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World(s)¹

Introduction

The point of departure for this text is formulated in the “Conversation on the End of the World” between Achille Mbembe and Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback, where Mbembe states “that we cannot think as if there was only one world or only one form of consciousness of the world. In consequence, not only the question of the world must remain open, but even the one about the world as an a priori.”² The consequence of this is that

the archives of this world in plural are themselves also plural – a multiplicity of worlds, a multiplicity of archives, if we wish to resume this idea in a simple formula. If we accept then that there is a multiplicity of worlds and a multiplicity of archives, it is also possible to admit that there are worlds that are finishing and others that are emerging and others that are in different situations from these as well. It is this simultaneity that should be thought. We cannot think the question about the end of the world as if it did not comprehend structurally, its own inverse in itself, namely the question about the emergence of the world, the world of another, and another world, and so on.³

To the problems Mbembe opens in this quote regarding the concept of world today, I would like to contrast what Alexander Galloway identifies as the poverty of contemporary philosophy: “What kind of world is it in which humans are

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² Achille Mbembe and Marcia Sá Cavalcante Schuback, “Conversation on the End of the World”, in M. S. C. Schuback and S. Lindberg (eds.), *The End of the World: Contemporary Philosophy and Art*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017, p. 23.

³ *Ibid.*

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on equal footing with garbage? What kind of world is it in which the landscape is a chaotic nothing-world, unfounded at its core and motivated by no necessary logic (Meillassoux) or by the logic of the market (Latour)?”⁴ What Mbembe points out at the outset, then, contrasts with a poor philosophy that looks the other way in a world where man is equal to garbage.

There is a definite common ground for both of these lines of thought, which can be found in the statement *there is no capitalist WORLD without colonialism*.⁵ But before I come to this and the problems that need to be addressed in order to understand the issue with thinking “the world” today, I will further outline the two contrasting ways of approaching this concept.

Returning to the first one subsumed in Mbembe’s opening quotation, it is important to connect it to his 2013 book *Critique of Black Reason*, where he writes:

The question of the world – what it is, what the relationship is between its various parts, what the extent of its resources is and to whom they belong, how to live in it, what moves and threatens it, where it is going, what its borders and limits, and its possible end, are – has been within us since a human being of bone, flesh, and spirit made its first appearance under the sign of the Black Man, as *human-merchandise*, *human-metal*, and *human-money*. Fundamentally, it was always *our* question. And it will stay that way as long as speaking the world is the same as declaring humanity, and vice versa.⁶

“[T]he term ‘Black’ has been generalized,” Mbembe writes.⁷ “This new fungibility, this solubility, institutionalized as a new norm of existence and expanded to the entire planet, is what I call the *Becoming Black of the world*,”⁸ or *le Devenir-Nègre du Monde*. Mbembe contends that the systematic risks that Black

⁴ Alexander Galloway, “The Poverty of Philosophy: Realism and Post-Fordism”, *Critical Inquiry*, 39 (2/2013), pp. 364–365.

⁵ The central part of this text is based on the research and writings I did for the workshop *Conjunctural Geographies of Postsocialist and Postcolonial Conditions: Theory Thirty Years after 1989*, Leipzig, Germany, 15–16 May 2020.

⁶ Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. L. Dubois, Durham, Duke University Press, 2017, pp. 179–80. First published as *Critique de la raison nègre*, Paris, La Découverte, 2013.

⁷ Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, p. 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*

slaves faced throughout early capitalism became the norm for the vast majority of subaltern people and that the new imperial practices we see today are linked to a tendency to universalize the Black condition. New imperial practices “borrow as much from the slaving logic of capture and predation as from the colonial logic of occupation and extraction, as well as from the civil wars and raiding of earlier epochs.”⁹

Another perspective, or more precisely, a philosophy of the becoming of the Black world, is offered by Kevin Everod Quashie when reflecting on black movements from the Combahee River Collective (CRC) to Black Lives Matter. CRC was a radical Black feminist organization formed in 1974 and named after Harriet Tubman’s 1863 raid on the Combahee River in South Carolina that freed 750 enslaved people. Its 1977 “Combahee River Collective Statement” formulated the interlocking of oppression and identity politics.¹⁰

Quashie emphasizes that

the idiom “a black world” names an aesthetic imaginary that encompasses heterogeneity. I take inspiration, as ever, from the worldmaking conceptualized prominently in black women’s feminism. When the Combahee River Collective’s “Black Feminist Statement” announces that “our politics initially sprang from a shared belief that Black women are inherently valuable,” it signals not only the enduring marginalization of black women in the world but also an imagining determined to locate philosophical and political meaningfulness through the specificity of black femaleness. There is a similar capaciousness in Hortense J. Spillers’s argument about black femaleness in the iconic “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” or in Alice Walker’s womanism, with its ever-widening pool of human insight cultivated from a black female vernacular idiom.¹¹

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He continues:

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁰ The Combahee River Collective, “The Combahee River Collective Statement”, in Z. R. Eisenstein (ed.), *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Social Feminism*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1978, pp. 362–372.

¹¹ Kevin Everod Quashie, *Black Aliveness, or a Poetics of Being*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2021, p. 11.

As necessary as “Black Lives Matter” has proven to be, so efficient and beautiful a truth-claim, its necessity disorients me; to hear it said or see it printed as an emblem is existentially disorienting. I want a black world where the matter of mattering matters indisputably, where black mattering is beyond expression. I want to read and study in the orientation of a black world.

Today there is no reconciling the facts of our lives, which seem tethered to death, and the case for black aliveness. Both have to be true at the same time.

This work begins with a single premise, an instruction, really: imagine a black world. Such a directive acknowledges that the New World plunder of modernity and coloniality enacts a destruction of the world as it was and might have become, that the New World unorders the relationship of the human to place, time, other human. Or we might say there never was a world, that imperialism’s destructiveness is that it imposed a world logic. Either case describes world-failure that, among other horrors, mobilizes blackness as an antithesis to human life.¹²

Going back to the second previously mentioned line of reasoning, its representative figure is Quentin Meillassoux. His formal-mathematical manner of thinking flees from the world to think a world as a possibility based on chaos theory, leaning toward inhumanity. With Meillassoux, we discover “a way to think realities subsisting beyond the correlation and not dependent on it. What subsists in-itself, irrespective of the correlation, is a *‘time of a radical inhumanity’* and this is why he will place a strong emphasis on temporality when discussing the absolute.”¹³

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Peter Gratton explains that the world in Meillassoux’s thinking is based on the “*‘pas-tout’* – translatable as ‘not-all’, ‘not-whole’ or even ‘not-everything’”, which “refers to the non-totalisability or subsumability of subjects under a given universal.”¹⁴ It is based on Jacques Lacan’s *‘pas-tout’*, used mainly in his

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹³ Peter Gratton and Paul J. Ennis, “Introduction: From a Speculative Materialism to a Speculative Ethics”, in P. Gratton and P. J. Ennis (eds.), *The Meillassoux Dictionary*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2015, p. 8.

¹⁴ Peter Gratton, “Non-whole/Non-all”, in *The Meillassoux Dictionary*, p. 126.

Seminar XX, Encore (1972–1973)¹⁵ and explored in “L’Étourdit” (1973).¹⁶ Gratton explains:

For Meillassoux, until Cantor, what was possible was thought under a set of possibilities, even if highly improbable. In each set or World, there is a given range of chances. For example, for a die, the chance of rolling a one is one out of six. But what Meillassoux says is that there is no totalisable set of all possible sets or universes. As such, while within this World we have a number of possibles, the universe itself cannot be totalised in terms of its possibilities. This he refers to as ‘world’ (lower case) or the ‘virtual’, the illimitable non-Whole of possibilities of creation in hyper-chaos.¹⁷

“For Meillassoux,” as Gratton and Paul J. Ennis reformulate Meillassoux’s “Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign,”¹⁸

given the capacities of hyper-chaos, it is conceivable that the current stability of natural laws has been upended before – that is, the facts of the physical laws have themselves changed. Meillassoux argues there were previous Worlds capitalised to distinguish them from the world of the non-Whole – prior to this one. They are (1) the World of inorganic matter; (2) the World of organic matter; and (3) the World of organic matter and thought. In this way, Meillassoux differentiates between the notion of World and ‘world’, since each World emerges *ex nihilo* from the ‘world’ of hyper-chaos. The essential point here is that once one is willing to accept Meillassoux’s ontological vision that no non-contradictory possibility can be discounted, then we see the possibility of a new World to come, which has immense implications for ethics.

Meillassoux argues at various points that from one World to the next there is a qualitative leap that cannot be explained in terms of the physical laws of the pre-

¹⁵ Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge, Book XX: Encore*, trans. B. Fink, New York, W. W. Norton, 1998.

¹⁶ Jacques Lacan, “L’Étourdit”, in *Autres écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 2001, pp. 449–496.

¹⁷ Gratton, “Non-whole/Non-all”, p. 126.

¹⁸ See Quentin Meillassoux, “Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign”, paper presented at the Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany, 20 April 2012, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/arena-attachments/886529/539a4b4a8c213179c159eefc04a28947.pdf>, accessed 7 September 2021.

vious one. Hence, each World is *sui generis* or self-causing: the World of thought could not have come out of the laws governing organic matter and organic matter, he avers, could not have been caused by simple matter. In this manner, speculative materialism ‘affirms’ the ‘radical contingency of our world.’¹⁹

In short, as Gratton and Ennis point out in their conclusion regarding Meillassoux’s 2008 paper²⁰:

There is no need to detail all those kinds of spectres Meillassoux describes – the dead child, the victims of heinous massacres of all sorts – since only the most affectless of us do not feel the existential weight of the horrors of this or that death, as well as all the Holocausts of history. To be human is to live under the shadow of this wide work of mourning. For Meillassoux essential mourning over these spectres is impossible in our current World. What words could console us concerning them?²¹

To this question, I would immediately respond that the idea of the world in Mbembe’s thought is about temporalization and another history. Mbembe argues that a negation of time (i.e., a colonial view of time) serves to produce a humanity without history.²² Being “radically located *outside of time*,” or *to connect* to the initial logic of repetition – it is “*repetition without difference*. Native time was sheer repetition – not of events as such, but the instantiation of the very law of repetition. Following Fanon, Mbembe understands decolonisation as precisely a subversion of the law of repetition – as a “possibility to reconstitute the human

¹⁹ Gratton and Ennis, “Introduction”, p. 14.

²⁰ See Quentin Meillassoux, “Time without Becoming”, paper presented at the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Middlesex University, London, United Kingdom, 8 May 2008, https://speculativeheresy.files.wordpress.com/2008/07/3729-time_without_becoming.pdf, accessed 7 September 2021.

²¹ Gratton and Ennis, “Introduction”, p. 15.

²² See Marina Gržinić, “Memory and History and the Act of Remembering”, lecture at *The Boundary Condition. About the Archive and Its Limits* seminar, MACBA, Spain, 16 February 2018, <https://www.macba.cat/en/exhibitions-activities/activities/boundary-condition-about-archive-and-its-limits>. See also Marina Gržinić, “Introduction: Burdened by the Past, Rethinking the Future. Eleven Theses on Memory, History, and Life”, in M. Gržinić, J. Pristovšek, and S. Uitz (eds.), *Opposing Colonialism, Antisemitism, and Turbo-Nationalism: Rethinking the Past for New Conviviality*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, pp. 1–21.

after humanism's complicity with colonial racism."²³ We should be clear that we are dealing with another history, not that of white supremacy, which believes itself to be the only valid history (of progress leading into the void). The point is to take colonialism and coloniality into account. Mbembe says at the very end of this text that we must escape the status of victimhood, and break with the "good conscience" and the denial of responsibility. Only through this double approach will we be able to formulate a new politics and ethics based on the call for justice.

In order to understand the antagonistic nature of these two positions, I propose that we take an unexpected path, summed up in the maxim *there is no capitalist WORLD without colonialism*. Or rather, we will undertake a conceptualization that illuminates the ontological and epistemological dimensions of the world at stake.

There Is No Capitalist WORLD without Colonialism

Capitalist dominance and its mode of reproduction are based on processes of racialization and class and gender discrimination that centrally redefine the relationship between labor and capital, the extraction of surplus value (profit) as conceived in the Marxist critique of political economy, as well as the dispossession of land, violent processes of othering, and the functioning of (neo)liberal institutions with their ideological and repressive apparatuses.

The relationship between capitalism and colonialism, since they work hand in hand, can be paraphrased through the dictum of decolonial theory, "there is no modernity without coloniality," just as there is no capitalism without colonialism. The intertwining of colonialism and capitalism tangentially affects the form of what is, in the parlance of Marxism, the base of capital, the mode of capitalist reproduction, and likewise the superstructure of the capitalist social, political,

²³ Achille Mbembe, "Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive", a paper forming the basis of a series of public lectures given at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER), University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg), the University of Cape Town (in conversation with the Rhodes Must Fall movement), and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Stellenbosch (as part of the Indexing the Human Project), 2015, <https://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/Achille%20Mbembe%20-%20Decolonizing%20Knowledge%20and%20the%20Question%20of%20the%20Archive.pdf>, accessed 7 September 2021.

knowledge, and institutional regimes that aggregate within a given capitalist formation, i.e., necrocapitalism, financial capitalism, turbo-capitalism, etc.

This text reflects on the relation between capitalism and colonialism in order to rethink two historical forms of capitalism that turn out not to be historical at all, but are fully functional in the present moment: racial capitalism and settler capitalism, or racial-settler capitalism as its common formation. Thus, my main thesis is that in order to critically assess the institutions built on the soil of colonialism that perpetuate the worlds of neoliberal global capitalism, financial capitalism, and necrocapitalism, we need to rethink the two main divisions mediated by decolonial theory and decolonization as analytical tools: the racial/colonial divide and the imperial/colonial divide.

To do this, we must first observe the convergence of colonialism and capitalism and how theory, past and present, reflects on their relationship. Below, I would like to explain the hyper-violent mode of the relationship between labor and capital, to the point where we move from slavery and racism to the concept of democracy itself. In this analysis, I also want to emphasize the inherent role of geography – the banality of the world as East, West, North, and South – in the processes of racialization that stems from past enslavement and racism and persists today as the structural and institutional racism that reverberates in the concept of racialization. What do I mean by this? A long-lasting, never-ending process of differentiation, violence, and exclusion based on the ideological concept of race. More than that, racialization refers not only to people, ethnicities, and non-citizens or second-class citizens, but also to geography. The geography of the former East and the contemporary South is a racialized geography.

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Primitive Accumulation and Capitalism

Nikhil Pal Singh argues that one of the biggest problems in understanding the role of colonialism and violent racialization and enslavement within capitalism is the distinction between the so-called pre-phase of capitalism, i.e., primitive accumulation, and what follows it as “proper” capitalism.²⁴ This problem is well elaborated in the 2021 book *All Incomplete* by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten:

²⁴ Nikhil Pal Singh, “On Race, Violence, and So-Called Primitive Accumulation”, *Social Text*, 34 (3/2016), pp. 27–50.

Let's approach this again by way of Afropessimism's special stringency. No slave, no world, as Frank Wilderson says; and given that this wall is erected and comes down, like its black heroes, in the world, those heroes have failed (at abolition); and so the world remains, in all its geocidally, genocidally extractive relation to earth and the differences earth bears. Such analysis zeroes in on the undeniably anheroic, the hero who fails, who fails to cohere into the monumental, who fails to instantiate any coherence of a people, as statue, statute, status, or state. She would appear, most devastatingly, as never to have been erected, never to have been torn down, as unable to fall in having always already fallen into abandon and dispossession.²⁵

In this pre-phase of capitalism, Marx registers the violence, the hyper-violence, necessary to form the super-exploited people under slavery, which will then figure as only a pre-stage of "proper" capitalism and its development. The extraordinary violence of primitive accumulation, as Singh points out, poses an "enduring historical and theoretical challenge," which "revolves around how to interpret the temporal and conceptual cleavage,"²⁶ a split between the primitive accumulation of capital and the ordinary accumulation of capital in what we might call "real" or "developed" or "proper" capitalism.

For Singh, this presents a limitation in Marx's work "for thinking about the ongoing development of racial categories – more precisely, the social reproduction of race as an ascriptive relationship anchored in ongoing violence, dominion, and dependency."²⁷ Thus, for Singh, Marx's focus on developed capitalism

can lead to an inattention, even indifference to how capital establishes new lines of social and historical genesis in which the ongoing differentiation between free labor and less than free labor, and the manifestation of that differentiation in racial, ethnic, and gender hierarchies within laboring populations, is retained as an instrument of labor discipline, surplus appropriation, and even a measure of capitalism's progressivism, in that it purports to render such distinctions anachronistic over the long run.²⁸

²⁵ Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *All Incomplete*, Colchester, New York and Port Watson, Minor Compositions, 2021, p. 140.

²⁶ Singh, "On Race", p. 33.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Singh asserts that

Marx's oeuvre, which frequently compares the contemporaneous forms of work carried out by workers and the enslaved people during this time, exemplifies the problem we face, both offering support for what W. E. B. Du Bois once called the "slavery character" of capitalism, particularly in its Anglo-American ascendancy, and yet contributing to a problematic conceptual relegation of African slavery within the history of capitalism that has haunted radical politics ever since.²⁹

Singh concludes: "In this New World iteration, primitive accumulation is not yet capitalism for Marx; it is plunder."³⁰ The result is that in "real" or "developed" or "proper" capitalism whiteness comes to be associated "with property, citizenship, wages, and credit, along with the renewal of surplus and/or superexploited subjectivities and collectivities at the openly coercive, lawless/law-defining edge of capitalist accumulation by dispossession."³¹

As early as in 1983, the assertion of Marxist theory that capitalism in its primitive accumulation phase was not yet proper capitalism was challenged by Cedric Robinson in his seminal book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*.³²

As Robin D. G. Kelly writes of Robinson's concept of racial capitalism in the introduction to *Boston Review's* 2017 issue on "Race, Capitalism and Justice":

Robinson challenged the Marxist idea that capitalism was a revolutionary negation of feudalism. Instead capitalism emerged within the feudal order and flowered in the cultural soil of a Western civilization already thoroughly infused with racialism. Capitalism and racism, in other words, did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of "racial capitalism" dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide. Capitalism was "racial" not because of some conspiracy to divide workers or justify slavery and dispossession, but because racialism had already permeated Western feudal so-

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²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³² Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2000. First published by Zed Press, 1983.

ciety. The first European proletarians were *racial* subjects (Irish, Jews, Roma or Gypsies, Slavs, etc.) and they were victims of dispossession (enclosure), colonialism, and slavery *within Europe*. Indeed, Robinson suggested that racialization within Europe was very much a *colonial* process involving invasion, settlement, expropriation, and racial hierarchy.³³

Robinson wrote in 1983 that the

violent event of colonial aggression and its corollary of “Indian” slavery had already been transmuted in [Benjamin] Franklin’s [1753] neo-nativistic “American” mind into a relationship of supplication secured by an economic rationale; indeed, the dependence of “new Comers” on natives already reversed. The curtain of supremacist ideology had by now begun its descent on American thought, obscuring from the historically unconscious generations of descendants of colonialists and later immigrants the oppressive violence and exploitation interwoven in the structure of the republic.³⁴

Or, to put it simply, Marx was mistaken when he believed that the European bourgeoisie would rationalize social relations in the course of capitalist development; instead, “real” or “developed” or “proper” capitalism racialized these relations even more brutally. In Singh’s words:

As subsequent anti-Marxist critics have pointed out [...], slavery in this register is paradoxically both indispensable for thinking capitalism and “unthinkable” as such: sometimes it seems “closer to capitalism’s primal desire [...] than wage [labor],” while at other times it represents what has been superseded by an order of oppression whose stealth (or veiled) power rests upon a supposed ability to dispense with violent dominion.³⁵

³³ Robin D. G. Kelley, “What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?”, *Boston Review*, 12 January 2017, <https://bostonreview.net/race/robin-d-g-kelley-what-did-cedric-robinson-mean-racial-capitalism>, accessed 6 September 2021.

³⁴ Robinson, *Black Marxism*, p. 77.

³⁵ Singh, “On Race”, p. 29.

Racialized Geographies

The processes of racialization and discrimination are repetitive and continuous. It is important to understand the hyper-violent mode of the relationship between labor and capital and that this violence ominously defines (neo)liberal-parliamentary democracy (Mbembe speaks of racial democracy³⁶) and its institutions to this day.

Moreover, contemporary capitalism and racism reinforce the transformation of all social, political, and economic relations in contemporary Europe. We see how well-rehearsed procedures that work in the West are implemented in the East. The formerly socialist states of Eastern Europe adopted the white power regimes of their occidental brothers, quickly and brutally imposing a merciless logic of hyper-neoliberalism over the entire territory. However, the critique of some decolonial writers that the former socialist countries of Europe are dysfunctional, archaic, obsolete, and therefore excluded from the decolonial agenda as presumably being unable to develop a critical stance is similar to the post-World War II narratives with which the Occident, instead of dealing with the Holocaust, antisemitism, and the genocides of World War II, reframed the discourse as a struggle between democracy and totalitarianism.³⁷

It can be said loudly and at length that we, and by that I mean Slovenians, other citizens of the former Yugoslavia, and, more widely, the socialist bloc of the former Eastern Europe, were considered “a piece of shit” (to describe something simply as annoying, barbaric and smelly) during the transition to capitalism, in the 1990s. This does not, however, excuse post-socialist people drifting into hyper-nationalism and turbo-fascism.³⁸ A common explanation and historical

³⁶ See Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. S. Corcoran, Durham, Duke University Press, 2019.

³⁷ See Madina Tlostanova, “The Postcolonial and the Postsocialist: A Deferred Coalition? Brothers Forever?,” *Postcolonial Interventions*, 3 (1/2018), pp. 1–37. Tlostanova states in an exaltation of colonial modernity that “The USSR with its showcase ideology offered a grand utopia or a new religion. The failed socialist modernity has lost its most important future vector and turned into a land of the futureless ontology. By losing to the capitalist modernity, it failed to meet the expectations of so many ‘wretched of the earth.’” *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁸ For turbo-fascism see Žarana Papić, “Europe After 1989: Ethnic Wars, the Fascisation of Social Life and Body Politics in Serbia,” in M. Gržinić (ed.), *The Body*, special issue, *Filozofski vestnik*, 23 (2/2002), pp. 191–205.

excuse for this drift is that we have been colonized by various imperial powers and by socialism in the past. This constantly repeated “mantra” helps many post-socialist – now turbo-capitalist – nations in the territory of former Eastern Europe embrace the local right-wing hyper-nationalist fascists and political profiteers, who function like Mafioso organizations, thus bringing them to power. And since such processes are also at work in the Occident (albeit differently, not through turbo-fascism, but through postmodern fascism, hyper-individualization, and the war state), support for local predatory politics among international neoliberal politicians is not surprising.

To put it in another way, as Harney and Moten have asserted in *All Incomplete*:

The humanization of the flesh is the racialization of the flesh. It is the catastrophe that befalls the species-being, one not even Marx can reverse. This is why logistics is the science of whiteness in/as the science of loss.

Such is the peril to flesh/earth by the time of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, as Denise Ferreira da Silva teaches. Surveillance. Access. Transparency. Resilience. The globalized, generalized fear of loss is everywhere logistics sees the need to straighten out our tangled flesh. And everywhere logistics finds monstrosity, it humanizes it. Now, to be obscure, as Saidiya Hartman instructs, is to be entangled; it is to be hunted, to be subject to the subject of the grasp.³⁹

And further, “Logistics emerges as much as the science of loss prevention as the science of moving property through the emptiness, of making the world as it travels by filling it. This is not making the road as we walk, in the anarchist tradition. This is converting everything in its path into a coordinated time and space for ownership.”⁴⁰

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Logistics is key, since it discloses “white science”; as Hartney and Moten write:

And what is the nature of our work in surveillance capitalism? Logistics. We bear, in the obsessive self-management of ‘our’ clicks and strokes, the overdetermination logistics lays down. It is both through and as a set of applications we apply –

³⁹ Harney and Moten, *All Incomplete*, p. 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

both on and underneath a field of platforms we erect – that our labor further concentrates the means of production with the goal quite simply and starkly of preventing us from taking care of one another, from looking out for one another, by making us look at one another, which is taking care of them.⁴¹

Post-socialism is an almost infinite transition to turbo-fascist capitalism. The post-socialist state exclusively reinforces its national format and induces, as much as possible, hyper-violent capitalist relations: it is violence carried out by the state and its apparatuses to naturalize racist labor. Framing racialization, dehumanization, and othering precisely by examining the capitalist system of reproduction fully executed throughout the former Eastern Europe allows for the exploration of racialized (re)production, the nexus between labor and capital, and the operation of capitalism as the other side of colonialism, or vice versa. The required analysis is not merely semiotical, but frames labor and its forms, i.e., slave labor, wage labor, and disposable labor, as key components.

Harney and Moten assert, in reference to Shoshana Zuboff's *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*,⁴² that a specific surveillance capitalism's predatory economic logic is at work in necrocapitalism. Though exposing a critique, they precisely encapsulate the relation of capital labor:

Zuboff argues that information technology now makes its money from gathering, packaging, and selling massive amounts of data on our everyday behavior. Thus, Facebook or Google do not make money by targeting your tastes or behavior with advertisements as is commonly assumed. According to Zuboff, they have no interest in us individually, though that does not mean these tools do not also individuate. Rather, it is the aggregate data that matters because it can be used not to track but to change behavior. She notes, moreover, that intervening in aggregate provides even more valuable aggregate data. Facebook is spying on you only insofar as it is spying on us, according to Zuboff; and if we are its raw material, and its product, then her employment of the concept of primitive accumulation is justified. Problematically, this argument appears to assume capital without labor, labor having been replaced by an algorithm that will have carried out itself. But

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴² Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, New York, PublicAffairs, 2019.

what we learn from the Italian autonomists, and from centuries of theorization by Africans experiencing the nightmare of total subsumption, which Zuboff's assumption of absent work extends, is that we are raw material, product, and labor, too. Our work makes this economic logic, or any economic logic, work.⁴³

The last decades of turbo-fascism and hyper-nationalism, however, also brought about important political impulses for new activism and political trans-national solidarities throughout the entire space of the formerly socialist Eastern Europe.

The Racial/Colonial Divide

In what follows, I would like to shed more light on these relations of separation. In the next two subsections, I will approach racialized geographies through two different divisions. The first is the racial/colonial division, while the second is the imperial/colonial division. We will see that through these divisions we get a matrix of the world that, in the case of the racial/colonial divide, divides the global world and Europe according to different but equally important ways of extracting wealth and dispossession, on the one hand, and shaping the social, on the other (as forms of fascism, populism, and liberalism). In the case of the imperial/colonial divide, which is related to Europe's relationship with its former colonies, the colonial past is transposed into an aphasic configuration.

The racial/colonial divide traverses and reorganizes two forms of capitalism: racial capitalism and settler capitalism. In racial capitalism, the connection between labor and capital is at stake, while in settler capitalism, the connection between land and capital is at stake. Sarah E. K. Fong theorizes them together; she speaks of racial-settler capitalism "as an intervention into prevailing approaches to racial capitalism and settler capitalism."⁴⁴ She emphasizes "first, that the development of capitalist relations in the United States depended upon both the exploitation of racialized labor and the accumulation of Indigenous lands," and second, "how the violent relations of racial-settler capitalism are re-

⁴³ Harney and Moten, *All Incomplete*, p. 18.

⁴⁴ Sarah E. K. Fong, "Racial-Settler Capitalism: Character Building and the Accumulation of Land and Labor in the Late Nineteenth Century", *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 43 (2/2019), p. 27.

made through attempts to cultivate consent and desire among African-descended and Indigenous peoples.”⁴⁵

For racial capitalism, the most important internal process is racialization; for settler capitalism, it is colonization, because “labor exploitation is indebted to theories of racial capitalism, which identify the fundamentally racial nature of labor exploitation.”⁴⁶ As Fong argues, Cedric Robinson’s “stratifications between labor and capital are organized by racial difference such that racialized lower classes provide the labor and resources necessary for the accumulation of wealth by the ruling classes. For Robinson, the term *racial capitalism* identifies the imbrication of capitalist production and the differential valorization of racialized life.”⁴⁷

Racial capitalism (chattel slavery is the best way to think of it) prioritizes the devaluation of racialized lives and the subordination of racialized labor. In chattel slavery, the enslaved person is legally made the personal property (chattel) of the slave owner. It is clear that through the myth that wage-labor, unlike slave labor, can be freely sold on the market in contrast to slave labor, the processes of capitalist-colonial violent racialization and exploitation have not disappeared, but persist to this day.

Shannon Speed argues in a 2017 text⁴⁸ that Latin American states are settler colonial states, emphasizing in particular this land-colonial relationship based on Patrick Wolfe’s 1998 *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*.⁴⁹ Speed underscores “the land–labor binary” elaborated in most of Wolfe’s work and reiterated in his recent 2016 *Traces of History*,⁵⁰ which “has become an often-unspoken and largely unexamined premise of the settler state in ways that occlude significant complexity and foreclose recognition of settler structures.”⁵¹

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Shannon Speed, “Structures of Settler Capitalism in Abya Yala”, *American Quarterly*, 69 (4/2017), pp. 783–790.

⁴⁹ See Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*, London, Cassell, 1998.

⁵⁰ See Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*, London, Verso, 2016.

⁵¹ Speed, “Structures of Settler Capitalism in Abya Yala”, p. 783.

Here, we can bring in Quashie's reflections on the enduring afterlives of slavery and coloniality and the ways in which Black life can be wrested from its proximity to death. Quashie departs initially from "Christina Sharpe, whose *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* characterizes 'wake' as an idiom not only of consciousness but also of life's deathness: 'In the midst of so much death and the fact of Black life as proximate to death, how do we attend to physical, social, and figurative death and also to the largeness that is Black life, Black life insisted from death?'"⁵² Quashie states that this attending to life is what Sharpe theorizes as "'wake work,' the materialization of being through death such that 'even as we experienced, recognized, and lived subjection, we did not simply or only live in subjection and as the subjected.' *In the Wake* is Sharpe's pursuit of 'the modalities of Black life lived in, as, under, despite Black death'"⁵³

Quashie's conclusion from this reading is overwhelmingly powerful:

I read Sharpe's study as a definitive articulation of black pessimism as a field, especially its exploration of what cultural theorist Saidiya Hartman describes as the enduring afterlife of slavery and coloniality. Indeed, by placing the terms of death (including "abjection," "negation," "terror," and "nonbeing") at the center of thinking about blackness, black pessimism has reenergized a critique of liberal humanism's uncritical faith in progress and its fallacies of freedom. The meaning of black freedom, these scholars remind us, cannot be indexed to the Enlightenment and cannot be mapped in the syntax of Western norms; there is no end to the condition of coloniality and captivity – no end, but there is life in the midst and aftermath of those interminable conditions.⁵⁴

We must also recognize that criminal fraud over indigenous land titles must be seen as a structural part of the U.S. economy. Joanne Barker addresses the co-production of U.S. imperialism, colonialism and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. She says, referring to Simpson Leanne, that because of

U.S. imperialism and colonialism – historical and present today – Indigenous relationships and responsibilities to the land are difficult at best. In maintain-

⁵² Quashie, *Black Aliveness*, p. 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

ing life practices that are land based, Indigenous people come “face-to-face with settler colonial authority, surveillance and violence because, in practice, it [land] places Indigenous bodies between settlers and their money [...] Being a practitioner of land as pedagogy and learning in my community [...] [is] a process of learning how to be on the land anyway.”⁵⁵

Barker is Lenape, Turtle Clan, and in many of her influential analyses explores the violent procedures of the dispossession of Lenapehoking (Lenape territory) carried out under the necro-articulatory grip of the U.S.A. as an imperial formation. Fong also returns to this point when she writes that settler capitalism “foreground[s] the ways in which Indigenous peoples have experienced territorial dispossession and genocide in the interest of land accumulation and exploitation.”⁵⁶

The accumulation and dispossession of territories provide the soil in which extractive and racialized economies can develop. In “Predatory Value: Economies of Dispossession and Disturbed Relationalities”, the authors expose that “[f]inancialization, debt, and the accelerated concentration of wealth today work through social relations already configured and disposed by imperial conquest and racial capitalism,” and that “[r]acialization – manifesting in systemic and everyday forms of devaluation, exploitation, and expendability, as well as the violence of racial terror and carceral regimes – and ongoing colonial modes of settlement, occupation, governmentality, and jurisprudence work in tandem with more capacious forms of US global militarism and empire.”⁵⁷

Racial capitalism is very effective in neoliberal global capitalism as it kills the social structure within the West and drives it to reproduce white supremacy. In Marxist parlance, the superstructure is also racialized in order to “freely” exploit racialized labor. What is essential is that these processes do not leave out the social; on the contrary, for extraction and dispossession through racialization to really work, the space of the social must also be racialized, i.e., loaded with rac-

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⁵⁵ Joanne Barker, “Decolonizing the Mind”, *Rethinking Marxism*, 30 (2/2018), p. 209.

⁵⁶ Fong, “Racial-Settler Capitalism”, p. 27.

⁵⁷ Jodi A. Byrd, Alyosha Goldstein, Jodi Melamed, and Chandan Reddy, “Predatory Value: Economies of Dispossession and Disturbed Relationalities”, *Social Text*, 36 (2/2018), pp. 1–18, accessed online at: https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1521&context=english_fac, accessed 7 September 2021.

ist and class ideologies. These ideologies support and feed liberal individualism (the notion that everything is “free” to exchange and therefore free to sell), and obscure the fact that democracy works exclusively through violence (democracy is only promoted and recalibrated through the constant use of violence).

In 2015, Jodi Melamed analytically uncovered the importance of emphasizing the power of racial capitalism on three levels: 1. “primitive accumulation – where capital is accrued through transparently violent means (war, land-grabbing, dispossession, neo/colonialism)”⁵⁸ while forming the basis of capitalist reproduction; 2. ideologies of individualism, liberalism, and democracy that blossom from this very fundament and destroy any sense of community; and 3. new forms of political activism that challenge these relations.⁵⁹

That is why activism, solidarity, and social justice must be central to the politics of the future.

Racial capitalism

Settler capitalism

Racial/Colonial Divide

Racialization	Colonization
Racialized labor/discrimination	Colonized land/accumulation
Exploitation	Dispossession
Labor/capital/profit	Land/capital/profit
Chattel slavery	Indigenous/native land
Slave capitalism	
Slave labor, wage labor, obsolete labor	Indenture extraction ⁶⁰ /profit
Debt/capital/profit	Devastation/gentrification

Settler capitalism and settler colonialism are organized around the imposition of space over time, which means that the total dispossession of land by the

⁵⁸ Jodi Melamed, “Racial Capitalism”, *Critical Ethnic Studies*, 1 (1/2015), p. 76.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Indenture is precisely grasped by Harney and Moten, for whom to “indent” is “to serve the debt.” See Harney and Moten, *All Incomplete*, p. 79.

necrocapitalist power structure and its violent supremacist regimes are central. In the context of the dispossession of Indigenous people, the ultimate goal is the destruction and elimination of communities, the people. At the same time, capitalism cannot reproduce itself without the extraction of surplus value from racialized labor. Racialized labor exploitation and territorial expansion as accumulation through dispossession, Fong argues, constitute the liberal self, which is the object and tool of racial, colonial subjugation.⁶¹

GLOBAL WORLD

North to South	extraction of capital from racialized labor
South to North	dispossession from land, elimination of the “Other”

The racial states in Europe, which means all of them at the moment, ignore social justice and human rights. The situation of refugees is directly related to colonialism and forms of neo-colonialism, and of course to abandoned collectivity.

EUROPE

West to East		
time/technology	property/hyper-privatization	hyper-individualization/fascist mob
East to West		
time/labor	land/hyper-devastation	nation-alism ⁶² /fascist populism

In the West, time is technology. In the former East of Europe, time equals labor exploitation. In the West, space only exists as property, total privatization; public space has disappeared. In the former Eastern Europe space is ruined, mismanaged, property plundered and finally privatized through violent gentrification. We need to address the formerly socialist Eastern Europe in terms of racism, nationalism, and debt. In Eastern Europe, instead of communities, we have only hyper-nationalism. In the West, a populist mob of hyper-individualized particles dominates.

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Harney and Moten describe this as follows:

⁶¹ Fong, “Racial-Settler Capitalism”, p. 27.

⁶² The hyphen is not a mistake, but a necessary disclosure of all the derived results of the nation as such.

Every step they take is a standing of ground, a stomping of the world out of earthly existence and into racial capitalist human being. It grows more pronounced the more it is threatened, consumed by its own feedback loop, and it produces sharper and sharper subject reactions in the face of this threat. This is the old/new fascism: not the anonymity of following the leader, but the subject reaction to leadership, which can just as easily imagine itself to be liberal dissent from, as supposedly opposed to a lock(e)-step repetition of, its call.⁶³

This is an important redefinition of the various forms of protest. Neoliberal capitalism has produced a fragmented, individualized position, protesting neoliberal individuals, whereas the Black Lives Matter movement, for example, adheres to the tradition of blocks of bodies on the street moving forward and stopping, taking a step back, waiting, and moving on, in lockstep.

Perhaps it is important to say that the dimension of time associated with technology in the West and labor in the East could be read to mean that the West is more advanced, more developed, but being subordinated to the speed of mobile devices and exploited by the relationship between labor and capital simply means that there are two kinds of racialization of time at work in advanced capitalism.

The Imperial/Colonial Divide

I would like to re-examine the particular decolonial position that the former Eastern Europe was colonized, that the Soviet Union colonized the former Soviet republics, and that the elimination of socialism is a process of decolonization. This leads to post-socialism being positioned in parallel with postcolonialism. This obfuscation can be clarified by analyzing the imperial/colonial divide. The answer lies in decolonization.

Seloua Luste Boulbina, in “Decolonization”, an analysis of the term for *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon*, published online in 2019, develops a remarkable analysis of how to think decolonization.⁶⁴ She notes “that there is no conceiv-

⁶³ Harney and Moten, *All Incomplete*, p. 17.

⁶⁴ Seloua Luste Boulbina, “Decolonization”, in *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon*, 24 May 2019, <https://www.politicalconcepts.org/decolonization-seloua-luste-boulbina/>, accessed 7 September 2021.

able decolonization without the *correlation* of a society's political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions, particularly on the post-colonial side."⁶⁵

She emphasizes the difference between postcolonial and "some sort of low-cost decolonization [that] is typically post-imperial."⁶⁶ The imperial, in such a low-cost reading, is "proper to the ancient metropolis and ancient societies, which apply the idea to objects rather than to social and political structures."⁶⁷ She asserts: "Politically, the question extends distinctly on both sides of an imperial-colonial line that I wish to highlight, in order not to conflate problematics that are totally different."⁶⁸ This equation of the imperial/colonial divide presents the imperial in relation to the peripheries, which is why the colonial is not a question of center and periphery but of imperialism. Imperialism is exploitation through colonization, through the use of military force, violence, genocides. So, when colonization is mentioned in relation to the former Eastern Europe, we are in fact talking about European postimperial countries (former metropolises) and not postcolonial African countries (former colonies).

For Luste Boulbina, decolonization captured through the imperial/colonial divide means that it "underwent a double displacement: on the one hand, from the metropolis to the colony and then from the colony to the metropolis; and, on the other hand, from the political field to the academic."⁶⁹ She explains that "The French doctrine of a 'colonial pact' was established on the basis of an eloquent division: the metropolis was destined for industrialization, whereas colonies had to provide raw materials."⁷⁰ She asserts: "This is how the idea of 'decolonization' becomes associated, and then conflated, with the dissolution of the European colonial empires in Asia and Africa and the subsequent emergence of new independent states. Within the academic field, this idea continues to migrate toward historiography."⁷¹ She shows that this is a misunderstanding since the imperial stands between the imperial center and the periphery, but decolonization means dismantling imperialism and colonization.

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⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Or, more to the point, it is important to see the postimperial and the postcolonial through the postcolonial lens rather than through a semiotic analysis that conflates them. Decolonization is not about the philosophy of history of the imperial city exploiting the periphery, but about dismantling imperialism, that is, ending capitalist colonialism.

The Imperial/Colonial Divide

Imperial centers/peripheries

Imperialism/colonialism

As Luste Boulbina states:

It is clear that the situation of African countries is not comparable to that of the former colonies of the Americas, with the exception of South Africa. [...] The slave-based former colonies of the Americas, all rooted in a settler model, must be differentiated from the last “modern” colonies of Africa, which are not, except and particularly Algeria, settler colonies. The independent states of the Americas must also be differentiated from African independent states. To put these matters schematically: the independences of the American continent have benefitted Europeans, with the exception of Haiti, which became the first “Black Republic” in 1804. The independence movements across the African continent benefitted the autochthonous populations, with the notable exception of South Africa, which only held its first “multi-racial” elections in 1994. In this continent, Algeria is the only former settler colony to have been entirely vacated of its European population. What is at stake in sovereignty is shaped to a large extent by the date of independence – those of the nineteenth century or the most recent ones achieved in the twentieth century – and by the presence or absence of Europeans.⁷²

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Conclusion

I can state that what we see all around us in this time of neoliberal global capitalism is that we are increasingly confronted with a political and social amnesia that profits from the almost complete obliteration of the past, the intensifying processes of de-historicization and de-politicization. Central to these processes is the logic of (neoliberal) repetition that produces at least two different pro-

⁷² *Ibid.*

cedures of (de)historicization. On one side, we have the logic of the neoliberal Western world that works as a pure trans-historical machine, and on the other, in the regions in the East and in the South of Europe, we detect a forced technique of embracing historicization as totalization. In both cases, the result is a suspension of history that works with the primary intention of disposing of any alternative within it. Mbembe suggests that the demythologizing of certain versions of history must go hand in hand with the necessary “*demythologizing of whiteness*.”⁷³ As Mbembe explains: “This is not because whiteness is the same as history. Human history, by definition, is history beyond whiteness. Human history is about the future.”⁷⁴

On the other side of discussions, we could say almost outside of philosophy, at its margins, we find the theoretical concepts of the late Édouard Glissant (1928–2011), “especially since his ideas have developed from observing and living the transition to globalization after decolonization and departmentalization to the current moment.”⁷⁵

In sharp contrast to globalization and its push for uniformity backed by capitalist “*lois du profit*,” Glissant’s concept of the “*tout-monde*” in [and] of itself produces a resistant discourse to globalization. His project develops his own theory of Relation to arrive at a poetics of being *of the world*, or *worldness*: the imagining of a world in which all peoples (humanities) of the *terre-monde* put into language (speaking, writing) their experiences and their being, so as to be heard by other peoples. Rather than accepting the domination of global hierarchies, Glissant proposes imagining the *real*, through a process that he calls *creolization*: cultures are constantly changing with the influence of other cultures’ languages, ways of being, without losing themselves to any dominant uniform culture.⁷⁶

⁷³ Mbembe, “Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive”, no page.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Sara C. Hanaburgh, “Global Wreckage and Consumer Illusions: Responses to the Human Effects of Economic Globalization in Sub-Saharan African Francophone Novels and Films, 1973–2006”, PhD thesis, New York, Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2012, p. 225.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

John E. Drabinski suggests,⁷⁷ and I reiterate, that the chaotic mix Glissant has been dealing with since his earliest work arises from the Caribbean as the crossroads of the world. The slave trade and then colonialism brought an incompatible but fertile cultural dynamic to the archipelago, producing creolized forms of culture. What is the significance of these forms of culture, asks Drabinski, and what theoretical lessons can be drawn from these forms? As he contends, Glissant's later work extends his concept of creolization, initially an internal feature of the Caribbean, to the idea of *tout-monde*. *Tout-monde* denotes an aggressive, forward-looking imperative to bring global cultures into contact and to harness the productive chaos that emerges from that contact. "A poetics of the whole world."⁷⁸

Let me finish as I started, going back to the *Critique of Black Reason* and Mbembe's firm view of the World of today.

On the one hand, we must escape the status of victimhood. On the other, we must make a break with "good conscience" and the denial of responsibility. It is through this dual approach that we will be able to articulate a new politics and ethics founded on a call for justice. That said, to be African is first and foremost to be a free man, or, as Fanon always proclaimed, "a man among other men." A man free from everything, and therefore able to invent himself. A true politics of identity consists in constantly nourishing, fulfilling, and refilling the capacity for self-invention. Afrocentrism is a hypostatic variant of the desire of those of African origin to need only to justify themselves to themselves. It is true that such a world is above all a form of relation to oneself. But there is no relation to oneself that does not also implicate the Other. The Other is at once difference and similarity, united. What we must imagine is a politics of humanity that is fundamentally a politics of the similar, but in a context in which what we all share from the beginning is difference. It is our differences that, paradoxically, we must share. And all of this depends on reparation, on the expansion of our conception of justice and responsibility.⁷⁹

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⁷⁷ John E. Drabinski, "Sites of Relation and 'Tout-monde'", *Angelaki*, 24 (3/2019), pp. 157–172.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, p. 178.

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