LAURA DOYLE

Inter-imperiality

Vying Empires, Gendered Labor, and the Literary Arts of Alliance

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Theoretical Introduction

Between States

Born into a world of mutual, uncertain, and unequal conditions of relation, humans survive through labors of care pressured by energies of coercion and domination. Our life on earth might be described not strictly as competitive engagement over scarce resources, as some thinkers have suggested, but rather as a microphysics of contingent survival and positioning that we enact with and against others at both intimate and macropolitical levels. This book aims to capture the degree to which relations span these interacting dimensions: of shifting attachments and coformations among persons and communities amid interacting geopolitical forces.[1] These multilateral dynamics continuously transform all participants, even as their patterns accrue slowly over time into material and ideological conditions that shape future interactions. Focusing on the geopolitical coordinates of what I call *inter-imperiality*, I develop a long-historical, dialectical theory of relationality and power that integrates feminist-intersectional, economic, materialist, literary, and geopolitical thought.[2] I will sometimes also refer to this dialectical model as horizonal: this framework considers a full 360-degree "horizon" of multiple simultaneous interactions shaping places and communities, which accumulate over time into determining pressures, kept alive in memory and in materiality.[3]

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This conceptual model rests on the observation that, like persons, polities are co-constituted and thereafter coformed, despite all disavowals to the contrary. We might recall that a state's claim to sovereignty must be recognized by other states to exist or have force. Moreover, most empires, nations, kingdoms, and villages depend materially on trade, a relational activity. Even an embargo expresses a negative relation. Thus, neither persons nor polities have an original, a priori independence to revive or defend. No pure origin. Only fraught co-origination, requiring labor in every sense.

That both humans and polities originate within this condition of entangled coformation becomes clear when we recall, as so few philosophies do, that a person's physical survival depends from birth on another person who brings sustenance from the material world. G. W. F. Hegel's famous "lord and bondsman" arrive late on this scene. When Hegel positions the lord and bondsman's physical contest for control as the original intersubjective moment, much gets erased in one stroke.[4] For his life-or-death story of struggle over labor has no women in it. Yet without women's labors as well as men's, there is neither lord nor bondsman in the first place.

Alternatively, to include the demands of caretaking in these labor struggles is to begin to craft a sound philosophy of dialectical relationality grounded in historical conditions. Doing so requires that we track the coformations of gender and labor at the center of a long, wide history of interacting political economies, including those that precede or exceed forms of capitalism. To focus on the existential, historical condition of relationality in these terms is not, however, to posit an originary scene of innocent mother and child. Even when beautiful and generous, relationality is not simply benevolent; it is demanding on all sides. Relations are strenuously clothed and fed, so to speak. We could say that this condition rests on a foundational practice of nourishing, harboring, listening, and responding, yet these may be enacted amid stinging blows, or comforting embraces, or vacillating swerves between them. These dynamics are repeated among adults and among communities. We sometimes call them international relations.

Within this account of existential relationality, the meaning of sovereignty takes on a different cast, with implications for the use of this term by a range of current critical thinkers. Insofar as the notion of sovereignty assumes an originary condition of autonomy—even if only as what Giorgio Agamben calls "bare life"—it carries forward a certain romance, often a gendered one, with the idea that persons, states, and kin communities exist a priori, before messy dependencies and mixings.[5] There are strategic, sometimes urgent reasons for embracing a concept of sovereignty, as with similar

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uses of strategic essentialism, especially when these aim to foreground relational histories. Consider the Mohawk tribe's "refusal" of Canada's failure to "recognize" the Mohawk's long-standing sovereign claims to land and nationhood, as analyzed by Audra Simpson.[6] More than a claim to autonomy, the Mohawk stance in effect demands that Canada acknowledge historical relations: first, the Mohawk's historical relation to the land and, second, the state-to-state relation, expressed in treaties, between the Canadian nation and the Mohawk nation. The Mohawk refusal is, in other words, a refusal of Canada's disavowal of relationality (which Simpson describes as misrecognition).[7] Because it remains true that these pragmatic discourses of identity or sovereignty risk reinscribing the very politics they contest, this book's relational, existential analysis emphasizes the historical rather than the "time immemorial" claims underlying such demands, as does other recent work on sovereignty. Likewise, this book joins those decolonial-feminist models in which agency is understood not as an aspect of autonomy, nor as primarily individual or unidirectional, but rather as dialectical: always already arising interdependently.[8] Thus, as thinkers and activists retool notions of sovereignty, agency, and "radical" freedom, it's crucial to practice discernment about the vestigial individualist, masculinist, capitalist, or civilizationalist investments sometimes lurking in these notions.

When we think in terms of radical relationality rather than radical freedom, keeping in mind what Judith Butler calls precarity, we can more precisely name the crimes of states, capitalists, sovereigns, and persons. We can understand their violence as disavowals of this relationality, not just as crimes against certain communities or individual persons. We might then conclude, in an affirmation of Édouard Glissant's poetics of relationality, that this disavowal of relation constitutes bad faith, and we might consider *it* the fundamental violence.[9] In order to also acknowledge the historically gendered beginnings of both relationality and bad faith, this kind of decolonial theory likewise enfolds the insights of intersectional theory about the interlocking demands of racial, class, religious, and gender identities, installed at the very site of birth and caretaking. Carole Boyce Davies's term *critical relationality* aptly describes the combined postures of care and critique required for wise navigation in this field, an orientation further developed in recent studies of critique and care.[10]

To incorporate these insights is to move past the still-persisting binaries of self and other, past theories of *the* subject or *the* state or *the* empire. It is also to rethink existential freedom not as "freedom from" or "for" anything but as the difficult burden of acting within this not yet wholly determined

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terrain, of making ethical choices within a fraught interdependence. Finally, we might then speak not strictly in terms of respect for sovereignties or individuals but primarily of avowal and respect for conditions of relationality. The guiding ethical principle would be a refusal to do violence against that primal yet difficult envelopment, which Maurice Merleau-Ponty called "the flesh of the world."[11]

This book focuses on a key historical dimension of the dynamics of relationality: the millennia-spanning geopolitical fact of vying empires. Human struggles have unfolded in relation to the inorganic, organic, and human-animal worlds that sustain us, yet in ways that have often been pressured by interacting empires, whose violent legacies persist over centuries to electrify visions of peace, of reparation, and of revenge. Both political leaders and everyday folks thus occupy what I call the condition of inter-imperiality, a fraught position, lived all at once in the neighborhood, at the imperial court, on the road, in the body, and amid the invasive stream of political events and news. The *inter-* of *inter-imperiality* refers to multiply vectored relations among empires and among those who endure and maneuver among empires. I argue that it is not only the materialities of empires that have accrued over millennia but also the forms of relation through which communities have struggled amid empires.

Literature has exerted a structuring force in this existential-dialectical field in both oral and written forms, both instrumentalized by empires and turned against them. Its high stakes have made literature a site of contestation, as suggested by the long-standing practices of censorship and exile of authors. One of my primary aims in this book is to analyze this force in interdisciplinary terms so as to establish its importance for any well-rounded study of politics and history, as I argue more fully later in this introduction. For now it's sufficient to note that, while the imperial will to control certainly arises from a desire for profit, it is also driven, perhaps more profoundly, by a wish to manage and "conquer" the volatile terrain of existential relationality itself. This drive to control relations is epitomized in the instrumentalization of language and other representational arts. If we understand hegemony, as I do here, as a near monopoly of the power to name relations and "identities"—a wish to control the terms of relationality—we can better track how language, translation, and aesthetics serve as tools in an inter-imperial field of vying hegemonies. This is why language regimes and aesthetics must be part of any dialectical theory of geopolitical economy. This argument has implications for the reemergent field of "world literature," as I later describe, and although that field is not my central concern, I hope

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this book's analysis is useful for debates about its problematic nomenclature and politics.

In short, although other thinkers have sometimes used the term *inter-imperial* in passing, or in narrower ways, I develop the term *inter-imperiality* as a feminist-intersectional and political-philosophical concept for analysis of longue-durée politics as they have co-constituted world history and human memory.[12] In this introduction, I develop the dialectical grounds of the inter-imperial framework. I recast Hegel's account of labor in feminist-decolonial terms; I freshly position gendered, stratified systems as a primary structural pivot of macropolitical dynamics; and I specify literature's multivalent role in these dynamics. My particular combination of intersectional, interdisciplinary, and decolonial angles of analysis allows me to supply the backstories missing in much dialectical and critical theory.[13]

Some initial definition of terms may be useful at the outset. The book has a decolonial orientation in several senses. Most fundamentally it is fashioned as a project for "decolonizing the mind," in the senses initially developed by thinkers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Linda Tuhiwai Smith.[14] Here I expand on that sense of term from a feminist-intersectional angle, drawing on analyses such as Donette Francis's, which considers how, in the Caribbean, "state formation unfolds through the micropolitics of intimacy" and through "the macropolitics of revolutions."[15] This book is also decolonial in the sense developed by Latin American and other philosophers of indigeneity, who foreground the non-Eurocentric legacies of values and practices of ethical collectivity by which communities have sustained themselves beyond or against imperial colonization. In recent years some scholars have distinguished decolonial studies from postcolonial studies, arguing that postcolonial studies has mainly critiqued the modern/colonial Anglo-European world order, while decolonial studies has highlighted visions originating outside of that order, especially among indigenous peoples. Like my cohort in the World Studies Interdisciplinary Project, I aim to develop a long-historical interdisciplinary method that integrates the analyses and insights of both, for I agree with feminist theorists who have argued that these two projects are connected at the root and are best developed as complementary rather than opposed.[16]

That is, *Inter-imperiality* emphasizes that for more than two millennia a range of transhemispheric interactions has generated both the problems and the creative visions of the global world. Feminist, postcolonial, and decolonial studies have been inspired by the long collective legacy of these visions, and literature, though historically complicit, has also increasingly

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participated in both the critical and the creative dimensions of these struggles. I tend to use the term *decolonial* because it more clearly signals these dimensions and because it does so without assuming that there will be a time after colonialism. Akin to what Kuan-Hsing Chen calls "deimperialization," decoloniality here entails an ongoing resistance to conditions of inter-imperial positionality and an ongoing commitment to the possibilities and demands of geopolitical transformation.[17] Furthermore, as this book demonstrates, and as the history of women, of gendered others, and of many peoples attests, the decolonial project must reach back further than the rise of European hegemony, for unfortunately the gender, ethnic, colonial, and labor problems begin long before, in ways that forcefully shape the world today. At the same time, however, the resources for survival have likewise been cultivated, in ways that also forcefully shape the world today. Although I occasionally use the word *postcolonial*, especially regarding literary texts and in keeping with common usage, in most cases I favor *decolonial* as the term to capture this wide worldly project.

Finally, a word on my definition of *empire*. Here I understand an empire as an expansionist state that achieves sustained control over the labor, finances, administration, and material resources of a foreign territory through political, financial, and violent coercion. Furthermore, each empire's powers of control arise and develop in relation to other empires and polities. This last point is essential to my approach to empires. As will become clear, an empire's success or failure in controlling foreign territories—including its ability to suppress dissent—determines its ability to negotiate geopolitically with other powerful states.

An emphasis on inter-imperial dynamics most definitely does not imply that all empires have been the same or have engaged in precisely the same projects. When we speak of international relations we do not imply that all nations are the same; nor when we speak of interpersonal relations do we imply that all persons are the same. Accordingly, inter-imperial theory simply begins from the fact that different empires, of different sizes and means, centered in different yet linked geographical locations, form in dialectical relation: their differences and divergent histories as well as their linkages, alliances, and similarities shape their coformations. Furthermore, some states calling themselves empires express an aspiration more than a realized condition, and some empires have done much more damage and exerted more far-reaching power than others. Smaller empires, such as the Japanese or Ethiopian, certainly suffered from the coercions of larger empires and have had less leverage in the geopolitical field. Yet from the point of view

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of the populations they colonized (the Koreans, the Somalians), the Ethiopian and Japanese states merit the name *empire*. These two empires have also been pivotal in world events. The rise of the Japanese Empire in the early twentieth century clearly affected global dynamics, signaled by its wars with Russia and China and reaching through World Wars I and II. Meanwhile, European states have long recognized the geostrategic power of Christian Ethiopia; their failed efforts to align with or colonize it have shaped later inter-imperial alignments—for instance of Italy, whose unsuccessful attempts to win support from Russia for its invasions of Ethiopia led to Italy's defeat, weakening its position and feeding its turn toward fascism.

One last framing remark is in order. In my years of writing and discussing this book, I have encountered expressions of concern about any widening of the decolonial focus to earlier periods and non-European empires, for fear of taking pressure off Anglo-European responsibility for its destructive legacies. Some similarly worry about giving capitalistic exploitation a longer history, for essentially the same reason. These concerns are understandable in light of the continued aggressions and lasting harm inflicted by Anglo-Europeans and in the face of the Europhile pundits who continue to champion or distort those legacies—men such as Niall Ferguson, Samuel Huntington, and Robert Kaplan.[18] These men write within familiar, implicitly racialized narratives of modern versus backward states that misrepresent entire millennia and world regions. But these writers cannot be allowed to define the terms of the debate, nor to inhibit frank and full analyses. Nor should we allow ourselves to eclipse the longer gendered, raced, and labor histories that also still hold the world in their grip, impoverishing women, minorities, and laboring castes and classes.[19] The sedimented, multisided, and dialectically unfolding history must be told if the decolonial project is to avoid false claims and falsely limited parameters. To put it differently, the potential for transformation made possible by a wider perspective is too necessary and sustaining to ignore.

This book's intersectional, long-historical dialectical theory encompasses these wider parameters. More specifically, it clarifies several structural dimensions of power by tracking how state formations are gendered and intersectionally shaped *co*formations; how states' systems and economies have accrued together over time, violently installing inequalities while rationalizing them; and how communities who labor to resist, endure, or maneuver within the inter-imperial field of relations have likewise shaped world history at many levels, enabling cooperative survival. The next section lays the theoretical ground for this analysis.

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Deepening Dialectics

Dialectical theory treats relation as a fundamental condition of life on earth. Both early Chinese Daoist philosophers and pre-Socratic Greek thinkers sought to name the interacting elements that constitute phenomena, physically and metaphysically.[20] European philosophers of dialectics, including G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, shared this effort while also focusing on the social dimensions of these co-constituting interactions. As is well known, Hegel formulated starkly racist descriptions of world history, yet in his early philosophy he articulated ideas that have since been retooled to undercut those racialized histories and teleologies, by thinkers from Karl Marx and Frantz Fanon to Mae Henderson and Audra Simpson.[21] Here I will add a gender critique to the critiques of his racism, while joining those who retool his analysis of the dialectics of labor. Given the resurgence of both Daoist and Confucian theories in recent international relations (IR) scholarship, it's valuable to mention that Hegel's descriptions resonate with the Daoist tradition, and it's likely that Hegel was at least indirectly influenced by Chinese philosophy. So we should not assume that these two lineages are separate, nor that they are identical.[22] Scholars of international relations such as L. H. M. Ling have productively proposed that Daoist dialectical philosophy offers a less combative notion of world politics, but it is not as radically different from Hegel's thought as Ling implies, which is less surprising in light of the influence of Chinese philosophy on German philosophy.[23] Indeed the general lack of awareness of the transhemispheric movements and the borrowing of ideas over the longue durée itself reflect geopolitics, as one state elides the contributions of the others even while absorbing and sublating those same contributions. In any case, Hegelian philosophy distinctly echoes the Daoist concepts of both interpenetration and coforming plurality, and this book's inter-imperial framework reworks these concepts. Along the way it sheds light on the political processes by which such Chinese and German notions have themselves arisen from interpenetration.

The Hegelian dialectics that influenced Marx have often been oversimplified, due in part to the redactions of Alexander Kojève.[24] Although both Hegel and Marx (and, later, Lenin) sometimes articulated a binary dialectics within phased teleological schemes of history, Hegel's and Marx's scrutiny of co-constituting elements importantly encompassed what Hegel called the "manifold self-differentiating expanse of life."[25] Marx of course cultivated the critical seed germinating in Hegel's dialectical exploration of the

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self-consciousness of the bondsman, which Hegel had traced to the laborer's active engagement in materiality and which Marx then analyzed as the laborer's alienated self-consciousness under capitalism. Yet before turning to this key element of labor, it's important to recall Hegel's theorization of the processes of coformation, sublation, and contingency, which are central to my analysis in this book.

In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel developed a "volatile" relational philosophy, to borrow Elizabeth Grosz's term.[26] That is, he tracked the human grappling with other beings and objects in a physical field of energetic, coforming "forces" (a conception influenced by the work of G. W. Leibniz, himself influenced by Chinese philosophy). Although Hegel considers all such forces and interactions an aspect of a spiritually ordered universe, he treats them not as "objective" facts, nor as metaphysical certainties, but rather as phenomena experienced by a consciousness and as phenomena constituting the state of relations for that consciousness. This method is what makes his philosophy a phenomenology—that is, a descriptive project rather than an ontological, essentialist, or positivist one.

Within this field of transforming relations, Hegel's emphasis is not on the meeting of opposites, as Kojève and others have suggested, but on the co-constituting differences in the world's phenomena, as Jacques Derrida elaborated. For instance, when Hegel comments on the lived distinction between night and day, he does not define night and day as opposing poles but rather as differentiated, interpenetrating elements for perception. He points out that "day" is the "negative" that subtends the human statement "now it is night."[27] Day is not night's opposite but rather its condition of perception. Moreover, in this way, day is also preserved, to use Hegel's word, in the perception "now it is night." Thus, as Hegel puts it more generally, although the "matters" of the world's phenomena appear as "independent" entities, in their experienced unfolding they "are each where the other is; they mutually interpenetrate."[28] When he concludes that all matters "are absolutely porous or are sublated," he means that phenomena are co-constituted, in perception, by their differentiating relation to each other.[29] They are sublated in the sense that, as they emerge over time, each entity enfolds others and contains elements of those encountered forms. For Hegel, it is this ongoing co-constitution of "the matters" that composes their "unity" as phenomena for consciousness and thus creates their participation in the "universal" or Spirit as an all-embracing medium.[30] Clearly, then, for Hegel, dialectical movements do not center on a "synthesis" of thesis and antithesis. They entail the interpenetration of sublated elements whose differences from the

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newly dominant entity remain active—like enzymatic yeast—preparing future moments of unfolding.

Inter-imperial theory considers this volatile, other-sublating coformation as a first principle in its analysis of states and of the relations among humans as we are ensconced in or between states. The theory also takes a powerful cue from Hegel's analysis of "lordship and bondage," where he explains the lord's power over the laborer yet also reveals that his power is precarious because the interdependence remains in play. Susan Buck-Morss has valuably understood Hegel's description as an encoded, suppressed reflection on the Atlantic economy of slavery insofar as it registers the sense of vulnerability in the master class. I suggest here that there are related implications in his theory's occlusions of women.[31] To see this point, some parsing is required.

Hegel first of all emphasizes that each human encounter entails a pressure to adapt to or subsume the distinguishing "differences" of other actors. In any encounter, according to Hegel, when two persons encounter each other, each "find[s] itself as an other being" and each wishes to "supersede this otherness of itself."[32] The wish is not only to supersede the other being but specifically to supersede the othering effect of the onlooker's gaze, prompting a desire to overcome the threat of domination by that onlooking being, who perceives the first self as an object for its vision. Meanwhile, the same is happening for the other person. Both of them are simultaneously perceiving and perceived, both fearing and seeking domination. Hegel stresses the uncertainty and wish for control arising from these encounters, which issue in a "double movement" or interdependent exchange of practices between the actors. For, in this agonistic relation, one person borrows from and imitates the other, exactly and ironically in order to counter control by the other. In this double movement, as Hegel says, "Each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only insofar as the other does the same."[33] Paradoxically, to manage the other's gaze and maintain independence, each acts more like the other. As I'll discuss later, this process underlies what Barbara Fuchs has identified as imperial and cultural mimesis.[34] To secure the stance of autonomy and independence in the face of this entanglement, the borrowing is disavowed: the other's powers and practices must be incorporated and sublated, and then that process of interdependent genesis must be denied. Here we can notice the origin-eluding contingency and precarity in this process, which lays the ground for a struggle.

And it will be a struggle over labor.

Hegel distills this dynamic of struggle by positing a primal scene in which two men literally battle with one another for domination. When one man

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has achieved enough physical control to threaten his rival with death, the other concedes defeat to save his life. It is at this point, Hegel posits, that the dominant man can claim control of the labors of the "bondsman." Coercive control of labor is here installed as the very fulcrum of relations. This fulcrum bears further pressure, as Hegel points out, because the dominant man harbors a cloaked awareness that he is actually dependent on that laboring man insofar as the bondsman performs the labor that sustains the life of the lord.[35] The lord therefore is "not certain of being-for-itself as the truth of himself."[36] His discomfiting awareness of being othered and being co-constituted with others cannot be wholly assuaged.

Meanwhile, the laboring man also develops a cloaked awareness, not only of the master's dependence on him but also of his own making and laboring powers. Hegel strikingly proposes that the bondsman develops a productive and empowering self-relation through his work with things in the material world. The laborer's work is first of all materially productive insofar as, in Hegel's words, his "work forms and shapes the thing."[37] Moreover, this relation to things produces a certain "consciousness" in the bondsman, shaped by knowledge of an existential truth: that, like night and day, dependence and independence interpenetrate. Through work, the laborer (always a man in Hegel's account) learns at once that "the object has independence" and that he can perceive its independence only by having a relation to it. In short, work yields a consciousness fruitfully steeped in relational in(ter)dependence.[38] As Hegel concludes, "It is in this way, therefore, that consciousness, qua worker, comes to see in the independent being [of the object] its own independence."[39] Although Hegel here emphasizes independence, he is meanwhile describing the relational genesis and co-constituted ground of independence. These are the passages that helped to inspire Marx's theory of work and his effort to name the alienation from meaningful work under capitalism (although the problem also exceeds capitalism, as we'll see). These passages also clarify how the fundamentally co-constituting, labor-intensive conditions of existence install a dynamic interdependency and in turn an ethical call at the heart of relations. Empire builders eschew that call when they exploit productive labor and simultaneously disavow their dependence on its world-shaping efforts.

Yet while Hegel foregrounds the lord and bondsman's struggles, he occludes another one—conveniently so, for the world of empires. One could almost imagine a shadow flitting across Hegel's page: the shadow of the laboring women on whom his own work and household depend, not to mention his very existence. Given these conditions, many men have implicitly

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apprehended that, in order to buttress fantasies of utter independence, they must simultaneously appropriate and denigrate women's powers—including the generative powers women have developed as laborers: the discerning powers of self-relation and the ready avowal of human relations to other creatures and things that also recognizes those others' independence. In order to be recognized as men, men are implicitly encouraged to disavow these powers and relational conditions and meanwhile redirect women's powers toward men's ends.[40]

Nancy Chodorow's analysis of what she calls "asymmetrical parenting" pinpoints the structural origins of this ingrained habit of simultaneously using and disavowing women's labor powers. As Chodorow explains in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, the social reproduction of gender division through asymmetrical parenting means that, although initially all children are intimate with the parent who sustains them and who has typically been a biological woman (though cultural differences create significant variation),[41] those children who are ascribed as "boys" must increasingly (and especially at puberty) define themselves as "not-her." They must understand themselves as not like the person to whom they owe their survival and to whom they are closely attached, physically and emotionally.[42] Children who are ascribed as girls, by contrast, are expected to be her, to reproduce her labors of care. Perforce, they must cultivate an emulative identification with the mother and with her role as a serving, loving laborer. Women are not allowed to disavow relationality and mimesis, in other words, whereas men who avow intimate and interdependent relationality are suspicious men. All men and particularly heteronormative men accrue psychic, social, and material advantages from this unequal labor arrangement, typically beginning with the benefits of the care bestowed on any household they occupy. No wonder political theorists from Aristotle forward considered control of the household as the first principle for control of the state.

Women's labors occupy a pivotal place not only in local and family relations but also in inter-imperial relations. As feminist scholars have noted, ruling classes regulate sexuality in ways that serve to reproduce race and class hierarchies, that is, to secure their group's power within kin lines and to ensure the reproduction of laboring classes especially in slavery and serfdom.[43] State eugenic projects are only the most obvious manifestation of this fundamental logic. One contribution of this book to that understanding is its positioning of the long-historical regulation of sexuality in relation to the large-scale cultural projects that in turn direct the infrastructural and institutional projects through which polities expand and compete.

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Here we also begin to expose the gendered elisions of dialectical theory that have often limited its critical insights. As I'll discuss later in this introduction, important critical thinkers sometimes have erased the material and often gendered labors that enable human survival—even as they have spoken of the "care" and "being-with" required for existence (as in Martin Heidegger's and Jean-Luc Nancy's thought) or the fundamental condition of "natality" (as in Hannah Arendt's political philosophy). Invocations of natality, sociality, and bare life in recent world theory unwittingly repeat the problem, as I discuss below. To undo these erasures is also to reveal the structural function of identity categories and names—and, by extension, of the world-structuring function of languages—in political economy. Identities have determined the forms, distribution, and unequal recognition of labor, fixed in place by the terms *man* and *woman*, or *white* and *black*, or *lord* and *bondsman*. By extension identities determine who has a seat at the state diplomatic or treaty table, which further affects the dynamics of relation among competing states. Thus are these labor-sorting identities co-constituted within the field of competing states. Recognition of this structuring in turn sheds light on forms of resistance, explaining why gender and ethnic identity discourses have become critical points of leverage against states, often in a difficult balancing act that avoids essentialist beliefs in the categories. To consider "identity" as a superstructural distraction from material problems is therefore to repeat the disavowal, or at least to ignore the fact, as historical economists note, that identities and labor roles have long been linked, in a range of ways.[44] In the more problematic patterns, discourses of identity have regulated systems and reproduced states that conscript certain bodies into the constant, demanding labors of care and food cultivation while freeing other bodies from those labors.

Again here, then, labor is at the heart of the matter. As I detail in chapter 1, drawing on a rich body of historical evidence, control of labor has long been at the core of the coforming relations between merchants and empires in a world of vying empires, over millennia. All their projects have required laborers, including those who produce the laborers and the rulers, as well as those who carry the sellable goods or building and food supplies, grow the food to feed the workers, and build the schools, forts, and ports. Controlling labor, and controlling the racialized stratifications that distinguish rulers from laborers, requires control of women's sexuality. In turn, the ruling-class orientation of these projects has ensured the uneven distribution of access to material resources: to water, land, and animals, as well as to housing, ports, roads, and ships and to tools, schools, and systems. An intersectional

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analysis of these conditions clarifies the structural depth at which labor is a fulcrum of relations, which Hegel's account both highlights and distorts (as does Friedrich Engels in his admirable but unsuccessful attempt to link class and gender stratifications).[45] To focus on the horizon of vying empires and their coforming projects is thus to capture the fuller workings of the traffic in women and laboring men as an aspect of macropolitical economy.[46]

Yet the other side of this coin must also be named. Human interactions do not move solely along an agonistic set of circuits driven always by a will to control. Born with our strenuous births, activated geopolitically and microphysically, the taut ropes of contestation are also tightly tangled with acts of care and collaboration. It is essential not to dismiss the sustaining collaborations as unreal or demote them to secondary status as epiphenomenal. Humans wouldn't still be here if they were. The salient point, which directs this study as a whole, is that there is a fundamental, unstable, ever-unfolding relationality that subtends both opposition and cooperation. This field is in effect what Heidegger called "the open," into which we are "thrown" at birth together with others—but his choice of this term allows him, when needed, to evacuate a field of relations that is, in fact, thickly populated.[47] It is a field of dialectically coforming bodies that are also intersubjectively intertwined within the existential condition that Merleau-Ponty called "intercorporeality."[48] Within this existential field, there are stakes in all encounters, macro and micro, and there is a fundamental interdependency among players. Rarely a strict matter of win or lose, the result of any conflict is more frequently a redistribution of material and relational sustenance as well as of the power to name relations, all of which, however, remain unstable. Such a conception of existence digs below "realist" and "evolutionary" theories of world politics that take primal "rivalries" among "hominids" who forever seek "status" as the fundamental relation.[49] It also digs below critical theory's sometimes totalizing accounts of relations, for instance as *wholly* directed by capitalism. By heightening our consciousness of an uncontrollable and difficult yet fruitful existential relationality, this intersectional dialectical conception values the labors of sustenance. It honors the centuries of everyday care that have fed pleasure, laughter, endurance, resistance, and solidarity.

Perhaps the uncertain, plural-sided intercorporeality of relational dialectics with its attendant instabilities is what realist or neorealist political theorists perceive as anarchy in a world of conflict and competition.[50] If so, anarchy is standing in here for everyday difficulty and everyday love. To respond to this everyday difficulty becomes the everyday ethical challenge.

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Although domination often shadows other kinds of relation in these engagements, and accordingly I often focus on them, the book's dialectical method keeps in view the coexistence of coercion and care, including through literature, which can enact its own labors of care.

Such is the existential, embodied depth of historical dialectics. Despite Hegel's frequent crystallization of these dynamics into an engagement between only two male actors, and despite his related "denials of coevalness," as Johannes Fabian put it, with non-European peoples, his descriptions hint that there is a proliferation of such engagements within the "manifold differentiating expanse" of the world, as when he adds that the lord and bondsman's struggle is "entangled in a variety of relationships."[51] The inter-imperial analysis unpacks this horizonal, historical, and volatile field of engagements.

Vectors of Inter-imperiality and Resistance

A historical tracking of these dialectics that begins "before European hegemony," to use Janet Abu-Lughod's phrase, crucially deepens our understanding of their persistent force in the present.[52] To study the co-constitution of sophisticated empires, economies, institutions, and cultures before 1500 and outside of western Europe not only further dislodges Eurocentric narratives of modernization, although it helpfully does that. It also firmly establishes the breadth and accruing force of coforming empires, and it reveals the dynamic range of multivectored contestations. Here I foreshadow some of these implications, developed at more length in chapter 1 and throughout.

The long perspective first of all brings into clearer view the multifaceted struggles of communities that, for centuries, have lived in the "shatterzones" of successive and converging colonizations, as in the Middle East, Indonesia, eastern Europe, the Andes, the Caribbean, and the Maghreb.[53] Such regions need to be understood and honored, I argue, not as peripheral territories but as strategic inter-imperial zones, again and again vied over for their resources (including laborers) and their geopolitical location—before, during, and since the height of European hegemony. Situated at strategic crossroads and along sea-lanes, parts of the Middle East and North Africa have, for instance, been repeatedly invaded by empires, reaching from Persianate Empires and the Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great, through the Roman and the Byzantine Empires, to the Ottoman and European Empires. Each reorganization has left its sediments in material, linguistic, philosophical, and political forms, shaping future conflicts. Parts of Kashmir have likewise been

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repeatedly invaded, claimed, and shaped by competing states—from the Chinese and the Mughals to the British—which in turn has influenced the vying claims on the region by India and Pakistan today. Similarly the states of eastern Europe have for two millennia endured successive waves of invasion and occupation, reaching from the Celtic and Roman invasions to those of the Ottoman Empire, the Hapsburgs, and the Soviet Union. In the Atlantic world, the crisscrossing colonizations and revolutions of the Caribbean archipelago epitomize inter-imperial dialectics, as I discuss in chapters 6 and 7. These regions continue to suffer under inter-imperial jockeying for control of them, and this situation evokes deep, yet different resonances for each. As Sanja Bahun argues about eastern Europe, we understand the pivotal importance of such regions in the contemporary world only when we consider the sedimented layers of knowledge, intersectional configuration, and state practice that have constituted them and that are tapped within contemporary conflicts. Recently, scholars are valuably developing longue durée, inter-imperial analyses of diverse regions.[54]

This angle of vision particularly calls our attention to the linguistic and legal histories that continue to shape these regions, as discussed by literary scholars.[55] Each invading empire has installed its own discourses and its own codes for language, law, religion, property, education, marriage, and labor. They have renamed and reorganized relations, including relations with the material landscape. Such regions have developed not only as palimpsests of infrastructural accretion and economic extraction. They are vessels of layered collective memory, replete with cultural resources, sustaining values, and seasoned forms of wisdom as well as with memories of betrayal, vying identifications, and defensive attachments to gendered forms of civilizationalism, all of which may be reenergized by particular events in the contemporary field of inter-imperial pressures.

These long-accruing formations *are* the world. They compose the field of difficult relations in which we are called on to act. These are the kinds of world-shaping dynamics and determinations that an interdisciplinary, inter-imperial method can capture.

As hinted, these interlocking histories have also shaped the dynamics of resistance and revolt. Our sense of the field of power and the history of relations changes when we acknowledge this fact: that anti-imperial actors and many other persons have shrewdly managed a multilateral, multiscalar field of political relations, facing off against not merely one empire but a horizon of maneuvering empires. Consider Toussaint-Louverture negotiating with agents of the British Empire who offered to support the struggle in

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Saint-Domingue against the French Empire. Or Roger Casement negotiating with agents of the German Empire to win Irish independence from the British Empire. Or Sharif Hussein ibn Ali, emir of Mecca and the leader of the Arab uprising against the Ottoman Empire during World War I, encouraged and abetted by the British Empire, although eventually betrayed by that empire in the Balfour Declaration.

In their struggles against one empire, all of these anticolonial and imperially entangled actors were ultimately betrayed by "other" empires, which were all along maneuvering for their own ends. Yet even when they did not immediately "win," these activists often gained ground for future maneuvers. Such was the case, for instance, during the pitched contest between Britain and India on the eve of Indian independence: for that decolonizing transformation took shape partly through risky affiliations between anti-British Indian nationalist leaders and Japanese politicians in the context of an expanding Japanese empire, which itself was operating under the pressure of continuing border skirmishes between Russian and Chinese expansionist states and amid the emergent polarization of communist versus capitalist states. Intersectional contestations also shaped these developments. In India, for instance, the writers and artists of the Progressive Writers' Association (WPA) raised discomfiting questions about long-historical norms of sexuality and gender as well as about hierarchies among Muslims, Hindus, and Dalit communities. Many magnets of affiliation and many inequalities thus operated simultaneously within these vectored imperial coordinates, pressuring the uncertain contingencies of action, as twentieth-century postcolonial state builders understood. In formulating a "third-world" politics of nonalliance and "positive neutrality" in relations with the other two "worlds," early postindependence thinkers such as Ghanian leader Kwame Nkrumah in effect articulated theory and strategy for managing interimperial positionality.[56]

In other words, as jockeying empires competed with each other they regularly encountered dissent and rebellion, which in turn affected their competition. We might recall that in Napoleon's communications with his brother Joseph (when Joseph took charge of newly conquered Italian territories), Napoleon advised him to make plans for quelling "insurrection" because, he noted, "insurrection is an event that constantly occurs in occupied countries."[57] Napoleon took it as a matter of course that there would be resistance to his claims to control; the resistance inherently shaped the practices and structures of empires, spiraling in this case into total war, as I discuss in chapter 4.

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Although regional studies have sometimes taken account of contemporaneous, vying Anglo-European empires, such as in scholarship on the early Atlantic world or the so-called scramble for Africa, rarely have these multivectored dialectics been made central to postcolonial, decolonial, or intersectional theory. When we take stock of the full horizon of empires, both successive and contemporaneous, the landscape of power at once intensifies and opens into a wider, more complex galaxy of charged relations. Its nodes are several, yet they are not exactly decentralized. Rather, they are co-constituted. Guns, gold, and sugar as well as soldiers, laborers, and exchangeable women stream through their infrastructurally connected channels, as do fears, memories, desires, and inter-imperially oriented calculations. As I've suggested here and as later chapters address, these processes have been shaped by the press of layered historical sublations: sedimented languages, identities, inequalities, resources, and alliances, active in memory and influential in the practices of minoritized communities. The vocabularies of co-constitution, sublation, and disavowal thus serve throughout this book to name the dynamics of world politics and the costructuring of aesthetic culture and political economy.

These vocabularies also serve to capture the ways that material technologies and infrastructures themselves have become sites of dialectical contestation and sublation amid struggles over labor and resources. As I describe in chapter 5, during World War I both revolutionaries and imperial soldiers exploded railway tracks to impede their antagonists. Furthermore, in this era as in earlier periods, empires battled directly over infrastructure, as when in the 1904 Russo-Japanese War Japan invaded Manchuria in part to seize the port and railway infrastructures that Russia had built there. Those railway lines became "interpenetrating" Russian-Japanese entities whose coformation entailed appropriations and sublations of the other's powers. Meanwhile, for the inhabitants and workers, this interpenetration represented yet another coercive colonization, complete with new protocols and language demands. Such effects further ensured that these technologies would remain an object of contestation by this full range of actors and states.

When we revisit women's conditions in this context, we see more clearly that their struggles issue not merely from their positions "between men" and not merely from their positions between colonizing and colonized men, but also from their status as pawns in a whole terrain of men jockeying in and among empires, who tactically move, divide, and capture women on their chessboards, even at times in the service of anti-imperial revolution. Positioned thus, and often resisting or negotiating with this positioning,

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women have been cast as a dangerously uncertain element in the field of relations—an Achilles's heel in men's control of states. Indeed we might recall that some of the best-known stories of the world blame women for the downfall of the state or for the colonization of it. Cleopatra and Helen of Troy were blamed for ruining empires, while in some anticolonial narratives women are blamed for "letting in" the conquerors, as with the figure of La Malinche in Mexican tradition, or "the adulteress" blamed in Irish nationalist rhetoric for bringing "the Saxon robbers here" (as Joyce parodies in his portrait of "the Citizen" in *Ulysses*).[58]

The familiarity of such gendered narratives of macropolitics returns us to the structural importance of art and literature. For it indicates that inter-imperial legacies "occupy" the habitus over long-historical time, not only spatially, in segregated spaces and systems, but also psychically, in art, memory, and feeling. These more invisible occupations have been reinforced in the histories of literatures and languages—a pattern further ensured by the exclusion of women from education and multilingual knowledge. By the same dialectical token, however, literary and other artists have sometimes been provoked to cultivate their audience's critical imaginaries, so much so that, as the book's later chapters establish, culture makers have increasingly allied with dissenting sociopolitical movements in recent centuries. Authors have variously incorporated and contested these masculinist legends—and this, too, has constituted dialectical history.

Finally, in approaching dialectical history from this interdisciplinary longue-durée perspective, this book also makes visible a wider range of political imaginaries, preserved and channeled partly through the arts. In keeping with recent formulations of resilience or Afropessimism, attention to the sensibilities shaped by inter-imperial positionality can help to delink political narrative and theory from liberal or progressivist teleologies and heroic narratives of freedom battles. As Stephen Joyce argues, the Korean philosophical posture of *han*, often expressed in Korean literature, offers one such instance.[59] Han is epitomized in the proverb invoked by Chang-rae Lee in his novel *Native Speaker*, spoken by the protagonist's mother: "San konno san itta. Over the mountains there are mountains."[60] Stephen Joyce situates the attitude politically, in the context of the waves of colonization suffered by Koreans: he considers it an expression of "the hard-won wisdom of a people living beneath successive empires who understand that there is no promised land on the other side of the mountains."[61] That is, rather than preparing for liberation at the summit of a sociopolitical struggle, one must instead prepare for another uphill struggle. Difficult dialectics continue. For

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the Korean novelist Park Kyong-ni (박경리), the philosophy of han means "both sadness and hope at the same time" and it names "the core of life."[62] She considers literature itself as both "an act of Han and a representation of it."[63] In this light, Stephen Joyce calls for embrace of vocabularies that include these "affective structures of understanding" generated by "the emotions of endurance"—an endurance achieved, I would venture to add, through gendered labors.[64] As I sketch in the next section, understanding the long past of diverse political imaginaries and their conditions of imagining in literature is crucial to the twin projects of "decolonizing our minds" and acknowledging our fundamentally dialectical conditions of relation.[65]

Worlding Literature

As suggested above, literature like other arts has been a force in this history of relations. In the next section I outline the key dimensions of its power. Yet here, with my literary colleagues in mind, I situate my analysis in relation to current debates in postcolonial and world literature studies.

While postcolonial and world literature scholarship often incorporates history, and some of these studies encompass the longue durée of literary history, there is still a need for more attention to the wealth of recent economic and decolonial historiography on non-European empires. Strikingly, while literary scholars have otherwise built a veritable industry of new interpretations from Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory, few have taken up Abu-Lughod's conversation-changing world-systems analysis of earlier periods in her 1989 book, *Before European Hegemony*. There she amasses evidence of the interlocking political economies of the tenth to fourteenth centuries shaped by Chinese, Islamicate, and other empires. Her irrefutable account offers a model for further analysis of early systems in other regions, and indeed it has inspired a wealth of critical historiography in the fields of anthropology, history, and sociology, though not always Marxist and decolonial in orientation. Meanwhile, this material has been widely ignored by critical theorists across disciplines, including literary and cultural studies, who continue to think within the Eurocentric coordinates of premodern and modern or feudal and capitalist.

Wider reading of these materials promises to enrich literary studies and clarify its proper place in theories and histories of geopolitical economy. It thus might also assuage the current worries over the demise of postcolonial

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studies and displacement of this field by an apolitical world literature studies. It would certainly help to undo two linked elisions in much literary theory: the eclipse of systemic political economies in what is commonly (and inaccurately) called "precolonial" or "premodern" history, and the persistent minoritization of feminist-intersectional analysis, which, when centered, quickly draws more attention to the problems of exploitation in those earlier histories and to the ways that erasure of these histories persists in both colonial and critical postcolonial thinking.

When we put the intersectional and the longue-durée histories back together, as I aim to do here, another world of understanding opens, yielding more sustainable world visions as well as more trenchant critique. For it enables us to plumb the depths at which literatures have structured and mediated the intersectional violence of empires for millennia, not merely since 1492. This book only scratches the surface of the revelations that follow from this deeper study, yet there are signs of a turn in the tide.[66]

This inter-imperial, intersectional perspective particularly promises to rectify the problems of depoliticization in the expanding subfield of world literature. As has been argued by many postcolonial critics, the very category of world literature sometimes operates simply as a new canon yet without clear grounds of definition beyond, for instance, the most widely translated texts. The subfield has thus spawned wide debate and critique in both articles and edited collections for its evacuation of politics, including the politics of translation, especially when it also cherry-picks from widely translated postcolonial texts for its "world" canon without attention to political and historical dimensions.[67]

Spurred by these problems in the field of world literature, literary scholars have begun to develop fresh methods for capturing the worldly reach of texts while simultaneously grounding them in specific politics, locales, languages, or histories. Shu-mei Shih has for example proposed that literary scholars might define their objects of study less in relation to "the world" as a whole and more specifically along "arcs of relation" created by events (such as the Vietnam War) and systems (such as the global plantation complex of bonded and enslaved labor), studying the ways that these generate a linked corpus of texts across regions and languages.[68] Other scholars have begun to incorporate longer-historical models and track literary intertextuality within regions, as advocated for instance by Karima Laachir, Sara Marzagora, and Francesca Orsini. They propose that critics might demote the centrality of nations and national languages and instead frame their analyses within "significant geographies," that is, regions where for centuries texts have accrued

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political intertextualities and overlapping cosmologies, as in Indonesia or the Maghreb.[69]

The framework I develop here shares the investments of these studies, especially with those calling for a long-historical, non-Eurocentric perspective. But as an intentionally interdisciplinary study, *Inter-imperiality* focuses as much on retheorizing geopolitical economy and the dialectics of history as it does on retheorizing literature's structural relation to these. This emphasis also entails extensive discussion of feminist-intersectional and decolonial-existential dimensions of world politics at a more structural level. I hope my formulations encourage more such analysis in studies of world literature as well as of world history and world politics, for in these fields, the feminist-intersectional dimensions are often as neglected as the long-historical or geopolitical dimensions. The few exceptions include, for example, the work of Revathi Krishnaswamy, which develops longue-durée, closely historicized frameworks that are also intersectionally attuned.[70] Krishnaswamy has drawn attention both to the gendered politics of older literary genres (such as the ancient tradition of framed tales and the gender-inflected voicing of bhakti lyrical poetry) and to ancient literary theory (as in ancient Tamil theories of landscape and literature), clarifying the ways that literature has for millennia critiqued and created social collectivities even as it has also evinced entanglement in the colonial, caste, and gendered politics of its own day. Increasingly, other studies take up similar intersectional work, especially on old narrative traditions, but there is still a need for fuller rethinking of the geopolitical economies in which these genres did their work.[71]

In the realm of debates on world literature, the existential orientation and concerns of my analysis have most in common with the work of Pheng Cheah, including both his first book, *Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights*, and his more recent one, *What Is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature*.[72] In *What Is a World?* Cheah argues that literature is a structuring force in the world, as I do here, and he too theorizes its constitutive, ethical power. Yet, our paths diverge not only in our historical treatment of political economy but also, a bit more subtly, in our feminist-philosophical analyses of what Cheah refers to as the "*a priori* principle of sociality."[73] Taken together, our differences and our shared commitments further highlight the need for more intersectional, interdisciplinary theorization of world politics, economies, and literatures, so I pause here to parse our divergences.

In *Inhuman Conditions*, Cheah carefully analyzes the structural role of gendered work in world politics and economy, and he focuses on the

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problematic of instrumentality. That is, building on Kant, he argues that ethical problems begin when humans and states make other humans and states into instruments for their own ends, specifically for their own profit and power. In both *Inhuman Conditions* and *What Is a World?* Cheah identifies this problem with the workings of capitalism, often deeming capitalism omni-determining: "There is no solution to the instrumentalization of human relations since this is rooted in the very nature of economic development within global capitalism."[74] Yet at moments in this earlier work Cheah also slips into a significantly different formulation, as when he comments that instrumentality is "a form of technical production that cannot be regulated and transcended because it is the condition of possibility of humanity. It forms the concrete human being and all its capacities at the most material level."[75]

This fleetingly mentioned existential condition moves to the center of Cheah's next book, *What Is a World?*, especially in its emphasis on the "*a priori* principle of sociality." In this second monograph, Cheah also adjusts his totalizing account of capitalism; it becomes a less absolutely determining force. Although he follows world-systems and other materialist critics in placing capitalism at center as the hegemonic form of political economy that literature challenges, he rejects those world-systems approaches that reduce literature to a function of or a reflection on political economy. He argues that doing so underestimates "the ethico-political horizon [literature] can open up for the existing world."[76] He further posits that our condition of "being in time" allows this opening. Through engagement with philosophers from Hegel and Heidegger to Arendt and Derrida, he argues that temporality is the unfolding element—the "to-come"—through which "the other" continually arrives, bringing unpredictability yet also reaffirming "the immanent sociality of human life."[77] Insofar as narrative literature refuses closure it keeps open the conditions of possibility. I wholly agree, as will become clear, that reconfigurations of temporality are key to literature's political-phenomenological power and its decolonial work.

What's puzzling here, however, is the degree to which in *What Is a World?* Cheah consistently hovers near the gendered conditions of an "a priori sociality" (for instance noting that "we are not and cannot be solitary and solipsistic beings in the primary instance"), but in his several philosophical chapters he never addresses these conditions, despite his concern with political economy.[78] He does not pause over the typically female labors entailed in this "primary instance," nor at how those labors constitute and practice the principle of sociality. It's important to notice that Cheah is led into these elisions by the theorists he taps. The habituation to these canonical western theorists offers an

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object lesson about the necessity for scholars of all stripes to immerse themselves in (and cite) the long tradition of feminist-intersectional philosophy and critical theory, which has seeped into theory without acknowledgment and as a consequence has often therefore been imperfectly understood. Specifically here, the problem is that the "primary instance" of people-making and world-sustaining labor lurks as the inadmissible supplement in the philosophies of Hegel, Heidegger, Arendt, and Derrida, even as these thinkers seem to discuss it. If the fact of birth appears in these thinkers, it does so always in the passive voice and in the absence of reference to any birthing or laboring bodies.[79] We might well say that the fact of birth has always already been instrumentalized by these thinkers.

These habitual elisions in theory that follow from minimal understanding of and attention to the wide tradition of philosophical intersectional theory are further reinforced when theorists limit their account of history to the history of capitalism.[80] Sustained attention to the world's much older imperial and masculinist economies better explains why women have cultivated the kind of maternal traditions that Cheah later discusses and to some extent romanticizes. This sustained attention would furthermore reveal how literature's handling of temporality and narrative has served heteronormativity, hierarchy, and empire as often as it has challenged them.

Focusing on literature's powerful yet also sometimes complicit involvement in worlding, and noticing the labors that actualize the principle of sociality, *Inter-imperiality* differently frames literature's part in the history of struggle.

The Vectored Dialectics of Art

Ultimately, the inter-imperial method situates literature as deeply as possible in the politically nested and often vying worlds that produce it and with which it engages. Taking a cue from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's concept of globalectics and incorporating fully intersectional postcolonial approaches, I ask: How do works of literature, however local, arise from and co-constitute the inter-imperially shaped field of relations?[81] How, and under what accruing and contemporary inter-imperial conditions, have literatures transformed their present? How have they crafted their engagements or occlusions, and with what immediate or long-term effects? These questions can be asked whether a work is oral or written, obscure or canonical, translated or untranslated, radical or conservative. Again, this analysis is less concerned with

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world literature as a canon or category than with the historical, existential, and political conditions under which literature exerts its worlding force.

A quick outline of the salient features of an inter-imperial analysis of literature may be helpful for scholars inside and outside literary studies. Most fundamentally, this analysis understands inter-imperial positionality as both a condition of aesthetic production and an object of literary representations. Second, as a result of its long-historical scope, this approach enables readers to discern how, over time, literatures become reservoirs of a sedimented political consciousness—what I will sometimes refer to, following Fredric Jameson, as an inter-imperial political unconscious.[82] I argue that communities and persons, including authors, have often acted within these sedimented legacies, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Third, this attention to inter-imperial positionality over the longue durée also reveals the precise ways that literary and other arts have arisen and dissented from the world's imperial economies. For, caught up as they often are in empires' efforts to control discourses of relationality, creative artists and intellectuals have navigated carefully. As Jean-Paul Sartre might put it, writers have made decisions about whether and how they will embark on the rocky seas of existential freedom by challenging the powers that be. Their fraught choices merit analysis not only in themselves but also insofar as they have had structural impact on political and literary histories. An inter-imperial analysis keeps an eye both on the direct involvement of writers in state building—for instance as court poets, historians, speech writers, or manuscript translators—and on their subversive interventions, whether spoken inside hallowed halls or inscribed in graffiti. It also acknowledges writers' impulses simply to imagine otherwise or to connect with others by describing the exquisitely reticulated planetary world we share.

Sometimes it is exactly because artists and writers are anchored in this wisdom that they are moved to expose bad-faith disavowals of entanglement, at times alluding to their own entanglement. This reflexivity composes a fourth important element of an inter-imperial analysis of literature. As Theodor Adorno argued, and as I emphasize throughout, artistic forms often self-reflexively hold up and reenact, in a "negative" dialectical engagement, the very processes and limit conditions that have produced them.[83] Authors have commented implicitly on their own compromises within a world of vying states and stratified economies, as in the case of Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Ulysses* lamenting his position as "the servant of two masters"—the British and the Roman Catholic Empires—while nonetheless teaching the same old narratives of imperial history to his students.[84] In this way, authors

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also dramatize their audiences' compromising entanglements. These audiences include critical intelligentsia such as ourselves, whose livelihoods depend on inter-imperially generated institutions and literatures. My reading of *The Thousand and One Nights* in chapter 2 reveals, for instance, how this text positions Shahrazad between Persianate and Islamicate empires and how it tracks her interventions in empires' politics from within the very imperial court and its legacies of learning: for, as we are told, she had "read the books of literature, philosophy, and medicine. She knew poetry by heart, had studied historical reports, and was acquainted with the sayings of men and the maxims of sages and kings."[85] Many subsequent authors have likewise rendered the in-between positions and charged global/local conjunctures that have shaped not only their characters and their writing labors but also their audiences. A dialectical inter-imperial method attends to these texts' implicit calling out of audiences through metacommentaries and subtexts. Most importantly, it honors these ethical struggles at the heart of art making.

In fact, close study of the genres and forms of literature in this light reveals how fully the writing of literature dramatizes the ethical problems rooted in relationality. Across languages and periods, in both oral tale-telling and stately theater, authors have registered the nuances of power-inflected relationality, including what Sara Suleri has called the "colonial intimacies" of relations.[86] Through cunningly crafted language, gesture, and structure, texts delineate the dynamics of power at many scales, mirroring the ways that macropolitics play out in bodily microphysics. Literature has also provided a means for subtle commentary by servants, minorities, and women whose critiques must operate undercover and from within the fraught labors and entanglements of the household. Texts often render these dynamic conditions more acutely than do historical documents, sociological data, or theory. For the "evidence" provided by literature is not a factual "representation" of history (indeed it typically strays from facts). It is rather a laying bare of the forms of our lives, sometimes a renaming of the very terms of our relationality. Scholars outside literary studies might more often attune their gaze to these restructuring techniques, instead of reading only for theme or historical fact.

Finally, as a sixth element of inter-imperial literary analysis, the above optics and practices open the way to new literary histories, non-Eurocentric and nonandrocentric. They allow us to consider, for instance, how the rise of vernacular literatures in late medieval Europe, often considered a singularly European innovation, instead reflects strategic language choices made under the intensely pressured inter-imperial conditions of the Mediterranean and

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the Crusades, as I discuss in chapter 1. Likewise, the millennia-long history of imperial library-building and translation projects requires us to rethink Europe's claims to have founded "enlightened" institutions and discourses. And again, the longer histories enable wider consideration of gender and sexuality in literary traditions, allowing us to make fuller sense of their queer and estranging elements.

This literary-historical rethinking not only further "provincializes" Europe. It also prompts retheorization of the temporalities, geopolitics, and dialectics of literary genres more broadly.[87] In turn, this literary-historical reconfiguration unveils the diverse histories and politics streaming into recent postcolonial texts. It brings into view the plural forms of address in postcolonial writing, as authors "write back" to multiple invaders or empires, create longer-historical time lines, and weave new intertextual relations with older literary forms—sometimes rekindling long-sublated elements or tropes. In effect, as my final chapters argue, this study resituates Wai Chee Dimock's notion of deep time within geopolitical and institutional histories, revealing that many authors of the last century have grappled with *deep inter-imperial time*.

Taken together, attention to these literary dimensions and practices explains literature's capacity to open up a perceiving space around "events" in which readers and listeners may, at least inwardly, gain distance and perhaps loosen attachments to the hegemonic terms of relationality. We might say that literature cultivates a certain mindfulness about the enactments and elisions of existential coformations. It allows us to notice the political stylizing and structuring of our collective being-in-the-world, including over long-historical time and as embodied in the arts all around us. In turn, we see more fully how each text and sign is a structuring event. Each interaction with a text or performance constitutes a historical moment like any other, operating simultaneously as a relational event and a reflection *on* such events, which incrementally also affects geopolitical events. Most broadly, the inter-imperial method establishes how fully the writing of literature is a dialectical engagement with the world's tumultuous history.

The Approach

Inter-imperiality unfolds these interdisciplinary and theoretical arguments within a historical arc. Led by the historical evidence, I eschew the periodizations of premodern and modern, or precolonial and colonial, that typically organize analyses of political economy and culture. Instead I begin

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approximately a millennium earlier than the usual medieval/modern periodization, and I end in the late twentieth century. In part, this arc allows me to capture what I propose is an intensifying set of processes over centuries. It shows that, as empires adopt and retool each other's technologies and state practices, they also become more interconnected and more homogenized, as well as more invasive. Troops, technocrats, and propaganda arrive more quickly, as states conscript, exploit, and indebt more aggressively. Yet dissidents in their turn have increasingly appropriated the tools and extended the reach of their political movements—tapping the powers of solidarity and sustaining care. This activism forces empires to regroup and realign, again and again. The historical organization of chapters allows me to track these dialectics of intensifying struggle.

The chapters also develop through a rhythm of diastole and systole, a widening and localizing that mirrors dialectical processes. My analyses often expand to encompass far-reaching linkages and pressures and then contract to register the regional conditions, adaptations, and locally positioned struggles, so as to capture their co-constituting relations. The systole-diastole action directs my movements within each chapter and in some cases my movements from one chapter to the next. At the same time, each chapter puts back together the worlding forces that academic disciplinarity has taken apart. Many studies of world problems assume that history, state formation, and political economy can be understood separately from aesthetics, culture, and identity. Rejecting this assumption, in every chapter I combine historical analysis of inter-imperial economies with analysis of languages and literatures, although in different proportions.

Thus in part I, "Co-constituted Worlds," the first chapter builds a wide historical frame and enfolds discussion of literary formations, whereas the second chapter narrows its focus to a literary-political case study, interweaving historical threads about specific state formations. That is, chapter 1, "Dialectics in the Longue Durée," widens the view in order to capture the dynamics through which empires have been radically co-constituted: accretively over centuries, competitively in any one era, and unstably through their interacting attempts to quell dissent—and dissent there always is. This first chapter also redescribes the ways that political and infrastructural formations in Afro-Eurasia and the Americas converged, provoking multivectored riptides of transformation across the world. The approach taken here is neither comparative, circulatory, nor merely connective, but strongly dialectical, with emphasis on the unfolding of history through manifold dynamics of domination, disavowal, destabilization, dissent, and alliance. This first

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chapter then closes with analysis of literary and political formations in the Mediterranean world of roughly the eleventh through fifteenth centuries. Positioning Mediterranean language politics within the crucible of converging, contesting forces, this specific case also epitomizes inter-imperial dialectics.

Chapter 2, "Refusing Labor's (Re)production," then contracts to interpret the shape-shifting, oft-translated text of *The Thousand and One Nights*. Focusing on the frame story that has remained virtually the same since the earliest extant version, I argue that the frame shrewdly encodes the interlocking sexual, racial, and labor stakes of inter-imperial and literary dialectics. Formed at the root by Persianate and Islamicate empires, the text stages the full drama. It is set in motion by the catalyzing threat of transgressive female sexuality and women's alliances with laborers and slaves, and these bring forth the empires' weapons not only of bodily execution but also of translation and learning in the form of Shahrazad's vizier father, who attempts to prevent her act of solidarity through tales of control, including over language. But such tales "do not deter" Shahrazad, as she says, and she wields her own language instruments in opposition.[88] Nor, as later chapters show, have later artists and communities been deterred as they have faced off against the converging powers of empires.

The three chapters of part II, "Convergence and Revolt," focus respectively on three periods: the sixteenth through early eighteenth centuries, the later eighteenth through early nineteenth centuries, and the twentieth century. I track the inter-imperial coformations that in each period unfolded across hemispheres in escalating dynamics of state coercion and antistate resistance. These chapters do not conform to standard narratives organized around the "rise of Europe," although that is a strand of the story. Instead, they keep in view a global field of contestations, aiming to convey the interdependent nature and unpredictability of outcomes at each stage. Literature, as the chapters show, played a part at every turn. Chapter 3, "Remapping Orientalism among Eurasian Empires," begins by expanding the traditionally western European frame to encompass the shifting battles and alliances among the Mughal, Safavid, Ottoman, and Russian Empires in the sixteenth century, a portrait that "provincializes" England's early efforts to enter the inter-imperial field. The chapter emphasizes the pivotal importance of the Russian Empire, and it foregrounds the role of literary culture in these dynamics, specifically as enacted through the multilateral genesis of Orientalism. In closing, the chapter revisits the thoroughly inter-imperial conditions under which Antoine Galland—cultural attaché for the French Empire living in the Ottoman Empire—created an embellished "translation"

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of the tales of *The Thousand and One Nights*. This text and adaptations of it immediately catalyzed a profound transformation of Anglo-European literatures, feeding Orientalist imaginaries yet also eventually being retooled for anti-imperial and feminist critique. In other words, this metamorphizing text helped to drive the vectored transhemispheric coformations of inter-imperial dialectics.

These dialectics also led to ever more aggressive war and to ever bolder rebellions, as detailed in chapter 4. This chapter, "Global Revolts and Gothic Interventions," takes account of the multiple sites of rebellion that both predate and intersect with European revolutions, from China and Russia to Haiti and South America. While describing the distinctive inter-imperial positioning of each rebellion, I also pinpoint the shared catalysts of these events, including taxes, conscription, and deliberately destabilizing interventions among rival empires. Accordingly this chapter also tracks an emergent anticolonial or what I call an anticipatory "post/colonial" sensibility, building out from the work of recent scholars. In the second part of the chapter I uncover the extent to which Gothic literature of the period frames these events within the longue durée of violent empires. Here I take as a case study the 1820 Gothic novel *Melmoth the Wanderer*, written by the Anglo-Irish author Charles Maturin. Setting his novel in a rebellion-wracked Ireland, Maturin undertakes (in today's terms) an Adornian negative-dialectical engagement with history while also offering a Trotskyist critique of combined and uneven development. He also reflects on literature's long entanglement with these problems by structuring his novel as a Shahrazadian all-night storytelling session between alienated inheritors of empire, a Spaniard and a British man. Quickly translated into French and Russian, and influencing both Balzac and Dostoevsky, this novel struck an inter-imperial nerve in this age of revolutions. It embodies all of the dialectical motions of literature.

One century later, as I consider in "Infrastructure, Activism, and Literary Dialectics in the Early Twentieth Century," the final chapter of part II, the Gothic's dark visions spiraled into a worldwide reality of "total" inter-imperial war in the twentieth century, accompanied by ravenous extraction, crippling economic crisis, and eugenic programs for women and the "lower races." Yet this early twentieth-century period also saw the makers of literature and other arts step forward more assertively. The very travel, communications, and military technologies that served ever more deadly war and systems of domination also enabled wider solidarities, as reflected in the intertwining of literary and political movements. Under these conditions, the techno-infrastructures of trains, telegraph, and radio became key dia-

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lectical sites of contestation, both between empires and between insurgents and empires. Indeed, writers understood that print and radio were themselves technologies to be mobilized for a political reimagining of the world. At the same time, in this early twentieth-century period, there emerged a problematic mixture, including among activists, of anti-imperial critique and masculinist rhetoric. My commentary highlights the degree to which these competitive discourses reflect the long, wide imperial interpellation of communities and subjectivities, a pattern called out by feminists of the period. I argue that, when seen through a longue-durée, inter-imperial lens, salient features of twentieth-century literature come into clearer view, especially the connections between their infrastructural, intersectional concerns and their genre experiments. With its wide coverage of these developments, chapter 5 sets the stage for the book's final section, which follows twentieth-century fiction, especially in the Caribbean, as it carries us into the maelstrom of neocolonial inter-imperial tempests—and leaves us stunned but alive on shore, asking searching questions.

In this final section, "Persisting Temporalities," I first of all survey the ways that twentieth-century literary experiments with temporality undercut what critics have called "empire time."[89] While most studies focus on their engagement with contemporaneous imperial conditions, these chapters recover the degree to which authors also reconfigure long-historical empire time. They expose the accruing violence, and they render the hidden history of tenderness under duress. As their narratives loop or fragment, the texts repeatedly re-create the present as a moment of dialectical struggle situated at the meeting point of past and present, determinism and agency, and microintimacies and macropolitics. They make us feel the momentum of history's determinations and contradictions bearing down on their protagonists in the inter-imperial present.

After surveying an array of novelists I turn to two Caribbean novels, in chapters 6 and 7: Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World* (1949) and Patricia Powell's *The Pagoda* (1998). Caribbean fiction epitomizes literature's grappling with the pressures of inter-imperiality. Like other writers situated in particularly intense inter-imperial battle zones, Caribbean thinkers and authors have had much to reveal about the ethics of acting in unfolding time. As is well known, over centuries the Caribbean archipelago became a crucial point of convergence and a leveraging fulcrum for jockeying European empires, especially given its role as matrix of the world's sugar economy. Yet for this reason, it simultaneously became a seedbed of determined resistance, anticolonial theory, and avant-garde literature.

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The last two chapters unpack Carpentier's and Powell's pointed engagements with inter-imperiality, while also highlighting their different handling of the sexual violence and masculinist narratives central to inter-imperial destruction. Carpentier's much-discussed depiction of the Haitian Revolution in *The Kingdom of This World* focalizes mainly through the enslaved laborer Ti Noël, who is closely attuned not only to labor as the fulcrum of empires since at least the Roman Empire but also to gendered practices of power and sexuality. Yet Carpentier creates him as a highly ambiguous observer of and participant in sexual violence, one who has an equivocally queer attachment to men that flows through his commitment to revolution. Carpentier's equivocal representations of these intertwined energies illustrate how literature sometimes walks an uncertain line between exposure of and perpetuation of masculinist, imperial structures. Scholarship on the text itself repeats this problem, as reflected in the plethora of studies focused on Carpentier's treatment of revolution in the novel and near absence of studies that take notice of the novel's emphatic pattern of rape. Revolution is fetishized; rape is elided.

Powell's *Pagoda* by contrast places aesthetic, imperial, and sexual legacies at the heart of a layered history, in this case reaching from Chinese practices of daughter selling to nineteenth-century European "coolie" bonded labor and rape in Jamaica. Her tale exposes and unravels the gendered, economic order of things, as the narrative submerges us claustrophobically in the consciousness of a Chinese woman struggling to emerge from her life as an "indebted" concubine in Jamaica. Understanding Carpentier's and Powell's narrative repetitions, breaks, and layerings as divergent mirrorings of history's coercions, I argue that nonetheless both novels call out to readers (subtextually in Carpentier's case) to acknowledge the weight of overdetermined choices and habits that perpetuate terror and impoverishment.

At its heart, *Inter-imperiality* seeks to echo this relational call: the call to honor the struggles and the sustaining practices that often escape the frames of both history and dialectical theory. It aims to join the project of repairing and reintegrating the worlds that androcentric and imperial history have put asunder. However daunting, the effort seems worth it, for the better we understand how we got here together, the more we undo the denial of our radically relational condition.

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Notes

Theoretical Introduction: Between States

Parts of the introduction appeared in "Inter-Imperiality: Dialectics in a Postcolonial World History," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* (2013): 1–38; "Dialectics in the Longue Durée: The IIPEC Model of Inter-Imperial Economy and Culture," *Globalizations* 11, no. 5 (2014): 689–709; and in "Inter-imperiality and Literary Study in the Longer Durée," *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (2015): 336–47.

1. Michel Foucault theorizes the "micro-physics of power" in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, [1975] 2011), 26–27. "Being-with-and-against" is a variation on Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of "being-with." Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009). *Forces* is one of Hegel's key terms, as I discuss later in the introduction. See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 79–103.

2. It's impossible to do justice to the many thinkers who have informed the feminist-intersectional aspects of this project. I cite many of them throughout the book, and in this note I name those who have particularly influenced me. I do so both to honor this work and for the benefit of younger intersectional scholars who are less familiar with this legacy, which in many cases implicitly informs recent intersectional and decolonial thinking.

Mary Louise Pratt's scholarship has been crucial for my thinking, especially her foundational book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, [1992] 2008). Her naming of the volatilities and dialectics shaping "contact-zone" colonial encounters opened new doors for many of us.

Body-centered philosophical and literary scholarship, especially that of intersectional and postcolonial thinkers, has inspired me for decades, including Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987); Carole Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 875–93; Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," *Signs* 7, no. 1 (1981): 13–35; Paula J. Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1984); Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, "Speaking in Tongues," in *African American Literary Theory: A Reader*,

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ed. Winston Napier (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 348–68; Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 339–43; Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Woman in Difference: Mahasweta Devi's 'Douloti the Bountiful,'" *Cultural Critique*, no. 14 (1989): 105–28. Also see Ella Shohat's foundational collection featuring "relational multicultural feminisms" in Ella Shohat, ed., *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, [1998] 2001), 11.

Beginning in the 1990s, feminist philosophers of political embodiment writing in English, such as Judith Butler, Seyla Benhabib, Gail Weiss, Drucilla Cornell, Elizabeth Grosz, and Dorothy Olkowski, developed important concepts, although it was not until later that they engaged with thinkers such as Hortense Spillers and Audre Lorde who named the racial and class politics of embodiment. At the same time the theories of Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan began to challenge normative androcentric paradigms of human psychological and ethical development and introduce relational models, while early feminist theorists of democracy such as Iris Marion Young moved political theory away from state-based models toward participatory and dialogical models. My first publications were in dialogue with many of these scholars, while also drawing on the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. See Laura Doyle, *Bodies of Resistance: New Phenomenologies of Politics, Agency, and Culture* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001); Doyle, *Bordering on the Body: The Racial Matrix of Modern Fiction and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Doyle, "Toward a Philosophy of Transnationalism," *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): n.p.

The scholarship currently interweaving decolonial, sexual, and indigenous studies is exciting for the way it develops the potential of this earlier work by taking it into deeper, often obscured histories.

3. For earlier formulations of the concept of horizonal dialectics, see Doyle, "Toward a Philosophy of Transnationalism"; and Laura Doyle, "Colonial Encounters," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. Peter Brooker et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 249–66. Although this horizonal and inter-imperial analysis shares an orientation with recent research on political horizon*tality* (focused on activist movements in world history), the framework of this book differs from those discussions in that it tracks the strained, vectored, and manifold *convergences and leveragings* of vertical and horizontal power axes. For a useful account of political horizontality, see Alen Toplisek and Lasse Thomassen, "From Protest to Party: Horizontality and Verticality on the Slovenian Left," *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, no. 9 (2017): 1383–1400.

4. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 111–19.

5. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

6. Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

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7. See Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*. My project shares a spirit and a method with Simpson's, particularly in its emphasis on the dynamics of denial as they play out in acts of interpretive contestation over "*actual* histories" (22). Both of us draw on Hegelian theory, in Simpson's case to analyze the element of "misrecognition" in these processes. I put more emphasis on the disavowal of relationality per se, as well as on the constitutive processes of interpenetration, coformation, and sublation, because, to my mind, these terms capture the underlying existential substratum of bodily social engagements and in turn they highlight the volatile conditions of life on earth. It's also worth noting that, although Simpson comments that "Hegel's concern is with the *position* of the slave, not the slave himself" (24), Hegel is in fact concerned with the subjectivity of the slave, as I discuss later in the introduction. As he remarks in a key transition: "We have seen what servitude is only in relation to lordship. But it is a self-consciousness, and we have now to consider what as such it is in and for itself" (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 117). He then proceeds to do so (116–19).

8. For instance, for historically oriented conceptualizations of sovereignty and indigeneity, see the essays in Joanne Barker, ed., *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). For essays in feminist-decolonial and indigenous theory that focus on agency and the complexities of historically layered relationality, see Priti Ramamurthy and Ashwini Tambe, eds., "Decolonial and Postcolonial Approaches: A Dialogue," special issue, *Feminist Studies* 43, no. 3 (2017). For generative rethinkings of sovereignty not focused mainly on indigeneity, see Michaeline A. Crichlow, Patricia Northover, and Deborah Jenson, eds., "States of Freedom: Freedom of States," special issue, *Global South* 6, no. 1 (2012), including the editors' introduction, "Caribbean Entanglements in Times of Crises," 1–14; Judith Butler, "Thinking Cohabitation and the Dispersion of Sovereignty," in *Sovereignty in Ruins: A Politics of Crisis*, ed. George Edmondson and Klaus Mladek (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 220–38; Alexander D. Barder and François Debrix, "Agonal Sovereignty: Rethinking War and Sovereignty with Schmitt, Arendt, and Foucault," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37, no. 7 (2011): 775–93; and Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 173–204.

Continuing discernment is required in discussions of sovereignty and agency in part because of their potential to perpetuate what Pradip Kumar Datta calls "imperial subjectivity," which carries residual identifications with empires past and which sometimes informs postcolonial visions. As I analyze in later chapters, old imperial attachments have sometimes shaped liberatory nationalist movements, as groups rally around "their" ancient "civilization," celebrating it as superior and prior to those of the invaders, meanwhile conscripting the (re)productive labors of women and racialized workers, and eliding their "own" "civilization's" histories of both exploitation and coformation with other states. See Pradip Kumar Datta, "The Interlocking Worlds of the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa/India," *South African Historical Journal* 57, no. 1 (2007): 35–59.

9. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [1990] 1997).

10. Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity*, 54–58. For recent thought-provoking contributions to discussions of care, see Mayanthi Fernando, "Critique as Care," *Critical Times*

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2, no. 1 (2019): 13–22; and María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017). Also see Laura Briggs, *How All Politics Became Reproductive Politics: From Welfare Reform to Foreclosure to Trump* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017). More broadly, see scholarship on social reproduction theory, which builds on Marxist critiques of capitalist labor exploitation to analyze the gendered dimensions of labor and care required to sustain and reproduce human communities. For an excellent collection of recent work, see Tithi Bhattacharya, ed., *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression* (London: Pluto Press, 2017).

11. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968). For related notions about sociality, see Judith Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); and Judith Butler, "Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics," *AIBR* 4, no. 3 (2009): i–xiii. The influence of Merleau-Ponty on Butler's work deserves more notice. For instance, see her early essay, "Performing Acts and Gender Constitution," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theater*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 270–82; and Judith Butler, "Sexual Difference as a Question of Ethics: Alterities of the Flesh in Irigaray and Merleau-Ponty," in *Bodies of Resistance: New Phenomenologies of Politics, Agency, and Culture*, ed. Laura Doyle (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 59–77. Simone de Beauvoir's and Jean-Paul Sartre's (different) articulations of existential "alterity" also deserve mention here: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1953); Simone de Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Open Road Media, [1947] 2018); and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1948).

12. John Hobson and V. I. Lenin understood the field of vying empires as an early twentieth-century phenomenon. See John A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: James Nisbet, 1902); and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline* (New York: International Publishers, 1939). Literary critic Fredric Jameson also highlights imperial rivalry in this period as context for his reading of modernist narrative form. See Fredric Jameson, "Modernism and Imperialism," in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, by Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward W. Said (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 43–66. More recently, scholars have used the term *inter-imperial* but only in passing and in historical rather than theoretical terms, with reference only to recent history. See Tarak Barkawi, "Empire and Order in International Relations and Security Studies," in *International Studies Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, ed. Robert A. Denmark and Renée Marlin-Bennett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1360–79; and Anthony G. Hopkins, "Rethinking Decolonization," *Past and Present* 200, no. 1 (2008): 211–47.

13. Hayward R. Alker and Thomas J. Biersteker also aimed to develop an "integrated dialectical theory," although they did not have in mind an intersectional or decolonial theory, nor did they have the benefit of the last four decades of scholarship on these approaches. See Hayward R. Alker and Thomas J. Biersteker, "The Dialectic of World Order: Notes for a Future Archeologist of International Savoir Faire," *International Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1984): 121–42.

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14. Prasenjit Duara, *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then: Rewriting Histories* (London: Routledge, 2004), 20; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1986); and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 2013).

15. Donette Francis, *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship: Sexuality and the Nation in Contemporary Caribbean Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 97.

16. See Kiran Asher, "Latin American Decolonial Thought, or Making the Subaltern Speak," *Geography Compass* 7, no. 12 (2013): 832–42. Also see Ramamurthy and Tambe, "Decolonial and Postcolonial Approaches." For the related notion of modernity/coloniality, see Walter Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), xiii; and Arturo Escobar, "Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise: The Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Program," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 179–210.

17. Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). For studies that differently explore the lingering effects of empire on postcolonial subjectivities, see Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); and Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

18. For distortions of the legacies of the British Empire and misinformation about the West as the source of "norms of law, order and governance" (xxi) that meanwhile cast nonwestern countries as Orientalized "no man's lands" (144–45), see Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2004). For comparable forms of Orientalist narratives of world history, see Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997); and Robert Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005).

19. At this late stage of intersectional feminist analysis, for example, it should not need saying that sex and gender practices have long occupied the structural core of the world's political economies, including because control of women and marriages is necessary for racial and labor stratifications. And yet, unfortunately, these established truths do need repeating. Indeed, as Antoinette Burton and others have had to point out, gender structures are still regularly eclipsed in world history and postcolonial analyses of history. See Antoinette Burton, "The Body in/as World History," in *A Companion to World History*, ed. Douglas Northrup (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 272–84. Also see Louise Yelin's analysis of the erasure of gender and women in studies of globalization in "Globalizing Subjects," *Signs* 29, no. 2 (2004): 439–64, part of a special issue, "Development Cultures: New Environments, New Realities, New Strategies," edited by Françoise Lionnet, Obioma Nnaemeka, Susan H. Perry, and Celeste Schenck.

20. Chinese philosophers such as Laozi and Zhuangzi and Greek philosophers such as Anaximander and Heraclitus sought to describe the elemental strata comprising relationality, in which all living and dying occurs. The Greeks postulated the "indefinite" in which

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earth, fire, water, and air interacted, and the Buddhists named *dharma* or *dao* as both source and driving force behind everything that exists.

21. Critiques as well as retoolings emerged in early postcolonial African scholarship, as discussed in B. Jewsiewicki and V. Y. Mudimbe, "Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa," *History and Theory* 32, no. 4 (December 1993): 1–11. Also, Susan Buck-Morss has usefully highlighted the grounds of his thinking in Atlantic world Anglo-European slavery; see Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, 2009). Other influential feminist retoolings of the dialectics of alterity include Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); and Mae Gwendolyn Henderson's "Speaking in Tongues: Dialectics, Dialogics, and the Black Woman Writer's Literary Tradition," in *Speaking in Tongues and Dancing the Diaspora: Black Women Writing and Performing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

22. See L. H. M. Ling's valuable essay, "Worlds beyond Westphalia: Daoist Dialectics and the 'China Threat,'" *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 3 (2013): 549–68. As I discuss in note 23, there are also some highly problematic appropriations of feminist conceptions of relationality in recent IR theories drawing on Confucian thought.

Concerning the influence of Chinese thought, recent global intellectual histories establish that "western" thought and culture have roots in Global Southeastern philosophies and cultures. German philosophers, most prominently Leibniz, engaged actively with Daoist thought, and Hegel expressed interest in debates about Eastern philosophies. On the latter, see Robert Bernasconi, "With What Must the History of Philosophy Begin? Hegel's Role in the Debate on the Place of India within the History of Philosophy," in *Hegel's History of Philosophy: New Interpretations*, ed. David A. Duquette (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003), 35–50. It's also worth recalling that Hegel's awareness of dialectics in ancient Greek philosophy was likely prepared by earlier Arabic translations. Claims about dialectics as a tradition of thought in western philosophy should be considered in this light.

For broader discussion of these coformations and influences, see J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume I: The Century of Discovery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Yu Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden: Chinese Gardening and a New English Aesthetic Ideal* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008). For useful sources, but cast within a problematically Eurocentric framework, see Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). See my discussion of Schwab in chapter 3.

23. See Ling, "Worlds beyond Westphalia." As Ling foregrounds, Daoism suggests that entities change by "dialectically interpenetrating and transforming the other" (568), and Hegel's word *durchdringung* for the relation among entities has been translated as "interpenetration" (in Miller's standard English translation of Hegel). Likewise in Hegel's comments on the "unity" of matter: he remarks that, via dialectical processes, "the universal is in undivided unity with this plurality," distinctly recalling the Daoist notion of oneness or "co-dependent origination" (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 81). Such concepts themselves

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manifest the interdependent unfolding of traditions of thought—although until recently the Daoist influence has been elided, or one could say self-servingly sublated, within European traditions, as noted above. For further development of the intersections between Hegel's notions and those of Eastern philosophy, see Douglas Osto, *Power, Wealth, and Women in Indian Mahayana Buddhism: The Gandavyuha-sutra* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

For a telling exposure of what happens when the concept of relationality is developed without attention to the feminist-intersectional or decolonial dimensions of power, see Yaqing Qin, *A Relational Theory of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Aiming to insert concepts of relationality into IR theory, Yaqing Qin on one hand provides useful genealogies of relational concepts in the traditions of Confucian thought, pragmatism, and sociological theory, and he sometimes discusses the challenges of diversity. But the author's lack of feminist-intersectional knowledge shows up in the innocence, or convenient blindnesses in the book's theory of state relations. Deeming relations and "relational management" a key to better power relations, he offers this example: "In dynastic China, marrying daughters of the Han imperial family to rulers of minority nationalities was an important policy for pacifying such groups and maintaining good relations with them"—a striking conflation of pacification and good relations (232). Yet praise for this "landmark" book as the "arrival of a truly global discipline of international relations" comes from eminent IR scholars at Cornell University and the London School of Economics.

24. Kojève reduced the dialectic to a set of ongoing interactions between two opposing forces: in his account, this encounter of opposites transforms into a synthesis or union, which then however encounters another opposing force, so that the binary, cumulative process repeats over time. See Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

25. For this phrase, see Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 121. Regarding the binary tendencies, in Marx's case the binaries are expressed in his account of phased class struggle, first between emergent bourgeoisie and aristocracy and then between emergent proletariat and bourgeoisie, a forward procession in which binary, antagonistic forces resolve into a utopian synthesis. Engel's and Lenin's discussions of dialectics similarly continue the binary logic and the problematic vocabulary of evolutionary development and progress. See Lenin, *Imperialism*, 220–21; and also Alker and Biersteker, "Dialectic of World Order," 122, 135.

It's worth noting that although the prefix *dia-* has associations with "two" because of its roots in the Greek word for that number, in Greek *dia* also has the ancient meanings of "across," "through," and "thoroughly"; it functions as a preposition or prefix indicating relation across difference or separateness, as in the word *dialogue*. In the early Greek formulation of dialectical practice by Socrates, it entailed exactly this interacting of plural views.

The retooling of Charles Darwin in the field of evolutionary world politics (EWP) is worth noting given my engagement with the fields of world politics and international relations. As I've discussed elsewhere, in *The Origin of Species* Darwin anticipates Merleau-Ponty's notion of "intercorporeality," by which Merleau-Ponty indicates the orientation of bodies toward each other within a material "habitus" and social "horizon," notions that inform my analyses here as they have my earlier work. Darwin suggestively described the world of organic beings as the result of "beautiful coadaptations . . . of one part of the

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organization to another part" that occurred "everywhere and in every part of the organic world" (Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* [New York: D. Appleton, 1859], 51–52). Ultimately, as does Hegel in *Philosophy of History*, Darwin reduces all relations to the competitive principle of antagonistic struggle and does so within a racist narrative of "higher" and "lower" races (Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* [New York: D. Appleton, [1871] 1889], 507–9). For discussion of both Merleau-Ponty and Darwin, see Doyle, *Bordering on the Body*, 64–70.

Unfortunately, traces of Darwin's hierarchical emphasis on competitive struggle circulate in EWP, despite scholars' attempts to emphasize relational and historical models. The shadow of racialized thinking appears (predictably coupled with a turn to population studies as it first was in the "science" of eugenics), for instance when George Modelski considers the explosion of "British stock" around the world between 1600 and 1960 and suggests that "'the quality of British institutions' explain this phenomenal population rise" (16–17). This linking of "stock" and advanced "institutions" has an old racist genealogy. See Laura Doyle, *Freedom's Empire: Race and the Rise of the Novel in Atlantic Modernity, 1640–1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). Likewise, although Modelski helpfully seeks models outside the nation-state, he continues to think within the model of "stages of historical development," asking whether and why global politics "is less primitive today than it was for instance, one thousand years ago." See George Modelski, "Evolutionary World Politics: Problems of Scope and Method," in *Evolutionary Interpretations of World Politics*, ed. William R. Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2001), 16–17. Whence the model of primitive and advanced? Such strains of thought reveal what lies coiled within the vocabularies of evolution, undercutting EWP efforts to move outside of Eurocentric accounts of state formation.

26. I allude here to Elizabeth Grosz's use of this term in her excellent study of gender and phenomenology, *Volatile Bodies*, cited above.

27. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 60.

28. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 81.

29. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 81.

30. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 60.

31. Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*.

32. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 111.

33. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 112.

34. See Barbara Fuchs, *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam, and European Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), introduction (1–12) and throughout. See related discussions in Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue, eds., *Imperial Formations* (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007).

35. For an illuminating analysis of these dynamics as shrewdly captured in the memoirs of those who escaped US slavery, see Nicholas Bromell, *By the Sweat of the Brow: Literature and Labor in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

36. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 117.

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37. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 118.

38. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 118.

39. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 118.

40. Here I am highlighting the labors of women in general but of course minoritized women have also shouldered other women's labor and thereby enabled the standing of bourgeois and elite women, including those who identify as feminist. For close study of these conditions see Pheng Cheah's important analysis in "Biopower and the New International Division of Reproductive Labor," *boundary 2* 34, no. 1 (2007): 79–113; and his book, *Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). For studies of New International Division of Labor more broadly, see Folker Fröbel, Jürgen Heinrichs, and Otto Kreye, *The New International Division of Labor: Structural Unemployment in Industrialised Countries and Industrialisation in Developing Countries*, trans. Pete Burgess (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Also see essays in Richard Robison, Richard Higgott, and Kevin Hewison, eds., *Southeast Asia in the 1980s: The Politics of Economic Crisis* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987). More broadly, see the corpus of work by sociologist Saskia Sassen on globalization and migration.

41. Cultural differences deserve further attention here. For instance, Ashis Nandy's classic study, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), develops an important analysis of how different family formations in different cultures shape their intersections with colonial politics, including relations between mothers and sons. Yet I cannot agree with recent feminist decolonial theorists, such as Rita Laura Segato, who posit a precolonial "village" life, where gendered realms are separate but equal. In the absence of further details, I am not yet convinced about the equality or reciprocity, especially since Segato's own formulations suggest otherwise. She suggests for instance that, before European colonial invasions, the village was "a world in which the genders occupy two different spaces in social life," yet she goes on to say that in "[this] dual world, both terms are ontologically full and complete, although they can maintain a hierarchical relationship." From whence does this seemingly incidental hierarchy arise? In whose interest and to what end? Her remark that "the dual structure . . . is driven by an ironclad and binding reciprocity" raises further doubts, especially in its "ironclad and binding reciprocity" (616). Why the need for ironclad if all is mutual and voluntary? Recent research on Mesoamerican states indicates, furthermore, that in many Mesoamerican regions, village life had been invaded and restructured long before the arrival of Europeans, as I also describe in chapter 1. The studies by Gayle Rubin and Gerda Lerner cited in note 43 give additional evidence of pre-1500 patriarchy in the villages of the world.

42. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

43. For earlier work, see Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1997), 27–62; Sheila Rowbotham, *Women's Consciousness, Men's World* (New York: Verso, [1973] 2015); and Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). For recent work on social reproduction, see Bhattacharya,

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ed., *Social Reproduction Theory*. For two different angles on these economies as enacted in literature, see Doyle, *Bordering on the Body*; and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

44. See, for instance, Mwangi wa Gīthīnji, "Erasing Class/(Re)Creating Ethnicity: Politics, Jobs, Accumulation and Identity in Kenya," *Review of Black Political Economy* 42, no. 1 (2015): 87–110.

45. Engels's dependence on Lewis Henry Morgan's stadial and Darwinist conception of human history (supposedly developing from savage to barbarian to civilized) undercuts his analysis from the beginning. The false corollary between monogamy and class society, among other confused claims, likewise cripples Engel's arguments. But he deserves credit for even raising the topic within his materialist critique. See Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, trans. Eleanor Burke Leacock (New York: International Publishers, [1940] 1975).

46. Rubin, "Traffic in Women."

47. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, [1927] 1962), for instance, 219–25, 321–22, and 387.

48. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*, 142–45.

49. Vincent Falger, "Evolutionary World Politics Enriched: The Biological Foundations of International Relations," in *Evolutionary Interpretations of World Politics*, ed. William R. Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2001), 30–51.

50. In this light, we might interpret the fetishization of sovereignty, autonomy, and independence in classic IR theory as convenient fictions that disavow our fraught, difficult interdependence.

51. See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 31–32. For Hegel's phrases, see Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 114.

52. Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

53. For the term *shatterzone*, see Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

54. I am indebted to Bahun's discussion of "interpositionality" in eastern Europe, which helped to shape my concept of inter-imperiality. See Sanja Bahun, "The Balkans Uncovered: Toward *Historie Croisée* of Modernism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 25–47. For work that draws on the long-historical concept of inter-imperiality to discuss language, politics, and literature, see two special issues: Laura Doyle and Sahar Amer, eds., "Reframing Postcolonial and Global Studies in the Longer Durée," special issue, *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (2015): 331–438; and Laura Doyle, ed., "Inter-imperiality," special issue, *Modern Fiction Studies* 64, no. 3 (2018). The latter includes essays on literatures in a range of places including Indonesia,

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China, Korea, Eurasia, the Atlantic World, and (by Sanja Bahun) eastern Europe, while the former focuses on underlying methodological questions in literary studies. Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts* is an infamous example of the many distorted accounts of so-called tribalism in such regions. For exposure of these misrepresentations in the work of recent commentators on the virtues of western empire such as Samuel Huntington, Robert Kaplan, and others, see Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson, eds., *Why America's Top Pundits Are Wrong: Anthropologists Talk Back* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). In this collection, see especially Tona Bringa, "Haunted by the Imaginations of the Past: Robert Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*," 60–82.

55. In particular see the following essays in the special *PMLA* cluster cited above: Annette Lienau Damayanti, "Reframing Vernacular Culture on Arabic Fault Lines: Bamba, Senghor, and Sembene's Translingual Legacies in French West Africa," *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (2015): 419–29; Lydia Liu, "Scripts in Motion: Writing as Imperial Technology, Past and Present," *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (2015): 375–83; and Mary Louise Pratt, "Language and the Afterlives of Empire," *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (2015): 348–57. Also see Nergis Ertürk, *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

56. Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1965).

57. Qtd. in David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 269–70.

58. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Gabler (New York: Vintage, 1986), 12:1156–58.

59. Stephen Joyce, "Inter-imperial Aesthetics: Korean and Korean Diasporic Literature between Empires," *Modern Fiction Studies* 64, no. 3 (2018): 488–511. The Korean meaning of *han* is linked to the character in Chinese and other languages yet with distinct meaning.

60. Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker* (New York: Riverhead, 1995), 333.

61. S. Joyce, "Inter-imperial Aesthetics," 502.

62. S. Joyce, "Inter-imperial Aesthetics," 499.

63. S. Joyce, "Inter-imperial Aesthetics," 499.

64. S. Joyce, "Inter-imperial Aesthetics," 507.

65. Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*.

66. For recent work of this kind, see Jason Frydman, *Sounding the Break: African American and Caribbean Routes of World Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014); Annaliese Hoehling, "Minoritarian 'Marvelous Real': Enfolding Revolution in Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World*," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54, no. 2 (2018): 254–67; Heather Wayne, "Gilded Chains: Global Economies and Gendered Arts in U.S. Fiction, 1865–1930" (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2019); and the special issues in *PMLA* and *Modern Fiction Studies* cited in note 54. Also see Walter Cohen, *A History of European Literature: The West and the World from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), which provides a wealth of information about literary traditions and genres from ancient to contemporary throughout the world. Cohen also

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offers useful attention to the states within which literary histories have formed, but this is not the focus of his project.

67. Critics have especially challenged Pascale Casanova's separation of literary and political "world-systems" in her book, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), while others have critiqued studies that eclipse the politics of translation, as reflected in David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). For critiques, see Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (New York: Verso Books, 2013); Sanjay Krishnan, *Reading the Global: Troubling Perspectives on Britain's Empire in Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and Aamir Mufti, *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016). A range of fruitful debates and reconceptualizations have been collected in, for example, David Damrosch, *World Literature in Theory* (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014); and Christopher Prendergast, ed., *Debating World Literature* (New York: Verso, 2004).

68. See Shu-mei Shih, "Comparison as Relation," in *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*, ed. Rita Felski and Susan Friedman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 79–98.

69. Karima Laachir, Sara Marzagora, and Francesca Orsini, "Significant Geographies: In Lieu of World Literature," *Journal of World Literature* 3, no. 3 (2018): 290–310. Also see Alexander Beecroft's flexible way of situating large bodies of literature within both regional and world contexts, as in his book, *An Ecology of World Literature: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (New York: Verso Books, 2015). Although, on one hand, Beecroft's idea of ecologies could be said simply to model historically grounded critical and intertextual practices, the temporal and the geographical reach of his studies, which include Chinese, Greek, and other literatures, performs valuable decentering of Anglo-European literatures.

70. See Revathi Krishnaswamy, "Toward World Literary Knowledges: Theory in the Age of Globalization," *Comparative Literature* 62, no. 4 (2010): 399–419, including for discussion of the bhakti and of early, nonwestern literary theory. Krishnaswamy's work on narrative genres in the longue durée will appear, along with similar studies, in the collection in progress, *Decolonial Reconstellations*, ed. Simon Gikandi, Laura Doyle, and Mwangi wa Githīnjī (working title; not yet under contract). Krishnaswamy's essay for this collection is drawn from her current book project.

71. See for instance the project undertaken by Rebecca Carol Johnson, Richard Maxwell, and Katie Trumpener in "*The Arabian Nights*, Arab-European Literary Influence, and the Lineages of the Novel," *Modern Language Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (2007): 243–78. Although the article tracks specific historical conditions under which the *Nights* and other texts have been readapted, offering suggestive close readings of the transformative powers of literary form, the authors frame their study mainly as evidence of a "complex and cosmopolitan literary history" and testimony to the valuable "discovery of links that make possible the meaningfulness, and the liveliness, of literature" (278). For a more political angle of reading this literary history, see the special issues in PMLA and *Modern Fiction Studies* cited in note 54.

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72. Both Cheah and I have, for instance, been engaged with the concept of freedom, highlighting the ways that concepts such as freedom have their purchase within the realm of cultural and political economy—the realm where "freedom" as an interpellating word has served contradictory functions, both rallying and equivocating. See Cheah, *Inhuman Conditions*; Doyle, *Freedom's Empire*.

73. See Pheng Cheah, *What Is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 44.

74. See Cheah, "Biopower," 111.

75. See Cheah, "Biopower," 111.

76. Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 5.

77. Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 74.

78. Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 106.

79. Arendt highlights "natality" as the basis of sociality and in turn politics, but only by referring to the fact that "we are born" and by removing human bodies from the momentous "appearance" or "arrival" of newcomers (qtd. in Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 138). Cheah himself simply notes that "the persistent coming of new others" ensures that "human existence is . . . a dynamic and constantly changing web of relations" (9–10, 103–4), from which however the "primary instance" of relation is excised. Similar problems occur in the thought of Heidegger and most especially Derrida. For a different reading of Arendt, see Rosalyn Diprose and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, *Arendt, Natality, and Biopolitics: Toward Democratic Plurality and Reproductive Justice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018). They implicitly supplement what she leaves out, but give her credit for their own extrapolations.

In the case of Heidegger, Cheah embraces the evocative notion of "the opening that puts all beings into relation" and concludes that "the world is an irreducible openness where *we cannot avoid* being-with-others" (Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 105; emphasis added). The phrase *cannot avoid* may well capture an everyday feeling, but it becomes something more when followed by this unsettling description of Being (*Dasein*) and Being-with (*Mitdasein*): "Even when I do not perceive other-Dasein as *on hand*, they always accompany me as co-Dasein (Mitda-sein) in *my daily absorption* in the world *that is looked after*" (Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 105; emphasis added). Cheah does not identify this habit of not perceiving that the world is looked after even though "they always" accompany us as a problem. He simply lists it as one of "four important traits" that constitute "the irreducible openness" of the world—the first being that the presence of others in this world "is inconspicuous" (Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 105). Here is the problem in the material and mental *habitus*, unintentionally named. For there is of course an unequal gender history that condones, or not, the "daily absorption" that overlooks how and by whom the world is "looked after." A different sense of lived history and a longer, more precise account of economic and colonial history informed by feminist-intersectional research might reframe this political ontology.

In Jacques Derrida's discussion of the "arrivance" of others, the combination of appropriation and erasure is particularly clear. Derrida the master dialectician senses that to minimize these gendered labors while arguing for the irreducibility of sociality is a problem. Thus

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he must mention—and then sublate—those labors. To make this move, Derrida claims that his theory, and Cheah approvingly quotes, encompasses something more "absolute" than "birth itself": "Birth itself, which is similar to what I'm trying to describe, is perhaps unequal to this absolute 'arrivance' [of others]. Families prepare for a birth; it is scheduled, forenamed, caught up in a symbolic space that dulls the arrivance" (qtd. in Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 172). His caveat appears in the very next sentence—provoked perhaps by his half-conscious apprehension of the resonance of "unequal to" and the bad faith in suggesting that the "symbolic space" "dulls" rather than intensifies those labors. Yet then comes the full erasure of the birthing body and the self-recuperative sublation, through grammatical antics and telling abstractions: "Nevertheless, in spite of these anticipations and prenominations, the uncertainty will not let itself be reduced: the child that arrives remains unpredictable; it speaks of itself as from the origin of another world, or from an-other-origin of this world" (qtd. in Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 172). The birthing person is, by sleights of hand and mind, smoothly replaced with a child, who can then become the arriving author, the widely quoted voice seductively speaking of "an-other-origin of this world." Cheah unfortunately follows suit, only remarking that "the to-come is an openness that promises nothing certain because it does not posit a determinate end of any kind. . . . The other that is to come is simply the absolute *arrivant* . . . that which cannot be determined as a foreigner, a refugee, an immigrant, and so on" (Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 172–73; emphasis in original).

80. This approach limits Cheah's literary readings of women's practices of sociality in literature, most especially his comments on a "feminist-maternal ontopology" in women's fiction. Cheah, *What Is a World?*, 233.

81. See Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

82. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981).

83. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

84. J. Joyce, *Ulysses*, 1:638–44.

85. Husain Haddawy, trans., *The Arabian Nights*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (New York: Norton, 1990), 11.

86. On colonial intimacy, see Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

87. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

88. Husain Haddawy, trans., *The Arabian Nights*, 15.

89. See, for instance, Adam Barrows, *The Cosmic Time of Empire: Modern Britain and World Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). Also see a prior study on time and modernist literature, thought provoking although not focused on empire: Stephen Kuhn, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1983] 2003).

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