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Gender as a Capitalist Category: Structural Separation, Forms of Domination, and The
Organization of Violence

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Abstract

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This article aims to further develop a current in Marxist-Feminist thought which understands gender as a historically-specific category of capitalist society, inseparable from the logic of value. Through close reading and comparative critique of some of the most promising works to emerge from this current, this article shows that they allow for a non-reductionist synthesis of a theory of gender and theories concerned with state violence, racialization, and social antagonism. Marxist-Feminist thought can therefore move past theories which understand various experiences of violence, coercion, and unfreedom as products of patriarchy considered as an autonomous system of social power. It can also avoid implicitly conceiving of certain forms of violence as an irrational remainder disconnected from wider social logics. Furthermore, a theory of this kind shows that an emphasis on impersonal domination need not ignore the continued role of direct force in society. Contrarily, it is only through a robust theory of negative circumscription that particular violent acts can be differentiated from each other according to their distinct roles in reproducing capitalist social relations. This article attempts to describe these distinctions through attention to the concept of outlawed need alongside the production and management of surplus populations, showing that a system of production organized around a principle other than the satisfaction of need necessarily produces various forms of conflict and social antagonism. In light of this dynamic, the political possibility and necessity of abolishing value and gender is emphasized.

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Gender as a Capitalist Category: Structural Separation, Forms of Domination, and The Organization of Violence

1. Introduction

Among the numerous analytical frameworks and methodologies that offer theorizations of gender, Marxist-Feminism alone possesses the potential to offer a coherent and adequate account of its existence as a social and historical category tied to relationships of force, the production of subjectivity, and related to other differential categories. Far from being able to rely on a settled and unambiguous conceptual structure, Marxist-Feminism must contend with the incomplete status of Marx's own analysis of capitalist society and critique of political economy, to say nothing of the tendencies and theories built upon it. Moreover, work developed outside of, or even in overt opposition to, Marxian or Marxist-Feminist theories occasionally offers vital historical or conceptual material which cannot be ignored. The task confronting those wishing to provide a coherent Marxist-Feminist critique of gender cannot, therefore, consist of pairing a transhistorical feminist critique of women's oppression with a Marxist account of "the economy" conceived as a static object rather than a set of social relations, or through any similar dualistic conception. Rather, gender must be understood as a category extensively transformed by the advent of capitalist society, and which cannot be separated from the self-valorising movement of capital and its requirements. The analysis that follows will examine a small body of literature developing a critique of gender through close attention to Marxian theories of value in order to highlight its unique ability to situate gender differentiation, gendered violence and coercion, and gendered divisions of labor with respect to capitalist society. Further, this paper will indicate a number of limitations and aporias which currently exist within this current and suggest how they might be overcome. In particular, this analysis contends that the current wave of

Marxist-Feminist literature is limited by a general fragmentation of its most promising theories and conceptual innovations. That is, despite the existence of work sharply attentive to (for example) the relation between race and so-called primitive accumulation or the status of poststructuralist understandings of gendered and sexual subjectivation with respect to Marxist critique, these projects are not brought into sustained conversation with each other. While eminently understandable from a practical perspective, the problem of under-specified limits or unclear compatibility between these contributions nonetheless impairs the clarity and conceptual force of a Marxist-Feminist theory of gender. Though far from an attempt at full systematization, the analysis that follows will focus in large part on clarifying the extent to which conceptual synthesis of the texts in question is possible, and will suggest what might be gained or lost in doing so.

More specifically, the analysis that follows is directed towards examining a number of linked problematics: First, what is the basis for the continued presence of (and transformations in) gender differentiation and oppression in capitalist society? That is, though relations of violence and social power subordinating women to men pre-exist capitalist society, these relations do not remain magically untouched by the massive reorganizations of social life in general during the transition to capitalist production, nor do they escape reorganization over the course of capitalist society's own history, as if determined by an autonomous system related only externally to relations such as class or the dynamics of value.¹ In short, what functions does gender serve with respect to capitalist production and accumulation such that it remains extant?

¹ The exact degree of (dis)continuity between the oppression of women in preceding class societies and in capitalist society is a matter of some debate. This analysis proceeds from the assumption that the broad transformation of social relations with the development of capitalism is sufficiently extensive that it is possible to speak of gender without reference to pre-capitalist forms. Unless otherwise noted, "gender" in this analysis refers to its specifically capitalist form rather than treating it as an analytical category designating the social organization of bodily difference in any given historical locus.

Second, how are gendered violence and coercion structurally organized? This question interrogates the different processes which link the impersonal forms of social domination unique to capitalist society to (no less structurally necessary) personal forms of violence and coercion. This line of argument further specifies why gender is (re)produced as a social category while also making visible the wider function or structural position of particular techniques of gender domination. Notably, a theory of this kind would allow for Marxist-Feminism to properly take up, critique, and situate analyses of these techniques developed by other theoretical traditions, such as (for example) theories of sexual identity and gendered discipline which draw upon queer theory. Given that economic relations do not “manipulate individuals like puppets” or endow them with foreign, ideologically distorted consciousness without mediation, a theory of the function of gender for capitalist accumulation cannot simply double as a theory of the production of gendered subjectivity.² The production of gendered subjectivity must be located historically and politically within a social context dominated by the self-valorizing movement of value or (in other words) a society in which social production is organized according to a seemingly automatic increase of value over (and in many ways against) the satisfaction of human needs.³ To these ends, the basic structure of the analysis is as follows: Section 2 contextualizes the Marxist-Feminist focus on the reproduction of labor power through an assessment of Lise Vogel’s *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*, before exposing the Endnotes article “The Logic of Gender” at length as the basis of a theory of gender as a capitalist category. Section 3 focuses on extending Endnotes’ critique through attention to the production of need, focusing

² This quote is taken from William Clare Roberts, who offers an interpretation of Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism as a “political problem first and foremost, and an epistemic problem only derivatively.” Roberts’ approach helpfully highlights the need to specify the causal relations between freedom-impairing market imperatives and the production of subjectivity, rather relying upon a “a social ontology in which social macrostructure is replicated via individual microstructure.” see *Marx’s Inferno* 83-103, especially p. 96.

³ In Marx’s famous rendering “Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (*Capital Vol. 1*, 163).

mainly on the work of Amy De'Ath. Section 4 works to further concretize the framework developed in Sections 2 and 3 through a focus on social antagonism, aiming to specify the causal relationships between class struggle, value-production, the state as a function of violence, and differential categories such as race.

1.1 A Note on Sex, Gender, and Bodily Difference

Before continuing with the main focus areas of this analysis, it is necessary to specify how the category of gender will be deployed in the arguments that follow. Like a number of other critical discourses, such as those concerning race and disability, feminist accounts of gender must contend with the relationship between classifications such as “female” and the bodily differences which seemingly anchor them or give them content. The theoretical and political stakes attached to this task are indeed quite high, given the prevalence of ideological formations which naturalize and justify violence and unfreedom by positioning specific gender categories and gendered social relations as natural, fixed, and ahistorical features of human society. In recent years, this problem has been frequently posed as an opposition between essentialist positions, which forward a view of gender as immutable and extra-socially determined (whether through reference to a particular requisite bodily configuration or otherwise) and social constructionist positions, which argue for the social determination of these categories in some form or another. As may be apparent, social constructionism with respect to gender encompasses a vast array of positions, some of which may be politically noxious in ways similar to essentialist positions⁴ or which might simply be inaccurate or insufficient as accounts of social life. The task of a critical theory of gender does not, therefore, consist in advocating for

⁴ For example, present-day anti-trans rhetoric sometimes takes the form of opposition to those ‘socialized male or female’ in childhood occupying the other social role later in life, with kindred (if not identical) political implications to those formulations basing themselves overtly in a rhetoric of immutable biological difference.

constructivism over essentialism, showing gender essentialism to be unsavory (politically or otherwise), or showing essentialist positions to be theoretically incoherent.

While efforts of this kind may at times be useful, such a theory should principally direct itself towards understanding gender difference with respect to the social mechanisms of its production and its functions, considered in light of the liberatory project of fundamentally transforming (or for some, abolishing) gender as a salient category of social life. Such a project might interrogate the production of “biological sex” as a falsely coherent and highly racialized medical norm founded in part on the somatization of social gender difference (Fausto-Sterling 3-7). It might also analyze numerous other means by which the body is altered and rendered intelligible in relation to gender difference: aesthetic norms, gendered physical violence, and so forth. In general, the body is to be treated as a something whose production and organization must be explained rather than as a separate pre-social ground with natural sexual features which provide the primary basis for cultural gender roles and expectations. Crucially, however, Marxist-Feminist critique reveals that a theoretical project of this kind is deficient, incomplete, or even impossible without centering gender as a category of capitalist society, one which is inexplicable without reference to the constitutive dynamics of the latter.⁵

1.2 Differentiation, Intersections, and Totality

Gender is not the only category of difference operative in capitalist society. Race and coloniality, in particular, cannot go unmentioned in any attempt to formulate a coherent Marxist Feminist critique of capitalist gender oppression, nor can such a critique merely incorporate an analysis of racialization after the fact. To do so would risk creating an implicit substantial

⁵ The oppression of women clearly precedes the advent of generalized commodity production and capitalist society more generally. However, as is consistently noted by Marxist Feminists, gendered oppression does not persist unchanged as capitalist production transforms and reorganizes other existing institutions and social dynamics.

separation between gender and race or falsely establishing a particular subject position (e.g. that of a white housewife during the era of the Fordist family wage) as the unquestioned center of critique, with other forms of gendered subjectivity and relations to capital accumulation figured as derivative or secondary concerns. Nor is this concern animated by a desire to show that race and gender difference are inseparable but nonetheless epiphenomenal effects of an overriding social structure, such as class domination or the impersonal domination of value. Rather, theoretical focus should go towards examining racialization and gender differentiation as active and conflictual processes through which domination of these kinds are preserved, intensified, or contested. This analysis follows Susan Ferguson and others in emphasizing the importance of critique which recognizes the necessity of engaging with a concept of totality. Here, totality does not refer to a conception of social life as driven everywhere by a singular logic, or to a functionalism which cannot account for historical or potential change (liberatory or otherwise,) both of which might be grasped by a theorist located outside of it, as if looking upon terrain from above. Rather, a concept of dialectical totality is to emphasize the process of “totalisation” through which seemingly separate and even contradictory moments can be grasped as aspects of a social whole.⁶ As Ferguson writes, to conceive of gender, race, colonial position, and class domination as ‘pure’ forms or as “independent, pre-existing, trans-historical strands of reality” which only interact through an unexplained notion of contingency would be to uncritically reproduce an ontological difference between them and occlude the questions of how and why they are constituted together or come into relation in specific instances (Ferguson “Intersectionality” 42). As this analysis moves forward, one of its primary goals will be to highlight moments in which specific analyses of race and gender must be reformulated,

⁶ Chris O’Kane has written extensively on totality. For a brief intellectual history of the different conceptualizations of totality within the Marxist tradition, see his article in the SAGE Handbook of Marxism.

recontextualized, or otherwise reconsidered in light of a Marxist critique of value and concept of totality. With these clarifications in mind, this argument can now turn to a more direct engagement with various Marxist-Feminist theorizations of gender as a capitalist category.

2 Outlining A Marxist Theory of Gender

2.1 Lise Vogel, Labor Power, and Surplus Value

Lise Vogel's 1983 work *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Towards a Unitary Theory* traces a history of attempts to bring theories of capitalist society which find their basis in the works of Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels into productive conversation with accounts of gendered social domination. From Marx's scattered comments on the effects of capitalist industry on women and Engels' highly influential *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* to the theories of Vogel's contemporaries, she offers a rich intellectual history of the "so-called woman-question" and articulations of socialist or Marxist feminisms in order to understand their presuppositions and overcome their limitations. Responding more immediately to what has been called the "domestic labor debate" and the problematics that grew out of it, Vogel turns her attention to the categories and dynamics developed within Marx's critique of political economy, particularly to the "special commodity" of labor power. Her approach is notable for her attempt to understand the limits of Marx's categories in order to expand their conceptual reach and draw out their unstated implications regarding what allows for the continual renewal of women's oppression in capitalist society. Vogel's most important insight rests in turning the broader feminist insight that gendered divisions of labor are historically specific into an unignorable question for Marxist theory. She does so by asking how the commodity labor-power, "the very pivot" of capitalist production, continues to appear in a condition fit for sale (Vogel xxiv, 157). The importance of labor-power to capitalist production

rests on its unique quality as a commodity. As with any other commodity, its value is determined “by the labour-time necessary for [its] production, and consequently also [its]reproduction.”

However, it alone produces value when consumed, upon its purchase for the (promise of a) wage and exercise in the creation of commodities under the direction of a capitalist. Since labor-power refers to “the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description,” acts of concrete labor exhaust the laborer mentally as well as physically, requiring the pursuit of sustenance, rest, and pleasure during non-working hours (leisure time). The replenishment of labor power therefore entails not only the day-to-day physiological subsistence of proletarians and their generational reproduction, but also the fulfillment of a historically defined set of needs (*Capital Vol. 1*, 119-121). As Ferguson and David McNally note in their preface to the 2013 revised edition of *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*, Vogel is the sole feminist theorist to have theorized the relationship between the reproduction of labor power in the working class family and the dynamics of capital, but her account was nonetheless significant for insisting that the “sociomaterial basis of women’s oppression” cannot be isolated in the age- and gender-differentiated relations of the household (Vogel xxii, 64-66). That is, capital’s need for activity which renews and replenishes labor power, rather than “the sex division of labor or the family per se,” is the necessary theoretical point of departure (xxxii). Analysis of family forms in other class societies, especially with respect to those transformed during the transition to capitalism can provide crucial vantages on the production and maintenance of gender differentiation, on relations of dispossession, exploitation, and coercion. However, setting aside the myriad insights and pitfalls of approaches of this kind, what lies wholly outside their scope is

a concept of the unique forms of impersonal social domination specific to capitalist society and their relations to reorganized forms of personal or “direct” coercion and violence.

Vogel’s text clears the way for such an analysis through her attention to certain subordinate questions within this project as well: She clarifies, against some contemporary assertions, that (unwaged) domestic labor is not directly productive of surplus-value (Vogel 23). This insight not only helps clarify the role of domestic labor in influencing the quantitative value of labor power but also highlights a key qualitative aspect of unwaged domestic labor: its exclusion from the process of real subsumption (including rationalization, socialization, and technical innovation) necessitated by intra-capitalist competition. Vogel’s remarks on this subject remain at a relatively abstract level, often phrased as an engagement with the question of whether domestic labor constitutes a distinct mode of production subordinate to capitalist production (Vogel 23-27). Despite this, her clarification regarding the non-value producing status of unwaged domestic labor clears the path for a coherent treatment of (for example) waged labor which reproduces labor power and the implications of socializing, in whole or in part, domestic labor. Finally, Vogel’s analysis of the family mentions Marx’s insight that the determination of the wage minimum occurs at the level of class rather than at the level of the individual: many proletarians⁷ will find themselves unable to reproduce their own existence and/or that of those dependent upon them (Vogel 56). Marx’s insight here is based off his contention in Chapter 25 of *Capital Vol. 1* that the labor-saving techniques and increased productivity necessary for a firm to remain profitable under competitive conditions results in an increase of the ratio between constant capital (the value of the means of production or “dead labor”) and variable capital (the

⁷ It is important to remember that this category is not limited simply to employed members of the working class. It encompasses all those made, by processes of so-called primitive accumulation, to be dependent upon wages received for the sale of labor power, whether accessed directly through a capitalist or through dependence on another proletarian.

value of labor power in the form of wages) employed in the production process, resulting in the expulsion of laborers from production and the expansion of what Marx calls the “industrial reserve army of labor” and relative surplus population. While the full argument for this tendency and its implications are too lengthy to explore here, two aspects are essential to note here: First, the existence of industrial reserve army works to intensify exploitation, as workers must work harder to compete against other proletarians vying for limited job opportunities and capitalists are able to treat laborers as disposable (subjecting them to intensified and dangerous laboring conditions, and suppressed wages) given the abundance of un- or under-employed proletarians eager to replace those exhausted, maimed, or killed by such conditions. Second, those unable to consistently access the wage directly must secure their existence through other means, including informal work, personal dependence, and criminalized means of securing the necessities of life, or else face death (*Capital Vol 1*, 434-451). Though only gestured at by Vogel, the recognition that “large sectors of the world’s population are destined to extinction because they are believed to be redundant or inappropriate to the valorisation requirements of capital” is therefore essential for understanding the differential imposition of vulnerability, death, and other forms of violence (Dalla Costa 8). In this way, Vogel picks up on the unstated or underdeveloped implications of Marx’s work (particularly *Capital Vol. 1*) and transforms them into a problematic capable of generating a properly Marxist critique of gender, the family, and the reproduction of labor power. At the same time, she draws many connections between Marx’s critique and the analysis of gendered relations of domination which remain undeveloped, setting the stage for the contributions that follow.

2.2 Value-Theory and Gender as a Real Abstraction

In an attempt to move past many of the imprecise, misleading, or otherwise inadequate categories developed during and after the domestic labor debate, while preserving and renewing the theoretical and political import of an analysis of gendered domination under capitalism, Maya Gonzalez and Jeanne Neton of the *Endnotes* journal published “The Logic of Gender: On the Separation of Spheres and the Process of Abjection” in 2013. Drawing upon value theory and the work of Marxist-Feminists who began to engage with it as a means of clarifying and deepening their analysis, “The Logic of Gender” has become a landmark text for contemporary Marxist-Feminist theory and will be a central point of reference for the analysis that follows. It is therefore worth explicating to ensure clarity before extending its insights and assessing its limits in light of other theories.

The article begins with the definition of gender as a “separation between spheres,” an initial abstraction from which the analysis moves towards increasingly concrete operations of gender. In order to specify “the relationship between the reproduction of labour-power and the reproduction of the capitalist totality” which remains incomplete in Marx’s analysis, they turn towards the two-fold form of labor “embodied”⁸ in commodities and the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value. Like Vogel and other Marxist-Feminists, Gonzalez and Neton note that Marx claims that the labor-time necessary to (re)produce labor power “reduces itself to that necessary for the production of [its] means of subsistence,” prompting a question regarding the status of those activities necessary to transform “a cart full of ‘means of subsistence’” into embodied labor-power (Endnotes 60-61). Rather than categorize activities of this kind as labor in

⁸ This translation is often misleading; value does not exist as a fixed property of individual commodities according to the quantity of abstract labor expended in their creation. “Substantialist” theories of value fundamentally mischaracterize the nature of value, and misunderstand the relationship between production and circulation. See Heinrich 49, 54,64.

the capitalist sense, Gonzalez and Neton seize on this reduction of labor-power to pure dead-labor in terms of value, writing that those activities necessary for the production and reproduction of labor-power are “structurally made non-labour.” That is, activities which reproduce labor power are non-labor and do not produce value not because of the particular characteristics of child-rearing, cooking, cleaning and so forth or because they are performed in a separate spatial location such as the household (rather than the workplace). Rather, they are rendered non-labor because labor-power could not otherwise have a value. The valorization of value therefore requires a sphere of activity separated from value production.

More than a simple recasting of a dichotomy between productive and reproductive labor, or a theory which directly connects the devaluation of ‘women’s work’ to a socially dispersed misogynist ideology which results in direct violence, “The Logic of Gender” offers a means of understanding particular activities in terms of their structural position. To this end, the Endnotes authors distinguish between the directly market-mediated (DMM) sphere and the indirectly market-mediated (IMM) sphere. Direct market mediation entails rationalization of the production process with respect to profit: uniformity of process and product, efficiency, and productivity must be established and maintained at “competitive levels” for the enterprise to remain worthy of continued investment and operation (63). The DMM sphere is therefore distinguished by the presence of the “impersonal abstract domination” of the market. That is, the criteria upon which the decisions of economic agents are evaluated are defined prior to, and independent of their individual will: for example, choosing to implement a particular innovation will either improve or impair one’s ability to sell commodities. Therefore, as William Clare Roberts helpfully explains, the impersonal domination of the market qualifies as domination precisely because it constrains deliberation through the imposition of economic hazard (*Marx’ Inferno* 96). Sufficient

failure to act according to the imperatives of the market detailed above, whether due to misfortune, ineptitude, or prioritization of another set of criteria results in an inability to reproduce oneself as a member of a given class, resulting in an array of potential negative consequences. In aggregate, these hazards determine not only what is produced, but also how, and as will be expanded upon later, by whom.

By contrast, in the IMM sphere there is no “way to objectively quantify, enforce or equalize ‘rationally’ the time and energy spent in these activities or to whom they are allocated” and rationalization according to profit and socially necessary labor time is not operative (Endnotes 65). The allocation of these activities is therefore “a conflictual question.” The contours of the answer depend on the relations of social power among those directly concerned, which themselves depend on aspects such as access to money and goods, violence, and naturalization of certain activities as the domain of a particular social group. Importantly, IMM activities are not wholly detached from the market, since the qualities demanded of labor power vary with transformations in the production process, entailing changes in the activities and materials necessary to produce and maintain the embodied capacity to labor. The significance of this insight, which connects an impersonal form of domination to a personal form, is far greater than acknowledged by Gonzalez and Neton. However, as subsequent analysis of the relationship between market domination and coloniality will show, attention to the distinction and relation between these two forms of domination is vital for any analysis wishing to properly situate a theory of subjectivity or the production of difference in relation to a theory of capital accumulation.

The Endnotes authors then draw a further complicating distinction, between waged⁹ and unwaged labor, categories which are not wholly identical with DMM and IMM activity. Focusing on the process of “social validation” by which activity is qualified as labor or assigned the status of non-labor (“the non-social of the social,”) the Endnotes authors specify that in addition to waged labor in the DMM sphere and unwaged non-labor in the IMM sphere, there exist waged IMM activities including reproductive functions undertaken by the state, as well as waged labor that is unproductive of value. With respect to waged IMM activities, two aspects are crucial: First, like waged labor in general, they are validated as social rather than natural and are subject to evaluation with respect to the social average. Unlike DMM activities, this social average corresponds only to the specific kind of labor in question, since value is the mechanism which allows for the abstraction and comparison of labor in general (Endnotes 66-76). Second, waged IMM activities diminish the potential magnitude of surplus value, insofar as their cost increases the exchange-value of labor power. Unwaged IMM activities, therefore, are the remainder which “must not only appear as, but also be non-labour” a designation which constitutes gender *as such* in accordance with (the critique of) the capitalist form of labor (68-69).

“The Logic of Gender” subsequently turns towards the matters of “double freedom,” formal equality as a necessary condition of capital’s movement, and the separation between the state and civil society. The authors seize on the differentiation between individuals in terms of their differential right to “that property which individuals own in their persons” which allows them to freely exchange their labor-power as proletarians, having been “freed” of the ability to otherwise secure their survival (72). Importantly, not all proletarians are granted total

⁹ As they note, the language of “paid/unpaid” risks ignoring that wage is received in exchange for the use of a worker’s labor-power during a given period, rather than as payment for the actual living labor performed.

self-possession in this sense: partially deprived of it, women must exchange their labor-power indirectly through those granted formal equality. The legal distinction between men and women which prevailed during the early period of capitalist society effectively anchors each gender to a particular sphere of activity on this basis, continuously producing women as different and subordinate not only on the level of ideology, but also (more saliently) on the level of which embodied human potentials are actualized or developed, and which needs are met or unmet (71-73).

Notably, though not given much focus by the authors, aspects of this subordinate and dependent position (such the inability to move between lines of work) allowed forms of direct violence to flourish.¹⁰ In addition to the force of naturalization, having access to the wage only indirectly through her husband or father (in return for domestic duties or being forcibly subcontracted to an employer) dramatically reduced a woman's ability to engage in struggle over the conditions of her life activity. Deprivation of even the meager potential to sell her labor power to a different capitalist, or to refuse it in the same way wage labor might be refused when performed by one granted the equality of double-freedom, also forecloses vital means for collectively opposing acts of non-market violence.¹¹ Additionally, as Gonzalez and Neton write, "'free exchange' can only occur through a disavowal of that class difference [between the owners of the means of production and those dispossessed of them], through its deferral to another binary: citizen and other" mapped by the Endnotes authors onto "male (white)/ non-(white) male" (72-73). The connection between this system of juridical inequality based in

¹⁰ Though this paper departs from the analysis offered by Silvia Federici in *Caliban and the Witch* in many ways, her emphasis on the relationship between violence and the increased dependence of women on men following their proletarianization is well justified. See Federici 73-75, and 87-89.

¹¹ ME O'Brien highlights that for Federici, Mariarosa Dalla Costa and others engaged with the question of "Wages For Housework," "the refusal of work was not an act of individual voluntarism of avoiding a job, but the possibility of mass strike action and organized class rebellion." Furthermore, Federici emphasizes that successful wage demands make possible further refusal as a gesture towards the overcoming of work altogether. See O'Brien 399-400

self as property and the myriad “attendant apparatuses of domination” deployed by the state to enforce it, alongside those apparatuses of violent differentiation in civil society, is largely deferred in “The Logic of Gender.” However, the focus on property (in one’s body) and the citizen/other distinction with respect to gender is crucial for understanding processes of racialization and naturalizing projection of gender onto the body as sex. In a brief discussion of slavery in North America, Gonzalez and Neton emphasize the close regulation of “the division between white and non-white women” in order to preserve whiteness as a signifier tied to heredity and reproduction, The preservation of “racial purity” marked black slaves as unable to own “property in their own persons” whatsoever. The argument advanced by the Endnotes authors therefore helps make sense of the highly racialized history of sex as a medical concept in a way that links it to a wider history of capitalist legal forms and capital accumulation (73-74). As one example that anticipates a more thorough engagement to follow, consider James Marion Sims and the early history of gynecology, in which a concern for securing the bodily integrity of white women (evident even in the details of medical diagrams) is coupled with brutal experimentation on chattel women, who were returned to their enslavers at the conclusion of Sims’ experiments. Underneath the appearance of a science performed (in Sims’ words) “for the relief of suffering humanity” lies an apparatus of violent differentiation organized around the defense of property forms and the demands of plantation production (Snorton 30). In this sense, understanding the racialized production of sex and gender in relation to double-freedom also works to dispel the mystified isolation of the scientific and medical apparatus¹², revealing it to function (in part) as a means of producing and naturalizing differentials which can be further

¹² See Horkheimer 197-199 for a general critique of the illusory independence of “traditional theory” including scientific activity.

taken up by apparatuses of accumulation, whether by dispossession or market-mediated exploitation.

Finally, Gonzalez and Neton move to the matter of the continued existence of gender and the anchoring of women to the IMM sphere after the legal differentiation between men and women with respect to ownership of their own labor-power has largely been done away with. Two aspects of the brief history provided in “The Logic of Gender” are of chief importance for this analysis: the reproduction of gender through the “sex-blind” market and the commodification of IMM activities. With respect to the former, the authors argue that the constitution of women as individuals tasked (naturally) with bearing and raising children marks their labor power as less reliable, mobile, and so forth. The non-labor performed in the IMM sphere, however vital for the continued appearance of new and renewed labor-power, appears to the purchasers of labor power as an inherent commitment (common to women in general) that reduces the time and energy that can be consistently exercised on the job. As the authors note, the production of sexual difference on the level of individuals anchored to a particular gendered sphere means that “woman as a bearer of labour-power with a higher social cost becomes its opposite: the commodity labour-power with a cheaper price” (Endnotes 75-76). In turn, capital is able to use this cheaper but less ‘reliable’ labor to its advantage by reducing investment in workers (via training, skill acquisition, and so forth) and relying on “cheap short-term flexibilised labour-power,” which the Endnotes authors highlight as the core of the tendency towards “feminisation” of labor (77). With respect to the real subsumption of IMM activities, Gonzalez and Neton focus on the difficulty of commodifying certain IMM activities such as childcare in a way that allows them to be widely accessible as paid services. While such activities can be organized and paid for by the state, as a collective cost to capital they are highly

susceptible to being scaled down or cut in response to economic crisis, resulting in privatization (a commodification limited in scale by the restricted population able to afford such services) and/or increasing the portion of these activities that are performed without remuneration (86-87).¹³ These activities which prove too costly (for the state) or unprofitable (at the level of capitalist firms attempting to organize them) form a category the authors term “the abject,” identified as a growing tendency that casts the “extra burden” of unwaged IMM activity and gender as a powerful external constraint along the obligation of waged labor (90). “The Logic of Gender” concludes here, at a moment which points towards the necessity of abolishing class and gender.

3. Negative Circumscription, Social Antagonisms, and Value

While the above analysis provides a powerful basis for a theory of gender based on a Marxian critique of value, it can nonetheless be made more determinate through an investigation of the relationship between the capital-labor relation, the differential management of surplus populations by the state, and non-socialized¹⁴ relations of gendered violence and coercion. The

¹³ The following is a brief addendum responding to Beverly Best’s recent article “Wages for Housework Redux: Social Reproduction and the Utopian Dialectic of the Value-form”. Best’s article is a compelling re-assessment of theories of social reproduction and Marxist-Feminist accounts of gender which draw on value-theory, one which diverges in several significant ways from the approach developed by Endnotes which this article draws on. Unfortunately, the article’s release in the midst of the drafting process of this paper precluded its incorporation into the main argument. In lieu of the extended engagement it deserves, a few brief comments will have to suffice. Though Best’s insistence on the need to think through, rather than against, the “full socialization of social reproduction” is convincing, her argument falters in part due to a largely absent engagement with the state. In particular, Best contends that “[r]eal-life dystopias of the full subsumption of social reproduction do have historical precedent” in the form of foster-care systems and horrors such as the Canadian residential school system, and uses these examples to refute arguments which insist on a boundary preventing this sort of subsumption (911).. As presented, it is unclear why such systems could not be understood (in Endnotes’ terms) as a “collective cost on capital” in the same way as other governmental programs, rather than an indication that capital could profitably subsume socially reproductive activity on a wide scale if it could surmount the competition between individual capitalists. The failure of the residential schools to become financially self-sufficient even with forced labor from students and poorly paid missionary instructors, and the history of budget-cuts to the program would seem to lend more weight to Endnotes’ analysis of austerity than Best’s argument (*What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation* 30).

¹⁴ The phrasing “non-socialized” is used here to indicate that these forms of violence and coercion are not formally organized as part of the production process, and are therefore not subject to the processes of

following section aims at preparing the ground for such an analysis by further exploring gender as a real abstraction which negatively circumscribes human activity. It consists primarily of a close reading of Amy De’Ath’s article “Gender and Social Reproduction” as a supplement to “The Logic of Gender” which allows for closer connections to be made between value-theory and the work of the authors discussed in section 4, such as Kevin Floyd’s critique of labor ontologism and autonomist Marxism in contemporary analyses of biotechnological reproduction.

3.1 Antagonisms as a Product of Outlawed Need

In the course of arguing that gendered social relations are form-determined by capital’s drive towards surplus value, De’Ath assesses several key contributions to Marxist-Feminism which recognize that “[f]or theorists of social reproduction – unlike poststructuralist feminisms – the violent policing of sexuality represents something of an analytical hidden abode” (De’Ath 1539). Specifically, De’Ath aims to reorient the understanding of value which animates the attempts of Cinzia Arruzza, Rosemary Hennessy, and others to resituate and critique poststructuralist understandings of gender. That is, De’Ath contends that if Marxist-Feminism can salvage “conceptual leverage to consider the roots of gendered violence anew” from the theories of Judith Butler and other poststructuralist feminists, then a focus on reification and/or circulation is insufficient (ibid). If the production of gender and the “reified forms of appearance it takes in capitalist societies” are to be adequately distinguished and related, future interventions ought to be oriented towards a critique of production and the form of labor in capitalist society, such as those offered by Diane Elson and Moishe Postone (De’Ath 1541).

Also key to De’Ath’s analysis is Hennessy’s concept of “outlawed need,” which designates the set of needs which are not covered by the wage and must therefore be fulfilled

direct rational optimization. It does not indicate that these forms of violence are extra-socially determined or serve no political or economic functions.

within the unwaged IMM sphere or “feminized arena of social reproduction. Importantly, this set of needs is historically produced¹⁵, and includes the requirements of basic survival, the ongoing replenishment of bodily and mental capacities, and those needs required for “creative development” and attempts to actualize human flourishing (1540). Within this sphere, certain needs which are no less vital from the standpoint of human life and development, but which are not (as) directly or immediately necessary to a proletarian’s ability to perform wage labor, must be continuously deprioritized, and certain needs (no matter how necessary for life) may go entirely unfulfilled. Further, at risk of restating the obvious, the selection of which needs are possible to satisfy operates differentially, conflictually, and according to class position, as will be explored shortly through the work of Kevin Floyd. For the time being, it is enough to recognize a painful contradiction: On one hand, the continual attempts to rationalize and transform the capitalist production process (real subsumption) are organized around the tautological self-expansion of value, in which “the concrete dimension of labour is subservient to the abstract.” That is, decisions regarding what is to be produced (and how) are made by capitalists (organizing the labor of proletarians) responding to market imperatives with the aim of profit; the satisfaction of human need is subsumed under this drive. On the other hand, the satisfaction of every “outlawed need” is left to individual proletarians, families, or political organizations limited in size and efficacy by their isolation, separation from the means of production, and the demands on time and energy expended on basic subsistence (whether acquired through the wage

¹⁵ “Remember that this quantity of value (wages) necessary for the reproduction of labour power is determined not by the needs of a 'biological' Guaranteed Minimum Wage (Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel Garanti) alone, but by the needs of a historical minimum (Marx noted that English workers need beer while French proletarians need wine) i.e. a historically variable minimum. I should also like to point out that this minimum is doubly historical in that it is not defined by the historical needs of the working class 'recognized' by the capitalist class, but by the historical needs imposed by the proletarian Class struggle (a double class struggle: against the lengthening of the working day and against the reduction of wages).” Althusser 131

or otherwise). In this sense, to Gonzalez and Neton's remark that "other mechanisms and factors [than socially necessary labor time] are involved in the division of IMM activities, from direct domination and violence to hierarchical forms of cooperation, or planned allocation at best" it might be added that these potential violences and hierarchies are intensified, and the effectiveness of any cooperation reduced, by their separation from socialized labor (Endnotes 65). Attention to outlawed need therefore helps elucidate the need for a politics which avoids valorizing the self-organization of IMM activity or the abject in the abstract.¹⁶ In this way, a theory of outlawed need moves past an ethical recognition of the harms of maldistribution towards an account of the particular political problematics it generates. As Juliana Spahr and Joshua Clover write, "[M]aldistribution is a form of appearance for necessary differentials, not an incidental outcome. Maldistribution is itself a constitutive part of value production, rather than an unfortunate effect" (Clover and Spahr 301-302)

An engagement with outlawed need situated within value theory also provides Marxist-Feminist with a stronger understanding of that "analytical hidden abode" of non-socialized violence and the production of subjectivity through the imposition and transformation of categories of difference and identity. In doing so, it provides a means of critiquing poststructuralist theories of gender and sexuality such as those advanced by Judith Butler, without reifying 'the economy,' relying on an undeveloped distinction between the

¹⁶ Roberts helpfully elucidates the problems with such a politics through a careful examination of Marx's writing on primitive accumulation as an operation necessary for, but structurally separated from and disavowed by, capital itself, writing that "If the state is dependent upon capital accumulation, then we should expect both that the more sovereignty communities enjoy, the more pressure these communities will face 'to open up their settlement lands to exploitation as an economic solution' (Coulthard, 2014: 77), and that the prevalence of democratic authority will not make a whit of difference in this dynamic. If the state is the servile agent of capital, then we can expect that alternative ways of life will be easily tolerated so long as they pose no threat to the accumulation of capital, and will face the full repressive power of the state if they do seem to threaten that accumulation" ("Primitive Accumulation" 16)

‘material’ and the ‘merely cultural’¹⁷ or (alternately) treating an account of gender’s forms of appearance as identical with an account of its root in capitalist political economy. As De’Ath writes, “It follows [from the historical contingency of need, and the myriad types of need that go unsatisfied] that ‘outlawed need’ is also a mode of proscribing the domain of the intelligible, the realm of coherent social relations that Butler so famously critiques” (De’Ath 1540). The most important part of De’Ath’s insight here is that the impersonal operation of outlawed need, “a structural and mediated withholding,” necessarily produces antagonisms through attempts to satisfy needs, which in turn prompts the creation and preservation of differentials as a way to adjudicate which needs will be met, how they will be met, and by whom: acts which police the boundaries of race and gender through the forcible assignment of individuals and groups to a subordinate category can be understood as confirming that their needs are secondary, irrelevant, or illegitimate. Encapsulating this theoretical contention, De’Ath writes that “[o]utlawed need is thus a way of conceptualizing gendered violence in the negative, as the historical consequences of needs not being met, and as the negative underside of real abstractions imposed in capitalism – abstractions dialectically mediated by that ultimate real abstraction, value” (1546).

Though De’Ath does not pursue this course of argument, this paper suggests that an analysis of outlawed need also allows for inquiry into the utopian dimension of the production and satisfaction of need. That is, against accusations of functionalism, worries about expressive totality, or concerns over conceiving of capitalist society as a “‘saturated immanence’ in which everything is inside,” the concept of outlawed need shows some of the ways in which capitalist social relations point beyond themselves (Sexton). Though the satisfaction of certain outlawed needs may be possible to a limited extent through the methods noted by Endnotes and De’Ath

¹⁷ This term was at the heart of a debate between Butler and Nancy Fraser on this point and the relation of gay and trans liberation struggles to political economy. See Butler 1997 and Fraser 1997

above, attempts to ensure the satisfaction of even physiological needs on a wider scale or fulfill those needs which are rendered impossible to actualize (or even straightforwardly incomprehensible) gesture towards the need to overcome capitalist social relations altogether. This is not to say that all practical need-satisfying activity is automatically oriented towards the abolition of value, the family¹⁸, gender, and/or race but rather to insist that capital accumulation does not function as an abstract imperative functioning at the level of an unconscious command, which determines action in advance for the purpose of the self-valorization of value.¹⁹

Admittedly, this utopian moment remains underdetermined as presented here, insofar as the domain of the intelligible or possible to satisfy ought to be substantiated through analysis of tendential aspects of capitalism such as the rising organic composition of capital, the state of political organization of the proletariat globally or in a particular location, and so forth.

Nonetheless, a concept of outlawed need can deepen a Marxist-Feminist analysis at both high and low levels of abstraction.

3.2 The Organization of Time and Value as a Measure of Wealth

De'Ath's engagement with Diane Elson and Moishe Postone provides one possible means to bind an analysis of the production and satisfaction of need more closely to the dynamics of capital at a high level of abstraction. In a particularly salient passage, De'Ath connects Postone's analysis of the unique form of wealth in capitalist society to the production of need and gendered domination. For Postone, Marx's analysis turns in large part on the contention that "in the course of the development of capitalist industrial production, value becomes less and

¹⁸ For a brief history of the family in capitalist society, in light of the call for its abolition, refer to ME O'Brien's "To Abolish the Family: The Working-Class Family and Gender Liberation in Capitalist Development."

¹⁹ "In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx employs [the figure of the automatic subject] to represent capital as self-valorising, and then only a few chapters later – having entered the hidden abode of production – provides an auto-critique of this same representation, identifying labour as the coerced catalyst of self-valorising value. He thereby critiques the fetish whereby the capacities of value-producing social labour appear as the exclusive capacities of capital" (Floyd 2016 69).

less adequate as a measure of the ‘real wealth’ produced [...] Value becomes anachronistic in terms of the potential of the system of production to which it gives rise” (Postone 26). Postone’s analysis suffers from an underdetermination of exactly how this potential is manifested, giving rise to an occasionally uncritical treatment of the wealth creating capacity of science and technology despite his attention to the need to transform the concrete laboring process as part of the overcoming of capitalism. Moreover, as Roberts argues, his account of domination fails to consistently ground itself in account of mediated relationships among people attempting to pursue their own ends and satisfy needs (*Marx’s Inferno* 92).

Although Postone’s general theory may be unsustainable as a basis for a theory of gender in capitalist society, it is nonetheless possible to put to use some of his arguments in a limited form. Given that value rests on “the determination of units of socially necessary labor time,” De’Ath emphasizes the need to account for the “undetermined” units of time in the sphere of social reproduction where (in the majority of cases) no value is produced (De’Ath 1545). Reframing De’Ath’s argument, this paper argues that this question prompts two linked lines of inquiry: The first, as elaborated previously, takes as its objects the processes which differentially assign particular subjects to the specific tasks of fulfilling outlawed needs. Insofar as such activities are not shaped by the comparison of private labors as expressions of abstract labor (as is the case for labor in the DMM sphere) then the particular social logics which organize that activity in a given case must be accounted for. This line also helps properly connect a theory of gender as a political-economic category to gender as lived: rather than understand gender as social temporality primarily through a focus on the repetition of acts tied to norms rooted in consumption or circulation, a value-theoretic account can show how this range of identity-defining action is circumscribed by the demands of valorization through production

(ibid). The second line of inquiry pertains to the socialization of IMM activities through marketization or organization by the state or (inversely) their expulsion as abject. Recalling Gonzalez and Neton's comment that children cannot be looked after "more quickly" De'Ath asks "Which kinds of time can be measured in units of socially necessary labour time? Which kinds of time refuse productivity increases and thus remain fixed units of time? Which kinds of time cannot be measured in units of socially necessary labour time at all?" (1546). This line of inquiry therefore draws critical attention to the specific processes of measurement and quantification necessary for the comparison of distinct labors, and can substantiate the disjoint between value and "real wealth" that Postone describes. Assessing different need-satisfying activities in terms of their ability to be profitably subsumed by capital therefore not only grants a vantage on which activities are liable to be rendered abject, but also elucidates what is necessarily lost when abstract labor organizes concrete, need-satisfying activity.

Elson's influence on De'Ath is especially important on this point, insofar as the former's work on Marx's "value theory of labor" emphasizes the necessity for labor to become socially fixed in order for valorization to take place (De'Ath 1543-1544). Elson's theory also provides a corrective to Postone, insofar as her elaboration shows that value theory can maintain a strong concept of capitalist domination as the mediated domination of people by people. In contrast to other theories of gender (such as those focused primarily on subjectivation through iterative norms) in which the problem of "underspecified causal relationships between capital and gender" is especially acute, a value-theoretical account such as De'Ath's provides methods which allow a dialectical ascent from the abstract to the concrete²⁰, linking (for example) an international crisis of valorization to violent intervention directed against surplus populations by states to the

²⁰ *Grundrisse* 34.

gendered division of need-satisfying activity in response to an expansion in outlawed need. In De'Ath's words, "[i]t is perhaps through a theory of negative circumscription, then, that a more properly antihumanist method for analysing the production of gender in capitalism can be advanced" (ibid).

Nonetheless, there remain conceptual gaps in the account offered in "Gender and Social Reproduction". Notably, De'Ath's contends that Kevin Floyd's attempt in *The Reification of Desire* to pair Foucault and queer theory with analyses of the institutional regulation of capital accumulation "is arguably a move even further away from the core of capital accumulation and the site at which a Marxian intervention would be focused" (De'Ath 1541). Though this point is well-taken in light of the insights described above, and De'Ath does not not dismiss the import of Floyd's analysis entirely, her account does not include any sustained engagement with the role of the state. This absence is especially notable insofar as De'Ath directly references Ingo Elbe's contention that one of the three main departures of value theory from traditional Marxism is a move away from "reformist conceptions of the state in favour of a view of the state as a structural component of capitalist domination" (De'Ath 1542). Nor does she account for the influence of antagonistic processes such as class struggle in determining the limits of gender as lived within the range of movement determined by value.

4. Ascending Further Towards the Concrete: Social Antagonisms and the State

The following section will briefly address elements of *The Reification of Desire* which survive De'Ath's critique above and cast light on these antagonisms while also drawing on Christopher Chitty's *Sexual Hegemony*. Subsequently, Floyd's later article "Automatic Subjects: Gendered Labour and Abstract Life" and the ongoing reassessment of primitive accumulation offer interventions which help situate the state and repressive apparatuses to value and gender.

Finally, racialization as an unignorable aspect of state violence (and its relation to non-socialized violence and terror) will come into focus through engagement with the work of Nikhil Singh and others.

4.1 Reassessing *The Reification of Desire: Masculinity and Worker Differentiation*

The bulk of the arguments made in *Sexual Hegemony* and *The Reification of Desire* regarding sexuality lie outside the scope of this analysis, but the obvious and significant entanglement of gender with sexuality demands a consideration of the latter category. In lieu of a more sustained engagement, the following consideration of sexuality will focus on clarifying how those forms of cooperation and antagonism described earlier with reference to outlawed need can be understood with reference to reorganizations of production, crisis, and the operation of disciplinary state violence. Doing so additionally helps clarify specify the limits of the utopian moment specified earlier, since as Chitty notes (following Raymond Williams) “the major theoretical problem for understanding the hegemonic is categorically distinguishing counterhegemonic forces from forms of opposition that may ultimately be absorbed by a specific hegemony — bound by certain specific limits, neutralized, changed, or wholly incorporated” (Chitty 190). Or, to put it in terms closer to those deployed in this paper so far: What are the potentials and limits of specific struggles over the domain of outlawed need (wage struggles, campaigns for welfare and state services, etc) or attempts to organize the satisfaction of these needs? Stopping at the indeterminate utopian moment of outlawed need would be to eschew any assessment of organizational forms, transformations in the exercise of state power, and other vital practical and theoretical tasks in favor of a deadening focus on the extent of immiseration and deprivation as the singular factor able to explain the success or failure of any particular movement. Quite naturally then, Chitty and Floyd’s distinct attempts to critique rather than

dismiss Foucault and Butler from a Marxian perspective are vital methodological resources. Their accounts of sexuality show that narrow economism need not be the answer to poststructuralist theories deficient in analysis of class and value, reliant on fetishized concepts of contingency, and fixated on institutional forms with thin accounts of the wider social logic connecting them to one another.

In a crucial section, Floyd examines Butler's emphasis on the skilled labor which constitutes the performative subject alongside their continual denial that a Marxian account of labor (or its reproduction) is central, observing that the skilled labor of Butler's account appears as if it operates in "some kind of vacuum" with respect to capital. For Floyd, Butler's reading of Althusser emphasizes labor performed at an "indeterminate distance from capital" but notes that analysis of activity performed at this distance can be vital if its apparent independence (in Butler's account) is shown to be a product of a determinate mediation (Floyd, *Reification* 96-97). Though the account of structural separation provided by Endnotes and De'Ath remain more compelling than Floyd's focus on reification, his account allows for a supplementary look into the mediated effects of reorganizations of production on the satisfaction of need in the IMM sphere. In particular, Floyd highlights a process in the 19th and early 20th century United States in which ongoing deskilling constitutes masculinity as a skilled, embodied competence and independence. Floyd elaborates:

Skilled male laborers insisted on the inseparability of manhood, independence, and skill all the more tenaciously as industrial labor discipline became increasingly widespread, especially in the transition to a system of wage labor. And this working-class norm was as gender and racially specific as its middle-class counterpart, industrialization's threat to laboring manhood only compounded in the context of the radical dependence, the utter

lack of autonomy projected onto that same range of infantilized, racialized, and gendered others. The skill, the technical knowledge embodied by the craftsman, gave him independence vis-à-vis his foreman, but also vis-à-vis the disavowed, supplementary others working-class and middle-class manhood held in common (*Reification* 104).

Floyd's attention to the ambivalences contained in this strategy is essential: in attempting to resist capitalist domination in the form of labor discipline through consolidating a norm of masculinity founded on skill and independence, white male laborers further entrenched their division from other proletarians who were excluded from this form of embodiment and knowledge.²¹ It is apparent that the material benefits provided by such a strategy (greater job security through enforcing this norm, control over the domestic activities of wives, etc.) also entailed decisive political weaknesses including an effective rejection of shared struggle with black workers. Citing David Roediger, Floyd underlines the blow dealt to anti-capitalist struggle by this racialized, differential norm of laboring masculinity which emphasizes a strong distinction and hierarchy between whites subject to "wage slavery" and black slaves or doubly free black workers (Floyd, *Reification* 103-105). Further, insofar as this masculine identity emphasizes atomized independence during leisure time (as real subsumption continues apace in the workplace) those granted access to white masculine identity are encouraged to relate antagonistically to those "infantilized, racialized, and gendered others" rather than forging solidaristic bonds capable of strengthening class struggle.²² Though points of this kind are far from novel, Floyd's intervention makes visible the political and subjective effects of the reified

²¹Ferguson and McNally identify a parallel phenomenon, in which campaigns organized in defense of "household life and kin-networks" can unwittingly accelerate "reforms that were in the long-term interests of capital [such as] restrictions on child-labour, pressures for a male 'family-wage', and limits on female employment." Though a valuable insight, the ongoing tendency towards feminisation of labor shows that establishing the "long-term" interests of capital is far from an uncomplicated theoretical task. (Vogel xxx-xxxi).

²² See Brenner and Laslett 389-391 for a brief discussion of conflicts between working-class men and women over access to wages.

forms of appearance gender takes while historicizing Butler's positing of gender as a form of "labor without capital." In light of understanding of the separation of spheres and outlawed need, gender's appearance as a principally a matter of circulation, exchange, and consumption can be seen as a historical product of transformations in the production process. De'Ath is therefore right to emphasize the dissociation of reproductive activities from exchange as the deep content of gender, but fails to see the explanatory value of analyzing transformations in gender as lived due to reorganizations of production as a secondary process of determination. Rather than a vacuum with respect to capital, or an undetermined space for "self-transformative play,"²³ Floyd provides a crucial vantage on how time not spent working for a capitalist is shaped mediately by the dynamics of production.

4.2 Absorption and Management of Social Conflict by the State

In the course of a wider attempt to re-historicize sexuality with respect to bourgeois hegemony and capital accumulation, Chitty's consideration of immiseration also provides ways to further extend a theory of the conflictual relations engendered by market dependence. Chitty identifies a conspicuous lack of attention to the process of absorption and expulsion of labor in even the most robust histories of homosexuality. These processes are significant not only because they determine access to the wage and which need-satisfying activities are socialized as explored previously, but also because they shape the experience of sexual and gendered embodiment. In addition to a brief mention of the feminization of labor in the textile industry caused by

²³ Chitty 26. In a similar manner to Floyd's argument, *Sexual Hegemony* refuses to define the "queer" according to an indeterminate utopianism, instead opting to define it in a more restricted sense: "it captures the way in which norms of gender and sexuality get weakened, damaged, and reasserted under conditions of local and generalized social, political, and economic crisis. The queer would then imply a contradictory process in which such norms are simultaneously denatured and renaturalized. [The queer describes] forms of love and intimacy with a precarious social status outside the institutions of family, property, and couple form." Chitty additionally aligns this use with Cathy Cohen's critique in "Punks, Bulldaggers, Welfare Queens."

mechanization and its effects on the conditions of women at the time (in particular, situating intermittent prostitution as a necessity for survival in response to factory closures or layoffs,) Chitty emphasizes the fundamental relation between the precarious conditions of the working class and bodily freedom:

[I]ndustry, industrial working conditions, pollution, toxicity, disease, sanitation, and crowded urban housing conditions destroyed workers' bodies and contributed to a net drain on human populations in Britain and continental Europe during the nineteenth century. Surely these factors had something to do with the possibilities of the experience of a sexually "free" body among the working classes of industrialized Europe (161).

The process of incapacitation, injury, and death Chitty outlines here cannot go unmentioned in any theory which takes up the question of how needs are produced and satisfied in capitalist society.²⁴ Rather than a conflict between new forms of pleasurable relationality made possible by a more developed division of labor (or the concentration of production) and a broad cultural valorization of work over pleasure which produces "a (modern) universal stigma attached to homosexuality," it is necessary to restore the link between sexual and gendered embodiment and the reproduction of the laborer (Chitty 162).

In addition to the matter of transformations in the family, this refocused problematic provides a theory of gender with crucial lines of historical inquiry, for instance: How does the gendered nature of unwaged IMM labor enable or prohibit different forms of non-familial relationality (sexual or otherwise) for men and women in a particular historical moment?²⁵ How

²⁴ Nate Holdren's recent book *Injury Impoverished: Workplace Accidents, Capitalism, and Law in the Progressive Era* is an essential work for understanding the rational calculation of workplace injury and death alongside labor movement struggles surrounding systems of compensation for such injuries, including the failures or unintended consequences of such struggles. Holdren's attention to the disabling effects of capitalist law and market systems is particularly complementary to the focus on outlawed need advanced in this analysis.

²⁵ *Sexual Hegemony's* engagement with feminist scholarship and lesbian history is present but underdeveloped, as acknowledged in its introduction by Christopher Nealon. Though this paper cannot

are sex and gender inscribed onto the body through gender-differentiated exposure to injury and violence (industrial accidents, repetitive strain injuries from household tasks, etc.) in the course of attempting to satisfy outlawed needs? An exhaustive consideration of these questions and others like them is outside the scope of this analysis, but Chitty does provide one highly salient example which links enforced market-dependence and immiseration to political conflict.

Addressing 19th century Paris, Chitty examines the clash between bourgeois women and working-class men over public urination and public sexuality in terms of competing notions of sexual freedom produced, in part, by the lack of privacy in cramped proletarian housing spaces. His account contends that “the entry and influence of middle-class women into the public sphere is the decisive factor in changing norms of urban policing around public displays of sexuality — namely, prostitution and homosexuality” (125). To the degree that this holds, and given the often vital roles these policed acts played in survival for the dispossessed, Chitty’s methodology provides a robust case for centering sexuality (or sexual hegemony) as a key factor in the organization of need-satisfying activities dissociated from the market.

Perhaps more importantly, *Sexual Hegemony* provides a powerful analysis of the state as an organ of capital accumulation and of its management of social conflict produced by the negative circumscription of action by the market. One of its strongest moments is Chitty’s extensive analysis of the 15th century Florentine “Officers of the Night,” in charge of policing sodomy which provides a case study in how differential categories are taken up and managed by the state. Focusing on the pattern of late marriage and the surplus population produced by declining investment in cloth manufacturing (from which a full third of the Florentine population derived their wages) Chitty emphasizes the centrality of these factors to the political turmoil of

consummate this undoubtedly productive connection, attention to Marxist-Feminist theories of gender would be valuable for any work that hopes to do so (Chitty 14-15).

the city. According to his account, sodomy, casual prostitution, and broader (largely age- and status-stratified) homosexual practices were not criminalized as a simple means to regulate acceptable masculinity or civic virtue among members of the ruling class, nor as a simply punitive power. Instead, the Florentine approach effectively ensured its continued presence and rendered legal sanction against it into a sophisticated instrument of class-rule and intra-class conflict:

The political power to make the city's homosexuality visible was the result of a governmental organ that absorbed petty (and also very grave) slights and power struggles into the state edifice. By making sentences lower and providing men with a way out — confession granted an individual immunity from accusations — the Officers of the Night ensured a constant flow of accusations, greater social control over homosexuality, and better knowledge of its locations, persons, and practices. In addition to its primary function of policing the poor and the workers, its regulation provided a pressure valve for outrage at abuses of power [...] (66).

Given that the population of young, un- or under-employed men (who were the most frequently convicted) was itself a product of the political defeat of working-class movements in the prior century, and of the impersonal action of the market, Chitty's example is illustrative of the wider political-economic function of law and the state's repressive apparatuses (49). In this case, in addition to a minor expropriative role played by fines, the state's actions are organized around securing accumulation through making the exercise of force or legal sanction as precise as possible, which includes the possibility of acting against (or neglecting to protect) members of the ruling class if doing so is expedient for securing the wider stability of the regime of accumulation.

Chitty's analysis runs against a view of the state as a neutral mediator of class relations captured by one class or another, and against accounts which assume rather than explain bourgeois hegemony through outsized emphasis on bourgeois science and epistemology as constitutive of differential categories. Though the criminal statutes against sodomy may contribute to its coherence as a category, *Sexual Hegemony* illustrates that the social basis for its politicization is the network of personal dependence, hierarchy, and economy of need and desire among proletarians subject to potential or actual superfluity, and between these proletarians and the wealthy or powerful men they come into erotic contact with. This level of attention to the material basis of differential categories and the process by which they are taken up by the state, rather than being ready-made to facilitate exploitation and expropriation, is no less important for historical study of gender and race. Though Chitty's analysis of Florentine sodomy, statecraft, and capital accumulation cannot simply be transposed onto modern society, these methodological considerations are especially useful for extending present-day Marxist theories of the state and relating them to a Marxist-Feminist theory of gender.

Chitty's critique of Foucault provides additional means for doing so, insofar as the limitations of the latter's methodology prevent a Marxist-Feminist theory of gender from easily or cleanly taking up his powerful analyses of sexuality and population. According to Chitty, Foucault neglects to differentiate the ontological from the epistemic, fails to undertake adequate comparative historical work regarding the problem of sexual freedom, and neglects to engage with working-class history when nominally accounting for how bourgeois sexuality (or other such categories) became hegemonic or achieved power over proletarians (147, 154-155). As has been established, *Sexual Hegemony* begins to overcome these issues through its attention to the forms of social conflict produced by immiseration, a line of critique only sharpened when framed

through the robust account of dissociation from the market and negative circumscription offered by De'Ath and Endnotes. However, properly recontextualized, Foucault's ambivalence about sexuality (both falsely important aspect of subjectivity and crucial element of transformations in the exercise of power) provides a Marxist-Feminist theory of gender with a vital provocation: how will ongoing transformations in gender be taken up institutionally, by the state and otherwise? Chitty asks a similar question about sexuality: "[T]he basis of modern productive power is the power to guarantee life or disallow it. If sex historically played such a role in the constitution of this sweeping power over life, it remains to be seen whether it will continue to be so central to the function of power as welfare states roll back their safety nets, as families and intimates are once again necessary to guaranteeing a minimum level of assurances" (154). Though De'Ath and Endnotes (alongside Marxist-Feminists more generally) provide convincing reasons to believe that gender will remain a salient category of difference so long as capitalist production continues to exist, crises and tendential aspects of capital accumulation as well as social movements pressing for expanded freedoms in gendered embodiment will undoubtedly alter the institutional management of gender as a differential category. Political movements, such as those fighting for expanded access to medical gender transition, reproductive freedom, and/or against routinized medical abuse of intersex individuals, cannot help but contend theoretically and strategically with the contradictory logic of capital accumulation and the operation of "biopower," which Chitty contends is effectively an ontologized version of Marx's controversial thesis surrounding the expansion of surplus populations (Chitty 153). Gonzalez and Neton's category of the abject is valuable precisely because it names a transformation in the experience of gender while remaining grounded in an account of its political-economic foundation.

4.3 Debt, Surplus Populations as Raw Material, and Labor Ontologism

Of course, analysis of the object does not exhaust the range of phenomena which might be analyzed in this way. To this end, Kevin Floyd's 2016 article "Automatic Subjects" provides an analysis of biotechnology and gendered labor which demonstrates the importance of maintaining such a grounding, and opens onto a wider consideration of the state as an organ of accumulation including the manifestation of these functions in the present moment. Floyd's article takes, as its point of departure, contemporary critical assessments of biotechnology as it pertains to biological reproduction, in particular those which focus on international flows of labor, value, and biological material: migrant labor, gestational surrogacy, compensated "donation" of organs and tissues, and so forth (62-64). In response to analyses which attempt to reformulate the category of living labor (and therefore call into question the status of Marx's critique of political economy more generally) in light of biotechnological reproduction, Floyd interrogates what is occluded by such a theoretical move (65). The meticulous attention Floyd pays to value, the distinction between labor and capital, and Marx's categories more generally allows for the integration of analysis of debt and an extended account of primitive accumulation and surplus populations with the theoretical and political insights elaborated throughout this analysis.

Floyd sharply criticizes a tendency in literature on social reproduction, especially pronounced in works influenced by autonomist Marxism, to expand the category of labor according to an ethical impulse to recognize the agency of labor, and in particular to recognize unwaged or gendered activities as labor. Many of the analytical problems with such an approach are already evident in light of the accounts of necessary dissociation from value detailed above (82). What Floyd's analysis draws out, however, is that in ontologizing the value-producing

capacities of labor and depicting “the mediated capacities of biotechnological capital as the immediate capacities of biotechnologically reproductive labour,” works like Melinda Cooper and Catherine Waldby’s *Clinical Labor* effectively present an incoherent account of value which sharply limits any ability to theorize the conditions of surplus populations (65-66). In accounts of this kind, the dependence of labor upon capital becomes indeterminate; labor is at once absolutely independent from capital and absolutely suffused by capital. Capital merely captures wealth produced independent of it by labor’s immediate capacities, and yet at the same time the body’s laboring capacities take on qualities of circulating, fictitious capital: “[Cooper and Waldby identify] the womb as an asset that secures a claim on the future revenue of the firm that manages the contract and profits from the surrogacy itself” (70).

Even when not granting the capacity to produce value to biological material itself this misapprehension of the capital-labor relation is intensely problematic insofar as it renders commercial surrogacy, compensated organ donation, and other such activities impossible to comprehend in light of stagnant accumulation. At the same time, it severs analysis of such activities from analysis of the surplus populations produced by the inability of capital to absorb a growing portion of available labor-power. To extend Floyd’s point, analyses of this kind remain trapped in an antinomy between structure and agency because they lack an adequate concept of impersonal market domination and its connection to violence structurally separated from the market. Cooper and Waldby, in this sense, fall prey to a related problem to the one identified by Roberts when he writes “If primitive accumulation is the prehistory of capital, then the disavowal of violence is just as essential to capitalism as the continuation of plunder is its predictable consequence” (“Primitive Accumulation” 16). In taking up an ethical imperative to politicize the conditions of reproductive activities by subsuming them as labor, social

reproduction theory of this kind loses sight of the different forms of domination operative as part of the differentiated totality of capitalist society, lapsing into a logic of repetition or homogeneity.

Thankfully, Floyd offers the conceptual means to resituate analysis of biotechnological reproduction and other related practices. The core of his analysis of the present moment lies in his emphasis on the centrality of “the systemic stagnation of accumulation in the present,” which puts the lie to conflation of value and wealth and therefore the collapse of labor’s specificity in capitalist society into its transhistorical sense (“Automatic” 77). Floyd brings this to bear on the differential reproduction of labor power: “And if, in the [global] North social and biological reproduction performed by women increasingly takes place within the value circuit, this implies not a contracting but an expanding global surplus population, an expanding field of labour both subject to the value-form and dissociated from the valorisation process” (79). The sale and forceful dispossession of organs and tissues may well reduce the laboring capacity of the desperate and structurally vulnerable individuals they were extracted from, but this is acceptable insofar as such individuals belong to a population expelled (near-)absolutely from production. A condition of widespread stagnation and growing surplus populations therefore not only entails the suppression of wages, informalized and disposable laboring conditions, and neocolonial super-exploitation but also a “field of calculable vitality” which can be taken advantage of through plunder rather than production (82). Floyd also points out that biotechnologically facilitated birth and reproduction is especially capital-intensive and, in this sense, commodified social and biological reproduction in the global North is facilitated by more than just the bodies of clinical trial subjects or gestators engaged in commercial surrogacy. As a commodified, marketized activity its profitability (however limited) relies upon apparatuses for the

management of surplus populations, including those dedicated to the “international expropriation of ‘life itself’” but also those techniques of the state which attempt to efficiently suppress political organization or social conflict born of deprivation (81). Attempting to theorize the expansion of outlawed need, the subsumption of formerly IMM activities by the market or their expulsion from it, and gender as a differential therefore requires analysis of these international flows of value and biological material rather than stopping at the connection between the state of valorization internationally and the expansion and contraction of the welfare state.

Another salient international flow which cannot go unmentioned is debt, which determines the content of gender at the level of the household and at the level of the state. Drawing on a range of sources, Floyd elegantly links “finance-driven deindustrialization” to state policies which rely upon an expansive range of direct force and personal domination, whether enacted by the state’s own repressive apparatuses or intentionally ignored and left to flourish in the civil society. Noting, in particular, the tacit endorsement of international sex trafficking and reliance on remittances from migrant laborers responding to austerity as strategies for reducing government debt, Floyd writes:

The gendered labour of social reproduction is in this sense financially extracted from poorer countries to wealthier ones, in a kind of inverse reflection of the way in which households in the North are steeped in debt. Fictitious capital saturates gendered social reproduction in a double sense: the debt of relatively affluent households on the one hand, and global debt’s separation of countless women from their own households, so that they can perform domestic-service labour elsewhere, on the other (78).

Such policies also shape the exercise of repressive and disciplinary force by state apparatuses and employers: the vulnerability of (especially undocumented) migrants to unchecked working

conditions and extreme exploitation, alongside their exposure to theft, physical violence, and medical (incl. reproductive) abuse organized according to gendered, racializing logics need not be reiterated here. What cannot go unmentioned, however, are the significance of these realities for any attempt to construct political strategies for opposing gendered domination. Notably, this line of argument brings to light the difficulties invariably faced by attempts to self-organize abject activity or the satisfaction of outlawed need more generally when answering the tactical questions of “Who is being organized?” and “Whose needs are to be satisfied?”. The global flows of commodities and people, organized in one way or another by the logic of value, therefore problematize theories of gender which move outward from the gendered division of labor in the household. Insofar as theories of this kind are unable to address that the materials and individuals involved in the reproduction of labor power (and human life with it) have ties that stretch well beyond the local or national level, they are conceptually and politically inadequate.

This is not to say that a proper theory of gender condemns any action that fails to abolish the law of value globally as futile or inadequately attentive to questions of race and (neo)coloniality. Rather, its purpose is to emphasize that the separation between spheres which gives gender its fundamental content in capitalist society is reinforced by systems of differentially-organized violence which operate at the level of national belonging and debt-enforced action.²⁶ Roberts’ emphasis on capital’s need for agents of primitive accumulation structurally separated from it and recognition that “[t]he methods of systematic primitive accumulation– colonialism, protectionism, confiscatory taxation and so forth – are not crude anachronisms in an era of peaceful commerce. They are predictable consequences of the state’s

²⁶ See Maria Lugones’ “The Coloniality of Gender” for additional discussion of the colonial imposition of gender through an extension and critique of Anibal Quijano’s work on the coloniality of power .

having ‘entered into the service of the makers of surplus value’” can therefore be read with respect to gender in multiple ways (“Primitive Accumulation” 13). First, straightforwardly, dispossession and imposed market dependence eliminate or radically transform other systems for organizing sexual difference alongside pre-capitalist forms of organizing social production. Secondly, the state’s systems of formalizing and reinforcing social differentials are instrumental in propping up a feminized valorization process: a desperate laborer is transformed into one without recourse to even meager potential redress of safety violations or wage theft, a proletarianised peasant sells blood, as a means of repaying household debt to the state, to a company eager to reduce its constant capital costs (Anagnost 518, Floyd “Automatic” 81). Lastly, systematic dispossession, debt-fueled austerity, and growing surplus populations produce various forms of non-systematic, informally organized arrangements of personal dependence and violence, including some forms which are directly useful to the state and/or capital, including racial terror as an instrument of labor discipline and the aforementioned tacit endorsement of sex slavery as a means of generating tourism revenue.

4.4 Slavery, Race, and the State

This analysis would be remiss if it failed to discuss racialization as a process connected intimately to the state’s dependence on the success of valorization and its role as agent of accumulation. As a means of further specifying the scattered mentions of race as a differential category scattered throughout the arguments above, the following section will draw on an array of theoretical interventions linking racialization to capitalist production, legal forms, and state action. The techniques of social domination which continually enforce racial difference, including *de jure* and *de facto* legal exclusion and violence enacted by the state or sanctioned by it (tacitly or otherwise,) cannot be extricated from gender, whether considered at the level of the

separation between spheres which ensures gender's continued existence in the face of the tide which sweeps away all "fixed, fast frozen relations" incompatible with capitalist production, or at the level of gender as a lived category (*Communist Manifesto*). Nikhil Pal Singh's article "On Race, Violence, and So-Called Primitive Accumulation" will be central here, alongside supplementary engagements with a variety of other theorists, including Chris Chen, Sadiya Hartman, and Angela Davis.

Before beginning with this analysis in earnest, it's necessary to address whether Marxism as a critical theory of society is equipped to address racialization and slavery, in light of powerful critiques of its adequacy. Notable among these is Frank Wilderson III's article "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society?" which elaborates a forceful critique of Gramscian Marxism based in part on a critique of the doubly-free white worker as the (falsely universal) privileged revolutionary and discursive subject. At the heart of Wilderson's argument are a pair of claims deserving of close attention. First, Wilderson contends that the "black subject reveals marxism's inability to think white supremacy as the base" insofar as Marxist discourse is oriented around a critique of bourgeois hegemony and exploitation in the form of wage work but is unable to adequately account for racial slavery and non-market violence and domination (225). On this count, the attention to structural separation and attempt to theorize the relation between forms of domination pursued by this paper constitute an implicit attempt to overcome the very problem Wilderson identifies. As stated previously, a theory of negative circumscription and analysis of capitalist society as a differentiated totality help overcome narrow economism without falling into indeterminate affirmations of mutual constitution. Second, Wilderson criticizes the conception of socialist revolution as a process of doing away "not with the category of worker, but with the imposition workers suffer under the approach of variable capital: in other

words, the mark of its conceptual anxiety is in its desire to democratise work and thus help keep in place, ensure the coherence of, the Reformation and Enlightenment ‘foundational’ values of productivity and progress” (226). In the course of a compelling account of race, the class relation, and the dynamics of capital accumulation, Chris Chen emphasizes the divergence of value-theory from the “affirmationist focus on wage labor” common to various historical readings of Marx, including Gramsci’s (Chen 212). As may be apparent, critiques of production such as the one elaborated by Postone reveal that democratic control of a fundamentally unchanged production process is neither a tenable nor desirable vision of communist society. Less tenable still is an emphasis on the end of exploitation as the establishment of a right to the “full value” of one’s labor, insofar as the conception of value underlying such a position is effectively Ricardian in addition to running afoul of Wilderson’s potent criticism.²⁷ Critique based in value-theory therefore allows for more productive engagement between theories of gender and theories of racialization and race by avoiding uncritical valorization of work and “worker” as identity, and providing a scaffold for rigorously elaborating the relationship between distinct forms and techniques of domination.²⁸

In an article framed in part as a response to theories which categorically distinguish between “the worker’s exploitation and slave’s social death” Singh undertakes a close

²⁷ Such programs are politically undesirable and often theoretically incoherent. See, for example, Marx’s attack on Proudhon in the 1844 manuscripts on this basis: “An enforced increase of wages (disregarding all other difficulties, including the fact that it would only be by force, too, that such an increase, being an anomaly, could be maintained) would therefore be nothing but better payment for the slave, and would not win either for the worker or for labor their human status and dignity. Indeed, even the equality of wages, as demanded by Proudhon, only transforms the relationship of the present-day worker to his labor into the relationship of all men to labor. Society is then conceived as an abstract capitalist” (“Estranged Labor” 34).

²⁸ The arguments presented here are far from exhaustive of Wilderson’s body of work, which often problematizes attempts to understand racial slavery in economic terms. It may be the case that the divergences between Marxist(-Feminist) critique and the diverse lines of critique often grouped as “Afro-Pessimism” are too significant to allow for productive and coherent synthesis on a wider level. Nonetheless, as this has yet to be persuasively argued, bringing the two traditions into critical conversation helps avoid narrowly economic theories of anti-blackness and racial violence.

examination of the ambivalences within Marx's emphasis on the historical novelty of indirect, economic compulsion (capitalists are able to dispense with direct force as the core of coercing labor) and characterization of various forms of direct domination and primitive accumulation (Singh 29). Singh's intervention also notably includes a critical account of Marx's conceptual treatment of slavery and elegant considerations of how to situate racialization within capitalist society. Most importantly, Singh's argument revolves around an understanding of organized violence or direct force less as realities which underlie the exploitation of labor and more prominently as means for the "the development of cutting-edge technique [sic] within the governance of capitalist social relations — not only the defense of private property but also the active management of spatiotemporal zones of insecurity and existential threat" (39). Though opposed in several significant and consequential ways, this is precisely the moment where Singh's argument coincides with Roberts' reconstruction of the concept of primitive accumulation, and acts as a crucial supplement to the latter. Singh emphasizes that conditions of superfluity and the establishment of such zones enable a remarkable degree of technical and political development, in that they allow for "new specializations in violence [to be] field-tested free from ethical judgment" (43-44). The extended attention Singh pays to race as a category inseparable from organized violence tied significantly to "the form of the state" helps substantiate this analysis' stated attempt to overcome the conception of race and gender as independent "strands of reality" (38). It also allows this analysis to further extend Chitty's critique of Foucault, insofar as the latter focuses extensively on this "experimental" aspect of power without proper attention to the dynamics of capital and (in *Society Must be Defended*) develops an (inadequate) account of "race war as integral to modern statecraft" (Singh 48).

Singh's intervention regarding "new specializations in violence" dovetails with the above discussion of the violences attached to biotechnological reproduction discussed by Floyd and Snorton's analysis of James Marion Sims' experiments on enslaved women. In refusing to consign racial slavery to the status of an independent, non-capitalist form of domination Singh seizes upon a vital link between the control of biological and social reproduction, expeditionary plunder abroad, domestic regimes of organized violence, and the transformation of capitalist law. Referring specifically to North American slavery, and insisting that the "configuration of capitalism" that develops from it is marked on the level of its "general form" by race, Singh writes: "The vitality of this system required it to outgrow the externalities of the Atlantic slave trade and derived from its own directly reproductive capacity built upon violent control over the wombs of slave women, along with expanding settlement and murderous depopulation of indigenous land" (38). The language of eliminating/minimizing "externalities" is crucial here: control over sexuality and biological reproduction allowed slave-owners to minimize the financial risk of transatlantic travel, and this shift further implies an intensification of dispossessive and eliminationist settler violence in the geographically proximate frontier. Hartman emphasizes the implications of such a regime of reproductive control for the imbrication of race and gender:

The abjection of the captive body exceeds that which can be conveyed by the designation of or difference between "slave" women and "free" women. In this case what is at issue is the difference between the deployment of sexuality in the contexts of white kinship-the proprietorial relation of the patriarch to his wife and children, the making of legitimate heirs, and the transmission of property-and black captivity-the reproduction of property,

the relations of mastery and subjection, and the regularity of sexual violence-rather than the imputed , "freedom" of white women or free black women (83-84).

What Hartman's analysis identifies here is that an attempt to understand gender and sexuality in political-economic terms (such as property relations) is seriously deficient without an understanding of the structural distinction between the functions of activities undertaken in the context of white kinship and black captivity. That is, though an activity such as biological reproduction might be analysed transhistorically as labor (conceived as useful activity or activity which mediates between social life and nature) or as a practice of kinship, to do so would pass over the "divergent methods of sexual control" and their distinct functions for racial capitalism (ibid). This passage is also part of a discussion of sexuality and sexual control as essential supports for the law as instrument for securing racial hierarchy. The formal adjudication of (for example) the master's right to enjoyment of his versus the slave as embodiment of his vested right formally codifies in an enduring manner the differential normative valuations of need that animate "gratuitous" violence and terror.²⁹ Recognizing the intensity of resistance to the formal abolition of slavery and the sexual and gendered order it entailed, which was so great as to require "a war of cataclysmic proportions and mass death on an unimaginable scale" is therefore crucial for analysis of present-day capitalism (Singh 38). As one consequence of this acknowledgement, the differential operation of necessary maldistribution can be seen to constitute groups in civil society which act to preserve the benefits they accrue by violently enforcing categories such as race. Additionally, this line of argument opens onto the need for a political history of the state as a dependent agent of capital accumulation: comparative historical analyses of the American Civil War and other similar events may be essential to developing a

²⁹ The notion of gratuitous violence is one developed at length by Wilderson and other "Afro-Pessimist" theorists. See footnote 28

tactical understanding of the “self-activating but subservient” nature of the state under capital (Roberts “Primitive Accumulation” 16). To Roberts’ acknowledgement that the state will violently crush attempts to organize the satisfaction of need which threaten capital accumulation, it ought to be added that such attempts will also face significant opposition from fractions in civil society which seek to defend the material gain, libidinal pleasure, or other benefits they accrue from systems of racial and gendered domination, among other differential categories.

Though care should be taken not to universalize the legal and political structures of race in the United States, its history in the wake of abolition provides salient material for theorizing the racialized and gendered management of laboring and surplus populations. Here, Singh is emphatic but brief, drawing on W.E.B. Du Bois to connect the control of black populations at the level of embodiment and the newfound post-abolition functions of racism as a “tool of labor discipline (divide and rule), a means of introducing new forms of labor coercion (so-called coolie labor), and a weapon of class struggle (the wages of whiteness)” to empire (ibid). More than simply an opportunity to reiterate the above arguments regarding the global flows of capital and value which entail differential superexploitation and superfluity, this line of argument also invites analysis of particular repressive apparatuses in light of the state’s attempts to facilitate accumulation.

The connection which Singh gestures at might be further substantiated through examination of the “boomerang effects” of colonization, in which political, juridical, and military techniques developed by colonizing powers for the purposes of occupation, war, and social control are later deployed domestically. This “boomerang effect” was elaborated most famously by Aime Césaire in *Discourse on Colonialism* and is commonly associated with Foucault owing to a mention of it in *Society Must Be Defended* (Césaire 35-46, Foucault *Society* 103). The

international exchange of military technology and policing techniques, alongside their deployment for enacting settler colonialism or ‘simply’ for security and the defense of private property is widely discussed in present-day critical discourses.³⁰ Though a full discussion of the colonial “boomerang” is outside the scope of this analysis, it should be noted that this vital attention to techniques of colonial control and to their proliferation should be contextualized by the expanding surplus populations and displacement caused by the demands of value’s tautological logic, including those “externalities” of environmental destruction and climate change.³¹ In this sense, Foucault’s argument is inadequate. Singh criticizes Foucault’s general argument in *Society Must Be Defended* on the basis of various equivocations and exceptionalizations which seem to (ambiguously, at least partially) separate murderous, racist violence from the population management techniques tied to biopolitics and thus to the dynamics of accumulation (Singh 48).

A close reading of Angela Davis’ critique of *Discipline and Punish* offers an opportunity to bring analysis of state repressive apparatuses in the US after slavery’s formal end and Singh’s Marxist critique of Foucault together, offering a compelling way to theorize the interplay between race, gender, and the state’s facilitation of accumulation. In a central passage discussing the 13th Amendment and the authorization of slavery as punishment, Davis writes

³⁰ “Thus, Israeli drones designed to vertically subjugate and target Palestinians are now routinely deployed by police forces in North America, Europe and East Asia. Private operators of US ‘supermax’ prisons are heavily involved in running the global archipelago organizing incarceration and torture that has burgeoned since the start of the ‘war on terror.’ Private military corporations heavily colonise ‘reconstruction’ contracts in both Iraq and New Orleans. Israeli expertise in population control is regularly sought by those planning security operations for major summits and sporting events. Guided missiles and private armies work to securitise key events, from Olympics or world Cups, to g20 summits and political summits.” (Graham).

³¹ A recent article by Jacob Blumenfeld offers a number of compelling considerations regarding how to formulate a critical theory of climate change with respect to capitalism, including an engagement with a Marxian critique of value and assessment of various current efforts to understand the capital-climate relation

The incarceration of former slaves served not so much to affirm the rights and liberties of freed men and women (i.e., as rights and liberties of which they could be deprived), nor to discipline, in the Foucauldian sense, a potential labor force: rather it symbolically emphasized black people's social status continued to be that of slaves [...] 'Free' black people entered into a relationship with the state unmediated by a master, they were divested of their status as slaves in order to be accorded a new status as criminals" (363).

At first blush, an affirmative citation of a passage which rejects a classic and central Marxist concern (labor discipline) as an explanation of incarceration in favor of a strong emphasis on its symbolic purpose may seem contrary to the principles elaborated so far. To reassert the importance of labor as a category against Davis' analysis would be, however, to miss precisely its immense importance for theoretically drawing together state-organized violence and private terror, murder, and exclusion. The rationalization of discipline and striving towards economizing incarceration and other exercises of state power which Foucault is so attentive to can here be understood as an attempt to control a population freed from their forcible attachment to production in the form of plantation slavery (*Discipline and Punish* 206-208). Rather than an attempt to discipline the body, incarceration can be understood as an attempt to reinstate forced labor, terrorize freed black populations into submission in political life and at the point of production, and concentrate or eliminate those unable or unwilling to be absorbed into the valorization process. With respect to the first of these, it ought to be noted that the highly lucrative practice of convict leasing exemplifies the separation between state violence and the "innocent" concern for profit of capitalists. Attaching criminalization to racialization also acts to encourage and legitimize the aforementioned private (though often highly spectacular and visible, as in the case of lynchings) racist violence, effectively letting the state outsource the

latter two tasks to white citizens for little to no political or financial cost. The often discussed prominence of rape and black hypersexuality as ungrounded ideological pretext is of course essential for understanding how private violence influences the construction of gendered categories along racial lines.³²

Finally, Davis' work is essential for understanding how gender structures the prison system. Though an overview of the history of women's prisons is outside the scope of this analysis, the most salient aspect for the present analysis is the organization of prisons and prison reform around rehabilitating women as mothers and wives through training organized around domestic labor (Davis "How Gender..." 70). Importantly, such practices were inflected by class and race. As Davis shows, the same training might prepare a convict for the unwaged reproduction of labor power as a housewife or for waged domestic work. In many cases the treatment of black and Native American women eschewed the "pretense of offering them femininity" in favor of putting them to work as part of the convict leasing system or brutalizing them as completely superfluous to social production (ibid 72). Though unjustifiably brief, these considerations highlight the historiographical and political import of considering the state's subservience to, and facilitation of, accumulation while addressing incarceration as part of a theoretical history of race and gender. Engagement with Davis and Hartman therefore helps further concretize the implications of Singh's rewriting of Marx's contention that "Capital ceases to be capital without wage labor," as "Capital ceases to be capital without the ongoing differentiation of free labor and slavery, waged labor and unpaid labor" (Singh 37).

³² See, as one notable treatment of the subject, Davis' "Rape, Racism, and the Capitalist Setting." Chapter 3 of Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* includes detailed examination of legal forms and rulings in the antebellum South pertaining to the rape of enslaved black women by their white owners.

5. Conclusion

The analysis advanced over the course of this paper is undoubtedly and knowingly incomplete. Without being assessed and substantiated through sustained comparative-historical critique, a Marxist-Feminist theory of gender is at risk of lapsing into empty formalism or becoming disconnected from the vital political tasks it has historically grown out of and defined itself in relation to. Nonetheless, even a preliminary theory of the kind elaborated over the previous sections can help guide future analysis through clearing away theoretical deadlocks, showing how various critical projects might be brought together, and refocusing the terms of discussion by clarifying causal relationships. Further, though the varied historical loci (the postbellum United States, 15th century Florence, etc) mentioned over the course of this paper are useful for demonstrating theoretical principles, ultimately this fragmented and disjointed approach ought to be overcome in favor of a more consistent historical grounding. The above argument aims to facilitate focused historical work of this kind: studies of particular processes of dispossession and their effects on the organization of bodily difference as market dependence takes hold, studies of cyclical crises and their impacts on the subsumption and expulsion of certain activities from the market in a particular location, and so forth. The following reflections on the theoretical import of this analysis should be read as preparatory remarks for further study.

Labor power and its reproduction have long held central conceptual and practical import in Marxist-Feminist theory for good reason. Unfortunately, engagements with the category that fail to apprehend the causal relationships between “social reproduction” (in the narrow sense of labor-power’s continual reappearance on the market) and societal reproduction lead ultimately to a foreshortened critique of capitalist society: the harms of maldistribution and a gendered division of labor become severed from a critique of capitalist production itself, the specificity of

the capital-labor relation is elided in transhistorical conceptions of labor and value, and the state's dependence on, and facilitation of, accumulation is theorized in (at best) a highly fragmentary way. As this argument has shown, engaging with value theory as Endnotes and De'Ath do allows Marxist-Feminism to specify the relationship between capital and gender while avoiding these forms of partial, inadequate critique. Neither does understanding social conflicts and antagonisms as processes internal to the totality of capitalist society entail an *a priori* defeatism in which every action and social dynamic is a simple repetition of commodity logic or determined in advance to reinforce bourgeois hegemony. The account advanced above is aimed precisely at making it possible to assess how and to what extent a particular struggle or conflict points beyond capitalist society (if at all). Without a serious attempt to understand how various forms of domination circumscribe the sphere of possible action in different ways, and to understand the structural inter-relation between their techniques, analysis remains on the level of indeterminate utopianism. Nor does acknowledging the limits of a particular struggle freeze history and accept the present terms of political contestation as the only possible ones in lieu of a complete and instantaneous transition to communist society. Rather, it provides a clearer assessment of what problems might arise as a struggle waxes and wanes or political conditions shift around it. Acknowledging that attempts to organize sustenance, housing, and so forth at a distance from the market will face violent opposition by the state, and may run up against more or less coordinated violence by those who stand to gain from the current state of affairs is a vital strategic consideration, not a resigned sigh of futility. Outlining that exploitation in the productive process and expropriation are distinct but related processes does not foreclose solidarity or necessarily entail a limited particularism, it instead helps substantiate what forms struggles against each process might take, and thus helps understand what would be required to

bring struggles together as part of “the real movement which abolishes the present state of things” (*German Ideology* 56-57).

Lastly, if such a movement succeeds, then this argument will become unnecessary, except perhaps as a way of reckoning with the pile of wreckage left by the storm of history after it has finally subsided with the advent of communist society (Benjamin IX). The greatest hope for any theory which reckons with the ongoing catastrophe of class society or forms of domination in class society is therefore to become irrelevant to a daily life shaped by free development and the absence of the social domination described above. The end of the tautological increase of value as a social logic, which overrides and works against any other means for collectively deciding on and pursuing human ends, will also be the end of gender as a system tied to it and thus bound up in the immense web of violence and social domination in which we are trapped at present. Whether the abolition of value and overcoming of capitalism will entail the bloom of a thousand sexes³³, or the end of gender as a salient category of social life, what can be said for certain is that it will be cause for celebration.

³³ See Laboria Cuboniks' "Xenofeminism: A Politics For Alienation"

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