



# Introduction: Rethinking the Archaeology of Capitalism: Coercion, Violence, and the Politics of Accumulation

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**Abstract** Long an analytical staple of historical archaeology, capitalism in recent years has found itself under renewed scrutiny, due in part to the repercussions of the 2008 global economic crisis. Questions about the failings of “free-market” self-regulation and the proliferation of predatory practices and value-manipulation instruments fostered discussions about what, in fact, the “true” nature of capitalism was, and whether such practices, drawing on extra-economic power, violence, and various forms of coercion in the name of unequal accumulation, were aberrational or foundational. A space emerges within these discussions for a critical rethinking of capitalism through the emerging contributions of feminist, new materialist, actor-network, and (post-)Marxist perspectives that emphasize the diverse mechanisms and practices generative of the effects attributed variously to an abstract, monolithic, epoch-defining capitalist system. The approaches articulated in this thematic collection push for a move away from limiting and inconsistent definitions of capitalism, and toward a more supple suite of analytical threads for the cross-context analysis of diverse assemblages with diverse histories of emergence that generate parallel capitalist effects. In turn, the contributors to this collection illustrate the broader relevance of the contributions of historical archaeologies of capitalism to other archaeological contexts and subdisciplines by providing

common ground for the comparative analysis of contexts generative of similar human/nonhuman experiences and effects that have remained categorically segregated in their analyses.

**Extracto** Durante mucho tiempo un elemento analítico básico de la arqueología histórica, el capitalismo en los últimos años se ha visto sometido a un nuevo escrutinio, debido en parte a las repercusiones de la crisis económica mundial de 2008. Los interrogantes sobre las fallas de la autorregulación del “libre mercado” y la proliferación de prácticas depredadoras e instrumentos de manipulación de valores fomentaron las discusiones acerca de cuál era, de hecho, la naturaleza “verdadera” del capitalismo y si dichas prácticas, utilizando aspectos extraeconómicos como el poder, la violencia y las diversas formas de coerción en nombre de la acumulación desigual, eran una aberración o fundacionales. Un espacio emerge dentro de estas discusiones para un replanteamiento crítico del capitalismo a través de las contribuciones emergentes de perspectivas de feministas, materialistas nuevos, redes de actores y (post)marxistas que enfatizan los diversos mecanismos y prácticas que generan los efectos atribuidos de manera diversa a un sistema capitalista abstracto, monolítico y definitorio de la época. Los enfoques articulados en esta colección temática empujan a alejarse de las definiciones limitantes e inconsistentes del capitalismo, y hacia un conjunto más flexible de hilos analíticos para el análisis de contexto cruzado de diversos conjuntos

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con diversas historias de emergencias que generan efectos capitalistas paralelos. A su vez, los colaboradores de esta colección ilustran la relevancia más amplia de las contribuciones de las arqueologías históricas del capitalismo a otros contextos arqueológicos y subdisciplinas al proporcionar un terreno común para el análisis comparativo de contextos generadores de experiencias y efectos humanos / no humanos similares que se han mantenido categóricamente segregados en sus análisis.

**Résumé** Le capitalisme qui a été pendant longtemps un sujet analytique récurrent de l'archéologie historique, a fait l'objet au cours des années récentes d'un intérêt renouvelé, dû en partie aux répercussions de la crise économique mondiale de 2008. Les questions relatives aux carences de l'auto-régulation de "l'économie de marché" ainsi qu'à la prolifération des pratiques prédatrices et des instruments de manipulation de la valeur ont nourri des discussions sur ce qu'était en réalité la « véritable » nature du capitalisme, et si de telles pratiques s'appuyant sur un pouvoir extra-économique, mais aussi la violence et différentes formes de coercition au nom d'une accumulation inégalitaire, constituaient une aberration ou son fondement même. Un espace apparaît au sein de ces discussions pour un nouvel examen critique du capitalisme grâce aux contributions émergentes de perspectives issues du féminisme, du nouveau matérialisme, de réseaux d'intervenants mais aussi (post-)marxistes. Celles-ci mettent l'accent sur les divers mécanismes et pratiques conduisant aux effets attribués de différentes façons à un système capitaliste abstrait, monolithique et définissant une époque. Les approches articulées dans cette collection thématique sont en faveur d'une distanciation à l'égard des définitions réductrices et contradictoires du capitalisme. Elles privilégient une suite plus flexible de fils analytiques aux fins d'une analyse contextuelle croisée d'assemblages divers reliant des histoires variées d'émergence générant des effets capitalistes parallèles. Les contributeurs de cette collection illustrent quant à eux la pertinence plus large des contributions des archéologies historiques du capitalisme à l'égard d'autres contextes et sous-disciplines archéologiques, grâce à l'apport d'un tronc commun pour l'analyse comparative de contextes créateurs d'expériences humaines/non-humaines similaires et d'effets demeurés catégoriquement isolés dans leurs analyses.

## Introduction

What if capitalism were not an entire system of economy or a macrostructure or a mode of production but simply one form of exploitation among many? (Gibson-Graham 2006:260)

What exactly do archaeologists call “capitalism”? What defining traits are used, and how is it determined whether archaeological contexts are capitalist or not? In many cases it might seem obvious. The archaeological work on 19th-century industrial factories and the people laboring within them (Mrozowski et al. 1996), new urban and domestic spaces inhabited by dispossessed laborers and bourgeois capitalists (Wall 1999; Yamin 2000), and resource-extraction zones for industry (Nida 2013; Roller 2015) all fit squarely within the traditionally defined parameters of capitalist sites (i.e., those in the 19th-century industrialized north). These parameters, rooted in Marx's articulation and critique of capitalism, focus on a unique suite of traits as defining of “true” capitalist contexts, including: “alienated” wage laborers dispossessed of the means of production, conflict and struggle between capitalist and laboring classes, industrial modes of production, commodification, “free-market” enterprise, market dependence and the importance of consumption, emphasis on the individual, private property, an ideology accepting of greed, and more.

Working within the chronology, concepts, and language of the Marxist critique, archaeologies of capitalism have provided critical perspectives on the “disciplining” and detrimental effects of capitalism on laborers and landscapes (Leone and Potter 1999; Mrozowski 1999, 2006), on the reification of capitalist hierarchies and relations as “natural” (Leone 1984), on the replacement of more communal forms of social and material practice and subjectivities with “possessive individual” subjects (Matthews 2010), and on the debt and loss of autonomy (i.e., dependence) that comes with being drawn into market economies (Kardulias 1990; Martindale 2009; Pezzarossi 2014, 2015a). At the same time, archaeologists have explored how subjected populations resisted the effects of capitalism in order to maintain pre- or noncapitalist social and material practices, despite the incessant intrusions and coercive overtures of capitalist ideology and the market (Mullins 1999; Epperson 2001; Ludlow Collective 2001).

However, gaps emerge in this literature if one seeks to push beyond “core” northern American and British industrial regions or appropriate 18th- to 19th-century time periods. The absence of some or all (depending on the study) traits considered central to an industrial northern European form of capitalism and its chronology, as well as the presence of “pre-capitalist” violent extractions of labor and value, can blind analyses to the diverse relations of production that drive capitalist accumulation. What falls through the cracks are places connected to and constitutive of capitalist accumulation that are, nevertheless, excluded from archaeologies of capitalism, such as the analyses of the raw-material producing “peripheries” of the world system, where enslavement, violence, and other forms of coerced labor drive production and generate value to be made into capital elsewhere. Wallerstein (1974) noted the “variegated modes of production” that constitute the world system, such that no single form of labor relations came to define it and, by extension, global capitalism. Stern (1993:53) has made a parallel point, arguing that Spanish colonial contexts consisted of a “shifting combination of heterogeneous relations of production in a pragmatic package” that included “approximations of wage labor, complicated tenancy, share and debt-credit arrangements, and forced labor drafts and slavery [as parts of] a single productive process.” More recently, Tsing (2015) has provided a consideration of how diverse relations of production, unique to particular “sites” of global capitalism, are not in fact aberrational of a “true” or singular capitalist mode of production. Rather, she argues that such diversity is *constitutive* of this thing we scholars call the “global capitalist economy,” wherein value is produced in myriad ways, not just through “free” wage labor, yet translated into capital that flows across diverse cultural, political, and social contexts.

What these arguments put into perspective is the various capitalist traits we archaeologists have consciously or unconsciously used to frame our conceptions of the appropriate contexts for the study of capitalism. At the root of this schism is a consideration of the “uniqueness” of capitalism and its associated traits in human history. This epochal shift, or rupture, from antiquity (and all its brutal violence) to modernity/capitalism (and its more subtle forms of power) creates an incompatibility of analysis across the divide. Shannon Dawdy has put this in the starkest terms, arguing that the ideological “exceptionalism of modernity” has precluded the possibility of comparative work: “Most archaeologists of antiquity

decline to consider the possibility of such modern phenomena as racialization, *capital accumulation*, or terrorism in the past—to look for such things in antiquity is not only anachronistic, but also offensive [emphasis added]” (Dawdy 2010:765–766).

The need for a “pure” past, absent these violent processes, to use as a foil for the present and inspiration for a more just future is not unimportant. It provides examples of other ways of being that undermine the apparent “naturalness” and inevitability of modernist/capitalist ideology while leaving open the possibility of the radical alterity of the past/Other. However reifying the exceptionalism of capitalism and modernity as an epochal shift or rupture with the past (Dawdy 2010) actually does the opposite: it posits a set of relations, practices, and effects never before seen, managed, or dealt with, and somehow as outside human history and, thus, outside human capacities to change.

This thematic collection works to disperse the uniqueness of capitalism as a purified modernist “epoch” by playing with anachronism and attempting the archaeology of capitalism, and specifically capitalist processes, practices, and effects in capitalist, non-, and/or pre-capitalist contexts. The case studies and analyses presented work in various ways to reframe the archaeology of capitalism by redefining traditional analytical parameters and refining the theoretical and methodological approaches to capitalism.

As the archaeology of capitalism has continued to grow, indeed becoming a core focus of historical archaeology (Johnson 1996; Orser 1996; Mrozowski 2006; Matthews 2010; Croucher and Weiss 2011; Leone and Knauf 2015), the methods and perspectives drawn on have multiplied and opened up space for rethinking how, where, and when capitalism can be analyzed. Postcolonial approaches have productively drawn together the archaeology of colonialism and capitalism into nuanced analyses of how capital and capitalism emerged differently from and articulated with colonial regimes the world over (see contributions to Croucher and Weiss [2011]). Inspiring the framing of this thematic collection, the Croucher and Weiss volume expanded the consideration of where capitalism could be “found” to contexts of explicit violence, such as those found in colonies, as well as in parts of the world considered only “peripheral” or tangentially connected to the broader capitalist world “system.” Similarly, in Leone and Knauf’s

(2015) recent volume, the archaeology of capitalism is taken up and extended to contexts outside the usual North American and European contexts seen as “true” capitalist centers: Senegal, Guinea, Guatemala, and Colombia

In pushing the envelope by extending archaeologies of capitalism to contexts not traditionally considered capitalist, these contributions have raised broader questions about how we archaeologists have come to define capitalism in our analyses, and how some of these parameters have limited cross-context comparative analyses or, indeed, blinded archaeologists to the full scope and effects of capitalist practices and processes. For instance, does the absence of land dispossession and “free” wage labor keep us from considering the parallels between a “non-capitalist” context, such as colonial Guatemala, and a capitalist context in 18th-century England? Does forced repayment of debt—at penalty of beatings—delimit a context as non-capitalist? What if enslaved labor—broadly defined—is used to produce sugar, the value of which will be translated to capital in the metropole? Is the locus of production not capitalist, even if the surplus value generated by variously coerced labor is eventually turned to capital? As mentioned, diverse forms of labor and relations of production have been drawn on—past and present—to produce “cheap” surplus value at the expense of laborers and the environment (Wallerstein 1974; Stern 1993; Moore 2014; Tsing 2015). Such diversity is not aberrational, but rather constitutive of global capitalism, effectively blurring analytical boundaries defined by singular practices or traits and creating an opportunity for a more inclusive *longue durée* reconsideration of the actual processes and practices of capitalism, their longer and shorter histories, and their manifold, potentially varying, effects.

The task of rethinking capitalism is a daunting one. However, by focusing on common themes across analytical boundaries (e.g., prehistory/history, feudal/capitalist, antiquity/modernity) (Lightfoot 1995; Dawdy 2010), threads emerge that allow the following of actual practices and actors that collude in generating the effects that have been attributed to an abstract, inconsistently defined, analytical construct: capitalism. The contributors to this collection examine these practices and their effects in contexts ranging from 20th-century Baltimore, Maryland, to 10th-century Jordan, from 18th-century Iceland to 16th-century Guatemala.

They all draw variously on three themes in their cross-context exploration of capitalism: (1) a shift away

from abstract models of capitalism as explanatory framework and toward the analysis of on-the-ground practices generative of parallel capitalist effects, (2) the role of violence and coercion in capitalist contexts, and (3) a consideration of the embeddedness and contextual specificities of labor relations and commerce that highlight the productive “frictions” (Tsing 2005) of local/global capitalist practices and processes engaged in particular, situated contexts.

### Coercion and Violence

One of the analytical themes with which the contributors to this collection grapple is a reconsideration of violence and coercion as explicit elements of “real” capitalism—past and present—rather than precursors to a now-hegemonic and largely nonviolent economic phenomenon. The motivation stems, in part, from reemerging discourses on capitalism and its constitutive “freedoms” and “free” markets in the public consciousness due to, among other things, the ongoing reverberations of the 2008 global economic crisis and the high-risk, coercive, and sometimes predatory practices that contributed to its unfolding. Debates about the causes of the crisis quickly flourished: was the crisis simply the result of human greed, either on behalf of lenders or of materialistic consumers gleefully and irresponsibly living outside their means? Perhaps it could be attributed to the “natural” behavior of the market and its invisible forces that oscillate between booms and busts? One of the more intriguing debates centered on the question of market deregulation: had deregulation, spurred by undue neo-liberal faith in the “natural” fairness and rightness of the “free-market” engine of capitalism been at fault?

This last point is especially salient as it intersects with one of the primary analytical themes of this special collection. The free market, with all its benevolent invisible appendages, is arguably the most pernicious and modernly relevant defining trait of capitalism in academic and popular discourse. Indeed, the free market that fosters competition and lacks coercion is, in David Harvey’s words: “*the founding myth of liberal economic theory*” (Harvey 2014:132). Many of the contributors are directly involved in research projects that have in various ways pointed out the fallacy of the free market in capitalism, both historical and modern, by emphasizing the role of culture, politics, and especially unequal power in shaping the operation of markets (see also the

next section on “embeddedness” for further refinement of this point). One of the (many) important contributions of Croucher and Weiss’s (2011) volume is the joint analysis of colonialism and the emergence of capitalist projects, highlighting the entanglements between these traditionally, analytically separated processes/practices. Rather than cultivating unfettered competition, scholars have, in recent work, pushed for a consideration of how “free” capitalist markets are made, manipulated, and coerced in a variety of ways by both state and non-state actors, and thus unfree to various degrees (Nida 2013; Harvey 2014:133; Pezzarossi 2015b). Legislation that subsidizes particular industries or entities, acquiring political and economic influence through campaign contributions and lobbying efforts, artificial scarcities, price fixing and other forms of price inflations, all amount to disparate forms of manipulating markets and exchanges via unequal access to power/resources to the benefit of some and the detriment of many.

As an example, in 2016 analysts from Goldman Sachs (an investment bank at the center of the 2008 global economic crisis) pointed to a concern that the potential absence of “natural” free-market oscillations in corporate profit margins and concomitant redistributions of capital and competition would force “broader questions ... about the efficacy of capitalism” (Weisenthal 2016). The potential suspension of “natural” laws/behavior of the market would signal market manipulation practices that effectively insulate corporate entities from and stifle competition. Analysts noted that persistently high profit margins were buttressed by high prices, cheap labor in “emerging markets,” growing global market demand/dependence, and technology-driven efficiency. However, they also noted the role of share buybacks as a mechanism for manipulating stock price and inflating it (to the enrichment of shareholders and providing the illusion of growth in value creation through productivity) through a form of artificial scarcity, a practice not unique to late capitalist contexts, as illustrated by colonial Guatemala, among other contexts (Pezzarossi 2015a). William Lazonick (2014) argues that this practice of market price manipulation by allowing companies to adjust the value of their shares by creating scarcity has diverted excess (or borrowed) capital from being reinvested internally for “value creation” (e.g., higher wages; better benefits and training for workers; or more research, innovation, and job creation). Instead, capital is deployed in the pursuit of “value extraction” for shareholder benefit while pushing the

costs of research (as well as the social/physical cost of low wages) onto the public through taxpayer-funded research that leads to profitable commercial products through private/public partnerships (Lazonick 2014).

These largely political and economic manipulations that seek to further accumulate capital as “cheaply” as possible are glossed—and thus deemed just—as shrewd business practices. However, such practices are themselves made possible predominantly through greater access to power/capital/threats of violence (broadly conceived). The ability to exert influence through the non-human agent that is capital (Mitchell 2002) with the intention of gaining competitive advantage based on inequalities in power/resources (as in the share buyback example) is not simply “good business,” but is, in essence, a form of coercion and manipulation made possible by unequal power. Coercion, be it financially backed, politically instituted, or at the edge of the sword, is coercion and leads to the “monopoly power” that Harvey has recently argued is “foundational [and endemic] rather than aberrational to the functioning of capital” (Harvey 2014:134).

Through the lens of coercion, parallels emerge to what are historically considered non-capitalist contexts, particularly Western colonial contexts in the New World, Africa, south Asia, and plantation-slavery contexts in the Caribbean (Reilly 2015). The main difference that has set these contexts apart from discussions of capitalism and their role in the emergence of modernity is the overt coercion through violence—a feature of “feudalism” or other such “premodern” labor relations—that facilitated the “cheap” extraction and rapid accumulation of wealth in colonial contexts of the early modern world. The work that such categorical “purification” (Latour 1993) does is to artificially disassociate capitalism from the violence from which it promotes and from which it profits, thus rendering its pure and ideal forms as distinctly “free,” modern, and nonviolent. To stress the continued presence of violence and coercion as mechanisms of capital accumulation in the present is to dissipate occluding discourses that have sought to purify capitalism of its continued reliance on colonialist legacies and methods. Contributors to this thematic collection take on this perspective to highlight early and late capitalist/colonial contexts and the commonalities between them that help blur unhelpful analytical categorizations (Mrozowski, this issue; Pezzarossi and Kennedy, this issue; Sampeck, this issue; Simpson, this issue)

Despite his foundational critique, Marx's conception of coercion and violence in capital accumulation buttresses "free-market" conceptions of capitalism as spun by Adam Smith and his faith in the "natural" laws and operation of markets. For Marx, the violence of "primitive accumulation," such as colonial extraction of resources and labor punctuated by the vast wealth violently generated by the Atlantic slave trade, *preceded* capitalism and served as the massive jolt of capital that gave rise to the contours of inequality that characterize the modern global economy (Blackburn 1997:532; DeLanda et al. 2005:85). While Marx acknowledged capitalism's roots in violent dispossession, stating that "[i]n actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part [in primitive accumulation] (Marx 1999:507). In Marx's scheme this overt force fades in capitalist contexts as the violence that molded capitalist (wage-laboring) subjects transitions into the "silent compulsion of economic relations" and the subtle disciplining force of an almost "idyllic" hegemony (Harvey 2010:296). Federici (2004:12–13) adds to this point, noting that Marx argued that the violence of earlier phases of capitalist accumulation "would recede with the maturing of capitalist relations, when the exploitation and disciplining of labor would be accomplished mostly through the workings of economic laws."

However, Rosa Luxemburg (2003:432), among others, provided a different perspective by arguing that capitalism has never left behind primitive accumulation and its coercive, manipulative, and exploitative power relations and varieties of unfree labor and unequal exchange (including Federici [2004:12–13]). While Luxemburg argued for the necessity of violence in opening new markets in non-capitalist regions via conquest and imperialism, Harvey (2006) has extended Luxemburg's contributions into an argument for "accumulation by dispossession" as a central mechanism of capitalist accumulation. For Harvey (2003:145–146), accumulation by dispossession is carried out through a variety of coercive means, from extra-economic state intervention and violence (such as using eminent domain to displace communities in the interest of development) to continued profiting from enslavement via the sex trade, privatizing of common resources such as water, dispossession of small producers by larger entities with greater

access to capital, and other means of affecting unequal transfers of wealth with the aid of non-market "forces."

In a related vein, Braudel and, later, DeLanda centered unequal power relations, coercion, and violence in their conception of capitalism. Echoing Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession" argument, capitalism operates through the rerouting of surplus value (that unequal exchanges produce) into the control of those able to affect said manipulation of markets through disparities in economic, political, and other forms of power and recourse to violence. Such manipulations gave form to "monopolies [that] were the product of power, cunning and intelligence" that exploited through "*unequal or forced exchange* [emphasis added]" (Wallerstein 1991:356). Braudel and DeLanda argue that what has been dubbed capitalism is in fact an "effect" of the operation of manipulated markets and market exchanges, or, rather, what they term unfree anti-markets (Pezzarossi 2014; Pezzarossi and Kennedy, this issue).

In many ways this approach can be allied to Tsing's (2015) recent notion of "salvage accumulation," wherein profiting from coerced "unpaid" or "free" knowledgeable production at little or no cost—such as kin-based labor to support wage laborers—creates a form of unequal exchange that allows for the accumulation of surplus value by declining to meet the full value of the means of reproduction or life for those laboring (Corcoran-Tadd and Pezzarossi 2018; Pezzarossi and Kennedy, this issue). Salvage accumulation can apply to human labor as well as productive "labor" of plants (e.g., photosynthesis) and animals (e.g., growth and reproduction), wherein the value is generated outside capitalist relations, yet extracted at little or no return to be translated into capital and thereby accumulated and dispersed through capitalist relations and capital networks (Tsing 2015). Of note is the parallel consideration of capital accumulation carried out through the unpaid or unfairly paid "labor" of human and nonhuman agents; in a sense unequal exchange carried out via coercive and violent means made possible by unequal power.

Jason Moore's (2014) concepts of "Cheap Labor" and "Cheap Nature" help to further bridge Braudel's and Tsing's interventions. Moore posits that the rampant accumulation characteristic of capitalism and its effects on the globe and inequality have been made possible by what Tsing calls "salvage accumulation," as little to no consideration of the effects of unsustainable accumulation are contemplated or, in sense, "paid for," but rather are just dealt with spatially (Harvey 2001) by moving to new

places of cheap labor and nature. Federici (2004) has provided an excellent example of the cheap labor that drives capital accumulation through a consideration of the unpaid labor of women in Western capitalist contexts. The argument made is that the largely domestic labor of women, while critical to the reproduction of labor through the literal care of present and future laboring bodies, has been unpaid. Such “free” labor provides capitalist projects with the laboring bodies necessary, albeit without any cost associated with the actual work of feeding, raising, and caring for said bodies through their life courses. Coercion, of a different sort, reemerges with the consideration of why or how laborers would find themselves going along with such exploitative relations, from the symbolic violence of sexist and misogynist hegemonic discourses that devalue domestic labor as “not-work” and seek to fix women as primarily domestic laborers, to the simple necessity for day-to-day survival that enables employers to set prices low and still find a sufficient labor force. Together, Braudel, Tsing, and Moore are all speaking to a similar mechanism of capitalist relations bound by common threads of coercion and unequal power: unequal exchange—broadly conceived—carried out via undue influence, coercion, and/or violence that results in greater surplus value and, thus, capital accumulation at the expense of those laboring and producing value.

Some have taken issue with the wide application of accumulation by dispossession that Harvey and the other allied perspectives discussed above take as muddling lines between the “proper” operation of capitalist (“free” markets and labor, unfettered economic competition, etc.) and decidedly non-capitalist violence and unfree relations of production (Bailey 2015). Elaborating on this point, Brass (2011) notes that such attempts at defining “capitalism proper” as free of violence and coercion, and discursively rooting unfree labor and primitive accumulation as the “prehistory” of capitalism, has the pernicious effect of making a transition to a “fully functioning” capitalism the goal of political struggle.

Such discourse of “proper” capitalism as violence free is problematic for a variety of reasons. First, it fetishizes “free” markets—defined as markets unmoored from power relations and cultural/political/economic influence—as something attainable (see section on embeddedness below for argument against the possibility of markets “free” of *any* broader human-derived influence). Second, it reifies markets as an abstract natural entity or force subject to a set of “natural laws” that operate wholly outside of human action (if allowed to).

Finally, there is no denying the central role “free” markets play in neoliberal discourse, specifically around calls for deregulation buttressed by conceptions of the natural operation and laws of markets, as noted above.

Whether such discourse on free markets, natural laws, and violence-free capitalism is used as an ideological mask to rationalize exploitative practices or has become part of the habitus of both exploiters and the exploited in the present (Ho 2009), critiques of capitalism can help undermine such damaging discourse and abstractions. Archaeology and its focus on daily practice and doings can bring to light how even in the “normal” transfer of wealth in capitalist accumulation coercion/violence of some sort is present; from the violent and damaging effects of exploitative production on bodies and environment to how dispossession breeds dependence (or vice versa), and “choice” and freedom are reduced to one being “free to work [on terms disproportionately controlled by those with capital] or starve” (Bailey 2015).

The inclusion of both extra-economic as well as economic avenues for coercion highlight the spectrum of imbalances, inequalities, and coercive/coerced relations that actively constitute the topography of the fetishized “free” market in neoliberal discourse, while resisting the purification of violence from “proper” capitalism. From these analytical perspectives, the “anything but idyllic” methods of primitive accumulation and unfree labor are not expunged from capitalism, but rather inhere in and remain constitutive of capitalism. Indeed, it has been argued that “capitalism would long ago have ceased to exist had it not engaged in fresh rounds of primitive accumulation, *chiefly through the violence of imperialism* [emphasis added]” (Harvey 2010:206); see also Federici (2004) and Perelman (2000).

In a related move, Blackburn’s (1997) study of Atlantic slavery makes the case for explicitly affirming the violence of enslavement as part and parcel of capitalism and modernity, rather than being seemingly incompatible with them, as he takes on the task of showing “the many ways in which American slavery proved compatible with elements of modernity [that] will help to dispel the tendency of classical social science—from Adam Smith to Ludwig von Mises, Auguste Comte to Max Weber—to identify slavery with traditionalism, patrimonialism and backwardness” (Blackburn 1997:4); see also Williams (1944).

Within archaeology, James Delle’s (2014:21–24) work on plantation slavery in Jamaica moves beyond claiming slavery as a precursor of or contradiction within capitalism. Instead, Delle opens up space for a variety

of modes of production spanning the spectrum of unfreedom operating within capitalism's "universalizing mission to ... maximize the concentration of wealth in the hands of those in control of the means of production" (Delle 2014:23–24).

Similarly, in Mintz's (1985) nuanced accounts, slavery and coerced labor remains integral to capitalism, in a variety of ways, as the rhythms and forms of labor control, discipline, and coercion of the plantation system came to serve as a template upon which industrial production is modeled or, indeed, experimented with; (see Armstrong [this issue]). While in such a formulation it may seem that the overt violence and coercion of the plantation remain only a precursor to capitalism rather than an integral and lasting component, Mintz is clear in asserting the blurry, problematic boundaries used to uphold the divisions between the enslaved and the proletarian wage laborer, and thus capitalist vs. non-capitalist modes of production (Mintz 1978:96–98).

Expanding on Wallerstein's notion of the "variegated" relations of production of the capitalist world system, Mintz argues that no single mode of production can be used to define capitalism, as coerced forms of labor, such as slavery, are co-present with "free" forms of wage labor in the broader capitalist world system and are in no way antithetical to capitalist labor relations (Mintz 1978). Further, Mintz notes that "just as slaves were not completely encapsulated by the state of servitude, so those who, technically free, labored at their side were not in fact completely unshackled," pointing directly—as mentioned above—at the continued haunting of coercion, force, and violence in disciplining and maintaining even "free" capitalist laborers and labor relations (Mintz 1978:96).

One of the major goals of this thematic collection is to focus attention on analyzing the coercive and violent power relations that spurred and maintain capitalism in the very colonial/imperial contexts that provided and continue to provide flows of capital critical to the modern, "capitalist" global economy, even if these moments of violence or unequal power and coercion are occulted in the conceptions of late capitalism. Rather, it is more a matter of difference of degree than difference of types when discussing capitalism as a process of accumulation through dispossession via unequal, violent, and coercive means, rather than the outcome of the "natural" operation of markets. Marguerite DeLoney's (this issue) engagement with Quijano's (2000) concept of the coloniality of power in modern life, in essence the

residues of colonial power that exert manifold influences in the present, is particularly salient here (González-Ruibal 2015). The contributors to this collection attempt, in various ways, to excavate and reveal that coloniality of power in historical and modern capitalist contexts, to highlight the spectrum of coercion and violence that inhere in and afford political economic relations, past and present, to the detriment of those subjected to them (Coronil 2007).

### **Smashing Capitalism: From Totalizing Abstraction to Heterogenous Economies and Effects**

A second theme cutting through these contributions and, indeed, supporting the analytical tack discussed in the previous section parallels Gibson-Graham's (2006:264) call to "smash Capitalism and see it in a thousand pieces [in order to] make its unity a fantasy, visible as a denial of diversity and change." What this entails is the fracturing of abstract, homogenous conceptions of capitalism and capitalist contexts into the historically contingent assemblage of diverse practices, actants, doings, and mechanisms that constitute multiple coexisting modes of production active in any one place at any one time. Of course, some of these economic practices generate the dispossessive effects attributed to capitalism, albeit not always in the same manner given the contingencies of local historical development. However, there are many more practices that do not generate these effects and may, in some cases, undermine or resist coercive/violent accumulation practices.

A focus on effects, inspired by Coronil's (2007) flexible framework for cross-context analyses of imperialism, reorients us as archaeologists to the tangible and archaeologically visible by focusing on the embodied and material outcomes that have come to define what we think of as capitalism. By letting similar effects guide our analyses, new threads emerge that allow for a comparative analysis across contexts that have previously been analytically segregated as premodern/modern, pre-colonial/colonial, capitalist/pre-capitalist, etc.

Digging down into the process of accumulation and how empirically identifiable actors and effects contribute to it further demystifies capitalism as an independent entity and regrounds analyses on the variety of actors and circumstances that generate the effects of this thing we archaeologists call capitalism (Bear et al. 2015). For Johnson and Bolender (this issue), a recourse to



capitalism is not necessary when they have traced the processes of land dispossession that creates the rural “proletariat” they see in Iceland; processes that parallel Marx and Lenin’s conceptions of capitalism, yet in a context traditionally written off as non-capitalist and thus for which the analytical concept has little or no purchase or contribution.

Beyond the comparative analyses made possible by a focus on effects, this perspective also brings the diverse practices and agents responsible for the inequalities, violence, and dispossessions attributed to capitalism to light, rather than attributing motivations and outcomes to the operation of an abstract system or ideology. All the contributions in this thematic collection move away from uncritical deployments of capitalism as a singular, homogenous, explanatory phenomenon that “fills in the gaps” in interpretation or, indeed, determines what we archaeologists know about a context prior to analysis (Funari et al. 1999). Moreover, many contributors move past assumptions that come with labeling a context “capitalist” (e.g., dominance of narrowly defined capitalist labor relations, ideologies of greed, commodification, uncritical mass consumption, individualized subjectivities) and instead look to focus their analyses on the details of history, the on-the-ground relations and their outcomes that are both unique to each context and yet parallel other contexts, both capitalist and non-capitalist; see contributions in this thematic collection by Armstrong, Mrozowski, Richard, Sampeck, Simpson, Pezzarossi and Kennedy, Johnson, and Bolender.

Such attention to the actual diversity of forms of production within a particular context provides an additional avenue for dealing with the apparent inconsistencies of coerced/violent modes of production coexisting within capitalist contexts, as discussed in the section above. For some, as discussed in the previous section, this is carried out by mapping the specific entangled economic, political, and social practices that afford different forms of dispossession and exploitation attributed to the operation of an abstract capitalist mode of production or organizing logic (Johnson and Bolender, this issue; Kelly, this issue; Pezzarossi and Kennedy, this issue). In a sense, what is pursued is a more concrete analysis that attempts to identify “economic difference in terms of forms of exploitation, in other words, the specific forms in which surplus labor is produced, appropriated, and distributed—which indeed was what Marx was concerned to know and transform” (Gibson-Graham 2006:262).

Such a turn, away from abstraction and expectations and toward “doings,” avoids the continual stretching of

capitalism as a singular thing in order to accommodate all the diverse labor relations, motivations, coercive tactics, and social/material outcomes that have all broadly been credited to or excluded from a disembodied capitalism or capitalist ideology. Instead, the contributors to this collection focus on the actual variety of productive practices present in any context, a research goal that plays to archaeology’s strengths in recovering the material residues of various productive practices and the diverse relations of production they afford. Identifying the modes of production present through empirical research, rather than assuming what they are (or should be), allows for “feudalisms, primitive communisms, socialisms, independent commodity production, slaveries, and of course capitalisms, as well as hitherto unspecified forms of exploitation” to come into view (Gibson-Graham 2006:262).

Roller’s contribution provides ample evidence of this economic diversity at Pardeesville, a 20th-century Pennsylvania “shantytown” that housed migrant labor for the coal-mining industry. At different times, laborers in Pardeesville worked for wages at nearby industrial coal diggings, but they also “bootlegged” coal, scavenged goods, and partook of what Roller calls “communal self-reliance.” These were a series of practices outside the usual capitalist relations of production, including gardening and food sharing between families, that helped insulate them from cycles of debt to and dependence on company stores, to make ends meet when their meager wages were not enough or to weather periods of unemployment. They also provided subsistence during strikes, essentially serving as a material base from which to actively undermine extant power relations and exploitative labor practices; (but see Pezzarossi and Kennedy [this issue] for discussion of how non-coerced labor of this sort may also support exploitative relations and capital accumulation). In addition, Roller makes the important point that, for community members, these other forms of labor were not necessarily viewed as acts of “resistance” to capitalism, but, rather, were vectors by which community identity emerged in ways not entirely defined by its relation to industrial capitalism.

Finally, a focus on the diversity of productive practices allows for alternative forms of uncoerced/non-capitalist forms of production and exchange to stake a more visible position in analyses. DeLoney calls on archaeologists and others “to seriously and critically consider possibilities beyond [capitalism]” in order to imagine and work toward futures unmoored from

capitalist legacies of violence, inequality, and the mechanisms through which they were made manifest. A closer look within capitalist contexts reveals a more diverse “anachronistic” and inappropriate arrangement of coexisting economic practices and modes of production: some that would be termed “capitalist” and some that point to other forms of more-just arrangements of production and exchange (Gibson-Graham 2006). Archaeological analyses of diverse economies—rather than of monolithic capitalist economies—help bring to light these alternatives to capitalist relations and provide fodder for the important work of imagining and building more-just futures.

### Embeddedness

While coercion, politics, and violence are important elements of the archaeologies of capitalism presented here, the contributions in this collection expand beyond them in their analyses toward a broader consideration of the “embeddedness” of economics and capitalist relations in the cultural, material, and historical contexts of the regions and sites examined. Of note, these issues have a long and convoluted history of discussion, immortalized in the formalist vs. substantivist debate in economic anthropology and archaeology, and I can only very briefly point to some of the most relevant points; see Oka and Kusimba (2008) for an archaeology-specific review. Polanyi’s (1944) early work brought awareness to how the economics of premodern societies were embedded in broader social and cultural relations that constrained and enabled particular forms of economic practice in relation to these structuring relations and regimes of value (commonly referred to as the “substantivist” school of economic thought). However, Polanyi limited this consideration of embeddedness to premodern societies (i.e., pre-capitalist) based on the unique rational, maximizing, “economic” behavior of disembodied individuals in modern price-based market economies. In this model, free market-based commerce driven by supply and demand was isolated to modern contexts, while noncommercial reciprocal, redistributive and elite-controlled forms of exchange were classified as premodern (Oka and Kusimba [2008:356]; compare this to the discussion of heterogeneous assemblages of production and economic practice in previous section).

As a result, Polanyi critiqued the universal applicability of classical economic theories and analyses of market-based capitalist contexts to premodern contexts (i.e., the “formalist” school) as he argued that the rational/maximizing behavior they offered as the baseline for explaining economic practice was unique to capitalist market economies of the present. In archaeology and economic history, this debate took shape along similar lines, albeit divided into primitivist and modernist perspectives. The former, echoing the substantivists, argued for the fundamental difference of “primitive” economies due to the influence that social and cultural values and norms played in directing economic practice in such embedded ancient or premodern economies and their non-market forms of exchange. The latter posited no such difference in kind, instead arguing for the “pan-human economic rationalism” of formalist, classical economic models as an appropriate framework for the comparative analysis of economies, past and present, regardless of the presence of markets (Oka and Kusimba 2008:343–344).

While these perspectives generated important insights into economies of all sorts, the binary classification scheme and the contentious debate it afforded obscured the analytical potential of a more inclusive composite framework working from the details of history and context, rather than abstract models. Oka and Kusimba (2008:356) note that the “efforts to embed all premodern economic interactions in social relations served to smother or to negate any commercial motivations that nonmodern peoples may have had” and, in turn, smothered a consideration of the embeddedness of modern economic interactions in social and cultural structures and relations.

The contributions of Granovetter (1985) and, later, Callon (1998) helped bridge these divides, as they considered how even modern, capitalist societies’ economic relations are embedded and structured by “non-economic” social and cultural norms, be it differing motivations and regimes of value (Granovetter 1985), or the way in which economics, as a discipline, is thought to influence economic practices (Callon 1998).<sup>1</sup> For Callon (1998), economic theory and models about how “the Market” (an abstraction) works, have come to prefigure analyses of actual marketplaces and their activities, creating a

<sup>1</sup> Also see Ho (2005) for discussion of how ideas about the “natural” laws of markets inform practices that, in a form of self-fulfilling prophecy, reproduce those laws.

situation where economic practice, in turn, comes to be informed not by “rational choice” or maximizing efforts, but rather by economic theories and ideas about markets, thereby embedding economic practice in late capitalist contexts within the discipline of economics and the values and ideas unique to it.

Within anthropology, Yanagisako’s (2002) ethnography of family firms that comprised the Italian silk industry crafts a foundational work for explorations of the cultural contingencies and embeddedness of capitalist/market-based practices. Yanagisako moves away from rational, profit-maximization models to explain the practices of Italian capitalists and instead probes “what cultural sentiments, meanings and subjectivities motivate and shape their entrepreneurial actions” (Yanagisako 2002:xi). Part of this work requires blurring new divides between tightly defined spheres of capitalist and non-capitalist practice, specifically related to the divisions between business and family. Yanagisako argues that this divide “both shapes ... social actions and misrepresents them,” as non-economic family concerns frequently “cross-over” and inform economic practice, while the reified construct of the family/business divide as a “thing” informs action, economic or otherwise. Through this analysis, insight is allowed into the actual mechanisms by which the economic is embedded in the social, as specific “non-economic” cultural values, ethics, and kin responsibilities recursively shape economic practices of accumulation, and vice versa. Of course, care must be taken to avoid slipping into other abstractions and essentialisms by framing an essentialized homogeneous culture as a singular determinant of economic practice, and/or by mapping them as bounded spatiotemporal “cultures of capitalism” (e.g., Asian, Italian, late, proto) (Yanagisako 2002:188). In short, “[c]ulture does not produce capitalism; people produce capitalism through culturally meaningful actions that at the same time produce families and selves with particular desires, sentiments, and identities” (Yanagisako 2002:188).

Stressing the embeddedness of capitalism requires a refocusing on the actual practices and the diverse context contingent, and dynamic assemblages of policies, ethics, discourse, values, kin ties, materials, and power relations that shape and are shaped by economic practices. Such a bottom-up, microhistorical analysis serves both to disrupt

models of disembodied, ahistorical, rational agents of capitalist accumulation, as well as to further undermine notions of capitalism’s disembodied and naturally operating “free” markets (see discussion in previous sections).

Ian Simpson (this issue) pushes the consideration of the ways even the processes of capital accumulation and the resulting disparities in wealth and resources are never purely about economics, but rather are “cultural and social in its playing out.” Citing Piketty (2014), Simpson convincingly argues that understanding wealth accumulation requires an understanding of how accumulation projects are carried out by local and non-local agents through culturally contingent, frequently conflicting, and continually (re)negotiated discourses of what is or is not “just” or justified. At the same time, the justifying discourses that prevail cannot be analyzed outside the unequal power of disparate actors that play a role in determining what is or is not justified capital accumulation practice.

Anna Tsing’s work (2005, 2015) is also critical here, as her concept of “friction” has drawn attention to the fallacy of a homogenizing capitalism/globalization displacing all before it and simply imposing an entirely new order on its terms. Instead, Tsing has brought attention to the way in which all projects of capital accumulation emerge from the encounter between local conditions, relations, and values. The “friction” that results produces effects on and transformation of the local informed by global processes, values, ideas, and relations that, in turn, produce the global by generating capital flows and new forms of capital-generating practice, albeit through the unique local configurations of labor and value. In Tsing’s (2005:4) words:

Capitalism spreads as producers, distributors, and consumers strive to universalize categories of capital, money, and commodity fetishism. Such strivings make possible globe-crossing capital and commodity chains. Yet these chains are made up of uneven and awkward links. *The cultural specificity of capitalist forms* arises from the necessity of bringing capitalist universals into action through worldly encounters [emphasis added].

And, “at this confluence, universals and particulars come together to create the forms of capitalism with which we live” (Tsing 2005:4).

In short, rather than reproducing old binaries of local vs. global in doing the archaeology of capitalism, a

focus on embeddedness reconceptualizes the local/particular as not subsumed in the global/universal as a “type” or component of a broader entity/process or thing (Jameson 2002:182–183; Tsing 2005:4). By stressing capitalism’s embeddedness in “local” politics, cultural practice, power dynamics, and enduring relations, the local and global emerge as mutually constituted, in turn drawing analyses to the more illuminating and interesting questions of how value is generated locally and translated into a universal/global “value” as capital that flows globally, albeit via situated “worldly encounters” (Yanagisako 2002; Tsing 2005:4).

In this vein, Richard’s (this issue) analysis of agriculture in Senegal looks to “decompose narratives of global determination and recuperate some of the unpredictable dimensions of economic history” through a consideration of the way the transformations and effects of capitalist and colonial projects are always mediated through and emergent from the local assemblage of historically specific “constellations of people, things, and non-things.” Richard provides a powerful bridge across the themes in this thematic collection by embedding the emergence of capitalist effects and outcomes within a diverse assemblage of actors, relations, and practices particular to a place that are also implicated as catalysts of violence and coercion crucial to accumulation. His analyses of peanut cash cropping in 19th- and 20th-century French colonial Senegal identifies how particular coercive instruments, such as the introduction of a head tax payable only in currency, were instrumental in shifting productive practices to peanut cash cropping and of catalyzing market dependence (on French imports) among the Seereer. However, a more complex picture emerges as the variety of historically unique and unpredictable forces and factors that sparked and stymied developments are identified. These include diverse triggers from droughts to the affordance of Siin environments to peanut cultivation, to the collapse of international markets and commodity prices in catalyzing debt and dependence, to the role of ancestral spirits (*pangool*) and ritual activities in mediating market engagements, to the unwieldy geography and settlement patterns that mediated colonial impulses and plans for commercial integration. Moreover, Richard is careful to document how capitalist logics and policies in Senegal did not precede

and replace the local, but, instead, emerged through their frictions in unpredictable ways (Tsing 2005), yet structured by asymmetries of power and the violence that begat them.

### Following the Specter

Presented above are some of the themes that help frame the reorientation and expansion of the archaeology of capitalism to explicitly engage with the imbrications of power, violence, politics, culture, accumulation, and market exchange in contexts traditionally (or not) identified as capitalist. The utility of such a reframing is manifold, both to analyses of capitalism and its effects, as well as to the broader relevance of historical archaeologies of capitalism to present political issues and to other archaeological sub-disciplines. Mirroring Dawdy’s (2010) recommendations, dispersing the uniqueness and temporal specificity of capitalist processes and practices of accumulation through dispossession creates new possibilities for comparative analyses with other archaeological contexts, be they ancient, “prehistoric,” historical, or contemporary. By situating capitalism in practices, doings, and heterogeneous assemblages with longer and shorter histories, capitalism is demystified, from “something we’ve never seen before” and thus have no roadmap with which to address its excesses, to a set of localized, exploitative relations, practices, and processes that are identifiable and can be changed, in part because similar practices and processes have been seen and transformed before. Braudel makes note of similar mechanisms and processes of dispossession lurking in human history and follows Deleuze and Guattari in noting that “‘after a fashion, capitalism has been a *spectre haunting every form of society*’—capitalism that is as I have defined it [emphasis added]” (Braudel 1979:581). While the scale of accumulation and the historical particulars of how diverse regions and communities have become entangled in asymmetrical ways through the violence and coercion of colonialism and imperialism are unique, the means by which these effects were made manifest are not.

Through analytical lenses attuned to embeddedness, violence, and heterogeneity, the articles in this collection work to reground an abstract, seemingly transcendent capitalism within the particular assemblage of agents, discourses, practices, and things that produced and produce the effects on life and experience historically ascribed to totalizing disembodied logics and the hidden hands of free

markets. Building on the legacies of varied Marxist, post-structuralist, and feminist critiques of capitalism, this thematic collection looks to contribute by explicitly foregrounding power and the spectrum of coercive, violent, and extra-economic practices that contribute to the dispossession, inequality, and abjection that has come to be known as “capitalism.”

To paraphrase Braidotti (2015), there is no “Winter Palace” of capitalism to storm, rather capitalism and its effects manifest in places and in doings the world over. If archaeologists wish to mitigate capitalism’s effects, action and critique must be directed to the sites where practices generative of capitalist effects are carried out, rather than targeting a mirage-like structure that exists “behind” those doings. In short, archaeologists must “smash Capitalism” into thousands of pieces (Gibson-Graham 2006:264). The contributors to this thematic collection sort through the fragments of a “smashed” capitalism to lay bare its fragile contingencies, enduring legacies, and immanent alternatives.

#### Compliance with ethical standards

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