandings of race and colonialism. This genealogy proceeds by offering a critical re-examination of the ways in which Marxists of the Second International theorized a "modern," "scientific" account of imperialism, one that expunged important insights into the nature of colonial-capitalism at the same time it established a new knowledge of capitalist expansion and the world market. This Leninist schematization of imperialism is theorized in relation to "*deraceination*," a neologism arising from this project and describing the manifold discursive processes by which Marxism was uprooted from its grounding materialist premises while it underwent an ideological de-racialization that eschewed discussions of race and Indigeneity in Marxist political economy. After this critique of the Leninist schematization of imperialism, *deraceination* is elaborated by revisiting the early history of Marxist feminism, leading to the conclusion that the historical subjugation of the basic materiality of race and gender was accomplished in no small part through the definition of "the woman question." By liberating this subjugated trajectory of Marxist thought, this thesis argues for the necessity of reincorporating an anti-colonial reading of Marx into our understandings of Marxism and Marxist feminism.

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This project is dedicated to Jackie: “To fall in love is easy, even to remain in love is not difficult... But it is a hard quest worth making to find a comrade through whose presence one becomes steadily the person one desires to be.”

For all the relationships I have neglected in writing this work, I sincerely apologize.

## Introduction

Amid the welter of vague political abstractions to lay one's finger accurately upon any 'ism' so as to pin it down and mark it out by definition seems impossible... A certain broad consistency in its relations to other kindred terms is the nearest approach to definition which such a term as Imperialism admits. Nationalism, internationalism, colonialism, its three closest congeners are equally elusive, equally shifty, *and the changeful overlapping of all four demands the closest vigilance of students of modern politics.* (Hobson, 1965, p.3)

### I. Preamble

With the phrase “changeful overlapping,” J.A. Hobson signals a problematic arising from the complex nature of discourse taken in its totality. Marx, Marxists, Marxism. The regular conflation of these three terms in the many critiques of them likewise “demands the closest vigilance of students of modern politics,” and indeed it demands the closest vigilance of anyone who feels authorized to speak the “Truth” of their discrete definitions, whatever form that discretion may take. Gayatri Spivak (1999) says of Marx that he “keeps moving for a Marxist as the world moves” (p. 67).<sup>1</sup> As will be demonstrated in the work to follow, we would agree, however we would add as a corollary that Marxism keeps moving for its critics as the world moves. It is important to insist upon the effectivity of this movement, the effectivity of the “changeful overlapping” of Marx, Marxists, and Marxism. Often those who claim to critique (and thus also define) the “Truth” of one of these objects will find on closer inspection that the effective function of their critique was in fact a critique of one or both of its others: a critique of “Marx” is revealed to be actually a critique of *Marxists*. The ideological struggle is thus confused.

The complex of discursive relations mediating the significance of these objects is by no means transparent, and nowhere is this clearer than “amid the welter of vague political

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<sup>1</sup> This claim notably agrees with Foucault's (2010) description of Marx as a “founder of discursivity” (p. 114).

abstractions” listed by Hobson above. Despite, or rather perhaps because of, the sheer volume of writing on “imperialism” and “colonialism,” their relation—whether understood to be distinct, discontinuous, covalent, identical, etc.—is subject to a thoroughgoing and immanently *political* contestation. In some discursive contexts, these two objects are simply equated; in others, they are compared, contrasted, even diametrically opposed. Some may never question this complexity and will see these distinctions (or lack thereof) as self-evident, unproblematic and requiring no interrogation; others will not be too sure: “Where is the invisible line between [‘the post-colonial’] and its ‘others’ (colonialism, neo-colonialism, Third World, imperialism), in relation to whose termination it ceaselessly, but without final supersession, marks itself?” (Hall, 1996, p. 237) Slippages abound in the critique of Marxist “anti-imperialism.” The ideological struggle is thus further confused.

## II. Stakes

In 1980, the eminent Lakota activist Russell Means found himself embroiled in a controversy with the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP-USA).<sup>2</sup> Means had delivered a speech at the Black Hills International Survival Gathering titled “The Same Old Song” (in Churchill, 1983), one which denounced Marxism *in toto* as a worldview necessarily and irredeemably mired in an industrializing normativity. The RCP-USA responded with a dogmatic and remarkably racist critique titled “Searching for a Second Harvest.” All the usual colonial paternalism was deployed. According to the RCP-USA (in Churchill, 1983), Means was a bourgeois ideologue posturing as the “noble savage,” a Robinsonade in need of an education regarding the history of pre-contact Indigenous societies on Turtle Island. What was, however, perhaps more disappointing than this indisputably offensive response from the RCP-USA was

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<sup>2</sup> Not to be confused with the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR-RCP).

the fact that in amongst the vitriol of both parties was quite incisive and valid criticism. On the one hand, Means' position undoubtedly relied upon a vulgar caricature of Marxism which did not account at all for Marx's own writings on colonialism, nor for the significance of the discontinuities between Marxism and those discursive practices most directly implicated in the violence of historical processes of colonization on Turtle Island (in this sense, it was at least in part an ineluctably *idealist* critique). On the other hand, the RCP-USA demonstrably proved Means correct by refusing to examine the unexamined colonial premises of its particular brand of historical-materialism, grounded as their censure was in the dubious knowledge production of colonial anthropology and a dogmatic conception of historical development so rigid as to be brittle.

Glen Coulthard (2014) obliquely refers to this particular debate in his influential book *Red Skin, White Masks* and suggests that, far from being an isolated incident, this episode is representative of the relationship between Marxism and Indigenous political thought (p. 8). The accuracy of this appraisal was vindicated in the summer of 2017, a summer occasioning the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of both Canada's confederation and the publication of Marx's masterpiece, *Capital Volume One*. In Ottawa, the summer elicited a similar polemic between Indigenous supporters of the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR-RCP) and several local anti-communist Indigenous activists. This episode deserves mention here because the criticisms leveled at the supporters of the PCR-RCP were likewise the expression of certain generalized misconceptions concerning the historical theory and practice of communists engaged in anti-colonial struggles; *that is to say, they were the concrete expression of a subjugation<sup>3</sup> of this theory and practice*. The substance of

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<sup>3</sup> As will be elaborated below, this project adopts Foucault's (1980) conception of "subjugated knowledges" as a central theoretical pivot: "By subjugated knowledges I mean two things: on the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation... Subjugated knowledges are thus those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the

the prejudice consisted in the rejection of communism as a European doctrine of liberation, a totalizing “Western framework” that fails to recognize the colonial foundations of industrial capitalism. According to these activists, communists do not organize, and have no desire to organize, for the decolonization of Indigenous lands because communists have no adequate theoretical understanding of the historical imbrication of colonialism and capitalism. Of course, as alluded to above, any statement concerning what a singular and undifferentiated “communism” recognizes or doesn’t recognize, desires or doesn’t desire, is not at all rigorous. Any attempt to provide such a final assessment of such a diverse field is either marked by a lack of investigation, or stamped with specific interests: class interests; careerist interests (which are anticipated future class interests); and so on. The function of such assessments is the flattening of difference. The effect of such assessments is the erasure of histories of Indigenous resistance: the historical existence of Indigenous communist movements is flatly denied; contemporary revolutions at the colonized periphery are ignored and abandoned; Indigenous communists are dismissed as “mental Europeans” (Means, in Churchill, 1983, p. 30), a flagrantly essentialist proposition.

The episode was all the more interesting for the fact that the Marxist discourse of the PCR-RCP supporters was accused of being inaccessible at the same time its critics deployed concepts like “hegemony,” “necropolitics,” and “epistemological difference.” It was difficult not to be reminded of Aijaz Ahmad's (1992) critique of Edward Said; it was likewise curious that one should make "sweeping, patently poststructuralist denunciations of Marxism... delivered in

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body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism—which obviously draws upon scholarship—has been able to reveal. On the other hand, I believe that by subjugated knowledges one should understand something else, something which in a sense is altogether different, namely, a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity.” (p. 81-82)

the name of Gramsci, using the terminology explicitly drawn from Althusser" (p. 109).<sup>4</sup> Given the standard for "coloniality" set by these critics, it was surprising that they should themselves employ "Western frameworks" in order to argue the necessarily colonial nature of any knowledge production outside the strict purview of traditional Indigenous worldviews. This aspect of the conflict is perhaps the most significant to the project at hand, *as it indicates that the criticism, lacking a proper understanding of its genealogical origins, sought to invalidate elements of its own historical basis*. The impulse toward such invalidation is understandable, but the redbaiting often coincident with such invalidation is a complicated position fraught with contradictions. We perforce ask: what are the effects of this subjugation?

I argue that such rejections of the theoretical contributions of Marxism are by no means as straightforwardly anti-colonial as such rejections often portray themselves. On the contrary, these rejections often operate according to an unprincipled theoretical eclecticism that only serves the interests of a colonial-capitalist mode of knowledge production, one that requires and benefits from a perennial distortion of any discursive challenge to prevailing material relations of exploitation. Moreover, through such dismissive critiques, the radical potential of postmodern and poststructural thought comes to be circumscribed by readings inadequately informed by the historical fact of Marxism, to which the production of such thought was intimately connected and thoroughly indebted. The materialist presuppositions assumed by postmodern and poststructuralist thinkers are neglected, and critical discourse analysis becomes a largely idealist exercise wherein the "colonial nature" of a given discourse is no longer determined in relation to historically-specific material structures and institutional sites. The discursive inaccessibility

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<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to Gilbert Achcar's (2013) *Marxism, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism* for drawing my attention to this particular critique of Ahmad's, as well as to the fraught and seemingly generalized relationship between "postcolonialism" and its Marxist inheritance.

arising from the capitalist nature of a university, for example, becomes equated with the discursive inaccessibility arising from the historical subjugation of subversive ideological critique. The very word “proletariat” comes to be denounced as “elitist,” and the relation of exploitation that word seeks to designate is re-mystified. This phenomenon should not, however, be especially surprising for those who teach and study in an ideological state apparatus at the imperialist metropole, a discursive “surface of emergence” (Foucault, 1972, p. 41) where an emergent intelligentsia is taught Foucault, Butler and Said (the “cultural”), largely without being taught Marx, Lenin or Mao (the “material”).

That said, perhaps we have in this appraisal of stakes fallen into the exact trap we were trying to avoid, for it should by no means be assumed that all Marxisms are equally anti-colonial due solely to their repression by the colonial-capitalist state apparatus and its attendant complex of power-knowledge relations. Indeed, in our critique of the above mode of “anti-colonial” criticism, the point was precisely to recuperate *the difference internal to Marxism* that such criticism attempts to deny. We can say, therefore, that insofar as one hopes to articulate a properly historical-materialist defense against such criticism, there is an indispensable project in the parsing of Marxist anti-colonialism, one that accounts for the historical modifications made to Marxist discourse, one that accounts for the “changeable overlapping” of its specific objects, authorities and sites. Only *after* such a project can one rigorously argue for or against the utility of Marxist discourse in the struggle for decolonization.

### **III. Method/ology**

...Marx’s texts are by no means univocal. *The immense energy in transforming this to a univocal narrative has its own political history within our own lifetimes and one lifetime before us...* So it seems to me that what is required of the people who would like to think that the choice between Marxism and micropolitics is the giving up of the master narrative—I think *the real requirement there is to make time again to look at Marx*. If

one identifies Marxism with a master narrative *one is conflating the history of Marxism with the texts of Marx...* [emphasis added] (Spivak, 1989, p. 162)

Marx wrote voluminously on colonialism, and it is in these writings where we can see clearly that “Marx’s texts are by no means univocal.” These writings consist of personal correspondence, unpublished notebooks, articles Marx wrote when he worked for the *New York Tribune*, as well as passages from now “canonical” theoretical works like *The German Ideology* (1970) and *Capital* (1990). The geographical breadth of Marx’s subject matter in these writings encompasses such diverse locales as Algeria, Australia, Canada, China, Ireland, India, Indonesia, and the United States. It is therefore undeniable that colonialism traverses Marx’s oeuvre. And yet, this part of his project has been largely downplayed, treated as secondary, or, to employ a Foucauldian turn of phrase, *subjugated* (Foucault, 1984). Given this discrepancy, the following questions present themselves: what has been the nature of this subjugation; and what have been its historical effects? In attempting to answer these two questions, this project offers an intervention that seeks to liberate a reading of Marx’s anti-colonial critique by exploring the historical subjugation of that critique. The twofold hypothesis which guides this research thus includes the following elements: first, we can articulate a subjugated reading of Marx-on-colonialism, and in so doing understand Marx as a theorist of colonialism in a sense that was absent from subsequent Marxist analyses after Marx; second, to the extent we fail to understand Marx as a theorist of colonialism in this sense, we fail to recognize a significant historical shift in the conditions of possibility regulating the appearance of statements in Marxist discursive practice.

This project will therefore consist of a critical discourse analysis of Marxist political economy. As such, the primary methodological framework it will employ is that of Foucauldian genealogy. If a genealogy unites the discredited, “naïve” memories of local struggles with

discredited “erudite knowledge,” then the following project can be described as properly genealogical (Foucault, 1980, p. 83). Not only will this project “establish a historical knowledge of struggles” by revisiting the political contestations that effaced Marx’s theorization of colonialism—specifically the contestations of those Marxists attempting to formulate and schematize a critique of “imperialism” at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—it will also allow us “to make use of this knowledge tactically today” (Foucault, 1980, p. 83) by self-consciously orienting itself toward the contemporary “clarification of tactical struggles” (Badiou, 2012, p. 89), as alluded to in the above consideration of stakes. Put another way, this latter aspect of the following genealogy will be attuned to the relations of power/knowledge at work in these subjugations, as well as the consequences such relations have had for anti-capitalist and anti-colonial struggles as we understand them today. This Foucauldian method aligns with historical-materialist theoretical frameworks when we recall Foucault’s thorough indebtedness to the historiography of Marx,<sup>5</sup> however it is important to note that this project will not engage in a “communistological” (Foucault, 1980, p.53) apologetics in defense of Marx. On the contrary, at the methodological level this project fundamentally resists such doctrinal fixation. By elaborating how a *possible* reading of Marx was made *impossible*, we are allowed a view of the conditions of *possibility* governing Marxist discourse, a view that does not deny the very real impact of economistic, class-reductionist accounts of race and gender in the history of Marxism, but rather explains the historical occurrence of these accounts by showing how specific relations of power/knowledge were involved in their formulation and institution. This is an explanation that eschews a discussion of the “Truth” of Marx/ism (thereby disputing critiques of Marx/ism

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<sup>5</sup> “It is impossible at the present time to write history without using a whole range of concepts directly or indirectly linked to Marx’s thought and situating oneself within a horizon of thought which has been defined and described by Marx” (Foucault, 1980, p.53)

grounded in a definition of that “Truth”) and suggests that the most *useful* readings of Marx are precisely those that, in their failure to serve the interests of colonial-capitalist domination, expose these relations of power/knowledge in their liberation.

The first chapter will articulate my reading of Marx’s subjugated theory of colonialism. This chapter will begin by overviewing the prevailing schematizing critiques of Marx on colonialism, and then critique this schematization of Marx by counterpoising the many disruptive anti-colonial statements unrecognized by that schematization. This reading will serve as a point of comparison for the second chapter, in which I will examine how the discursive object “imperialism” was theorized in the Marxist tradition after Marx. This examination will proceed by liberating Rosa Luxemburg’s subjugated critique of imperialism, a critique that was discredited as “unscientific” in the new formalization of a “modern” theory of imperialism. I will identify this “modern” theory of imperialism as the Leninist schematization of imperialism, and I will critique this schematization by contrasting it with elements of my anti-colonial reading of Marx as elaborated in the first chapter. I will conceptualize the modifications effected in this schematization as a collection of discursive processes that I will call *deraceination*, a neologism describing the ways in which Marxist discourse uprooted Marxist analyses from the grounding premises found in Marx, as well as the ways in which Marxist discourse evacuated any understanding of the racialization of material relations of production under capitalism. Finally, in the third chapter, I will examine the extent to which early Marxist feminism was affected by this *deraceination*. I will argue that Marxist feminism similarly went through its own *deraceination* by demonstrating that Marxist feminism came to disregard considerations of race and colonialism at the same time that it effaced the Indigenous origins of its own founding. This chapter will provide a survey of the primary theoreticians of Marxist feminism at the beginning

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, specifically Friedrich Engels (via Marx and Louis Henry Morgan), August Bebel, Clara Zetkin, V.I. Lenin, and Alexandra Kollontai. At the conclusion of this survey, I will argue for a politics of memory that reincorporates Indigenous contributions to Marxist feminist thought. The conclusion of the third chapter will thus echo the conclusion of the project as a whole, namely one advocating a reincorporation of the subjugated anti-colonialism “present but disguised” (Foucault, 1980, p. 82) within the discourse of Marx/ism.

**“Die Moderne Kolonisationstheorie”: Marx as a Theorist of Colonialism**

Marx’s view of the impact of the [capitalist mode of production] on colonial society as it is expressed in his articles in the New York Daily Tribune is often not very far removed from conventional “bourgeois” sociology. *There is, therefore, a permanent theoretical need for careful interpretation and systematic reinterpretation of Marxist theories of colonialism, underdevelopment and dependency.* [emphasis added] (Turner, 1978, p.14)

[A]ny analysis or critique of contemporary settler-colonialism must be stripped of this Eurocentric feature of Marx’s original historical metanarrative. But this still raises the question of how to address this residual feature of Marx’s analysis... I suggest that this can most effectively be accomplished by *contextually shifting* our investigation from an emphasis on the *capital relation* to the *colonial relation*. [emphasis original] (Coulthard, 2014, p. 10)

These passages are notable for two reasons. On the one hand, they are representative of a common interpretation of Marx on the topic of colonialism, one in which Marx is said to reproduce uncritically the Eurocentrism of his time. This interpretation limits, if not outright discredits, his analyses of colonization as well as their political utility for projects of decolonization. On the other hand, they gesture toward a pressing, even “permanent,” need to come to terms with this difficulty in order to consider Marx as a thinker with indispensable insights into the nature of colonial-capitalism. This ostensible contradiction is taken up in this chapter with the aim of critically reassessing Marx’s account of colonialism. I will argue, drawing on Foucault’s (1980) notion of “subjugated knowledges,” that we can articulate Marx’s theory of colonialism as a subjugated knowledge of the “erudite” (pp. 81-82) type. That is to say, we can understand many of Marx’s statements on colonialism as “historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systematisation” (Foucault, 1980, p. 81). This study challenges schematizations of Marx’s thought that have portrayed his engagement with the political economy of colonialism as either secondary to his project of formulating the laws and mechanisms of the capitalist mode of production (as though these two projects could in some way be extricated), or analytically inadequate with regard to theorizing

that which defines the principal contradiction of colonialism: a racialized relation to a particular dispossessed land base. By excavating these buried historical contents, I will argue that, in fact, Marx's body of work on colonialism contains a much more sophisticated understanding of the material dynamics of race and place than is generally supposed by the literature.

This chapter will: first, begin with an overview of the prevailing critiques of Marx on the topic of colonialism, guided by a critical engagement with one of my primary interlocutors, Glen Coulthard; and second, evaluate these critiques by providing a close re-reading of Marx's writings on colonies, accumulation, and the world market, as well as the place these objects occupy in his historical-materialist project. This latter exposition will involve liberating all those disruptive statements that contradict the supposed "Truth" of Marx as propagated by these schematic anti-colonial critiques. Insofar as these critiques identify, implicitly or explicitly, the requirements of a properly anti-colonial theory of colonialism, the liberation of these disruptive statements will delineate the possibilities of reading Marx as a theorist of colonialism, and, more importantly, as a critic of colonialism. This exposition will serve as a point of comparison for the next chapter, allowing us to interrogate the appearance of "communistological" (Foucault, 1980, p. 53) conceptions of imperialism in the Marxist tradition after Marx.

### **I. Symptoms of a Subjugation**

In his book *Red Skin, White Masks*, Glen Coulthard (2014) offers us a relatively comprehensive typology of the schematizing anti-colonial critiques leveled at Marx. It is useful to examine it here, but it is also useful to note at the outset certain methodological features of Coulthard's analysis. By his own admission (p. 7), he deals only with chapters 26 through 33 of *Capital Volume One*, supplemented by cursory allusions to *The Communist Manifesto* and Marx's now infamous article for the *New York Daily Tribune*, "The British Rule in India." This

level of engagement with Marx as a primary source is by no means unique: we can observe a similarly superficial approach in Edward Said's (1978) classic *Orientalism*, Bill Warren's (1980) polemic *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*, Ward Churchill's (1983) anthology *Marxism & Native Americans* and Ania Loomba's (1998) survey *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Each of these works takes "The British Rule in India" as a source privileged above the many other, often far more critical, articles Marx wrote on British colonialism in India. When other texts are invoked, these are often critical secondary texts drawing largely on the same primary sources, as is the case in Coulthard's citation of the critiques of Marx leveled in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's (2009) *Commonwealth*. Although Hardt and Negri (2009) also reference "Forms which precede capitalist production" from the *Grundrisse*, they ultimately substantiate and ground their reading of this text by recourse to Marx's 1853 articles, predictably citing "The British Rule in India" and "The Future Results of the British Rule of India" (p. 84).

We must also note who exactly is considered a discursive authority empowered to speak the "Truth" of Marx's account of colonialism. Marx's own work appears just as significant for Coulthard (2014) as critiques of that work from other thinkers, such as Peter Kropotkin (p. 11) and the aforementioned Hardt and Negri. This is not to suggest that the semiotic authority of the author's intent should be revived and reinstated, but rather to signal that the appearance of new discursive authorities effects a modification of the discursive possibilities in a given discursive practice. These authoritative modifications will be especially important for the following chapter, but the point certainly also pertains to the fact of citing of Marx himself, given the distinction—famously described by Althusser (2005), although not in this terminology—between the discursive authority of the "Young Marx" versus "Marx" proper. Coulthard (2014) himself notes

this shift, though he does little besides recognizing its existence and therefore still privileges the Marx of 1853 as a discursive authority (p. 11).<sup>6</sup>

The following thus acts as a premise of the present inquiry: *with regard to articulating the “Truth” of Marx’s account of colonialism, we can observe a recurring citational practice whereby the same few texts—namely, The Communist Manifesto, the final chapters of Capital Vol. I, and one or two of Marx’s articles on India—are repeatedly invoked as a definitive “proof” of Marx as a kind of Achillean hero: brilliant but ultimately and tragically flawed.* Any attempts to evaluate Marx’s account of colonialism must therefore grapple with the persistent yet unexamined dominance of these texts. Related to this premise is a *question* guiding the present inquiry: why, and to what effect, is the “Truth” of Marx-on-colonialism almost invariably defined in the last instance by those articles wherein he appears supportive of colonization, and *not* those articles wherein he appears supportive of *de*-colonization?<sup>7</sup> Put another way, we can ask with Foucault (1984): “What is this curious unity which we designate as [Marx’s] work [oeuvre]?” (p. 103)

This practice of settling a debate concerning the “Truth” of a given element in Marx’s theoretical edifice with appeals to a few obscure, decontextualized texts from his time as a journalist rarely occurs for other objects of debate within Marxism. It would, for example, obviously lack rigour to ground the “Truth” of wage-labour exploitation in this or that article of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*; on the contrary, assessments concerning such objects are variously substantiated by sources that span Marx’s entire body of work, and have thus resisted the petrification undergone by evaluations of Marx’s attitude toward colonialism. The reason

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<sup>6</sup> Spivak (1999) likewise makes the mistake of mapping certain conceptual premises of *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* onto “Marx as such” (p. 74) without problematizing this method.

<sup>7</sup> Answering this question in full will likely require the following examination in Chapter Two of the modifications, eliminations, and altered emphases effected within Marxist discourse after Marx’s death.

sometimes given for this is that “Marx did not discuss colonialism in general terms” and that “his views must be deduced from scattered references” (Brewer, 1980, p. 51). His theorization of colonialism is portrayed as incidental, inessential, even extrinsic to his study of capitalism. This portrayal, however, disregards the organic, structural necessity of a theorization of colonialism for the “internal unity” (Althusser, 2005, p. 70) of Marx’s thought: that is to say, “it is impossible to extract one element [in this case, colonialism] without altering its meaning” (Althusser, 2005, p. 62). *It is impossible to extract colonialism from Marx without altering the meaning of Marx.* This is evidenced in part by the sustained, capillary nature of Marx’s analytical engagement with colonialism. This engagement is best illustrated by Kevin Anderson’s (2010) unparalleled study *Marx at the Margins*, though Anderson’s investigation is more concerned with “race,” “ethnicity,” and “nationalism” than it is with colonialism as such.

Given Marx’s voluminous engagement with colonialism throughout his life—as can be seen in his personal correspondence, newspaper articles, ethnographical notebooks, propaganda for the First International, as well as his more “canonical” theoretical treatises on history and political economy—the paucity of the sources used to support claims of Marx’s colonial mentality appears symptomatic of a structured subjugation. As will be demonstrated below, this citational practice is more-or-less characteristic of the literature, with those few critical re-evaluations of the literature self-consciously framed as dissent in the face of an established orthodoxy.<sup>8</sup> The historical development of this citational practice is of course always-already political, conditioned as it is by historical discursive practices structured in part by a pervasive (racialized) anti-communism which requires a perennial distortion of Marx’s work, and is further complicated by the posthumous publication of texts that have the potential to subvert these easy

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<sup>8</sup> See: August Nimtz’s “The Eurocentric Marx and Engels and other related myths” in Bartolovich and Lazarus’ (2002) *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*; and Harry Harootunian’s (2015) *Marx After Marx*.

schematizations, specifically *The German Ideology*, the *Grundrisse*, and an appendix to *Capital Volume One* titled “The Results of the Immediate Process of Production.” *Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli*.<sup>9</sup>

## II. “Negation”

The most cohesive set of schematizing criticisms leveled at Marx’s account of colonialism aims to re/construct and formalize Marx’s historiography as a totalizing metanarrative that is ineluctably Eurocentric and unable to account adequately for the difference of Indigeneity. This metanarrative, the critics argue, denies historical agency to the colonized, abandoning Indigenous peoples to (if not celebrating) the depredations of an assimilating modernity. Insofar as one’s only reference is the narrow collection of texts outlined above, this appraisal is quite sound and indeed difficult to dispute. With such an approach, Coulthard (2014) reiterates a number of familiar historiographical critiques intended to problematize Marx. The familiarity of these critiques should itself be read as a social fact signalling a certain ossification of the ambiguities alive in Marx’s unceasing play of contradictions. These critiques are: a critique of the “temporal framing” of original accumulation, a framing that relegates the processes of primitive accumulation to a pre-capitalist history (p. 9); a critique of Marx’s “normative developmentalism,” wherein Marx is purported to support colonialism as an ultimately beneficial process due to its nature as a necessary transitional step toward communism (pp. 9-10); a critique of Marx’s emphasis on processes of proletarianization over processes of territorial dispossession (pp. 12-13); and the commonplace critique of the supposed “economic reductionism” of Marx’s historical-materialism (p. 14).

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<sup>9</sup> “According to the capabilities of the reader, books have their destiny.” This phrase is borrowed from Pappé (1951), who observes that E.G. Wakefield’s contribution to Marx’s political economy has gone largely “eclipsed” (p. 91). We would likewise venture the “destiny” of Marx has been determined in part by the historically-specific discursive possibilities available to both scholars and critics of Marx; he has himself been likewise “eclipsed.”

I will now address these critiques and complicate their “functionalist coherence and formal systematisation” (Foucault, 1976, p. 81) by counterpoising them against disruptive statements unrecognized by that schematization, as well as against other critical attempts made to liberate Marx’s subjugated account of colonialism.

### **i. Original Accumulation & the Subsumption of Labour Under Capital**

With regard to the “temporal framing” of original accumulation, Coulthard (2014) states the following:

Marx tended to portray primitive accumulation as if it constituted ‘a process confined to a particular (if indefinite) period’ [Glassman, 2005]... For Marx, although the era of violent, state dispossession may have inaugurated the accumulation process, in the end it is ‘the silent compulsion of economic relations’ that ultimately ‘sets the seal on the domination of the capitalist over the worker.’ [Marx, *Capital Vol. One*] (p. 9)<sup>10</sup>

In essence, Coulthard argues here, contrary to Marx in his estimation, that the forms of violent dispossession characterizing the birth of capitalism did not end with the inauguration of the capitalist mode of production and its attendant achievement of a world-market, but has in fact carried on into the present. “Primitive accumulation” has also been invoked by Peter Kulchyski (2013) to describe the present situation of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Kulchyski agrees that this accumulation “continues to the present day” (p. 27), arguing that Indigenous peoples have largely maintained a “gathering and hunting mode of production” (30), and chooses to rename this enduring phenomenon “the racial reconfiguration and redistribution of wealth” (p. 28). Kulchyski’s decision to abandon the prefix “primitive” further echoes Coulthard’s (2014) concern with Marx’s use of “primitive” as a “historical marker” fixing capitalist accumulation to a particular *pre*-historical epoch (p. 185, n.35).

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<sup>10</sup> Note that Coulthard here quotes Glassman’s (2005) article “Primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession, accumulation by ‘extra-economic’ means.” Glassman, like Hardt and Negri, grounds his interpretation of an “unsympathetic” Marx with an appeal to “The Future Results of the British Rule in India” (p. 610).

The stakes of this reading lie in its critique of a historiographical stagism that organizes societal development, conceived in terms of discrete historical periods, on a scale from “backward” to “advanced,” “immature” to “mature,” and so on. (The widespread purchase of the term “primitive accumulation” is interesting to note in and of itself, given that a more accurate translation of *ursprüngliche* is “original.”) The implications of such a stagism include a view of historical development that is deterministic and linear, one that must follow the “classic form” (Marx, 1990, p. 876) as found in the European evolution from feudalism to capitalism via the agency of a developed and revolutionary bourgeoisie. The difference of incommensurable historical-material processes is flattened, cultural specificity is ignored, and the possibilities for resistance are accordingly circumscribed. Moreover, colonialism and its attendant violence are largely relegated to the status of eminently *historical* facts, disconnected from the present and precluding any analytical conception of colonialism and capitalism as necessarily inextricable and coextensive.

While these critiques are important interventions in discussions of Marx and colonialism, I argue that Marx was much more nuanced with regard to the historical and geographical variability of original accumulation, the process by which the forces of production assume the form of capital (self-valorizing value) and establish the capital relation—that is, capitalist exploitation—through the separation of the labourer from the means of production. At the end of “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation of Capital” in *Capital Volume I*, for example, he emphasizes the contingency of the process: “*The history of this expropriation assumes different aspects in different countries, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession, and at different historical epochs. Only in England... has it the classic form [emphasis added]*” (Marx, 1990, p. 876). This final qualification of the location of its classical

form is significant because feudalism was by no means the only pre-capitalist economic formation acknowledged by Marx. As Eric Hobsbawm (1964) observes in his introduction to Marx's notes on pre-capitalist economic formations from the *Grundrisse*, Marx was certainly aware that feudalism was only one historically and geographically specific transition from "primitive communalism" to capitalism.

This rejection of Marx's historical stagism is further supported by "The Results of the Immediate Process of Production" (Marx, 1990, pp. 948-1084). This posthumously published<sup>11</sup> appendix to *Capital Volume One* was originally intended to follow immediately after the exposition of "Wakefield's colonial theory" (Marx, 1990, pp. 943-944), and, according to Ernest Mandel, "had a double *didactic* function: as a summary of Volume 1 and as a *bridge* between volumes 1 and 2" (Marx, 1990, p. 944). This suppressed text details the differences between the "formal subsumption of labour under capital" and the "real subsumption of labour under capital," analytical categories indispensable for an appreciation of the differences internal to capitalism, and for an appreciation of *how difference is itself historically sublated by capitalism*.

Although both formal and real subsumption describe the subordination of the labour process to the exigencies of capital valorization, the former describes a situation in which the actual, concrete labour processes remain unchanged, despite its new purpose of producing surplus value for a capitalist: "capital subsumes the labour process as it finds it, that is to say, it takes over an existing labour process, developed by different and more archaic modes of production" (Marx, 1990, p. 1021). The latter, on the other hand, "not only transforms the situations of the various agents of production, it also revolutionizes their actual mode of labour and the real nature of the labour process as a whole" (Marx, 1990, p. 1021). While the

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<sup>11</sup> "Only when it was reprinted in German and other Western European languages in the late sixties did it become an object of intense study by Marxists and academic 'Marxologists' alike" (Ernest Mandel, in Marx, 1990, p. 943).

production of absolute surplus value characterizes formal subsumption, the production of relative surplus value characterizes real subsumption (Marx, 1990, p. 1025). With real subsumption, the alienation of the worker from her conditions of work appears complete, and the “definite social relation between [humans]... assumes... the fantastic form of a relation between things” (Marx, 1990, p. 165). We might therefore be tempted to chronologize these two modes of subsumption, given that it is with real subsumption that “a *specifically capitalist form of production* comes into being” (Marx, 1990, p. 1024). Marx (1990), however, does not allow for this easy arrangement: “[Formal subsumption] is the general form of every capitalist process of production; at the same time, however, it can be found as a particular form alongside the specifically capitalist mode of production in its developed form” (1019).

The subjugation of the “Results of the Immediate Process of Production” has been most thoroughly explored by Harry Harootunian in his book *Marx After Marx* (2015). According to Harootunian (2015), this subjugation abandoned

*...a perspective capable of recognizing the very unevenness lived by all societies, both the putatively advanced and the backward, as a condition of fulfilling capital’s law of accumulation... [T]he principal casualty resulting from the preoccupation with a matured capitalism... risked sacrificing historical capitalism, if not the historical itself, as a subject of inquiry. The consequence of this neglect meant overlooking both the depth and complexity of its multiple precapitalist formations, what Marx called ‘historical presuppositions’... But it also signaled a failure to take notice of the ‘distinct configurations, forms of the accumulation process, implying other combinations’ for a commitment to one ‘unique configuration.’ [emphasis added] (p. 5-6)*

The complexity of these “historical presuppositions,” and the distinct configurations of capitalist accumulation they would enable, was certainly understood by Marx, as can be seen in his ethnological notebooks (Kradner, 1975) and the *Grundrisse* (1973): “...the mode of pillage is itself in turn determined by the mode of production. A stock-jobbing nation, for example, cannot be pillaged in the same manner as a nation of cow-herds” (p. 98). The force of this misreading of

Marx has been recently illustrated by the debate surrounding Vivek Chibber's (2013) *Postcolonial Theory and the Spectre of Capital*, wherein Chibber challenges the need to repudiate a mechanical application of Marx's specifically, and avowedly, European account of historical development to colonized milieus.<sup>12</sup> Insofar as one understands the historical role of formal subsumption in capitalist accumulation, a critique of Marx/ism as rigidly Eurocentric due to a denial of difference in labour processes is unnecessary. As Hobsbawm (1964) notes: "This distinction between modes of production characterized by certain relations, and the 'forms' of such relations which can exist in a variety of periods or socio-economic settings, is already implicit in earlier Marxian thought. Sometimes, as in the discussion of money and mercantile activities, it is explicit" (p. 59). Indeed, an understanding of formal subsumption is key to understanding the role of merchant capital in the historical appearance of both colonialism and capitalism.

On my reading then, for Marx, the dialectical unfolding of history should not be read as a linear, stagist conception of history which confines specific material processes to a given, sharply defined historical period in which they could be said to begin and end.<sup>13</sup> Bryan Turner (1978) illustrates what this means in empirical terms when he emphasizes that the expansion of the capitalist mode of production "has both conservation and dissolution effects on pre-capitalist modes of production" (p. 17), often sustaining, even developing, pre-capitalist *relations* of

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<sup>12</sup> In his book, Chibber militates in part against the post-colonial critique of Marxist categories as not recognizing adequately "the persistence of caste and status hierarchies, and of [ante-capitalist] coercive relations of exploitation" (p. 113-114) at the colonized periphery. The analytical category of formal subsumption is useful in responding to this critique insofar as it explicitly posits and seeks to elucidate the following truth: "Social divisions do not have to be invented by capital: often they already exist within the population as it is proletarianized and absorbed into the labour process" (117).

<sup>13</sup> As Benjamin (1968) reminds us: "The word 'unfolding' has a double meaning. A bud unfolds into a blossom, but the boat which one teaches children to make by folding paper unfolds into a flat sheet of paper" (p. 122). I would argue that the former describes Marx's understanding of the dialectical unfolding of history more accurately than the latter.

production within a capitalist *mode* of production, for example slavery. Colonial slavery is itself notable in this context given that the “Results of the Immediate Process of Production” was originally to come after Marx’s exposition of Wakefield. It is notable because it was Wakefield (2001) who expounded how colonial-capitalists used slavery—both “nominal and virtual” (p. 54)—to solve the problem of the impossibility of the subsumption of labour under capital in the colonies.<sup>14</sup> Wakefield’s concern with “virtual slavery,” although remarkably racist in its delivery, suggests a certain understanding of the racialization of material relations under capitalism beyond chattel slavery as such, and echoes certain of Marx’s statements on the situation of Irish labourers in England; indeed, they both share an appreciation of the superexploitation of Black and Irish labourers, gesturing toward the significance of the ways in which race *materially* structured a developing colonial-capitalism. This will be discussed further below.

We should also add a brief, final reference to the “field of concomitance” (Foucault, 1972, p. 58) in which original accumulation is positioned. It is not insignificant that Marx should analogize original accumulation to original sin: “This primitive accumulation plays approximately the same role in political economy as original sin does in theology. Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race” (Marx, 1990, p. 873). Sin does not disappear after Adam bites the apple, rather original sin adheres to humanity in perpetuity; likewise, the capitalist “accumulated,” and thereupon accumulation “fell on the human race.” Marx’s specific field of concomitance should be kept in mind throughout, as it is likewise not insignificant when he makes such proclamations as “in a social point of view, Hindostan [India] is not the Italy, but the Ireland of the East” (Marx & Engels, 1986a, p. 125), or declares the Duchess of Sutherland

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<sup>14</sup> In Wakefield’s (2001) terminology this was the problem of “the combination and constancy of labour” (p. 54).

unfit to denounce American slavery due to her family's shameful historical role in the expropriation of Scotch-Gaelic "aborigines" (Marx, 1853).

## ii. Normative Developmentalism & Orientalism

Coulthard's second critique of Marx's "normative developmentalism" is perhaps the most widespread schematizing critique of Marx on colonialism, and it can be combined to a certain degree with Said's critique of Marx's Orientalism. This critique is covalent with critiques of Marx's Hegelian inheritance, which is said to mar his conception of history as "linear, progressive, determinist, and teleological" (Cicciarello-Maher, 2017, p.2). These critiques are reproduced by such thinkers as Warren (1980, p. 3), Bill Tabb (in Churchill, 1983, p. 160), Robert Young (1990, p. 2), Immanuel Wallerstein (1991, p. 125-126), Slavoj Zizek (2009, p. 116), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, p. 33), and Gilbert Achcar (2013, p. 84). The weight of this critique is so firmly established that coming to terms with this aspect of Marx's historiography appears as a kind of *sine qua non* for any dialogue between Marxism and its postcolonial critics (as can be seen in: Bartolovich, in Bartolovich & Lazarus, 2004, p. 1; Anderson, 2010, p. 9; Cicciarello-Maher, 2017, p. 2). This weight should not, and cannot, be dismissed lightly, in part because it points toward very real contradictions with which to struggle in Marx. That said, there is an indispensable project in challenging this critique insofar as its schematization restricts the possibilities for productive engagements and creative dialogue with and within Marxism. Unfortunately, this schematization has often suggested, implicitly or explicitly, the conclusion that the theoretical frameworks of Marx/ism should be rejected in analyses of colonialism and race (see: Said, 1978; Means, in Churchill, 1983; Tabb, in Churchill, 1983).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Coulthard (2014): "Within and between the fields of Indigenous studies and Marxist political economy, these debates have at times been hostile and polarizing. At its worst, this hostility has led to the premature rejection of Marx and Marxism by some Indigenous studies scholars..." (p. 8) As alluded to in the "Introduction" to this thesis,

For Coulthard, as for many of the theorists listed above, this argument hinges on an oft-cited passage from “The British Rule in India,” written in 1853. After a particularly condemnatory description of the “Oriental despotism” of Indian village-communities, Marx (Marx & Engels, 1986a) declares the following:

England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution. (p. 132)

This passage is also key to Said’s (1978) criticism of Marx, along with an interrogation of Marx’s quotation of a passage from Goethe’s *West-Eastern Divan* in the same article (p. 153-154).<sup>16</sup> According to Said (1978), the use of Goethe as a discursive authority “identifies the sources of Marx’s conceptions about the Orient” (p. 154) and subjects Marx to a “lexicographical police action” (p. 155) which conjures away his human sympathy, and relegates his socio-economic analyses of British colonialism to the status of a “Romantic redemptive project” (p. 154). Kevin Anderson (2010) has since nuanced this feature of Marx’s analysis, noting that Marx made extensive use of this particular passage from Goethe—in an 1855 article for the *Neue Oder-Zeitung*, in the 1861-63 economic manuscripts, and even in *Capital*—in contexts which suggest on the contrary that Marx was hardly “justifying” colonial violence in “The British Rule in India,” and was likely characterizing British colonial ideology rather than celebrating the suffering of colonized peoples (pp. 18-19). Moreover, the claim that Marx’s invocation of Goethe “identifies the sources of Marx’s conceptions about the Orient” (Said,

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these rejections often involve the further erasure of anti-colonial and anti-racist theorists working from within the Marxist tradition, an erasure which serves the interests of colonial-capitalism’s ideological hegemony.

<sup>16</sup> As cited in Said (1978, p. 154): “Sollte diese Qual uns qualen / Da sie unsere Lust vermehrt / Hat nicht Myriaden Seelen / Timurs Herrschaft aufgezieht? (Should this torture then torment us / Since it brings us greater pleasure? / Were not through the rule of Timur / Souls devoured without measure?)”

1978, p. 154) either lacks a certain expected rigor, or is purposely obscurantist; no one who has seriously studied Marx's ethnographical notebooks or the breadth of his correspondence on India would venture such an obviously reductive statement. This complexity is elided by Said who examines the use of a single discursive authority in a single text, without regard for how Marx's founding of an "entirely new discursive practice" (Foucault, 1972, p. 188) might have altered, for example, Orientalism's epistemological premises. This is explored by Achcar (2013) who notes that Said's main disciplinary focus was directed toward the field of literature, and thus lacked an appreciation of the important discursive modifications effected by Marx in the fields of philosophy and social sciences (p. 74), fields which operate according to their own specific discursive practices. Achcar notes, for example, the fundamental significance of essentialism in Orientalism:

[T]he epistemological revolution that [Marx] and Engels initiated is the most radical repudiation of all brands of essentialism... If Orientalism in the pejorative sense consists of adhering to a set of prejudices about the Oriental (Muslim, Arab, Indian, etc.) "cultural nature," there is no more radical rejection of this perspective than a conception that discounts the very idea of a 'cultural nature' in order to explain every cultural form as the historical product of the material circumstances shaping the existence of the human group that bears the culture in question—a culture that will inevitably be altered when the material circumstances themselves change. (p. 80-81)

Achcar goes on to delineate between "epistemic" and "supremacist" forms of Eurocentrism, Marx being undoubtedly guilty of the former, but not *necessarily* the latter. This distinction underlines the multiple registers, or "voices" to borrow from Maurice Blanchot (1986), at play within, and simultaneously belonging to, Marx's discursive practice. Marx's available data are unquestionably restricted by a certain spatio-temporal field of experience, the discursive authorities and institutional sites coterminous with that experience, and so on; but this does not necessarily entail an ontological "grid of specification" (Foucault, 1972) organizing, for example, the relative value of human lives, as Said argues.

We can add here in passing that there is a tendency among Marx scholarship to omit the significance of irony in Marx's use of certain racist turns of phrase, specifically with regard to descriptions of the differences between the "civilized" and "the lesser breeds," terms that Marx himself renders in scare quotes. Indeed, invocations of the supposed barbarity of colonized peoples are repeatedly deployed by Marx to illustrate the barbaric hypocrisy of the colonizers. This irony is certainly present in Marx's (1986a) 1853 articles on India, where he explicitly denounces "the profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization" (p. 221), before sardonically declaring of the corrupt colonial administrators: "These are the men of 'Property, Order, Family and Religion'" (p. 222). This can be seen as well in Marx's (1986c) Algeria letters of 1882,<sup>17</sup> and as early as 1847 in *The Poverty of Philosophy*: "But perhaps also, in speaking of improvement, the economists were thinking of the millions of workers who had to perish in the East Indies so as to procure for the million and a half workers employed in England in the same industry, three years' prosperity out of ten" (Marx & Engels, 2016, p. 63). This irony is, moreover, on full display in "The Modern Theory of Colonization" (Marx, 1990), wherein Wakefield is ridiculed mercilessly.

As has been mentioned above, rarely are any other texts than the "British Rule in India" and "The Future Results of the British Rule in India" ever cited in relation to making claims with regard to what Marx supposedly believed—in the last instance, as it were—concerning British colonialism in India.<sup>18</sup> This is unfortunate, because a close reading of Marx's articles on India, especially those written during the 1857 Revolt, allows for a more complex and critical picture.

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<sup>17</sup> "However we are aware that when a European colonist dwells among the 'lesser breeds', either as a settler or simply on business, he generally regards himself as even more inviolable than handsome William I. Still, when it comes to barefaced arrogance and presumptuousness vis-à-vis the 'lesser breeds', to a grisly, Moloch-like obsession with atonement, the British and Dutch outdo the French." (Marx, 1986c, p. 234)

<sup>18</sup> We can except here those more recent, in-depth studies of Marx's journalism on India (Jani, 2004; Anderson, 2010), to which this project is indebted.

Marx's article "Investigation of the Tortures in India," for example, concludes with the following evaluation of a struggle for decolonization contemporaneous with its author: "In view of such facts, dispassionate and *thoughtful men may perhaps be led to ask whether a people are not justified in attempting to expel the foreign conquerors who have so abused their subjects* [emphasis added]" (Marx & Engels, 1986b, p. 341). He continues to censure British colonialism in "The Indian Revolt," dated September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1857:

However infamous the conduct of the Sepoys, it is only the reflex, in a concentrated form of the England's own conduct in India... To characterize that rule, it suffices to say that torture formed an organic institution of its financial policy. There is something in human history like retribution; and it is the rule of historical retribution that its instrument be forged not by the offended, but by the offender himself.<sup>19</sup> (Marx & Engels, 1986b, p. 353)

He continues in the same article:

...the horrid mutilations committed by the Sepoys, are of course more revolting to European feeling than the throwing of red-hot shell on Canton dwellings by a Secretary of the Manchester Peace Society, or the roasting of Arabs pent up in a cave by a French Marshal, or the flaying alive of British soldiers by the cat-o'-nine-tails, or any other of the philanthropical appliances used in British penitentiary colonies.<sup>20</sup> (Marx, 1986b, pp. 355-356)

Indeed, what is inarguably present throughout Marx's journalism is a sustained criticism of the hypocrisy of the ideological justifications given for the violence of colonial rule. His indignation at such violence extends not only to India, but also to British incursions into China: "The Chinese have at least ninety-nine injuries to complain of to one on the part of the English. How silent is the press of England upon the outrageous violations of the treaty daily practiced by

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<sup>19</sup> Compare this passage with Frantz Fanon's (1961) *Wretched of the Earth*: "Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, *which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies*. Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together—that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler—was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons. [emphasis added]" (p. 36)

<sup>20</sup> Compare this passage with Aimé Césaire's (2000) *Discourse on Colonialism*: "...it is not *the humiliation of man as such*, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the 'coolies' of India, and the ['Blacks'] of Africa." (p. 36)

foreigners living in China under British protection!” (Marx, 1986b, 234-235) Again, we should repeat a guiding question of the present inquiry: why, and to what effect, is the “Truth” of Marx-on-colonialism almost invariably defined by those articles wherein he appears supportive of colonization, and *not* those articles wherein he thoroughly condemns its practices?

Returning to the charge of “normative developmentalism,” it must be said that the more rigorous analyses of Marx’s journalism on India respond to this critique by charting an evolution in Marx’s position, wherein “the structure and tone of Marx’s argument shift subtly, becoming more dialectical” (Anderson, 2010, p. 23). In this shift, Marx abandons a “unilinear” (Anderson, 2010) conception of historical development, and later in his life comes to posit colonized peoples as vitally important agents in the realization of a world-historical revolution that cannot be accomplished without decolonization. Marx’s writings on Ireland are especially important to note in this regard. In an 1870 letter to Meyer & Vogt, he states: “After occupying myself with the Irish question for many years I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against the English ruling classes (and it will be decisive for the workers’ movement all over the world) *cannot be delivered in England but only in Ireland.* [emphasis original]” (Marx, 1972, p.332) We should recall here Marx’s statement that “India is the Ireland of the East.” This theoretical insight would become an issue of practice in 1871 when the First International, under the *de facto* leadership of Marx, attempted to establish a branch of the organization in Calcutta, and emphasized the necessity of enrolling colonized Indians (Nimtz, in Bartolovich & Lazarus, 2002, p. 69). As Hobsbawm (1964) succinctly puts it: “No misinterpretation of Marx is more grotesque than the one which suggests that he expected a revolution exclusively from the advanced industrial countries of the West” (p. 49).

Jani (2004) attributes this shift to the events of the 1857 Revolt in British India, during which Marx is transformed “from a mere observer of the battle to an active participant in the ideological struggle over the meaning of the Revolt” (p. 91). Whatever the reason for the shift, these arguments from Jani (2004) and Anderson (2010) highlight the fundamental problem with attributing the truth of Marx’s account of colonialism to the Marx of 1853, a problem which has been explored at length by Althusser (2005):

...the sense of a development of a particular ideology *depends not on the relation of this development to its origins or end, considered as its truth*, but to the relation found within the development between the mutations of the particular ideology and the mutations in the ideological fields and the social problems and relations that sustain it. [emphasis added] (pp. 62-62)

That is to say: to declare, explicitly or implicitly, that the ultimate “Truth” of Marx’s account of colonialism can be found in and defined by Marx’s position of 1853 is to bely a Hegelian-idealist methodology which projects the ideas of an early Marx onto Marx-as-such. I would argue that we need not restrict ourselves to simplistic claims like “Marx is Orientalist” or “Marx is not Orientalist,” relating either of these claims to some seemingly definitive statement or other; rather we can understand Marx’s discourse as modifying the discursive possibilities of Orientalism, and vice versa. Put another way, we can sidestep this question of whether or not Marx’s discourse was “Eurocentric” or “racist”—it necessarily was in certain respects due to the historical delimitation of his own discursive possibilities as a 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectual at the European metropole—and instead ask how Marx reproduced Orientalism in certain ways at the same time he made possible statements which fundamentally undermined certain unexamined premises of colonial discourses dominant in the mid- to late 19th century. Unfortunately, this project is foreclosed insofar as these insurgent discursive facts remain suppressed.

### iii. Proletarianization, Dispossession and the Question of Land

Coulthard's (2013) third critique concerns the relative importance of dispossession and proletarianization in settler-colonial contexts like Canada. According to Coulthard, "the history and experience of *dispossession*, not proletarianization, has been the dominant background structure shaping the character of the historical relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state" (p. 13). He continues by emphasizing that anti-colonialism for Indigenous peoples "is best understood as a struggle primarily inspired by and oriented around *the question of land...*" (p. 13). This critique is shared to a certain extent by Kulchyski (2013, p. 28), but is articulated more forcefully by Anishinaabe activist Winona LaDuke (in Churchill, 1983), who asks: "What is Marxism's understanding of the land? What is or will be the relationship of a Marxist society to the land?... In answering such questions, Marxism goes far in defining its true allegiance and place in the world" (pp. vi-vii).

There are a number of responses we could offer to these questions. The first of these is a minor empirical refutation, for it is not altogether the case that proletarianization was an insignificant experience relative to dispossession for Indigenous peoples in the area of Turtle Island presently known as Canada. As Kulchyski reminds us, Indigenous labour-power "provided the fundamental productive value that established Canada as an economically viable economy. [Indigenous] women and men were primary producers of fur for the first 300 years of colonization in Canada" (27). Although Kulchyski rejects the idea that Indigenous peoples in Canada constituted a working class, the fur trade necessarily required a significant amount of formal subsumption for its functioning. Furthermore, it is curious to claim that proletarianization was a relatively insignificant experience for Indigenous peoples given the thoroughly traumatic

history of the industrial school initiative, a part of Canada's genocidal Indian Residential School system.<sup>21</sup>

The second of these responses is that Marx undoubtedly recognizes the constitutive importance of a given land-base for Indigenous societies. This recognition is of course affirmed and emphasized in Marx's (1990) account of original accumulation, but it is also explored in "Forms which precede capitalist production" from the *Grundrisse*: "The earth is the great workshop, the arsenal which furnishes both means and material of labour, as well as the seat, *the base of the community*" [emphasis added] (Marx, 1973, p. 472).<sup>22</sup> This sentiment is reiterated at the beginning of *Capital Volume One*, when Marx (1990) paraphrases William Petty: "Labour is therefore not the only source of material wealth...As William Petty says, labour is the father of material wealth, the earth is its mother" (p. 134). While it is assuredly not the case that Marx had any kind of in-depth understanding of specific Indigenous worldviews—nor any kind of

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<sup>21</sup> See *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future* (TRCC, 2015): "It was in keeping with this intent to assimilate Aboriginal peoples and, in the process, to eliminate its government-to-government relationship with First Nations that the federal government dramatically increased its involvement in residential schooling in the 1880s. In December 1878, J. S. Dennis, the deputy minister of the Department of the Interior, prepared a memorandum for Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald on the country's Aboriginal policy. Dennis advised Macdonald that *the long-term goal should be to instruct 'our Indian and half-breed populations' in farming, raising cattle, and the mechanical trades, rendering them self-sufficient. This would pave the way 'for their emancipation from tribal government, and for their final absorption into the general community'* [emphasis added]" (p. 55); "Unlike the church-run boarding schools, which provided a limited education with a heavy emphasis on religious instruction, the industrial schools were intended to prepare First Nations people for integration into Canadian society by teaching them basic trades, particularly farming" (p. 57).

<sup>22</sup> This quote is taken from a passage that describes, among other things, that infamous spectre "Oriental despotism." While much ink has been spent on the controversy of Marx's account of "Oriental despotism" it should be said that in the *Grundrisse* the pre-capitalist form of property actually described is neither strictly defined by its "Orientalness"—"the unity may extend to the communality of labour itself, which may be a formal system, as in Mexico, Peru, especially, among the early Celts, a few clans of India" (Marx, 1973, p. 473)—nor by its "despotism": "The communality can, further, appear within the clan system more in a situation where the unity is represented in a chief of the clan-family, or as a relation of the patriarchs among one another. Depending on that, a more despotic or a more democratic form of this community system" (Marx, 1973, p. 473). One such example of a "more democratic form of this community system" recognized by Marx is that of Haudenosaunee society: "All the members of an Iroquois gens personally free, bound to defend each other's freedom; equal in privileges [and] personal rights. Sachem [and] chiefs claiming no superiority; a brotherhood bound together by the ties of kin. Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, though never formulated, were cardinal principles [of the] gens [and these the] unit of a social [and] governmental system, the foundation whereupon Indian society organised." (Krader, 1974, p. 150) Unsurprisingly, without a close examination of the *Grundrisse*, criticism of Marx's "Oriental despotism" largely depends on Marx's 1853 articles on India, a methodological choice we have problematized above.

sophisticated understanding of the holistic interconnections between land-based epistemologies, cosmologies, ontologies, pedagogies, and so on—it remains important to insist upon the recovery of Marx’s own account of the “psychic or spiritual suffering” (LaDuke, in Churchill, 1983, p. iii) attendant to the “process of separating [people] from the land” (LaDuke, in Churchill, 1983, p. iii). This account is put most forcefully in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, wherein Marx (Marx & Engels, 2010a) describes the scarring historical effects of alienation:

That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature. In estranging from man (1) nature, and (2) himself, his own active functions, his life activity, estranged labour estranges the *species* from man. It changes for him the life of the *species* into a means of individual life... Estranged labour turns thus: (3) Man's *species-being*, both nature and his spiritual species property, into a being *alien* to him, into a *means* for his *individual existence*. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his *human* aspect. [emphasis original] (p. 276-277)

This is not to suggest that a mechanical application of Marx can replace the liberation and revitalization of subjugated Indigenous knowledges, but rather to signal that such projects share many neglected points of unity with Marx insofar as he is centrally concerned with effecting shifts in consciousness by re-establishing the communal ownership of the material wealth of society, the “mother” of which is considered the land.

The last, and most important, response has to do with the political significance over land struggles, that is, struggles for the decolonization of land. We return to Marx’s (1972) letter to Meyer and Vogt:

The destruction of the English landed aristocracy in Ireland is an infinitely easier operation than in England itself, because in Ireland *the land question* has hitherto been the *exclusive form* of the social question, because it is a question of existence, of *life and death*, for the immense majority of the Irish people, and because it is at the same time inseparable from the *national* question. [emphasis original] (p. 333)

Here we see a reiteration of the importance of “the land question,” literally as a question of “life or death.” More importantly, however, we see an inextricable connection being made by Marx

between the decolonization of Indigenous land and “the national question,” i.e. the significance of decolonization for the national self-determination of a colonized people, its recognition as the “principal contradiction” (Mao, 1965) for colonized peoples.

#### **iv. Economism & Race**

The fourth and final critique leveled by Coulthard to be addressed here is by no means unique to debates concerning colonialism in Marx, but rather concerns a generalized schematic misreading of Marx as an economist, that is as someone who disregards the importance of race, gender, sexuality, and so on. Coulthard (2014) characterizes this critique as a critique of Marx’s “economic reductionism,” and suggests that Marx fails to “recognize that [capitalism facilitates the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples] only... *in relation to or in concert with axes of exploitation and domination configured along racial, gender and state lines*” (p. 14). This misreading is certainly due in part to the schematizations that Marxism would undergo after Marx’s death (to be discussed in the following chapter), but Marx’s own understanding of race was arguably much more sophisticated than was appreciated in a context defined by a distinctly European class struggle at the beginning of the 20th century. As will be shown below, armed with a close reading of Marx it is difficult to argue that he was ignorant to the ways in which material relations of exploitation and domination are racialized and gendered under capitalism.

For example, when we return to the fundamental premises of historical-materialism as laid out in *The German Ideology* (Marx, 1970), in combination with Marx’s writings on colonies, we can see that race in Marx should not be understood simply as some rarefied, ideological antagonism. Prior to the commodity and exploitation as the extraction of surplus value, prior to the evolutionary succession of historical stages, we have as Marx’s (1970) “first premise of all human history...the existence of living human individuals” (p.42). This existence is predicated

on re/production, or, more specifically, the re/production of the means of subsistence (and thus also the re/production of the means of re/production): “What [individuals] are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce [emphasis original]” (Marx, 1970, p.42). A mode of production, the material base, thus comprises both the forces (or means) of production as well as the *relations* of production. There are, however, different modalities of production relation, as exemplified by the “patriarchalism” (Marx, 1970, p.43) characterizing the early family unit as a particular relation of production.

Race thus should not be understood ultimately as an ideological effect of class dynamics; on the contrary, in order for race to appear as ideology race must first be inscribed in the material relations of production. As Lucio Colletti (1972) reminds us, Marx does not provide an account of society as such, but of this society, one defined and structured by a capitalist mode of production: “...Capital is not a study of ‘society,’ but of this society, not an abstraction, but rather a real process (a natural process), not an *Objekt* but a *Gegenstand*” (p. 10).<sup>23</sup> Likewise if we wish to theorize race, we cannot do so by providing an account of race as such, but of *this race, these racialized relations, racialization as it is defined and structured by the practices and material relations required and maintained by colonial domination insofar as colonial domination has historically occurred*. Even if race was once a superstructural ideological mystification, one superimposed onto material relations which existed anterior to racialization, there are no longer grounds for this claim. The historically-specific organization of bodies in time and space—that is to say, colonialism—required by capital in order to valorize itself is now too thoroughly dependent on a modal racialization of material production relations. This position

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<sup>23</sup> This claim can, and should, be challenged with regard to the highly abstract nature of the problematic in *Capital Volume Two* (one with which Rosa Luxemburg will take issue). This complication does not however foreclose readings which are in the spirit of Marx rather than the letter, especially given that the spirit is itself informed by the letter, albeit often a different letter.

is explored by both Paul Paolluci (2006) and Himmani Banerji (in Bakan & Enakshi, 2014) in their revisiting of Marx on race.

History has imbricated race and class so completely that race universally inflects relations of production under colonial-capitalism; that is to say, race is not the special concern of the colonized proletariat of colour. Race materially structures the historical situation of the white proletariat both to his benefit, by affording a host of material advantages—such as those attendant to the racialized displacement of violence in a world capitalist economy—as well as to his detriment by, for example, depreciating the price of white labour-power. As Marx (1972) argues:

Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. *The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life.* In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of a ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself... This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. [emphasis added] (p. 334)

Note that this antagonism is primarily a material one, one brought about by market competition for differently racialized labour-power, one which is then subsequently buoyed by ideological cultural production on the part of the class which owns the means of knowledge production (the bourgeoisie). Marx's conceptions of race and colonialism therefore cannot simply be read as simplistic reductions of race to the exigencies of an abstract and economistic class struggle. We can instead read Marx as providing the tools for understanding the ways in which the laws of motion which govern that class struggle are racialized according to certain modal inflections of material production relations. In the words of Spivak (1989), "the idea of class is not an inflexible idea" (p. 161): *it is not a matter of how economics determine race—as in the relation of a cause to an effect—but of how race is an integral, inextricable feature of economics.* This

orientation toward supposedly superstructural phenomena like race and gender has yet to be acknowledged in Marx's theorization of colonialism.

### III. "Negation of the Negation"

Given our preceding complication of the generally accepted "Truth" of Marx-on-colonialism, we can venture a number of claims in order to construct an alternative reading of Marx's account of colonialism:

- 1) **Colonialism is for capitalism a condition-effect, that is to say, colonialism and capitalism are each both the necessary condition and effect of each other.** They both require each other and re/produce each other. They are coextensive and mutually reinforcing. This conclusion is supported by both the analytical and historical accounts of original accumulation provided by Marx.
- 2) **Marx's historiography accounts for difference.** This difference is not a stagist difference which organizes difference according to a normative scale of historical development, but a very real, concrete difference embodied and practiced in historically and geographically specific forms of material production. This conclusion is supported by the indispensable (yet neglected) role played by Marx's theorization of the subsumption of labour under capital.
- 3) **Marx locates historical agency at the colonized periphery.** Insofar as decolonization is not realized, the colonial bourgeoisie and landed aristocracy render proletarian revolution at the metropole impossible. This can be seen especially clearly in Marx's writings on Ireland.

4) **Marx posits the inextricability of land and Indigenous nationhood.** A specific relation to land is recognized as the defining feature of (pre-capitalist) Indigenous societies.

5) **Marx allows for intersectionality.** This intersectionality is a decidedly material one, however. Effectivity is not organized according to a division between a particular root category of oppression—for example the patriarchal domination of women as in radical feminism—and the epiphenomenal oppressions stemming from it, as in Firestone who describes racism as “the sexism of the family of man.” Rather the division according to which base and superstructure is structured, that is to say according to which effectivity is ultimately conceptualized, cuts through categories of race and gender, with the material aspects of these categories assuming primary importance.

This reading is an explicitly anti-colonial reading. It will allow us in the following chapter to evaluate the degree to which we can say that “communistological” (Foucault, 1980, p. 53) Marxists *de-race-inated* Marx. The extent of the *de-race-ination* of Marx will be determined in reference to the reading outlined above, with *deraceination* defined as a specific modification to Marxism as a discursive practice, including: 1) the processes of ideological *de-racialization*, in this case the conceptual de-racialization of global/izing capitalist expansion in Marx; 2) the *uprooting* of Marxist analysis from its grounding premises, specifically concerning the rejection of a Eurocentric stagism; and 3) the extrication of race from place, an extrication precluding any proper understanding of racialized relations to place, that is to say, precisely those relations which define Indigeneity in colonial contexts. This exposition will proceed by examining the ways in which Marxists of the Second International subsequently attempted to synthesize a “new,” “modern” account of “imperialism.” As will be shown, this account of “imperialism”

departed in significant ways with the anti-colonial Marx as described in this chapter, and at times even explicitly denied the analytical utility of discussions of colonialism and race for understanding material relations under capitalism.

### Imperial Subjugations: Colonialism & Race After Marx

Marxists... play a game whose rules aren't Marxist but communistological...  
(Foucault, p. 53, 1980)

It has always been the privilege of epigones to *take fertile hypotheses, turn them into rigid dogma*, and be smugly satisfied, whereas a pioneering mind is filled with creative doubt. [emphasis added] (Luxemburg, p. 374, 2015)

For Foucault (1980) there is a difference between Marx's original historiography and "communistological" Marxist historiography, the latter "defined by communist parties who decide how you must use Marx so as to be declared by them to be a Marxist" (p.53). The distinction between "Marx on colonialism" and "Marxism on colonialism" is therefore important to note, and it is used here to distinguish Marx's foundational discursive practice from the subsequent modifications to that discursive practice made by a Marxist tradition historically embedded in a complex of power-knowledge relations obtaining in the struggle for proletarian revolution at the turn of the century. These modifications will be examined in this chapter with the aim of demonstrating how the Leninist<sup>24</sup> schematization of imperialism subjugated significant aspects of Marx's theorization of colonialism. In particular, this chapter examines how the "classical Marxist theories of imperialism" (Brewer, 1980, p. 79) articulated primarily by N.I. Bukharin and V.I. Lenin, via the controversy surrounding Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital*, became "a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order" Marxist theories of imperialism "in the name of some true knowledge" (Foucault, 1980, p. 83). This schematization of a "true knowledge" of imperialism would repeatedly appeal to notions of "what constitutes a science and its objects" (Foucault, 1980, p. 83) and systematically

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<sup>24</sup> "Leninist" will be used here as a shorthand for that conception of imperialism principally mediated by Lenin's discursive authority (specifically that conception outlined in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*). *This is not a conception of imperialism wholly conceived by Lenin*, due to his synthesizing of the contributions of Hilferding and Bukharin, but it is *attributable* to him insofar as "imperialism" as a discursive object came to denote his specific popularized (and subsequently *institutionalized*) synthesis.

disqualify “unscientific” accounts of imperialism in favour of a pre-eminently and explicitly “modern” theory of imperialism.

Although today only a handful of texts are recognized by Marxists as the accepted origins of the “Truth” of a properly Marxist conception of imperialism, it is a fact generally forgotten that the period of the Second International (1889-1916) was marked by a fierce and variegated ideological struggle over the meaning of imperialism for Marxist praxis (as can be seen in Day & Gaido, 2011). An appraisal of the theoretical output of the Second International, an international coalition of European socialist parties, is indispensable to the project at hand, as it was the Second International that represented the primary institutional site of Marxist discourse after Marx. This discursive “surface of emergence” (Foucault, 1972, p. 41) is all the more relevant when we remember that the parties making up the Second International were deeply rooted in the trade union movement<sup>25</sup> and boasted agitational propaganda with readerships inconceivably wide by today’s standards.<sup>26</sup> It is thus not an exaggeration to say that this period was a moment of revolutionary ferment. However, as with the revolutionary moment of the French Revolution a hundred years prior (see: James, 1989, p. 62-84), the inconvenient fact of colonialism quickly forced itself upon the revolutionaries who, according to their own words, sought “the liberation

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<sup>25</sup> This relationship between the trade unions and the parties of the Second International should not be left out in a history of the theorization of the imperialism, as it was this relationship that was determinative of certain exigencies of revolutionary practice which shaped how national oppression should be diagnosed and treated; cf. Stalin (2013): “But with the parties are associated the trade unions. In Austria, both in the parties and in the trade unions, the main brunt of the work is borne by the same Social-Democratic workers. There was therefore reason to fear that separatism in the party would lead to separatism in the trade unions and that the trade unions would also break up. That, in fact, is what happened: the trade unions have also divided according to nationality. Now things frequently go so far that the Czech workers will even break a strike of German workers, or will unite at municipal elections with the Czech bourgeoisie. *It will be seen from the foregoing that cultural-national autonomy is no solution of the national question. Not only that, it serves to aggravate and confuse the question by creating a situation which favours the destruction of the unity of the labour movement, fosters the destruction of the unity of the labour movement, fosters the segregation of the workers according to nationality and intensifies friction among them [emphasis added]*” (p. 42-43).

<sup>26</sup> “By 1903, circulation [of Zetkin’s journal *Gleichheit*] had attained 11,000 copies. It rose to 67,000 by 1906, 85,000 by 1910 and 125,000 by 1914.” (Foner, in Zetkin, 1984, p. 27)

of mankind” from “every form of dependence and oppression” (Bebel, 1910). This inconvenient fact generated an enormous amount of debate over what would come to be known as “imperialism.” This chapter argues that much of this debate—its texts, its concepts, its points of conflict, its *dramatis personae*, and so on<sup>27</sup>—was subjugated by the imposition of a Leninist schematization that effectively shut down this moment of creative possibility. We can observe the scope and impact of this shift in the ways that the definition of “imperialism” underwent a thoroughly Eurocentric reorientation: although at first this debate understood “imperialism” as a question primarily concerning the fate of the *colonies*, a question that was at this early stage answered with really quite radical solutions,<sup>28</sup> discussions of “imperialism” would come to be primarily associated with the nationalist competition of finance capital and its effects *at the European metropole*. As I will argue, these shifts can be witnessed especially clearly in the subjugation of Luxemburg’s book *The Accumulation of Capital*.

This chapter will therefore begin with a review of Luxemburg’s account of capital accumulation and its correspondence with Marx’s account of colonialism, simultaneously critiquing those Marxists who sought to disqualify Luxemburg in the service of a “modern,” “scientific” theory of imperialism. Following this account of Luxemburg will be an exposition of

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<sup>27</sup> That the diverse manifestations of the theoretical content of this debate—to say nothing of a basic, nominal awareness of its textual output and defining authorities—have been largely suppressed is taken as a more-or-less axiomatic premise of this chapter. As Brewer notes: “Ideas were in the air, especially about imperialism, and their original sources may be hard to trace. Bukharin and Lenin, especially, worked almost simultaneously, and were very close to each other politically and intellectually. To sort out the real author of some of their ideas would be a research project in itself” (p. 79). This project has since been undertaken by Day & Gaido (2011), whose compilation is an indispensable resource for the purposes of the present chapter.

<sup>28</sup> These radical solutions are exemplified in Ernest Belfort Bax’s articles “Imperialism v. Socialism” and “The True Aims of ‘Imperial Extension’ and ‘Colonial Enterprise,’” the former of which argues for “[breaking] up these hideous race monopolies called empires” (1885). As Gaido & Quiroga (2013) note, “Bax’s position on the colonial question was extreme for his time, not only because he rejected any kind of colonialism, but also because of his stand in defence of armed struggle by the colonised nations against their European oppressors” (p. 438). This so-called “extreme” position notably aligns with our anti-colonial reading of Marx as outline in the last chapter, but it is also important to emphasize Bax’s specific formulation of imperialism as “these hideous race monopolies,” given the subsequent evacuation of race from Marxist accounts of “imperialism” to be demonstrated below.

the Leninist schematization of imperialism as a departure from, and subjugation of, the anti-colonial Marx as outlined in the previous chapter; this exposition will proceed by a critical interrogation of Lenin's account of "national oppression," as well as the qualitative rupture assumed by this schematization between imperialism as "a modern phenomenon" and colonialism as the "capitalist world policy of the whole nineteenth century" (Pannekoek, in Day & Gaido, p. 692). In conclusion, I will attempt to articulate a conception of a *deraceinated* Marxism on the basis of the preceding critique of the Leninist schematization. In conceptualizing "*deraceination*," I will be pointing to the ways in which Marxist political economy was uprooted from its grounding materialist premises in eschewing any consideration of race and Indigeneity as irrelevant to the historical-materialist analysis of capitalist accumulation and the world market.

This *deraceination* is especially visible in what I describe as the Leninist schematization of imperialism. This schematized definition of imperialism is almost wholly delimited by the contributions of three thinkers—Hilferding, Bukharin, and Lenin—and continues to dominate Marxist approaches to imperialism. This is evidenced throughout the literature on Marxist theories of imperialism, as well as the enduring pedagogical choices of contemporary communist organizations,<sup>29</sup> and can be seen explicitly in: John Weeks' Leninist definition of imperialism in Tom Bottomore's (1983) *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*; the self-definition of those like Georg Lukács (1971b) attempting to formalize Leninism as a coherent system governed by a certain conception of imperialism; Marcuse's (1961) critical description of the historical institutionalization of the "orthodox" (p. 13) Leninist account of imperialism; the specific identification and delimitation of what constituted "classical Marxist theories of imperialism" by

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<sup>29</sup> Organizations such as the Revolutionary Student Movement, for example, will often teach Lenin even before teaching Marx.

Anthony Brewer (1980); assertions from post-colonial theorists like Ania Loomba (1998) that Lenin “gave a new meaning to the word ‘imperialism’” (p. 5-6); and so on. We can add to this list the work of the reactionary “Marxist” Bill Warren (1980), who nonetheless correctly apprehends that “Marxism... has become the principal compass of investigation of imperialism” (p. 3), while recognizing Lenin as having “reversed” the “traditional Marxist [that is to say, Marx’s] view of imperialism” (p. 48). Each of these examples invariably privileges Lenin as the principal discursive authority mediating the “Truth” of a properly Marxist understanding of imperialism after Marx. While some of them may also invoke Lenin’s polemics with Karl Kautsky and the Narodniks (see: Lukacs, 1971b; Warren, 1980; Weeks in Bottomore, 1983; Day & Gaido, 2011), or Lenin’s theoretical debt to Bukharin and Rudolf Hilferding (see: Lukacs, 1971b; Brewer, 1980; Day & Gaido, 2011), there is generally no mention whatsoever of the perspectives of other “lesser” Marxists like Ernest Belfort Bax, Max Beer, Heinrich Cunow, Paul Louis, Eduard Bernstein, Julian Marchlewski, or Otto Bauer, among others. Indeed, some of the contributions of these writers on the topic of imperialism only enjoy English translations due to Richard Day & Daniel Gaido’s (2011) unparalleled study *Discovering Imperialism* (p. 2), itself a genealogical excavation of subjugated historical contents. As Day & Gaido (2011) state at the outset: “The standard historiography on imperialism relies exclusively on the canonical books by Hobson, Hilferding, Luxemburg, and Lenin and is therefore unsatisfactory on the early stages of the theory” (p. 1-2). While Day & Gaido here describe Luxemburg’s book *The Accumulation of Capital* as a “canonical” text, it should be emphasized that it was really only “canonical” in the sense that it represented the obverse of the official “Truth” of the new imperialism; that is to say, it was historically disqualified as little more than a didactic *limit*, a proof of the “theoretical superiority” (Lukacs, 1972b, p. 43) of Lenin’s articulation. This disqualification, however,

allows for an opportunity *to examine why, and to what effect*, Luxemburg's knowledge of imperialism was deemed inadequate, if not unintelligible, by the standards of not only a hegemonic-bourgeois scientificity, but also a newly-formalized *Marxist* scientificity.

### **I. Rosa Luxemburg's *Contribution to an Economic Explanation of Imperialism***

[I]t is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified, even directly *disqualified* knowledges... a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity *and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it*... it is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work. [emphasis added] (Foucault, 1980, p. 82)

Upon examination of the response to Luxemburg's 1913 book *The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to an Economic Explanation of Imperialism*,<sup>30</sup> one is immediately struck by the presence of a knowledge "which owes its force to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it" (Foucault, 1980, p. 82). Indeed, as Gaido & Quiroga (2013) note, reviews of the book were "almost universally negative" (p. 441), with criticism from the "right-wing" of the German Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, or SPD) represented by Max Schippel and Conrad Schmidt (p. 441), criticism from the "centre" of the SPD represented by Gustav Eckstein and Otto Bauer (p. 441-446), and criticism from the "left-wing" of the Second International represented by Dutch council-communist Anton Pannekoek (p. 446-448). Lenin would himself criticize Luxemburg for having "distorted Marx" and express in a March 1913 letter to Lev Kamenev his satisfaction "that Pannekoek and Eckstein and Otto Bauer have all with one accord condemned her, and said against her what I said in 1899 against the Narodniks" (Lenin, as cited in Day & Gaido, 2011, p.

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<sup>30</sup> It is important to note, as further evidence of the subjugation of Luxemburg's account of imperialism, that the subtitle of *The Accumulation of Capital*—namely *A Contribution to an Economic Understanding of Imperialism*—was excluded in the English translation (Day & Gaido, 2011, 712, n.28). This omission is itself symptomatic of the subjugation examined in this chapter, given that Luxemburg's theses would be dismissed as neither a "contribution" nor properly "economic."

677). Of what did this supposed “distortion” consist? The critiques leveled at Luxemburg can be roughly divided into the following: first, a critique of her attempt to prove that the realization of surplus value is impossible from the point of view of total social capital without colonial outlets for manufactured goods;<sup>31</sup> and second, following from the first critique, a rejection of Luxemburg’s assertion of a historico-economic necessity for colonial expansion under capitalism. These critiques were almost unanimous, and characterize the polemical reviews of Bauer, Bukharin (1972), Eckstein, Pannekoek, and presumably also Lenin. Although Lenin never wrote the repudiation he had planned—a repudiation notably to be titled “Rosa Luxemburg’s Unsuccessful Addition to Marxist Theory” (Lenin, 1975, p. 579, n. 109)—his notes, as well as his letter to Kamenev, indicate that he believed Luxemburg had repeated the mistakes of the Narodniks (Day & Gaido, 2011, p. 677-678).<sup>32</sup> The unanimity of these critiques was not only significant for their content, but also for their uniform “creation of a self-constituting class of experts located within a new knowledge” (Hacking, 1989, p. 31). Luxemburg (2015b) would herself note that it was “comical” that “[only] those who had torn my book apart were to be designated as ‘experts’” (p. 348).

### **i. Formalization & the Subjugation of Luxemburg’s Imperialism**

In *The Accumulation of Capital*, Luxemburg (2015a) had attempted to show that the reproduction schemas elaborated by Marx in *Capital Volume Two* failed to demonstrate the possibility of expanded reproduction (accumulation) at the level of total social capital. In *Capital Volume Two*, Marx (1992) had attempted to prove the possibility of expanded reproduction given an entirely capitalist society, comprised solely of proletarians and capitalists. With such a

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<sup>31</sup> Described by Brewer (1980) as an “underconsumptionist” argument. (p. 33)

<sup>32</sup> Lenin (1972) had engaged the Narodniks in ideological struggle beginning at the end of the 19th century over what he characterized as “economic romanticism,” and a “sentimental criticism of capitalism.”

premise, Marx attempted to establish the value ratios—between the department of production producing means of production (Department I) and the department of production producing means of consumption (Department II)—necessary to enable expanded reproduction under capitalism. Luxemburg (2015a) attempted to show how Marx’s account of expanded reproduction was not possible without a metabolic exchange between capitalist and non-capitalist societies, that it was impossible to realize the surplus value at the level of total social capital without colonial expansion and *the sale of the goods comprising the surplus value of the total social capital* to these colonial markets. This “underconsumptionism” was rejected because it posited that “consumer demand is somehow more fundamental than demand for means of production” (Brewer, 1980, p. 33), a position which flew in the face of the “modern,” “scientific” knowledge of imperialism *qua* the age of capital exports:

But what people usually understand by imperialism is a modern phenomenon that is not simply identical with the capitalist world policy of the whole nineteenth century... *This imperialism finds its economic explanation not in the necessity of new markets for sales or in the interests of selling commodities, but in capital-exports.* [emphasis original] (Pannekoek, in Day & Gaido, 2011, p. 692-693)<sup>33</sup>

Day & Gaido (2011) have explained that this was not solely a matter of theory, but also a practical matter of the agitation and mobilization of the working class: “If capitalist production depended primarily on commodity-exports, then workers’ jobs would also appear to depend directly on imperialist expansion...” (675). Admittedly, Luxemburg’s critics were in a certain sense correct to declare “Part One” of her analysis to be below the threshold of a Marxist scientificity.<sup>34</sup> According to the rules governing the formation of “truthful” propositions in

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<sup>33</sup> See also Eckstein (in Day & Gaido, 2011): “Luxemburg thinks that with her book she has made a contribution to the economic explanation of imperialism. In fact, she deals with the actual problems of imperialism only in Chapter 30, ‘International Loans’, which, however, contains nothing new. Generally speaking, the book has so little to do with the new phenomenon of today’s pulsating economic life that it could have been written just as well twenty or more years ago.” (p. 712)

<sup>34</sup> I am referring here *specifically* to her treatment of *total social surplus value* in her revised reproduction schemas.

Marx's foundational discursive practice, it is technically incorrect to treat total social capital the same way as one would treat an individual capitalist enterprise: "She insists that the problem of realisation must be examined on the level of the aggregate social capital, but then she treats the aggregate capital as though it were an individual capital among many..." (Brewer, 1980, p. 67). Put another way, it is not the case that every capitalist enterprise in society realizes only its constant and variable capital, but cannot then find a market for its surplus value; rather it is the case that some capitalists realise enough surplus value to expand and accumulate, some realize only enough surplus value for simple reproduction, and some discover that their labour was socially unnecessary from the point of view of the market and do not realize even their constant and variable capital inputs. This was the crux of Lenin's (1972) critique of the Narodniks: "Lenin replied that such difficulties [with realizing surplus value], due to the imbalance in the distribution of social labour among the various industries, exists for all parts of the capitalist product, and not just for the surplus value" [emphasis added] (Gaido & Quiroga, 2013, p. 449). That said, it should be noted that Luxemburg (2015a) herself makes this exact same point in "Part Three" of *The Accumulation of Capital*: "This relation of dependence is not exhausted by the bare question of the market for the 'excess product'... The accumulation process of capital is tied to noncapitalist forms of production in all of its value relations and material relations—i.e. with regard to constant capital, variable capital and surplus value" (p. 262). The fact that the criticism of Luxemburg was framed as a debate over something that she readily admitted and even incorporated into her analysis suggests that her critics could not comprehend the breadth and depth of what Luxemburg's project was actually trying to accomplish, that they could not comprehend the specific transformations to the object "imperialism" that Luxemburg was attempting to effect.

Indeed, Luxemburg's critics almost entirely failed to grasp a vitally important element of her critique of Marx, namely that it was a mistake on his part to explicate the laws governing the reproduction of capital in a vacuum, abstracted away from actual historical processes. Borrowing terminology from the previous chapter, it was a mistake to assume the global completion of the subsumption of labour under capital.<sup>35</sup> The extent to which this is a problem *for Marx* is debateable, given the insistent and inextricable role of his thoroughgoing historical analysis in, for example, *Capital Volume One* (1990); it is however a significant problem for the Leninist schematization, *a schematization that would turn this economic abstraction into a historical principle defining a new age of imperialism*: "Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is *established*... in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers *has been completed* [emphasis added]" (Lenin, 1974, p. 266-267). For Luxemburg, on the other hand, the "mathematical [reproduction] schemas can prove absolutely nothing, especially when the assumption [of a wholly capitalist world-economy] they are based on is untenable" (p. 367). It was for this reason she attempted to revise Marx's reproduction schemas, aiming to bring an economic analysis of capital accumulation into harmony with actual, observable historical processes, foremost among them the persistent significance of original accumulation and the violence of the "struggle against the natural economy" (Luxemburg, 2015a, p. 265). It was this aspect of Luxemburg's analysis—the attempt to revise Marx's schemas—that was seized upon by her critics. They declared her attempts to offer new reproduction schemas as "worthless" (Pannekoek, in Day & Gaido, 2011, p. 687), because, according to them, there was in fact no

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<sup>35</sup> Lukacs (1971b) puts this position quite succinctly when he makes the following dubious distinction: "In its developed form capitalist exploitation does not just criminally exploit the colonial peoples as it did at its outset; *it simultaneously transforms their whole social structure* and draws them into the capitalist system." [emphasis added] (p. 44)

problem in the first place. Eckstein (in Day & Gaido, 2011) quipped that: “If Comrade Luxemburg overlooked the problems where they actually are and found them where they do not exist, the solution that she offers is even more astonishing than the problem itself” (p. 711). Schippel meanwhile compared her to the doctor in Molière’s *Le malade imaginaire* (as cited in Gaido & Quiroga, 2013, p. 441).

Luxemburg (2015b) would spend a not insignificant portion of her *Anti-Critique* combating the absurdity of this mode of criticism:

One might have regarded the solution I submitted as correct or wrong, criticized it, challenged it, added to it, or pointed to a different solution. None of this happened. There ensued something entirely unexpected: The ‘experts’ declared that there was no problem at all that required a solution! (p. 364)

Insofar as formalization can be described as the definition of “the axioms necessary to it... *and the transformations that it accepts... taking itself as a starting point [and deploying] the formal edifice that it constitutes*” [emphasis added] (Foucault, 2010, p. 187), we can say that a Marxist knowledge of imperialism here crossed the “threshold of formalization” (Foucault, 2010, p. 187) and became rather a *communistological schematization*, one “defined by communist parties who decide how you must use Marx so as to be declared by them to be a Marxist” (Foucault, 1980, p. 53). Indeed, the fact that this specific mode of criticism was “entirely unexpected” to Luxemburg indicates a shift in the rules governing Marxist discourse and its specific intelligibility. To clarify: this new class of “experts” (significantly and entirely comprised of men located at the European metropole) sought to disqualify Luxemburg’s proposed transformations to the discursive object “imperialism,” and furthermore grounded this disqualification by taking its own “formal edifice” as its starting point. The reasoning proceeded along these lines: “our

reproduction schemas work *in the way we have constructed them* and thus there is no problem.”<sup>36</sup>

Luxemburg (2015b) would sardonically refer to this explicit refusal to deconstruct the premises *underlying* her critics’ understanding of capital accumulation in the following way:

In olden times people believed in the existence of all kinds of fabulous creatures... Does anyone believe that such creatures really existed? But we see them drawn precisely on the old maps. Is that not *proof* that those conceptions of the ancients corresponded exactly with reality? (p. 370)

We can conclude therefore, that whereas Luxemburg attempted to practice a theoretical appreciation for the importance of a sustained critical reinterpretation of Marx<sup>37</sup>—a reinterpretation that, as will be explored below, was actually still *closer* to Marx’s anti-colonial commitments than the reinterpretation provided by the Leninist schematization—her critics articulated and instituted (literally) what the accepted Marxist “Truth” of imperialism was to be, actively suppressing any challenges to this new knowledge.

## ii. The Imperial Necessity

We can now ask the following question: what exactly was subjugated in this formalization? The assumption of an entirely capitalist society, and the conclusions drawn from such an assumption, were problematic for Luxemburg (2015a) insofar as they obscured the historical basis of capitalist accumulation:

[T]his question of past labor as the basis of all present labor leads back to an infinite regress to the ‘beginning of all beginnings,’ which is as meaningless for the economic development of humankind as it is for the natural development of matter...*[T]he question of the origin of this past labor that forms the foundation for the process of reproduction becomes the question of the genesis of capital.* This is certainly much less mythical,

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Luxemburg (2015b): “The reply is: but the schemas work out exactly, *so* the problem of accumulation is solved—it simply doesn’t exist.” (p. 367)

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Luxemburg (2015b): “Are Marx’s schemas the ultimate truth, infallible dogmas, or are the ‘arbitrary and not free from contradictions?’” (p. 385); and “It is certainly true that Volume 2 of *Capital* is by no means the fully fleshed-out work that Volume 1 is, but only a skeleton, a loose assemblage of more or less finished fragments and rough drafts such as a researcher would note down for his own self-clarification. However, Marx’s elaboration and completion of these drafts was impeded and interrupted over and over again by illness... It is certainly true that to Marx himself it seemed, according to Engels, that this last part of Volume 2 was ‘urgently in need of revision, and also according to Engels, it remained only a ‘provisional treatment of the subject.’” (p. 365)

indeed it is written in letters of blood in modern history as the chapter of so-called original accumulation. [emphasis added] (p. 54)

This question of the imbalances between branches of production was therefore to be answered by Luxemburg by examining the *historical* occurrence of original accumulation *qua* colonial expansion.<sup>38</sup> At first glance, this point seems curiously similar to Lenin's oblique reference to the "historical presuppositions" (Marx, as cited in Harootunian, 2015, p. 6) determining the possibilities of the reproduction of capital in his repeated insistences that "[t]he problem of the realisation of the product in capitalist society... consisted in finding for each part of the capitalist product the other part that replaces it in the market, both in terms of value... *and of its material form.*" (Gaido & Quiroga, 2013, p. 449) On closer inspection however, Lenin (1972) grounds this difficulty for capitalists in a purely *economic* principle, namely "the contradiction between the social character of production... and the private, individual mode of appropriation" (p. 167) a contradiction which ensures crises via the anarchic competition grounded in a lack of central planning. This is, however, a formal understanding of the difficulty, and provides no insight into the specific historical *content* of the difficulty, that is to say, into the actually existing imbalances that exist between specific industrial sectors (for example, the specific imbalances arising from a global division of labour between the industrial metropole producing finished goods and a colonial periphery producing primarily raw materials). This kind of abstract, economic explanation does indeed make sense insofar as one has worked backwards from an ahistorical and anachronistic assumption of a completely capitalist world-economy. For Luxemburg (2015a), however, this difficulty of reproducing needed inputs in the right quantity and quality is to be grounded in a historically produced inequality between the European metropole and the

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<sup>38</sup> "[W]hat is the starting point for accumulation? It is from this standpoint that the interdependence of the accumulation process in both departments of production must be retraced..." (Luxemburg, 2015, p. 87)

colonized periphery, an inequality that is perennially reproduced by the historically-determined exigencies of capital valorization arising from the necessarily colonial nature of a nascent capitalist mode of production: “[Expanded reproduction] cannot be conjured up out of the fixed, reciprocal relationships and dependencies between the two great departments...Accumulation is not merely an internal relation between the branches of the capitalist economy—it is above all a relation between capital and its noncapitalist milieu” (p. 303). This account of colonial-capitalism explicitly aligns with the anti-colonial Marx outlined in the previous chapter, as will be explored below.

Pannekoek’s (in Day & Gaido, 2011) critique of Luxemburg portrays clearly the ahistorical attitude of the new “experts” on this question of the imperial necessity:

Is the struggle [Luxemburg] describes against natural economy fortuitous, devoid of any internal necessity? No, but the causes lie elsewhere than where she looked for them. In reality, capitalism exchanges its products with non-capitalist producers because it developed in an environment of such producers. *That existence of non-capitalist buyers and suppliers is a practical fact, albeit not a necessity without which an emerging capitalism could not exist.* [emphasis added] (p. 691)

For Pannekoek, the “existence of “non-capitalist buyers *and suppliers* [emphasis added!]” is a “practical fact,” but not a “necessity.” Thus, when Pannekoek (in Day & Gaido, 2011) claims that “since the existence of non-capitalist buyers is a fact, the expansion of capitalism at the same time requires an expansion of non-capitalist production with which it exchanges its products” (p. 691), it is difficult to grasp what exactly is meant by “requires,” insofar as the existence of these non-capitalist sectors is considered ultimately unnecessary. The contradictory nature of this “refutation” of Luxemburg is itself likely indicative of the nature of a mode of criticism grounded in a formalized (rather than scientific) Marxism. In point of fact, the existence of non-capitalist buyers and suppliers is *absolutely necessary, historically and economically*, for an “emerging capitalism”: without them, crises would act as an insuperable barrier to the

development of the means of production, due to the inhibiting determinations provided by capitalism's "historical presuppositions" (Marx, as cited in Harootunian, 2015, p. 6) and the resulting imbalances in the ratios necessary between different sectors of production. We should thus pause here to appreciate the enormity of Pannekoek's departure from Marx, for whom colonialism is not only a necessary condition-effect, as outlined in the previous chapter, but is moreover the *only* answer Marx provides for the question of the historical appearance of capital, the ignition of its ceaseless valorization processes, and the beginnings of a specifically bourgeois development of the forces of production. This can of course be seen in Marx's exposition of original accumulation in *Capital*, but the theoretical insight is also plainly and explicitly rendered as early as *The Communist Manifesto*:

*The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonisation of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development. [emphasis added] (Marx & Engels, 2010b, p. 485)*

We can add to this the following observation regarding what it was that enabled the creation of the world market by modern industry: "Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America [prepared<sup>39</sup>]..." (Marx & Engels, 2010b, p. 486). It is moreover worth remembering that the first substantive discussion of the colonies in Marx's (1990) *Capital* is not to be found in the elaboration of original accumulation in "Part Eight," but rather much earlier in his examination of the role of machinery in the establishment of periodic crises of overproduction:

...this mode of production acquires an elasticity, a capacity for sudden extension by leaps and bounds, which comes up against no barriers but those presented by the availability of raw materials and the extent of sales outlets... By ruining handicraft production of finished articles in other countries, machinery forcibly converts them into fields for the

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<sup>39</sup> Although the *MECW* (Marx & Engels, 2010b, p. 486) translates "*vorbereitete*" as "paved the way," the translation "prepared" is preferred here.

production of its raw material. Thus India was compelled to produce cotton, wool, hemp, jute and indigo for Great Britain. (p. 579)

Marx immediately goes on to describe how the ruination of handicraft production, that is the sublation of formal subsumption by real subsumption, at the metropole creates an industrial reserve army of labourers who are pressured to emigrate (that is, to colonize) by a labour market that forces them to sell their labour-power below its value. The outcome of this movement is that “[a] new international division of labour springs up... and it converts one part of the globe into a chiefly agricultural field of production for supplying the other part, which remains a pre-eminently industrial field” (p. 579-580). Where Lenin and the other “epigones” (Luxemburg, 2015b) assume the completion of the subsumption of labour under capital, and an era in which capital can be exported profitably and unproblematically to anywhere in the globe, they abandon this insight of Marx’s, and furthermore abandon Marx’s (1990) central premise of his chapter on “The Modern Theory of Colonization,” namely that one cannot profitably export capital without also exporting the capital relation via “the struggle against the natural economy.”<sup>40</sup> According to both Marx and Luxemburg, it is this struggle that structures the capitalist world-economy and determines the historically- and geographically-specific content of the problem of reproduction.

This exposition of the historical *content* of the imbalances governing the possibility of expanded reproduction is precisely what we see in “Part Three” of *The Accumulation of Capital* with Luxemburg’s (2015a) attempt to reframe the problem of the reproduction of capital *not* in a content-less economic principle regarding the contradiction between socialized production and individual appropriation, but rather in a specific, historically produced imbalance between the metropole, with the accumulated constant capital needed to produce “finished articles,” and the

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. “Capital investment and the intensive cultivation of the soil can no more be conjured up out of nothing than can capitalist relations in general.” (Luxemburg, 2015a, p. 277)

colonized periphery, primarily producing “raw material.” An appreciation of this division and its consequences was the crux of Luxemburg’s intervention, an intervention which grounded a terminal diagnosis of imperialist capitalism *not* in the tempestuous military competition between monopolized finance capitalists and the attendant restrictions it places on the development of the forces of production, but rather in the fact that capitalism requires a palliative course of treatment that necessarily promises only diminishing returns: “...[At] the same time as it tends to become the universal form, it is smashed to smithereens by its intrinsic inability to be a universal form of production” (p. 341).<sup>41</sup> For Luxemburg, capital reaches a limit in its capacity for colonization, or, put more rigorously, a limit in the capacity for colonization to fulfill its primary economic function vis-à-vis capital valorization through the provision of cheap resource extraction and the ability of colonial markets to stave off crises. It is the *colonial* nature of capitalism that necessarily leads to both its expansion, as well as to its eventual, yet objective, sublation. What is therefore being subjugated here is, in the words of Glen Coulthard (2014), a “contextual shift” (p. 10) in the definition of the object “imperialism” from the capital relation (as in Lenin) to the colonial relation (as in Luxemburg). There are thus serious grounds for the following conclusion: with the disqualification of Luxemburg came a subjugation of the anti-colonial Marx.

### **iii. Other Passions at Work**

In the history of Western thought, sex has been thought a variable in the distribution of rationality... From antiquity to the present day, women have been claimed less capable of abstract and systematic thought than men... more inclined toward subjective assessments and less toward objective ones than men. (Harding, 1982, p. 226)

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<sup>41</sup> See also: “[C]apital accumulation can no more exist without noncapitalist formations, than these are able to exist alongside it. It is only in the constant and progressive erosion of these noncapitalist formations that the very conditions of the existence of capital accumulation are given” (Luxemburg, 2015a, p. 302); and “As much as imperialism is a historical method to prolong the existence of capital, objectively it is at the same time the surest way to bring this existence to the swiftest conclusion” (Luxemburg, 2015a, p. 325).

In her *Anti-Critique*, Luxemburg (2015) signals that “over the decades Social Democratic publishers have certainly not produced all gold and pearls. *All these events clearly indicate that, in one way or another, there have been passions at work other than those of ‘pure science’* [emphasis added]” (p. 348). What would it mean to take the consideration of these other passions seriously? What would it mean to account meaningfully for the fact that Luxemburg faced criticism from men in the service of replacing her authority with the authority of men, that her knowledge production was relegated to the status of a “sentimental” and “romantic” (Lenin, 1972) political economy, one lacking a capacity for abstract thought? In the context of our present interrogation, it would mean an acknowledgement of the fact that the unexamined colonial premises of thinkers like Lenin were, at least in part, historically constituted by and within a discursive practice that remained undoubtedly structured by misogyny. It would require a sustained interrogation of the fact that the racist and colonial presuppositions structuring Marxist discursive practices, including subsequently that of Marxist and materialist feminisms, was not *solely* an effect of a particular historical relation between colonized and colonizer, but also an effect of the specific gendered relations existing at the European metropole, relations actively disallowing any transformation to the thoroughgoing Eurocentrism of a newly-minted Marxist “anti-imperialism.” It would require an expansive and rigorously *intersectional* genealogy of Marxist discourse. Such a project, however, is foreclosed insofar as these insurgent discursive facts remain subjugated by a formalized Marxism constitutively unaware of its own formalization.

## II. A Critique of the Leninist Schematization

Novelty is not unimportant: it is the mutation of formal operations, the appearance of the new, of a machine that remains substantially the same... Political theory is never tired of celebrating the new when, in point of fact, it has generally produced only the novel. (Moufawad-Paul, 2017, pp. 53-56)

This distinction between the “new” and the “novel,” defined as the difference between a change in the substance of historical-material relations and a change in their appearance, their subjective apprehension, is a guiding premise of the following critique of the Leninist schematization of imperialism. An example of this distinction can be seen in Aimé Césaire’s (2010) *Discourse on Colonialism*, wherein Césaire famously takes up the position that the fascism of Nazi Germany and its attendant horrors were in essence nothing new. What *was* new was the fact that fascism had “applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the ‘coolies’ of India, and the [‘Blacks’] of Africa” (p. 36). We could summarize this somewhat schematically by saying that it was not the *objective* laws of a colonial-capitalist mode of production that had fundamentally changed, but rather the *subjective* conditions prevailing in Europe after the war. A historically racialized framework of affective intelligibility (Butler, 2016) had finally allowed for the objective yet repressed violence latent in the structural functioning of colonial-capitalism to return to European consciousness, to become a significant subjective condition of post-war Europe. Following Césaire, the critique of the Leninist schematization elaborated here seeks to problematize the theorization of imperialism as a qualitative rupture, as a “special stage of capitalism” (Lenin, 1973a, p. 49), distinct from its antecedent: the old “colonial policy” (p. 82). We will then explore the significance of this schematization for the discursive possibilities available to Leninist analyses of colonialism and race by briefly examining Lenin’s response to “the national question,” a practical question covalent with the theoretical articulation of the Leninist schematization of imperialism, one that likewise subjugated important elements of Marx.

In his famous pamphlet *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin (1973a, p. 50) provides a definition of imperialism that includes five basic features: 1) the replacement of

“free competition” with the dominance of monopolies, due to the high level of the concentration of capital; 2) the appearance of finance capital, defined as the effective fusion of financial capital and industrial capital; 3) the primary importance of the export of capital in capital valorization, rather than the export of commodities; 4) the “formation of international monopolist capitalist associations” (p. 50), state national trusts, cartels, and the like; and 5) the completion of the division of the world between the (capitalist) world powers, after which only re-division is possible. While most of the specific characteristics of these five features had already been articulated by Hilferding (1981) and Bukharin (1929), we should add to this list an important consequence of the historical convergence of these features, a consequence that was recognized by Lenin as a defining feature of imperialism in its own right: the advent of “the first world war in the strictest sense of the term” (Lukacs, 1971b, p. 44).<sup>42</sup> While undoubtedly some of these features represented significant *quantitative* changes in the functioning of the mechanisms of capital valorization in a capitalist world-economy, the degree to which these features can be said to represent a *qualitative* leap necessitating the declaration of a new “stage of capitalism” (Lenin, 1973a) is deserving of critical scrutiny. As Edward Said (1994) reminds us: “...no matter how one wishes to demarcate high imperialism... imperialism itself had already been a continuous process for several centuries of overseas conquest, rapacity, and scientific exploration” (p. 221). As I will demonstrate, this difference between Said and Lenin—or, indeed, between Luxemburg and her “epigones”—should not be understood merely as a matter of “terminological confusion” (Eckstein, 1991, p. 307), as many have suggested (see also: Brewer, 1980, p. 80, p. 117; and

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<sup>42</sup> Although Lukacs is quoted here for the clarity in which he advances Lenin’s claim, it should be stated for the sake of rigour that Lenin advanced exactly and explicitly this claim, and repeatedly emphasized the supposedly distinct character of the “First World War.” This can be observed especially well in his text “Socialism and War” (Lenin, 1973a, pp. 36-43), as well as in the preface to the French and German editions of *Imperialism*, where he contextualizes his study with a reference to the world-historical significance of “the eve of the first world imperialist war” (Lenin, 1974, p. 189)

Pannekoek, in Day & Gaido, 2011, 692-693); on the contrary, we can deconstruct Lenin's "technical and highly specialized" (Eckstein, 1991, p. 307) definition of imperialism by rigorously interrogating the historical shift they attempt to substantiate.

### **i. Bourgeois "Facts"**

At the outset, however, we should make a brief methodological observation. As Lenin (1974) himself explicitly states: "the main purpose of the book was, and remains, to present, *on the basis of the summarised returns of irrefutable bourgeois statistics, and the admissions of bourgeois scholars of all countries*, a composite picture of the world capitalist system...

[emphasis added]" (p. 189). According to Brewer (1980), this methodological choice was

"deliberately" made "so as to condemn the bourgeoisie... with their own words..." (p. 109).

With regard to Lenin's debt to "bourgeois scholars," we can, for example, single out the work of J.A. Hobson (1965), whose book *Imperialism, A Study* was cited repeatedly by Lenin and provided much of the material for Lenin's study of imperialism.<sup>43</sup> Eckstein's (1991) question "is there a Hobson-Lenin thesis?" is itself indicative of the influence of Hobson on Lenin, as well as the debates this influence has generated. While there would certainly be a project in, for example, tracing the residuum of Hobson's reformist and anti-Semitic concern with "economic parasites" in Lenin's (1974) exposition of imperialist "parasitism" (p. 276),<sup>44</sup> it is considered

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<sup>43</sup> Eckstein (1991): "...[Hobson's] *Imperialism* was more prominent than any other source in Lenin's notebooks preparatory to his own essay on the subject; Hobson's was the only work cited in the original preface to the finished essay, and is the first citation on the first page of the essay itself; and references to Hobson's *Imperialism* appear in a steady stream from the beginning to the end of the essay." (p. 306)

<sup>44</sup> Lenin (1974a) would even go so far as to declare that Hilferding's lack of concern with "parasitism" as a characteristic feature of imperialism was a "step backward compared with the non-Marxist Hobson" (p. 276). Of course, this concern with parasitism is itself a step backward compared with Marx insofar as Marx always assumed the proper functioning of capital in his exposition of the laws of capitalism, its basic contradictions, and the *radical* necessity of its overthrow: "While these swindles [described by Lenin] certainly happened, and played a part in events, it is surely better to follow the line that Marx took in dealing with the role of fraud and dishonesty in explaining surplus value: the functioning of the system was to be explained in terms of legitimate dealings; swindles were just an optional extra" (Brewer, 1980, p. 111). This was an important methodological decision for Marx: so long as one was able to suggest that capitalism was not functioning "properly," one was able to offer reformist,

more relevant here to examine Lenin's extensive use of statistical data drawn from bourgeois sources. The basic mistake made in such a choice is articulated well by Lukacs (1971a): "The unscientific nature of this seemingly so scientific method consists... in its failure to see and take account of the historical character of the facts on which it is based" (p. 6). Although Lukacs (1971a) directs this criticism toward those bourgeois economists before Marx who could not decipher the "fetishistic character of economic forms" (p. 6), we can use this insight of Lukacs' to reproach Lenin's *Imperialism*, in which Lenin avowedly deploys "isolated facts" (p. 6) drawn from bourgeois economists without accounting for the following:

... however simple an enumeration of 'facts' may be, however lacking in commentary, it already implies an 'interpretation'. Already at this stage the facts have been comprehended by a theory, a method; they have been wrenched from their living context and fitted into a theory. (Lukacs, 1971a, p. 5)

The problematic nature of this method can be examined in the statistical data Lenin invokes to make his points concerning the territorial expansion of the "Great Powers." A chart illustrating the "Colonial Possessions of the Great Powers" (Lenin, 1974, p. 258), for example, lists the relative size and population of the different "Great Powers" between 1876 and 1914.<sup>45</sup> According to Lenin, the United States is considered in 1876 to be a "Great Power" *with no colonies*: the colonial situation *internal* to the U.S. thus remains unexamined and unproblematized. *Terra Nullius* is simply assumed; the ongoing colonial genocide of Indigenous people and the settlement of the Western United States (which was at the time far from complete) is erased. We can see here in the Leninist schematization an unproblematized assumption of an *effective* division of the world with regard to the economic processes

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rather than *revolutionary*, solutions. Indeed, offering these reformist "solutions" was exactly Hobson's (1965) ethno-nationalist project in *Imperialism*.

<sup>45</sup> This chart uses data compiled from the bourgeois geographer Alexander Supan and the colonial statistician Otto Hübner.

supposedly defining imperialism. That is to say, although all area west of the Mississippi “belonged” to the United States in the ideological imaginary of American imperialism, in reality, for many areas west of the Mississippi speculative capital export was still not even possible (much less profitable) without a “struggle against the natural economy” that had yet to be completed. Luxemburg’s understanding of imperialism *qua* colonial-capitalism is thus far superior to the Leninist schematization in this sense, due to the fact that it consistently and thoroughly complicates the assumptions of the completion of the subsumption of labour under capital both externally *and internally*. This is additionally evidenced by the fact that while Lenin theoretically abandons the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island in his accounts of imperialism and “national oppression” (to be discussed further below), Luxemburg (2015a) certainly does not:

Railways...gradually brought the American farmer over the vast expanse of the Union, from the east to the west, and he exterminated the American Indians with firearms, bloodhounds, liquor, and syphilis and violently drove them westwards so that he could appropriate their land as ‘free land’ in order to clear and cultivate it (p. 286).

Further examination of the framing of the statistical data borrowed by Lenin from his bourgeois sources would provide more examples. Although such a genealogy lies outside the scope of this chapter—as it would involve an exhaustive (and exhausting) examination of the 800+ pages of the 39th volume of Lenin’s (1974b) *Collected Works*, a volume dedicated to only his *notebooks* on imperialism—we should signal that this methodological problem is generalizable, that is to say, it not only affects the conclusions he draws from the “isolated facts” (Lukacs, 1971a, p. 6) he borrows, but it also constitutively affects the discursive objects and conceptual frameworks he borrows from other thinkers. One example of such borrowing is the importance Lenin attributes to the “overabundance of capital” in explaining the necessity of imperialist capital export, a claim remarkable for the fact that it is—from the point of view of Marx and his reproduction

schemas—just as “unscientific” and “reformist” as the underconsumptionist argument advanced by Luxemburg.

## ii. Novelty & Rupture

That said, we cannot condemn the Leninist schematization for *completely* failing to appreciate the colonial violence of imperialist capitalism. Such a claim would admittedly be disingenuous. We should however critically examine those moments when this violence is addressed. One such moment can be found in the “Preface” Lenin (1973a) wrote to Bukharin’s

*Imperialism and the World Economy*:

*There was an epoch of relatively ‘peaceful’ capitalism* [<sup>46</sup>], when it had completely defeated feudalism in the leading European countries *and was free to develop with the utmost — relative — tranquility and smoothness, expanding ‘peacefully’ over the vast expanses of the as yet unsettled lands* and the countries not yet irrevocably drawn into the capitalist maelstrom... For nine-tenths of the population of the leading countries, for hundreds of millions in the colonies and backward countries that epoch was not one of ‘peace’ but of oppression, suffering and horror, which was the more terrible... for appearing to be a ‘horror without end.’ *This epoch is gone for good, it has given way to an epoch which is relatively much more violent, spasmodic, disastrous and conflicting, an epoch which for the mass of the population is typified not so much by a ‘horror without end’ as by a ‘horrible end.’* [emphasis added] (p. 45)

How much analytical work this single word “relatively” does! We should note the return of the repressed element here: although imperialism is consistently affirmed to be a qualitative difference—a break, a “new” and “highest” stage of capitalism—Lenin is consistently making sure to emphasize that what we are seeing now is what the masses have always been seeing. Given this admission, the following question must perforce be posed: where *can this qualitative difference* be found? Certainly not in the occurrence of a war with world-historical importance and a global scope, a war that sought a “‘more equitable’ distribution and subsequent more concerted exploitation” (Lenin, 1973a, p. 41) of the colonies for the benefit of national

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<sup>46</sup> *N.b.* Lenin defines this “relatively peaceful” epoch as the period from 1871 to 1914.

monopolies, for the benefit of capital enjoying a high-level of concentration and centralization through financial instruments like joint-stock companies; such wars had already occurred twice before in 1756 and 1812. Certainly not in a vaguely-defined “horrible end,” one which the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island had even then already been experiencing for several hundred years. Indeed, it is the suggestion of a relatively peaceful expansion “over the vast expanses of the as yet unsettled lands” where Lenin allows us a clear indication of the invisibility sustaining his field of visibility (Althusser & Balibar, 2009). Lenin’s inability to conceive of, and thus account for, the *ongoing* nature of the historical processes foundational to the birth and development of the capitalist mode of production—an oversight ineluctably encapsulated in “the vast expanses of the as yet unsettled lands”—results in a diagnosis marred by that inability. This inability expresses itself in a stagism that is defined by European historical development: the “economic foundation of national movements” (Lenin, 1973b, p. 8) becomes the development of a national bourgeoisie through consolidation of language, literature, culture, etc., *rather than the slavery and territorial dispossession constituting the historical-material basis of white-settler nationalism*. Lenin thus reaffirms the stagist nature of his conception of imperialism (not to be found in the anti-colonial Marx), a stagism that requires a centring of European historical experience at the same time it attempts unsuccessfully to critique that Eurocentrism.

We can moreover return to our discussion of Luxemburg’s subjugation in relation to this problem with the Leninist schematization. What does the insistence on the accuracy of Marx’s reproduction schemas amount to, the insistence that it is possible under capitalism to expand without colonization so long as the correct ratios are maintained? It amounts to a departure from Marx’s project insofar as that project is substantially concerned with taking the latent, capillary violence of colonial-capitalist re/production and making it manifest. I argue that this aspect of

Marx's account of colonial domination is more-or-less absent in Lenin's synthesis of Bukharin and Hilferding, and is thus dangerously close to "making its claims complicit with capitalism's self-representation." (Harootunian, 2015, p.1).

### iii. Imperialism and "the National Question"

If we are to take seriously Lukacs' (1971b) assertion that "Lenin's superiority" on the question of imperialism lay in "*his concrete articulation of the economic theory of imperialism with political problem of the present epoch*, thereby making the economics of the new phase a guide-line for all concrete action" (p. 41), then it is worth dwelling for a moment on Lenin's conception of "national oppression" and his debate with Luxemburg on the practical question of "the right of nations to self-determination" (Lenin, 1973b). Indeed, an examination of the differences on this question is useful in examining the invisibility structuring Lenin's field of visibility, in examining "the theoretical problematic's non-vision of its non-objects" (Althusser & Balibar, 2009, p. 27).

Why does national oppression appear as a primary concern for Lenin? Because the formation of nation-states through national-bourgeois revolutions is considered—in the manner of a Eurocentrically-defined teleological stagism—to be the necessary precondition for the development of the forces of production, and thus also for the consequent development of a self-conscious and revolutionary proletariat, as alluded to above. Nationalist movements are therefore inherently progressive<sup>47</sup> for Lenin (1973b):

Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speaks a single language, with all obstacles to the

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<sup>47</sup> We could cautiously venture that it is here where the "normative developmentalism" critiqued by Coulthard (2014, p. 9-10) and Means (in Churchill, 1983) appears, becoming fully elaborated and formalized by and within a formalized Marxism-Leninism.

development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated. *Therein is the economic foundation of national movements.* (p. 8)

*Nota bene* the universalization of feudalism as the ante-capitalist mode of production that must be overcome (another Eurocentric departure from Marx). This universalization is notably not to be found in Luxemburg (2015a), whose analyses are based on a recognition of the specific historical differences produced by capitalism’s “struggle against the natural economy,” differences unrecognized by the Leninist schematization.<sup>48</sup> The difficulties of “national oppression,” as well as the possibilities for its resistance, are correspondingly defined for Lenin by the political contours of “national oppression” in the European context,<sup>49</sup> a context that does not and cannot be mapped onto the colonized periphery. Unlike Luxemburg, Lenin largely fails to problematize the basic ability of nationally-oppressed minorities to develop the forces of production in ways commensurable with the historical development of Europe, a failure that likely follows from a formal understanding of the problem of the expanded reproduction of

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. “If the violent struggle in Europe took the form of revolution against feudalism...then in the non-European countries it took the form of colonial policy in the struggle against more primitive social forms.” (Luxemburg, 2015a, p. 266) See also Luxemburg’s (2015a) quotation of the French General Allard—“By this means, [the French colonial government] will sweep away the last remnants of feudalism...” (p. 275)—in which she makes sure to include an in-text “[sic!]” after Allard’s suggestion that feudalism is an accurate descriptor for Algeria’s Indigenous modes of production.

<sup>49</sup> This European definition of the problematic of national oppression is put most forcefully and explicitly in Joseph Stalin’s (2013) *Marxism and the National Question*, a text written at Lenin’s behest. For Stalin, national oppression is a historically specific phenomenon confined to the era of capitalism, engendering a struggle waged primarily (necessarily but not always sufficiently) between nationally antagonistic bourgeoisies: “A nation is not merely a historical category but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capital” (p. 18). For Stalin, therefore, Indigenous peoples do not, and cannot, constitute nations so long as there is no bourgeoisie to play nationalism’s “leading role” (p. 20) in the constitution of a nation’s necessary features. This definition is taken beyond a mere historicizing of nationalism-under-capitalism in his critique of Bauer: “Bauer is obviously confusing *nation*, which is a historical category, with *tribe*... [emphasis original]” (p. 17). Indigenous resistance during colonialism’s original accumulation is thus *not* considered a national movement, because the necessary grounds for that definition are not present, namely an Indigenous bourgeoisie. We should be wary of hackneyed, prelapsarian critiques of “Stalinist censorship” by remembering, in the spirit of Said, that these definitions of national oppression were still crucial for many postwar liberation struggles (cf. Ho, 1960: “What I wanted most to know... was: which International sides with the peoples of the colonial countries?”). That said, we should also register as significant the fact that Stalin’s definition of “the nation” affected how Lenin schematized “imperialism” in ways that not only privileged European struggles for national liberation, but also effectively made some Indigenous struggles for national liberation *invisible as such*.

capital, as explored above. The object under investigation in the guise of “national oppression” is no longer the basic, material violence of “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey, 2003), as in Luxemburg, but rather a superstructural form of political domination. The obstacle to the development of the forces of production is not the basic, material differences produced by colonialism—the specific economic content of the imbalances between the European metropole and the colonized periphery, the racialization of labour-power as a commodity, and so on—but is rather the political, cultural and linguistic difficulties posed by “multi-national states,” since “the national state is typical and normal for the capitalist period” (Lenin, 1973b, p. 9). How the consolidation of language occurs in multinational *colonial* contexts, that is, in contexts irrevocably marked by the presence of the oppressor nation, does not receive anywhere near the kind of in-depth analysis it requires, if it receives any at all.

We thus witness in Lenin almost a kind of Freudian displacement<sup>50</sup> from colonialism as a racialized process of dispossession-proletarianization to a vaguely-defined “national oppression.” This is a displacement which represses a specific mode of historical difference, namely the difference between colonizer and colonized *qua* racialized relation to a particular dispossessed land base: “national oppression” under the Leninist schematization is equally applicable to America under the so-called “yoke” of British taxation as it is to the “miniature Balkan states” (Lenin, 1973b, p. 11).<sup>51</sup> This false equivalency is taken to unfortunate proportions in Lenin’s article “Russians and Negroes” (1978), wherein Lenin not only explicitly argues for the validity of the analytical commensurability of “race” and “nation,” but even goes so far as to declare that

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<sup>50</sup> Freud (1973), on “displacement”: “[Displacement] manifests itself in two ways: in the first, a latent element is replaced not by a component part of itself but by something more remote — that is, by an allusion; and in the second, *the psychical accent is shifted from an important element on to another which is unimportant, so that the dream appears differently centred and staged.* [emphasis added]” (p. 208)

<sup>51</sup> It is worth stressing here the complete omission of the Indigenous peoples under the very real yoke of American colonial genocide, a historical datum that is by no means ignored by Luxemburg (2015a).

“today... the Russians still show many more traces of slavery than the Negroes” (p. 543).

Unsurprisingly, the evidence provided to support this conclusion is not at all rigorous, and depends on a vacuous comparison of literacy rates between the two demographics. A similarly grievous false equivalency can be seen in Lenin’s (1974b) complete misapprehension of the world-historical significance of the American “Revolutionary” War, a misapprehension that frames the consolidation of a white-nationalist, settler bourgeoisie as a *victory* in the struggle *against* national oppression:

The history of modern, civilised America opened *with one of those great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars* of which there have been so few compared to the vast number of wars of conquest which, like the present imperialist war, were caused by squabbles among kings, landowners or *capitalists over the division of usurped lands [!] or ill-gotten gains*. That was the war the American people waged against the British robbers who oppressed America *and held her in colonial slavery, in the same way as these “civilised” bloodsuckers are still oppressing and holding in colonial slavery hundreds of millions of people in India, Egypt, and all parts of the world.* [emphasis added] (p. 62)

There is perhaps no better evidence of the analytical inadequacy of Lenin’s definitions of imperialism and national oppression than the above comparison of white-settlers fighting other white-settlers “over the division of usurped lands” to the decolonizing struggles of the Indigenous peoples of India and Egypt. Again, it should be emphasized that the complete abandonment of the anti-colonial Marx—not to mention a complete abandonment of the basic precepts of historical-materialism—observable in such careless analyses is much more suggestive of a formalized Marxism than it is a scientific application of Marx.

### **III. *Deraceinated* Marxism**

Based on the foregoing analysis, I argue that the Leninist schematization of “imperialism” is an object belonging to, and representative of, a *deraceinated* Marxism. I conceptualize imperialism’s communistological formalization and institutionalization as a

collection of *processes of deraceination*. These processes of deraceination include shifts in discursive authority, shifts in standards of epistemological validity,<sup>52</sup> shifts in how objects are defined according to specific “grids of specification” (Foucault, 1972), and so on. It is important to emphasize that in attempting to offer such a description, *I do not attempt to describe anything other than the historically-specific modifications undergone by the discursive practice of Marxist political economy due to its Leninist schematization and formalization*. The processes of deraceination that I conceptualize and describe are limited to a specific, historically-delimited period of Marxist discourse at the European metropole, a period spanning roughly 40 years (1885-1925). What defines these processes and their product? A neologism combining “race” and “deracination” (literally, “to uproot”), *deraceination* will be defined by the following features:

**1) The processes of an ideological de-racialization, or, put another way, the subjugation of an appreciation for the racialization of material relations.** These processes are grounded in an articulation of a strategic politics geared toward proletarian struggle against imperialism *at the European metropole*, a politics notably including a conditional support for the consolidation of an exploitative, *and at times racially-defined*, national-bourgeoisie. This can be seen best in Lenin’s conflation of race with nation, and of colonialism (an assemblage of racialized material processes of domination) with “national oppression.” This de-racialization is perhaps best captured by one of Lenin’s marginal notes in Luxemburg’s *The Accumulation of Capital*: “The description of the

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<sup>52</sup> Again, the “Truth” of imperialism was *not* determined in relation to “the three kinds of social practice” (Mao, 1963) to which a materialist would usually afford epistemic authority. This was a dogmatic imposition *at the discursive level* that then shaped the direction of practice, not the outcome of a practical anti-colonial struggle that then shaped the direction of theory.

torture of Negroes in South America is noisy, colorful, and meaningless. *Above all it is 'non-Marxist' [emphasis added]*" (as cited in LeBlanc, 2015, p. xviii).

**2) The uprooting of Marxist analysis from its grounding premises, the formalization of a scientificity that can no longer be identified with Marx's foundational discursive practice.**

Although Marxists have since explained the modifications of Marxism-Leninism with reference to changing material conditions necessitating new forms of ideological struggle, in the case of the Leninist schematization this easy explanation subjugates the diverse discursive contestations occurring within the Second International concerning how imperialism was to be defined. These contestations were *not* settled according to a vindication of the theory by a concrete investigation of material conditions,<sup>53</sup> as evidenced in part by its persistent reliance on bourgeois facts, but rather by the formalization of a certain definition of imperialism, a definition of imperialism that grounded its "truthfulness" in its own constitution, taking itself as its own starting point at the same time its definition constituted those defining it as its "experts." The uprooting of what was to become known as Marxist political economy from the basic premises of Marx's political economy can be seen in the advancement of a Eurocentric stagism, as well as the frankly opportunistic equation of racialized material relations (colonialism, slavery, etc.) with the superstructural political domination of "national oppression," an equation which is especially problematic in relation to Lenin's descriptions of the experiences of Russian serfs and white-settler Americans.

**3) The extrication of race from place, an extrication of the historical processes of racialization from the historico-geographical development of colonial-capitalism.**

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<sup>53</sup> That is to say, the "rational" was not proved to be "real" through practice, as is often claimed. This is certainly a departure from the epistemological revolution initiated by Marx.

This is an extrication precluding any proper understanding of racialized relations to place, that is to say, precisely those relations that define Indigeneity in colonial contexts, that define the specific relationship between the imperial metropole and the colonized periphery. This extrication is accomplished with the formal, abstract explanation of the role of colonial expansion in the expanded reproduction of capital. Related to the second feature, the uprooting of Marxist political economy from its grounding premises, this extrication involves an ahistorical decoupling of formal economic laws from the historico-geographical content of those laws.

All three of these processes intersect and reinforce each other at various points. As Chapter Three will explore further in relation to the contemporaneous founding of Marxist feminism, these conclusions highlight the ways in which white supremacist structures and discourses have historically functioned to erase racialized relations of domination from the ideological imaginary, treating the experiences of the white European as the neutral, “scientific” referent, as well as the ways in which the force of this erasure shapes in turn how resistance to that domination is conceptualized, expressed and practiced.

### The Red Roots of Marxist Feminism

Yet feminists too often believe that no one has ever experienced the kind of society that empowered women and made that empowerment the basis of its rules of civilization. The price the feminist community must pay because it is not aware of the recent presence of gynarchical societies on this continent is unnecessary confusion, division, and much lost time. (Allen, 1986)

In her text “Who Is Your Mother? Red Roots of White Feminism,” Indigenous feminist Paula Gunn Allen (1986) argues for a politics of memory oriented toward a recognition of the historical contributions of Indigenous political thought to emancipatory political movements, and specifically to contemporary feminism. This argument is put succinctly in her claim that “the root of oppression is loss of memory,” and, insofar as this claim is not understood in a strictly idealist sense,<sup>54</sup> such a project certainly aligns with the political and methodological commitments of the present attempt to liberate the subjugated knowledge of an anti-colonial Marx. As other scholars of Marxist feminism have noted, the “selective memory of official histories” (Lokaneeta, 2001, p. 1405), combined with a relative lack of capability with regard to “handing down memory” (Luxton, 2014, p. 137), has entailed a vicious cycle of reinventing the wheel within Marxist feminism, and, within feminism more broadly, a great deal of unnecessary division wherever histories of theoretical and practical solidarity are not adequately appreciated. This effect of power/knowledge relations under a colonial-capitalist mode of knowledge production makes it relevant in the context of this project to examine the modifications made to the discursive practice of Marxist feminism. Following the previous chapter’s attempt to conceptualize the discursive modifications belonging to what we have called a *deraceinated*

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<sup>54</sup> Although there lacks a certain rigor and specification in Allen’s broad stroke survey, it should certainly *not* be understood in this sense. As Coulthard (2013) reminds us, the standard Marxist division between base and superstructure does not always easily map onto Indigenous worldviews: “...the identity-related claims of Indigenous peoples for recognition are always bound up with demands for a more equitable distribution of land, political power, and economic resources...” (p. 52)

Marxism, this chapter will critically re-examine the early history of Marxist feminist theorizing, a history that, as Allen (1986) correctly observes, owes much to Marx's studies of Indigenous societies. This examination will determine how, and to what extent, Marxist feminism was affected by the same processes of *deraceination* that characterized the modifications made by the Leninist schematization of imperialism established in the last chapter.

This chapter will thus begin with an exposition of the importance of Indigenous kinship systems for the consolidation of a Marxist account of the family, specifically as it was articulated—via Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* (see: Krader, 1974)—by Friedrich Engels (1986) in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* and August Bebel (1910) in *Woman and Socialism*. The chapter will then assess the extent to which Marxist feminism departed from the theoretical commitments of these original insights by critically revisiting the work of Alexandra Kollontai, V.I. Lenin and Clara Zetkin in their attempts to schematize an answer to the so-called “woman question”<sup>55</sup> in the practical struggle for proletarian revolution at the European metropole. Finally, I will briefly examine the theoretical connections, or lack thereof, made by Marxist feminism between “the national question” and “the woman question.”

## I. Rediscovery of a Rediscovery

The *rediscovery* of the primitive matriarchal gens as the earlier stage of the patriarchal gens of civilized peoples has the same importance for anthropology as Darwin's theory of evolution has for biology and Marx's theory of surplus value for political economy. [emphasis added] (Engels, 1986, p. 48)

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<sup>55</sup> A brief word on the dated terminology of early Marxist feminism is needed here at the outset. In attempting to ask and answer “the woman question,” the problematics with which Marxist feminism was concerned at the time—those of “the family,” “women's work,” “sexual relations,” the institution of marriage, sex work, and so on—generally *accepted* a biological determinism that equated one's gender with one's sex. Despite the many critiques of the prevailing ideological constructions of femininity, conceptions of cis/heteronormativity that historical-materialists would engage today (see: Mayer, 2015) were then largely absent from discussions of “gender relations under capitalism.” This shortcoming should be kept in mind throughout, and should circumscribe the claims made here concerning how one should understand such objects as “gender,” “sex,” and “the family” in the discourse of Marxist feminists at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Why is the word “rediscovery” important here? It is important because it signals, despite the dated (read: racist) use of the terminology of “primitive” and “civilized,” that Engels’ project in *The Origin* was itself a kind of genealogical liberation of a subjugated knowledge, in both the Foucauldian and literal sense. Not only did Engels (1986) see himself as combating a “conspiracy of silence” (p. 49) in publishing Marx’s ethnological researches (see: Krader, 1974), but Morgan’s project itself sought to liberate a subjugated knowledge of historical family forms by a kind of diachronic linguistic analysis which found that Indigenous “systems of consanguinity” proved the historical existence of matrilineal, indeed even *matriarchal*, societies. We are tempted to go so far as to say that this really was a quite radical decentring of European historical experience in the definition of the discursive object “family”:

Before the beginning of the [1860s], one cannot speak of a history of the family... The patriarchal form of the family, which was there described in greater detail than anywhere else, was not only assumed without question to be the oldest form, but it was also identified... with the bourgeois family of today, as if the family had really experienced no historical development at all. (Engels, 1986, p. 39)

This decentring was possible precisely because it was *Indigenous* societies offering Marxism radical alternatives to heteropatriarchal gender relations under capitalism, but also because the project of Engels (*via* Marx) was explicitly to incorporate these matrilineal and matriarchal examples as pivotal data in the articulation of a new, broader theory of the historical development of the family. By grounding his materialist history of the family in the significance of Indigenous social formations, Engels (1986) was working against an anthropological field that could *register* the existence non-monogamous and matrilineal family forms, but could not *integrate* these data into a general historical trajectory that identified its specific mechanisms and laws of motion:

It is true that in addition to the monogamous [European] form of the family, two other forms were known to exist... but these forms could not be arranged in any historical

order and merely appeared side-by-side without any connection... [T]hese facts [concerning the existence of matrilineal kinship systems] were indeed known and fresh instances of them were continually being collected. But nobody knew what to do with them, and even as late as E.B. Tylor's *Researches into the Early History of Mankind, etc.* (1865) they are listed as mere "curious customs"... (p. 39)

The explicit inclusion of Indigenous experience into this general historical trajectory militated against the stereotypical construction of Indigenous peoples as being somehow "outside" history, and is all the more notable when we remember that this dissent occurred at the same time that the "science" of anthropology was inextricably, even *existentially*, bound to the justification and success of the colonial-capitalist project: "Of all the modern social sciences, anthropology is the one historically most closely tied to colonialism..." (Said, p. 152).<sup>56</sup>

Although not the first Marxist treatise to provide an account of gender from a historical-materialist perspective, Engels' (1886) *The Origin* is perhaps the most significant early text of Marxist feminism for its attempt to establish scientifically the basis of patriarchal material relations under capitalism, and to show that the prevailing gendered division of labour—indeed, the gendered nature of women's domination—is not a universal, transhistorical fact, but is rather historically *variable* and subject to changes according to the historically-specific dialectical relation between the forces of production and the relations of production in a particular time and place.<sup>57</sup> While Marxist feminists like Lise Vogel (1983) and Michèle Barrett (1986) have surveyed the many subsequent empirical refutations of Morgan's book, it is a not insignificant discursive fact that, at the time of its publication, the field of anthropology had attempted to "kill [Morgan's] book by silence" as Morgan "had committed a kind of sacrilege in dissolving all

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<sup>56</sup> See also: Deloria, 1988, p. 78; and Smith, 2012, p. 70.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Marx (1970) on racialized relations of production: "A Negro is a Negro. He only becomes a slave in certain relations." (p. 28)

[their] hallowed dogmas into thin air” (Engels, 1986, p. 49).<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, despite the specific factual grievances described by these scholars, the main theoretical thrust of *The Origin* concerning the widespread fact of the matrilineal family form among Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island has been vindicated, and remains widely recognized as both the defining feature of many Indigenous political systems, as well as a primary site around which to organize resistance against colonial-capitalist dispossession (see: Sioui, 1992; Alfred, 2009; Simpson, 2014).

We must likewise be careful not to treat these critical anthropological studies of Marx and Engels as idiosyncratic curiosities; on the contrary, it should be understood as a significant discursive fact that Marx and Engels attempted a return to these disqualified “naïve” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 82) knowledges in founding historical-materialism, a fact indicating how exactly Marx and Engels were trying to come to theorize and critique exploitative relations of production and reproduction (at least in part *ethno*-logically), what data they found relevant, and so on. One indispensable standard by which to judge any subsequent modifications made to the Marxist analysis of gender relations is therefore the extent to which such an analysis subjugated this original Indigenous basis of Marxist feminist claims concerning the historical specificity of gender oppression under capitalism. As George Ciccariello-Maher (2017) notes in his book *Decolonizing Dialectics*, this genealogical method “is doubled in terms of the very *content* that renders it effective” (p.16); that is to say, by judging the subjugation of a knowledge according to such a standard, one is necessarily confronted by the presence—or the *present-absence*<sup>59</sup>—of an Indigenous knowledge which “[poses] a challenge to prevailing logics and practices of unity” (p. 16), logics and practices that attempt to deny rich histories of discursive contestation by

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<sup>58</sup> Engels (1986) notably, and probably correctly, explains this hostility with reference to Morgan’s radical critique of private property relations under capitalism. (p. 49-50)

<sup>59</sup> That is to say, tying a genealogical critique of Marxist feminism to this founding act is to be forced to be confront the significance of both the presence and absence of this founding act in Marxist feminist discursive practice.

portraying a singular and undifferentiated Marxism as either: a) wholly and irredeemably Eurocentric; or b) too “class-reductionist” to be of use to feminist emancipatory projects.<sup>60</sup>

### **i. Bebel’s *Woman and Socialism***

According to Vogel (1983), Engels had written *The Origin* likely in an attempt to correct the utopian socialism characterizing the first major work of Marxist feminism (p. 75): Bebel’s (1910) *Woman and Socialism*. As Vogel (1983) notes, this intervention seems to have been relatively successful, as Bebel would in the ninth edition of *Woman and Socialism* incorporate Engels’ conclusions from *The Origin*, and reverse his position that the nature of gendered oppression had historically remained more-or-less the same, positing instead with Engels that gender relations were historically variable according to specific historical-material conditions (p. 98-99). This is important; as Lopes & Roth (1993) remind us, although *The Origin* was a more scholarly text, it was Bebel “more than anyone [who] provided the socialist movement with its theory of gender” (p. 67). As Zetkin (in Draper & Lipow, 1976) would later say:

[*Woman and Socialism*] must be judged by the time at which it appeared. And it was then more than a book, it was an event, a deed... For the first time, in its pages it was made clear to the comrades what connection the women's question had with the development of society. For the first time, from this book issued the watchword: We can conquer the future only if we win the women as co-fighters. (p. 197)

Undoubtedly, part of this momentous influence was due to the fact that *Woman and Socialism* (1910) included one of the first explicit Marxist definitions of “the woman question,” viz.:

The woman question deals with the position that woman should hold in our social organism, and seeks to determine how she can best develop her powers and her abilities, in order to become a useful member of human society, endowed with equal rights and serving society according to her best capacity...

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Lopes & Roth (1993): “Narratives of the first decades of interaction between Marxism and feminism present a fairly uncluttered and incremental trajectory. Marxism, it is claimed, consistently subordinated feminism to its own emphasis on class and, consequently, gender remained a side-issue for left-wing politics. This history has been repeated so often that original sources no longer need to be cited in support. As a result, it is almost always read negatively; that is, it is read as a means to confirm the limited usefulness of Marxism for the understanding of gender.” (p. 66)

Bebel (1910) goes on to declare that the solution of the woman question “is identical with the solution of the social question.”<sup>61</sup> In her pamphlet popularizing Bebel’s book, Eleanor Marx-Aveling (1886) summarizes the question in the following way: “...the question is one of economics. The position of women rests, as everything in our complex modern society rests, on an economic basis... *The woman question is one of the organisation of society as a whole* [emphasis added].” What is significant about these formulations? Insofar as one’s understanding of class is informed by a schematic, economistic reading of Marx—one that eschews theorizing the racialization of material relations and describes national oppression in terms of superstructural phenomena—one’s approach to the relation between class and the political economy of gender will necessarily be similarly superficial. Indeed, the subordination of “the woman question” to class, homogeneously understood, is already present in the statement “the woman question is only one phase of the general social question” (Bebel, 1910). As will be explored below, this is already a departure from Engels, who very explicitly attempts to theorize how material relations are historically gendered, as well as the attendant practical implications for revolutionizing the material basis of patriarchal oppression.

## II. Answers to “the Woman Question”

At the moment other problems are more urgent than the marriage forms of Maoris...  
(Lenin, as quoted in Zetkin, 1937, p. 8-9)

Although at first Marxist feminists like Zetkin rather mechanically took up the positions of Bebel (Lopes & Roth, 1993, p. 68),<sup>62</sup> we can track the moments in which certain

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<sup>61</sup> Put another way, the (class) question of socialism.

<sup>62</sup> As Lopes & Roth (1993) elaborate in their article “Marxism’s Feminism: Bebel and Zetkin in Opposition,” Zetkin’s thought concerning the theory and practice of Marxist feminism shifted markedly away from Bebel in the 1890s, and came to identify rather simplistically the liberation of women with the liberation of the proletariat; at the same time, she oriented Marxist feminism toward the protection and preservation of women’s domestic role: “In 1896 she confessed that her earlier statements on the family had claimed with ‘one-sided sharpness’ that the family had no future because it was being undermined by the development of capitalism. Instead . . . from 1896 onwards

communistological interventions modified Marxist approaches to “the woman question.” As can be seen in Lenin’s dismissal of “the marriage forms of Maoris,” a primary modification effected in such interventions was the evacuation of Indigeneity from any discussion of “the woman question.” In her book *Lenin on the Woman Question*, for example, Zetkin (1937) records a conversation wherein Lenin criticizes her for the agitational work conducted among women in Germany. In this criticism, Lenin specifically addresses the fact that “questions of sex and marriage are the main subjects in the reading and discussion evenings of women comrades” (p. 6) and goes on to declare: “And what is the result of this futile, *un-Marxist* dealing with the question? That questions of sex and marriage are understood not as part of the large social question? No, worse! The great social question appears as an adjunct, a part, of sexual problems [emphasis added]” (Lenin, as cited in Zetkin, 1937, p. 8). As in the previous chapter, we can see here a Leninist schematization of the “Truth” of Marxism concerning the “woman question.” For Lenin (in Zetkin, 1937), feminist consciousness-raising centred around issues of loosening sexual mores and the historical study of the family was “bourgeois” (p. 7), and was to be subordinated to the practical activities of building dual power and overthrowing the bourgeois state, namely: the mobilization of proletarian women and the organization of soviets (p. 9). In a certain sense, Lenin was correct in his assessment of the nature of attempting to change sexual and family relations under capitalism without the state power necessary to alter fundamentally the property relations that provide the heteronormative nuclear family unit with its specific mode

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she fully accepted the validity of the family as an institution” (Evans, as cited in Lopes & Roth, 1993, p. 75, n. 16). In our opinion, the argument of Lopes & Roth papers over the contradictions present in Zetkin’s thought a little too easily—it is, for example, difficult to argue successfully that Zetkin came to deny *tout court* the specificity of *women’s* oppression under capitalism and the need for special forms of agitation and organization—but it is certainly true that Zetkin (1984) would warn against “[alienating] the proletarian woman from her duties as mother and wife” (p. 81), and that positing such a strategic goal of Marxist feminism departs significantly from previous perspectives that understood that the duties of wife and mother are historically contingent upon a specific mode of production.

of gendered exploitation. As Angela Davis (1981) notes, returning to Engels: “While most women would joyously hail the advent of the ‘househusband,’ the desexualisation of domestic labor would not really alter the oppressive nature of the work itself.” What is really needed to liberate the proletariat from domestic labour is rather the development of co-operative domestic labour and then, ideally, *industrialized* domestic labour. That said, the fact that these theoretical commitments of an incipient Marxist feminism were articulated such that they were subsumed under the practical, strategic goals of the proletarian movement at the European metropole necessarily raises questions about what was lost in such formulations, especially since “the practical” always has its own particular historical definition.

## ii. Clara Zetkin

In Lenin’s above criticism, for example, it never occurs to him that issues of sexuality and the family could ever be more than an agitational resources at the *superstructural* level of ideological critique, and, moreover, it would appear that it does not occur to Zetkin either. When challenged as to the purpose of discussing “questions of sex and marriage” (Lenin, in Zetkin, 1937, p. 6), Zetkin (1937) responds with the following:

Forms of marriage and of the family, in their historical development and dependence upon economic life, are calculated to destroy the superstition existing in the minds of working women concerning the eternal character of bourgeois society. A critical, historical attitude to those problems must lead to a ruthless examination of bourgeois society, to a disclosure of its real nature and effects... [E]very real Marxist analysis of any important section of *the ideological superstructure of society*... must lead to an analysis of bourgeois society and of its property basis... [emphasis added] (p. 7-8)

As Susan Himmelweit (1983) notes, this approach to the family was characteristic of Marxist feminist approaches to the family at the time (p. 135).<sup>63</sup> What is notable about this attempt at a

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<sup>63</sup> Himmelweit (1983): “...domestic labour became a recognized category of Marxist thought with the modern feminist movement... as Marxist feminists sought the material basis of women’s oppression under capitalism. Previous Marxist writings on women had tended to locate the economic oppression of women purely in their disadvantaged position in the labour market, which followed from their main responsibilities in the home, *while the*

historical-materialist formulation concerning what a “practical” approach to the “woman question” would be is the direction of the anticipated movement: *from* ideological critique *to* material transformation. There is no discussion of building revolutionary dual power through, for example, the autonomous collectivization of domestic labour, nor is there a meaningful consideration of the ways in which such organizing at the material level would itself instill in women a revolutionary consciousness.<sup>64</sup> Put another way, we can ask why it was at the time *unintelligible* within the discursive practice of Marxist feminism to suggest the unionization of “housewives,” so-called. This curious Marxist definition of the “practical” is likely related to the fact that, at the time, women’s unpaid domestic labour was not considered “productive” (see: Lenin, 1965; Luxemburg, 1971; Zetkin, 1984, p. 46). As Zetkin (1984) would put it: “so long as... ancient ways of production predominated, so long were women economically productive” (p. 46). While there has been a great deal of debate concerning whether or not unpaid domestic labour—such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and so on—is productive or unproductive (see: Landy, 1943; Himmelweit, 1983; Vogel, 1983), what is significant here is that there are certainly possible readings of Marx that allow for understandings of domestic labour as productive from the point of view of the capitalist,<sup>65</sup> insofar as that domestic labour increases rates of exploitation outside the home by depreciating the necessary variable capital inputs (wages), and, *ceteris paribus*, increases rates of profit by embodying a greater percentage of productive capital in a greater amount of finished commodities. These readings emphasizing the mediation of the productivity of domestic labour were, however, foreclosed by early Marxist feminist theory, and

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*[family] itself was seen as a superstructural institution whose effects were primarily ideological.* [emphasis added]” (p. 135)

<sup>64</sup> As such, it would appear as though Marx’s 11th thesis on Feuerbach was effectively abandoned when it came to “the woman question.”

<sup>65</sup> And indeed, this is the only perspective that matters under capitalism. The labour of a man working in the factory is by definition unproductive *for him*: he himself accrues no surplus value, owns no finished products, and valorizes no capital *for himself*. This is precisely the nature of capitalist exploitation.

the “unproductiveness” of gendered domestic labour was dogmatically established as fact. What this meant for the theorization of Marxist feminist practice was essentially that the predominant form of women’s labour (domestic labour) wasn’t considered a basic, material condition to revolutionize in the process of proletarian organization. The precondition for women’s emancipation in the proletarian revolution became joining “productive” labour outside the home, and the following strategic sequence was established: 1) encourage women through ideological agitation to join the labour-market outside the home, often in concert with bourgeois struggles for women’s suffrage; 2) overthrow the bourgeois state with the combined power of the undifferentiated masses of “productive” labourers; 3) with the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, abolish old misogynist legislation and institute new, more egalitarian legislation; 4) emancipate women from gendered labour relations by socializing housework.<sup>66</sup> What is immediately obvious in this sequencing is that it is not sufficiently problematized how exactly women are meant to join the ranks of the “productive” labourers in Step 1 so long as Step 4 has to wait until after the seizure of state power to be accomplished, that is to say, so long as women are still expected to perform domestic labour that has not yet been socialized.<sup>67</sup> There are thus very real grounds for critiques of early Marxist feminism as subordinating “the woman question” to an undifferentiated class analysis that advocated waiting until “after the revolution” to deal with the problem of women’s material liberation.

Importantly, this position departs from Engels’ *The Origin* in significant ways. Although Engels (1986) similarly declares that “the first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring

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<sup>66</sup> This sequence is articulated most clearly in Lenin’s (1965) “The Tasks of the Working Women’s Movement in the Soviet Republic.”

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Engels (1986): “But [large-scale industry] was opened to her in such a manner that, if she carries out her duties in the private service of her family, she remains excluded from public production and unable to earn; and if she wants to take part in public production and earn independently, she cannot carry out family duties” (p. 104-105).

the whole female sex back into public industry” he makes sure, at the same time, to emphasize that this condition itself requires the re-socialization of domestic labour: “this in turn demands that the [“domestic slavery”] characteristic of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society be abolished” (p. 105). This is a conclusion concerning *the material basis of women’s gendered oppression*, one that he draws from his *historical* research examining Indigenous societies:

In the old communistic household, which comprised many couples and their children, the task entrusted to the women of managing a household was as much a public, a socially necessary industry, as the procuring of food by the men. With the patriarchal family and still more with the single monogamous family, a change came. Household management lost its public character. It no longer concerned society. It became a private service; the wife became the head servant, excluded from all participation in social production. (p. 104)

This is further supported by a passage in which Engels, describing Iroquoian society, states that “the communistic household...is the material foundation of the supremacy of women” (p. 79). Allen (1986) is therefore correct when she notes that Morgan’s “account of matriarchal culture...heavily influenced Marx and the development of communism, particularly lending it the idea of the liberation of women from patriarchal dominance.” Indeed, for Engels, reading Marx’s notebooks not only indicated the *possibility* of the liberation of women, *but also provided practical insights into the necessary material basis of that liberation*. Unfortunately, these insights were subjugated so long as “the marriage forms of Maoris” were dismissed as irrelevant, with consideration of the historical experiences of Indigenous peoples once again considered “un-Marxist.”<sup>68</sup> What we can observe here is not so much an ideological de-racialization in the way we’ve been describing it in relation to the evacuation of race from the purview of

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<sup>68</sup> Recall Lenin’s marginal notes in Luxemburg’s *The Accumulation of Capital*: “The description of the torture of Negroes in South America is noisy, colorful, and meaningless. *Above all it is ‘non-Marxist’* [emphasis added]” (as cited in LeBlanc, 2015, p. xviii)

economics, but rather simply a complete *erasure* of the historical experiences of Indigenous peoples. We can conclude therefore that it is not merely the case that gender was subordinated to class in the Marxist tradition after Marx, but that the racialized *content* originally structuring approaches to “the woman question” was effaced. It is the subjugation of these historical counterexamples that impacted Marxist feminism’s ability to articulate a more radical challenge to gendered relations of production under capitalism, and damaged the ability of Marxist feminism to theorize gender under capitalism in the present, as well as under communism in the future.

## ii. Alexandra Kollontai

That said, there are still useful data to be analyzed by examining the mixed results of the actual implementation of the Leninist approach to “the woman question” in practice, as can be seen in the Soviet Union’s historical experimentation with socializing domestic labour after the October Revolution. This was a process with which Kollontai (1971) was intimately familiar as the People’s Commissar of Social Welfare (p. 35). Even after resigning her position, Kollontai was still very much involved in organizing proletarian women:

...the foundation was laid for methodical work in the whole country for the liberation of the women of the working and the peasant classes... The question was now one of drawing women into the people’s kitchens and of educating them to devote their energies to children’s homes and day-cares centers, the school system, household reforms... The main thrust of all this activity was to implement, in fact, equal rights for women as a labor unit in the national economy and as a citizen in the political sphere... (p. 41)

These sorts of activities drew intense opposition from Church officials, who slanderously accused her of attempting to bring about the “nationalization of women” (p. 38). It was not only the Church who opposed Kollontai’s proposed reforms, however. After publishing her “thesis on the new morality,” (Kollontai, 1971, p. 43) she was bitterly attacked by other Party members.

According to Jinee Lokaneeta (2001), it was likely “in Kollontai’s unorthodox writings on the

realm of the personal that one can locate the cause of her political downfall and the amnesia towards her writings on the part of the official record keepers of Soviet history” (p. 1412).

What did these “unorthodox writings” espouse? Principally, Kollontai’s (1977b) tract “Theses on Communist Morality in the Sphere of Marital Relations” argues that it is a function of a communist economy to do away with the material basis of the family, to abolish its economic purpose. This abolition of the family entails a consideration of what kinds of sexual relations are beneficial to a collective of workers: since the law no longer needs to secure a specific kind of family form in the interests of private property—through the institution of marriage, distinctions between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” children, and so on—it is no longer law, but rather the new “communist Morality” that should govern sexual relationships, according to Kollontai. This communist morality is defined by a rejection of “the twin pillars of bourgeois morality”: hypocrisy; and gendered double standards concerning sexual relations. According to Lokaneeta (2001), the need for a new communist morality after the revolution is indicative of an appreciation on Kollontai’s part of the need for sustained ideological struggle even after the material basis of the family is eradicated with the collectivization of domestic labour and the abolition of private property:

Kollontai realises that mere economic independence will not itself lead to the emancipation of women. In fact there is a recognition of the autonomy that patriarchal ideas and practices have vis-a-vis the economic structures of society... In other words, although economic independence is a primary need it would only lead to a weakening of patriarchal ideas and not their elimination. (Lokaneeta, 2001, p. 1411)

This position makes perfect sense for someone who has read Engels,<sup>69</sup> since Morgan’s original insight was based on the observation of the enduring presence of ideological remnants from older

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<sup>69</sup> This is something that was likely, given that Kollontai (1977b) cites *The Origin* in her “Theses.” Indeed, the first three paragraphs of the “Theses” read like an exhaustive summary of Engels on the historical development of the family.

family forms even after the material basis of those older family forms had disappeared and the economic function of the family had changed.

If Lokaneeta's (2001) thesis is correct—that this aspect of Kollontai's theorizing on “the woman question” caused her to be “ignored by the Socialist revolutionary tradition and more specifically by Soviet history” (p. 1405)<sup>70</sup>—this subjugation is again legitimate grounds for suspecting an economist, class reductionist modification to Marxist discourse after Marx. It is of course not only domestic labour that provides the material basis of the family, the economic foundation of the “production and reproduction of everyday life” (Engels, 1986, p.35); this foundation is also very much bound up in the literal, physical reproduction of labour-power, in the social organization of pregnancy and childbirth. Insofar as Marxist discursive practices attempted to subjugate Kollontai's problematizing of sexuality under relations of socialized domestic labour, we can say that, in the realm of gendered relations of production, Marxist analysis was again uprooted from its grounding premises. To argue, as the Soviet bureaucrat Polina Vinogradskaya did, that “Marxism and sex are mutually exclusive” (Holt, as cited in Lokaneeta, 2001, p. 1412) is not only an unmistakable attempt to schematize and institute the “Truth” of Marxism concerning sexuality, it is also to depart from several key observations of Engels (1986), namely those concerning the tripartite historical coincidence of “the communistic household” (p. 78-79), more fluid forms of sexual relations, and the superstructural acceptance of gender equality (p. 129).<sup>71</sup> Again, we can conclude that the subjugation of these historical

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<sup>70</sup> Lokaneeta (2001) provides two citational “illustrations” to support this argument: “Lenin's writings on women titled *On the Emancipation of Women* (1965) seem to be oblivious to the very existence of Alexandra Kollontai let alone responding to the questions raised by her. The life and writings of Kollontai are restricted to a thin volume of *Selected Speeches and Articles of Kollontai* published by Progress Publishers, Moscow (1984). The publishers are indeed 'selective' as they attempt to present a completely abridged and uncontroversial picture of Kollontai that overlooks all issues of dissension from the official party history.” (p. 1405)

<sup>71</sup> This matrix can schematically be broken down into: 1) relations of production, defined by collective ownership and the “communistic household”; 2) relations of reproduction, defined by matrilineality and relatively easy

counterexamples provided by Indigenous peoples impacted the ability of Marxist feminism to offer radical alternatives to gendered relations of production under capitalism.

### III. “The Woman Question” and “The National Question”

We should also note here that there is little to no evidence that any substantive attempt was made by Marxist political economy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to articulate the “woman question” against the “national question.” These two problematics for Marxism remained almost completely separated in the process of their historical-materialist theorization, and the imposition of patriarchal relations of domination on Indigenous societies is rarely, if ever, identified as a basic material mechanism of national oppression. As we have seen in the last chapter, Lenin (1973b) would identify the “economic foundation of the national movements” as “*politically* united territories whose population speaks a single *language*” (p. 8), largely ignoring the fact that the imposition of gendered material relations—a specific division of labour, and so on—was often a primary mechanism of colonialism, and could therefore serve as the basis for national liberation struggles.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, although Zetkin certainly realized the impacts of the so-called “imperialist war” of 1914-1918 on proletarian women at the imperialist metropole (see: Zetkin, 1984, p. 114), she nonetheless straightforwardly tied the exploitative nature of gendered relations of production under capitalism to the given level of the development of the forces of production. Like Lenin, through the Eurocentric application of a content-less *economic* principal, she consistently failed to problematize whether or not the historical-material development of the forces of production at the colonized periphery is at all commensurable with development at the imperialist metropole. This is significant from the perspective of an anti-colonial critique of

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processes of divorce; 3) the ideological superstructure, defined by a generalized respect for women and vested political power.

<sup>72</sup> As, for example, in the Vietnamese struggle for decolonization (Cf. Ho Chi Minh, 1922), during which the gendered oppression specific to French, and then American, colonization was a major agitational resource.

Marxist discursive practices when we remember that for many Indigenous feminists the recognition of pre-contact matriarchal and matrilineal societies entails a specific strategic orientation toward *material* struggles against both colonial-capitalism and the state that secures colonial-capitalist property rights. For these feminists, this recognition acts as a kind of *sine qua non* for any dialogue with white-settler feminist theorizing, given that the position entails a radically different strategic programme for realizing the liberation of Indigenous women, one that is not at all served by the theoretical premise that the oppression of women is historically and geographically universal (see: Allen, 1986; Trask, 1996; and Smith, 2012, p. 153). As Butler (2007) explains, such a universalization is not only problematic because of its implications for the prospects of feminist solidarity, but also because it often reinscribes one of the primary tenets of colonial-capitalist ideology, namely the supposed cultural inferiority of Indigenous peoples (p. 5).<sup>73</sup>

It is, however, interesting to examine where exactly we *can* find some theoretical gestures toward an appreciation of the imbrication of colonial-capitalism and capitalist-patriarchy. The locations of these hints are significant, but not especially surprising given the picture we have already tried to sketch in the preceding chapters. E.G. Wakefield (2001), for example, certainly understood the necessity of “religious women” (p. 49) in the colonies. This was not considered a necessity by virtue of any need for proselytization, but rather by virtue of the need to implant in the colonies gendered material relations conducive to the colonial-capitalist project (p. 49). Although Marx (1990) did not explicitly take up this insight of Wakefield’s in *Capital*, it certainly aligns with Marx’s central thesis in “The Modern Theory of

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Vron Ware (2015): “An increased awareness of feminism and the different forms of women’s subordination at home meant that gender relations in other countries were viewed more critically by many observers. Hindu women were increasingly portrayed by feminists as victims of barbaric cultural customs from which they needed to escape.” (p. 129)

Colonisation,” namely that colonization requires more than the transportation of capital and labour-power; above all, colonization requires the imposition of capitalist relations of production through the violence of original accumulation and the “struggle against the natural economy” (Luxemburg, 2015a). That said, we *do* know that Marx had *some* appreciation of the gendered nature of this imposition, as it can later be seen explicitly in his *Ethnological Notebooks* where he notes that Christian missionaries thought the system of succession among the Delawares disowned the son unfairly (Marx, in Krader, 1974, p. 180), as well as attributing the fact that so many Algonquian peoples had recently switched from matrilineal to patrilineal descent to the influence of “American [and] missionary influence” (Marx, in Krader, 1974, p. 176).<sup>74</sup> Moreover, while Marx acknowledges that the introduction of machinery in large-scale industry throws women onto the labour-market in competition with men, and links this event with the creation of a reserve army of labour forced to emigrate (that is, to colonize), nowhere in the history of early Marxist feminism is there made this connection between the introduction of women into the capitalist workplace—considered a pressing exigency for proletarian revolution by Zetkin and Kollontai—and the effects that such an introduction would have on the colonization of Indigenous lands at the periphery. This is an omission of considerable consequence, since, as Vron Ware (2015) has noted in her classic text *Beyond the Pale*, “[o]ne of the most immediate ways in which women... were connected to the expansion of the Empire was through emigration and the opportunities it provided for female independence and employment” (126). This is not necessarily to say that Marxist feminism should have *discouraged* women from

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<sup>74</sup> In the original German: “Sonderbar dass so many tribes of this stock changed female (to) male line of descent, da, wenn entdeckt, property bei ihnen nur slightly über germinating stage. Whschlich all dies recent under American u. missionary influence” (Marx, in Krader, 1974, p. 176); and “Evidence, dass noch 1 840 descent in the female line with respect to the Sachem. 3) American u. missionary influence; d. Missionaries, schien Erbfolge die d. Sohn enterbte, ungerecht” (Marx, in Krader, 1974, p. 180).

joining the labour-market, but rather to signal that it was nowhere problematized what effects this would have on Indigenous women at the colonized periphery, nor was it problematized whether this option would even be available for Indigenous women in settler-colonial contexts where the development of the forces of production is necessarily impeded by the nature of the macro-level value relations structuring forms of interdependence between metropole and periphery (as discussed in relation to Luxemburg in the previous chapter). It is here where we can see that the subjugation of the Indigenous origins of Marxist feminism not only impacted the ability of Marxist feminism to theorize gender, *but race and colonialism as well*.

#### **IV. *Deraceinated* Marxist Feminism**

Given the above exposition, there are certainly grounds for venturing the conclusion that Marxist feminism also underwent a historical *deraceination*, or, alternatively, underwent *the same* historical *deraceination* as was operative in the self-conscious shift from the object “colonialism” to the object “imperialism.” That is to say, perhaps what we have been trying to describe was a more generalized modification than it originally seemed, a modification that affected Marxist discursive practice in similar ways across different discursive sites, objects, authorities, etc. As we have attempted to define it here, this *deraceination* includes the following discursive modifications:

- 1) **The processes of an ideological de-racialization.** These processes are grounded in an articulation of a strategic politics geared toward proletarian struggle against the oppression of women at the European metropole. Within Marxist feminism, this de-racialization did not occur as explicitly as elaborated in the previous chapter with the schematization of “imperialism,” that is to say, by arguing for the equation of race and nation, etc. This de-racialization rather consisted of a thorough *erasure* of the Indigenous

origins of the historical-materialist theory of the development of the family. This erasure allowed for formulations of “the woman question” that lacked any attention to the ways in which gendered relations of production were at times also racialized, for the ways in which specific gendered relations of production were *imposed* upon Indigenous peoples as a mechanism of colonialism, and for the ways in which these racialized impositions might affect practical approaches to “the woman question” at the colonized periphery, approaches that were consequently never theorized by Marxist feminism during the period in question.

**2) The uprooting of Marxist analysis from its grounding premises, the formalization of a scientificity that can no longer be identified with Marx’s foundational discursive practice.** This uprooting of Marxist analysis from its grounding premises consisted in an effective abandonment of materialism in the theoretical definition of the praxis appropriate to women’s liberation. This is a praxis defined by a socio-historical effectivity that moves backwards from the superstructural to the basic, from the ideological to the material. Women—and by extension, gender—were effectively considered outside the realm of the material insofar as their labour was understood as “unproductive” under a capitalist mode of production. While this explanation may seem somewhat divergent from the uprooting described in the previous chapter, they share in common a disregard shown to the concrete investigation of material conditions, a disregard that manifests itself in curious definitions of the “material” transformations needed for proletarian revolution (as can be seen in the superstructural and/or ideological definitions of both “the woman question” and “the national question”).

**3) The extrication of race from place, an extrication of the historical processes of racialization from the historico-geographical development of colonial-capitalism.** In the case of Marxist feminism, this extrication proceeded in part by way of adopting the Leninist schematization of imperialism. This is an extrication precluding any proper understanding of racialized relations to place, that is to say, precisely those relations that define Indigeneity in colonial contexts, that define the specific relationship between the imperial metropole and the colonized periphery. This extrication is accomplished with the formal, abstract explanation of the development of the family under capitalism; this is an explanation that ties the development of the family to the development of the forces of production, neglecting the role of macro-level economic processes that require the artificial, violent imposition of patriarchal gender relations as a mechanism of colonial domination. This neglect unfortunately precludes any solidarity between Indigenous feminists and anti-colonial Marxism so long as it remains unaddressed. Related to the second feature, the uprooting of Marxist political economy from its grounding premises, this extrication involves an ahistorical decoupling of formal economic laws from the historical content of those laws.

As we have demonstrated, the subjugation of the basic materiality of race and gender relations in Marxist discourse was accomplished in no small part through the definition of “the woman question.” We can moreover posit that the economistic modifications delimiting analyses of gender and race were not two separate delimitations; rather, the subjugation of the racialization of material relations of production operated through a theorization of gender, while the subjugation of the gendering of material relations of production operated through a theorization of race.

## Conclusion

Do not ignore the strengths of Marxist studies at their best. Do not dismiss the capacity for internal correction and development within the Marxist tradition. Above all, do not underestimate the power of Marxism as a general approach to historical sociology, and certainly not its power as a specific theory of capitalism. Otherwise one may end up with a framework that is “post”-Marxist in the very worst sense of the term—not any kind of advance but a bad retreat or detour. (Vanaik, 2017, p. 8)

We can understand the findings of this project as a concrete demonstration of “the capacity for internal correction and development within the Marxist tradition.” These findings advance two basic claims. The first of these claims is that *a subjugation has historically occurred within Marxist discursive practice*, a subjugation that continues to affect how we understand the basic conceptual foundations of Marxist political economy, as well as their historical development. We have shown that Marxists after Marx—sometimes through no fault of their own, sometimes through opportunistic considerations of political expediency—subjugated possible readings of Marx, readings that importantly would have allowed for more sophisticated historical-materialist analyses of race and colonialism. I have described the contours of this particular subjugation through elaborating what I have called “*deraceination*,” and have revealed the ways that the historical processes of *deraceination* transformed Marxism’s conditions of possibility for thinking and speaking about capitalist accumulation, imperialism, and even the material itself. This subjugation operated both at the level of “erudite” knowledges (Foucault, 1980a, p. 82), as seen in the second chapter’s exposition of an “order imposed by functionalist or systematising thought” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 82), as well as at the level of local, “naïve” knowledges (Foucault, 1980a, p. 82), as seen in the third chapter’s exposition of the Marxist feminism’s theoretical step backward from the integration of Indigenous experience attempted by Engels via Marx.

The second of these claims is that this thesis has provided tools for more productive engagements between the fields of Marxist political economy, critical race studies, and Indigenous political thought by developing a conception of *deraceination* in a historically- and geographically-specific way, that is to say, in such a way that does *not* attempt to provide a definition of the “Truth” of Marxism, and then attempt to establish and critique “the racism of Marxism” *tout court*. Put another way, an appreciation of the *deraceination* of Marxist discourse complicates “the premature rejection of Marx and Marxism by some Indigenous studies scholars” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 8) while at the same time it explains how these rejections are understandable, rooted as they are in both the ideological hegemony of bourgeois knowledge production as well as very real grievances with Leninist conceptions of imperialism largely unintelligible to Indigenous historical experience on Turtle Island. By liberating this subjugated trajectory of Marxist thought, this thesis argues for the necessity of reincorporating an anti-colonial reading of Marx into our understandings of Marxism and Marxist feminism. Such a reincorporation elucidates the many points of unity between Marxism and Indigenous projects of decolonization insofar as it necessarily involves reinserting a memory of the Indigenous foundations of Marxist feminism into the theory and practice of Marxism. A “re-remembering” (Allen, 1986) of the shared positions arising from these historical connections provides new avenues for solidarity between Indigenous decolonization movements and Marxist organizing toward proletarian revolution. These shared political commitments include: opposition to the colonial-capitalist state apparatus; the abolition of private property; the collectivization of the land; a conception of patriarchy antagonistic to liberal feminisms; and substantive self-determination rejecting the cant of reformist parliamentarianism; among others. Furthermore, the clarification of these shared political commitments breaks down the perception of “Indigenous”

and “Marxist” as hostile, mutually-exclusive categories, challenging the marginalization and erasure of rich histories of Indigenous communist thought.

While the main thrust of this project’s critique was aimed at the discursive possibilities open to Marxist feminists, and not Marxist feminist theory itself, a brief contemplation of how to open up this discussion of the utility of *deraceination* for Marxist feminism is appropriate. It would, for example, be a compelling undertaking to analyze subsequent classics of historical-materialist feminism in relation to the subjugations described here, especially since those classics of the 1960s and 70s so often attempted to synthesize Marxist feminism and radical feminism by explicitly grounding the universal oppression of women in Marxist political economy. Such statements from Shulamith Firestone (1970) describing racism as “sexism of the family of man” (p. 103), or Sheila Rowbotham’s (1973) description of ideological gender socialization and capitalist market incursions into family life as analogous with imperialism, for example, are problematic for more complicated reasons than the simplified story that goes: “Third Wave feminism is intersectional; Second Wave feminism was not.” It is not merely that these feminists “failed” to account for the intersections of gender, race and class; in many ways the theory and practice of what has come to be called “intersectionality” was a central problematic for the Second Wave, as has been argued by Meg Luxton (2014). Rather, there are complex historical reasons for the theoretical difficulties facing these feminists, difficulties grounded in the discursive possibilities available to them and conditioning the eventual positioning of race superstructurally relative to gender and class. In illuminating the specific nature of these difficulties, it is possible to make a critique of Marxist feminism that is in keeping with the spirit of those Marxist feminists who argue for the continued relevance of Marx’s historical-materialism in the struggle for feminist liberation.

We can say in conclusion, therefore, that anti-racist and anti-colonial critiques of Marxism and Marxist feminism need not and should not take the form of dismissals or rejections, but should rather rigorously account for the history of gaps, eclipses and omissions that continue to shape our understanding of what Marxism has to offer in the context of ongoing struggles. To quote Coulthard (2014), “for Indigenous peoples to reject or ignore the insights of Marx would be a mistake, especially if this amounts to a refusal on our part to critically engage his important critique of capitalist exploitation and his extensive writings on the entangled relationship between capitalism and colonialism” (p. 8).

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