

INTRODUCTION

Rethinking Marx in Latin America

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IN A LETTER FROM MARCH 1977, the Argentinean theorist, translator, and editor José Aricó discusses a series of upcoming projects with Ludolfo Paramio, then an editor at the publishing house Siglo XXI in Madrid. Among the projects under discussion, Aricó mentions one concerning “the issue of the existing nexus between the critique of political economy and the theory of class or politics or the state.”¹ Citing several recent publications by Italian socialists and communists on the topic of hegemony, most notably Norberto Bobbio’s *Quale socialismo?* (Which Socialism?, 1976), he asks whether it might not be useful to publish a collection on the topic.

The present volume does not pretend to offer a resolution to the relationship between accumulation and subjectivity, much less argue for something like the inherence or priority of the Latin American case. Instead, it conceives of itself as an intervention into the common sense and closed historical horizon that characterizes the reformist spirit of the late 1970s and that continues to structure much of the work of sociocultural interpretation in the field of Latin American studies today. Rather than recuperating a readymade historical or theoretical archive, the essays to follow explore the performative relationship between the collection’s title terms in conceptual, historical-intellectual, and sociocultural terms. Contributions address the relationship between accumulation and subjectivity from within the colonial archive and with respect to the logic of history in Marx and in Latin American social

theory; by reconstructing key concepts for the critique of political economy specific to the intellectual history of the Latin American Left over the last forty years; as a problem or *problématique* manifest in its juridical and socio-cultural effects in the analysis of contemporary film, narrative, urban planning, and immigration policy; and by examining the topological place and historicity of the subject in poststructuralist theory and in Marx's economic writings. In doing so, *Accumulation and Subjectivity* attempts to question the turn away from the categories and problems of political economy that has defined post-Marxist political theory and critical approaches to the study of culture since the 1970s. It also aims to rediscover in Marx and Marxist theory from Latin America those concepts that might allow us to capture the dynamics of contemporary exploitation and expropriation specific to the region and, inversely, to explore the extent to which these theoretical and sociocultural case studies illuminate the historical logic of capital and the role of political, psychic, and ethical life within it.

In what sense, then, are we the addressee of Aricó's letter? Or, in slightly different terms, why impute the problem of accumulation and subjectivity to him? Though the present volume is not devoted principally or exclusively to Aricó, his intellectual and political trajectory speaks to its context and aims. His two major works from the 1980s testify to his ongoing research into nonteleological and nondeterministic theories of capitalist development and mass political organization and the relevance that he assigned to the analysis of political economy in a theoretical context that assumed the autonomy, if not directly the ontology, of politics. Aricó's question, in the letter cited above, regarding the relevance of a volume articulating political economy with politics or the state, could thus be said to fulfill a heuristic function for the purposes of introducing the present collection of essays. In his two major works from the period, Aricó's position is notable because it continued to assign an analytical function to political economy in a moment that tended to define politics in increasingly autonomous and ontological terms. Simultaneously, Aricó's gesture is also significant for the way that, in the author's own lexicon, it reveals a certain temporal missed encounter (*desencuentro*). If the turn away from political economy among political philosophers in the late 1970s and '80s was in many ways the product of a feeling of historical defeat, it was also indicative of the apparent inability of existing paradigms of Marxist political analysis either to account for the patterns of capitalist accumulation specific to the region historically, or to provide a window onto the nature of mass politics in an era increasingly defined

by immaterial labor and the appropriation of wealth through financial speculation.

Several of the contributions to the present collection reconstruct and conceptualize the work of Latin American social theorists who aimed to advance a more nuanced and concrete picture of the unfolding of capitalism and to integrate the analysis of political economy into the interpretation of specific political conjunctures. In doing so, they both address parts of Aricó's project, as in the case of Marcelo Starcenbaum's analysis of the concept of socioeconomic formation, and extend it by interrogating overlooked theoretical works or conjunctural analyses whose nonmechanistic approach to the relationship between capitalism and class or politics mirrors and anticipates the approach of more recent interventions in the fields of postcolonial theory and political philosophy in the English-speaking world. At the same time, Aricó's letter speaks to the collection's even more ambitious aim of questioning the seemingly ubiquitous but unsatisfactory ways in which the dominant strains of post-Marxist theory since the 1970s have attempted to articulate the relationship between political economy and politics and, more broadly, capitalist accumulation and subjectivity. Contemporary theoretical discussions, concerned, alternately, with political subjectivation and the expropriation of wealth from increasingly intimate and informal realms of psychic and collective life, often take as their point of departure either a political ontology divorced from history or a social ontology that assumes the total or "real subsumption" of all forms of life and labor power under capital. By contrast, the present volume takes Aricó's untimely question as an occasion to reconsider its title terms in relation to theoretical problems and sociocultural processes specific to Latin America.

Aricó was one of the earliest translators of Gramsci into Spanish and a former militant of the Argentinean Communist Party who helped to articulate the broad theoretical interests of the country's intellectual New Left in the mid-1960s.² Despite this, his embrace of social democracy in the context of Argentina's democratic transition in the 1980s marked him, until very recently, as an influential but ambivalent figure for the Latin American Left. Aricó's political decisions were representative of those of many other leftist intellectuals of his generation. At the same time, his abiding historiographic and theoretical interests in political economy also stand out against the backdrop of Left defeatism that has defined discussions in Marxist and post-Marxist theory over the last forty years. Aricó conceived of the ongoing inquiry into the concrete social forms, popular modes of political

organization, and theoretical vocabulary necessary to capture the specificity of class struggle in Latin America, as part of the groundwork for the rebirth of socialist internationalism. In this sense, it is worth pointing out that amidst the radicalization of the Peronist and socialist Left in Argentina in the 1960s and '70s, Aricó's interests diverted importantly from the dominant Guevarian *foquista* or Leninist vanguardist approaches to political organization and class consciousness. The reflections on populist political experiences and nondeterministic views of historical development that formed the nucleus of Aricó's editorial work thus remained at a critical remove from the common sense of the Latin American Left even or especially during the most acute years of struggle and military repression. The same could be said of his work with respect to the Eurocommunist horizon of the late 1970s and '80s. While Aricó embraced social democracy as the horizon of politics during the last decade of his life, his intellectual project remained irreducible to those of so-called experts in democratic transition or professional political philosophers, such as Chilean sociologist Norberto Lechner or philosopher Norberto Bobbio, cited above.³ The reformist position that Aricó eventually adopted does not so much belie, as remain in tension, with his work to reestablish the bases of a historically nuanced socialist enlightenment.

Unlike many other interpreters of Gramsci's theory of the state and of hegemony in the era of democratic transition, Aricó wished to preserve the place that Gramsci assigned to the relations among property, the instances of civil society—importantly, the Church—and class in theorizing revolutionary politics in southern Italy's largely agrarian, Catholic society.⁴ The tension between the theoretical and practical, political facets of Aricó's project, beginning in the late 1970s, is perhaps most clearly manifest in *La cola del diablo: itinerario de Gramsci en América Latina* (The Devil's Tail: The Itinerary of Gramsci in Latin America, 1988), a retrospective interpretation of Gramsci's reception in Latin America and of the political relevance of the theory of class hegemony for the present. In it, Aricó insisted on "the pretense of maintaining the unity of socialism and democracy."⁵ However, rather than discarding or recoding the theory of hegemony or its relation to the state, as one finds in Ernesto Laclau's theory of radical democracy, Aricó attempted to preserve and reinterpret such concepts in relation to the experiences and theories of mass-based Latin American political movements. He maintained the historical materialist basis of Gramsci's concepts at the same time that he relegated the categories of property and class relations to an analytical level, thus suspending the Leninist horizon of their political application in Gramsci's own context.

For Aricó, the failure of the organized Left of the 1960s and '70s to articulate a mass-based form of class hegemony was indicative of a longer historical pattern in which, over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Latin America, worker and peasant movements often “remained alien and even opposed to one another.”⁶ The historical disidentification between workers’ movements and other, more heterogeneous forms of popular political organization was the index, if not the outcome, of what, in *Marx and Latin America* (1980), he called the “missed encounter” between Marx and Latin America. With the notion of the missed encounter, Aricó referred to the failure of Marxist doctrine, as advanced by the region’s nationally based communist parties, either to recognize or to formulate a revolutionary theory adequate to its national “realities.” The actual articulation of capitalism—dependent, as it was, upon noncapitalist forms of labor and social organization, the military intervention of the United States, the duration and abolition of slavery, the scale and topology of agricultural production, the issue of national self-determination, and the position of the Church in political power and property relations, among many other noneconomic factors, such as the potentially revolutionary subjects—peasants, agrarian day-laborers, miners, urban factory workers, students, etc.—to emerge from it, remained hidden behind teleological assumptions about the development of class struggle and parochial ideas about the industrial working class as its protagonist. Simultaneously, Aricó’s fortuitously named “missed encounter” also transcends the moment of self-critique motivating *Marx and Latin America*. By assuming the demand that there should have been a theoretical articulation of Marxist historiography and revolutionary theory worthy of the region’s political experiences, the “missed encounter” can also be understood as the call for a radical new beginning for Marxist theory and cultural critique. The present collection is one possible response to that call.

Recent years have witnessed the authorship and translation into English of a number of historical, theoretical, and conjunctural analyses that articulate political economy with a theory or account of mass politics. Consider, for example, the English translations of Aricó’s own *Marx and Latin America* (Brill, 2014); René Zavaleta Mercado’s *Towards a History of the National Popular in Bolivia* (Seagull Books, 2016), a posthumously published study of the historical and political cycle of capitalism and national self-determination in Bolivia, between the War of the Pacific of the 1880s and the Chaco War of the 1930s, as well as a condensation of its author’s highly original political theoretical framework; Álvaro García Linera’s *Plebian Power: Collective Action and Indigenous, Working-Class and Popular Identities in Bolivia* (Brill,

2014), which, building upon Zavaleta's Gramscian framework, offers a series of historical and conjunctural analyses of leftist movements that emerged in opposition to Bolivia's neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and '90s; or Raquel Gutiérrez's *Rhythms of the Pachakuti: Indigenous Uprising and State Power in Bolivia* (Duke University Press, 2014), which analyzes the mass collective actions in the same country against the privatization of gas and water between 2000 and 2005. These recent translations speak to a growing interest in the hybrid Marxist theoretical paradigms of the 1970s and their adaptation for contemporary analysis.

Recent years have also produced a growing list of translations into English of the work of intellectual historians, explicators, and theorists dedicated to this same corpus of social thought. Take, for example, Martín Cortés's *José Aricó and the New Latin American Marxism* (Brill, 2019), whose conceptual reconstruction of Aricó's editorial and theoretical work aims, in part, to rescue its subject's legacy from the dominant social democratic appropriation of Gramsci; or Luis Tapia Mealla's *The Production of Local Knowledge: History and Politics in the Work of René Zavaleta Mercado* (Seagull Books, 2018), which explains and historicizes Zavaleta's corpus with respect to the historical cycle beginning with the popular democratic government of Bolivia's Revolutionary Nationalist Movement of 1952 and ending with the return to democracy in 1982.

Among recent publications we might also consider a number of analyses emerging from the social sciences concerned with the complex relation to the state sustained by populist and communal agrarian and urban social movements, both historically and in the recent Pink Tide governments of the early 2000s. Consider, for example, Donald V. Kingsbury's *Only the People Can Save the People: Constituent Power, Revolution, and Counterrevolution in Venezuela* (SUNY Press, 2018), which mobilizes the Negrian category of constituent power beginning with the 1989 Caracazo; and George Ciccariello-Maher's *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution* (Duke University Press, 2013), a history and political analysis of popular struggles beginning with the installation of Rómulo Bentancourt's formal democratic regime in 1958 and ending in the Caracazo, which examines the category of constituent power in order to reveal the mediation between the state and social movements. Jeffrey Webber's *Red October: Left Indigenous Struggles in Modern Bolivia* (Brill, 2011) details the concatenation of collective actors, sociopolitical circumstances, and historically rooted indigenous and working-class radicalism that contributed to Bolivia's Gas and Water Wars between 2000 and 2006 by privileging the analytical categories of class and

class struggle in the analysis of social movements. To this necessarily partial list, we might also add the recent translation of Ruy Braga's *The Politics of the Precariat: From Populism to Lulista Hegemony* (2018), which offers a sociological study of the political practices and class politics of the precariat, or reserve army of precarious, largely unskilled labor, in the period spanning the populist Vargas regime in the 1930s and popular presidential administration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in the early 2000s. Braga observes the relation of continuity and overcoming, rather than of rupture, in the dynamics structuring both the bureaucratic incorporation of syndical leadership into the state and of the capacity for self-organization of an expanded proletariat before and after the country's last military dictatorship.

In contrast to the macropolitical, or, in the language of Deleuze and Guattari, molar lens of such studies, a number of other analyses focus on the psychic, affective, and micropolitical dimensions of social and political struggles in the region. For the English-language reader, perhaps the most familiar illustrations of this approach is Brazilian analyst and art critic Suely Rolnik and Félix Guattari's *Micropolitics in Brazil*, a compendium of talks and interventions given during Guattari's month-long trip across Brazil in 1982 amid the incipient institutionalization of the Workers' Party and mobilizations against the authoritarian government. First published in 1986 in Portuguese and 2007 in English, the book documents and theorizes the place of desiring production in a social field characterized at once by the recodification of old class and racial hierarchies and the articulation of social movements beyond the union, party, or state. Spanish-language readers interested in the psychic effects of contemporary capitalism might consult Argentinean Spanish psychoanalyst Jorge Alemán's recent *Horizontes neoliberales en la subjetividad* (*Neoliberal Horizons in Subjectivity*, 2016). Alemán describes neoliberalism as social link defined by the withering of conventional forms of authority and the construction of subjects confronted with the seemingly insatiable demands and limitless power of capital. Alemán argues that the escape is not to be found in an individual cure, but rather in the finite discursive logic of Laclau's descriptive model of hegemony, which I discuss in further detail below.

Given the broad, speculative questions entertained by the present collection, it would be futile to argue that it completes or reveals the omissions of a given field of knowledge in any kind of positive sense. Rather, *Accumulation and Subjectivity* complements such recent studies and translations in social, political, and psychoanalytic theory in its attempt to articulate the relationship between its two title terms. In this sense, its purpose is neither to

underscore the purported lack of attention to the ethical, psychic, or ideological mediation of political economy in sociological accounts of neoliberalism or the grassroots alternatives to it, nor, inversely, to demand that analyses of the symbolic, ethical, or psychic effects of contemporary capitalism incorporate a more detailed analysis of political economy. Rather, it aims to open a space for the reconstruction of conceptual genealogies and the analysis of theories and cultural phenomena that call into question the avowedly ontological or implicitly totalizing schemata that shape the approach to accumulation and subjectivity in the most ambitious and influential works of recent decades.

The present volume attempts to question two dominant theoretical frameworks structuring sociopolitical and cultural analysis over the last thirty years: the autonomy of politics in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's theories of populism and hegemony, and the immediately political nature of class struggle posited in Antonio Negri's analyses of the Keynesian state and its crisis beginning in the late 1960s. By alighting briefly on their proposals, alternately to sever and to identify the analysis of political economy and the subjective, political dimensions of class struggle, we can also appreciate the consequences of each at work in sociologist Verónica Gago's recent and widely read analysis of neoliberalism in the aftermath of Argentina's 2001 financial crisis.

Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism, first proposed in the final chapter of *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (1977), outlines a nondeterministic theory of political organization and subjectivity. Proposing a formal, structuralist approach to the experience of Peronism that extant uses of the term *populism* had overlooked, Laclau responded to the question of how to conceive of the class determination of ideology and politics. The chapter, titled "Towards a Theory of Populism," thus argues that "the class character of an ideology is given by its form and not by its content."⁷ Irreducible to a given set of ideas or worldview, Laclau instead proposed a structuralist, discursive understanding of hegemony. In his view, class thus operates at the level of ideas and political organization by dictating the combination of class and national-popular elements. Together with Nicos Poulantzas, Laclau's earliest theory of populism participated in the reception and interpretation of structuralist Marxism as a way of accounting for the class or economic determination of mass-based politics in societies characterized by weak liberal institutions and heterogeneous historical temporalities and forms of property. Simultaneously, its attempt to outline a formal theory of populism

marked its intervention into debates in modernization and dependency theory regarding the historical logic and political forms of capitalism specific to the region. “Towards a Theory of Populism” maintains a historical materialist understanding of universalism, such that, in Laclau’s formulation, socialism would represent the highest form of populism.⁸ At the same time, by casting the movement of Gramscian hegemony onto the structural plane of discourse, it also effectively weakened the analytic category of class by conflating it with the lonely “last instance” of economic determination. “Towards a Theory of Populism” thus lays the formal conceptual groundwork for Laclau and Mouffe’s revisionist reading of class determination among thinkers of the II International in their highly influential *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985).

With respect to the present collection, it is less perhaps relevant to signal the evolution of the theoretical vocabulary in Laclau’s employ—from structuralism to postfoundational political ontology to the metapsychology of identification in *On Populist Reason* (2005), than to note the ways in which the descriptive value of his framework occludes the specificity of the historical and theoretical contexts to which it responds. In his 1977 text, the mechanism of articulation of national-popular and class identities or elements addresses a question of causality or determination between subjectivity and accumulation, or the contingent and semantically singular realm of class politics and the objective position occupied by a given social group with respect to capital. By contrast, in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the articulation of class-based and non-class-based elements or demands appears as both the retroactive nucleus of Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and as the necessary response to the fragmentation of the industrial working class in Western Europe and the United States. In Laclau and Mouffe’s words, “It is impossible to talk today about the homogeneity of the working class, and a fortiori to trace it to a mechanism inscribed in the logic of capitalist accumulation.”⁹ If this conclusion reiterates the nondeterministic correlation between the objective and subjective dimensions of class politics, it also voices a more insidious and also more influential ahistorical vision of politics or political ontology. Laclau and Mouffe predicate their interpretation of hegemony—and the political ontology to which it gives rise—on the mimesis or mirroring among deindustrialized societies in which the wage no longer defines the dominant form of property and agrarian export countries where the wage could never be said to define the general form of labor. The descriptive efficiency of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of hegemony lies in the dehistoricizing

nature of its attempt to codify the movement of class hegemony independent of the historical determination of class struggle.

Whereas Laclau and Mouffe sever any analytical tie between accumulation and subjectivity, Antonio Negri's writings from the 1970s and early '80s propose an immediate relationship between the two. Negri's theoretical and historical-political analyses from this period attempt to reformulate the principles of Italian workerism—for example, Mario Tronti's emphasis on the subjective capacity of living labor produced by the increasingly cooperative nature of industrial work—in order to account both for the new forms of control and exploitation produced by the crisis of industrial capitalism and for the new, expanded field of social antagonism taking shape beyond the setting of the factory or the sale and exploitation of wage labor. In Negri's view, Marx foresees the crisis of the social relation based on the exchange of wage labor in his development on the general intellect in the *Grundrisse*. According to Negri, Marx thus posits the development and imminent crisis of capitalism as one based on capital's decreasing reliance on the "theft of labor time" and increasing dependence on the general intellect, or scientific knowledge and technical know-how produced at a social level.¹⁰ In Negri's view, the present crisis of industrial capitalism has similarly begun to incubate the communist society that will also subvert it. As Negri and other postautonomist Italian thinkers such as Maurizio Lazzarato and Paulo Virno have observed more recently, in this same passage Marx also affirms that capitalist development has brought about nothing short of an anthropological transformation or second nature. With this Marx refers to the inherently social techniques mediating the relationship that the individual sustains with his "inorganic body," or his means of existence. Setting this anthropological claim aside for the moment, Negri's key insight with respect to the periodization of capitalism lies in the way in which the radicalization of new social antagonisms in spheres traditionally assigned to the reproduction of class relations, also defines the expanded, social scope of the capital-labor relation.

In Negri's reading, the politicization of economic relations is more than an extreme response to increasingly molecular and violent forms of social control. Rather, he argues, it is the product of the "planner state," or a model of government aimed at containing and incorporating class struggle into the political sphere through state-centered economic planning.¹¹ Negri's point is not only that the subsumption of social labor power under capital has realized the social factory inadvertently posited by Keynes, but rather also that this new form of domination arises as a response to the uprisings of 1968–69 "within and against the system of the relative wage."¹² According to Negri,

the restructuring of capital associated with the myriad dimensions of productive management and social control associated with postfordism is itself a response to the recomposition of the working class in both objective and subjective terms, as indexed by the expansive scope of struggles beginning in the late 1960s. With the concept of “class composition,” Negri thus attempts to advance a political understanding of labor predicated on the incorporation of social labor into capital. Class composition can thus be understood as an interpretation of class consciousness that refuses the separation between the objective function of labor power within capital and its enlightenment or process of self-consciousness in the realm of praxis or party organization. It proposes an immediate relationship between the incorporation of social labor into capital and the subjectivization of the collectivity produced as a result. In Negri’s words, “[Class composition] is an historical process which combines material elements and becomes at the same time subjectivised; this in the sense that historical experience becomes transformed into irreversible qualities, into second nature.”¹³ Echoing Marx’s description of the new social subject supposedly incubated within the technical processes of advanced industrial capital, Negri also describes the historical-political process of class composition in an anthropological, rather than genealogical or practical, register. Negri’s approach to the politicization of class struggle provides a convenient framework for describing social movements implicated in the dynamics of class struggle that nonetheless transcend struggles over the wage. However, despite its descriptive capacity in contexts, such as the Argentinean one, in which the regime of wage labor was never generalized nor was the politicization of labor ever confined to the space of the factory, the anthropological subject of class composition in Negri’s framework assumes a historical tendency belied by ways in which capitalist development has proceeded by incorporating, rather than merely eliminating, heterogeneous temporalities and modes of production in the region. Stated slightly differently, if capitalism cannot be said to incubate the subject of a socialist society purportedly to come, then what conceptual vocabulary might allow us to apprehend the individual psychic or collective political subjects produced by actual processes of accumulation beyond the wage relation?

Verónica Gago’s *Neoliberalism from Below: Popular Pragmatics and Baroque Economies*, first published in Spanish in 2014, has been widely recognized for its account of neoliberal subjectivity. An experimental ethnography of La Salada flea market on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, it traces the historical-political process of class composition operative in the informal economies that emerged as a result of Argentina’s economic crisis

in 2001, and their subsequent incorporation into systems of private and state-sponsored finance under the center-left governments of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández. Gago's emphasis on the heterogeneity of these forms of sociability and mutual aid observed in La Salada serves to question the lasting center-left view of the Argentinean working class as one that is largely native-born, male, and industrial, and of the exploitation of wage labor as the principal source of capitalist accumulation. In slightly narrower terms, Gago's study also attempts to question Laclau's theory of populism as the one best suited to account for the subjectivization of the working class during the avowedly Peronist and populist administrations of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández. In Gago's view, the political ontology that Laclau ultimately derives from the experience of Peronism—including the “populist reason” that he borrows from the libidinal dynamics of identification with the charismatic leader or ideal in Freud's *Group Psychology*—ultimately proves inadequate to the collective forms generated, not only by the political rhetoric or redistributive policies of the state, but also by the material conditions of what she calls neoliberalism from below.

Gago documents the role of the state and of private banks in extracting wealth via debt through unemployment benefits packages, access to credit for consumption, and the microfinance of previously autonomous, informal networks of mutual aid and subsistence.¹⁴ In her view, these marginalized segments of the population—poor women, immigrants, the unemployed or precariously employed, and the indebted lower middle class—constitute new forms of sociality that find themselves inevitably implicated in the extraction of value through rent. Gago argues that these collectivities should be understood, not merely as victims of neoliberal economic policy, but rather as the historical and anthropological face of an expanded working class. The new class composition that Gago describes emerges from the way that contemporary capital “puts to work” not only biopower but “ways of life.”¹⁵ In this sense, Gago shares with Negri a reading of Foucault filtered through the cataclysmic Marx of the *Grundrisse*. Indeed, it is around this point where Gago's study both locates and hides its most incisive insights about the relationship between accumulation and subjectivity in Latin America. Rather than questioning the historical teleology behind Negri's interpretation of the real subsumption of social labor under capital, Gago assumes it—tacitly, but also ambivalently. In other words, *Neoliberalism from Below* struggles to find the conceptual vocabulary adequate, not simply to the empirical heterogeneity of the subjects that it documents but rather to the multiplicity and layering of historical times and forms of sociability that neoliberalism brings

under the command of financial capital without, for that reason, wholly subordinating them to it. What is at stake is more than a lexical problem or an assertion of the purported irreducibility of the Argentinean case. Rather, it is the ability to give a critical account of the historicity of capitalism as a social relation and of the forms of collective subjectivity produced and productive of it. Motley for the necessary plurality of methodological approaches and problems that it unfolds, the present volume participates in the search for a conceptual vocabulary adequate to the imbrication of accumulation and subjectivity in its varied historical forms.

Why insist on the relationship between accumulation and subjectivity? Why insist on the problematic nature of positing this relationship? Why Latin America? In theory, accumulation and subjectivity serve as the objects of wholly different fields of inquiry: historical materialism and philosophy, respectively. And yet, despite this, the two are also historically intertwined. To identify a collective subject of social transformation outside of determinate historical and political circumstances of struggle is to exit the realm of historical materialist analysis for that of metaphysics. Inversely, to speak of accumulation without subjectivity is to posit capital as some sort of autonomous, self-perpetuating entelechy and thus to participate in the ideological ruse that powers its own reproduction through the capture of labor power. In other words, there can be no account of the logic governing the extraction of wealth as such outside of a notion of the construction of the collective subjects implied in this operation at an institutional, juridical, moral, or psychic level. The collection's regional focus complicates matters further. Though social scientists in the English-speaking academy often call upon Latin America to provide the raw material for political thought, the present collection refuses the idea that its analyses offer any such ready-made models for life or products for academic consumption.

The collection instead aspires to present the reader with a set of critical-methodological tools or concepts. We might think of the latter in terms of what Aricó, glossing Gramsci, proposed as the labor of translation. Taking as his starting point an enigmatic remark by Lenin to the effect that the Russian Revolution had not yet been able to “translate” its language into Western European languages, Gramsci developed the notion of translation as a way of connoting a relationship of generality and particularity or conceptuality and instantiation that he then put to work in different theoretical discussions and registers.¹⁶ As Martín Cortés has signaled, Aricó appropriated the term as a way of describing the simultaneously singular nature of Latin American socioeconomic formations and their circumscription within the necessarily

universal reach of capitalism. From this perspective, Gramsci's notion of translation thus ponders the concepts necessary in order to render legible concrete national realities and seeks ways of transferring such concepts to the analysis of other historical-political contexts.¹⁷ Neither a metaphor nor a method, in Aricó's approach to Gramsci, the work of translation is both interpretive and interventionist in nature. In this sense, positing the translatability of a given concept involves more than simply importing and applying an existing theory, but rather of extracting a way of reading or of performing theoretical work from within the singularity of a given national or regional situation.¹⁸ Aricó deployed this notion of translation as a way of distinguishing between the singularity and purported irreducibility of different socioeconomic formations, thus anticipating the pitfalls of cultural particularism, and extending its objects of inquiry to texts and experiences that might or might not posit their object in terms of Marxist theory or class struggle. Just as the starting point for this critical maneuver was the ability to detect formal similarities in the sociopolitical morphology of distant regions—between Gramsci's Mezzogiorno and Aricó's Argentina, for example—the end result was a vision of Marxism as a constellation of debates traversed by both Marxist and non-Marxist thought from diverse regions.¹⁹

One of the collection's aims is to recuperate a series of problems and concepts, such as property, class, totality, and socioeconomic formation, first coined or treated at a problematic level in response to the discourses of development and dependency and intended to address both the social contradictions produced by industrialization and the political possibilities opened by the Cuban Revolution. A second aim of the collection is to localize and interpret the relationship between accumulation and subjectivity in specific sociocultural case studies: the cinematographic construction of political memory in Bolivia, the juridical category of the migrant, the moral dimension of debt, and the symbolic representation of femicide in the maquilas of Ciudad Juárez. The collection's third aim is to revisit concepts and logical operations central to Marx's own work and to interrogate their consequences for contemporary theoretical inquiry and political analysis.

One finds this third objective at work on the face of those essays that take leave of the social, cultural, and intellectual context of Latin America in order to examine the historicity of the individual subject as a construct of moral and juridical norms and their psychoanalytic subversion; to extend and return Alain Badiou's topology to the historical logic of capitalism; and to question the philosophical assumptions sustaining contemporary articulations of ecological Marxism. Simultaneously, the objective of revisiting and

expanding Marx's categories cuts across virtually all of the essays, whether by addressing the category of hybrid subsumption in *Capital*; the metaphorical language of Marx's chapters on primitive accumulation in the context of contemporary migrancy at the U.S.-Mexican border; or the vicissitudes of the concept of property in colonial Mexican law and legal testimony.

The content and organization of the present volume thus attempt to demonstrate two broader critical-methodological points. The first speaks to the epistemological assumptions sustaining Gramsci's notion of translation. To the extent that the translation of a concept from one context to another supposes a creative and interpretive effort on the part of the theorist, inversely, it also supposes that the historical-political context or conjuncture, to use Althusser's term, poses these same problems objectively. Regardless of whether or not they place the history of Marxian concepts at the forefront of their inquiries, almost all of the essays to follow "think in the conjuncture."²⁰ That is, more than merely describe the objectively given elements of a given situation, they allow us to see how the logic of class struggle becomes visible only from within specific ideological and political determinations. Through their close attention to the history of policy, urban planning, film social movements, and intellectual debates, they not only give account of phenomena illustrative of the effects of capitalism on law, art, and literature but also pinpoint and mobilize the tensions and contradictions dynamizing each context in order to identify new theoretical and political problems. Rather than merely attending to the singular nature of the case in question, the studies included in the present volume illustrate concepts at once immanent to the processes that they describe and potentially extrapolatable from them. In so doing, they offer up instances of the kind of materialist political thought at stake in Althusser's formulation. Simultaneously, their sensitivity to the specificities of the conjuncture also speaks to the volume's second point.

For many of the authors anthologized, the technical language of Marxist political economy serves as the most precise vehicle for identifying the oftentimes obfuscated or tense relationship between capitalism and subjectivity. Despite this, the present volume does not pretend to offer an overview of Latin American Marxism, understood either as a positively given field of study or as a compendium of discrete national intellectual, social, or political traditions. To paraphrase Lacan, Latin American Marxism does not exist, or rather, it does not exist as a self-reflexively cogent or consistent set of theories, attitudes, or practices. The point is rather to interrogate two concepts whose relationship unsettles the implicit or professed assumptions about radical historical transformation that academic discourse wishes to capture

when it invokes “Latin American Marxism.” The book thus aims to question, rather than to reify, Marxism in its regional or national declinations. For this same reason, it also includes several essays that, though they do not focus on Latin American authors or contexts, do address the historical logic of capitalism and the potential place of the subject within it, thus allowing the reader a somewhat more formalized perspective on the historical case studies presented in previous sections.

The collection includes four sections, each of whose subheadings serves both a descriptive and heuristic function. The essays in the first section, titled “Property and History,” represent different approaches to the definition of property—as a historical and ontological relation among individuals and between individuals and their means of existence—and as a set of economic and juridical relations straddling and blurring the border between the economic and political determinations of a given society. Each of the contributions to this section also examines how Marx, as well as Marxist and non-Marxist thinkers, attempted to define property or to conceive of the transformation of property relations under capitalism. In the first of these contributions, “On Subsumption as Form and the Use of Asynchronies,” Massimiliano Tomba examines Marx’s formulations of subsumption, or the incorporation of labor into capital, by asking what it might mean to consider formal and real subsumption, not as stages of historical development, but rather as ways of defining the social form of labor. To the extent that capitalism cannot create but rather must encounter its conditions of existence in “preexisting relationships of production, property and politics,” Tomba’s reading underscores the expedience, rather than the merely residual nature, of noncapitalist forms of labor for capital, thus asking us to view capitalism as a social relation defined by the violent encounter among different historical temporalities, and one open to nonbourgeois configurations of property and self-government. David Kazanjian’s “‘I am he’: A History of Dispossession’s Not-Yet-Present in Colonial Yucatán” questions assumptions about the juridical definition of property in the Spanish colonial archive. Kazanjian’s case study of the late-seventeenth-century court case of the enslaved Afro-Yucatecan Juan Patricio, asks us to question the metaphysical foundations undergirding assumptions that challenge the notion of accumulation by dispossession on two counts: both as a narrow historical definition of Marx’s formulation of primitive accumulation, and as a common trope among interpreters of the colonial period that tends to reinforce the purportedly metaphysical foundations of the individual’s relation to others and to the land. My contribution, “Accumulation as Total Conversion,” proposes a revisionist

interpretation of the notion of transculturation at work in José María Arguedas's anthropological studies on the effects of capitalist expansion on the country's Southern Central highlands. Addressing the categories of property and subsumption in Kanzanjian and Tomba's contributions, the essay aims to show how, in Arguedas's account, the ethical and material life of the collective functions as a condition for and potential obstacle to capital. In close conversation with the other contributions in this section, Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott's "Latin American Marxism: History and Accumulation" traces how Latin American Marxist debates of the 1960s and '70s emerging as a reaction to the discourses and theories of development and dependency questioned lineal notions of progress. Villalobos-Ruminott argues that a reconsideration of these debates might help to articulate a Marxist analysis of the processes of "ongoing primitive accumulation triggered by neoliberal globalization while questioning, at the same time, the limitations imposed by a naturalized understanding of historical temporality."

The essays grouped under the heading of "Class and Totality" examine how such terms sought to account for the concrete ways in which accumulation and subjectivity intersect in societies defined by neo-imperial economic relations and the articulation of heterogeneous modes of production. The essays in this section trace concepts and debates among Latin American social and political theorists of the 1960s and '70s whose work alternately responded to and took advantage of the so-called crisis of Marxism by recasting the logic and ontology of history and the category of the subject charged with its transformation. Pablo Pérez Wilson provides a succinct interpretation of the purpose of the three essays in this section when he writes, "Rather than deriving a necessary outcome from a given conception, historically oriented research should pay attention to how the actual development of a specific social formation encapsulates the tensions and contradictions of capital itself." Pérez Wilson's "Class and Accumulation" is unique for the way that it traces how different theorizations of social class in Chile intersect with shifts in the pattern of global capitalist accumulation. Considering the work of Manuel Castells, Javier Martínez, Eugenio Tironi, Carlos Ruiz Encina, and Giorgio Boccardo, Pérez Wilson's essay questions the application of market-oriented research in recent critiques of neoliberalism by showing instead how we can understand social class and capitalist accumulation as part of the same historical process. Marcelo Starcenbaum's essay, "José Aricó and the Concept of Socioeconomic Formation," traces a genealogy of the concept of socioeconomic formation, which serves as an alternative way of naming the mode of production, in Marx and Lenin, and in the Cuadernos

de Pasado y Presente in the context of debates about historical causality and transition in the mode of production in the 1960s and '70s. Starckenbaum underscores the importance of this nonmechanistic formulation of social and political determination in Aricó's work as a researcher and publisher, thus signaling the continuity between formal debates about the definition of mode of production and the kinds of concrete historical analyses of national self-determination and communalism that Aricó viewed as fundamental for the renewal of socialist internationalism and enlightenment. Jaime Ortega Reyna's contribution focuses on the tension between totality and contingency in the work of Bolivian sociologist René Zavaleta Mercado. Noting Zavaleta's newfound, posthumous recognition in the Anglophone world, "An Irresolvable Tension: The Part or the Whole? The Effects of the 'Crisis of Marxism' in the Work of René Zavaleta Mercado" argues that the central current animating Zavaleta's intellectual project and its place within the so-called crisis of Marxism can be defined by its insistence on the tension between the universal character of capitalism and the situated and contingent, or conjunctural, nature of politics. Ortega Reyna thus argues that Zavaleta's formulation of society's *abigarramiento* or becoming motley, should be read in the intellectual context of the thinker's mature work from the late 1970s and early 1980s in its attempt to address the question of historical determination, rather than describe a situation of cultural or linguistic heterogeneity, as championed by the Anglophone reception of his work in recent years. In addition to tracing the uses and reformulations of concepts pertinent to class and totality in Marxist theory, each of the essays in this section also emphasizes how such formulations emerged from and reflected upon the specificity of purportedly outlier cases, that is, socioeconomic formations and national political contexts—Bolivia, Chile, or Latin America, more broadly speaking—that prove central for questioning and reinventing the categories of Marxist analysis globally or universally. These chapters not only provide us with a nuanced glossary of new and familiar terms but also, and perhaps more importantly, ways of translating problems and formulations among the conceptual languages of specific historical-political conjunctures.

The essays collected in the section "Sovereignty and Debt" contemplate the relationship between contemporary forms of neoliberal governance and the legal, cultural, and psychic consequences of contemporary mechanisms of accumulation through rent with an emphasis on debt. In "Postmigrancy: Borders, Primitive Accumulation, and Labor at the U.S./Mexico Border," Abraham Acosta studies the role of jurisprudence in the dynamics of ongoing

primitive accumulation through an analysis of the history of laws and policies governing Central American migration to the United States beginning in the 1980s. By taking as his point of departure the specific inflection of the “freedom” that Marx imputes to the English peasants dispossessed of their means of subsistence in the final chapters of *Capital*, Acosta coins the term *postmigrancy* in order to name a present defined by the implication and undecidability of freedom and rightlessness. Horacio Legrás’s contribution, “Psychotic Violence: Crime and Consumption in the Apocalyptic Phase of Capitalism,” underscores the extent to which the hermeneutic assumptions and shortcomings of journalistic and social scientific accounts of the femicide in Ciudad Juárez can be understood to be implicated in the “neoliberal redrawing” of both urban space and the function of the state with respect to the economy. Building upon Rita Segato’s analysis of the Juárez murders, Legrás characterizes the social link sustaining neoliberal governance in the city as one best described by what analyst Jacques-Alain Miller terms “ordinary psychosis,” such that that mutilation of the female body substitutes and supplements the symbolic deficiencies of a moral law reconfigured by capital. In “Debt, Violence, and Subjectivity” Alessandro Fornazzari reads the moral and economic logic of debt in the essays and chronicles of Ricardo Piglia and Pedro Lemebel, focused, respectively, on Witold Gombrowicz’s time in Argentina (1939–1963) and with Pedro Lemebel’s reflections on 1980s Chile. Mobilizing Giovanni Arrighi’s and Maurizio Lazzarato’s accounts of finance capital, Fornazzari skews the superficial thematic treatment of use and exchange value in Piglia’s and Lemebel’s writings, arguing instead that their texts reconfigure the subject’s relationship to the future and to others beyond the purportedly totalizing culture produced by the creditor-debtor relationship and amplified by the rise of finance capital in the 1970s. In contrast to the literary and cultural analyses in the volume, Irina Feldman’s “The ‘Insurgent Subject’ versus Accumulation by Dispossession in Álvaro García Linera and Jorge Sanjinés” focuses on the economic and political valences of accumulation in the progressive cultural agenda of Evo Morales’s MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) government. Feldman examines the notion of accumulation as it pertains both to insurgent experience and to capital in Álvaro García Linera’s extensive essay *Las tensiones creativas del Proceso de Cambio* (Creative Tensions of the Process of Change, 2012) and the film *Insurgentes* (Insurgents) produced the same year by Jorge Sanjinés and the Grupo Ukamau. By suggesting a continuity between the Katarista rebellions of the 1780s and the Bolivian Gas Wars of 2003, Feldman argues that *Insurgentes*

performs García Linera's cultural program at the same time that it ponders the possible limitations of the MAS government's revolutionary aims.

The collection's final section, "The Subject and Nature," mirrors the first in its attempt to formalize the emergence of the subject in ontological and contingent historical-political terms. Bruno Bosteels's contribution asks whether it might be possible to conceive of a theory of the subject absent the Hegelian logic of presupposition, which Marx employs in order to describe the movement by which capital produces "the semblance that the conditions of its becoming are in reality the effects and attributes of its own being." Bosteels thus proposes "Marx's Theory of the Subject" as one that would allow us to historicize the becoming ahistorical and transcendental of the subject in the theories proposed by Judith Butler, Alain Badiou, and Slavoj Žižek, among others. Gavin Walker's "Non-Capital' and the Torsion of the Subject" looks to Badiou's *Theory of the Subject* (1982) in order to locate the emergence of a revolutionary subjectivity in the extimate place that labor power occupies with respect to capital. Walker thus relates Badiou's topological figure of torsion and Marx's passing reference to the notion of non-capital in order to formulate how a collective subject might emerge from within the critique of political economy. Orlando Bentancor's contribution, "The Impasses of Environmentalism: Subjectivity and Accumulation in the World-Ecology Project," examines the field of Marxist eco-criticism and, specifically, what theorist Jason Moore has proposed as the devaluation and transformation of the biosphere under capitalism. By reinterpreting the topological place of labor power, as discussed in Walker's essay, Bentancor proposes a critique of the ontology of nature at stake in Moore's project. Just as the volume begins with an elaboration on the Marx's scattered mentions of the subsumption of labor under capital, it ends with an attempt to locate and formalize a theory of the subject with respect to this same logical-historical movement.

As the reader may have already gleaned from the description of its individual contributions, the collection includes a variety of sociocultural, theoretical, and intellectual-historical objects and critical-methodological approaches, approaches that sometimes surface in productive tension with one another as part of the framework of a given essay. Literary scholars such as Legrás write about culture, not simply as a code word for nonliterary texts or phenomena, but as a way of underscoring the ethical structures and material practices constitutive of specific socioeconomic formations.²¹ Intellectual histories and conceptual accounts relevant to the mode of production debates among Latin American social theorists of the 1960s and '70s, such as those of