



SYMPOSIUM

Geographies of the *Grundrisse*

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Marx Without Guardrails: Geographies of the *Grundrisse*

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Thus, while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital, therefore, the more extensive the market over which it circulates, which forms the spatial orbit of its circulation, the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation of space by time (Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* 1973:538).

The four papers collected in this special section of *Antipode* appear 150 years after Karl Marx wrote the texts with which they engage, texts we know today as the *Grundrisse*. While the sesquicentennial of the *Grundrisse* led us to assemble these papers for publication, no anniversary can determine whether the text is worth revisiting today. Nor can it explain why or how geographers in particular should do so. Each of the four following papers demonstrates that the *Grundrisse* matters a lot for critical geography. Yet, given the quite difficult (not to mention incomplete and often peculiar) nature of the *Grundrisse*, some brief preparatory remarks may be useful, especially for those who have not read it. We therefore begin by addressing a simple yet confounding

question—what exactly *is* the *Grundrisse*?—before turning to some of the theoretical issues the text raises. We conclude by introducing the four papers in this special section, to position the *Grundrisse* in relation to Marxist geography.

What is the *Grundrisse*?

What we know today as the *Grundrisse* contains a selection of notebooks Marx wrote in the 1850s. The first edition, published in Moscow in 1939–1941 under the title *Grundrisse zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Rohentwurf) [*Outlines for a Critique of Political Economy* (Rough Draft)], from which we obtain the short title *Grundrisse*, collected together all of Marx’s extant notebooks on political economy written between 1850 and 1859 (Lallier 1989:xv).² The German edition of 1953, however, and its English translations, contain only eight notebooks, those Marx wrote late into the London nights between August 1857 and June 1858, while he worked during the day as a correspondent for the New York *Daily Tribune*.³ They include the famous Notebook M (also known as the “1857 Introduction”), arguably Marx’s most comprehensive comment on method, and seven others, numbered 1 through 7. As published, Notebook M stands alone, Notebooks 1 and 2 constitute the “Chapter on Money”, Notebooks 3–7 the “Chapter on Capital”. Neither “Chapter” is a chapter in the sense of *Capital*; each runs to hundreds of pages and sprawls through many themes and subsections.

The title is another source of confusion. The first publisher of the notebooks, the Institute for Marxism–Leninism, drew the title from Marx’s description of the project in a letter to Engels of December 1857, a letter that provides a sense of Marx’s intensity at this time, an intensity brought on by his sense of impending social transformation. Marx wrote that he desperately wished to complete the *Grundrisse*, or outlines, of his economic study “before the deluge” (cited in Oakley 1983:52).⁴ The “deluge” to which Marx refers is the international fallout of the Panic of 1857, the result of a banking crisis triggered in the US in the late summer (24 August). With the collapse of one New York institution, the response of the region’s financial community was to limit or stop almost all financial transactions. In turn, individual and institutional depositors, including a great deal of European (especially British) capital, panicked, precipitating a run on the banks that spread across the United States. On 14 October, later remembered as “Suspension Day”, banks across New York and New England suspended all transactions in an attempt to slow hoarding, the flight back to money as precious metal, what Marx called a return to “barbaric conditions” (1973:230).

Marx started writing the “Chapter on Money” as the crisis crossed the Atlantic in late 1857, as British manufacturing went into a free

fall and unemployment skyrocketed. For him, in a manner not unlike the monetary crisis in Louis Bonaparte's France the previous year, the Panic of 1857 made manifest the inevitable crises of capital as value-in-motion: in the period leading up to the collapse, capital, in its relentless effort to expand, had exacerbated the inherent tendency to overcapacity in the economy. The resulting disproportionalities between production and circulation, which up to a point had been maintained by a constant flow of speculative investment in fixed capital, reached a level of instability at which the bubble burst: circulation stopped and capital ceased to function as process.⁵

The crisis seemed to portend a revolutionary opening and filled Marx with hope. He wrote to Engels: "the stock exchange is the only place where my present dullness turns into elasticity and bouncing" (cited in Rosdolsky 1977:7). The *Grundrisse* emerged at the time and in the manner it did because its formulation was so urgent in the face of such opportunity. Just as the economic tempest drove him to frantically work out his theory, the political economy which precipitated it was his object of analysis. The resulting notebooks may be read as extended reflections on the relations between money-as-commodity and money-as-capital, the law of equivalence, disproportionality, and the meaning of the categories of money, capital, and value. But then there are many ways to read the *Grundrisse*.

Reading the *Grundrisse*

In contrast to *Capital*, the *Grundrisse* is Marx without guardrails. It does not unfold through neatly delineated sections and chapters; it is frequently repetitive and often obtuse. So what we have come to see as the "outline" or "ground-plan" of *Capital* is not carefully outlined, grounded, or planned. In Gayatri Spivak's words the *Grundrisse* is "a creative digest of Marx's readings" (1995:73) to which we may add that it is a digest without table of contents, executive summary, or index.⁶

Yet the text remains deeply compelling for at least two reasons. On the one hand we find an astonishing range of analysis of a broad range of questions. Some of the topics Marx considers in the *Grundrisse* are never again substantively addressed; his discussion of pre-capitalist economic formations (on which see the papers by Wainwright and Sayre), for instance, goes farther than any subsequent text. On the other hand, the *Grundrisse's* treatment of its diverse topoi is compelling because it provides perhaps the clearest window available through which to observe Marx at work—the ways he worked through ideas, the relentless energy with which he approached the problem of political economy. As such, the legacy of the notebooks is enormously complicated and exciting, and has attracted so much attention, at least partly because they comprise the point of production for some of Marx's most important theoretical

developments regarding concepts we now understand as central to his theoretical legacy, including money, labor, and capital. This is not to say that these categories emerge from the text as final products; rather, one finds in the *Grundrisse* their early, more plastic formulations. Such conceptual unfolding, in combination with the relative lack of structure, narrative, and formality, allows the *Grundrisse* to serve, for many, as a path to a more open Marxism.

It is also true that this plasticity and openness make the text an object of heated exegetical battles among Marxists. These debates have revolved around several issues, the most contentious being the problems the notebooks pose for an ostensibly “scientific” Marxism or rigorous Marxist social science. It is not that Marx does not pursue the concerns of the *Grundrisse* in the exhaustive, dialectical manner for which he is known. He did. The challenge derives from the lack of theoretical closure. The text crackles with categorical instability. This raises several interpretive questions that remain important for Marxist theory and practice. Let us consider two.

First, there is the question of the *Grundrisse*’s relation to *Capital*. Are they fundamentally separate and different works? Or is *Grundrisse* merely the “rough draft”, a flawed first attempt, as the first editors’ title suggests? If bits are missing from *Capital*, does that mean that Marx disavowed his earlier analysis? If so, how does that matter for Marxist thinking? We know that Marx never intended the *Grundrisse* for publication. Given the preponderance of *Capital* for Marxists (ourselves included), these are points of longstanding debate. The intractability of these questions is compounded by the impossibility of reading the *Grundrisse* as an independent work today. It is probably a rare reader who comes to Marx first through the notebooks; for those of us who have read *Capital* beforehand, it is hard not to read the *Grundrisse* retrospectively, through the lens of the later work, as if it were itself a product of what followed.

Still, holding the *Grundrisse* against the background of *Capital* has sometimes enabled exciting and original readings. Some even discover in the *Grundrisse* a Marx more original, more pure, even more important than the author of *Capital*. For instance, in his Paris lectures on the *Grundrisse*, published as *Marx Beyond Marx* (1991), Antonio Negri argues that the *Grundrisse* is the crux of Marx—not so much a turning point, which implies a discovery that improves the process, but in fact the highest expression of Marx’s originality. After writing the *Grundrisse*, Negri says, Marx became too gripped by his accidental reading of Hegel’s *Logic*, and his earlier emphasis on a kind of absolutely productive, subjective labor that stands fundamentally outside or apart from capital was deflated, effectively lost. Through a redemptive reading of the *Grundrisse*, Negri extracts its radically open, un-Hegelian quality and its creative approach to subjectivity and labor.

In contrast, Kojin Karatani (2003:5) claims that the “Marxian turn”, the moment of Marx’s essential insight, “occurred in his middle career, in the shift from *Grundrisse* . . . to *Capital*: it was the introduction of the theory of ‘value form’”, a shift that Karatani attributes to Marx’s encounter with Samuel Bailey’s critique of Ricardo.⁷ In other words, Marx’s radical turn came only “after he finished writing *Grundrisse*”. Both Negri and Karatani agree that Marx’s central contribution was to elaborate the value form, to show that value is produced by labor, objectified, and circulated in a way that deepens the division between labor and capital (which both theorists relate to Marx’s theory of the subject). Without elaborating on this debate,⁸ the key point is that the question of the status of the *Grundrisse* within Marx’s *oeuvre*—mere draft of *Capital* or independent creative workshop?—cannot ultimately be separated from more substantive debates over Marx’s basic economic concepts. Hence the need for coming to terms with the text.

This brings us to a second question raised by what most readers (*pace* Negri) see as the much more explicit influence of Hegel’s thought on the *Grundrisse* in comparison to *Capital*—indeed, the papers included here by Gidwani and Mann are partly focused on the centrality of Hegel to an understanding of the notebooks. The *Grundrisse*’s rise to prominence in recent decades owes much to the attention it has received from Marxists for whom Hegel, and Hegel’s influence on Marx, is important. The best known of this camp—Lenin, Trotsky, Lukács and Gramsci—all wrote before the *Grundrisse* was published, yet their thinking has secured the recognition of Hegel’s relevance to our understanding of Marx (a debt recognized by many otherwise different contemporary Marxists, such as David Harvey and Fredric Jameson).

Not surprisingly, with the important exceptions of Negri and Lucio Colletti (1973 [1969], 1975), the *Grundrisse* receives less textual attention from non- or anti-Hegelian Marxists of various stripes. This is especially true of the “scientific” Marxists for whom *Capital* reigns supreme, and who for a time did so much to shape post-World War II Marxism. Louis Althusser is the best known of this group, which also includes Galvano Della Volpe, Colletti, and Jon Elster (as well as some of Elster’s fellow “analytical Marxists”, most of whom are now definitively ex-Marxists). This group essentially agrees on only one point: the need to purge Marxism of Hegel’s purported idealism and mysticism. Thus the *Grundrisse* is often left out of anti-Hegelian accounts of Marx.⁹ Yet, as Mann demonstrates in his paper, reading the *Grundrisse* makes that purge difficult, because the Hegelianism of the *Grundrisse* is fundamental, not in the least idealist, and essential to the text’s capacity to found a Marxism independent of the scientificity of *Capital*.

To confront the *Grundrisse*, then, with its clues to the meaning of Hegel for Marx, is a theoretical challenge with far-reaching implications,

for it exposes an anti-teleological Marx obsessed with historical processes, yet deeply scornful of History (see the papers by Gidwani, Wainwright and Mann). In the notebooks we find the concerns of *Capital* exposed much more aggressively to the flames of the dialectic than in the latter work. Gayatri Spivak writes of the *Grundrisse*: “[l]ifting the lid, Marx discovers that the pot of the economic is forever on the boil” (Spivak 1985:74). We might say the same of the pot that geographers call the world.

Geographies of the *Grundrisse*

While it is by no means easy to state what Marx’s theory is, at least it is possible to clarify what it is not. It is not a speculative philosophy of history. Professedly a deconstruction of universal History, it opens the way to a history that promises no salvation, offers no guarantee to redress injustice—not even the faintest possibility. A profane history emerges whose trajectory is unsettled, in that it is determined conjointly by struggle and necessity. Hence there is no question of founding a new philosophy of some unidirectional history. What we have, instead, is a new way of writing history, whose alphabet is suggested by the *Grundrisse* (Bensaïd 2002 [1995]:2–3).

Bensaïd’s comments on the historicity of Marx’s thought provide us with a powerful language to introduce the geographies of the *Grundrisse*. The notebooks certainly do not provide a philosophy of geography, but they open a way to a geography without salvation, without guarantees; it is unsettling, profane geography. Let us explain.

Antipode readers are familiar, particularly through the work of David Harvey, with the ways Marx’s analysis of capitalism in *Capital* opens a radical reinterpretation of the world’s geographies (on Harvey and the *Grundrisse*, see the paper by Sayre).¹⁰ In different respects, the four papers collected in this section argue that the *Grundrisse* has still more to offer geographers. So too do they suggest that the way we read the *Grundrisse* will shape *how* Marx matters for us geographers today. Part of the fecundity of the text for our geographical imagination stems from what we could consider the *Grundrisse*’s setting. Like *Capital*, the *Grundrisse* was written in Victorian London and traces of that imperial, urban environment appear in the text. Yet there is an important distance in the feel of this setting. *Capital* often reads like an analysis of industrial, urban capitalism such as could only have been found in London at the time of its writing; the first volume makes reference to its workshops and state, labor laws, the social history of the British enclosures, and in the last chapter, British colonialism (on which see the paper by Wainwright). Of course, *Capital* is about capitalism, not British capitalism. Nevertheless, few readers could mistake the book’s setting, and we are perhaps not the only Marxists who have difficulty

imagining what *Capital* might look like had it been written in, say, Paris, or, for that matter, Beijing.

Here the difference with the *Grundrisse* is stark and fruitful, we believe. “Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier”, Marx wrote (1973 [1953]:524), and the text too explodes spatial barriers. Indeed, the “setting” is so undefined that it can only be called unsettled; the *Grundrisse* produces a palpable sense of indefinite, even volcanic, geography: more than *Capital*, the *Grundrisse* describes capitalism and the *world*, in its world-becoming and its becoming-worldly. The *Grundrisse* is thus volcanic for its concepts emerge in a world of contradictory and still-unfolding spaces. Whereas a reader may (perhaps mis-)read *Capital* as a book about England’s capitalist society and its eventual overthrow by the British proletariat, there can be no mistaking *Grundrisse* as anything other than a text of geography without salvation, set in a world without guarantees.

Something of this luminescent fluidity is captured, we hope, in each of the four papers collected here. The paper by Vinay Gidwani that introduces our quartet begins with the *Grundrisse*’s almost breathless tone and the restless moment in which Marx was writing. Yet the text’s tumultuous energy is not merely a product of its times, but also its analytical approach. As Gidwani argues, for the Marx of the *Grundrisse*, there are two Hegels: one to be embraced, another to be wary of; a Hegel of contradiction and confrontation, and a Hegel of identity and closure. Separating the two is perhaps impossible. Part of the *Grundrisse*’s complex energy arises in Marx’s struggle to do so.

Reading this tension in the *Grundrisse* alongside Spivak’s ‘Can the subaltern speak?’, Gidwani proposes that the *Grundrisse* may be seen as postcolonial Marxism *avant la lettre*. This theme is also advanced in the paper by Joel Wainwright, which traces the problematic of uneven development and colonialism from *Grundrisse* to *Capital*. By examining the shifts in Marx’s treatment of pre-capitalist social relations, the development of capitalism, and colonialism between these two texts—focusing in particular on Marx’s writings on Edward Gibbon Wakefield—Wainwright argues that Marx’s economic analysis of capitalism, culminating in *Capital*, hinges upon his discovery of the interrelation of uneven development and imperialism.

The third contribution, by Nathan Sayre, considers the impact of the translation of the *Grundrisse* on Anglo-American geography and anthropology. Sayre argues that the *Grundrisse* has been vastly more important to the development of the two disciplines than might be immediately apparent. He suggests that the *Grundrisse* made possible not only some of David Harvey’s contributions, but also helped to end the heated formalist-substantivist debate in economic anthropology. And, more broadly, it has contributed to the ability of both geographers and

anthropologists to understand the ongoing processes of financialization so influential in the contemporary world.

The last article in the section, by Geoff Mann, reads the *Grundrisse* as a call to revive Marx's analysis of historical necessity. Digging into the notebooks by way of the Hegelian concepts that run through it, Mann argues that a non-determinist, historicized necessity is not only essential to an understanding of Marx's work, but proves central to critical historical–geographical explanation more broadly. Reading the passages on “the annihilation of space by time” against their Hegelian ground, he tries to uncover the seeds of what might be called a communist geography.

Endnotes

¹ The author-editors collaborated evenly on this introduction and the issue; our names are listed alphabetically.

² These include 24 notebooks from 1850 to 1853 on a variety of topics; annotated excerpts from Ricardo's *Principles* from 1851; a manuscript on foreign exchange from 1854–1855; a fragment on Bastiat and Carey from 1857; a “new theory of profits” written around the period of the eight principal notebooks; and the so-called “Urtext”, written in the summer of 1858, which is often seen as an intermediary between the “Chapter on money” and the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* that appeared in 1859. For the “Urtext”, see *Collected Works*, vol 29 (1986–1987:430–507). The four papers that follow this introductory essay engage only those notebooks published in the English and German editions.

³ There are two English translations of these notebooks. The more commonly used is that of Martin Nicolaus, which appeared with an excellent introduction in 1973 (New York: Vintage). The second, and some say better (e. g. Arthur 2006) translation, is by Ernst Wangermann (Marx and Engels 1986) and Victor Schnittke (1987). It can be found in volumes 28 and 29 in the *Collected Works*, with a preface by Tatyana Vasilyeva.

⁴ The following month, he wrote again to Engels: “I'm working colossally—usually until 4 a. m. My task is twofold; 1) to work out the fundamentals of the economics . . . 2) the present crisis” (cited in Rosdolsky 1977:8).

⁵ To anyone observing the current financial meltdown—another crisis of capital-as-process in which the banking system does not perform its role as the mechanism of circulation—may sound familiar. As for economic primitivism: as we wrote this introduction, the nominal price of gold surpassed \$1000/oz for the first time.

⁶ Our reference to Spivak comes from a passage where she attributes Marx's discovery in the *Grundrisse* in these terms: “A *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, like the ‘Economic and philosophical manuscripts’ and the *Grundrisse*, is in large part a creative digest of Marx's readings. It is of course in the notebooks of the *Grundrisse*, comprising notes taken in 1857–58, that the notion of capital being engendered in the human difference between making and needing is discovered. Because this is not yet there in *Contribution* (published the following year, while the researches of the *Grundrisse* are fermenting), there is much greater emphasis on the so-called ‘alienation of use value’” [*Contribution* 491] (1995:73).

⁷ See section 5.2 of *Transcritique* (2003:193–196); for another elaboration, see Furner (2007).

⁸ Briefly, Wainwright thinks that Karatani has it right, and Mann departs from both Karatani and Negri—as readers will find in his paper, he argues that the very greatness of the *Grundrisse* lies in its intensely Hegelian qualities.

⁹ For instance, in the whole of the English edition of Althusser's and Étienne Balibar's enormously influential *Reading Capital*, the *Grundrisse* is only mentioned once, by Balibar (1970 [1968]:201). As Althusser (1971:103) later wrote in his preface to the French edition of *Capital*, "it is to be predicted that, along with the *German Ideology*, the *Grundrisse* will provide all the dubious quotations needed by idealist versions of Marxist theory". The Hegelianism of the *Grundrisse* was emphasized for English readers in particular because the most widely circulated English edition was translated and introduced by Martin Nicolaus, a Marxist for whom Hegel is extremely significant.

¹⁰ Just as we cannot read the *Grundrisse* today except through *Capital*, we can hardly approach the geographical dimensions of these texts without interpreting them in light of David Harvey's work.

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Capitalism's Anxious Whole: Fear, Capture and Escape in the *Grundrisse*

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Abstract: Two Hegels inhabit the *Grundrisse*. The first is conservative of the “selfsame” subject that continuously returns to itself as non-identical identity and propels “history”. The other Hegel carries with the “negative” he (which or variously calls “non-being”, “otherness” “difference”) to disrupt this plenary subject to Marx’s reading of a Hegel who is different-in-himself lends *Grundrisse* its electric buzz: seizing Hegel’s “negative” as the *not*-value of value, i.e. “labor”, Marx explains how capital must continuously enroll labor to its will in order to survive and expand. But this enrollment is never given; hence, despite its emergent structure of necessity, capital’s return to itself as “self-animating value” is never free of peril. The most speculative aspect of my argument is that the figure of “labor” in *Grundrisse*, because of its radically open formulation as not-value, anticipates the elusive subject of difference in postcolonial theory, “the subaltern”—that figure which evades dialectical integration, and is in some ontological way inscrutable to the “master”. Unexpectedly, then *Grundrisse* gives us a way to think beyond the epistemic and geographic power of “Europe”.

Keywords: geography, Hegel, Marx, postcoloniality, subaltern, value

The seven notebooks of the posthumously released *Grundrisse* were born in an explosion of manic energy that lasted from October 1857 to early May 1858. “I am working like mad all night and every night collating my economic studies so that I at least get the outlines clear before the *deluge*”, Marx confided in a letter to Frederick Engels as he was compiling his third notebook.¹ Marx’s frenzy scars the pages of *Grundrisse*. The writing is terse, fevered; the arguments restless, condensed, even unfinished. They lurch ahead violently, trembling with a dialectical tension never witnessed before or after in Marx’s work. And what tension it is, crackling with the electric buzz of opposites—capital and labor—repeatedly thrown into an embrace neither wants but both implacably need! Capital must compel living labor to act for capital, as *capital*, in order to reproduce and expand; even as workers, as bearers (*Träger*) of social relations that posit them as labor, strive with varying degrees of success to resist the incarceration of their capacities. Michael Lebowitz captures the agonism of this recurring encounter:

In capitalism as a whole, the two-sided totality, capital does not merely seek the realisation of its own goal, valorisation; it also must seek to suspend the realisation of the goals of wage-labour. Capital, in short,

must defeat workers; it must negate its negation in order to posit itself (Lebowitz 1992:122).²

Lebowitz's resolutely Hegelian remark should not be read as a concession: that "negation" is politically realized as workers' permanent "defeat". By foregrounding the fraught relationship of capital to labor, Lebowitz exposes the turbulence—indeed, the indeterminacy—that suffuses Hegel's dialectical logic. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's observation that "Marx docket the Hegelian system in the narrative time of *das Aufheben*—the effort of sublating—rather than the graphic Time of *Aufhebung*, the accomplished sublation" (1999:60) is readily extended to Lebowitz. Hegel's displacement yields two contrasting portraits of that prodigious thinker: the commonplace Hegel, as philosopher of sublation; and a less familiar Hegel, as philosopher of encounter.

Marx, I argue, seizes on this caesura in Hegel in the *Grundrisse*. He inverts and extends Hegel's idealist system; and, wittingly or not, maneuvers a divided Hegel. As such, to read *Grundrisse* is to come away feeling unsettled, even uncertain. The mood of the notebooks shifts as the sublative Hegel is pushed to the ropes by his non-sublative alter ego. As a consequence of this parrying, *Grundrisse* gives us, on the one hand, capital as a totality: a world historical force that subsumes other forms of sociality and production as its own moments, and stitches them into a regime of structural necessity—such that "doubly free" labor, posited by capital as the condition of its self-realization, is forced to submit to the latter's demands in order to survive and reproduce. On the other hand, *Grundrisse* exposes how labor constantly exceeds not only its *concept* but also, by implication, capital's *grid of control*.³ Capital's mastery over labor—like the mastery of lord over bondsman in Hegel—remains suspect because both labor and slave embody something in reserve: a *space of withholding* that remains unintelligible to the master. By insisting on this excess—"the untruth of identity", as Theodor Adorno powerfully put it—Marx pierces the plenary desire of capital to totalize. He does not naively proclaim liberation on the horizon. Rather he exposes the moment of negativity in capital's repeating spatiotemporal encounters with its heterogeneous Other, labor, as a site of recurring anxiety and fear. Marx's *Grundrisse* also pays an unexpected dividend: a figure of 'labor', which uncannily anticipates that elusive subject of difference in postcolonial criticism, the 'subaltern'.

Deleuze, Prosecutor

Let's begin then with the commonplace Hegel, philosopher of conquest *qua* sublation who is damned by Gilles Deleuze as follows:

It is said the difference is negativity, that it extends to the point of contradiction once it is taken to the limit. This is true only to the extent

that difference is already placed on a path or along a thread laid out by identity. It is true only to the extent that it is identity that pushes it to that point. Difference is the ground, but only the ground for the demonstration of the identical (Deleuze 1994 [1968]:49–50).

These are stark accusations. Deleuze implicates a “selfsame” Hegelian subject that is virulently colonial. It first legislates difference, and then just as imperiously dissolves it into the identical. Why is this necessary? According to Deleuze, in order to continuously affirm the superior, essential existence of “self” over “other”. Metonymically, “modernity” posits “tradition”, “reason” posits “unreason”, “civilization” posits “savagery” and “humanity” posits “inhumanity”—only in order to, then, subsume that which does not concord with itself. Here Deleuze echoes Fanon, who in a memorable passage in *The Wretched of the Earth* wrote:

The settler and the native are old acquaintances. In fact, the settler is right when he speaks of knowing “them” well. For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence. The settler owes the fact of this very existence, that is to say, his property, to the colonial system (1963:36).

It is worth remembering that the word “property” is an affine of “propriety”: both reference possession and imply a certain—“proper”—order of things. As such, the native who forgets or wilfully flouts her place threatens both aspects of the (colonial) “proper”. This fear of disruption is precisely why Hegel, in Deleuze’s reckoning, never permits otherness to exist as difference-in-itself—as a “swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences, a properly differential and original space and time; all of which persist alongside the simplifications of limitation and opposition” (Deleuze 1994 [1968]:50).

Does Deleuze have a case for prosecution? Consider the admissions of Hegel’s writings. In the famous Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977 [1807]:110) he declares: “Mediation is nothing but the self-identity which moves itself; in other words, it is reflection into itself [*in sich selbst*], the moment of the I as being-for-itself, pure negativity, or—when reduced to its pure abstraction—it is simple becoming”.⁴ Because “self-identity” is the barely disguised S/subject of “Europe”,⁵ Hegel effectively consecrates history as the outcome of Europe’s self-mediation, scission and self-motion. Thus, these corroborating observations in the chapter on “Being-for-Self” in *Science of Logic*:

Being-for-self is first, immediately *a* being-for-self—the One. Secondly, the One passes into a *plurality of ones*—*repulsion*—and this otherness of the ones is sublated in their ideality—*attraction*. Thirdly, we have the alternating determination of repulsion and attraction in which they collapse into equilibrium, and quality, which in being-for-self reached its climax, passes over into *quantity* [i.e. the One, restored

as identity or unity in diversity] (Hegel 1969 [1812:157, italics in original).

There are more explicitly damning passages in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (1975 [1830]), where he deems certain forms of otherness as so inconsequential to the forward march of Spirit/self that they are considered neither worth engaging nor, by implication, sublating. In his imagination of "Africa proper" Hegel anticipates the imperial discourse of race. Thus, Africa is dismissed as a continent with "no historical interest of its own, for we find its inhabitants living in barbarism and savagery in a land which has not furnished them with any integral ingredient of culture" even as Europe is anointed, a few pages anon, as the "empire of self-knowing subjectivity", where the "principle of spirit has become manifest, in that subjectivity has acquired a universal character" (Hegel 1975 [1830]:174, 205). "Europe", for Hegel, names the temporal and spiritual *present*: a realm of cultural richness, political achievement and "concrete freedom", whose geographic and epistemic primacy over the world is indisputable. More strongly, Europe is the vantage point for that knowledge which properly qualifies as Philosophy: *wherfrom the past stands revealed but also superseded (as incomplete rather than false), and whereby diverse and contradictory moments are grasped as necessary moments in the present totality*. This is why Hegel is a *modern* thinker and, to many, the philosopher *par excellence* of identity and (European) mastery. Deleuze's indictment appears secure.

Or is it? Deleuze, ordinarily so supple at evoking the undercurrents of difference that swirl just below the surface calm of identity, seems unable to imagine, far less concede, a differentiated Hegel: a philosopher whose thought of unity is indelibly fissured. This other Hegel wrestles competing desires. On the one hand, he is the system builder intent on erecting a philosophical formation that is unparalleled in scope. Nothing may escape its continuous weave of meaning. Sublated, every moment becomes complicit in the Hegelian "whole": a domesticated *pars totalis*.⁶ But this very Hegel also urges—craves—the (repeating) encounter with otherness, fully knowing its perils for the "self". Hence this startling declamation in the Preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

The life of the spirit is not a life that shuns death and bewares destruction, keeping clean of it; it is a life that bears death and maintains itself in it. Spirit gains its truth only through finding itself within absolute rupture. Spirit is that power not as positive which turns away from the negative, as when we say of something that it is nothing or false, and having thus finished with it we turn to something else; rather spirit is that power only in so far as it looks the negative in the face and dwells in it (2005 [1807]:129).

Hegel's words are unsettling, even chilling. The dialectical progress of Spirit—that is to say, History—is portrayed as a recurring confrontation with “death” (standing in for the power of negativity). Put in another way, the self's *truth*⁷ of existence as “essential being”—*its* freedom—is wrested from otherness by force of will. Here's a manifesto, we think, for the master's violence. But this narrow brief requires that we wilfully ignore the open character of Hegel's remarks, which revel in the contingency of the encounter. There is, after all, no guarantee that the ruptured self will find a way to reconstitute itself—and thereby ensure the circular ascent of Spirit.⁸

In an analogous manner, isn't it precisely the political stakes of capital's uncertain transitions as “value in motion”—as “self-expanding value”—that Marx graphs with such verve in *Grundrisse*? Marx's notebooks show that for value to expand, a phenomenon tantamount to the expansion of the realm of exchange values—*capitalism's “equivocal” form of sociality as in-difference*⁹—it must pass, restlessly, through several phases. And, like any voyager, it faces the constant threat of an accident or breakdown (even death, *absolute negation*) that can bring the journey to an abrupt halt. Unexpectedly, then, Marx succeeds where Deleuze fails. Intent on positing Hegel as the figurehead of “State science” (and arch-nemesis of “minor”/“nomad” knowledge) Deleuze unleashes a savage irony: the “Hegel-effect”, where Hegel is recuperated as a unified subject of consciousness. Marx, less subtle (and likely less concerned) about affirming multiplicity than Deleuze, produces, by contrast, a more complex and interesting Hegel.

Hegel's “Force”

Marx was ailing as he compiled the notebooks of the *Grundrisse*. His correspondence reveals a man who was exhausted, wracked by illness and poverty, and transported by a manic tide of ideas that threatened to overwhelm. Engulfed by circumstances, he engulfed smoke. “I had been overdoing very much my nocturnal labours, accompanied, it is true, by mere lemonade on the one hand, but an immense deal of tobacco on the other”, he wrote to Engels in a later dated 16 January 1858. But I want to draw attention to what he said next in that same letter:

I am, by the way, discovering some nice arguments. E.g. I have completely demolished the theory of profit as hitherto propounded [by Ricardo and his followers]. What was of great use to me as regards method of treatment was Hegel's *Logic* at which I had taken another look by mere accident, Freiligrath having found and made me a present of several volumes of Hegel, originally the property of Bakunin. If ever the time comes when such work is again possible, I should very much like to write 2 or 3 sheets making accessible to the common reader the rational aspect of the method which Hegel not only discovered but also mystified (Marx and Engels 1856–1859:248).

The desired exegesis of Hegel's method in *Logic* never materialized. But as many of Marx's commentators have ventured, Hegel's influence on him was long, continuous and rich.¹⁰

I have already hinted at this richness. But there should be no mistake: while the imprint of Hegel's *Logic* on *Grundrisse* is deep, Marx is a shrewd pupil. He does not merely invert Hegel's system and then follow its legislated mandate. Instead, he works it over. The result is a theory of capital that crackles with such agonism and celerity that Hegel's dialectics of sublation is left frayed, but survives. *Grundrisse*, thus, choreographs a dance of two Hegels: one traces circuits of capture within capitalism; the other, lines of interruption and escape. Marx exposes both capital's extraordinary power and its repeating failure to become self-adequate totality. It is precisely as this conflicted biography of capital that *Grundrisse* remains fecund today, under late capitalism, as a theoretical *and* political tract.

Notebook M, composed in late August–early September 1857, operates as the Introduction to *Grundrisse*. It is an extended commentary on Marx's method of study and brackets its epistemological object—capital—as follows:

In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it . . . Capital is the all-dominating economic power of bourgeois society (1973:105).

In this intensely chemical description, parts are transformed as they are sutured into an interconnected whole—the particular network of associations that constitute a “society”. Thus bourgeois society, which Marx famously describes as “the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production” (1973:105)—where “every economic relation presupposes every other in its bourgeois economic form” (278)—is articulated into a diverse unity by the *force* of capital.

What is the nature of this “force”? Hegel has a remarkable and characteristically unexpected discussion of the category in *Logic* (book two, Doctrine of Essence); and it is difficult to imagine that Marx, who was such a close reader of texts, would have missed its significance. Hegel writes (and I quote at length because the passage stages my subsequent argument):

Force is the negative unity into which the contradiction of whole and parts has resolved itself . . . In the *essential relation* as now determined, the immediate and reflected self-subsistence are posited as sublated or as moments . . . In this there is contained first, that the reflected unity

and its immediate determinate being, in so far as both are first and immediate, sublimate themselves within themselves and pass over into their other; the former, force, passes over into *its expression*, and what is expressed is a vanishing something which withdraws into force as into its ground; it *is*, only as borne and posited by force. Secondly, this transition is not only a becoming and a vanishing, but is a negative relation-to-self; or, that which *alters its determination* is at the same time reflected into itself and preserves itself; the movement of force is not so much a *transition* [*Übergehen*] as a movement in which it *transposes* itself [*sich selbst über setzt*] and in this alteration posited by itself remains what it is. Thirdly, this *reflected*, self-related unity is itself sublated and a moment; it is mediated by its other and has it for condition; its negative self-relation, which is a first and begins the movement of its transition *out of itself*, has equally a presupposition by which it is *solicited*, and an other from which it begins (1969 [1812]:518–519, italics in the original).

This dense passage provides as good a snapshot of Hegel's *Logic* as one is likely to find in that daunting work. Both *Phenomenology* and *Logic* chart a systematic course of exposition, which Marx adopts with important reservations. Thought proceeds from the immediacy of the sensed world to simple abstraction and, thereon, to more complex and, according to Hegel, more concrete categories.¹¹ Thus, Hegel's *Logic* begins with an abstraction, "pure being"—"simple immediacy" or "immediacy itself", unmediated and without "presuppositions". It is its own presupposition and, as such, "cannot contain within itself any determination, any content" (Hegel 1969 [1812]:70). Hegel then graphs the difficult ontological journey by which this indeterminate being, mediated by otherness, returns to itself as a "negative unity" ("force")—that is, as a "becoming-being" rich in content and determinations. Concrete returns to concrete, but non-identically and irreversibly transformed.

Yet, this actualized result—concrete totality grasped as unity-in-diversity—is not a stopping point. It marks rather the onset of another cycle whereby what is *now* "being-in-itself" ("immediate being") becomes, through a renewed process of mediations, "being-for-itself". Hegel remarks: "The essential requirement for the science of logic is not so much that the beginning be a pure immediacy, but rather that the whole of the science be within itself a circle in which the first is also the last and the last is also the first" (1969 [1812]:71). Thus, Hegel's circular method reveals the original presupposition of a process as a result *and*—this is critical for understanding Marx's diagnosis of capital as "self-valorizing value"—the presupposition for what follows.

Hegel's disquisition on "force" seems suddenly less opaque. What is Hegel telling us? Notice that he writes retrospectively, from the conjuncture where presupposition has developed into result—where, both, simple immediacy and its initial negation have been negated, and

thus passed over into an articulated unity of “moments”. “Sublation” is revealed as the (repeating) process of *double* negation in which each of the system’s ingredients passes into the others and is recurrently rebuilt by them, thereby producing them as *specific moments* in an interrelated whole. Hegel uses the German word *aufheben*, which carries the coupled sense of “transcend” and “transform”, to describe this dialectical movement. The passage in question identifies how “force” as the positive result (“negative unity”) of the Hegelian *Aufhebung* simultaneously negates, preserves, and lifts otherness in the course of “coming-to-be” (which, in Hegel’s dialectic, is simultaneously a “ceasing-to-be”).¹² Hegel points to three aspects of this becoming, which, however, only partially correspond to a sequence.

The first aspect consists of “immediate being” (what Hegel calls “self-identity” in *Phenomenology* or “the One” in *Logic*) positing—or better yet, encountering—*another one* initially as difference and, subsequently, as opposition. In this process of reflection (*Schein*), which is a strange admixture of “repulsion” (the imperative to assert that “I” am not the “other”) and “attraction” (the desire for recognition by the “other” of my existence as “I”), pure/immediate being becomes “being-for-another”. That is to say, it becomes “determinate being” in that its existence is no longer self-contained. Another now *mediates* it (and needless to add, there is a *multiplicity* of other “ones”). However, in order to grasp “essence”, the reality lying beneath the surface—or, that which is *genuinely* immediate—reflection must not only “remove from the surface being that has initiated its activity those inessentials which are in fact not genuinely immediate”, it must also “cancel the mediating effects of its own activity” by thinking “of itself as standing outside of the material it is thinking about” (Burbidge 2006:63).

Hegel gives the name “expression” to the multiplicity that results when “force”—“the integrated, distinguished unity that is to be the underlying foundation”—performs its distinguishing activity, namely *reflection*. Force is recovered as a reality that Hegel calls “actuality” when reflection cancels its own work of negativity and “withdraws into force as into its ground”. Thus, *sublation is negation of the negative*. In sublation, “being-for-another” returns to itself as “being-for-self”. This is the second aspect of “force” that Hegel discusses in the foregoing passage: namely, “force . . . as a movement in which it *transposes* itself and in this alteration posited by itself remains what it is”.

It is fundamental to appreciate that in Hegel’s ontological scheme, “force” and “expression”—as well as its homologues, “ground”/“appearance”, “whole”/“part”, “inner”/“outer”—are in a *reciprocal* relationship. In such a relationship, Burbidge explains, “one cannot really say that one is more essential, or more necessary, than the other. What is critical is this very relation itself. How is the whole to itself as whole” (2006:71). Indeed, in delineating the third aspect of “force”

Hegel makes clear that what is supposed to be the initiator of movement, force, is in fact “solicited” by its “negative self-relation”. It is in this sense that the “other”—the side that is to be the expression—is the “condition” of force. The other is *that which initiates its activity*.

Marx, Hegel's (Insubordinate) Pupil

The section titled “The Relation of Force and its Expression” in Hegel's *Logic* is an extraordinary outline of the *Grundrisse*'s basic plan of exposition, albeit with important differences. To begin, Marx's concept of “capital” is analogous to Hegel's “force”. Capital is the “essence” that is actualized as a concrete totality—“an integrated, distinguished unity”—through mediation. It is “I” (the presupposition) that returns to itself, *non-identically*, as “I” (the result). More strongly, capital names a social relationship that *implicates and requires* its other, “labor”. And what is “value”? It denotes the multiplicity of “expression” that enables capital's necessary mediations and, eventually, self-valorization.¹³ Thus, “value” is another name for the self-cancelling work of mediation performed in the movement from product to commodity (exchange-value) to money, and on to capital.¹⁴

Schematically, Hegel's *Logic* and Marx's *Grundrisse* map into each other as follow:

Mapping Hegel's *Logic* to Marx's *Grundrisse*¹⁵

<i>Logic</i>	<i>Grundrisse</i>
S1) Presupposition: Force Immediate being/being-in-itself Unqualified diversity	Presupposition: Capital Things, as pure use-values “Natural” heterogeneity, not yet social
S2) Positing of “other” ones Repulsion and attraction Difference of qualities	Universe of products Social use-values Difference of qualities
S3) Reflected unity Being-for-another Determinate being Mediated whole of “one” and “other”	Universe of commodities Use-value for others, ie exchange-value Individual commodities Unity in opposition of use- and exchange-value
Abstracted quantity, expression	Abstracted quantity, appearance
S4) Canceling the work of mediation Being-for-itself Dissolution of reflected unity	Universe of money Money as measure of value Externalized opposition of commodity and money
S5) Result: Force [Concept] Reflection returns to ground	Result: Capital (Part of) money returns to capital as productive consumption
Becoming, actualized essence “I” → “I” (as I + Δ I)	Self-valorization, accumulation M → (C) → M' (as M + ΔM)
S6) Result as new presupposition	Next round of capital accumulation

To summarize, the initial qualification occurs when pure use-values are recognized as social use-values. But this transition *already* anticipates the subsequent qualification: the product as commodity. As Uchida (1988:32) explains: “The product as commodity is not posited in its natural likeness to itself or as use-value, but as unlike itself or as exchange-value. Its use-value now changes into ‘use-value for others’, or social use-value”. The work of value in its social form as commodity is to gather unlike aspects into an identity (hence the commodity’s double existence as unity-in-opposition of use- and exchange-value), as well as set into relation things that are unlike. Marx provides an instructive account of this mediation in ‘Chapter on Money’ (Notebook I of the *Grundrisse*). He writes:

Considered as values, all commodities are qualitatively equal and differ only quantitatively, hence can be measured against each other and substituted for one another (as mutually exchangeable, mutually convertible) in certain quantitative relations. Value is *their social relation*, their economic quality” (Marx 1973:141, my italics).¹⁶

By invoking the “social”, Marx has already identified a critical fault line between his ontology and Hegel’s. Marx agrees, in concordance with Hegel, that the mediation by abstraction that carries the name “exchange-value” in the *Grundrisse* is, in fact, a thought: it “exists initially only in the head, as a conception, since it expresses a relation; just as, in general, relations can be established as existing only by being *thought*, as distinct from the subjects which are in these relations with each other” (1973:143). But unlike Hegel, who “fell into the illusion of conceiving the real as the product of thought concentrating itself, probing its own depths, and unfolding itself out of itself, by itself” (101), Marx maintains that generalized “exchange-value” is an ideality specific to bourgeois *society*—that is, a historic organization of private property relations and production which takes as given that all things, no matter how unlike each other, have equivalent exchange-values and therefore exist as potential commodities. More peculiarly: the ideality “value”, which is a *predicate* of social relations, comes to operate as *subject* in bourgeois society. As money it becomes the dominant subject “in such a way that individuals are now ruled by *abstractions*, whereas earlier they depended on one another” (164).

Money as measure/symbol externalizes the unity-in-opposition that marks the commodity form: “In the form of money, all properties of the commodity as exchange value appear as an object distinct from it, as a form of social existence separated from the natural existence [use value] of the commodity” (145). And it is as money that value is able to cancel its work of mediation and acquire “the occult ability to add value to itself”. Marx gives a resolutely Hegelian account of value’s non-identical return to itself in *Capital*, Vol. 1:

As the dominant subject [*übergreifendes Subjekt*] of this process, in which it alternately assumes and loses the form of money and the form of commodities, but preserves and expands itself through all these changes, value requires above all an independent form by which its identity with itself may be asserted. Only in the shape of money does it possess this form. Money therefore forms the starting-point and the conclusion of every valorization process (1976:255).

Tremblings

In the Preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel writes that self-identity is realized through “the earnestness, the pain, the patience, and the work of the negative” (2005 [1807]:100). But this “negative” remains abstract. It is only later, in the “Lordship and bondage” section, that Hegel for the first time discerns the “negative” as “another self-consciousness” (1977 [1807]:111). More intriguingly, Hegel portrays the dialectical encounter as a process that enables the “other” (bondsmen) to become “*for himself*, someone existing on his own account” (118). The twist to the story is that it is through his ability to work upon and fashion the object-world of things or raw materials—to recognize what he has shaped and made external not as an “alienated existence”, but rather as the expression of his “essential being”—that the bondsman/servant/slave “becomes conscious of what he truly is” and, hence, “free” (118).

Conspicuously, lord and bondsman are not “free” in the same way: they inhabit qualitatively different states of “freedom” following their encounter. The “*truth* of the independent consciousness” of the self *qua* lord is confirmed as “the servile consciousness of the bondsman” (117); but for the bondsman the lord remains an “other”: an independent existence and source of fear. It is only indirectly, through work—specifically, “a skill which is master over some things” (119)—that the bondsman is able to transform fear into a positive result. Implied in Hegel’s formulation is the status of lord as proprietor, who mediates his relation to the bondsman via the things over which he has power and through which he holds that other in subjection—hence, the lordship/bondage dyad as an (imperfect) allegory for capitalist social relations.¹⁷

Hegel, as I have previously argued, advances a fissured narrative with moments of startling contingency that belie its desire for closure. Sparks of radical possibility escape the grids of conservation, which are subsequently erected. Here, the oft-cited first sentence of the “Lordship and bondage” section is exemplary: “Self-consciousness”, writes Hegel, “exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged”. Although by the end of the section Hegel seemingly forestalls the possibility of the other reserving or refusing acknowledgment and, thereby, short-

circuiting the dialectical progression of self/Spirit, his text opens this window of possibility. Shortly into the “Lordship and bondage” section Hegel issues another remarkable claim: “Self-consciousness faced by another self-consciousness” must *each* “proceed to supersede the *other* independent being in order thereby to become certain of *itself* as the essential being” and thereby “supersede its *own* self, for this other is itself” (1977 [1807]:111). At the moment of encounter all we have is a “play of Forces,” each “staking . . . its own life” and seeking the “death of the other” (112, 113). It is only as the process unfolds that this extraordinary “twofold action” is transmuted into relations of domination and servitude, and order as it should be restored. Similarly, in the sub-section entitled ‘The solicitation of force’ in *Logic*, Hegel describes a reciprocal presupposing of force and “*another force*”:

Each of the two forces contains the unity reflected into itself as sublated and is therefore a presupposing activity; its posits its own self as external; this moment of externality is *its own*; but since it is equally a unity reflected into itself it at the same time posits this its externality not within itself, but as another force (1969 [1812]:512).

In these foregoing passages we meet Hegel the philosopher of encounter, who registers a whole series of tremblings in the being of self as it confronts its own desire to be recognized and to be desired by the other.

Capital’s Heterogeneous Other

In late August 1857, as Marx was composing Notebook M (Introduction) of the *Grundrisse*, a financial panic erupted in the US—sparked by the failure on 24 August 1857 of the New York branch of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company. It was soon reported that the entire capital of the Trust’s home office had been embezzled. New York bankers almost immediately put severe restrictions on even the most routine transactions. People interpreted these restrictions as a sign of impending financial collapse and reacted with panic, rushing to unload stocks and commercial paper at distress prices. To compound the problem, the SS *Central America*, a sailing vessel transporting millions of dollars in gold from the new San Francisco Mint to create a reserve for eastern banks, ran straight into the path of a severe hurricane, and sank in mid-September. Since banking institutions of the day dealt in gold and silver coins (specie) instead of paper money, the loss of some 30,000 pounds of gold sent shock waves through the financial community.

Reports of financial instability, possibly exaggerated, were quickly carried between cities by the new telecommunications medium, the telegraph. The economic contraction that followed the events of 1857 was profound, and extended to Europe, South America, South Africa, and the Far East. It was, according to many, the first worldwide

economic crisis. The US economy was left reeling as the British withdrew capital from US banks, grain prices fell, Russia undersold US cotton on the open market, manufactured goods lay unsold, railroads overbuilt and some then defaulted on debts, and land schemes and projects, dependent on new rail routes, failed. The consequences were severe: significant job loss, and a major slowdown in capital investment, commerce, land development, the formation of unions, and the rate of immigration.

These events rend the pages of the *Grundrisse*. Proximately incited by the American economic crisis, Marx slices into the body of capital in uncanny and unexpected ways. And possibly emboldened by unfolding global tumult—let us not forget that the financial panic of 1857 was book-ended by two seismic political events: the May 1857 sepooy rebellion in India that nearly felled British rule and the March 1858 founding of the pro-Independence Fenian movement in Ireland—Marx uses crisis to produce an agonistic knowledge that is intensely alert to fissures and interruptions in capital's imperial being. Possibly for the same reasons, Marx in the *Grundrisse* is as attentive to the less-noticed Hegel—the philosopher of encounter—as he is to his better-known counterpart—Hegel, the philosopher of sublation.

Even so, Marx is, as earlier evinced, a disobedient pupil, who departs decisively from his teacher. Thus, while Hegel narrates history as the *circulation* of Spirit or the One returning to itself as an ever richer and higher unity, Marx unpacks the process of production as a fraught space-time of *non-circulation* that capital must traverse before re-entering the realm of circulation. And it is in this domain outside circulation, where capital directly encounters the other it must subsume as its own moment if it is to continue to exist, that we are offered *Grundrisse*'s new understanding of capitalism as a two-sided whole: value-for-itself (capital) pitted against use-value-for itself (labor).¹⁸

Consider, therefore, this fitful passage in 'Chapter on Capital' (Notebook III of *Grundrisse*), which repeats with difference Hegel's discussion of force from the vantage point of capital's other:

Labour posited as *not-capital* as such is: (1) *not-objectified labour* [*nicht-vergegenständlichte Arbeit*], *conceived negatively* (itself still objective; the not-objective itself in objective form). As such it is not-raw-material, not-instrument of labour, not-raw-product: labour separated from all means and objects of labour, from its entire objectivity. This living labour, existing as an *abstraction* from these moments of its actual reality (also, not-value); this complete denudation, purely subjective existence of labour, stripped of all objectivity (1973:295–296).

Several key elements of Marx's *oeuvre* make cameo appearances in the passage cited. We meet living labor in an abstracted existence as

“immediate bodily existence”: pure potentiality that has not yet become an instrument or raw material for capital; that has not as yet been captured and consumed for the production of value—the objective form of wealth under capitalism. In this unmediated *capacity*—and in this sense only—can living labor be described as “purely objective use value”, that is, use-value-*for-itself*. As it stands, Marx has only opened a breach. Its emancipatory force awaits explanation. He gives us this in the second segment of the passage in question:

(2) *Not-objectified labour, not-value, conceived positively*, or as a negativity in relation to itself, is not the *not-objectified*, hence non-objective, i.e., subjective existence of labour itself. Labour not as an object, but as activity; not as itself *value*, but as the *living source* of value. [Namely, it is] general wealth (in contrast to capital in which it exists objectively, as reality) as the *general possibility* of the same, which itself exists as such in action. Thus, it is not at all contradictory, or, rather, the in-every-way mutually contradictory statements that labour is *absolute poverty as object*, on one side, and is, on the other side, the *general possibility* of wealth as subject and as activity, are reciprocally determined and follow from the essence of labour, such as it is *presupposed* by capital as its contradiction and as its contradictory being, and such as it is, presupposes capital (1973:296).

Here, Marx tells us that in the raw state of “[*n*]ot objectified labour, not value, conceived positively”, *living labor as activity* is the *possibility*—the irreducible prospect—of multiple actualizations or becomings. In this reading, one possible actualization (indeed, the global condition these days) is for living labor to become “*the use value* of capital” (1973:297, italics in the original): the “form-giving fire” that sustains and extends capital. But conscripted as capitalism’s “*general possibility* of wealth” labor is hurled into forms of life that hem its creative possibilities.

The latter half of the passage is notable for Marx’s emphasis on labor as *activity*. Hence, “[I]labour not as an object, but as activity; not as itself *value*, but as the *living source* of value”. On this reading, capital has an ultimately molecular existence. It names an immensely powerful structure, capitalism, that is however no more *and* no less than the combinatorial effect of spatially diffuse and iterative practices that enable the capture of labor’s use-value for the production of surplus. Capital, one might say, has a virtual materiality, its diagrammatic powers over planetary existence continually activated *in action* through apparatuses for the capture of living labor that are vast and ingenious: encompassing the spheres of production, distribution, and consumption.

But so captured, labor is “*presupposed* by capital as its contradiction and as its contradictory being, and such as it is, presupposes capital”. One could read into this fragment the proposition that capture is not merely a

question of foreclosing freedoms—for instance, employment choices—by divesting labor of property or means of production as the classic Marxist argument would go. It is also the work of inciting individual desires in ways that are useful for capital, not to mention critical in its relentless drive for self-expansion. Thus, identities of various sorts—validated in the name of “freedom”, as vessels of emancipation—are easily annexed to the commodity logic of capital, becoming its spectacular productions.

But the buzz of hope never vanishes. The Marx of *Grundrisse* is intent on producing political knowledge charged with a kinetic potential for subversion. Thus, in spite of capital's incursions—its ingenious forms of capture—labor remains “its contradictory being”. Marx even hints that labor remains somehow *unintelligible* to capital. Its possibilities to be otherwise, not-for-capital, are therefore an omnipresent source of fear and peril. *Grundrisse* leaves us with a looming political question: will capital use this viral contradiction that suffuses its existence to discover new strategies of survival and accumulation (as it has been doing), or will the virus short-circuit its host?

Marx and Postcoloniality

The specter of such unintelligibility—the withheld secret beyond the dialectical cunning of sublation—haunts capitalist modernity. Thus the figure of labor as “not-value” in the *Grundrisse* anticipates (in unintended ways perhaps) a cornerstone of postcolonial criticism: the “subaltern”. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued in numerous venues¹⁹ that one of Marx's singular achievements was to expose the founding and recurring violence that sustains the economic coding of value under capitalism; and by so doing, he textualized Hegel's dialectic, throwing it open in ways that are extraordinarily generative for “ab-using” Enlightenment's pieties and protocols.²⁰ “[W]here in Marx”, Spivak (1999:99) rhetorically asks, “is that lever to turn the text, to de-construct it for use, where that moment of transgression or bafflement? In my reading of Marx . . . that lever and moment (concept-metaphors necessarily mixed) is in Value”.

Value, for Spivak, is the machine that wrenches the text of (Enlightenment/capitalist/colonial) modernity away from itself, shifting certitude into bafflement and unease. And nowhere in Spivak's *oeuvre* are the sites of bafflement and transgression more vividly explored than in her 1988 essay, ‘Can the subaltern speak?’²¹ Quite possibly the most widely noticed and debated provocation on the question of subalternity and the postcolonial, it stages the arguments that follow.

Spivak's now canonical essay enacts a series of displacements. It begins by noting the failure of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, two of the most ardent critics of the “sovereign subject”, to de-center this

apparition. What initially appears as an idiosyncratic move—Spivak hones in on a conversation between Deleuze and Foucault, rather than their formal writings—ends up being emblematic of the undetected and viral workings of ideology. Spivak argues that Deleuze and Foucault’s aversion to a theory of representation that would take account of the intellectual’s location and of the geopolitical determinations that operate him serves, unpardonably, to “conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject”.

The conversation in question ranges around Maoism and the workers’ struggle in China. Deleuze and Foucault speak of these transparently, invoking “the concrete experience of the oppressed”. They talk as if privy to the intentions and consciousness of Chinese workers, and are neither troubled by their monolithic depiction of Maoism nor by their naïve conflation of workers’ struggles in the periphery with those in the core. The appeal to “concrete experience” as the guarantor of knowledge about the subaltern rehearses all the ethical and epistemological problems of “positivist empiricism”. At issue here is Deleuze and Foucault’s elision of their intermediary role as theoreticians who *produce* representations—that is, re-present the reality of “the oppressed”. The activity of ideologically interested intellectual production is effaced in Deleuze and Foucault’s conversation. Instead they imagine themselves as ciphers that merely relay “what actually happens” in the experience of subalterns, thereby setting outside discourse both the intellectual who constitutes and the subalterns who are constituted. Such transparency and parity are purchased by placing signifiers and signified in a relationship of equivalence—a one-to-one transaction—that rehearses the liberal-capitalist fiction of equal exchange between free individuals. Despite their acute analyses of power, Deleuze and Foucault seem unaware of the international division of labor that structures production within factories and academia alike—and as such, of the unequal realization of surplus value which allows metropolitan intellectuals to profit from their representations of subaltern “experience” in the peripheries. Instead Deleuze and Foucault become prey to the subterfuge of ideology and reproduce the “subject of the West, or the West as Subject” that claims its usual retinue of privileges: privileged understanding of phenomena, the privilege to dictate various forms of production, the privilege to claim surplus value from such production—and, above all, the privilege to be exempt from naming itself (which reproduces a position of transcendence and mastery). In Spivak’s words: “This S/subject, curiously sewn together into a transparency by denegations, belongs to the exploiters’ side of the international division of labor” (1988:280).

The criticisms staged in the opening encounter with Deleuze and Foucault frame the remainder of Spivak’s intervention. Her methodological aim is to advocate a radical practice of textuality

and reading that will account for the politics of representation in its double sense of proxy (“speaking for”) and portrait (“speaking of”), rather than glibly reincarnate the transcendent, paternal subject of authority and knowledge. Spivak disrupts the intellectual’s complicity in an epistemic violence that persistently constitutes “the Other as the Self’s shadow”. This remark, which is directed as much at progressive Third World scholars as at Western radical intellectuals, paves the way for a stark and simple injunction: “To confront them [subaltern Others] is not to represent them (*vertreten*) but to learn to represent (*darstellen*) ourselves”. A lengthy discussion of the Hindu practice of *sati* (widow sacrifice) and the paradoxes that attend its abolition by British colonial rulers—Spivak’s point is not that “the killing of widows” is acceptable but rather that women’s subjectivity is repeatedly foreclosed, first by the epistemic violence of Hindu law and later colonial and post-colonial law—culminates in the now notorious answer to her article’s title and provocation. Her terse response: “The subaltern cannot speak”.

Several critics, even sympathetic ones, have objected to Spivak’s “muting” of subaltern voices.²² They misconstrue the implications of Spivak’s essay, of which there are at least five overlapping readings—all with radical implications for studies of subalternity. First, the essay is tautological. By definition, the subaltern is that subject (or that “space of sheer heterogeneity” in Spivak’s words) who cannot speak. She is always “spoken for”; such space is always figured, represented. Second, the subaltern is that subject who cannot speak because her speech is disqualified. Here “speech” carries the political valence of being the property of that person who is properly recognized as citizen of the *polis*—and hence a “political”. Third, the subaltern is that singular figure who, although exploited and marginalized within hegemonic formations, defies dialectical integration. She is the figure of the “radically other” who marks off a cryptic, secret “space of withholding” within the territorialized ambits of modernity, which dreads her precisely because she represents an internal margin that resists coding and, hence, the Enlightenment desire to know in order to control.²³ Fourth, the subaltern names that figure of undecidability whose reality cannot be known (“spoken of”): as such, she forces an ethical decision around how and why to substitute for her (“speak for”). Subalternity pits the two senses of representation—portrait (*darstellen*) and proxy (*vertreten*)—into an aporetic relationship. Fifth, even if the subaltern could speak for herself—or as Spivak puts it, “invest her own itinerary”—she would still be within the domains of ideology and politics, and be operated by them. In other words, she would come to presence via the work of “supplements”: the network of signifiers, which precede and constitute her. The rub? There is no escape from the politics and ethics of representation.

To bring this back to the question of value, the figure of the subaltern as “space of sheer heterogeneity” can be read as the living, creative potential in labor for becoming *otherwise*—*an immanent potential that is both the effaced predicate of capital and, as the possibility of use value-for-itself, capital’s differentiated “other”, which persistently exceeds its imperial mediations and objectifications*. As Spivak notes with characteristic insight and obtuseness:

[T]he short-circuit teleological status of use-value, *materially* adequate to its proper consumption [at either end of the capitalist value-chain] but inaccessible to evaluation (and not because of transcendentalism) is, strictly speaking, a denegation of the natural and rational inscription of the possibility of surplus-value, the mark that a mere “humanism” cannot disappear, that it must be negotiated with. This is, in effect, the paradoxical excess or “surplus”-value of the entire system, conveniently yoked to exchange [under capitalism] by deliberate error (1993:109, italics in the original).

In Conclusion

We have seen how Marx maneuvers a Hegel who is different-in-himself to expose tremblings *within* capital that unsettle its desire for unity and universality. Through the cryptic figure of labor-as-“not-value” *Grundrisse* enacts a remarkable critique of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, one that provides a clearing to think beyond the epistemic and geographic power of “Europe” without resorting to problematic artifices.²⁴ Marx’s dialectic relentlessly displaces the sublative impulse of Hegel’s philosophical historicism—one that would negate difference and leaves no room for its affirmation outside the speculative protocols of capitalism. Marx, by contrast, dwells on the moment of negativity in capital’s repeated and heterogeneous spatiotemporal encounters with labor as a site of fear and desire. He shows us, on the one side, capital’s desire to capture “living labor” as use-value for itself and its permanent fear that labor could become otherwise; on the other side, he underscores labor’s desire to be otherwise and its fear that without capital it may not be able to remain active and reproduce.

Thus, *Grundrisse* confronts head-on necessity and the repeating incarceration of labor through capture, but retains fidelity to possibilities for liberation within—or more forcefully, as a result of—capital’s desire for accumulation and the geographies written into this. Today, when the operations of capitalism have been characterized as a logic of permanent crisis or emergency and the left is vertiginously unsure of itself, a revisit of the *Grundrisse*—anniversary or not—seems sorely overdue.

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Endnotes

¹ Letter dated 8 December 1857. In Marx and Engels (1856–1859) *Collected Works* (hereafter MECW), p 214. Letter available through Marx and Engels Internet Archive at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1857/letters/57_12_08.htm

² Also worth consulting on this topic is Arthur (2004).

³ I use the term “concept” in the strict sense of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, which Hegel subsequently appropriates. Hence, “[c]oncepts . . . are *functions* which serve to *unite* diverse representations—that is, the immediate givens of sense—under something common” (Burbidge 2006:21, italics in the original). Thus, the concepts “labor” and “capital” gather empirically diverse manifestations of these under a common representation.

⁴ The standard translation is *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977 [1807]) [hereafter, *Phenomenology*]. I have opted for Yovel’s more recent translation of the Preface because it is stylistically clearer, although both Miller and Yovel rely on Hegel’s original German text *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1952).

⁵ Hegel never names “Europe” as such in the 1807 *Phenomenology*, but does later in the 1830 *Lectures*. I have borrowed the formulation, S/subject of Europe, from Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak’s (1988) essay, “Can the subaltern speak?”

⁶ Louis Althusser’s searing critique of Hegel’s “whole” and its political limitations deserves special mention (Althusser 1997 [1968]).

⁷ According to Yovel (2005:42), “Hegel sets a distance between certainty and truth. Each of these two stands at an opposite end of the *Phenomenology*. The process begins with subject subjective certainty, which, because it is a direct, unmediated personal experience, is not yet truth; truth is attained only at the end, when the subject’s consciousness has fully overcome its merely particular standpoint and adopted the standpoint of the whole as a development of its (the subject’s) own self.”

⁸ Martin Nicolaus (1973:41) flatly misreads Hegel on this point. In the “Foreword” to his translation of *Grundrisse* he writes: “[W]here does Hegel indicate the *conditions* on which the identity of Being and Nothing depends? What moment of their contradiction contains the possibility of their non-identity? What basis is given for a potential breakdown in the mediating movement of Becoming? None whatever; there is no such basis, no such possibility; the identity and mediation are unconditional and absolute”. Nicolaus goes on to contrast the apparent absence of contingency and mediation in Hegel’s dialectic to Marx’s materialist dialectic in the *Grundrisse*, where “the identity of opposites is conditional; but their non-identity, their struggle, antagonism and break-up are inevitabilities”.

⁹ This is a paraphrase from Maurizio Viano (1991:xxxiv).

¹⁰ Marx’s engagements with Hegel’s philosophy date back to his early writings, although his most sustained foray into Hegel’s *Logic* is surely in the 1857–1858 *Grundrisse*. For Marx’s early commentaries on Hegel see his “Critique of Hegel’s philosophy of the state” (1843) and several companion essays, published in Easton and Guddat (1967). Similarly, the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* contains a spirited critique of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Right*. Commentators who have noted the imprint of Hegel’s *Logic* on *Capital* include Lenin (1914–1916) (remarkable because Lenin was unaware of the existence of *Grundrisse*), Schmidt (1971), Nicolaus in his ‘Foreword’ to the Penguin edition of *Grundrisse* (1973), Rosdolsky (1977) and, most recently, Uchida (1988). In a new book, Karatani (2003) has claimed that Kant, not Hegel, is the more direct line of descent to Marx. I am not in a position to adjudicate this debate, but it is abundantly clear that numerous formulations in Marx have a Hegelian mould.

¹¹ In Hegel’s scheme the movement of the dialectic produces ever-richer unity of knowledge, such that greater complexity comes to imply a higher degree of concreteness.

¹² Hegel's words are: "The resultant equilibrium of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be is in the first place becoming itself". In the same section he says this about sublation: "on the one hand it means to preserve, to maintain, and equally it also means to cause to cease, to put an end to . . . Thus what is sublated is at the same time preserved; it has only lost its immediacy but is not on that account annihilated" (1969 [1812]:106, 107).

¹³ Hegel employs the term "speculative reason" to describe the synthesis and affirmative outcome that results from the mutual dissolution of immediate being and its reflected unity. This stage of sublation corresponds to capital's self-valorization, or its ability to speculate and return to itself, expanded, as "being-for-self". Notably, the root of the word "speculation" is the Latin *speculum*, which means "mirror".

¹⁴ See Henderson's (2004) superb meditation on value.

¹⁵ The table mapping Hegel's *Logic* to Marx's *Grundrisse* was significantly enabled by my uptake of Uchida's (1988) painstaking monograph, *Marx's Grundrisse and Hegel's Logic*.

¹⁶ Marx has a fascinating discussion in *Grundrisse* (pp 142–144) on the emergence of exchange-value.

¹⁷ See Hegel's provocative discussion of "appropriation" and "property" in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1991 [1821]:75–78). I am grateful to a very thoughtful *Antipode* reviewer for this reminder.

¹⁸ See the discussion in Lebowitz (1992:ch 5).

¹⁹ A short list would include: Spivak (1986, 1993, 1999).

²⁰ On the implications of textualizing, see the excellent essay by Castree (1996). Spivak (2004) takes up the notion of "ab-using" the Enlightenment.

²¹ There are several versions of Spivak's article in circulation, but the one that appears to be most frequently invoked features in Grossberg and Nelson (1988).

²² See, for example, Coronil (1997).

²³ Compare Baucom (2005).

²⁴ I have in mind Chakrabarty's constructs of "History 1" and "History 2s" in his deeply suggestive book, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2000). Chakrabarty, to my mind, inadequately theorizes the relationship between these two domains of "History". I elaborate on this disaffection and others in Chap. 5 of my book (Gidwani 2008).

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Uneven Developments: From The *Grundrisse* To *Capital*

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Abstract: Since its publication, Marxists have debated the relation between the *Grundrisse* and the first volume of *Capital*. This paper offers one entry point into this debate by comparing the way each text frames its “problematic of uneven development”, that is, the way that capitalism’s inherently uneven development is thematized as a problem for explanation. In the *Grundrisse* the uneven nature of capitalism as development is explained by the emergence of capitalism from precapitalist relations. While this analysis is not entirely absent from *Capital* (cf the discussion of primitive accumulation), precapitalist formations are not treated as systematically in *Capital*. By contrast, uneven development enters *Capital* in the final section, particularly where Marx criticizes Wakefield. Reading these two texts together, I argue that the problematic of uneven development shifts from *Grundrisse* to *Capital* in a way that underscores Marx’s growing stress on capital’s imperial character. This shift has its roots in political events of the period when Marx rewrote *Grundrisse* into *Capital*.

Keywords: colonialism, uneven development, Marx, value

I

The theory of uneven geographical development needs further development (Harvey 2006:71).

Perhaps no Marxist concept is more central to critical geography than “uneven development”. It defines much of what is *geographical* about critical geography, since it is the very unevenness of social–spatial power relations that often inspires our research. Although the social relations in question are rarely defined in narrow economic terms, critical geographers recognize that the uneven nature of (and inequalities woven through) spaces are produced by capitalist social relations. This has been best demonstrated by David Harvey, who continues to rally us to the work of refining the Marxist geographical account of uneven development (as the epigram attests).

It may come then as something of a surprise to many critical geographers that uneven development is not a concept of Marx’s. It is certainly a *Marxist* concept, meaning that it cannot be understood apart from the intellectual tradition inspired by Marx’s analysis of capitalism, Harvey included. And to be sure, the unevenness of capitalist

socio-spatial relations is a central problem of analysis in Marx's mature economic writings (which were inaugurated with the *Grundrisse*). Yet, to repeat, "uneven development" is not a concept elaborated by Marx. This paper addresses this gap—between the present-day centrality of "uneven development" in critical geographical thought, and its absence as such in Marx—by grappling with Marx's attempts to explain what we today refer to as "uneven development". To do so, I compare the way that the problematic of uneven development is framed in two of Marx's greatest texts: *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. That is, I examine the way that these texts situate uneven development relative to their stated, central task—the task of unraveling capitalist social relations and analyzing value.

What is at stake in such conceptual work? In the first place, we geographers stand to benefit from learning more about the itineraries of our core concepts: doing so can only strengthen our analysis. But putting the concerns of critical geography *qua* subdiscipline aside, the importance of uneven development as a critical, vernacular concept is enormous. Its gravity derives from the massively uneven dispensations of power and wealth in the world. "Uneven development" has proven to be the paradigmatic description of the *geographical nature of this injustice*. And in the wake of the "fall of communism", Marxist thought today is largely defined by its criticisms of the unequal provision of the fruits of "capitalist development".¹ We should recognize that this represents a departure from Marx's texts (as well as from most Marxisms predating the 1950s). If the great struggle of the twentieth century, as Edward Said once wrote, was the popular effort to decolonize the world, then one fundamental effect of this struggle for Marxism was to shift the accent of our critique from labor capital to colonized imperial. Addressing the latter dyad requires, for critical geographers, the concept of "uneven development". Perhaps this is why Harvey argues that the theory of uneven geographical development needs further elaboration and refining.

The *Grundrisse* is central to the task. Part of what distinguishes this text both from Marx's earlier works as well as the three later drafts of *Capital* is the way it weaves four threads together: the emergence of capitalism, value, contradictions of capitalism, and capital's expansionary tendency.² Although these threads reappear in *Capital*, the resulting tapestry is not the same. By reading the twists in the weave of these four threads in two texts, we may be able to answer some of the questions that Harvey has recently tabled about uneven development. In neither text does Marx offer a definitive explanation of uneven development; each text offers distinct and useful, but limited, thoughts toward an explanation. Marx provides us with the elements of a theory that sees uneven development as an effect of four related processes: capitalism's original and primitive accumulation of its own

“exterior” in slavery, the formal subsumption of labor, the displacement of diverse precapitalist formations, and colonialism. Taken together, we may call these processes *imperialism*. I use this term decidedly and to underscore the main finding of my research: the difference in Marx’s treatment of the problematic of uneven development in these two texts results from his growing recognition during the 1850s of the interconnections between England’s imperial brutality and the expansionary nature of capital. Although Marx himself did not use these terms, we may speak of Marx’s “discovery of uneven development and imperialism”.³ The work of critical geographers since the 1970s (Harvey included) to elaborate a theory of uneven development should therefore be seen as attempts to elaborate upon Marx’s discovery of 150 years ago. To reiterate, my reading aims to contribute to this work by examining the problematic of uneven development in Marx’s texts. This is not to render Marx’s economic oeuvre whole or settled—rather the opposite. My goal is emphatically not to make Marx consistent with himself in order to convince you, my reader, to be consistent with Marx. It is rather to trace part of the itinerary of what remains, for many, the central concept of critical geography.

II

[T]he really difficult point to be discussed . . . is how the relations of production as legal relations enter into uneven development (Marx, *Grundrisse*⁴).

If our aim is to discern where and how uneven development figures within Marx’s analysis of capitalism in the *Grundrisse*, how do we proceed? The concept only appears once, in the Introduction, and only in passing. Discussing the primacy of material production for historical and social change, Marx comments on the “uneven development of material production relative to e.g. artistic development” and the unevenness of the relations of production and legal relations (1973 [1857–1858]:109; also see epigram). A difficult point indeed—not least because Marx’s comments are preliminary and never elaborated upon. Yet, two lessons may be gleaned from the Introduction. First, Marx emphasizes that capitalist relations of production, understood as *social relations*, develop unevenly relative to other sorts of social relations that a Marxist would expect to shift along with capitalism. So the fact that art and law—two crucial elements of the social relations for any society—do not grow and change in lock-step with the relations of production is, in Marx’s words, a “really difficult point to be discussed”.⁵ Second, Marx indicates that any use of the concept “development” would require the destruction of the “usual abstractness” of “the concept of progress” (109).⁶ Nothing would have been less in keeping with his method than the simple

notion of progress. Development must be thought dialectically—not teleologically.

So much for “uneven development” in the *Grundrisse*. It is introduced, noted to be “really difficult”, and left behind. Yet even if this *expression* disappears, Marx continues to analyze the uneven development of relations of production vis-à-vis social relations. Let us consider one well known section of the *Grundrisse*: the “Forms which precede capitalist production”, with the parenthetical subtitle: “Concerning the process which precedes the formation of the capital relation or of original accumulation”.⁷ Here Marx confronts the task of defining capitalism by its origin and by its difference with all that came earlier. In this analysis, we find Marx’s earliest attempt to explain the uneven nature of capitalism’s development as an effect of the very emergence of capitalism from within precapitalist Europe.⁸ To appreciate this, we should first locate this section in the text. The *Grundrisse* begins with methodological discussions and an analysis of production and consumption. Then comes the chapter on money, where Marx distinguishes value from money, followed by the chapter on capital, where Marx explains how money is transformed into capital and how labor produces surplus value. This culminates in a discussion of the circulation and accumulation of capital, again with an emphasis on surplus value. So far, so good. The narrative does not begin with commodity, as in *Capital*, but it traces a similar arc, that is, it follows the dynamic movement of value: from production, via the application of labor purchased with money, to the conversion of surplus value into capital, and so forth.

At this point the narrative breaks in a new direction, what appears to be an historical digression, to explain how capitalist social relations came into existence in Europe. This section begins with the following remark, which hangs like a frame over what follows:

One of the prerequisites of wage labor and one of the historic conditions for capital is free labor and the exchange of free labor for money, in order to reproduce money and to valorize it . . . Another prerequisite is the separation of free labor from the objective conditions of its realization—from the means and material of labor. This means above all that the workers must be separated from the land, which functions as his natural workshop (1986 [1857–1858]:399).

Marx thus posits two necessary conditions for the emergence of capitalist social relations: first, the exchange of “free”—neither slave nor serf but proletarian—labor for money and second, the emergence of a certain necessity in the labor–capital relation by separating workers from the means of production, particularly the land.

In this way Marx links uneven development to the emergence of these two conditions from, and subsequent extension through, *precapitalist*

social relations. After a long introductory paragraph, Marx sketches three distinct forms that are historically–geographically differentiated. The first, the so-called “Asiatic” or “oriental” form, is said to be “natural and spontaneous”; the second, the Roman form, is expressed by commune towns; the third, the Germanic, is grounded upon the household as an economic totality (1973 [1857–1858]:472–485). I think Gayatri Spivak is right when she characterizes (one part of) this famous analysis as “not an explanation but an attempt to fit historical presuppositions into a logical mold” (1999:81).⁹ And it is not difficult to pair this business of “fitting” presuppositions into logical molds with Marx’s infamous question from his essay on “The British rule in India”: “can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia?” (1968 [1853]:41). The link between “mankind fulfill[ing] its destiny in . . . Asia” and the Asiatic mode of pre-capitalist production is suggested by Marx’s very ontopogenic division of the world into ideal forms.¹⁰ So we may find in the *Grundrisse* evidence of a fundamental Eurocentrism. And not only here.

If there is a dialectical quality to Marx’s analysis here it may be found where the “fitting” exceeds the mold; that is, in Marx’s very attempt to ground his analysis of capitalism in historical categories in a fashion that is itself neither empiricist nor historicist. This reading would not apply, I think, to the aforementioned question of the “Asiatic mode” but it may well be for the question of the origin of labor-sale. Consider where Marx writes that “the positing of the individual as a *worker*, who is stripped of all qualities except this one, is itself a *historical product*” (1968 [1853]:41). The worker is a historical product but not the result of historical laws, nor “a product of history” that simply is there because history made it that way. The existence of each laborer defies the notion of history because nothing that comes before can explain what makes the fundamental leap, proletarianization, happen. And this leap is not made once. And it changes history each time. In this view Marx’s sketch of precapitalist formations is less an essay on “what came earlier” in a strict temporal sense as it is an analysis of the conditions of possibility for a twisting of property and power needed for capitalist social relations to come to be—not temporally, but *ontologically*.

In the emergence of capitalism two fundamental changes occur in social relations: the crystallization of property relations and the emerging centrality of labor–capital relations. Marx elaborates by identifying the conditions needed to free the worker as such, as “objectless, purely subjective labour capacity confronting the objective conditions of production as his *not-property*”; that is, a person with nothing to sell but their labor, their own life. Marx summarizes the emergence of capitalist social relations as a set of presuppositions and dissolutions:

[A] process of history which dissolves the various forms in which the worker is a proprietor . . . *Dissolution* of the relation to the earth—land and soil—as natural condition of production—to which he relates as his own inorganic being . . . *Dissolution* of the relations in which he appears as *proprietor of the instrument*. Just as the above landed property presupposes a *real community*, so does this property of the worker in the instrument presuppose a particular form of the development of manufactures, namely *craft, artisan work* . . . *Dissolution* . . . at the same time of the relations in which the *workers themselves*, the *living labour capacities* themselves, still belong *directly among the objective conditions of production*, and are appropriated as such—i.e. are slaves or serfs (1973 [1857–1858]:497–498).

Capitalist social relations emerge not as a preformed, external totality, but come into existence through—Marx italicizes the word thrice—the *dissolution* of older social relations. Capitalist social relations emerge therefore in a way that is both complete—since the essence of capitalism is the hiring of labor as a commodity, which happens at the “beginning” of capitalism—but also profoundly incomplete, since capitalist social relations must reproduce themselves elsewhere and beyond an initial purchase of labor. It takes time for everything to dissolve, so to speak. Earlier in the *Grundrisse*, still within the chapter on Capital, Marx insists that capitalist relations of production “do not develop out of *nothing*”, nor do they emerge “from the womb of the Idea positing itself” as for Hegel. No, capitalist social relations emerge “within and in contradiction to the existing development of production and the inherited, traditional property relations” (1986 [1857–1858]:208). Capitalist forces of production emerge where they are not capable of being, initially:

within and in contradiction to the existing development of production and the inherited, traditional property relations. If in the fully developed bourgeois system each economic relationship presupposes the other in a bourgeois-economic form, and everything posited is thus also a premise, that is the case with every organic system. This organic system itself has its premises as a totality, and its development into a totality consists precisely in subordinating all elements of society to itself, or in creating out of it the organs it still lacks. This is historically how it becomes a totality. Its becoming this totality constitutes a moment of its process, of its development (1986 [1857–1858]:208).

We should read this in light of Marx’s warning that any use of the concept “development” would require the destruction of the usual abstractness of the concept of progress. The emergence of capitalist social relations—not all at once, but by positing relations that are then taken as premises for advance—is the counterpart to capitalism *becoming* totality, a process

that is never complete. The process is characterized by the tendency to subordinate “all elements of society” so that it may create “the organs it still lacks”—for instance, the elements and organs of *law* (see epigram).

Marx takes pains in his notes to conceptualize this totality both concretely and spatially. In the paragraph immediately following the passage I just cited—a hinge-point that is, for me, an illustration of Marx’s dialectical procedure at work in the notebooks—Marx turns his attention to the moment when capitalist social relations encounter non-capitalist relations through geographical diffusion:

[I]f, within a society, the modern relations of production, i.e. capital, are developed in their totality, and this society now takes possession of a new terrain, as e.g. the colonies, it finds, more especially its representative the capitalist finds, that his capital ceases to be capital without wage labour, and that one of the premises of wage labor is not only landed property in general but modern landed property; landed property which, as capitalized rent, is expensive and as such excludes the direct use of the soil by individuals. Therefore *Wakefield’s* theory of colonization . . . is immensely important for a correct understanding of modern landed property (1986 [1857–1858]:208).¹¹

In these two paragraphs Marx joins the emergence of capitalist social relations with territorial power. Capitalism emerges through dissolution of precapitalist social relations *in Europe*, but more, it flows, a dynamic solvent for transforming precapitalist relations elsewhere.

This remark about the spread of capitalism outward from Europe manifests Marx’s Eurocentrism. In the *Grundrisse* Marx asserts that in Europe the relations of production under capitalism are not only the most complex of any society but also hold the key to understanding everything else. In the Introduction to the *Grundrisse*, Marx writes: “bourgeois society is the most developed and many-faceted historical organization of production” (1986 [1857–1858]:42). His point is not only that capitalist Europe is more complex but also that it contains the key to the past, everywhere: “the anatomy of man is a key to the anatomy of the ape . . . Bourgeois economy thus provides a key to that of antiquity . . .” (42). I think it is fair to say that this style of thought opened the way toward the Eurocentric stagism later enshrined as dialectical materialism and, in a different frame, as modernization.¹²

Which is perhaps why Marx decided to leave it out of *Capital*.

III

It is not because an English washerwoman cannot sit down to breakfast without tea and sugar, that the world has been circumnavigated; but it is because the world has been circumnavigated that an English

washerwoman requires tea and sugar for breakfast (Wakefield 1967 [1834]:243).

The question of precapitalist formations returns in *Capital* in two ways, neither as extensive nor speculative as in the *Grundrisse*. In Part Five of the third volume of *Capital*, best known for its analysis of the role of finance in the production process, we find a chapter on “pre-capitalist relations” (1981 [1894]:728–749) where Marx argues that the transition from pre-capitalist relations into capitalism was made possible by two “antediluvian forms of capital” that long predate the emergence of capitalism in toto: usurer’s capital and merchant’s capital.¹³ Yet credit cannot take credit for creating capitalism, since “usury, like trade, exploits a given mode of production but [can]not create it; both relate to the mode of production from outside” (745). This suits Marx’s argument that capitalism emerges through the dialectical unfolding of itself. But we should not be distracted by these remarks on credit, for they take us no further in understanding the origins of capitalism or its uneven development.

Marx returns to these problems more substantively in Part Eight of the first volume of *Capital* on primitive accumulation. Here Marx reveals the tendency of capitalist accumulation—the secret of capital’s emergence red in tooth and claw—and then concludes with this description of the end of capitalism:

This expropriation is accomplished by the action of the immanent laws of capitalistic production itself . . . [leading to] the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market . . . Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital . . . grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralization of the means of production and socialization of labor at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated (1976 [1867]:929).

Note that Marx’s analysis of the impending end of capitalism is linked directly to what we call today uneven development. What was supposed to bring about the end of capitalism is here characterized as the increasing divisions between classes and societies as a consequence of “the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market”. These divisions are themselves brought about by the extension-slash-centralization of capital’s contradictions. The knell of capitalist private property is sounded, albeit slowly, by the uneven development of

capitalism on a planetary scale, with the centralization of the means of production and the socialization of labor reaching a point of fundamental contradiction.¹⁴ Yet despite the entanglement of all peoples, the mass of misery, the increasing numbers of proletarians, etc, the expropriators have not yet been expropriated.

One wonders if, despite everything, Marx wanted to hedge his bets, because he does something strange here. Volume I does not end at its natural conclusion—the destruction of capitalism. Why did Marx, who arranged *Capital* so delicately and dialectically, opt against concluding with this majestic *Aufhebung*? Instead this conclusion is followed by a brief and breezy discussion of Wakefield's theory of colonialism. Noting that this final chapter's placement is "somewhat odd" (1982:413), David Harvey asks: "why open up such questions at the end of a work that appeared to reach its natural culmination in the preceding chapter?" Harvey's (admittedly speculative) reply is to suggest that Marx is drawing a shrewd parallel with the conclusion of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel "proposes . . . colonial solutions" to the problems facing bourgeois civil society by demonstrating that "there is no *outer* resolution to the internal contradictions of capitalism" (414).¹⁵ Harvey may be onto something—Marx knew his Hegel—but there is a more immediate and I think stronger explanation to this riddle, stronger because it is borne out by clues from Marx's notes, letters, and previous drafts, including the *Grundrisse*.

Except for two brief passages, Marx does not address colonialism in the *Grundrisse*; nor, again, in *Capital*, until the final chapter—ostensibly a minor digression on Wakefield's theory of colonialism. This is the same Wakefield we saw cited in the *Grundrisse* on the origins of capitalism: Edward Gibbon Wakefield (1796–1862), a British political economist obscured by history but important in his time.¹⁶ Wakefield married into wealth, and when his first wife died, he abducted another wealthy woman into forced marriage—but was caught and sent to Newgate prison for three years. Not unlike Gramsci (1992), while in prison he filled notebooks with reflections on political economy—albeit toward an entirely different effect. Wakefield emerged from prison a strenuous advocate for colonialism as a solution to all Britain's problems. No armchair theorist, Wakefield went on to play an important role in the British colonization of southern Australia, New Zealand, and Canada in the 1830s and 1840s.

Marx's criticisms are directed principally at Wakefield's (1967 [1834]) book, *England and America*, the fruit of his ruminations in prison.¹⁷ Before turning to Marx's reading of Wakefield, a few words on Wakefield's text are due. Notwithstanding the fact that Wakefield openly advocates colonialism, he was no idiot. His texts offer defenses and *analyses* of colonialism; they contribute novel arguments and anticipate much of the content, if little of the tone, of twentieth century Marxist

theories of imperialism. Noting that the advance of capitalist social relations within England has created circumstances that are unfavorable to continued growth, in *England and America* Wakefield argues that colonialism will bring an “Extension of Markets”, “Enlarge [the] field for Capital”, and assuage the problem of “Excessive Numbers”—of unruly underemployed workers. It would be hard to find a more concise statement of the gains of colonialism to capitalists. Wakefield’s views were based upon an analysis of British political economy that, like Marx, took the thought of Smith and Ricardo as the starting point. And like Marx, Wakefield emphasized the essential novelty of the British situation—the unprecedented industrialization of capital and proletarianization of labor—and speculated that the intense competition among laborers had reduced their quality of life: “[many laborers lack] the means of a comfortable subsistence according to the respectful standards of living”. Yet this does not mean that capital is thriving. On the contrary, Wakefield explains, in England there is a surfeit of capital: “capital sometimes accumulates so far beyond the room for productive investment, that a great mass of capital is wasted, both at home and abroad, in all sorts of unproductive enterprises” (1849:64). This overaccumulation could best be solved by exporting capital to colonies that would in turn create new markets for British industry. Such was Wakefield’s “theory”, which called for the Colonial Office to sell land at a carefully calibrated (generally higher) price, so that colonists would be compelled to sell their labor—that is, to become proletarians (1849).¹⁸

Still, it is puzzling that Marx would give pride of place to Wakefield in the final chapter of *Capital*, since Wakefield receives only very modest attention in the *Grundrisse*, the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (of 1861–1863), and elsewhere in *Capital*. In comparison to the rich and extending commentaries we find on Marx’s main interlocutors regarding *value*—Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Thomas Malthus and Samuel Bailey—the passages on Wakefield amount to little. The dozen or so references to Wakefield in these texts merely anticipate, and are eclipsed by, the final chapter of *Capital*. Yet there Marx credits Wakefield’s theory of colonialism with inadvertently exposing something essential about the nature of capitalism. Remember that Wakefield was concerned with the fact that colonialism was hampered by the lack of fully formed capitalist social relations. Marx writes: “At earlier stages of production . . . an earlier working class may be present sporadically, not however as a *universal* prerequisite of production. The case of *colonies* (see Wakefield [. . .]) shows how this relation is itself a product of capitalist production” (1988 [1861]:75–76). The existence of the capital–labor relation is “initially sporadic”, but capitalism posits it increasingly: not only in theory, but also concretely, as is demonstrated by colonialism. Marx returns to this “immensely important” line of

thinking later in his notebooks. Here is, I think, the key passage on Wakefield in Marx's economic writings before the final chapter of *Capital*:

The merit of *Wakefield's* new system of colonization is not that he discovered or promoted the art of colonization, nor that he made any fresh discoveries whatsoever in the field of political economy, but that he naively laid bare the narrow-mindedness of political economy without being clear himself as to the importance of these discoveries . . . The point is that in the colonies, particularly in the earliest stages of development, bourgeois relations are not yet fully formed; not yet presupposed, as they are in old established countries. They are in the process of becoming. The conditions of their origin therefore emerge more clearly. It appears that these *economic relations* are neither present by nature, nor are they *things*, which is the way the political economists are rather inclined to view capital (1988 [1861]:256–257).¹⁹

For Marx, Wakefield demonstrates two intertwined truths: *capitalism* is not a system of markets or capital, but an ensemble of social relations; and the “becoming” (not to say “origin”) of capitalist relations can be found in the colonies. Remember that Marx's clearest statement in *Capital* Volume I to the effect that capital is not a thing, but a social relation, appears in the final chapter on colonialism—and he attributes this discovery to Wakefield (1976 [1867]:932).

This attribution is not entirely ironic. Marx and Wakefield understood more clearly than any political economists of their time that colonialism was intended to resolve contradictions engendered by Britain's early advance as an industrial capitalist society. Yet their interpretations of this fact are fundamentally distinct. Whereas Wakefield examines the colonial situation as a statesman and advocates adjustments in the Colonial Office's land pricing scheme, Marx studies the contradictions of capitalism in England to hasten communism. Wakefield advocates colonialism to overcome two contradictions—the overaccumulation of capital, and labor strife—by *extending* capitalist social relations to the colonies. Yet these contradictions were not actually explained until Marx wrote *Capital*. Thus both Wakefield and Marx saw, in their way, that colonialism would help save British capitalism. The difference between them is that only one felt British capitalism worth saving.

IV

The specific task of bourgeois society is the establishment of a world market . . . and of production based upon this market. As the world is round, this seems to have been completed by the colonization of California and Australia and the opening up of China and Japan.

The difficult question for us is this: on the [European] Continent the revolution is imminent and will immediately assume a socialist character. Is it not bound to be crushed in this little corner, considering that in a far greater territory the movement of bourgeois society is still in the ascendant? (Marx to Engels, 8 October 1858²⁰).

To conclude, we should return to our question: what led Marx to conclude *Capital* with the critique of Wakefield? Marx's decision to begin the analysis in *Capital* with commodity and to focus on industrial capitalism in England led him to study the totality of industrial capitalism emerging around him. This analysis did not require "historicizing" capitalism from a certain germ, an origin story. Marx thus excised the section on the forms of precapitalist formations, and *Capital* was spared this digression. Rather than introducing the concept of primitive accumulation to then inquire into the historical roots of capitalism, as in *Grundrisse*, Marx ends *Capital* with colonialism—the spatial diffusion of primitive accumulation. The origin of capitalism appears in a new way, through the elaboration of the ever-widening capital–labour contradiction on one hand and its spatial adumbration via colonialism: from precapitalist formations to the colonial present. The problematic of uneven development shifts from a temporal to a spatial accent.

Yet, to leave the answer at this is too elegant. For one thing, Marx may not have written about colonialism in the *Grundrisse*, but he anticipated doing so. Two tantalizing passages indicate his intentions. The first comes in the Introduction, where Marx offers a summary outline of the topics he must address in *Capital*. He begins with the general concept of capital, and analyses its various forms, concluding with money; then, accumulation; value; exchange; credit; and finally, "capital as source of wealth. The capitalist". Having unraveled capital, in the next section "landed property would have to be dealt with", which means rent. "After that wage labour". Taken together, capital, rent, and labor comprise the "three classes as production posited in its three basic forms and presuppositions of circulation". But Marx imagined weaving production and consumption into a broader analysis. He sketches these elements:

The *state*...—The state externally: colonies. External trade... Finally the world market. Encroachment of bourgeois society over the state. Crises. Dissolution of the mode of production and form of society based on exchange value. The real positing of individual labour as social and vice versa (1986 [1857–1858]:195).

Such was Marx's outline at this stage for *Capital*—from the first unfolding of capital all the way to communism in 150 words. What stands out here is Marx's inclusion of territorial power. In a lapidary turn of phrase, he defines colonialism as "the state externally". Judging by this outline for *Capital* from the *Grundrisse*, Marx anticipated an

intermediate analysis of colonialism and trade between that of the nation-state and the world market; this intermediate space is what we have come to know as uneven development. Yet Marx never wrote all this. He maintained his basic orientation, but his impetus to analyze the relations between the world-market-forming tendency of capital with “the state externally” went unfulfilled, except again in the critique of Wakefield.²¹

The second mention of colonialism arrives via an abstract historical typology of the possible outcomes of imperial conquest. “In all cases of conquest”, Marx writes, three outcomes are possible.

[1] The conquering people subjugates the conquered under its own mode of production (e.g. the English in Irelandy . . . partly in India); or [2] it leaves the old mode intact and contents itself with a tribute (e.g. Turks and Romans); or [3] a reciprocal interaction takes place whereby some thing new, a synthesis, arises . . . In all cases, the mode of production, whether that of the conquering people, that of the conquered, or that emerging from the fusion of both, is decisive for the new distribution which arises (1973 [1857–1858]:97–98).

In this third possible outcome we see Marx outlining, in embryonic form, a mode of analysis later to be elaborated by Samir Amin (1976), Alain de Janvry (1981), David Harvey (1982), and all those who have analyzed the ways that colonial capitalism preserves in synthesis elements of precapitalist social formations, thereby reproducing uneven relations between core and peripheral economies. Capitalism can then “resolve” crises in the core—by exporting capital to the colonies during periods of overproduction and low profitability, by expanding markets during periods of low effective demand, and so on.

This second passage also underscores an important dimension of Marx’s thoughts regarding colonialism circa 1857. Note that India and Ireland are placed together in the first group, where “the conquering people”, in this case, the British, “subjugates the conquered”. But between Marx’s first jottings in the *Grundrisse* and the completion of *Capital*, the “conquered” in India and Ireland made themselves (in Marx’s view) historical subjects. In 1857–1859 Marx was confronted, in a direct and involved way, by two anti-colonial movements against British rule: the Sepoy mutiny in India and the (almost concomitant) rise of the Fenian movement in Ireland. During the period of Marx’s most intensive study of British capitalism, these two events formed arguably the most concrete manifestations of political resistance to Britain’s world hegemony.

As other writers have demonstrated, Marx’s analyses of these anti-colonial movements—executed to support his livelihood as a writer for the *New York Tribune*—changed his views on the ostensibly progressive effects of imperialism (Nimtzt 2002; Jani 2002). Marx’s extensive

writings on the insurrections of 1857–1859 (including some 20 articles for the *Tribune*) are matched perhaps only by Mark Twain for their acerbic attacks on the hypocrisy of imperial liberalism.²² Take, for instance, Marx’s blistering article of 28 August 1857, which documents the torture of people in India by British imperial troops. After relaying accounts that appear only too familiar today, Marx concludes with this comment:

We have here given but a brief and mildly-colored chapter from the real history of British rule in India. 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 (1968 [1857]:167).

Marx may well have remained Eurocentric in certain respects²³, but his views on imperialism and anti-colonial struggle shifted during the years after 1857 when he first put down an outline for his critique of political economy that included a study of “The state externally: colonies”. Here we find no apology for the British, only a demand: that his audience accept the justness of anti-colonial resistance. His appeal for “dispassionate” contemplation is, of course, affect. A clearer indication of Marx’s sentiments may be gained from his letter to Engels on 8 October 1858: “The difficult question for us is this: on the [European] Continent the revolution is imminent and will immediately assume a socialist character. Is it not bound to be crushed in this little corner, considering that in a far greater territory the movement of bourgeois society is still in the ascendant?” (see epigram). By the time Marx finished the *Grundrisse*, he had raised his eyes well beyond “this little corner”. He still anticipated revolution to begin *in Europe*. But he saw that it would fail without revolutions *worldwide*.

Therefore it was not Hegel, but another sort of world-historical jolt—living anti-colonial movements—that led Marx to conclude *Capital* with Wakefield. For if he could analyze the violent transformation of precapitalist formations in the colonies as it was happening, there is no need for an historical digression. And if the “external” expression of the British state produced resistance that challenged capitalism, then it deserves pride of place in the conclusion of *Capital*. Further evidence that Marx was not only studying political economy while he wrote the *Grundrisse*. He was also studying struggles around the world. These combined analyses allowed him to recognize both capital’s imperial tendencies and its provocation of anti-colonial resistance. From this analysis we inherit the problematic of uneven development.

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Endnotes

¹ Compare popular liberal criticisms of globalization or the *World Development Report* (World Bank 2006) (which took as its theme *Equity and Development*) with recent books by Marxist geographers like Harvey (2005, 2006) and Smith (2005). The massive inequities of the global economy are typically accepted in the same way that climate change is today: as a fact, a matter of concern, but one that can be understood in different ways across the political spectrum. The key issue here for Marxism is that the facts of global inequality have become the new starting point for most Marxist studies, and these criticisms have come to shape how Marxism is understood. I place “capitalist development” in scare-quotes because this concept must be destroyed—and replaced with “capitalism qua development” (Wainwright 2008).

² We now know that Marx wrote at least two extensive drafts of *Capital* after the *Grundrisse*. Enrique Dussel’ remarkable *Towards an Unknown Marx* (2001 [1988]) is the best commentary I know on the Marx’ manuscripts of 1861–1863, ie the “second draft”. Unfortunately for English readers, Dussel’ commentary on the *Grundrisse* (1985) has not been translated.

³ Although this paper takes inspiration from Harvey, I do not use Harvey’ expression “uneven geographical development” because it is redundant: unevenness implies spatiality. Harvey is perhaps justified in insisting on the geographical accent, for the discussions of uneven development have long emphasized temporality (see Harvey 1981, 1982). Marxist debates on uneven development partly emerge in response to Marx’ effort to theorize the emergence and spread of capital as a historical process. A critical contribution was Trotsky’ history of the Russian revolution, which is framed by the concept of “uneven and combined development”: “The development of historically backward nations leads necessarily to a peculiar combination of different stages in the historic process. Their development as a whole acquires a planless, complex, combined character” (1959 [1932]:3). Trotsky’ historical plotment of Russia’ uneven and combined development is in keeping with Marx’ statements on uneven development of productive and social relations from the introduction to the *Grundrisse* (see Section II)—remarkably similar, given that Trotsky never had an opportunity to read the *Grundrisse*. Since Althusser “uneven development” has also been used by some Marxists to speak of unevenness in changes in social–political formations. In his glossary of Althusserian terms, Brewster provides us with the following definition of uneven development (*développement inégal*): “A concept of Lenin and Mao Tse-tung: the overdetermination of all the contradictions in a social formation means that none can develop simply; the different overdeterminations in different times and places result in quite different patterns of social development” (1997 [1970]:312). Note that Brewster does not credit Trotsky: a mark of Stalinism?

⁴ Marx (1986 [1857–1858]:46). This is the Wangermann translation. Compare the Nicolaus translation: “But the really difficult point to discuss here is how relations of production develop unevenly as legal relations” (1973 [1857–1858]:109). Note that in Wangermann’ translation of this passage (again, the only appearance of “uneven development” in the *Grundrisse*) the word “development” is not used as a verb but as a noun. In this translation, “uneven development” is a *condition* that multiple social relations “enter into”; different *relations enter into relation* with one another more or less evenly. The opposite is true of the Nicolaus translation: development is the verb (“relations of production develop . . .”). Ergo, capitalism develops unevenly. Wangermann has it right and is more consistent with Marx’ thought: Marx does not write “the uneven development of capitalist development”; “capitalist development’ is not a Marxist concept.

⁵ Hence the importance of Gramsci for extending Marxist theory: he analyzed the political implications of the relations of law, art and religion and how these entered into uneven development with capitalist relations of production in Italy.

⁶ See Peet (1981) and Smith (1984:97–98).

⁷ This section is found in Notebooks 4 and 5 of Marx (1986 [1857–1858]:399–439), or the Vintage edition (Marx 1987 [1857–1858]:471–514). This section was published as a freestanding text in Russian in around 1940, in German in 1952, and in English (with an introductory essay by Hobsbawm) in 1965. I agree with Negri—who calls this subsection “a parentheses that cannot be put into parentheses” (1991 [1979]:107–121)—that its publication as a standalone text, apart from the rest of the *Grundrisse*, introduces problems. I see two in particular. First, this subsection breaks into the text in a respect that should guide our reading: removing it from its place subtracts the appropriate sense of disruption. Second, *pace* Negri, if we do not read this “parentheses that cannot be put into parentheses” where it appears in the text—ie within parentheses on the creation and extraction of surplus value—we are inclined to miss out on one of the most dialectical qualities of the *Grundrisse*, ie the way in which it presents value as at once simple, contentless and parahistorical.

⁸ Bond (1999) similarly argues that Marx’ earliest thoughts on uneven development can be traced to the *Grundrisse*, “where unevenness represents the condition for a transition from one declining mode of production to another rising, more progressive mode”. Bond alludes to the section of precapitalist formations but does not elaborate.

⁹ See Spivak (1994:56, 1999:ch 1). Spivak calls the Asiatic Mode and Primitive Communism “names that inhabit the pre-historical or para-geographical space/time that mark the outside of the feudalism/capitalism circuit” (1999:83). I think this is correct but would prefer to say *para*-historical.

¹⁰ On ontopology, see Derrida (1994:82–83).

¹¹ I believe this is the first reference to Wakefield in Marx’ economic writings. I discuss his “immensely important” theory below.

¹² Later interpretations drew especially from Marx’ (1977 [1859]) Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: “Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation. In broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society. The bourgeois mode of production is the last antagonistic form of the social process of production . . . but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism. The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation”. In his 1965 essay on Marx’ notes on precapitalist economic formations, Hobsbawm notes that the “classical formulation of these epochs of human progress”—Hobsbawm’ gloss on Marx’ (1859) Preface—is to be found in the *Grundrisse*. Perhaps. As Hobsbawm argues, it is in this particular section of the *Grundrisse* that Marx sought “to formulate the content of history in its most general form” albeit not in a simple chronological sense (1965:12–14). Yet while it is true that Marx’ discussion of precapitalist forms in the *Grundrisse* came before the Preface, and is more fully elaborated, his notes there are also more dialectical (Marx’ language to describe the emergence of capitalism—dissolution, suspension, positing—are associated with Hegel of course, but Marx’ intention is not teleological in the sense that is often unfairly ascribed to Hegel’ dialectic). Although today we would be less inclined to relate the *Grundrisse* with the concept “epochs of human progress”, Hobsbawm’ essay shows how Marx attempts to write a history of capital lacking the teleology typically ascribed to it. Yet the essay is also limited by Hobsbawm’ approach to history, to empirically define the general forms of eras (cf Hobsbawm’ misplaced emphasis on what Marx really did and did not know about precapitalist societies). Hobsbawm does not ask about the conditions of possibility of knowing, from Europe, another history, nor whether Marx’ approach to capitalism’ history may be Eurocentric.

¹³ In Marx' discussion, credit appears as both the earliest and the highest stages of capitalism. On credit as a reagent in the emergence of capitalism and the dominant expression of its "highest stages", see also Lenin' *Development of Capitalism in Russia* (2000 [1899]:ch VI, section VI: "merchant' and industrial capital in manufacture") and his study of *Imperialism* (1939 [1915]).

¹⁴ Notwithstanding the part played by "the revolt of the working class", Marx' description of global revolution of the end of *Capital* is remarkably asubjective, one in which the role of living labor' radical alterity is at best vague and perhaps absent. This is how I understand Negri' reading of the *Grundrisse*: to leverage against Capital to produce a *subjective* theory of capitalist revolution, one with a central role for living labor.

¹⁵ Notwithstanding Negri' preferences, the *Grundrisse* is a more Hegelian text. On the Hegelian qualities of *Grundrisse*, see Rosdolsky (1977 [1968]) and Uchida (1988); compare Karatani (2003).

¹⁶ In a review of the literature in Marxist geography, I found no discussion of Marx and Wakefield. Here I draw principally from Wakefield and Marx' primary texts, and also Pappe (1951) and Semmel (1961).

¹⁷ Wakefield later published an extended correspondence in his *View of the Art of Colonization* (1849). Published only a year after Marx and Engel' *Communist Manifesto*, Wakefield' *Art of Colonization* could be read as a reply: one that attempts to dispel the ghost haunting Europe, so to speak, to the colonies. His texts circulated as practical manuals. The copy of *On the Art of Colonization* that I read to prepare this section came from the Ohio State University library. A first edition, it was donated to the school by Ohio Governor Charles Clayton in 1861. We are not so far out of the shadow of mid-nineteenth century colonial practices.

¹⁸ And consumers. Wakefield also recognized that colonialism would benefit capitalists and the stability of British capitalism in ways that were not strictly economic. His lapidary statement about the English washerwoman requiring tea and sugar "because the world has been circumnavigated" powerfully indicates not only that markets in the core were created to facilitate profitable production in the colonies; here and elsewhere it is clear that Wakefield sensed that stability in England hinges upon consumption and the satisfaction of desires bound up with new forms of subjectivity.

¹⁹ Marx makes similar remarks elsewhere (1988 [1861]:292, 1991[1861]:72).

²⁰ Marx (1968 [1858]:322).

²¹ See Negri (1991:61–63, 118–121).

²² Compare Marx' comments on British torture in India (1968 [1857]) with Twain' *King Leopold' Soliloquy* (1961 [1905]). Each text derives its force from the play of quotations of eyewitness reports with wry observations. In this way, Jani argues that Marx "frees the subaltern testimony trapped within [the colonizers' own text] as the unmediated 'truth' of the matter, the 'real history' of colonial India" (2002:91). Yet I find Twain' text more effective in this respect. In representing the truth in the form of a soliloquy, historical truth is fictionalized, thus made all the more real.

²³ This is to affirm Gidwani's evaluation that "neither Nimitz's defense nor—to a lesser degree—Jani's confronts the criticism that Marx's theory of capitalism is Eurocentric not in the parochialism of its spatial imaginary but rather in the presuppositions from which it derives epistemic warrant" (2004:532).

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Assessing the Effects of the *Grundrisse* in Anglophone Geography and Anthropology

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Abstract: Selections of the *Grundrisse* were translated into English beginning in 1964; a full translation did not appear until 1973. Anglophone Marxian social science has changed dramatically since then; this article attempts to assess the role of the *Grundrisse* in these changes, focusing specifically on anthropology and geography. In geography the effects are most apparent in the work of David Harvey, who was among the earliest Anglophone social scientists to undertake a full reinterpretation of Marx in the light of the *Grundrisse*. I identify four insights that can be seen in Harvey's writings and elsewhere in recent human geography, but whose relation to the *Grundrisse* is not often acknowledged. In anthropology, the effects of the *Grundrisse* are perhaps even more pronounced but also more complex and obscure; nonetheless, a similar, and similarly under-acknowledged, influence can be discerned, especially in historical anthropology and recent studies of value. I suggest that the *Grundrisse's* translation into English has facilitated a convergence of anthropology and geography, and that critical ethnography in this vein is needed to grapple with the financialization of everything, in which commodification is only a preliminary step.

Keywords: commodification, critical geography, dependency theory, financialization, formalist–substantivist debate, historical anthropology, Karl Marx, political economy

The *Grundrisse* is the record of Marx's mind at work, grappling with fundamental problems of theory. This is the manuscript's most valuable distinguishing characteristic (Martin Nicolaus, in Marx 1973:25).

Introduction

The sesquicentennial of the notebooks now known as the *Grundrisse* is the event we are commemorating, but the reason we commemorate it is not really its age. After all, Marx spent most of his adult life generating notebooks. What matters for us now are the effects that these particular notebooks have had since their rediscovery not quite 70 years ago. Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright (this volume) have provided a wonderful account of the context and motivation of the writing of the notebooks (cf Rosdolsky 1977). I attempt here to assess what difference they have made since their translation into English beginning in 1964, more than a century after Marx finished drafting them.

Such an assessment is an unavoidably precarious undertaking. There is, first, the difficulty of characterizing Marxian social science circa 1973, which in retrospect appears both economic and scientific. In a handful of paragraphs in the Preface to *A Critique of Political Economy* (published in German in 1859, just after the writing of the *Grundrisse*, and translated in 1904), Marx seemed to give strong causal priority to “the economic foundation” or “forces of production” (aka the base) over “the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms” of the “relations of production” (aka superstructure). Anything other than the material realities of production were not only secondary but also suspect as mere “false consciousness”. This economism was reinforced by the notion that Marx, in *Capital*, had revealed “scientific laws” of capitalism that were of a kind with the laws of mathematics or physics: deterministic and causal, at least in the proverbial “last instance” (see, eg, Althusser 1971; Mandel 1978 [1972]). Without expressly contradicting the Preface, the *Grundrisse* makes both of these positions difficult to maintain.

Second, as is well known, the *Grundrisse* was not written for publication, and it is highly uneven. Long stretches are obscure or tedious, but it is also punctuated with passages of luminous, even lightning-strike clarity. It might be easier to understand than *Capital*, but that isn't really saying much, and it is also less gripping and cogent. In any case, the *Grundrisse* is not often cited outside of a relatively small circle of specialists, and its meaning cannot be derived separate from Marx's larger corpus, especially *Capital*. The effects of the *Grundrisse*, then, may be expected to be more diffuse and difficult to demonstrate than is ordinarily the case. Not only are they likely to be second order—in the sense of having altered how people read Marx's other works—but their traces may be further obscured by lack of citation and by the likelihood that people are reading Marx in ways that have been influenced by other people's readings of the *Grundrisse*, without necessarily having read it themselves.

The *Grundrisse* is by no means the only reason, moreover, that Anglophone Marxian anthropology and geography look so different today compared with 40 years ago. Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1992) and Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* (both translated in 1971) have also been extremely important in redefining the conceptual landscape and the agenda for research and action. Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (published in 1974, translated in 1991) would further complicate the task at hand, except for the fact that Lefebvre modeled his book explicitly on the *Grundrisse* (Lefebvre 1991:66f).

With these caveats, my thesis is that the perspectives opened up by the *Grundrisse* were critical to enabling scholars to find fertile new directions in both disciplines. These are more easily discerned in geography due to the work of David Harvey, whose *The Limits to*

Capital (1982) was one of the first attempts in English to reinterpret Marx's corpus in light of the *Grundrisse*. In the first part of this article, I identify four insights that can be traced from the *Grundrisse* through Harvey's voluminous writings, and that have also attained wider circulation in geography (and the social sciences more generally) in recent decades. (1) Humans and nature constitute a dialectical unity; their separation (both real and conceptual) is not a priori but historical and must be explained. (2) One's categories are themselves historical, material products and Marx's categories (eg value, capital, labor) are historically specific. (3) Relations and processes are not only real but also take priority over essences and things. (4) Production and reproduction must be understood together; because capital accumulation necessarily takes place in and through landscapes and peoples who may resist or fail to cooperate, commodification is an ongoing, never-completed process rather than an absolute condition.

In the second part I turn to the effects in anthropology, which are more indirect and obscure but perhaps even more pronounced than in geography. It can be argued, for example, that *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, an excerpt of the *Grundrisse* published in London in 1964, played a large role in the emergence of Anglophone Marxian anthropology, especially in the United States. The excerpt first entered debates among Marxist historians regarding modes of production (Asiatic, ancient, feudal and bourgeois); it served, for some, as strong evidence against Louis Althusser's structuralist-determinist reading of Marx. Subsequently, *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* informed dependency theorists' inquiries into the articulation of capitalist and non-capitalist societies and the role of peasantries, and it helped end the vitriolic debate between formalists and substantivists in economic anthropology. Meanwhile, Maurice Godelier drew on the *Grundrisse* to develop a reading of Marx that pervades present-day Marxian anthropology. In recent years the *Grundrisse* has largely disappeared from anthropologists' bibliographies, but its influence is widespread, especially in historical anthropology and in recent work on value.

In the conclusion, I suggest that although many of the older debates—over modes of production, base and superstructure, “early” versus “late” Marx, and formal versus substantive economic anthropology—now seem obsolete, their intellectual descendents in geography and anthropology are complementary and in many cases quite similar. They are perhaps best captured by Gillian Hart's (2006) notion of “critical ethnography and relational comparison” and exemplified by monographs in both disciplines that emphasize processes such as capital flows and the contested, variegated dynamics of commodification through and across social space. Beyond “the commodification of everything” (Watts 1999), moreover, the *Grundrisse* can help us grapple with the financialization of everything, as value is increasingly embodied

in, and reproduced through, such intangible “things” as cultural symbols, digital information, ecosystem services or pollution credits.

I do not claim that the *Grundrisse* is the sole cause of the changes witnessed in Marxian geography and anthropology since 1973. Support for the insights I emphasize here can be found elsewhere in Marx’s corpus, and in the evolution of such broad disciplines no single text can operate unilaterally or unequivocally in any event. Nonetheless, the shifts I describe did not occur in the 30+ years after publication of *The German Ideology* (published 1932, translated 1938) or *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (published 1932, translated 1959). Moreover, illuminating the under-acknowledged effects of the *Grundrisse* is not merely an exercise in intellectual history. Perhaps it is ironic that Marxian geography and anthropology have flourished in new ways since 1964, while Marxist governments and political influence have withered in the face of globalization and neoliberalism. It would be too simple to assert a causal relation between the two, but it is nonetheless worth considering how a less mechanistic and dogmatic, post-*Grundrisse* Marxian theory might help revive the left’s practical and political significance today.

Effects in Geography

The full translation of the *Grundrisse* appeared in 1973, just as David Harvey was beginning the research that resulted, nine years later, in *The Limits to Capital*. That he was aware of and inspired by the *Grundrisse* from the very beginning is demonstrated by a book review he published in 1972, when only a small fraction of the manuscripts were available in English (see below). The book under review concerned ancient Chinese urbanization, yet Harvey saw fit to devote a full page to a summary of the *Grundrisse*’s implications for materialist historical analysis. And in a parenthetical note to start his discussion, he described the *Grundrisse* as “a work which has only recently become known and which departs in significant respects from the rather narrow and naïve economism of many subsequent ‘marxist’ scholars” (Harvey 1972:510). Two years later, with the full translation in print, Harvey (1974) published an analysis of Marx’s method that fleshed out this assertion in greater detail.

I cannot here include a full analysis of the *Grundrisse*’s role in Harvey’s thought. Suffice to say that it is cited and/or discussed by name in every book he published in the two decades beginning 1982. In *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, Harvey (1996) related his theories of space–time, capitalism, and social reproduction to the philosophies of Leibniz and Whitehead, but he obviously did not find them there first. His central claims seem more closely rooted in Lefebvre’s, and his own, readings of Marx in light of the *Grundrisse*. For

Harvey, as for Lefebvre, space–time is not simply absolute but relative and relational: it is socially and materially produced through processes of human (inter)action such as the movement of goods, people, ideas, symbols, capital and information. There is probably no other passage more closely associated with Harvey’s corpus and influence than this one:

The more production comes to rest on exchange value, hence on exchange, the more important do the physical conditions of exchange—the means of communication and transport—become for the costs of circulation. Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange—of the means of communication and transport—the annihilation of space by time (Marx 1973:524).

One can trace a direct line from the *Grundrisse* to “space–time compression”, which is probably Harvey’s (1989) most cited idea across the social sciences.

The full effects are much more complex than this, of course. Rather than attempt to explicate them in detail, however, I will confine myself to four points that can be traced from the *Grundrisse* through Harvey’s voluminous works, and thence into the work of other critical human geographers. By the end of this trajectory, we no longer need to find the *Grundrisse* cited or discussed overtly for its influence to be evident (especially by comparison to earlier strains of Marxist social science), provided we are attuned to notice it. In short, insofar as Harvey’s interpretation of Marx relies heavily on the *Grundrisse*—a claim that can scarcely be disputed—then it is plausible to suggest that Harvey’s influence on geography is one indication of the influence of the *Grundrisse*. It would be too strong to say that the *Grundrisse* has become mainstream, but many of its insights now circulate well beyond avowedly Marxist geography. In the second part of this article, I will argue that a similar sequence of citation–incorporation–non-citation has occurred in anthropology.

1. Humans and nature constitute a dialectical unity; their separation (both real and conceptual) is not a priori but historical and must be explained

In his introduction to *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations*, Eric Hobsbawm (in Marx 1964:12, emphasis in original) wrote that people labor “by operating *in* nature, taking from nature (and eventually consciously changing nature) for this purpose. This interaction between man and nature is, and produces, social evolution”. The passage that probably provoked Hobsbawm here was Marx’s observation that:

It is not the *unity* of living and active humanity with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolic exchange with nature, and

hence their appropriation of nature, which requires explanation or is the result of a historic process, but rather the *separation* between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence, a separation which is completely posited only in the relation of wage labour and capital (Marx 1973:489).

Two years after *The Limits*, Harvey's student Neil Smith (1984) made the unity of humans and nature a central premise of his critique of Alfred Schmidt and the Frankfurt School. Previously, the idea that Marx was a "Promethean" advocate of human "progress", understood as a technologically enabled "domination of nature", was widely circulated by Frankfurt School figures such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1972). Smith dismantled Schmidt's interpretation of Marx and nature, pointing out that capitalist society does not and cannot dominate nature in any absolute way and that Marx was acutely aware of the conjoined exploitation of laborers and the earth.¹ Harvey (1996:131) later argued that in recent world history "it has been capital circulation that has made the environment what it is", and critiqued strains of environmentalism that reinforce a static human-nature dualism by fetishizing "pristine" or "wild" landscapes over urban or human-inhabited ones. And in a recent essay, Harvey observes:

We have to understand how the accumulation of capital works through ecosystemic processes, re-shaping them and disturbing them as it goes . . . But the social side cannot be evaded as somehow radically different from its ecological integument . . . The circulation of money and of capital have to be construed as ecological variables every bit as important as the circulation of air and water (2006:88).

The notion of a "metabolic exchange" between humans and the environment has also been further developed, quite persuasively, in the work of sociologist John Bellamy Foster (2000).

2. *One's categories are historically material products and Marx's categories (eg value, capital, labor) are historically specific*

Another principle made plain in the *Grundrisse* is the historical specificity of Marx's categories: not only that capitalism was historically unprecedented, but also that the very concepts through which Marx explored capitalism were historically conditioned and enabled. "[E]ven the most abstract categories, despite their validity—precisely because of their abstractness—for all epochs, are nevertheless, in the specific character of this abstraction, themselves likewise a product of historic relations, and possess their full validity only for and within these relations" (Marx 1973:105). Marx's categories—value, labor, capital, the commodity—had now to be understood as grounded in, made possible by, and specific to the material circumstances of capitalist

society. They were not, therefore, universally applicable to any and all forms of human society.

This may seem obvious today, and it is abundantly supported in *Capital* (cf Harvey 1982; Postone 1993), but it was not widely acknowledged for much of the twentieth century, and only in the *Grundrisse* is the importance of this seemingly simple proposition clarified.

In the succession of the economic categories, as in any other historical, social science, it must not be forgotten that their subject—here, modern bourgeois society—is always what is given, in the head as well as in reality, and that these categories therefore express the forms of being, the characteristics of existence, and often only individual sides of this specific society, this subject . . . this holds *for science as well* (Marx 1973:106, emphasis in original).²

Not only does this deflate the universal pretensions of any “scientific laws” in political economy (see Mandel (1978 [1972]) for an indication of earlier interpretations and Llobera (1979) for an historical account of their emergence’) it also specifies the relation between the world and any attempt to apprehend it in thought, with priority placed on the actual, material world. “As a rule, the most general abstractions arise only in the midst of the richest possible concrete development . . . Not only the category, labour, but labour in reality has here become the means of creating wealth in general, and has ceased to be organically linked with particular individuals in any specific form” (Marx 1973:104). Abstract labor had come to be thinkable as a concept because it had come to exist in the actual world of human production. Such self-reflexivity obviously raises the issue of how to ground one’s categories in such a way as to explain the possibility of having them at all. “False consciousness” may apply as much to the critic as to anyone else in capitalist society, so one cannot claim to “see through” the illusions or “appearances” of the material world without also explaining how the material world can enable one to obtain such a vision. Moishe Postone (1993), who likewise draws heavily on the *Grundrisse*, refers to Marx’s method as one of “immanent critique”.

3. Relations and processes are not only real but also take priority over essences and things

Capital is not a simple relation, but a *process*, in whose various moments it is always capital (Marx 1973:258, emphasis in original).

The *Grundrisse* also makes plain that for Marx, things cannot be understood in themselves, as essences abstracted from context, but only in relation to other things and the totality of all things (cf Ollman (1971) for an important early exegesis in English of “the philosophy of

internal relations”). Most commentators have focused on the Hegelian influences in the *Grundrisse*, but Foster (2000) traces this epistemology to the pre-Socratic materialism of Epicurus and Lucretius (the subject of Marx’s doctoral dissertation), who conceived of flux and change as more real than static objects. Things are produced through processes, in which relations become manifest; as all things are ultimately ephemeral or subject to change, apparently “objective” characteristics or essences are less real than the processes and relations that produce them. For Harvey (1974), the power of the dialectical method, compared with both normative analytics and logical positivism, is its ability to explain how systems change from within—something of obvious importance for analyzing human–environment interactions. Harvey also stressed the importance of relationality: “Ideas are therefore regarded as social relations . . . [I]t follows that we can gain as much insight into society through a critical analysis of the relations ideas express, as we can through a study of society as object”. Similarly, Nicolaus (in Marx 1973:14) observes that money and capital each “signify . . . an entire system of social relationships based on certain rules and laws, and involving a certain type of politics, culture, even personality”. He went on to argue that this insight informed Marx’s emphasis on production: “If the society as a whole is to be grasped in motion, in process, it is first and foremost essential to comprehend the dynamics of the direct production process. . .” (in Marx 1973:31).³

4. Production and reproduction must be understood together; because capital accumulation necessarily takes place in and through landscapes and peoples who may resist or fail to cooperate, commodification is a continuing, never-completed process rather than an absolute condition

Nicolaus is right to see the priority of production as a corollary of Marx’s relational-processual ontology. But this priority is not about the “forces” or technologies of production (“the base”) dominating over “relations” (the “superstructure” of ideology); rather, it refuses the distinction between “work” and “non-work” altogether:

The important thing to emphasize here is only that, whether production and consumption are viewed as the activity of one or of many individuals, they appear in any case as moments of one process, in which production is the real point of departure and hence also the predominant moment . . . The individual produces an object and, by consuming it, returns to himself, but returns as a productive and self-reproducing individual. Consumption thus appears as a moment of production (Marx 1973:94).

Production as a whole process is simultaneously reproduction of both the worker and the society of which s/he is a member. This is not a functionalist sense of (re)production, reducible to how humans survive

as a species; rather, it treats *social relations* as every bit as real and material as tools, technology or the activities of labor. Thus, how commodified wage labor fits (or fails to fit) together with the non- (or less) commodified spheres of social reproduction becomes *part* of the study of production, not its marginalized or subordinated other.⁴

Feminist geographers have found here a fruitful ground for engaging and extending Marxian critiques of capitalism and globalization. Massey (1994) criticized Harvey, and political economists more generally, for neglecting the highly gendered division of labor that characterizes such spheres of social reproduction as the household, child rearing, and non-wage labor. Harvey (1996) subsequently endeavored to address this shortcoming, incorporating issues of gender, difference and the body, as well as the environment, into his analysis. Marston (2000) reiterated Massey's critique through an analytic of scale, and Katz (2001:710) has persuasively argued that "Social reproduction is the missing figure in current globalization debates". Emphasizing the dialectical unity of production and reproduction offers an important opening for bringing the state, the household, and civil society into Marxian political economy and critical geography.

In *The Limits*, Harvey focused on the implications for another "frontier" of commodification: landscapes and the built environment. Not only is fixed capital a significant sink for surplus capital; it also imparts an unceasing and unpredictable dynamic of investment and devaluation into the landscapes—urban and rural—that humans produce and occupy. Whether due to political opposition, unintended consequences or simple overaccumulation, the circulation of capital through landscapes and people is chronically prone to crisis and disruption. The point holds for commodification in general, as Jack Kloppenburg (1988)—also inspired by the *Grundrisse*—has demonstrated in his remarkable political economy of plant biotechnology.

Furthermore, the *Grundrisse* demonstrates that Marx's focus on capitalism and political economy did not come at the expense of other fields of inquiry. Toward the end of his life he devoted significant time to reading proto-anthropological studies such as Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* and Henry Sumner Maine's *Ancient Law*.⁵ After all, he could only construct categories adequate to capitalism by carefully distinguishing it from other historical forms of human society. Production in general could not suffice, for example, because it applies equally to all such forms:

Whenever we speak of production, then, what is meant is always production at a definite stage of social development—production by social individuals . . . *Production in general* is an abstraction, but a rational abstraction . . . Still, this *general* category . . . is itself segmented many times over and splits into different determinations.

Some determinations belong to all epochs, others only to a few . . . nevertheless, just those things which determine their development, i.e. the elements which are not general and common, must be separated out from the determinations valid for production as such, so that in their unity—which arises already from the identity of the subject, humanity, and of the object, nature—their essential difference is not forgotten (Marx 1973:85).

To identify what set capitalism apart required a materialist analysis of the whole of human history, including evolution, tools, social organization and the means of production. In Hobsbawm's words: "Though particular social-economic formations, expressing particular phases of this evolution, are very relevant, it is the entire process, spanning the centuries and continents, which [Marx] has in mind" (in Marx 1964:14). It is hardly surprising, then, that the *Grundrisse* sparked considerable interest among anthropologists.

Effects in Anthropology

The effects of the *Grundrisse* in anthropology are more indirect and obscure but perhaps even more pronounced than in geography. It can be argued that *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* played a major role in the emergence of Anglophone Marxist anthropology, especially in the United States, but the route by which this occurred is a twisted and multi-stranded one. One strand passes through dependency and world systems theory, which borrowed both from *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* and from earlier works such as Paul Baran's *Political Economy of Growth* (1957) to study the articulation of capitalist and non-capitalist societies and the role of peasantries (cf Roseberry 1988). Another strand, originating more from within the discipline, was the debate between "formalists" and "substantivists" in economic anthropology, which revolved around whether categories developed in and for modern industrial society could be applied to non- or pre-capitalist settings (cf Graeber 2001). It appears that the *Grundrisse* helped end this debate, although political ecologists have been treading very similar ground more recently and might benefit from revisiting this antecedent. In recent years the *Grundrisse* has largely disappeared from anthropologists' bibliographies, as have these debates. Its influence is pervasive nonetheless, especially in historical anthropology and in recent studies of value.

We tend now to associate the *Grundrisse* with the full-length translation published in 1973 by Martin Nicolaus. But parts of the notebooks appeared in English earlier. David McLellan translated 22 selections (totaling roughly one-sixth of the whole) in 1971 (Marx 1971), and in 1964 Eric Hobsbawm brought out *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* (Marx 1964), a slender volume that was reprinted in England

no less than four times (a separate American edition appeared in 1965). It included extracts from *The German Ideology* and a half-dozen letters by Marx and Engels, but the bulk of the volume was a long introductory essay by Hobsbawm and an excerpt of similar length from the *Grundrisse*, translated by Jack Cohen.⁶ Hobsbawm (in Marx 1964:9) explained that the notebooks had been published in Moscow in 1939–1941. “The time and place of publication caused the work to be virtually unknown until 1952 when the present section of it was published as a pamphlet in Berlin, and 1953, when the entire *Grundrisse* were republished in the same city . . . The *Grundrisse* are therefore the last major writings of the mature Marx to have reached the public”.

In both German and English, then, the earliest exposure of Western scholars to the *Grundrisse* was this section on “forms which precede capitalist production” (to use Nicolaus’ translation of the section heading). This is noteworthy mainly for its curious retrospective improbability: Today the introduction, with its meditation on method, is generally considered far more important (Hall 2003). Hobsbawm’s essay feels especially outdated, far more so than the excerpt itself. It takes one back to Cold War-era debates over the definitions of Asiatic, ancient, feudal and bourgeois modes of production, which Marxist intellectuals struggled to reconcile with the complex and diverse realities of societies around the world. The list and sequence of modes of production was well known from the Preface to the *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* represented a much fuller exegesis than had previously been known from Marx himself. Presumably this is why the excerpt was chosen for separate publication.

If such debates now seem antiquated or obsolete, then the larger *Grundrisse* is itself a major reason for this. Hobsbawm (in Marx 1964:10) recognized the potential of the notebooks to change how people understood Marx. “It can be said without hesitation that any Marxist historical discussion which does not take into account the present work—that is to say virtually all such discussion before 1941, and (unfortunately) much of it since—must be reconsidered in its light”. McLellan (in Marx 1971:3) called the *Grundrisse* “the centrepiece of Marx’s thought”. Nicolaus (in Marx 1973:7) wrote: “The *Grundrisse* challenges and puts to the test every serious interpretation of Marx yet conceived”. Such testing and reconsideration has taken place since then (Hall 2003; Harvey 1982; Meaney 2002; Negri 1984; Postone 1993; Uchida 1988), but *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* represented only the first steps in that direction—and rather oblique ones at that.

It should be stressed that I am not attempting to assess the effects of the *Grundrisse* among historians. Such a task is beyond the space available here. Hobsbawm clearly had this audience in mind in 1964, and the generation of Marxist British historians of which he is a part—including Maurice Dobb, Christopher Hill, George Rudé, E P Thompson

and Raymond Williams—represents an important mediating force in the development of post-*Grundrisse* Anglophone Marxian social science (see, eg, Mintz 1984). Working from a more empirical and inductive point of departure, they saw the rise of capitalism not simply as a matter of “the laws of motion of capital” (Mandel 1978 [1972]) but as a fine-grained, quotidian affair, intimately embedded in the practical activities of ordinary working people and much more contingent in its logic and outcomes. This was an approach that Marx seemed to validate in the *Grundrisse*: far from a rigidly deterministic procession invoked as the *deus ex machina* of human history, Marx’s modes of production appeared here as conceptual tools, abstracted very self-consciously from a vast array of empirical information.

These historians drew directly and explicitly on the *Grundrisse*, especially in their (sometimes vitriolic) denunciations of Althusserian structuralism (eg Thompson 1978). Althusser had painted himself into a corner, so to speak. In order to valorize *Capital* as “science” on a par with mathematics and physics, Althusser (1971) had insisted on a strong break between the “early” and the “late” Marx, relegating the more overtly Hegelian earlier writings to relative insignificance. The *Grundrisse* made it abundantly clear, however, that Marx had in fact drawn very heavily on Hegel’s *Logic* in formulating his method for *Capital*—there was no strong break after all, or if there were, it would have to be defined in some other way.

This did not prevent Althusser’s work from influencing subsequent anthropology—far from it—but it did help to decouple the study of capitalist social relations from the rigidly deterministic framework that had prevailed in mid-twentieth century Marxism. This was particularly important when anthropologists encountered dependency and world systems theory, alloys of an earlier Marxism (eg Baran 1957) and Latin American radical political science. As William Roseberry notes, Althusser’s interpretation of two concepts—modes of production and social formation—became central to radical anthropology on the “underdeveloped” world. However:

In their diffusion through journals and the practice of fieldwork, such concepts often became unhinged from the structuralist philosophy of Althusser himself and were applied to concrete problems of historical and current development. In these more practical applications, the mode of production concept offered the possibility of a more differentiated understanding of capitalism than did the extreme versions of dependency and world-systems theory . . . [R]ather than subsuming all parts of the world within a global capitalism from the 16th century onwards (as both Frank and Wallerstein had done), scholars working within a mode-of-production perspective saw a more prolonged and uneven transition to capitalism. The incorporation of regions within colonial or mercantile empires did

not necessarily impose upon those regions the laws of capitalist development (Roseberry 1988:167–168).

The very idea of a Marxist anthropology had been considered, at least among English speakers, a risible absurdity (Godelier 1984:56). The peoples anthropologists studied were presumptively understood to be timeless and primitive, isolated from all things modern, let alone from capitalism. In Sidney Mintz's (1984:13) words, "it is really because of the curiously nonhistorical or ahistorical character of these [Anglophone] anthropologists that Marxist thinking was for so long of no interest to their practitioners". "The charter of American anthropological legitimacy", he continues, "was an overwhelming concentration upon the past, and a determined separation of the people being studied from the modern industrial society in which they lived, from which they could hardly escape, and to which they were clearly subject" (1984:15). By the 1980s, Mintz (1985) and his long-time collaborator Eric Wolf (1982), among others, were producing influential works that bore strong marks of this new, post-*Grundrisse* sensibility regarding capitalism.

Try as they might, anthropologists could not avoid the issue of capitalism impinging upon "primitive" societies, especially as international development rolled out during the Cold War. As economists were deployed to "develop" the so-called third world, issues of social and cultural dispositions and compatibilities became acute. By the mid 1960s, a heated debate had developed over how to proceed in what had come to be known as economic anthropology. It boiled down to which should take conceptual priority: the "economic" side of the interdisciplinary union or the "anthropology" side. Proponents of the former were known as "formalists", while those of the latter were known as "substantivists". As George Dalton, a prominent substantivist, wrote: "Almost all the communities anthropologists study in the field are now experiencing some degree of economic, social, cultural, or technological change as parts of newly independent nation-states bent on 'modernization' and economic development" (1969:64). To what extent, he asked, should anthropologists "adopt conventional economics as the conceptual language with which to analyze primitive and peasant economies"? The formalists accepted the tacit claim of conventional economics that its concepts—such as scarcity, maximizing, and surplus—were universally applicable; the substantivists demurred, drawing on the work of Karl Polanyi to argue that "the differences between primitive economic organization (i.e., where market transactions of resources and produce are absent or present only in petty amounts) and our own are so great that a special set of concepts, leading ideas, and terms are necessary to analyze these subsistence economies" (Dalton 1969:65).

It might seem that the *Grundrisse* would favor the substantivists because of Marx's insistence on the historical specificity of conceptual categories. But in a context of obvious interaction, how then to deal with the capitalist elements of the encounter? In the end, it appears the *Grundrisse* had the effect of defusing the debate by undermining the dualism that defined it. Dalton's article, published in *Current Anthropology*, provoked commentaries that include some of the earliest citations of the *Grundrisse* in Anglophone anthropology. Ronald Frankenburg, writing from Lusaka, asked why *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* had not been discussed in Dalton's piece. Zbigniew Marcin Kowalewski, of Poland, cited the 1953 German edition of the *Grundrisse* in his remarks, noting that "capitalist economic relations, which penetrate into even the most 'isolated' peasant community, are regulated within the community by their own mechanisms", such that "economic relations with the outside world may have a capitalist character even though economic relations within the society are pre-capitalist" (Dalton 1969:85).

Scott Cook, one of Dalton's main adversaries, did cite *Pre-capitalist Economic Formations* and the *Grundrisse* in his rejoinder, and in so doing he appears to have helped bring the debate to an end. Cook (1969:380) called Marx "the most astute and profound of all substantivist economic thinkers", yet went on to insist that he was also a formalist—that he had "wisely argued for the application of (and himself applied) the concepts of formal economic theory to the study of peasant and feudal (ie non-industrial, non-capitalist) economies". Cook called for cultural geography, archaeology and economic anthropology to come together in a "substantive formalism" that would rest heavily on the Marx of the *Grundrisse*. This Marx had

rejected as superficial the thesis that the market mechanism is a motivating, causal, or fundamental factor; he recognized . . . that the market is merely a device to co-ordinate the various moments of a process more fundamental than exchange, namely production . . . Economic anthropology can, I submit, move beyond its present theoretical impasse by following Marx's precedent in positing production as the core of the economic process and as the analytical key to isolating economically relevant phenomena, and in employing the dialectical method to approximate economic reality (Cook 1969:382).

Cook's main target in the debate between formalists and substantivists (which he described as "an enervating . . . sectarianized polemic") was not Dalton but Polanyi, under whom Dalton had studied, and in this respect the debate may yet have something to offer to present day geography. Noel Castree (2007) has argued that recent work in political ecology draws theoretical inspiration primarily from two sources: Marx and Polanyi. Cook argued that such a synthesis was impossible.

Polanyi and his followers were haunted by the ghost of Engels, he wrote, unable to recognize that Marx's critique of capitalism was fundamentally different. Their substantivism was "spurious": "Polanyi ... never recognized that the materiality (ie the substantiveness) of the economic field must be sought in production rather than in the amorphous concept of 'embeddedness'" (Cook 1969:385).

No self-described "substantive formalism" emerged to fulfill Cook's call. But by effectively rejecting both sides of the debate, a new kind of Marxist anthropology emerged that did embrace several of Cook's main points. It was generally understood more as the product of a debate originating in France, however, over structuralism and Marxism. Jonathan Friedman (1974:444) remarked early on that this debate had "led to the incorporation of important elements of structuralist analysis into a more sophisticated marxist approach based on the 'model' developed in the *Grundrisse*". The structuralism Friedman had in mind was not that of Althusser, however, but that of Claude Levi-Strauss. Here the work of Maurice Godelier, who had trained as an economist before becoming an anthropologist and working as an assistant to Levi-Strauss, is of central importance. Like David Harvey for geography, Godelier spread a *Grundrisse*-inflected Marxian approach in anthropology so effectively that its origins now pass largely unremarked.

Godelier's corpus is too large to review here; I seek only to establish that his approach relied on the *Grundrisse* and that it has gone on to influence Anglophone anthropology in pervasive and enduring ways. Ironically, one of his most influential early papers in English (Godelier 1978) took as its point of departure "the distinction between infrastructure and superstructure"—a decidedly pre-*Grundrisse* framing that owes more to Althusser than to Levi-Strauss. Yet Godelier's argument undermined the hierarchical and dualistic assumptions of earlier debates about the "superstructure". "To my mind, a society does not have a top and a bottom, or even levels. This is because the distinction between infrastructure and superstructure is not a distinction between institutions. Its principle, rather, is one of a distinction between functions" (1978:763). The confusion arose, he wrote (765), because in capitalist society it happens that functional and institutional distinctions do coincide. Elsewhere they might not, such that institutions formally excluded from "production" in capitalist society, for example kinship, might be functionally part of a non-capitalist society's relations of production.

Godelier defined "infrastructure" as including all of the following: "1. The specific ecological and geographical conditions within which a society exists and from which it extracts its material means of existence. 2. The productive forces, i.e., the material and *intellectual* means that the members of a society implement ... to work upon nature and to extract from it their means of existence ... 3. Social

relations of production” (1978:763, emphasis in original), including those determining access, ownership, allocation and distribution of resources, means of production, people and goods. By definitional fiat, Godelier dissolved conventional distinctions between “forces of production” and “relations of production”, “base and superstructure”, “material” and “ideological”, “economy” and “culture”. He did not directly cite the *Grundrisse* in his article, but at least one American anthropologist, asked to write a commentary to be published alongside it in *Current Anthropology*, noticed the influence immediately:

The work is “revisionist” in the best sense of the word: It revises Marx by rediscovering Marx. Its originality lies in a return to origins, to the Marx of the *Grundrisse* and the Philosophical Manuscripts, to the Marx of questions and not just answers . . . The recent trend toward a more flexible Marxist approach in the social sciences suggests that a new era is dawning in Marxist studies, a time of “paradigm” reevaluation. If so then Godelier must stand as one of the major intellectual midwives of this new era, if only on the basis of this short, brilliant piece (David Gilmore, in Godelier 1978:769).

Just six years later, Godelier repudiated “the naïve view of infrastructure and superstructure” that had prevailed earlier. “[T]he explanatory capacity of this metaphor is very limited”, he wrote (1984:37, 42). Instead, he focused on social relations of production, understood as comprising all three parts of infrastructure as he had defined it. “For me, now, Marxism is not a theory of production. It is a theory of production of society, not a theory of production in society” (1984:44). He noted that “capitalism does not generate capitalism everywhere”, and that “ideas are not only reflections, they are conditions or part of the conditions of the production of social reality” (1984:49, 50). Finally, Godelier summarized materialism as “Marx’s central claim that, in the last instance, the production of social forms is determined by or through the transformation of the relationship with nature. My understanding of Marx is that you cannot produce a new form of society without transforming this relationship with nature” (1984:55).

I have reviewed the various strands of post-*Grundrisse* Anglophone anthropology very briefly here, and I recognize that many other details and emphases might be warranted. I hope to have demonstrated, in any case, that the *Grundrisse* helped open new paths for historical anthropology as the study of the complex expansion of capitalist social relations. More recent examples are too many and too diverse to review here. They would include, for example, anthropologies of nature and the state in Venezuela (Coronil 1996, 1997), of international development in Lesotho (Ferguson 1985, 1990), and of conservation in Papua New Guinea (West 2006). Studies of commodification and commodity flows through space and time have proliferated and extended in many

directions, including works that make no mention of the *Grundrisse* but have absorbed and reworked, to a greater or lesser degree, insights that can be traced back to it along various paths.

On a more theoretical note, it remains to consider recent anthropological efforts to understand the category of value anthropologically. Foundational works include Fred Myer's *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self* and Nancy Munn's *The Fame of Gawa* [which Harvey (1996) has treated in an essay on the social construction of space and time]. Perhaps the most comprehensive analysis, for our purposes, resides in the work of Terence Turner, which until recently was scattered across a score or more articles and unpublished manuscripts. Fortunately, it has recently become more accessible through the work of David Graeber (2001) and others of Turner's former students.

Discussing commodities, Marx wrote in the *Grundrisse* that:

Value is their social relation, their economic quality . . . As a value, the commodity is an equivalent; as an equivalent, all its natural properties are extinguished . . . commodities as values are different from one another only quantitatively; therefore each commodity must be qualitatively different from its own value (1973:141).

This rather difficult passage lies near the conceptual center of commodity fetishism: how things can both express and mask social relations while reducing humans to objects. The anthropology of value explores this paradoxical process in the only sites accessible to direct observation: the activities of people. Stephen Sangren, in a *festschrift* in honor of Turner's retirement, writes that "value is best understood in relation to society conceived of as an integrated totality of productive activities" (2006:122). Graeber argues that:

What has passed for "materialism" in traditional Marxism—the division between the material "infrastructure" and ideal "superstructure"—is itself a perverse form of idealism . . . The *actions* involved in the production of law, poetry, etc., are just as material as any others . . . [W]hat we take to be self-identical objects are really processes of action (2006:70).⁷

Such an approach is a logical extension of the insight that production should be conceived as social reproduction. Capitalist value is a historically unique form of value, but it remains but a subset—and a contested one at that—of the purposes and aspirations that motivate human actions.

The anthropology of value combines several of the insights and themes found in post-*Grundrisse* geography: a relational and processual ontology; self-reflexivity about one's categories and their material basis; and an emphasis on the complex and variegated dynamics of commodification as an ongoing process.⁸ It adds to these a commitment

to ethnographic methods—which have become more prominent in geography in recent decades—and it brings anthropology’s longstanding interest in the social production of space and time to bear on contemporary settings where capitalism is far from an undisputed or normative fact of life. It is unsurprising, then, that Marxian anthropology and geography have witnessed a convergence in interests, methods, and research subjects in recent decades.

I have endeavored to show that the *Grundrisse* played a major role in enabling this convergence to occur. It helped break up the rigid dualisms and determinisms of twentieth-century Marxism; awakened geographers to a more anthropological sense of space and time; and helped open anthropology up to historical and political economic approaches to its traditional subjects. If many of the debates that preoccupied Anglophone Marxism 40 years ago now seem obsolete, the translation of the *Grundrisse* should be recognized for its role in bringing this about.

Conclusion

(To be further developed, the influence of the transformation of all relations into money relations: taxes in kind into money taxes, rent in kind into money rent, military service into mercenary troops, all personal services in general into money services, of patriarchal, slave, serf and guild labour into pure wage labour) (Marx 1973:146).

The appearance of the *Grundrisse* in English beginning in 1964, in particular the passages concerning “forms which precede capitalist production”, was critical in dislodging the “techno-economic determinism” and “unilineal evolutionism” that had dominated interpretations of Marx since the turn of the century (Llobera 1979). In Lefebvre’s (1991 [1974]:102) words, “Less rigour, less emphasis on logical consistency, and hence a less elaborate formalization or axiomatization—all leave the door open to more concrete themes, especially in connection with the (dialectical) relations between town and country, between natural reality and social reality”. It must be stressed, however, that this does not make the *Grundrisse* (or *Capital*) less scientific; rather, it indicates that *given the complexity of the subject of inquiry*—namely, human society in relation to the natural world—a dialectical materialist approach is more appropriate and powerful than the methods typically associated with “science” (Foster 1999; Harvey 1974). Moreover, in view of the growing recognition among natural scientists of the dialectical nature of biophysical processes (Levins and Lewontin 1985), and current attention to complexity, emergent properties, non-linear dynamics, and problems of scale in “complex adaptive systems” (cf, eg, Gunderson and Holling 2002), the *Grundrisse* should help to open further paths of convergence between the social and natural sciences (Sayre 2005).

It is with regard to method that the *Grundrisse* is likely to play its most important roles at the present time, however. Marxian Anglophone geography and anthropology are converging on a shared problematic: how to understand the complex interactions of humans and processes of capital—commodification, circulation, valorization, accumulation and devaluation—through and across socio-natural space. If, as Michael Watts (1999) contends, the present time is one of “the commodification of everything”, then this problematic is clearly an enormous one, reaching around the world and producing extremely diverse and uneven outcomes. Gillian Hart’s (2006) notion of “critical ethnography and relational comparison” captures well the approach that is needed to grapple with these realities. Hart emphasizes the Lefebvrian character of her arguments, but as noted above, Lefebvre modeled *The Production of Space*—both the book and the concept—on the *Grundrisse* and the conception of production Marx developed there. The approach Hart advocates involves “using intensive ethnographic studies” at multiple sites in order to enable

a non-positivist understanding of generality. In this conception, particularities or specificities arise through *interrelations* between objects, events, places, and identities; and it is through clarifying how these relations are produced and changed in practice that close study of a particular part can generate broader claims and understandings (2006:995–996, emphasis in original).

Such an approach is increasingly important as processes of commodification find ways to embody value not only in objects, goods, bodies and land but also in such intangible “things” as cultural symbols, digital information, ecosystem services or pollution credits. Exactly where, how and by whom such values are produced can be difficult to discern, but they are increasingly linked—and often conjured into being—by financial interests and instruments that represent a kind of second-order commodification. As Robertson (2006) has shown for the emerging market in ecosystem services, these interests may not even need to produce an actual biophysical result in order to realize the value they seek: these commodities are not so much fictitious as they are imaginary or fantastical. Yet their social and environmental impacts and implications are quite real. This is by no means an isolated example, and insofar as financialization is a defining characteristic of the present neoliberal period (Harvey 2005), such imaginary commodities are likely to become increasingly important. The financialization of everything greatly increases the speed, distance and magnitude of capital flows, which is of critical importance as alternative means of social reproduction are gradually eroded or abruptly eviscerated. After all, the absence (or disappearance) of capital can be as powerful in its effects as its presence (or arrival) ever was (Ferguson 2006).

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Endnotes

¹ Although it remains unclear how to deploy “the production of nature” without simultaneously recapitulating a human/nature dichotomy (cf Harvey 1996:138), Smith’s exegesis of uneven geographical development and the “production of nature” has had a pronounced impact on geographers’ efforts to apprehend the environment in Marxian (as well as Lefebvrian) terms.

² Anthropologist Bridget O’Laughlin put the point in simpler terms just two years after the full translation of the *Grundrisse* appeared: “Scientific knowledge of the world is apprehending the essential determinations and suppressing the unimportant. Since the material world is constantly and irreversibly changing, the significance of particular theoretical categories and questions will change as well” (O’Laughlin 1975:343).

³ Anthropologists, too, quickly recognized the epistemological implications: “Structural regularities are always processual and should be conceptualized as such in understanding any particular concrete historical situation . . . Society cannot be understood as a population or aggregate of individuals, but only as a totality of social relations” (O’Laughlin 1975:345f).

⁴ See also Mintz (1985) for an important anthropological example of studying production and consumption as a dialectical unity.

⁵ Marx’s “ethnological notebooks” appeared in 1972, triggering discussion among intellectual historians (see, eg, Kelley 1984). The notebooks undoubtedly gave anthropologists reason to revisit Marx, but the *Grundrisse* was far more important in shaping the course of subsequent theory and research. See below.

⁶ It occurs at pp 471–514 of the Nicolaus translation, where it is one paragraph longer than in Cohen’s translation.

⁷ Graeber proceeds to develop a specifically geographical interpretation of the transformation of slavery into capitalism: removing and relocating workers from their sites of social (re)production to other sites of production was a necessary condition for exploitation, whether such relocation was singular and permanent (eg the middle passage) or repeated daily (eg commuting).

⁸ As Graeber (2006:70–71) remarks: “it is in the nature of systems of domination to take what are really complex interwoven processes of action and chop them up and redefine them as discrete, self-identical objects—a song, a school, a meal, etc. There’s a simple reason for it. It’s only by chopping and freezing them in this way that one can reduce them to property and be able to say one owns them”.

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A Negative Geography of Necessity

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Abstract: One of the many unfortunate results of the long-lived misconception that Marx was a “determinist” is a lack of engagement with his ideas of necessity and negation. Reading the *Grundrisse*’s famous comments on the annihilation of space by time, I trace the Hegelian roots of these concepts to show that for both Marx and Hegel, negation is the very act of critique itself, and necessity is properly understood not as the force of history, but as the object of historical explanation—what makes things the way they are and not another. It is therefore crucial to critical geography’s efforts to identify the possibilities for social change, for that analysis must be predicated on an understanding for how things have emerged in their present form, i.e. the one we have to work with. I argue that a negative geography of necessity is the essential basis for anything we might call a communist geography, a geography of “the real movement which abolishes the present state of things”.

Keywords: Marx, Hegel, Marxist geography, necessity, negation, communism

Marxism’s “determinism” is a tired old saw. With the exception of Fukuyama, one hardly ever sees it trotted out anymore. Determinism surely deserves its bad reputation, but it is nothing new to point out Marx was no determinist, economic or otherwise (Bensaïd 2002 [1995]:261–284; Cohen 1988:77; Karatani 2003:165; Lewis 1972:244–255; Lukács 1971:194–204; Walicki 1995:206–268). And yet, while I welcome these corrections as much as anyone, we have nonetheless inadvertently lost something with them, an idea I would like to help recover in what follows. For if determinism is the bathwater, historical necessity is the baby. The theoretical blacklisting of necessity and determination—largely a result of their “determinist” associations—merits re-examination, for these concepts are vital to Marxist geography.

In this regard, the notebooks that comprise the *Grundrisse* matter enormously. For a rereading of Marx’s necessity by way of the *Grundrisse* turns out to speak directly to critical geography’s theoretical dynamism and its capacity to identify opportunities for political change. Geography—as something we do, as scholars—is at least as much about necessity as it is about possibility, maybe more. Geography is, of necessity, about necessity; this has everything to do with *determination*, but nothing to do with determinism. I believe we need what I call a negative geography of necessity. This concept, which I draw from the Hegelian–Marxist tradition of people like Karl Korsch, Antonio Gramsci

and Georg Lukács, is something like an affirmation of dialectical thinking in the face of post-Marxism. Or, at least, it names the argument that critical geography cannot be entirely “post-Marxist” unless it is also “post-historical”. Whether or not Marxism is indeed “over”—as Derrida (1997:24–25) reminds us, the need to repeatedly declare Marx dead should make us pretty suspicious—the body in the post-Marxist box is not Marx’s, or at least not all of it.¹

Marx’s *Grundrisse* and Hegel’s Geography

It is a commonplace that Hegel looms large in Marx’s work, even among those whose lack of familiarity with Hegel limits their capacity to identify how exactly that looming operates. I set aside for now the loud and lengthy arguments over the nature of Marx’s relation to Hegel, except to say that for almost every imaginable argumentative position, one could find several painstakingly constructed monographs to support it, and several others to knock it down.² The important point is that Marx’s lifelong engagement with Hegel was always critical, but no less fundamental for that. His description, at the age of 19, of his encounter with Hegel as a “frontier post” in his life proved to be much more than a poetry-writing teenager’s romantic exaggeration (Marx and Engels 1978:7). Unlike my own adolescent self-examinations, it turned out to be true: no reading of the *Grundrisse* (let alone *The German Ideology*, *The Poverty of Philosophy* or the “early writings”) can fail to speak Hegel to those whose ears are attuned to his theoretical sensibilities and mode of exposition.³

The question that follows, then, pertains to the ways in which Hegel was “fundamental” to Marx. There is no single answer. Marx often thought by way of Hegel’s categories and dynamic historicism, but he was absolutely not “an Hegelian” in the sense that I call myself “a Marxist”. Moreover, like all of us, his thought developed over the years, and his engagements with particular thinkers waxed and waned. By the time he published the first volume of *Capital* in 1867 (at the age of 49), he had dropped much of the Hegelian language of his earlier work. But that language still animates the *Grundrisse*, his earliest elaboration of “the principles of economics”, written just a decade earlier (Marx and Engels 1975: vol. 40, 244). Indeed, I would argue that it is the Hegel in Marx that gives the *Grundrisse* its particularly restless quality, its irrepressible movement. Even though his famous materialist “inversion” of Hegel’s idealism is in operation in the notebooks, as in fact it had been at least since the 1843 *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (Colletti 1975:19–24), he still speaks through Hegel. He develops a critique of political economy in the language of necessity and contingency, of subjectivity and objectivity, of affirmation/position and negation, and of dialectical transcendence or “sublation” [*Aufhebung*]⁴—perhaps the most distinctly Hegelian term

of all. Indeed, Roman Rosdolsky, who dedicated more than a decade of his life to a study of the *Grundrisse*, describes it as “a massive reference to Hegel, in particular the *Logic*” (1977 [1968]:xiii).

I thoroughly agree. The *Grundrisse*'s grounding in Hegel's work constitutes some of its most important geographies—and I want to stress that here I am not using “geography” metaphorically to refer to a conceptual “space” or terrain on which Marx's thought unfolds, accurate as that metaphor may be. Rather, the Hegelian geographies to which I refer are real, material geographies, lived spatial problematics. Two are perhaps most familiar to geographers. First, there is the notoriously Eurocentric geography of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (1956 [1837]), the one where he parses the great regions of the world into quasi-environmentally determined “nations”.⁴ (Not that Hegel's historical geography is as straightforward as many imagine; debate continues today, especially among African scholars, concerning the extent to which the *Philosophy of History* is as “racist” as many assume; Buck-Morss 2000; Dieng 2006; Tavares 1993.) Second, and more important for contemporary geographers, is the Hegelian geography David Harvey uncovers in his groundbreaking paper “The spatial fix: Hegel, von Thünen, Marx” (1981; cf Harvey 1999 [1982]:413–415). There, Harvey grounds Marx's expansionist theory of capital (developed in the first volume of *Capital*)—specifically the connection between capitalism, the state, and imperialism—in the analysis of civil society contained in part III of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (1991 [1822]: 220–274).⁵

One of the great merits of Harvey's Hegel–Marx chain is its geographical substance. There is real space being produced here, and both Hegel and Marx knew it. But there are other Hegelian geographies or spatial analyses in Marx that are less straightforward, if no less compelling. I have two in mind. One, which merits a discussion of its own, is the ground upon which Marx bases his discussion of “pre-capitalist economic formations” (see the papers by Wainwright and Sayre in this issue). Another, which I take up here, breaks the surface in the *Grundrisse* in a couple of similarly worded, well-known passages.⁶ Here is the first:

Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange—the means of communication and transportation—the annihilation of space by time—becomes an extraordinary necessity to it (1973 [1953]:524; 1974 [1953]:423).⁷

Harvey's article speaks to these ideas, elucidating the mechanisms through which this drive operates. But try as we might to read the “capitalist production of space” here, we cannot get around the fact that Marx, who cared a great deal about terminology, writes “annihilation”

[*Vernichtung*]*—*obliteration, extermination, or usurpation are other options—not “transcendence”, or even “abolition” (both of which usually go by *Aufhebung*). In other words, we have to assume that when Marx says “annihilate”, he means “annihilate”. We are not talking about dialectical sublation, the preservation/cancellation/overcoming so fundamental to both Hegel’s and Marx’s understand of historical motion; we are talking about destruction. This is quite a different problem than the one Harvey examines.⁸

Yet it too is woven of Hegelian thread, or at least it reweaves Hegelian cloth. In the “Preface” to the *Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel argues that space is the realm of lifeless quantity, of mere mathematics.

Space is that kind of existence wherein the concrete notion inscribes the diversity it contains, as in an empty, lifeless element in which its differences likewise subsist in passive, lifeless form . . . In an unreal element of that sort we find, then, only unreal truth, fixed lifeless propositions (1967 [1807]:103).

Later, in the *Science of Logic*, he writes:

Space is this absolute *self-externality* which equally is absolutely uninterrupted, a perpetual becoming-other which is self-identical; time is an absolute coming-out-of-itself, a generating of the one, (a point of time, the now) and immediately the annihilation of it, and again the continuous annihilation of this passing away; so that this spontaneous generating of non-being is equally a simple self-sameness and self-identity (1969 [1816/1830]:189).

We get the definite feeling that space is passive, time is active; space is form, time is content.⁹

Then we remember that Marx’s discussion of this space–time hierarchy is very explicitly and specifically attributed to the historical mode of production dominated by capital. And, according to Marx, Hegel was talking about capital too, if necessarily unwittingly, given the historical conditions under which he worked (Colletti 1973 [1969]; Uchida 1988:138). The “annihilation of space by time” is not a transhistorical inevitability, but the historically particular operation of capital. One possible read of the *Grundrisse*’s geographic critique, then, is the implicit re-spatialization and re-materialization necessary to the emergence of a post-capitalist world. As Marx mentions throughout the *Grundrisse*, space functions for capital principally as a barrier to the realization of value (eg 1973 [1953]:521, 533–534, 685; 1974 [1953]:420, 432, 577). But the conclusion we should consequently draw is not that communism (whatever form it takes) will somehow finally overcome the problem of space by “completing” the process of annihilation. On the contrary, space in communism will be returned to its proper “quality”, something Hegel, who like Ricardo, could

not see the historical specificity of his own thought, argued was impossible:

More specific examples of pure quantity, if they are wanted, are space and time, also matter as such, light, and so forth, and the ego itself . . . Space, time and the rest, are expansions, pluralities which are a coming-out-of-self, a flowing which, however, does not pass over into its opposite, into quality or the one (1969 [1816/1830]:189).

In other words, according to Hegel, space and time escape the force of the dialectic. For Marx, this only underscores the bourgeois limits of the idealist dialectic. Communism—as traced here and there, usually silently, by the *Grundrisse*—involves what we might call material emplacement (minus back-to-the-land romanticism and the nation-state), the dis-abstraction without which post-capitalism is impossible. So communism necessarily entails not merely an inversion—or at least not as we usually think of as inversion (see below)—but a transcendence of Hegelian space.

The *Grundrisse*'s Geography of Necessity

If we go back to the annihilation of space, then, we find not only that it is a consequence of capital's drive [*Trieb*]¹—there is a Freudian's playground in there somewhere—but also that annihilation of space “becomes an extraordinary necessity” for capital. In an effort to take ahistoricism and teleology out of necessity, a possible first move might be to point out that here necessity “becomes”, which is not something a transhistorical force normally needs to do. What I would like to note, however, is not only necessity's becoming, but also its inevitable impermanence. As discussed above, from the fact that the annihilation of space “becomes” a necessity for capital, it does not follow that history is permanently de-spaced. Rather, capital's necessity is bounded by history on both sides, in its emergence and in its transcendence.

Marx says as much in the *Grundrisse*. In a discussion of labour time, he writes “this necessity is itself subject to changes”, for that which is “posited as necessary” is “a historically created necessity” (1973 [1953]:527–528; 1974 [1953]:425–426). It might be tempting to think that since these phrases are a part of his analysis of necessary labour, the necessities to which he refers are human “needs”, which of course will change with the times. Like the political economists at which he directed his critique (Smith 2000 [1776]:39; Ricardo 1951 [1817]:96–97), Marx analyzes these culturally determined “necessaries of life” [*Bedürfnissen des Lebens*] closely, but they are a product of another kind of necessity [*Bedürftigkeit*] (1973 [1953]:604; 1974 [1953]:497). Historical necessity [*historische Notwendigkeit*] describes an entirely different conceptual register.

In the seventh and last of the *Grundrisse* notebooks, in a passage on what he would later call the increasing organic composition of capital, Marx reflects on the way in which the objective conditions of labour in capitalism—the “congealed labour” that constitutes the means of production for industrial capital and its labor force—come to have a “colossal independence”, increasingly to appear as the worker’s dispossession and the capitalist’s appropriation. This process, which we recognize as a central to his analysis of class struggle in capitalism, Marx here calls “inversion” [*Verkehrung*]. He goes on to remark:

But obviously this process of inversion is a merely *historical* necessity, a necessity for the development of the forces of production solely from a specific historical point of departure, or basis, but in no way an *absolute* necessity of production; rather, a vanishing one, and the result and the purpose immanent to this process is to sublimate [*aufzuheben*] the basis itself, together with this form of the process (1973 [1953]:831–832; 1974 [1953]:716).¹⁰

There is a lot going on here. Like many passages in the *Grundrisse*, it offers several ways in.¹¹ For my purposes, I will stick to this: To put it bluntly, for Hegel and for Marx, necessity is not what you think. Necessity is neither predictive nor fateful. And it is not causal—at least not in the everyday sense—let alone teleological:

[A]bove all, we must note the *inadmissible application* of the relation of causality to relations of *physico-organic* and *spiritual life*. Here, what is called cause certainly reveals itself as having a different content from the effect; but the reason is that that which acts on a living being is independently determined, changed and transmuted by it, because a living thing does not let the cause come to its effect, that is, it sublates it as cause. Thus it is inadmissible to say that food is the *cause* of blood, or certain dishes or chill and damp are the *causes* of fever, and so on; it is equally inadmissible to assign the ionic climate as the *cause* of Homer’s works, or Caesar’s ambition as the *cause* of the downfall of the republican constitution of Rome. In history generally, spiritual masses and individuals are in play and reciprocal determination with one another; but it is rather the nature of spirit, in a much higher sense than it is the character of the living thing in general, not to receive into itself another *original* entity, or not to let a cause continue itself into it but to break it off and to transmute it (Hegel 1969:552; emphasis in original).¹²

We have to think of necessity not as cause, but as process (Hegel 1975 [1817/1830]:211–212), a property of movement immanent to objects of experience. What must animate a historical moment for it to plausibly be what it is? Even if it has yet to reveal itself, which Marx (1973 [1953]:415, 443–444, 447) and Hegel (1969 [1816/1830]:651) call “inner necessity”. Necessity is what we might call “whatness” itself,

the quality of an object that makes it what it is. We cannot forget that quality is always developing; “whatness” is never static. As one prominent modern commentator writes, “[w]hat Hegel calls Necessity is a necessity of meaning which progressively unfolds itself; ‘it is hidden in the events that happen and only appears in the end’” (Hypolite 1969 [1947]:164). I think it impossible to exaggerate the importance of this insight into Hegel and Marx. The *Grundrisse* shows us that for Marx, as Fredric Jameson says (1971:360), necessity is a “characteristic of historical understanding as such”; it is its very condition of possibility:

True actuality is necessity; what is actual is necessary in itself. Necessity consists in the division of the whole into the distinctions within the concept, and in the fact that this divided whole exhibits a fixed and enduring determinacy which is not dead and unchanging but continues to produce itself in its dissolution (Hegel 1991 [1822]: 302).

In the passage from the *Grundrisse* cited above, Marx calls very explicitly on this Hegelian formulation of necessity to make a crucial distinction, that between “historical” and “absolute” necessity, concepts Hegel works through in the *Science of Logic* (1969 [1816/1830]). Clearly, historical necessity is not the teleological, determinist beast flogged by some (a critique differently inflected, of course, from Popper to Lyotard; cf Losurdo 2004:36–38). Instead, Marx says it is about “the development of the forces of production solely from a specific historical point of departure, or basis”. In other words, historical necessity is not the force of history, but the object of historical explanation—indeed, of explanation proper: to describe why something happened the way it did and not another. It is the whatness of a moment in history, a moment that is otherwise literally incomprehensible. Note also that Marx embraces contingency and conjuncture, confronts them head on, and not in an attempt to dismiss them. On the contrary, necessity makes sense “solely from a specific historical point of departure”.¹³

What Marx called historical necessity, Hegel called “real” or “relative” necessity. Real necessity, Hegel says, is “a relation that is pregnant with content . . . For it has a *presupposition* from which it begins, it has its *starting point* in the *contingent* . . . Thus in point of fact real necessity is *in itself* also contingency” (1969 [1816/1830]:549–550; emphasis in original). My point is that historical necessity on Marx’s or Hegel’s terms is not something we can shirk. Rather, to understand the interplay of structural–historical forces and lived contingency—Gramsci’s organic and conjunctural—we have no choice but to commit to grasping a moment’s necessity.¹⁴ Historical necessity, as Marx says, is a “vanishing [necessity], and the result and the inherent purpose of this process is to sublimate the basis itself, together with this form of the process”. In short, there is no dialectic, materialist or otherwise, without

necessity. Nor can there be anything meaningfully called possibility. To imagine what can be, we must understand what is. Historical necessity is not what must be or had to be, but what must be for us to say “is”:

When anything is said to be necessary, the first question we ask is, Why? Anything necessary accordingly comes before us as something due to a supposition, the result of certain antecedents. If we go further than mere derivation from precedents, however, we have not gained a complete notion of what necessity means. What is merely derivative, is what it is, not through itself, but through something else; and in this way it too is merely contingent. What is necessary, on the other hand, we would have to be what it is through itself; and thus, although derivative, it must still contain the antecedent which it is derived as a vanishing element in itself. Hence we say of what is necessary, “It is” (Hegel 1975 [1817/1830]:208).

Absolute necessity, which Marx brackets in this part of the notebooks, might appear closer to the caricature of Hegelian teleological totalization. But it is worth noting two things. First, it was not what Marx was talking about. Second, the caricature is wrong—it is not what Hegel was talking about either. Absolute necessity is for all intents and purposes “essence”; not *the* essence, but essence as such, the idea of that without which something cannot be what it is. “Absolute necessity is not so much the necessary, still less *a* necessary, but *necessity*” (1969 [1816/1830]:554). “That which is simply necessary only *is* because it *is*” (552). In other words, absolute necessity, for Hegel and Marx, turns out to be the contingency they are so often accused of trampling beneath their feet:

But this *contingency* is rather absolute necessity; it is the *essence* of those free, inherently necessary actualities. This essence is *light-shy*, because there is in these actualities no *reflective movement*, no reflex, because they are grounded purely in themselves alone, are shaped for themselves, and manifest themselves only to *themselves*, because they are only *being*. But their *essence* will break forth in them and reveal what *it* is and what *they* are . . . [C]ontingency is absolute necessity, it is itself the presupposing of that first, absolute actuality (Hegel 1969 [1816/1830]:553; emphasis in original).

This is not exactly geography’s material necessity, perhaps. But to the extent that one might take up David Harvey’s (1999 [1982]) frequent calls for an historical–geographical materialism, I believe we need also confront the force of historical–geographical necessity. In fact, I would say we cannot do one without the other. Historical necessity is the content of history, the movement of history. An attempt to understand it is our privilege and responsibility as intellectuals. Examining the

forces—including “accident”—that determine why things are the way they are, and not another, is a *sine qua non* of politics.

A Negative Geography of Necessity

This is so because necessity negates possibility. For Hegel, the actual—what is—is a result of the confrontation of possibility and necessity. The “outcome” is the actual—and possibility and necessity are both simultaneously negated but contained in the actual. They are superseded but preserved in the movement. (This is an excellent example of Hegel’s dialectic if you ever need to teach it, because it shows that a commitment to grasping necessity is not a rejection of possibility, but its authentic embrace.)

Now negation may bring us back to exactly what terrifies people about the idea of necessity. But again, I want to allay those fears and try to show that it cannot be otherwise, since a properly political geography, ie a geography that is political, is a negative geography of necessity in this sense. For both Hegel and Marx, negation is the necessary operation or moment through which we come to confront the posited—the “given”, the “mere” facts – that both of them scorned (eg Adorno 1993 [1963]:30, 94–110; Hegel 1967 [1807]:92, 1991:11; Marx 1973 [1953]:472, 852–853; 1974 [1953]:375, 736).

All objects are initially experienced as “posited” insofar as they must be “given” to us to be considered an object of experience or conception for and by us. The objects of the world must *be* for us to encounter or experience them in thought or action, and their constant movement and internal opposition will mean that when we “simply look upon them” we will always find them to be *not*—ie more or other than—what they “are”. This, not annihilation, destruction or removal, is the meaning of negation. A geography of necessity, then, is a negative geography; grasping the historically necessary is a negative process. In its relentlessness, restlessness, unwillingness to settle—in the dialectic as such—this geography is of course active, crafting the world, but this is not the opposite of negative. The negative is, rather, the very process of encountering and changing the world. “As a matter of fact”, Lucio Colletti (1973 [1969]:116) says, “thinking is always the negation of what we have immediately before us”.

For Marx, history involves people in the process of constantly breaking things open (unfolding), making the implicit explicit (learning, questioning, politicizing) in all its contradictoriness. Negation, in thought and practice, denounces the “given”, always revealing, ever making the world to be more and other than it is (Adorno 1973 [1966]:161). Hegel and Marx call it negation because to do so makes it *not* what it was, or might have been. This is the negative moment—it is *critique*—and to the extent that it identifies possibility, it is “the

possibility of which their reality has cheated the objects” (Adorno 1973 [1966]:52). Neither Hegel nor Marx dismiss possibility *qua* future-as-radically-other in favour of iron laws of determinate necessity. For Marx, possibility in that sense is everything: “Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things” (Marx and Engels 1978:162; emphasis in original). Communism is not a terminal social formation or an identifiable order. It is the historical unfolding of what Hegel, in no uncertain terms, called “possibility”: neither pure openness-as-possibility, nor meaningless, ahistorical utopianism, nor pure “positivity”, but possibility as a concrete, specific, grounded, historicized and thus constrained possibility (Hegel 1969 [1916/1830]:550). For Marx, communism *is* possibility. It is the very movement of the dialectic beyond the “present state of things”. This seems to me so important it can hardly be overstated.

A negative geography of necessity, then, captures the dialectic in this “real movement”. It also captures some of its radical political potential insofar as it can make sense of “the dynamic instantiations of the dialectical rhythm” (Spivak 1999:74) which drives and is driven by “the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things”. One might even say it is a *communist geography*. The problem is not that the “present state of things” is illusory; the problem is that it we live in an “upside-down world” [*verkehrte Welt*], in which space is abstracted and hypostatized as “amounts of time [*Zeitquantum*]” (Marx 1973 [1953]:538; 1974 [1953]:436; cf Colletti 1973 [1969], 1975). A geography of necessity is certainly the seed of anything Gramscian in contemporary critical geography, since it consists in the re-assertion of space, the transcendence of capital’s abstract aspatial annihilation, the dialectical “return” to “real relations” without which Gramsci’s entire strategic edifice is incomprehensible (Said 2002:467–468; Wainwright 2005).

Gramsci holds that in “history, in social life, nothing is fixed, rigid, or definitive. And nothing ever will be” (1985:31) not despite, but because of his Hegelian Marxism. Indeed, I would contend that that strategy—the grinding work of constructing spaces beyond the reach of hegemony, spaces like the factory council in which it is possible to “shift the terrain” and construct a new hegemony—is still the best alternative we have. What falls out of that struggle I cannot at present imagine—that is part of the point—but real possibility becomes actual only if we act. As Marx writes, all of it is “*merely historical*” (1973 [1953]:461; 1974 [1953]:365; emphasis in original). Consciousness of necessity is about transcending/sublating “it could have been otherwise”, and moving on to “it is otherwise, but it contains the possibility of what it might yet be”; it contains its own negation. Possibility at its most concretely meaningful

is not “anything can happen”, nor even “anything we can imagine”, but necessity harnessed—grasped—in political praxis. If we are to speak of the future, which Marx rarely does, we can do so analytically, by which I mean in a politically relevant manner, only if we try to understand the forces through which what is came to be (Koselleck 2004 [1979]).

An attempt to understand necessity as the negation of possibility, as the fundamental condition for “is”, is the very act of explanation, of political argument, or political sociality. Necessity is what possibility must have become for there to be anything called “history”. The effort to identify “possible worlds” is meaningless without the simultaneous effort to critically explain, as Marx did, why the world is not otherwise, and in doing so, to explode the “given” from which the not-given can emerge. This is what Hegel meant when he wrote, “[N]ecessity is transfigured into freedom—not the freedom that consists in abstract negation, but freedom concrete and positive. From which we may learn what a mistake it is to regard freedom and necessity as mutually exclusive” (1975 [1817/1830]:220; cf Adorno 1973 [1966]:68). Herein, perhaps, lies the *Grundrisse*’s fundamental geographical insight. On its volcanic textual terrain—from which we occasionally glimpse the geography of a world after capitalism, beyond the annihilation of space—we find the transfiguration of necessity into freedom as critique. And the myriad insights into the dynamics of capital it contains, some burning slow like molten rock, some exploding momentarily like fumaroles, continue to illuminate contemporary political economies by grasping the movements by which they are what they have become—of historical necessity.

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Endnotes

¹ “When we say ‘Marx is dead’, that oft-repeated formula, what are we saying? When someone dies and we repeat the notice of his death for more than a day—normally, when a newspaper prints someone’s obituary, it does so for one day and then no more—when we repeat it again and again, it’s because something else is going on, because the dead man is not that dead” (translated from Derrida 1997:24–25).

² In *Marx Beyond Marx* (1991 [1979]:57–58), Antonio Negri manages the unusual feat of agreeing with virtually every position in the debate on the “relations *Hegel–Marx*”, while simultaneously, and very usefully, encouraging us to move beyond it.

³ For those unfamiliar with Hegel’s work, without getting into the theoretical details I think it is fair to say that even new readers of Marx understand that feeling one gets at the beginning of *Capital*—like one’s feet cannot find the ground; that mix of anxiety and excitement, where one starts to make a hundred seemingly brilliant connections in a chaotic mix of insight and obscurity. This is an important part of what Marx got from Hegel. Still, the inclusion of *Capital* in the list of Marx’s Hegel-influenced work is the subject of one of the great debates in the history of Marxism. Many would add it (including me), but many would not.

⁴ “Nature is the first standpoint from which man can gain freedom within himself; and this liberation must not be rendered difficult by natural obstructions . . . In the extreme zones man cannot come to free movement; cold and heat are here too powerful to allow Spirit to build up a world for *itself*. Aristotle said long ago, ‘When pressing needs are satisfied, man turns to the general and more elevated.’ But in the extreme zones such pressure may be said never to cease, never to be warded off; men are constantly impelled to direct attention to nature, to the glowing rays of the sun, and icy frost. The true theatre of History is therefore the temperate zone; or, rather, its northern half, because the earth there presents itself in continental form, and has a broad breast, as the Greeks say” (Hegel 1956 [1837]:80).

⁵ Although Harvey only cites her in passing, choosing instead to focus on what Lenin did with these ideas, the expansionist argument is perhaps best worked out by Rosa Luxemburg in *The Accumulation of Capital* (2003).

⁶ Throughout, citations from the *Grundrisse* reference the English translation by Martin Nicolaus (1973 [1953]) and the German edition (1974 [1953]).

⁷ Later in the notebooks (1973:538; 1974:436), Marx writes: “in as much as the circuits which capital travels in order to go from one of these forms into the other constitute sections of circulation, and these sections are travelled in specific *amounts of time* (even spatial distance reduces itself to time; the important thing e.g. is not the market’s distance in space, but the speed—the amount of time—with which it can be reached), by that much the velocity of circulation, the *time* in which it is accomplished, is a determinant of how many products can be produced in a given period of time; how often capital can be realized in a given period of time, how often it can *reproduce* and *multiply* its value”.

⁸ Elsewhere in the *Grundrisse*, Marx actually contrasts these two spatial problems in similar terms: “Thus, while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate [*vernichten*] this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital, therefore, the more extensive the market over which it circulates, which forms the spatial orbit of its circulation, the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation [*Vernichtung*] of space by time” (1973 [1953]:538; 1974 [1953]:438). Harvey analyzes the first of these, i.e. the conquest of “the whole earth for its market”.

⁹ See also *Grundrisse* (Marx 1973 [1953]:321; 1974 [1953]:227): “expressed passively, the magnitude of labour appears as an amount of space; but expressed in motion, it is measurable only in time”; or “the working day, regarded spatially—time itself regarded as space—is *many working days alongside one another*” (Marx 1973 [1953]:399; 1974 [1953]:303).

¹⁰ Emphasis in original; translation modified. Nicolaus usually (and idiosyncratically) translates the Hegelian terms *Aufhebung* and *aufzuheben* as “suspension” and “suspend”. The idea is much more commonly rendered as “overcome”, “transcend”, “supercede” or even “abolish” (which Nicolaus uses occasionally (eg 1973 [1953]:629–630)). It is also the original of the increasingly common “sublate”, an attempt to capture the combined and simultaneous processes of cancellation–supercession–preservation that it carries in Marx and Hegel’s original works. Marx makes another very brief mention of “vanishing necessity” in the section of the *Grundrisse* on pre-capitalist economic formations: in simple circulation, “money as medium of circulation showed itself as merely vanishing [*verschwindend*], without independent necessity, and hence not as limit or barrier” (1973 [1953]:416; 1974 [1953]:319).

¹¹ It also gives one the opportunity to put several mythical Marxisms out of their misery. For example, the dynamic movement of the *Basis*—not to mention its dialectical sublation—puts some very non-determinist flesh on the bones of Marx’s brief but

nonetheless famous base-superstructure comment in the Preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1970 [1859]). See also Jameson's (1990:46) interesting speculations on the mobility of the basis.

¹² We can see what inspired Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1971) in this passage, and all the trouble it got him into with those party members faithful to the Stalinist doctrine of "scientific" dialectical materialism, or "Diamat".

¹³ The way in which historical necessity works in the *Grundrisse* is similar to its operation in Marx's mature work generally. See, for example, *Capital*, vol 3: "the mode of production itself possesses a transitory historical necessity and so too therefore do the relations of production and exchange that arise from it" (1981:760), or *Theories of Surplus-Value*: "the merely transitory historical necessity of [capital]" (1972:vol III:1138).

¹⁴ Hegel "makes a clear distinction between historical process and natural process, and the category of historical necessity is linked not to nature per se but to 'second nature'. Second nature is clearly the result of history, and therefore of man's freedom; nevertheless, the result is not revocable by . . . any other individuality which believes itself ingenious and wants to shape history and the masses according to its pleasure" (Losurdo 2004:38).

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