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ROSA LUXEMBURG AND THE PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION OF WHITENESS

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Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg

from colorblind conceptions of capitalism's violence. Rather than drawing a neat separation between anti-capitalism and anti-racism, our analysis suggests that robust anti-capitalist politics must necessarily include active and explicit organizing against white supremacy. At the level of both theory and politics, left analyses must be re-oriented to center an analysis of, and fight against, capital's structural entanglement with whiteness and racial domination. Through our framework of the primitive accumulation of whiteness, then, we contribute to better theorizing this entanglement. We also emphasize the need to build solidarity across capitalism's racialized exploitation and expropriation continuum, and not simply at the point of production within the boundaries of the nation-state.

Luxemburg is clear in *Accumulation* that because capitalism is a "living historical contradiction" with particular laws of motion the critic can identify and analyze, an internationalist movement can (and should, and will) struggle against it to build a different world (2016: 341). Creolizing Luxemburg and developing the concept of the primitive accumulation of whiteness generates, we hope, a more incisive account of imperialism, of racial capitalism, and—following Luxemburg—of the potentialities for anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist practice.

This text is the Chapter 15 to *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg* (2021). See the original book for the Works Cited which has been omitted from this pamphlet.

policies, debt imposition by international financial institutions, and new forms of racialization that incorporate the language of multiculturalism into constructions of whiteness. As Heng argues, “race is a structural relationship for the articulation and management of human differences, rather than a substantive content” and has the ability “to stalk and merge” with hierarchical systems such as class, gender, and sexuality (2018: 262), a transformation that the primitive accumulation of whiteness and capital helps us center.

CONCLUSION: INTERRUPTING THE PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION OF WHITENESS

In creolizing Luxemburg’s analysis of capitalist imperialism and ongoing primitive accumulation, we have elucidated how the primitive accumulation of whiteness is organically linked to the accumulation of capital. We have also specifically articulated the ways that the historical and ongoing (re) constitution of *homo Europaeus* mediates and enables the reproduction and perpetuation of racial capitalism, from the European Middle Ages to our contemporary moment of neoliberal imperialism.

Through the lens of the primitive accumulation of whiteness, we can theorize race as a historical contingency rather than an inevitability that always and automatically separates producers from the means of production. In this way, primitive accumulation, in “its most speculative iteration” but also “at its heart,” can become “a way of grasping the unforeseeable capacity for radical contingency that exists within even the most seemingly entrenched structures” (Rosenberg, 2019: 368). Meanwhile, Heng consistently demonstrates how the substance, form, and content of race can mutate within particular historical moments, which we think points—as does Luxemburg’s theorization of the ongoing nature of accumulation—to the salience of historic specificity in shaping the social relations undergirding racial hierarchy and capital exploitation. The contingent, changing nature of such accumulations allows us to grasp salient properties of the primitive accumulation of whiteness: it constantly takes new forms as the social relations undergirding it shift across time and space; and as a result, it is differently *felt* by variously racialized and gendered bodies across imperial contexts. Tending to the *embodied*, specific accumulation of whiteness reveals the heterogeneous impacts of racial capitalism on individuals and collectivities and the surprising forms of solidarity that might arise among them.

Understanding the embodied, contingent, and structural constitution of whiteness as a precondition for capitalism and its mutations across time and space is necessary to make visible how it is resisted by non-white groups and movements. It is equally important in forging solidarities by moving away

Chapter 15

Rosa Luxemburg and the Primitive Accumulation of Whiteness

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We need a concept of primitive accumulation, Marx writes toward the end of the first volume of *Capital*, in order to account for the violent processes “preced[ing] capitalistic accumulation” and creating its preconditions, and to avoid the fallacy of theorizing a “never-ending circle” in which capitalism seems to arise *sui generis* (1977: 873). Critical race theory encounters a similar problem. At a broad level, the prevailing approaches understand race “to occur only in *modern* time,” positing “high modernist racism as the template of *all* racisms” and rehearsing “a *grand récit* that reifies modernity as *telos* and origin . . . [that] entrenches the delivery of a paradigmatic chronology of racial time” (Heng, 2018: 16, 18, 20, emphasis in original). Even if one constructs race as a primarily or exclusively modern invention, how are we to not trap ourselves in our own tautology of race and racism emerging as if out of nothing, whether it be in 1492, the beginning of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, or the Enlightenment’s political theoretical and scientific racisms? What are the antecedent enabling conditions of these articulations and enactments of race and racial violence? What is the relationship between the primitive accumulation of capital and historical processes of race-making? What are the structural conditions of possibility for the expansion and reproduction of racial capitalism? This chapter mines and creolizes Rosa Luxemburg’s reworking of the Marxist concept of primitive accumulation in order to theorize the relationship between capital accumulation and constructions of race and whiteness from the European Middle Ages onward. We turn to Luxemburg because she offers a way to theorize the violence of imperialism and primitive accumulation as an organic and continuous part of capitalism, across its history. At the same time, we turn to theorists of medieval race-making—and, later, to analyses of contemporary “neoliberal imperialism,”

a term usefully mapped in Godfrey et al. (2014)—to deepen and complicate Luxemburg’s prescient analyses of capitalist imperialism.

We argue that what we call the *primitive accumulation of whiteness*—a concept we develop by reading Rosa Luxemburg alongside Geraldine Heng’s work on the medieval constructions of race and the forging of a white, Christian, European subject (*homo europaeus*)—is a necessary condition of possibility for the ongoing primitive accumulation of capital. Specifically, we contend that the logic of capital, facilitating and enabling the bifurcation of human populations and their respective territories. This (re)production and accumulation of whiteness—operating inseparably with the reproduction and accumulation of capital—allows capital to open up bodies and territories to modes of expropriation that exceed capital’s exploitation of normative wage labor. While we trace the beginnings of the primitive accumulation of whiteness, following Heng, to the medieval period, we also contend alongside scholars of racial capitalism that the accumulation of whiteness is not a historical artifact but a continuous feature of the contemporary capitalist world system. We do not conceive of “whiteness” as a transhistorical category divorced from material social relations; rather, we dialectically connect Luxemburg’s analyses of primitive accumulation and imperialism with Heng’s arguments about the “invention” of race and *homo europaeus* to articulate one genealogy of racial capitalism.

As such, we argue that the primitive accumulation of whiteness is a useful concept for theorizing racial capitalism. The primitive accumulation of whiteness: identifies and elucidates a mechanism/dynamic by which racial capitalism operates; connects processes of racialization, the consolidation of whiteness as a racial-civilizational category, an originary and ongoing imperial accumulations of capital; situates Luxemburg and Heng as theorists of racial capitalism; explores racial capitalism in what Heng calls “deep time” (2018: 22–24); and ensures that accounts of early modalities of whiteness in medieval race-making and later in neoliberal modes of imperialism do not understand whiteness or race as phenomena separate from capital.¹

Our interest is in structurally theorizing the processes by which material social relations change and are changed in order to consolidate white

forced Iraqis to accept genetically modified seeds from agri-business corporation Monsanto, expanding the company’s consumer market, and eventually generating profit for it (Brown, 2015: 145–50). This example underscores the force of militarism and war that enables the expanded reproduction of capital. As Luxemburg remarks, it is through ostensible “great works of civilization” that the colonizer justifies the expropriative expansion of commodity markets (2016: 279).

The examples above also illustrate how the primitive accumulation of whiteness underwrites the expanded reproduction of capital and the continuation of racial capitalism more broadly. Revealingly, the 2002 U.S. National Strategy for Homeland Security portrays the defeating of an imagined Muslim enemy—and a “modernizing” of the Muslim world—as inextricably tied to the expansion of capitalist markets. Not only does the Strategy racialize “the Muslim world” as that space which harbors “our enemies,” it equally declares that these “enemies have seen the results of what civilized nations can, and will, do against regimes that harbor, support, and use terrorism to achieve their political goals.” At the same time that the Bush Administration painted “the Muslim world” as synonymous with “global terrorism,” it argued for the defending of “our democratic values and way of life” not only through military might but also through the “(promotion of) economic growth and economic freedom beyond America’s shores . . . (underscoring) the benefits of policies that generate higher productivity and sustained economic growth.” It is thus “market economies, rather than command-and-control economies” that are “vital to U.S. national security interests” (“The National Security Strategy 2002,” 2002). Though the present neoliberal period of late capitalism is marked by financialization and recourse to the language of human capital and entrepreneurship (Brown, 2015), Luxemburg’s prescient analysis helpfully lays out how racialization and the realization of surplus value are intertwined. By situating Luxemburg’s concept of primitive accumulation in relation to post-9/11 U.S. imperialism, we see that the accumulation of capital is inextricably tied to, and in dialectical relationship with, the primitive accumulation of whiteness. Such an analysis reveals how racial capitalism is mutually constituted by the ongoing resignification of *homo europaeus* and the particular imperial form capital accumulation takes at a given moment. To treat post-9/11 mutations in whiteness and accumulation as wholly new is to overlook the many imperial projects upon which they stand. This, in effect, erases historical forms of racialized violence constitutive of the United States itself, such as settler genocide against indigenous peoples and the use of slavery to amass capital (Byrd, 2011). At the same time, by viewing the primitive accumulation of whiteness and capital as ongoing and as mutually constitutive, we can foreground the latest iterations imperialism takes, such as financialization, drone warfare, imposition of particular development

¹ The general dynamic of racial capitalism is most lucidly explored through Cedric Robinson’s foundational account in *Black Marxism*: “[The] development, organization and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology. As a material force, then, it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism. I have used the term ‘racial capitalism’ to refer to this development and to the subsequent structures as an historical agency” (1983, 2–3). The theoretical incorporation of Luxemburg, Robinson, and Heng together in this chapter elucidates the primitive accumulation of whiteness as one of the central mechanisms of the development of racial capitalism.

(Mamdani, 2004). Thus, the primitive accumulation of whiteness may also enable the reproduction of capital through recourse to the racial exception rather than through overt racial domination and coercion. However, such exceptions, by virtue of existing in contrast to a presumed general rule, reinforce Orientalist logics painting Muslims as the antithesis of an imagined “West.” Neoliberal shifts in U.S. imperialism that underwrite the realization of surplus value have continued to transform the racialization of Muslims. It is here that Luxemburg’s engagement with expanded reproduction and the ongoing nature of capital accumulation is especially instructive. For Luxemburg, “Imperialism is the political expression of the process of the accumulation of capital in its competitive struggle over the unspoiled remainder of the non-capitalist world environment” (2016: 325). Furthermore, expanded reproduction through militarism and imperialism takes place through the extraction of resources of non-capitalist countries and strata and through the expansion of consumer markets abroad. Thinking through these different facets of expanded reproduction through an analysis of the primitive accumulation of whiteness and of capital reveals important continuities and discontinuities in the post-9/11 neoliberal imperial turn.

From the side of consumption, neoliberal imperial policies in Iraq and Afghanistan have engineered a growth in specific consumer markets that allow the United States to actualize surplus value outside of late capitalist economies. This is evident in the greater demand for U.S. manufactured arms abroad, security technologies created by U.S. corporations, and the forceful imposition of genetically modified seeds in Iraq, as but three examples. Tellingly, between 2009 and 2017, the Department of Defense spent \$209 billion on private contracts in the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan (Peters and Plagakis, 2019: 17), and four out of the five arms manufacturers who have benefited the most from war are American companies (Calio and Hess, 2014). The \$39.5 billion that oil company Haliburton, once run by Dick Cheney, amassed from war-related contracts is evidence of how post-9/11 war profiteering “turns overseas conflict into another business proposition” (Pieterse, 2004: 125). In this way, the accumulation of capital takes place through militarism, as Luxemburg details near the end of *Accumulation* (2016: 340–41), but what is crucial is that racializing forces are necessary for this accumulation of imperial capital (and imperial whiteness). That accumulation occurs through imperial force and violence is further evidenced by the Bremer Orders instituted in Iraq, which: “mandated selling off several hundred state-run enterprises, permitting full ownership rights of Iraqi businesses by foreign firms and full repatriation of profits to foreign firms, opening Iraq’s banks to foreign ownership and control, and eliminating tariffs – in short, making Iraq a new playground of world finance and investment” (Brown, 2015: 142). In particular, the bombing of Iraq’s national seed bank

European national identity that could ground and launch modern racial projects. Primitive accumulation functions theoretically in this way, focusing our account on the enabling conditions of racial capitalism. The primitive accumulation of whiteness, we will show, is not epiphenomenal to or contingently related to later “modern” practices of proletarianization, race-making, and capitalism but rather constitutes and structures racial capitalism as such. The primitive accumulation of whiteness ought to be part of the theory of racism, white supremacy, and the ongoing primitive accumulation of capital. This is the case for the genealogy of racial capitalism, as we demonstrate in our analysis of medieval European race-making, and it is also the case for contemporary modes of racial capitalism, as we detail in our exploration of the primitive accumulation of whiteness in neoliberal imperialism.

It is by creolizing Rosa Luxemburg’s account of capitalist accumulation that we work to do this. Jane Anna Gordon and Neil Roberts articulate creolization as a political theoretical project involving a “method of reading that couples figures who are not typically engaged together,” and in the process “bring[ing] interrelated, contradictory faces of modernity closer, creating conversations among worlds entangled by colonizing projects” (2015: 2).² Crucially, they argue that this is *not* a banal compare and contrast but rather a “robust theoretical *métissage* that yields new modes of thought, that, at their best, are more than the sum of their parts” (2015: 3). For us, such a creolization entails bringing together Luxemburg with theorists and historians of racism and colonialism, where the sum of the theoretical parts illuminates the worlds constituting and constituted by colonizing projects in a way that is different than Luxemburg, Heng, or Robinson would explore on their own.

The first section starts to develop the concept of the primitive accumulation of whiteness by examining Luxemburg’s analysis of the structural dependency between capitalism and imperialism in *The Accumulation of Capital* and suggests how an analysis of race is necessary to fully develop the account of capitalism. The second section turns to two examples of race-making projects in medieval Europe—violence against Jews in England and European narratives of the Mongol Empire—to illustrate how and why the primitive accumulation of whiteness, as a concept, proves vital to analyses of racial capitalism and imperialism. This culminates in a brief discussion situating primitive accumulation, racial capitalism, and Luxemburg’s theorizing as operating across multiple temporalities. The third section picks up this temporal cue and examines the primitive accumulation of whiteness as it operates in twenty-first century “neoliberal imperialism,” where relations between private industries, the American government and military, and the

² For a fuller account of the cultural, political, and theoretical genealogies of creolization, see Gordon (2014).

racialization of Muslims and Arabs in the United States function to reproduce racial capitalism. The conclusion briefly sketches the kinds of political solidarities that would be needed to struggle against the primitive accumulation of whiteness and the dynamics of which it is a part.

ACCUMULATION AND RACE IN LUXEMBURG'S THEORIZING OF CAPITALIST IMPERIALISM

Over the past few decades, a number of scholars have returned to Marx's notion of "so-called" primitive accumulation to theorize the relations of violence intrinsic to the reproduction and perpetuation of capitalist social relations. Ranging from Marxist feminist scholarship to settler colonial studies to Marxist-inflected analyses of race to neo-Marxist analyses of neoliberalism (Coulthard, 2014; Federici, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Ince, 2018; Melamed, 2015; Mies, 1986; Nichols, 2015; Singh, 2016), a number of scholars have productively refashioned Marx's teleological conception of primitive accumulation by drawing, either implicitly or explicitly, on Rosa Luxemburg's (2016) insights about the *continuous* character of primitive accumulation. While sometimes disagreeing with Luxemburg on the specific causal mechanisms that require capitalism to resort to extra-economic coercion,³ these scholars utilize Luxemburg's insistence (contra Marx) that "capital does not merely come into the world 'dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt,' it also imposes itself on the world step by step in the same way" (2016: 330). Through the prism of primitive accumulation as an *ongoing* aspect of capitalism, and not a stage prior to the emergence of capitalism proper, Luxemburg uncovers how imperialism is bound up with the dynamics of capital accumulation. This move by Luxemburg—which reworks Marx's analytic of primitive accumulation and simultaneously breaks with V.I. Lenin's analysis of imperialism—is theoretically foundational for contemporary scholars grappling with the elements of force unleashed by capitalism.

To fully appreciate Luxemburg's contemporary relevance and ubiquitous presence in debates around capital's violence and primitive accumulation, we return to her arguments about the structural links between imperialism and capitalist development in *The Accumulation of Capital*. In the spirit of Luxemburg's political and theoretical interventions in Marxist theory, then, this chapter seeks to *creolize* Luxemburg's concept of primitive accumulation and her critique of imperialism by thinking about the ways racial domination,

³ For instance, Harvey disagrees with Luxemburg's emphasis on effective demand and "underconsumption" as the forces driving capitalist imperialism; rather, he suggests that capital deploys force and violence to resolve crises of *over-accumulation* (Harvey, 2005: chapter 4).

Easterners as "backward, decadent, and untrustworthy" in popular culture as early as the 1700s; 1990s media depictions racializing Israeli Jews as moderate and non-Jewish Middle Easterners as "ruthless, rich, or radical Arabs"; and academic research attributing a "backwardness, cultural decline, indeed, fossilization" to Arab societies (Little, 2009: 3, 35, quoting Patai, 1973). This mutation in the construction of whiteness vis-a-vis the imaginary of a homogenized "Muslim world" has in turn justified and perpetuated imperial interventions designed to secure the accumulation of capital through the oil and the arms industries. As Little asserts:

Once the orientalist mindset of imperial Britain insinuated its way into the White House, the Pentagon, and Foggy Bottom during the late 1940s . . . U.S. policies and attitudes toward the Middle East were . . . [i]nfluenced by potent racial and cultural stereotypes . . . that depicted the Muslim world as decadent and inferior. (2009: 11)

Attention to the primitive accumulation of whiteness across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries thus underscores how it has been intertwined with the accumulation of capital through imperial intervention in the Middle East. Luxemburg presciently argues:

[M]ilitarism lurks behind international credit, railway construction, irrigation systems, and similar civilizing projects as the executor of the accumulation of capital. Even though the states of the Middle and Far East hasten feverishly along their development from the natural economy to the commodity economy, and then on to the capitalist economy, they are still devoured by international capital, because they cannot accomplish this radical transformation without placing themselves in the hands of the latter. (2016: 320)

The ongoing expansion and morphing of racial capitalism has, hence, been predicated upon the ongoing accumulation of whiteness and capital as they become encoded in "civilizing" missions that take economic-military forms.

At the same time, this entwinement does not mean they always move in step; corporate elites across racialized binaries may forge alliances conducive to the accumulation of capital, just as racist tropes may hinder capital gain. As but one example, the close connection between the government of Saudi Arabia and U.S. defense contractors, the automobile industry, and multinational conglomerates, such as General Electric, reveal how exceptions to Islamophobic racial logics take place. Such corporate and imperial alliances do not suggest that a racial logic is not present; rather, they demonstrate how the racializing of a "good" Muslim, as the exception to a racial logic of exclusion and domination, is predicated upon its contrast to a "bad" Muslim

The “War on Terror” is itself a “technology of race” creating the “racial imaginary” of a “Homeland” besieged by (non-white, non-Christian) outside enemies (Sheth, 2017: 348). Though Arabs are classified by the U.S. Census as white, since 9/11 the signifier “Arab” has become more interchangeably associated with “Muslim” and “non-white” in the popular imaginary. As Selod argues, by naming “terrorism rather than individual nations” as its target, the “War on Terror” creates a monolith of the Muslim world, putting responsibility for any political volatility on Islam as a religion, helping constitute what Mahmoud Mamdani terms “Culture Talk” (Selod, 2015: 80, drawing on Rana, 2011; Mamdani, 2004). Simultaneously, “the Homeland” becomes a site of “affective associations, ethnic ties, and cultural unity” whose citizenry, national values, and ways of life are under attack (Sheth, 2017: 348). The “war on terror” has thus racialized the Muslim at home as an “enemy within” assumed to be of non-black, Middle Eastern and/or Asian origin, and the Muslim abroad as inhabiting a primitive, anti-modern, violent geographical space outside “the West.” Through this logic, the “*racings* of space,” or the “depiction of space as dominated by individuals . . . of a certain race,” occurs alongside a “spacing of race,” wherein particular individuals are “imprinted with the characteristics of a certain kind of space” (Mills, 1997: 41–42). The racializing of the Middle East and South Asia as non-white and Muslim is simultaneously a *spacing* of Arabs, Muslims, and those of Middle Eastern or South Asian descent, as belonging to a non-Western, monolithic Muslim world.

Though the myth of a “clash of civilizations” between a Christian, “Western” culture and a Muslim, “non-Western” culture precedes 9/11, and as Mamdani argues (2004), is indeed tied closely to Cold War ideology, the primitive accumulation of whiteness underlying these Islamophobic arguments has been transformed and expanded upon since 9/11 to meet the goals of the “War on Terror.” In this sense, there has been a resignification of *homo europeaus* that justifies—and is justified by—the economic imperatives of post-9/11 U.S. imperialism. Post-9/11 mutations in whiteness thus build upon a genealogy of the primitive accumulation of whiteness and of capital, where white supremacist, Orientalist views of the Middle East have historically justified imperial intervention to secure strategic access to capital, namely in the form of oil (Jones, 2012), the arms industries, and PSIs. To apprehend racial capitalism in our contemporary moment is thus to see the primitive accumulation of whiteness and capital as ongoing and continuously morphing under different forms of imperialism, rather than as originary historical moments preceding the emergence of racial subordination and capitalism.

Imperialist policies of intervention are thus inextricable from the primitive accumulation of whiteness. Such processes of the accumulation of whiteness include Orientalist characterizations of Jews, Muslims, and Middle

racial hierarchy, and the historical production of whiteness complicate, supplement, and are bound up with Luxemburg’s prescient analyses. In other words, we enlist Luxemburg to think through *racial capitalism*. To this end, this section fleshes out Luxemburg’s arguments about primitive accumulation, delving into the interconnections between imperialism and the development of capitalism. We particularly interrogate how attention to processes of race-making in both the European Middle Ages and in contemporary neoliberal imperialism might enrich Luxemburg’s observations about the reproduction of capital and its necessary relation to militarism, imperialism, and war.

One of the key problems framing Luxemburg’s inquiry in *The Accumulation of Capital* is a historical-theoretical dilemma she identifies in Marx’s analysis of expanded capitalist reproduction. In a straightforward manner, Luxemburg asks, “What is the source of the constantly increasing demand underlying the progressive expansion of production?” (2016: 87). More directly, Luxemburg points out that Marx “gives no answer to the question of for whom expanded reproduction actually occurs . . . [suggesting] that capitalist production realizes its entire surplus value exclusively by itself, employing the capitalized surplus value for its own requirements” (2016: 235). The theoretical assumptions underlying Marx’s analyses—the universality of the capitalist mode of production and the existence of only workers and capitalists—unfortunately hide the problems of effective demand and its relationship to the *expanded* reproduction of capital (2016: 87, 250). Indeed, the realization of surplus value is necessary for capital to accumulate and reproduce itself. As Luxemburg states, “the successful realization of the commodities produced in the preceding period of production appears as the first condition of reproduction for the capitalist producers” (2016: 14). Marx, according to Luxemburg, does not satisfactorily account for this vital process of realization, which hinges on an increase in effective demand. So, how does capital resolve this dilemma of effective demand?

Historically analyzing how capitalist development ensures the existence of a large enough consumer base to buy commodities and realize surplus value, Luxemburg argues that the continued reproduction, expansion, and accumulation of capital depends on capital’s subjugation of non-capitalist spheres via imperialism, militarism, and war. Although conceding that Marx, in his analysis of so-called primitive accumulation at the end of *Capital, Volume 1*, details how capital appropriates non-capitalist social relations and means of production, the problem in Marx’s account is that these processes of proletarianization and expropriation—whether of the English peasantry and their lands or of European colonialism’s extractive relationship with its non-European colonies —“merely illustrate the genesis of capital . . . As soon as Marx begins his theoretical analysis of the process of capital (of production as well as circulation), he constantly returns to his presupposition of the

universal and exclusive dominance of capitalist production” (2016: 262). Yet, as Luxemburg observes, capital’s need to appropriate and transform non-capitalist sectors is not limited to the historical birth of capitalism but extends into and encompasses capitalism’s mature forms (Ibid). In order for capital accumulation to proceed smoothly, Luxemburg explains that capitalism “requires non-capitalist social strata as a market in which to realize its surplus value, as a source for its means of production and as a reservoir of labor-power for its wage system” (2016: 265). Consequently, given capital’s “powerful drive” to capture non-capitalist territories (2016: 263), imperialism—including a kind of internal imperialism against non-capitalist strata within capitalist countries—emerges as the “political expression of the process of the accumulation of capital in its competitive struggle over the unspoiled remainder of the non-capitalist world environment” (2016: 325). Far from being simply part of capital’s origin story or peripheral to capitalist development, Luxemburg thus surfaces the ways imperialism and colonialism are built into capital’s structuring logic.

By recasting Marx’s analysis of primitive accumulation into an ongoing feature of capitalism, Luxemburg develops the theoretical tools to reveal how capital accumulation operates through the simultaneous logics of wage-labor exploitation and the imperialist expropriation of non-capitalist spheres. Where Marx’s critique of political economy focuses on penetrating the veil of liberal market exchange to highlight capital’s extraction of surplus value at the point of production via the exploitation of labor, Luxemburg deepens this analysis by adding a second dimension that is no less central to capital accumulation, namely, capital’s imperial relationship with non-capitalist sectors of the globe. The latter mode of accumulation via imperialism works primarily through the overt use of violence and fraud, relying on the methods of “colonial policy, the system of international credit, the policy of spheres of interest, and war” (2016: 329). These two dimensions of capital accumulation are “organically bound up with each other through the very conditions of the reproduction of capital, and it is only together that they result in the historical trajectory of capital” (2016: 329–330).

Luxemburg’s grounding of imperialism as a structural component of capital accumulation powerfully intervenes in and opens up Marxism to account for capital’s violent relations with the non-capitalist world, yet it also raises questions that Luxemburg does not directly pursue. Most of all, on what basis is capital’s global imperialist violence organized? Differently stated, why are populations designated as “non-white” the disproportionate bearers of imperialism and naked violence unmediated by liberal rights or wage-contracts? This is not to suggest that Luxemburg is unaware of the role race has played in the imperial/colonial expansion of capitalism. For instance, Luxemburg states, “Capital needs other races to exploit territories where the

Though the use of militaristic invasions for profit is not new—indeed, it is a point central to Luxemburg’s understanding of expanded reproduction—it is now overtly interlinked with U.S. security strategy as the stated goals of the arms industry, financial markets, and the so-called “war on terror” come to overlap (Pieterse, 2004). This post-9/11 imperial turn has led to a rise in the Private Security Industry (PSI), which has doubled in size since the 1990s and increased more rapidly since 9/11 after the invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan (Leander, 2005 referenced in Godfrey et al., 2014). Through the outsourcing of what were previously Department of Defense functions to for-profit contractors and subcontractors, the U.S. government has strengthened its relationship with private corporations in the business of war.

As we delineate below, the post-9/11 characterization of spaces inhabited by Muslims as uncivilized, pre-modern, and terroristic, and the racialization of Muslims compared to U.S. citizens racialized as white, both justify and are reinforced by efforts to expand U.S. economic influence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the “Global South” more broadly. Though the racialization of Muslims is by no means new, its post-9/11 iteration is reinforced by a general rise in the PSI.

Under the auspices of the “war on terror,” the resignification of *homo europaeus* thus works in tandem with the expansion of financial markets and for-profit security companies, ensuring the reproduction of racial capitalism. Through widespread criminalization, public rhetoric, strategy reports, national addresses, social exclusion, and post-9/11 Homeland Security laws and policies enabling surveillance, the U.S. government—particularly under the G.W. Bush and Trump administrations—has characterized Muslims across the world as “a threat to Western cultural values,” opponents of democracy and freedom, terroristic, pre-modern, patriarchal, and homophobic (Selod, 2015: 78).¹³ While the racialization of Arabs and Muslims in the United States predates 9/11, their increased targeting and criminalization through laws and policies “ostensibly designed to protect the American public” has rendered them a more visible non-white minority counterposed to the ideal white, Christian citizen (Sheth, 2017: 2; also see Selod, 2015). The passing of the PATRIOT Act; the creation of a Department of Homeland Security, state-level bills and amendments vilifying Muslim religious life; the surveilling of Muslim individuals and communities since 9/11; the torture of Muslims in Guantanamo, Iraq, and Afghanistan; Trump’s 2017 Muslim ban; and lack of punitive measure for hate crimes of Muslims all mark a shift in their racialization as external threats to the American public and to national security (Considine, 2017).

¹³ Also see Bayoumi (2009) and Considine (2017).

“races to exploit territories where the white race is not capable of working” (2016: 261), Luxemburg invites us to think about ongoing mutations in the primitive accumulation of whiteness and capital in their mutual imbrication. For Luxemburg, “in its forms and laws of motion, capitalist production reckons with the whole world as the treasury of productive forces, and has done so since its inception. In its drive to appropriate these productive forces for the purposes of exploitation, capital ransacks the whole planet” (Ibid). At the same time, the primitive accumulation of whiteness and of capital do not always move neatly in step with one another. The close ties between corporate elites across imposed binaries such as East/West and Muslim/non-Muslim, for example, suggest how the logic of capital accumulation can also supersede or differently negotiate categories of racial domination, as we discuss below.

As we suggest in this section, such an analysis helps trace continuities and ruptures in contemporary and historical forms of racialization, imperialism, and capitalist reproduction. Of course, this is not to suggest that there are never instances where the primitive accumulation of whiteness and of capital diverge. Indeed, the messy entanglement of racism and capitalism is such that racism does not in all instances serve the needs of capital accumulation. Nevertheless, by attending to the ongoing nature of the accumulation of whiteness and capital, we can trace their contingent relationship, a point to which we return in the conclusion. The primitive accumulations of whiteness and of capital constantly take new forms as the social relations undergirding them shift across time and space, and they are thus differently felt by variously racialized and gendered bodies across geographical and temporal contexts. Luxemburg suggests as much in her attention to different historical examples of the expansion of capitalism to non-capitalist markets through military force, whether by the British in India and Egypt, the Germans in Asia, the Dutch in South Africa, and European-descended settlers during westward expansion in the United States. In the tradition of Luxemburg, investigating various imperial turns demonstrates new iterations in the expansion of capitalist markets through military imperial force and the modes of racialization enabling and produced anew by them.

A rich body of scholarship has detailed the development of “neoliberal imperialism” in the post-9/11 United States (cf. Godfrey et al., 2014). The neoliberal imperial turn demonstrates how differentializing racialized and gendered hierarchies enable the realization of surplus value and the expansion of racial capitalism, and thus illustrate how the primitive accumulation of whiteness and of capital morph over time. At a general level, neoliberal imperialism involves the explicit use of war and military occupation as a means of profit generation, whether through the arms industry, oil extraction, or private military contractors (Godfrey et al., 2014; Pieterse, 2004).

white race is not capable of working, and in general it needs unrestricted disposal over all the labor-power in the world” (2016: 261). Elsewhere she points to capital’s use of hybrid forms of labor domination, particularly in the colonies, which range from the exploitation of “free” and “unfree” forms of labor (for example, slavery⁴). Luxemburg certainly provides an incisive economic explanation for imperialism and the violence meted out against non-European peoples and territories; however, how might the construction of *homo europaeus* in the European Middle Ages augment Luxemburg’s analysis? In what ways is the accumulation of race and whiteness intertwined with the ongoing primitive accumulation of capital? In sum, by bringing contemporary scholarship on medieval race-making and neoliberal imperialism to bear on Luxemburg’s analyses, we seek to creolize her work—especially her refashioning of Marx’s notion of primitive accumulation—to shed light on histories of racial capitalism in the next section and on its contemporary manifestations, as we explore in the section after that.

Resonant with the way Luxemburg extends Marx’s critique of capital and primitive accumulation, we thus extend Luxemburg’s critique of imperialism by examining the ways imperialism and capital accumulation more generally are enabled and mediated by the primitive accumulation of whiteness. The historical production of *homo europeus* (the “white,” European subject), which is always in antithesis to an internal and/or external Other, we suggest, is a missing condition of possibility for the analysis of capital accumulation that Luxemburg presents. We contend that Luxemburg’s analysis of imperialism as a second dimension of capital accumulation can be productively complemented by attending to the ways the metabolism between capitalist and non-capitalist territories is also simultaneously a metabolism between *homo europaeus* and non-white peoples. Indeed, the shifting boundaries of “whiteness” designate which subjects and territories are marked to face the naked violence of imperial domination from those that are subject to exploitation under the guise of the liberal social contract. Luxemburg is keenly attuned to capital’s expropriation of the labor, land, and resources of non-white populations, and we more explicitly draw out how racial hierarchies—especially the constitution of the white European subject—serve as a structural precondition for capital accumulation, particularly in terms of accumulation via imperialism. From the outset, then, the consolidation of *homo europaeus* configures and overdetermines capital’s violence as it expands across the globe.

⁴ Luxemburg notes the role of racialized slave systems established by the British on the cotton plantations of the South American colonies (2016: 261–62) and by the Dutch in South Africa (2016: 298–99) in imperial capital accumulation.

THE PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION OF WHITENESS AND MEDIEVAL RACE-MAKING

To theorize such violence, this section reads Luxemburg's concept of accumulation back into accounts of race and racial capitalism, particularly in relation to Heng's work on racialization in the European Middle Ages.⁵ More specifically, we engage in a close reading of two key historical phenomena from Heng's text in order to analyze medieval race-making as a primitive accumulation of whiteness, and hence as a fundamental mechanism of racial capitalism—or perhaps proto-racial capitalism. Our claim here is that Luxemburg, Heng, and Cedric Robinson activate an account of the primitive accumulation of whiteness *as a concept for analyses and theories of racial capitalism*. In order for whiteness to accumulate, it requires an ongoing violent relation to non-white worlds, both geographically within and without Europe. The expanded reproduction of capital, according to Luxemburg, necessitates ongoing relations with, sale of materials to, and transformation of, non-capitalist milieus, all in order to realize the part of surplus value that is necessary for capitalization and thus accumulation (2016: chapter 26). Whiteness consolidates in conjunction with processions of dominion over land, trade, resources, and proto-capital, the imperial destruction of natural and peasant economies, transformation of communal land into private property, and imperial ventures by capitalist states. These processes, which Luxemburg details as fundamental to capitalist imperialism, are at the same time imperial race-making projects. Creolizing Luxemburg and reading her alongside Heng—and, later in this section, Robinson—enables us to think through how these processes are connected as modalities of racial capitalism. Heng provides historical-theoretical analysis of medieval race-making that, we suggest, can be generatively theorized through Luxemburg as a primitive accumulation of whiteness, while we later use Robinson's theoretical framework of racial capitalism in order to clarify how this accumulation unfolds.

Whiteness must be consolidated in medieval Europe for it to launch itself into multidimensional violent regimes of racism in modernity, and also, as Luxemburg shows with regard to capitalism, requires an ongoing violent relationship to non-white peoples and strata. This section focuses on a close reading of Heng's account of the racial-economic-religious assemblage involving Jewish people in medieval England and of the mercantile imaginary's

⁵ In doing so, we admittedly (and perhaps inevitably) flatten many of the more complex facets of Heng's extensive, magisterial text even as we draw from it for theoretical framing and concrete historical examples. See, for example, her discussion of the multivalence of color and skin color, the multiple forms through which tropes of color are expressed, and the variable relationship color has to 'race' in the Middle Ages (2018: 42–44, chapter 4). It is well worth one's effort to engage fully with the intricacies of the text.

and malleability of race, racial practices, and racial institutions have failed to be adequately understood or recognized" (2018: 23). The problem with such accounts is that the "long history of race-ing" gets "foreshortened" and "elided" (Ibid). In response, Heng advocates a notion of *deep time* in which the past can "be non-identical to itself, inhabited too by that which was out of *its* time—marked by modernities that estrange medieval time in ways that render medieval practices legible in modern terms" (2018: 22; emphasis in original). We suggest that Luxemburg's account of capital accumulation situates the notion of primitive accumulation itself in a kind of deep time. Marx's classic account of early colonialism and the enclosure of the Commons are non-identical with themselves insofar as Luxemburg demonstrates how such historical violent processes of accumulation are simultaneously contemporary, because capitalism necessarily requires them for its expanded reproduction. By creolizing Luxemburg through an engagement with Heng, the idea of the primitive accumulation of whiteness can elucidate how whiteness must be accumulated historically as a condition of possibility for high modern racism and racial capitalism, *and* always already is also a continuous yet variable force. That is, just because phenomena like primitive accumulation or medieval race-making could be presented exclusively as originary prehistories does not mean they no longer exert force or exude activity. The primitive accumulation of whiteness may have its "origins," so to speak, in medieval Europe through processes like the racialized and economized violence against Jews or the imaginary of Mongol difference, but—as we articulate in the next section—its constitutive power operates across multiple temporal scales.

NEOLIBERAL IMPERIALISM AND THE ONGOING PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION OF WHITENESS

As the forms of coercion justifying the imposition of capitalism and European supremacy to non-capitalist markets has shifted across time and space, so too does the primitive accumulation of capital and racial domination shift under racial capitalism in our contemporary moment. To this end, two particular elements of Luxemburg's analysis—the *ongoing* nature of capital accumulation and the role of imperialism and militarism in enabling expanded reproduction—allow us to track how the material and ideological conditions of possibility for racial capitalism shift over time. As we articulate above, thinking about Luxemburg's insistence on the *ongoing* nature of capital accumulation as itself a form of "deep time" allows us to read the racialization of Jews in Europe and of non-Europeans more broadly, as a simultaneous accumulation of capital by expansion into new, non-capitalist strata. Coupled with her attention to imperialism and the notion that "Capital needs other

supposed universalisms with grids of differentiation that sustain their accumulations¹¹—the non-white/non-capitalist others are resources to dominate and expropriate in the service of the reproduction of racial capitalism. The primitive accumulation of whiteness thereby enables future accumulations of capital, and the realization of surplus value through capitalization reinforces hierarchies of difference that constitute the white, European subject over time, even as whiteness disavows these violent, extractive race-making histories.

The Primitive Accumulation of Whiteness in Deep Time

These two examples demonstrate, in two different ways, that the reproduction of racial capitalism and its attendant social relations require the “invention (which is always a reinvention)” (Heng, 2018: 24) of whiteness and of a white subject. Keeping in mind the flexibility and historical specificity of this white subject, including the racialized others it defines itself against, we contend that the unceasing creation and maintenance, no matter how partial, of whiteness is a stabilizing, structuring force that makes capital accumulation possible. Following Luxemburg in recognizing that primitive accumulation is an ongoing process ensuring that the structural conditions for capital accumulation are in place, we thus claim that the primitive accumulation of whiteness is also a necessary enabling condition for racial capitalism to *successfully* function. Indeed, whiteness and the primitive accumulation of capital (in Luxemburg’s sense) are necessarily co-imbricated, forming the relentless foundation upon which racial capitalism reproduces itself. This is why we position the primitive accumulation of whiteness—a concept generated by creolizing Luxemburg through Heng and Robinson—as a concept for racial capitalism.

To bring this section to a close, we contend that the concept of the primitive accumulation of whiteness helps think through the *multiple temporalities* of racial capitalism. Heng asserts that we must theorize race in “deep time”¹² rather than focus on the so-called origins of racism only in modernity, for the latter approaches construct a “narrative of bifurcated polarities vested in modernity-as-origin [that] have meant that the tenacity, duration,

¹¹ One sees this dynamic elsewhere in Heng’s work, for instance as one possible explanation for the remarkable appearance of a sculpture depicting Saint Maurice as a Black African (2018: 222–42), where Heng identifies a European universalism functioning in the service of imperial ambitions (2018: 228). Relatedly, other Europeans performed a kind of orientalizing in their perceptions and depictions of Spain due to the influence of Moorish rule and culture (Fuchs, 2011).

¹² There is further potential exploration to be had about this approach to queer theories of temporality (for example, Freeman, 2010; Halberstam, 2005; Muñoz, 2009), explorations Heng hints at in her text.

description/fantasy of the Mongol Empire. In doing so, we articulate these phenomena as formative dimensions of racial capitalism through the concept of the primitive accumulation of whiteness. We turn to these specific examples from Heng’s work because we think they forcefully crystallize the concept of the primitive accumulation of whiteness, the broader historical-theoretical argument about racial capitalism, and the critical potential of the project of creolizing Luxemburg. Moreover, we find that Luxemburg and later Robinson provide a vantage point to elaborate how proto-capitalism conditions medieval race-making more extensively than Heng’s account alone does. The racialization of English people as white through the violent racialization of Jews as well as the mercantile-racial imaginary about the Mongols are not the *only* examples of what we are calling the primitive accumulation of whiteness in medieval time. Rather, they are especially salient for developing this concept and for the project of creolizing Luxemburg through Heng’s account of medieval race-making.

Accumulating Capital, Accumulating Whiteness, Accumulating Violence: Jews in Medieval England

Amid Heng’s examination of Jews in medieval England as a racialized “internal minority” subjected to nation-making and race-making state violence (2018: chapter 2), she analyzes the intertwining of Jews’ racial, economic, and religious situation (2018: 58–65). This analysis, we argue, helps significantly develop an account of the primitive accumulation of whiteness: the social status of Jews, their economic positioning, and their racialization intersect to elucidate the closely linked dynamics of the accumulation of capital and the establishment of a white European subject against a non-white other. In these ways, Heng’s example of Jews in England helps crystallize our account of the primitive accumulation of whiteness. In twelfth- and thirteenth-century England, Jews were at the same time “the engine of economic modernity” because of their central role in “credit markets” and “a commercializing land market” (2018: 58) *and* subject to disproportionate taxation, land expropriation, stigma, and finally violence and expulsion underwritten by their racialization as not-white and not-English. In Heng’s analysis, these phenomena work together to constitute Jewish racialization in a way that requires one to think race and proto-capitalism—and religion, as it is situated vis-à-vis these two other processes—together. In other words, racial (proto-) capitalism positions Jewish subjects in medieval England as racially inferior, and we will claim that the concept of the primitive accumulation of whiteness explicates the dynamics contained therein.

The financial role of wealthier Jews in medieval England operated in relation to their racialization and the violence against them. Heng demonstrates

that “the widespread identification of Jews with economic difference, and the hydra-headed personality of capital, and capital accumulation”—supported by both the “allure, presumptive power, dangers, and threat of money” and “Christian culture’s proscriptions and ambivalence” rendered Jews the “personification” of turbulent forces of capital (2018: 58–59). Even short of periodic state and vigilante violence or eventual expulsion, this rendered Jews subject to anti-Semitic tropes, accusations of usury, disproportionate taxation by the state, wealth and land appropriation, and at the same time their constriction to outsider economic activities like moneylending (2018: 59–64). As Heng points out, while one could imagine a scenario where the “logic of capital” and economic success in a “commercializing economy” might confer “advantages . . . social, material, and other benefits” to the successful group (2018: 62), yet Jewish people in the medieval period experienced no such status. The crucial point for our analysis is that the oppressed position of Jews in a capitalizing economy cannot be accounted for or understood through “purely” economic reason. Rather, “the allure and threat of capital can be transformed into a politics of race,” generating violence that is *both* a “politics of race” *and* an “economics of class,” featuring “class heterogeneity among the anti-Jewish assailants” (2018: 62). Jews, as racialized subjects, were not white yet essential to capital accumulation. Their participation in commercializing processes is weaponized against them *through race*, such that an economic analysis alone would be insufficient to explain violence carried out against them. Here, the conjunction of race and (proto-)capitalism synthesizes racial and class politics, transmogrifies economic success into exposure to violence, and conscripts a cross-class coalition to carry out that violence.⁶

These are dynamics of racial capitalism. Indeed, Heng insists that while they were “unquestionably an important factor in the violence and destruction visited upon Jews, economic motives should not be assumed to offer adequate explanation, nor should they be assumed to be unconditioned by a politics of race” (2018: 63). These “economic motives” were, rather, thoroughly racialized, in a way that is typical of racial capitalism.⁷ The racialization of Jews as a distinct homogenized and inferior minority conditions their economic

⁶ Heng notes that everyone from “peasants and townfolk, knights of the shire, monastic houses, and great magnates” all made Jews “targets” of “resentment” (2018: 61). This targeting essentialized all Jews as a homogenous economic-qua-racial threat/subjects, even as wealth was disproportionately distributed among the Jewish population and poverty was present among Jews in England (2018: 62–63).

⁷ See, for instance, Robin D.G. Kelley’s essay on racial capitalism, where he articulates—drawing on Robinson—the way that 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*” (Kelley, 2017). Also see Heng’s account of the racialization of the Irish in relation to their economic status and practices (2018: 37–39).

“research” that can be useful for later European imperialist ventures. More substantively, Heng points to the possibility for *profit extraction* created by Marco Polo’s mercantile imaginary, as the taxonomies, descriptions, and differentiations enable the merchant to “know how to profit from difference and otherness” (2018: 332) and to “see how profit can be extracted ad hoc from local conditions” (2018: 334). The central point of Luxemburg’s *Accumulation* is that capitalism requires non-capitalist strata and societies as sites of realization of surplus value for capitalization and thus accumulation and expanded reproduction. The knowledge of difference—racial, gender, civilizational, and religious difference included—in relation to non-Western locales presented by *Le Devisement* makes possible processes of capitalist accumulation. The ascription of these hierarchical differences onto non-European spaces becomes the non-capitalist societies necessary for the expanded reproduction of capital.

There is a broader theoretical point here that illustrates the generativity of a notion of the primitive accumulation of whiteness and the kinds of analyses the concept reads together. In deep time, it is possible to theorize a connection between Luxemburg’s account of accumulation and this modality of medieval race-making. On one hand, there is the accumulation of economic, commodity, racial/civilizational, religious, and gender differences in relation to the Mongol Empire in present-day China, all in a literary epic of the European Middle Ages. On the other, there is Luxemburg’s account (2016: 279–85) of violent imperial war in China as an especially salient exemplar of capitalist accumulation by “the integration of communities . . . into commodity exchange,” a process occurring “after—or through—the destruction of these communities” (2016: 279). Both processes evince a superficial quasi-tranquility: the Mongols of *Le Devisement* receive “admiration,” “awe,” and accession to human status (Heng, 2018: 334), while bourgeois economists and liberal theorists represent the introduction of commodity economies as “the beginning of ‘peace’ and equality,” fair economic competition, and “mutual interests” (Luxemburg, 2016: 279). Meanwhile, “religious race does not disappear” even if the Mongols are granted a partial or full measure of humanity (Heng, 2018: 349), and of course the introduction of commodity economies in non-capitalist zones is in fact foundationally constituted by war, “theft, extortion, and flagrant fraudulence” (Luxemburg, 2016: 279). This dynamic is in fact characteristic of racial capitalism, which for Robinson involves—“from the twelfth century forward”—state and class powers who both “initiated and nurtured myths of egalitarianism” and “seiz[ed] every occasion to divide peoples for the purpose of their domination” (1983: 26). In their contiguity, whiteness and capitalism saturate their

the “tendency” of European racial capitalism was “*not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, dialectical differences into ‘racial’ ones*” (1983: 26, emphasis in original). Even if this narrative of Mongol civilization foregoes an explicit racism, it still conduces to a broader racial capitalist imaginary in its push to differentiate and categorize for racial capitalist exploitation and/or expropriation. In this sense, its internal logic lays groundwork for a (proto-)racial capitalism that instrumentalizes systems of differentiation.

The mercantile taxonomic framework extends to the circulation of women’s bodies, a description-qua-fantasy in *Le Devisement* of a sort of “sexual tourism” through which international (male) travelers receive lodging and “hospitality sex” in an Orientalized Asia (Heng, 2018: 333–34). Heng argues that an economic logic undergirds these “exchanges”:

. . . [T]he relative values of commodities around the world run parallel to the relative values of human behavior and female sexuality around the world . . . In a world gridded by commerce and trade relations, not only are goods exchanged, but people also circulate in relations of exchange that produce profit calculable by the participants: This is how a mercantile imaginary sees the world. All human relations are economic relations of a sort where participants seek to profit from trading, including intimate kinds of trading. But profit, of course, can be unequal for the participants in exchange relations, since those in control often decide the conditions of trading. (2018: 333–34)

If the general mercantile-racial logic of differentiation suggests the dynamic analyzed by Robinson, the mercantile-sexual logic points us to Silvia Federici, who theorizes primitive accumulation as not just a “concentration of exploitable workers and capital” but also as “*an accumulation of differences and divisions within the working class*, whereby hierarchies built upon gender, as well as ‘race’ and age, became constitutive of class rule” (2004: 63, emphasis in original). We thus witness a series of differentiations in the service of accumulation whereby the general mercantile imaginary functions through the creation of taxonomies and categories. For those accumulating capital and whiteness, these grease the wheels of trade relations encompassing kinds of racial differentiation that are central to racial capitalism, and of related gender and sexual differentiation central to a proletariat-centric understanding of primitive accumulation; for those racialized as non-white Others, expropriated, and dispossessed, such processes are anything but smooth.

Luxemburg helps think through these differentiations across longer-term capitalist trajectories. At the very least, we speculate that the economic information generated through the narrative is background knowledge and imperial

roles, possibilities, and activities, and also the social consequences of those activities. Simultaneously, the dangers and turbulence stuck to commercializing capital heightens the danger posed by their racialization. The feedback loop of their economic role and racialization constitute one another, which sows a “fertile ground for generating racialized modes of group redress” that reach “its logical extremity” in the 1290 expulsion order (2018: 61). Jews in medieval England are not just racial subjects or economic subjects but subjects of racial (proto-) capitalism, as they become the racialized other against which a white subject coheres and accumulates. Examining the biopolitical management of Jews in medieval England, Heng elucidates how the Church and the State used various physical, theological, and ideological mechanisms and technologies to separate and demarcate the Jewish population from the larger Christian population (2018: 15–16, chapter 2), through which a white Christian, Anglo-Saxon English national identity consolidates.

In this consolidation, whiteness and capital accumulate together. In the twelfth century, a prominent abbot proposed a plan to confiscate Jewish lands and use the revenue to finance crusades against Muslims in the holy land (2018: 61). Not only does this proposal “seamlessly link . . . the disciplining of the infidel within Europe to the disciplining of the infidel without” (Ibid) in a move that coheres the figure *homo europeas* against its variably racialized Others, it also constructs a chain of linked accumulations of capital. The plan would expropriate proto-capital from Jews in Europe, use that capital to engage in imperial ventures—or, in Luxemburg’s terms, realize that proto-capital in non-European/non-white/non-proto-capitalist zones—which would lead to plunder that could then be re-circulated back through Europe, all underwritten by the racialization of Jews and Muslims against the white European Christian subject.

In England more specifically, capital accumulation happens through Jewish economic agents in two ways. First, “land transfer through Jewish financial transactions,” a process linking land, capital, and credit that “capitalized the market in land to such an extent as to threaten and undermine feudal obligations and relationships, destabilizing the basis of land-based feudalism” (2018: 59). Luxemburg herself identifies the marketization of land for the purpose of establishing a system of private property—and thus the description of feudal and “natural” socioeconomic systems—as one of the central mechanisms of imperial capitalist accumulation, with India and Algeria as her two main examples (Luxemburg, 2016: chapter 27).⁸ A similar process takes place in England itself as a more originary accumulation that involves relations with a racialized population, the destruction of more

⁸ The establishment of credit flows is also essential to capitalist accumulation (Luxemburg, 2016: 304–5).

traditional forms of property and social relations, and the circulation of land-qua-private-property. Second, the state appropriated wealth directly from the Jewish population of England, subjecting them to “special tallages and other fiscal exploitation,” such that, for example, half of aggregate Jewish wealth was transferred from individuals to the Crown from 1241 to 1258 (Heng, 2018: 64). Here, accumulation takes the more direct form of plunder or theft from an internal minority. In both of these processes, the racialization of the population from which capital is circulated and extracted enables accumulation to operate, such that whiteness and (proto-)capital are accumulated alongside and through one another.

More broadly, then, this close reading of Heng’s examination of Jews in medieval England demonstrates the importance of a concept such as the primitive accumulation of whiteness for analyses of racial capitalism. In an abstract sense, the concept connects processes of racialization, the consolidation of whiteness, and both originary and ongoing imperial accumulations of capital. In the concrete example of Jews in medieval England, it crystallizes the racialization of Jewish subjects and the white Christian European subject they constitute, the economic role of Jews in England, violence against Jews in England, the financing of imperial Crusades, and specific mechanisms of capital expropriation and accumulation. Rather than unfolding separately from the primitive accumulation of capital, the process of racialization of Jews in medieval England enables and mutually constitutes the realization of surplus value. The primitive accumulation of whiteness illuminates this process of racialization as it is intertwined with capital accumulation. In the next subsection, we move from thinking about the primitive accumulation of whiteness within Europe to the accumulation of capital and whiteness in relation to the Mongol Empire in order to see a different racial-economic-geographical process of this accumulation.

Accumulations and the Logic of Differentiation: Imagining the Mongol Empire

Heng extensively analyzes the text *Le Devisement du Monde*⁹ (c. 1311), written by an author of Arthurian courtly narratives, Rustichello da Pisa, on the basis of his conversations with the Venetian merchant Marco Polo while they were both imprisoned in Genoa in 1298–1299 (Heng, 2018: 323–49). The text purports to chronicle the travels of Marco Polo, especially his time with Kublai Khan, head of the Mongol Empire, in present-day China. Heng

⁹ The literal translation of the title is *The Description of the World*, while the more common English name is *Book of the Marvels of the World* or *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Following Heng, we refer to it as *Le Devisement*.

assesses the ways that—in stark distinction to prevailing European views of Mongols and other Asian peoples—in the text, Marco expresses consistent admiration of and occasional identification with Mongols, most of all through his mercantile attention to cataloging the wealth, commodities, and architectural grandeur amassed by Kublai Khan and the broader Khanate (2018: 327–29). Assimilating “material success and moral righteousness” through “a calculus of equivalence,” *Le Devisement* situates material success as a kind of “admission to the society of *humanitas*” such that the “Mongol race has been welcomed into civilization” (2018: 329). The “mercantile imaginary” (2018: 331) about the Mongol Empire thus seems to mitigate some of the hierarchal racializing tendencies of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Europe (2018: 327–34, 346–49), even if “religious race does not disappear” (2018: 348–49).

What substitutes, at least in this instance, for racial hierarchization? Heng argues that for the Marco Polo of *Le Devisement* and the mercantile imaginary he characterizes, human difference becomes another kind of material for the logic of taxonomy and differentiation:

. . . a reflexive mechanism of identifying, tagging, and tallying the things he sees, and quantifying their value, affords Marco an important means of taxonomizing the world . . . In [this] global transversal, taxonomies of this kind help to make intelligible and manageable the inexhaustible variety that is encountered, so that the world’s diversity can be processed. . . . And, just as with merchandise, differences among the peoples can also be a necessary condition for their yielding of value. (2018: 331–32)

The proto-capitalist standpoint emphasizes racial/civilizational *difference* as part of a broader economic categorization project¹⁰ rather than racial/civilizational *hierarchy*, at least so far as the powerful and wealthy Mongol Khanate and its goods are concerned. In this sense, European racialization of the Mongols reverses the relationship between wealth and race enacted through anti-Jewish violence: there, the wealth of some Jews marks out Jews as a population against whom racialized violence will be carried out, whereas for *Le Devisement*, the wealth of some Mongols mitigates and mediates the possibility for immediate racialized violence. However, this less overtly dominating framework itself sustains primitive accumulation, racial capitalism, and imperialism. The taxonomizing rationality of Marco Polo depicted in *Le Devisement* can be considered as a version of the logic of differentiation that constitutes racial capitalism for Cedric Robinson. He contends that

¹⁰ That there are resonances across deep time between this mercantile grid of intelligibility and neoliberal reason’s translation of human difference into economized subjectivities for differentiated population management (see Brown, 2015) is not lost on the authors.