A Radical Journal of Geography
ANTIPODE

Modalities of Conjunctural Analysis: "Seeing the Present Differently" through Global Lenses

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Abstract: The sub-title of this essay refers to Antonio Gramsci's concept of "prevision"—understood as neither foresight nor prediction, but a method of political work that enables intervention in the present in order to change it. Prevision forms part of conjunctural analysis, which remains powerfully salient and urgent in our own time. Over the past decade attention to conjunctural analysis has surged across a number of disciplines. Yet some distinctly different modalities of conjunctural analysis are at play in this burgeoning work. The first two sections of this essay offer close readings of the conjunctural analyses of Gramsci and Stuart Hall; their respective relationships to the work of Louis Althusser; and the political work that conjunctural analysis was doing for each of them in relation to fascism and Thatcherism. Building on but moving beyond these analyses, the third section focuses on what it might mean to "globalise" conjunctural analysis in relation to the urgent challenges of the current conjuncture, in a way that sheds light on articulations of racist, gendered, sexualised, and other exclusionary and oppressive forms of difference in relation to class and capitalism.

Keywords: Gramsci, Hall, conjunctural analysis, articulation, relational comparison

Introduction

> The crises of the 1970s were to be followed by the world-shattering political accession of Mrs. Thatcher … and the blitzkrieg launched by "Thatcherism", with its contradictory authoritarian and neo-liberal, strong state/free market impulses, on the social fabric … Few believed that this was a historic turning point. They defined it as another of the usual swings of the political pendulum. But those of us who had heard the ugly sound of an old conjuncture unravelling, watched the crisis unfold, understood its populist roots and its long-term hegemonic project, were in a position to know differently. (Hall et al. 2013:xvii–xviii)

> [A] conjuncture is not a slice of time [or a period], but can only be defined by the accumulation/condensation of contradictions, the fusion or merger … of "different currents and circumstances". (Hall 1980:165)

The first epigraph comes from the Preface to the second edition of *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*, originally published in 1978, which Stuart Hall co-authored with Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts. *Policing the Crisis* remains a towering instance of conjunctural analysis,

Antipode Vol. 56 No. 1 2024 ISSN 0066-4812, pp. 135–164 doi: 10.1111/anti.12975

from which many of us have drawn inspiration.[1] Focused initially on a widely reported attack on an elderly white man in the Handsworth district of Birmingham in 1972, for which three boys of mixed ethnic backgrounds received lengthy prison sentences, the authors trace the multiple, interconnected forces and relations driving the rise of "mugging" as a moral panic—defined in terms of race, crime, and youth—in Britain at that specific moment. Moving out from there, they illuminate the accelerating implosion over the 1970s of the social democratic welfare state consensus and the rise of what they call the "law and order state" that helped pave the way for Thatcher's triumph in 1979, which the book presciently anticipated. Returning to "The Politics of 'Mugging'", the final chapter offers a compelling analysis of how interconnected class depredations and racist oppression played into the attack. It also makes clear the relations between reactions to these forces in Britain and the Black Panthers, as well as connections with longer imperial histories. The final chapter of *Policing the Crisis* is closely related to Hall's important 1980 essay "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance", which engaged the politically charged race versus class debate in South Africa that intensified through the 1970s, and remains salient to contemporary debates in and beyond South Africa (Hall 2021b).

Hall's death in 2014 called forth a florescence of writing on conjunctural analysis in and beyond cultural studies.[2] Yet it is becoming evident that some distinctively different methods of conjunctural analysis are at play in this burgeoning work, underpinned by divergent conceptual framings and with very different political stakes that need to be made clear—especially given the inherently political character of the concept of conjuncture in Marxist analysis. Central to these tensions are profound differences in approaches to conjunctural analysis by Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser. Hall sought to navigate a path between them, in a journey he charted with exemplary clarity.[3] Yet what makes this path so perilous, as we shall see, are the sharply different stakes of their respective analyses. Ongoing tensions between Althusserian and Gramscian approaches to conjunctural analysis are evident in recent literature in cultural studies.

Such tensions assume a different form in urban studies. Viewing conjunctural analysis as a method in need of clarification, scholars in this field have been primarily concerned with questions of spatialisation on grounds that, "[t]o date, conjunctural thinking has been relentlessly historical in orientation" (Leitner and Sheppard 2020:493). As part of his critique of historicism, Althusser did indeed posit a concept of multiple temporalities abstracted from space (although reliant on spatial metaphors). In sharp contrast, Gramsci focused on the multiplicity of interconnected *spatio*-temporalities, acutely attuned to questions of scale. Also, Gramsci's conjunctural analysis is inherently comparative, while Althusser's is not. The political stakes of these differences are significant, as we shall see.

More generally, conjunctural analysis is not simply a "method" that can be divorced from theory and politics. In addition, as Ben White (2015:1398) has warned, "[i]t would be a pity if 'conjuncture' became an attractive but too easy way out … if complex phenomena and processes that need to be explained get explained away, as conjunctures all the way down". Part of my purpose in this essay is to clarify the simultaneously conceptual, methodological, and political

stakes of different lineages of conjunctural analysis. I do so through close critical readings of Gramsci's and Hall's conjunctural analyses, including their respective relationships to Althusser; how each was deploying the analysis to do political work in the context of fascism and Thatcherism; and how we can build on the strengths of their analyses while also moving beyond their limits.

Propelling my turn to conjunctural analysis is how, in many regions of the world since the end of the Cold War, we have witnessed not only the rise of right-wing populist politics and racialised nationalisms, but also ferocious and mutually inflammatory battles with proponents of liberal democracy and secularism. These warring tendencies underscore the limits of a widely held view that the rise of the right signifies the failure of "progressive neoliberalism", and related calls *For a Left Populism* (Mouffe 2018) or "progressive populism" (Fraser 2019). Such claims and calls severely underestimate the sources, dangers, and complexities of the present moment, as well as the contradictions from which different possibilities might emerge—which is, precisely, the work of conjunctural analysis.

At the outset I want to make clear that, rather than adjudicating "correct" readings of Hall (Section 1) and Gramsci (Section 2), I am most concerned with trying to explain—from a necessarily partial and situated position—what I find useful and how, to borrow a felicitous phrase from Kipfer and Mallick (2022), I have tried to "stretch and translate" their analyses in relation to my project of developing a global conjunctural frame (Section 3).

Stuart Hall: Race, Articulation, and Conjunctural Analysis

> We use the term "contextualising" to describe this analytic process of widening the frame. But it is a weak formulation. In the *Grundrisse* Marx argues that the only way to produce "the concrete by way of thought" is to add more determinations: "the concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations" [Marx 1973:101]. Contextualising is thus not the invocation of an inert "background" but involves treating these *articulated* processes as a real movement through time and identifying, in their historical specificity, the links between the different levels of abstraction. (Hall et al. 2013:xiv, emphasis added)

> There is good reason why Stuart Hall's attention to the demands of the conjuncture was paralleled by his interest in the practice of articulation—as a means of forging connections. (Clarke 2019:137–138)

The discussion of Hall's conjunctural analysis in this section starts by elaborating on how he navigated the tensions between Althusser and Gramsci outlined in the Introduction. We then turn to Hall's pathbreaking work on the articulation of class and race, focusing on two related and extremely influential essays that made extensive use of the concept of articulation of modes of production. I distinguish four different concepts of articulation at play in Hall's work, highlighting how his earlier reading of Marx's method (referred to in the first epigraph of this section) offers a dialectical understanding of articulations of class and race as well as other dimensions of difference, that carries important political stakes.

Conjunctural Analysis between Althusser and Gramsci

Following the publication of *Policing the Crisis* and the ascent of Thatcher, Hall made several key Gramscian moves that exemplify the power of his conjunctural analysis of Thatcherite Britain. "The Great Moving Right Show" from 1979 is a prime example of the political work of conjunctural analysis. Locating the rise of Thatcherism in the contradictions and crises of social democracy, Hall underscores how the capacity of the Right to mobilise "the people" against "the power bloc" is not merely a rhetorical device or a trick. Its success and effectivity "[do] not lie in its capacity to dupe unsuspecting folk but in the way it addresses real problems, real and lived experiences, real contradictions—and yet is able to represent them within a logic of discourse which pulls them systematically into line with the policies and class strategies of the Right" (Hall 1979:20).

In "State and Society, 1880–1930", a closely related Gramscian conjunctural analysis, Hall and Schwarz (1988) illuminate the crisis of liberal hegemony in Britain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This essay provides powerful comparative insights into "the peculiarities of the British route and—in contrast to Germany and Italy—the differences which led, in the British case, not to a fascist but to a democratic-interventionist 'solution'" (Hall and Schwarz 1988:95). It also demonstrates how interventionist solutions to the crisis of liberalism in Britain from the 1880s restored a degree of political stability in the face of popular challenges, but also created the conditions for their own destruction:

> The neo-liberal resurgence today is testimony to the unfinished trajectory of the crisis of that earlier period. Social democracy was formed out of the crisis of liberalism between the 1880s and the 1920s. We are now living through its successor—the crisis of social democracy. (Hall and Schwarz 1988:121)

In addition to its complementary with *Policing the Crisis*, this analysis connects directly with "Variants of Liberalism", another Gramscian exposition in which Hall "moves constantly between the 'philosophical' and 'common sense' aspect of liberalism", illuminating the close links between English liberalism and English nationalism, and mapping the broad ways in which liberal ideas have entered into, shaped, and transformed the practical consciousness and actions of "specific historical classes, groups and individuals" (Hall 1986:37). Together these pieces demonstrate the value of combining spatio-historical analysis of key conjunctural moments with close attention to the production of what Gramsci called common sense (*senso comune*) in the realms of everyday life. They also exemplify the centrality of passive revolution and Gramsci's concept of the integral state to Hall's conjunctural analysis.

Yet, I suggest, these insights are in tension with the strong Althusserian strain running through a major part of Hall's work from the late 1970s to mid-1980s—including influential versions of his conjunctural analysis, and the two key essays on racism (Hall 2021b, 2021c). In a set of lectures delivered at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign in 1983 Hall laid out in detail how he saw the relationship between Althusser and Gramsci. He insisted on recognising "the generative ways Althusser goes outside the Marxist problematic, takes up concepts that have developed in another discourse, tries to understand Marx's discourse in light of that new conceptualization, and produces extremely positive reformulations of

problematic points in Marx's work" (Hall 2016:115)—including Althusser's felicitous formulation of conjuncture in terms of an accumulation of contradictions in *For Marx*. Hall was more ambivalent about Althusser's borrowing the notion of "levels" from structuralist approaches to rethink Marx's notion of the social formation in terms of economic, political, and ideological levels in *Reading Capital*—a move, he notes, that "attempts to displace relationships experienced historically and processually into a spatial model" (Hall 2016:105).[4] Yet in different phases of his work Hall persisted in deploying Althusserian levels, albeit in carefully qualified ways that included using Gramsci "both to enrich Althusserian concepts and to define an alternative or limit to Althusser's 'hardening of the structuralist categories'" (Hall 2016:55).

Hall navigated the path between Gramsci and Althusser with tremendous deftness, but he did not engage the profound analytical and political differences between them, exemplified by Althusser's ferocious attack on Gramsci's historicism as a regrettable descent into the humanist/historicist Hegelian hellhole of expressive totality:

> [Gramsci's] project of thinking Marxism as an (absolute) historicism automatically unleashes a logically necessary chain reaction which tends to reduce and flatten out the Marxist totality into a variation of the Hegelian totality … Gramsci was so insistent on the practical unity of the conception of the world and history that he neglected to retain what distinguishes Marxist theory from every previous organic ideology: its character as *scientific* knowledge. (Althusser and Balibar 1970:132)

Most immediately problematic, as we shall see in the following section, is that Althusser's allegation in fact applied to Benedetto Croce, while completely ignoring Gramsci's fierce critique of Croce's historicism as enabling fascism. In *The Gramscian Moment* (2009), Peter Thomas develops a precise exposition of each of the three key terms in Gramsci's philosophy of praxis—"absolute 'historicism', the absolute secularisation and earthliness of thought, an absolute humanism of history"—providing a philological reconstruction of how Gramsci developed critical understandings of each term directly at odds with Althusser's allegations.[5] Loftus (2013) also shows how, for Gramsci, nature is central to all three facets of philosophy of praxis.

In addition to profound analytical differences, what is at stake politically is that Gramsci and Althusser represent diametrically opposed positions on "the precise way in which philosophy should be integrated with the political aspirations of the working-class movement" (Thomas 2009:15).[6] Directed at dismantling the division between intellectual and manual labour, "Gramsci's reformulation of Marxism as a philosophy of praxis aimed to be immanent to the social and political relations in which it is elaborated, functioning as the critical dimension of those practices and reconfiguring them as self-organisation 'from below'"—as a "new form of philosophy that would be both a laboratory for and an enactment of the self-regulating society it aimed to bring into existence" (Thomas 2013:148).

In sharp contrast, for Althusser in *Reading Capital* Marxist philosophy "guarantees the defence and illustration of the scientificity proper to historical materialism, and intervenes so that the new knowledges necessary for the class struggle

are produced"—it adjudicates, in other words, between science and ideology, "foiling the ideological illusions that re-emerge and prevent the party and the masses from identifying the decisive objectives" (Thomas 2009:17). Koivisto and Lahtinen (2012:272) contend that, in his later work,

> Althusser's self-criticism increasingly emphasised the importance of the *interaction* between theory and practice, [but] he never put forward any concrete conjunctural analyses concerning the relations between intellectuals and the masses or the *organisational-political* connections between Marxist science and philosophy in relation to the prevailing ideologies or *senso comune* … In Althusser's analyses, Marxist intellectuals seem to remain philosophers or theoreticians who *spontaneously* reproduce the division between intellectual and material work typical of the capitalist class society.[7]

Hall's reading of Gramsci through Althusser was part of a broader tendency in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in which Chantal Mouffe played an important role.[8] By the latter part of the 1980s Hall seemed to veer in a more explicitly Gramscian direction.[9] Another pivotal moment came in 1994—in the midst of post-Cold War celebrations of globalisation, multiculturalism, and diaspora—when Hall delivered the Du Bois Lectures at Harvard.[10] Most notably in the lecture on "Race as a Sliding Signifier", Hall embraced a poststructuralist analysis that took decisive leave of both Althusser and Gramsci—as well as his earlier work on articulations of race and class discussed more fully below (see Jones et al. 2019). Yet by the early 2010s, in the wake of the financial crisis, Hall reverted to a predominantly Althusserian frame of conjunctural analysis of neoliberalism in terms of economic, political, and ideological levels in his work with Doreen Massey.[11]

Ongoing tensions between Althusserian and Gramscian approaches to conjunctural analysis are evident in recent literature in cultural studies. Lawrence Grossberg, for example, presents "A Model/Method of Conjunctural Analysis" defined in structural terms of economic, political, and ideological levels:

> Using Althusser's concept of the structure of dominance, I might say that in Reaganism, the emergent New Right was defined by a struggle for dominance between the economic (neoliberalism) and ideological (social conservatism) levels. For G.W. Bush, the economic was clearly dominant and for Trump, I would suggest that the political is dominant but also because it has rearticulated and been rearticulated by the culture wars of the 1960s. (Grossberg 2019:43)

Endorsing Grossberg's analysis but translating his Althusserian language of structural levels into "factors", Jeremy Gilbert (2019:9–10) tells us that "almost by definition 'conjunctural' analysis as practiced by Hall et al. does not prescribe in advance how much weight is to be given to 'cultural', economic, political, social or technological factors in making an overall analysis of a given social formation or period".

In contrast John Clarke (2019:136) outlines a far more Gramscian conjunctural analysis in terms of multiple spatio-temporalities, suggesting how "very different framings—neoliberalisation, the crisis of social democracy, the unfinished dynamics of post-colonialism and the transformations of a familial/gender order—combine to constitute the present moment, contributing different dynamics, tensions and antagonisms"—and how these condensed spatio-temporalities came

together in the battle over Brexit. Also central to Clarke's analysis is Hall's concept of articulation:

> Hall insisted on the importance of analysing the specifics of particular articulations. This meant paying attention to both the conditions of their existence and the political-cultural work (practice) that went into making and sustaining particular articulations. No articulation—whether the combination of social forces in a political bloc or a discursive alignment of meanings and politics—came with a "lifetime guarantee". (Clarke 2019:138)

On the contrary, this sort of analysis opens up political possibilities of "disarticulation" and "rearticulation". Clarke extends and deepens this analysis in *The Battle for Britain* (2023), which exemplifies the power of conjunctural analysis framed in terms of multiple, interconnected spatio-temporalities.

The tensions between Gramscian and broadly Althusserian understandings are most clearly evident in Hall's work on articulations of race and class. Briefly reprising and updating my earlier writing on articulation (Hart 2007, 2013) in conversation with important new work, I turn now to (i) identify the multiple meanings of articulation at play in this work, and (ii) propose that Hall's 1974 "reading" of Marx's notes on method in the 1857 "Introduction" (Hall 2021a) deploys a dialectical approach to articulation that is distinctively different from various (neo) Althusserian and poststructuralist iterations—and then suggest why that matters for conjunctural analysis.

Race, Class, and the Multiple Meanings of Articulation

> Gramsci did *not* write about race, ethnicity, or racism in their contemporary meanings or manifestations. Nor did he analyse in depth the colonial experience or imperialism, out of which so many of the characteristic "racist" experiences and relationships in the modern world have been developed … [Yet] *despite* his apparently "Eurocentric" position, [Gramsci proves] to be one of the most theoretically fruitful, as well as one of the least known and least understood, sources of new ideas, paradigms, and perspectives in the contemporary studies of racially structured social phenomena. (Hall 2021c:300, 328)

Hall's assertion that Gramsci did not write directly about race and racism does not hold up to closer scrutiny (Green 2013, 2021; Kipfer and Mallick 2022). Yet his reading of Gramsci was indeed central to "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance" (Hall 2021b)—an essay that challenged the reductionist terms of the class versus race debate in South Africa, and shed powerful light on how regimes of capital operate in and through differentiation and difference. Delving into Stuart Hall's archives, Efthimios Karayiannides (2022:12) recently discovered near-complete versions of this paper dating back to the mid-1970s. Rather than following from *Policing the Crisis* as some of us have presumed, the essay published in 1980 seems to have informed it. Karayiannides underscores how Hall's thinking about Thatcherite Britain was profoundly influenced by a series of UNESCO seminars on race and colonialism in the 1970s, which led him to work by French Africanists and émigré thinkers in Britain on the concept of

articulation of modes of production (AMP).[12] He also suggests that Hall's critics, who accused him of excessive emphasis on ideological factors and underestimating underlying economic forces, fail to recognise how he was drawing on political-economic theories of AMP to construct an argument about Thatcherism as a form of "regressive modernisation".

Karayiannides draws a sharp distinction between Hall's use of AMP and the concept of articulation deployed by Althusser "as an anatomical metaphor to capture the relations of linkage and effectivity which exist between the various levels—economic, political, and ideological—of a social formation":

> For development theorists in the period [late 1960s-1970s], articulation had a much more specific, sociological meaning. They spoke of the *articulation of modes of production* as a phenomenon in which capitalist relations of production exist alongside and in relation to social relations from precapitalist modes of production. "Articulation" described the relation between capitalist and precapitalist modes of production within a single social formation … meant to capture situations in which precapitalist relations of production were subordinated and made functional to capitalist relations without being fully undermined or transcended in the course of a society's economic development. It is this latter usage of articulation, rather than Althusser's, that Hall's notion is closest to and in conversation with … Hall's concept of articulation is concerned with capitalism's uneven development and how elements from previous modes of production are recast in subsequent modes … It is a theory of historical development and transition, sensitive to the historical and social context in which certain productive relations emerge. (Karayiannides 2022:5–7)

He suggests as well that "Hall read Gramsci as a theorist of underdevelopment comparable to the Anglo-Caribbean, South African, and Latin American thinkers he was engaging with in the same period" (Karayiannides 2022:2).

While I strongly endorse Karayiannides' insistence on recognising the non-Western provenance of Hall's theorising, it's important for my purposes in this essay to pay critical attention to three distinctively different concepts of articulation in "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance". First, Althusser's concept of articulation plays a central role in the essay—a point that Karayiannides (2022:17) acknowledges in his discussion of the "three distinct levels [economic, political, and ideological] at which the articulation of race and class should be sought". Hall himself calls attention to the need for additional concepts "to supply further determinations to those which have been mobilised for the analysis of the *economic 'mode of production'* levels"—recognising that "the economic level, alone, cannot prescribe what those levels will be like and how they will operate" (Hall 2021b:227, emphasis added). This is also precisely the point at which he turns to Gramsci to do work that neither Althusser nor the concept of AMP can do. Contrary to Hall's claim that he uses Gramsci to provide a "'limit case' of historicity for Marxist structuralism" (ibid.), he is actually rolling in Gramsci to provide crucial analytical ballast in support of his important claims about how capitalism and racism work in and through one another—to provide, in other words, a *dialectical* understanding that is not just a limit case, but sharply at odds with Marxist structuralism. More on this below.

Second, as Karayiannides also recognises, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance" draws on Ernesto Laclau's (1977) theorisation of populism that embodies the double meaning of articulation in English and French as both "linking together" and "giving expression to".[13] As I argued some time ago, however, neither Hall nor Laclau (nor, for that matter, Mouffe) pay *any* attention to Gramsci's vitally important theory of language and translation, nor to his related and relational conception of the person that is fundamentally different from either a liberal notion of the sovereign subject or the structuralist conception of interpellation on which Laclau (1977) leans heavily (Hart 2013).[14] Close attention to this dimension of Gramsci's work is essential to a dialectical conception of articulation, and to extending Hall's conjunctural analysis.

Third, notions of articulation of modes of production were part of intense debates in the late 1970s and early 1980s in which, as McGlone (2022:158) has recently noted, Althusser's and Balibar's texts played a notable role—and to which feminist critiques made major contributions.[15] A key figure in these debates to whom Hall (2021b) gestures but does not engage is Jairus Banaji, whose 1977 "Modes of Production in a Materialist Conception of History" delivered a resounding critique of the concept of AMP on the grounds that: (i) the Althusserian distinction between modes of production and social formations "may actually obscure and mystify the mechanisms of modes of production" (Banaji 2010:98); and (ii) it is deeply misleading to regard a form of reproduction of labour-power (such as subsistence production) as a specific, separate mode of production.[16] More specifically: "Relations of production are simply not reducible to forms of exploitation, *both* because modes of production embrace a wider range of relationships than those in their immediate production *and* because the deployment of labour, the organisation and control of the labour-process, 'correlates' with historical relations of production in complex ways" (Banaji 2010:4). I return to a fuller discussion of Banaji's work in the final section of this essay, underscoring how he explicitly situates his arguments in terms of Marx's method.

This brings me to a fourth, distinctively different concept of articulation. In his 1974 "reading" of Marx's notes on method, Hall (2021a) makes clear how, for Marx, the concept of articulation was part of a method for rising from the abstract to the concrete, in the sense of a concrete concept that is adequate to the concrete in history, through multiple relations and determinations. Moreover, as McLennan (2021:166) has noted, he accomplished this explication in "a much more flexible register than that of the Althusserians" by emphasising Marx's stress on the historical movement of, as well as the tensions among, all these relations. As Hall put it,

> Both the specificities and the connections—the complex unities of structures—have to be demonstrated by concrete analysis of concrete relations and conjunctions. *If relations are mutually articulated, but remain specified by their difference, this articulation, and the determinate conditions on which it rests, has to be demonstrated*. It cannot be conjured out of thin air according to some essentialist dialectical law. Differentiated unities are also therefore, in the Marxian sense, *concrete*. The method thus retains the concrete empirical reference as a privileged and undissolved "moment" within a

> theoretical analysis without thereby making it "empiricist"; the concrete analysis of concrete situations. (Hall 2021a:36, emphasis added)

While acknowledging the Althusserian concept of a social formation as a complex ensemble of relations structured in dominance, he also insists (contra Althusser) on a reading of Marx in terms of the "mutual articulation of historical movement and theoretical reflection" (Hall 2021a:47).

Precisely this "mutual articulation" undergirds Hall's illumination of Marx's dialectical analysis of the elements of capitalist political economy— production, consumption, distribution, and exchange—in terms of three kinds of identity relations between production and consumption:

> First, *immediate identity*—where production and consumption are "immediately" one another. Second, *mutual dependence*—where each is "indispensable" to the other, and cannot be completed without it, but where production and consumption remain "external" to one another. Thirdly, a relation, which has no precise title, but which is clearly that of an *internal connection* between two sides, linked … by real processes through historical time … The inner connection here passes through a distinct process. It requires what Marx, in his earlier critique of Hegel, called a "profane" history: a process in the real world, a process through historical time, each moment of which requires its own determinate conditions, is subject to its own inner laws, and yet is incomplete without the other … Marx insists that the historical process through which production and consumption pass *has* its breaks, its moments of determinacy … *Nothing except the maintenance of these determinate conditions can guarantee the continuity of this mode of production over time* … It is, in short, a finite historical system, a system capable of breaks, discontinuities, contradictions, interruptions: a system *with limits*, within historical time. (Hall 2021a:32–34)

Hall's emphasis on slippages, openings, and contradictions distinguishes Marx's dialectics from Hegel's. It also exemplifies a key argument from *Policing the Crisis* in the epigraph at the start of this section: "Contextualising is thus not the invocation of an inert 'background' but involves treating these *articulated* processes as a real movement through time [or space-time] and identifying, in their historical specificity, the links between the different levels of abstraction" (Hall et al. 2013: xiv, emphasis added)—in other words, a *dialectical* conception of articulation.

Such a concept is directly relevant to understanding race/racism—as well as gender, sexuality, caste, and other dimensions of difference—as active constitutive forces, operating in and through one another, and inseparably intertwined with processes of class formation. In her incisive critique of the undialectical concept of intersectionality, Himani Bannerji deploys precisely this aspect of Marx's method to argue that:

> If one were to broaden "class" … [to make it stand for] an entire ensemble of social relations, signifying practices, and organisations, it could not be articulated within specific social formations such as ours without "race". For this reason, one could say that "race" is the ideological discourse as well as cultural common sense of a patriarchal, colonial, and imperialist capitalism. In such an existential historical terrain, disarticulating "race" from "class" is impossible. Denuded of its metaphysical trapping, the notion of the "concrete", then, in Marx's usage … [signals] a constitutive complexity. (Bannerji 2021a:14)

This insistence on constitutive complexity also underscores the impossibility of addressing different dimensions of oppression in isolation from another. Bannerji's formulation shares close affinities with Combahee River Collective (CRC), whose 1977 Black feminist statement emphasised both that it is impossible "to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously" and that "liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy" (in Taylor 2017:19). Barbara Smith (2000) describes Black feminist organising by the CRC as combining "an anti-racist, feminist *practice* with a radical, anticapitalist analysis", as well as a clear focus on coalition politics (Reagon 2000).

The final section of this essay returns these arguments and their political reverberations, bringing them into conversation with conjunctural analysis through a set of moves that build on but extend beyond Hall's approach—as well as that of Gramsci, to which we now turn.

Gramsci's Conjunctural Analysis: Fascism, Passive Revolution, Revolutionary Strategy

> In the Europe of 1789 to 1870 there was a (political) war of manoeuvre during the French Revolution and a long war of position from 1815 to 1870. In the present era the war of manoeuvre took place politically from March 1917 to March 1921, to be followed by a war of position whose ideological representative for Europe, as well as its practical one (for Italy) is fascism. (Q10I§9; Gramsci 1995:350)

> If liberalism was the form of "passive revolution" specific to the 19th century, wouldn't fascism be, precisely, the form of "passive revolution" specific to the 20th century? (Q8§236; Gramsci 2007:378)

This section begins with Gramsci's critique of Croce's historicism, and his very different concept of spatial historicism framed in terms of multiple, interconnected spatio-temporalities. We turn then to focus on how this formulation underpins his conjunctural analysis, linked in turn with the key comparative concept of passive revolution and with his revolutionary strategy, of which prevision is a part. I also engage an important debate over the relationship of Gramsci's historicism to the concept of passive revolution. Although Gramsci paid greater attention to race, colonialism, and imperialism than Hall allows, I pave the way for Section 3 by suggesting how we might move beyond the European focus of his conjunctural analysis—and how the dialectical concept of articulation suggested by Hall's engagement with Marx's method contributes to this move.

Gramsci's Spatial Historicism

The first epigraph comes from a note entitled "Paradigms of Ethico-Political History" in which Gramsci launched a fierce critique of Benedetto Croce's *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century* from the end of the Napoleonic Wars to World

War I published in Italy in 1932. Is it by chance, Gramsci asks, that Croce leaves out the moment of struggle, the moment when one system of social relations disintegrates and another one arises? And is it by chance that "instead he placidly assumes history to be the moment of cultural or ethico-political expansion?"—in other words, a historicist account of a "pacifically unfolding and self-realising liberty, which effectively meant, as Gramsci recognised, writing 'history from above,' that is from the perspective of the state and the class that dominated it" (Thomas 2006:71). Hence Gramsci's insistence on an analysis of European history starting with the French Revolution and encompassing the Bolshevik Revolution.

Gramsci directed his critique of Croce's historicism not only at its class bias but also its effective support for fascism. An enormously influential Italian liberal philosopher and politician, Croce represented for Gramsci "the strongest and most solid guarantee of the continuity of bourgeois power in Italy" who, in every phase of his intellectual activity, "posed the problem of how to realise the passive absorption of the demands of the popular masses in order to avoid their being able to become a hegemonic force" (Frosini 2016:535). Gramsci saw Croce's *History of Europe* as a "tract of passive revolutions" that "contributed to strengthening fascism by indirectly providing it with an intellectual justification, after having helped to purge it of a number of secondary features". These justifications included modifications in the economic structure of the country "without thereby affecting … the individual and group appropriation of profit" that helped to create "hope and expectation especially among certain Italian social groups, such as the great mass of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie" (Q10I§9; Gramsci 1995:349–350). More broadly, for Gramsci "Croce was—from the point of view of the subaltern classes of Italy, and despite his pompous self-definition as the leader of anti-fascism—the main obstacle to oppose in the struggle for hegemony in Italy since the 'revisionist' role that he fulfilled succeeded in inserting into the bourgeois power bloc those new social forces that had been brought into life by the experience of the war and (above all) the economic transformations of the postwar period" (Frosini 2016:536). Hence the imperative to "struggle against the political morphinism that exudes from Croce and his historicism" (Q15§62; Gramsci 1971:114).

Gramsci's spatial historicism—and hence his conjunctural analysis—flow directly from his critique of Croce. Recent years have seen growing recognition of the multiple spatio-temporalities that define the specific character of his alleged "historicism".[17] Yet well in advance of this work, Estevo Morera (1990) provided an early and lucid exposition of the centrality for Gramsci not only of multiple temporalities but also their entanglements with spatialities. In a pathbreaking article, Stefan Kipfer (2002) extended these arguments to demonstrate the close complementarities between Gramsci and Henri Lefebvre's relational conception of the production of space and critique of everyday life. More recently he underscored Gramsci's understanding of conjunctures as "historical moments that articulate the punctual temporality of the event with longer-term forms of historical duration … [recognising that] temporal rhythms are all spatialized" (Kipfer 2013:86). In the same volume, Kipfer and I suggested how not only Lefebvre but also Frantz Fanon and Himani Bannerji (discussed earlier) help to strengthen,

reshape, and translate Gramsci's spatial historicism in the present conjuncture through their shared commitment to "a dynamic, open-ended, and multi-dimensional understanding of dialectical method" (Kipfer and Hart 2013:331). Extending and enriching these arguments, Kipfer and Ayyaz Mallick (2022) offer a comprehensive account of the synergies between Gramsci and Fanon, including detailed references to Gramsci's attention to multiple dimensions of racism in Italy in relation to his spatial historicism.

Recent debates over multiple spatio-temporalities can be traced to *The Gramscian Moment*, in which Thomas illuminates the multi-scalar dimensions of Gramsci's multiple temporalities: (i) a relational conception of "the person" (as opposed to the subject) as an ensemble of relations with others and with nature; (ii) Gramsci's spatial understanding of language; (iii) the fissured relations between urban centres and rural peripheries; and (iv) hegemonic relations among nations at the international level that "consign some social formations to the past 'times' of others" (Thomas 2009:285). For Thomas (2018:201), multiple (spatio)temporalities are also the site of class struggle in which "the logic of passive revolution of bourgeois politics aims to 'fix' those times in relations of domination, [while] the hegemonic project of the emergence from subalternity posits their difference as constitutive" (see also Thomas 2017).

Despite endorsing Thomas' emphasis on multiple spatio-temporalities in the *Prison Notebooks*, Fabio Frosini takes issue with his interpretation of this multiplicity as constitutive of proletarian hegemony, as opposed to bourgeois hegemony (or passive revolution) defined as the imposition of the notion of a unified present:

> [If] we assume that the bourgeoisie was never able to produce hegemony, and that every bourgeois hegemony is a form of deception and domination, it becomes impossible to distinguish between different forms of bourgeois power … [T]hese difficulties can be resolved only if bourgeois hegemony—and passive revolution as its current version—is conceived as a form of hegemony that, although partial in its social extension, is intensively a fully structured example of truth-constitution. (Frosini 2014:133)

From this perspective, the crucial distinction for Gramsci is between "a [bourgeois] hegemony constructed on the basis of a *separation* between masses and intellectuals … and a [proletarian] hegemony constructed, conversely, on permanent revolutionising of all ideological relations, that places at its centre *the necessary unity of intellectuals and masses*" (Frosini 2021:31, emphasis added).[18] I return to this debate in the following discussion.

Conjunctural Analysis, Passive Revolution, Revolutionary Strategy

> A common error in historico-political analysis consists in an inability to find the correct relation between what is organic and what is conjunctural. This leads to presenting causes as immediately operative which in fact only operate indirectly, or to asserting that the immediate causes are the only effective ones. In the first case there is an excess of "economism" or doctrinaire pedantry; in the second, an excess of

> "ideologism". In the first case there is an overestimate of mechanical causes, in the second an exaggeration of the voluntarist and individual element. (Q13§17; Gramsci 1971:178)

He goes on to observe that the dialectical nexus between the two categories of movement, and therefore of research, is hard to establish precisely, and that "if the error is serious in historiography, it becomes even more serious in the art of politics, when it is not the reconstruction of past history but the construction of the present and future history which is at stake" (Q13§17; Gramsci 1971:178–179). To address these complexities, Gramsci posits "various moments or levels" in the "relation of forces": (i) the relation of social forces, or the "level of development of the material forces of production [that] provides the basis for the emergence of various social classes"; (ii) the relation of political forces entailing "an evaluation of the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness, and organisation attained by the various social classes"; and (iii) the relation of military forces (both in the strict or technical military sense, and what may be termed politico-military) "which from time to time is directly decisive" (Q13§17; Gramsci 1971:180–183).

Although Gramsci attends in the first instance to what he calls social relations of force as the essential starting point in the analysis of situations, he insists that:

> The specific question of economic hardship or well-being as a cause of new historical realities is a *partial aspect* of the question of the relations of force, at the various levels. Changes can come about either because a situation of well-being is threatened by the narrow self-interest of a rival class, or because hardship has become intolerable and no force is visible in the old society capable of mitigating it and of re-establishing normality by legal means. Hence it may be said that all these elements are the *concrete fluctuations of the totality of social relations of force*, on whose terrain the passage takes place from the latter to political relations of forces, and finally to the military relation which is decisive. (Q13§17; Gramsci 1971:184–185, emphasis added)

He makes clear as well his conception of the relations of forces in terms of multiply scaled but dialectically interconnected processes in constant flux: "international relations intertwine with these internal relations of nation-states, creating new, unique and historically concrete combinations", and "this relation between international forces and national forces is further complicated by the existence within every State of several structurally diverse territorial sectors, with diverse relations of force at all levels" (Q13§17; Gramsci 1971:182).

While "Analysis of Situations. Relations of Force" constitutes a foundational statement, Gramsci's conjunctural analysis needs to be situated on the broader canvas of *The Prison Notebooks*—especially the key comparative concept of passive revolution as a form of bourgeois hegemony which, as we have seen, remains subject to debate. Yet there is close agreement among these and other Gramsci scholars on the problematic character of Perry Anderson's (1976) hugely influential reading of what he called Gramsci's antinomies, including hegemony/consent as the opposite of domination/coercion.[19] Contrary to Anderson's antinomies, Gramsci's starting point was "the dialectical integration of hegemony with domination, of consent with coercion, united in their distinction" (Thomas 2009:166). It is also not the case that for Gramsci "hegemony (direction) pertains to civil

society, and coercion (domination) to the State", as Anderson (1976:21) asserts. Gramsci used the term State to refer both to concept of the "integral State" (a dialectical unity of civil society and political society) and to political society (or the state in its narrow sense). Rather than being located in civil society, bourgeois hegemony traverses political and civil society—but it is political society that predominantly sets the terms of traversal. This formulation enables an understanding of bourgeois hegemony as a *process* of contention and struggle, in which "the words, images, symbols, forms, organisations, institutions, and movements used by subordinate [or subaltern] populations to talk about, understand, confront, accommodate themselves to, or resist their domination are shaped by the process of domination itself" (Roseberry 1994:361). At the same time, this process is shot through with fragilities and instabilities.

Far from seeing passive revolution as the *exception* to an ideal type of bourgeois hegemony exemplified by the Jacobins and the French Revolution (as asserted, for example, by Chatterjee [1993]), Gramsci saw the Jacobins as the exception which, though impossible to emulate, explained why later European bourgeois revolutions took the form of passive revolution. It is precisely the diverse, interconnected, and changing forms of passive revolution in different parts of Europe over the course of the 19th and into the 20th centuries that form the focus of his conjunctural analysis. Gramsci pointed to the Chapelier Law of 1791 that was used to ban workers' organisations as signifying the Jacobins having encountered the class limits of the bourgeoisie which, they erroneously assumed, could be displaced indefinitely: "In comparison with the age of mercantilism … politics is no longer a tool for the institutional consolidation of an economic class; on the contrary, the expansion of production and of the world market are now the terrain for the continuous political reaffirmation of a given hegemony" (Frosini 2012:69). In other words, Gramsci saw passive revolution—the predominant form of bourgeois hegemony in the post-Napoleonic era—as deeply interconnected with the consolidation and massive expansion of industrial capitalism and new forms of imperialism.

Despite their different interpretations of bourgeois hegemony/passive revolution outlined earlier, Frosini and Thomas are both sharply critical of widespread notions of passive revolution as an iron cage to which the bourgeoisie holds the key, and both focus on how profoundly contradictory imperatives are always embodied in capitalist forms of rule. In the debate between them, I find aspects of Frosini's interpretation deeply compelling in relation to my project of coming to grips with warring tendencies between right-wing populists and liberals since the end of the Cold War. First, he illuminates the centrality of religion in formation of secular liberal European states in the 19th century as reactionary forms of overcoming the French Revolution. For Gramsci, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* provided the foundation, grounded in a formal distinction between state and civil society that separated politics from religion, as well as intellectuals from "the people". Despite the effort to suppress subaltern groups and classes, an "insuppressible aporia" is always present in the seeming triumph of the bourgeoisie, which is what enables "the popular masses in direct action to arise again"—but such movement can and does take different forms, both revolutionary and reactionary,

"and this [reactionary form] is what fascism shows in such a clear way" (Frosini 2013:181).

Second, Frosini clarifies Gramsci's view of fascism as "the form of 'passive revolution' specific to the 20th century" in the epigraph above. Gramsci saw the First World War as "the first manifestation" of the 1929 crisis because, with the war, the relationship between the world market and political nationalism that undergirded the liberal state fell apart (Frosini 2012:70). The war and the Bolshevik Revolution heralded "a phase of 'frenetic' and 'totalitarian' integration of subaltern classes … where 'liberal' modalities will be, in various degrees, abandoned or downsized, passing to the *politics of permanent mobilisation of the whole population*" (Frosini 2013:183). For Gramsci "fascism's 'occupation' of society and its reorganisation of society on a corporative basis was not an abnormal exception, but became the European model for restructuring bourgeois hegemony" (Frosini 2016:523). At the same time, "[w]hat the subalterns are lacking is not a class consciousness adequate to their practical function, but the *coherence* of those representations that already operate, fueling their resistance to domination and that for the moment do not find a concrete, political mediation between local struggles and universal projection" (Frosini 2013:183).

This observation brings us to the centrality of Gramsci's conjunctural analysis to philosophy of praxis, the Modern Prince, and revolutionary strategy. Thomas explains how, in early 1932, when Gramsci was reflecting critically on how the concept of passive revolution "may induce some kind of fatalism" and defeatism (Q15§62; Gramsci 1971:114), he turned most intensely to Machiavelli to insist on the imperative for a "vigorous antithesis" to passive revolution (Thomas 2020:28). What emerged is a concept of the Modern Prince as a laboratory of mass critical intellectuality and experimentation (Sotiris 2013, 2019), recognising that "[t]he problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists … in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone" (Q12§3; Gramsci 1971:9). It also entails a conception of the party not as a hierarchical organisational structure, but rather an open political and intellectual *process* focused on experimentation and learning, constantly adapting itself to the surrounding social environment and the dynamics of the conjuncture (Sotiris 2019).

It is in relation to this process of bridging the intellectual/manual labour divide that we can see how Gramsci's conjunctural analysis in terms of multiple, interconnected spatio-temporalities formed a key condition of revolutionary politics. This connection hinged crucially on the notion of "prevision" (*previsione*), conceived neither as prediction nor foresight, but as that which allows the present to be seen differently so as to make possible a "practico-political intervention in the present".[20] In other words, "prevision as a *method of political work* presupposes the continuing existence of multiple times [or space-times]; it emerges precisely as a distinctive relation to the plurality of those times, which it aims to modify through the construction of *alternative modes of their intertwining* (Thomas 2017:299, emphasis added). Thomas cites in translation Nicola Badaloni's (1981) discussion of "a method of 'prevision' in determinate conditions, some of which are not 'given', but are constructed, or are able to be constructed, by means of the organisation, practice and formation of models of reality that are

capable of disaggregating what had at first sight seemed dominated by a completely unchangeable necessity or causal order".[21]

Finally, let me underscore that Gramsci was "acutely aware of the supranational dimensions of the problems that he addressed" (Liguori 2016:51), as well as changing forms of imperialism (see also Arrighi 1994; Fusaro 2020; Morton 2007). Yet his conjunctural analysis of fascism in the *Prison Notebooks* concentrated on reconstructing *European* history from the French Revolution to the Bolshevik Revolution.[22] As part of my effort to construct a global conjunctural frame, I turn in the final section to suggest the need to go back to the Age of Revolution, encompassing the interconnected American, Haitian, and French Revolutions, combined with close attention to constitutive articulations of racist, gendered, sexualised, and other forms of difference in relation to class and capitalism.

"Seeing the Present Differently" through Global Lenses

> [H]ow *could* we come to understand … the genesis of the present, along with the preconditions and processes involved, other than by starting in the present, working our way back to the past, and then retracing our steps? (Lefebvre 1991:66)

Henri Lefebvre's regressive-progressive method outlined in this epigraph—an understanding of Marx's method that is simultaneously spatial, historical, and closely attentive to processes and praxis in the multiple arenas of everyday life—meshes closely with Gramsci's spatio-historical conjunctural analysis and his concept of prevision. It also undergirds the method of relational comparison (Hart 2018) that can contribute to seeing the present differently. A recent essay on situating relational comparison in a global conjunctural frame (Hart 2023) turns to Lefebvre's (2003) approach in *The Urban Revolution* that distinguishes the global level (defined as the state and capital); the level of everyday life; and the urban level that *mediates* between the global level and everyday life. Goonewardena (2005, 2011) and Kipfer (2009) stress that Lefebvre conceives of "levels" *dialectically* in terms distinctly different from Althusser; and that Lefebvre's levels are *not* coterminous with scales, although each can be conceived in multi-scalar terms.

Building on but also departing from Lefebvre's frame, the approach I have found useful distinguishes three dialectically interconnected *domains* rather than levels: *global conjunctures*; praxis in the multiple arenas of *everyday life*; and projects, practices, and processes of *bourgeois hegemony* that mediate between global forces and everyday life. As with Lefebvre's levels, I see these domains not as separate scales but conceivable in multi-scalar terms. The "global" domain is closer to Lefebvre's concept of *mondialité* (or "the worldwide") than to his global level. This move enables an organising frame defined in terms of key *global conjunctural moments*, understood as major turning points when interconnected forces at multiple levels, domains, and spatial scales in different regions of the world have come together to generate new conditions with worldwide implications and reverberations. It also lets us see different regions of the world or nation-states as specific nodes in globally interconnected historical geographies, and as sites in the *production* of global processes rather than just recipients of them.

My task in the final section of this essay is to bring key arguments developed from Hall's and Gramsci's conjunctural analyses into conversation with this global conjunctural frame in an effort to extend and elaborate it—and, conversely, to engage the question of what it would mean to globalise their conjunctural analyses as part of the urgent imperative to see the present differently.

In Section 1 we saw how the dialectical concept of articulation drawn from Hall's reading of Marx's method enables understandings of race/racism, gender/patriarchy, and sexuality/hetero-normativity as active constitutive forces in relation to class processes, often operating in and through one another. This concept also provides leverage in relation to other dimensions of difference—including caste, nationalism, and religion—all of which are directly relevant to a global conjunctural and comparative frame. In addition, it encourages understandings of the production of space as also about the production of interconnected forms of difference. The key limit of Hall's approach, in my view, lies in its reliance on articulation of modes of production—an alternative to which I suggest below.

In Gramsci's conjunctural analysis (Section 2), what I find most directly relevant to my efforts to come to grips with warring tendencies since the end of the Cold War is how the contradictions of the liberal forms of state power in 19th century Europe gave way to a new form of passive revolution after World War I, in which "the politicization of common sense necessarily assumes nationalistic ('religious') [and, one might add, racist] appearances that divert conflict from classes to nations" (Frosini 2013:182). In the present conjuncture I suggest that: (i) in different regions of the world, we are seeing *both* liberal and populist forms of bourgeois hegemony playing out in relation to one another in increasingly conflictual ways; and (ii) to comprehend the multiple forces that have played into these and other contemporary processes, it is useful to go back to the Age of Revolution, and trace key dynamics in subsequent global conjunctural moments. For illustrative purposes I draw on South Africa, India, and the US. First, though, we need to clarify what might be entailed in moving beyond thinking in terms of articulation of modes of production.

Beyond Articulation of Modes of Production

> The concept of "world capitalist system" … cannot be *derived* from the concept of "capitalist mode of production" but must be *constructed* by starting from a theoretical study of possible articulations of modes of production. (Laclau 1977:3)

> [W]hat the world-economy of the nineteenth century threw up was an articulation of *forms of capitalism* more than a combination of modes of production. (Banaji 2010:359–360)

These two epigraphs exemplify sharply different concepts of articulation and related notions of capitalist world economy. The first comes from the 1977 Postscript to Laclau's 1971 essay "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America", in which he deployed the concept of articulation of modes of production to challenge Andre Gunder Frank's (1969) assertion that Latin America is and always has

been capitalist through its dependent incorporation into the capitalist world economy. In "Modes of Production in a Materialist Conception of History" (written in 1974 but published in 1977), Jairus Banaji pointed out that *both* Frank and Laclau subscribed to a one-sided view in which "in all phases of its evolution, the structure of the world-economy posits only one element of explanation, namely the demands of capital-reproduction" (Banaji 2010:66), *and* that Laclau systematically confused relations of production with forms of exploitation of labour. Drawing explicitly on Marx's method in the "1857 Introduction", he argues that "[t]he idea of world-economy as already dominated from its inception by the requirements of capital-reproduction is a false abstraction"—in other words, it confuses a simple abstraction for a concrete category, by failing to specify multiple relations and determinations. Moreover, "forms of exploitation derive their specific historical 'social forms' and 'functions' from the relations of production which they mediate or which are embodied in them" (Banaji 2010:93, 98). This is precisely what Hall (2021a:47) referred to as the "mutual articulation of historical movement and theoretical reflection"—enabling us to see how Banaji and Hall were travelling along parallel paths in their respective essays written in the 1974, but how Hall veered off to embrace articulation of modes of production as part of his Althusserian orientation.

The notion of multiple modes of production co-existing within specific social formations remains pervasive—including in some of the burgeoning literature on racial capitalism, and the influential effort by Anievas and Nisancioglu (2015) to provide an alternative to diffusionist accounts of capitalism as emerging autonomously in England and radiating out from there.[23] Since the conjunctural frame I am proposing requires a globally interconnected understanding of the history of capital in relation to the production of difference, I need to specify (of necessity very briefly) what it might mean to move beyond articulation of modes of production and related approaches.

In *Black Reconstruction*, first published in 1935, W.E.B. Du Bois provided a powerfully innovative analysis of the intensification of slavery and cotton production in the US in the 19th century as integral to the global formation of industrial capitalism:

> Black labor became the foundation stone not only of the Southern social structure, but of Northern manufacture and commerce, of the English factory system, of European commerce, of buying and selling on a world-wide scale; new cities were built on the results of black labor, and a new labor problem, involving all white labor, arose both in Europe and America. (Du Bois 2007b:3)

Instead of viewing slavery as a residual form in a world of emergent capitalism—or, one might add, as a "slave mode of production"—"Du Bois treats the plantations of Mississippi, the counting houses of Manhattan, and the mills of Manchester as differentiated but concomitant components of a single system", as Walter Johnson (2017:21) succinctly puts it. He also issues a sharp reminder that the Atlantic economy "was founded upon the capacity of enslaved women's bodies; upon their ability to reproduce capital" (Johnson 2017:26). In *Capitalism and Slavery* Eric Williams (1944:210) asserted that:

> The commercial capitalism of the eighteenth century developed the wealth of Europe by means of slavery and monopoly. But in so doing it helped to create the industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century, which turned round and destroyed the power of commercial capitalism, slavery, and all its works. Without the grasp of these economic changes, the history of the period is meaningless.

Engaging with mode of production debates of the late 1970s, Orlando Patterson (1979) firmly rejected any notion of a "slave mode of production", insisting on the essentially capitalist nature of modern slave formations in the Americas and the Caribbean. Methodologically, he distinguished between the specific relations of slavery in practice (or what he called the "inner dialectic") and the "outer dialectic" or the relationship between "slavery, seen as a single process, and the total complex of processes which we call society" (Patterson 1979:47). More recent work on the "second slavery" of the 19th century extends and elaborates this work (e.g. Tomich 2017).

Banaji's and related work can be seen as located in this lineage, while also extending it beyond the Black Atlantic. His broad spatio-historical canvas encompasses a distinction between changing forms of commercial capitalism from the 12th to 18th centuries (Banaji 2020), and the capitalist mode of production that took hold in the 19th century. Rather than articulation of modes of production, capitalist production integrates diverse forms of labour exploitation "from chattel-slavery, sharecropping, or the domination of casual labour-markets to the coerced wage-labour peculiar to colonial regimes, and of course 'free' wage-labour" (Banaji 2010:359).

A stellar instance of how this approach can be put to work is Gavin Capps' dialectical demonstration of how the weakness of the colonial state in different regions of Africa meant that the subordination of labour to capital operated through traditional authorities: "In seeking to resolve the overarching contradiction between accumulation and control, the colonial state … unintentionally created in the modern African chieftancy an institutional combination whose very structures and practices embodied and reproduced that antagonism, as a form of political authority on the one hand, and a form of landed property on the other" (Capps 2018:987–988).

In *Marx After Marx*, Harry Harootunian (2015) also draws on Banaji's refusal to conflate forms of exploitation of labour with the mode of production. He focuses on Marx's concept of the formal subsumption of labour, which operates to appropriate what it finds useful in prior practices and procedures "which invariably meant taking on the baggage of older forms of exploitation and resituating them alongside and within new capitalist demands to create value"; yet this process is inherently contradictory, because "if capitalism seeks to establish the force of the value form and achieve sameness in the commodity relation, *it paradoxically also produces the very difference it is trying to eliminate*" (Harootunian 2015:13, emphasis added). In addition, it generates intensifying struggles, as Capps' work makes clear. The production of racial, ethnic, gendered, and other forms of difference as inseparably linked with capitalist accumulation is also integral to understanding

processes of nation formation and the dynamics of imperialism, to which we now turn.

Key Global Conjunctural Moments: From the Age of Revolution to the Cold War

Extending Gramsci's insistence that a counter-Crocean history of Europe in the 19th century must start with the French Revolution, a global conjunctural frame requires going back to the Age of Revolution (1780–1815), encompassing the *interconnections* of the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions, the Napoleonic wars, and their global reverberations. Crucial here is that the revolutionary age had Asian and African, as well as American and European origins, and that its consequences were also global (Bayly 2004:114). In addition to the industrial revolution as a worldwide process, these consequences included new forms of the nation and the state and, following the defeat of Napoleon, British maritime supremacy that "project[ed] amphibious power across the world" (Bayly 2004:129). Josep Fradera (2018) points to the consolidation over the 19th century of "the imperial nation" in which partial extensions of liberal democracy in Europe and the settler colonies (including the US) went hand in hand with white supremacist forms of colonial rule, increasingly grounded in "scientific" claims about "natural" racial hierarchies.

In addition to achieving formal independence, the Haitian Revolution propelled the formation of US through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 that doubled its size and paved the way for the second slavery: "The rôle which the great Negro Toussaint, called L'Ouverture, played in the history of the United States has seldom been fully appreciated", Du Bois (2007a:50) declared in 1896, including his troops defeating French forces "which led Napoleon to sell Louisiana for a song". The Haitian revolution also profoundly shaped the emergence of formally independent nation-states across Latin America. Key moments in the formation of India and South Africa can be traced to Britain's defeat in the American War of Independence when the British East India Company expanded from its base in Bengal to conquer much of India between 1783 and 1818. Driven by "its voracious need to finance its military forces, [t]he Company forced Indian rulers to pay for its troops or, alternatively, seized their revenue-bearing territories" (Bayly 2004:94). Also in the Age of Revolution, Britain took over the Cape Colony from the Dutch, initially to protect the passage to India.

Another set of key moments in the making of South Africa, India, and the US as nations came in the second half of the 19th century leading up to the Age of Empire (1875–1914), with the Indian rebellion (1857-58), the US Civil War (1861–65), and the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), along with the destruction of so-called "pre-modern" institutions—the British East India Company; chattel slavery; and the Boer republics. In their wake, the specific contours of racialised forms of rule associated with "the imperial nation" emerged with greater sharpness and brutality amidst the deepening, widening, and intensification of multi-scalar and multi-temporal processes of global capitalist and colonial restructuring (Goswami 2004); the contradictions of "colonial hegemony" (Engels and Marks 1994);

and emergent forms of anti-colonial nationalism in the period leading up to World War I.

The aftermath of World War I, the Russian Revolution and the Spanish flu pandemic constitutes another global conjunctural moment, with popular uprisings all over the world along with conservative forms of backlash. Playing out in relation to fascism, Nazism, and the Depression, the worldwide proliferation of religious nationalisms in the inter-war years was deeply interconnected with intensifying class struggle, racism, caste, and patriarchy—including the synchronous emergence of novel forms of Christian nationalism in the US and South Africa, along with Hindutva in India—many of which have resurfaced in the current conjuncture. Powerful anti-immigrant sentiment and legislation also took hold all over the settler colonial world including the US, driven by a transnational alliance of white men (Lake and Reynolds 2008). Yet the late 1930s and early 1940s witnessed the formation of a very different transnational alliance of anti-colonial and anti-racist activists who saw their "differing experiences of slavery and colonialism … as part of the history of expansion of Europe and the development of capitalism" (Von Eschen 1997:5)—a movement ended by the Cold War.

In addition to the start of the Cold War, the global conjunctural moment of the late 1940s encompassed the consolidation of US imperialism; decolonisation in much of Asia, but colonial powers trying to hang on in most of Africa; and the Bretton Woods regime of relatively stable exchange rates and restrictions on financial movements across national borders. It also marked the inauguration of what I am calling Cold War Era (CWE) projects of capitalist accumulation, bourgeois hegemony, and related articulations of nationalism—broadly speaking, various forms of Keynesian social democracy in Euro-America and Development in non-socialist countries of the "Third World". This move allows me to bring South Africa (Apartheid), India (Nehruvian Development), and the US (Fordism) into the same frame.

More generally I suggest that: (i) the specific ways in which these CWE projects fell apart starting in the late 1960s, and their relationship to when and how the neoliberal counter-revolution took hold in different national formations, are crucial to understanding the timing and forms of exclusionary nationalisms and populist politics in the post-Cold War era; and (ii) these processes need to be situated in relation to changing forms of US imperialism since the 1980s that redefined the relations of the US to different regions of the non-Western world. This argument resonates with—and indeed is partly informed by—*Policing the Crisis*.

Of necessity very briefly, I turn finally to reflect on how these efforts to stretch and translate both Hall and Gramsci into a global conjunctural and comparative frame speak to the exigencies of the present conjuncture.

Concluding Reflections: The Contemporary Work of Global Conjunctural Analysis

As an organising device, global conjunctural moments provide a framework for tracing the long-wave "organic" movements (or spatio-temporal formations and processes) that have played into the present conjuncture—and how they are moving and changing in relation to one another and to the more immediate or

"conjunctural" movements with which they are dialectically connected. In his illuminating deployment of a closely related approach, Clarke (2023:49) insists on attention to how "even the longest of *longue durées*—the Anthropocene—has quickened its rhythm and affected the trajectory of the current conjuncture with increasing intensity". Especially but not only in the US, climate change denialism has become a key battleground on which the right has taken up the cudgels against deadly threats of liberal oppression that far outweigh those of global environmental implosion invented by "experts".

In trying to come to grips with these and other warring tendencies since the end of the Cold War I have suggested how, in combination with a relational comparative perspective, a global conjunctural approach also helps illuminate specificities and interconnections. It lets us see, for example, how the conflictual dynamics of liberal and populist forms of bourgeois hegemony express themselves in distinctly different but mutually illuminating forms in South Africa, India, and the US—including, for instance, very different articulations of class, race, and Christian nationalism in South Africa and the US, and the specific articulations of class, caste, and religion through which Hindutva has come to dominate in India. Yet these processes also call for and contribute to a deeper understanding of the globally interconnected forces of which they are a part. Most importantly, they compel attention to "the points of least resistance, at which the force of will can most fruitfully be applied" (Q13§17; Gramsci 1971:185).

With these imperatives in mind, let me reflect on three simultaneously political and analytical issues that this essay has raised. First is the question of what it means to focus not only on the rise of the right, but also on the limits and contradictions of liberalism. In contrast to the oceans of ink devoted to the rise of the right, remarkably little critical attention has been paid to liberalism and the liberal shibboleths that help fuel right-wing fear and fury. An important exception is Michael Bray's (2019) *Powers of the Mind*, a brilliant exposition that places front and centre the separation of mental/intellectual from manual labour that was also the distinguishing feature of Gramsci's analysis of multiple, changing forms of bourgeois hegemony—and central to his political strategy of bridging the mental/manual labour divide. Bray's analysis is focused on the US but has much wider salience. My forthcoming book (i) extends beyond the US the insights he provides into "the historical intertwining of resentment against the privileges of mental labour and changing forms of racialization" (Bray 2019:183), and (ii) combines them with a comparative conjunctural analysis of religious nationalisms and the contradictions of liberal secularism, to suggest new angles of cutting into and dissecting warring tendencies. Bray also reminds us of the imperative for those of us who occupy the position of "knowledge workers" to interrogate critically our own taken for granted (often liberal) "common sense"—what Gramsci called *senso comune* that encompasses subaltern groups and classes, but is not limited to them (Crehan 2016).

This brings me to the importance of paying close attention to praxis in the multiple realms of everyday life that are integrally connected with processes of bourgeois hegemony, and key sites in the production of racial, gendered, sexualised, and other forms of difference in relation to class processes. Much of my earlier

work has been grounded in critical ethnography which, since the early 1990s, has been based in South Africa (Hart 2002, 2014). In the present project I am having to rely on secondary sources, two examples of which stand out: (i) Himani Bannerji's (2021b) "Making India Hindu and Male" and related ethnographic work in India that makes vividly clear the spatio-historical depth and extent to which Hindutva operates in the realms of everyday life; and (ii) *Don't Blame Us*, Lily Geismer's (2015) extraordinary account of how US liberalism and the Democratic Party came to reflect the "materialist concerns of suburban knowledge workers rather than autoworkers" and also sheds light on the workings of "racial liberalism" (Bray 2019).

Finally and most importantly is the question of coalitional politics, exemplified by the Combahee River Collective as well as the transnational anti-colonial, anti-racist movement of the late 1930s/early 1940s. From where I write in the belly of the imperial beast, the wanton cruelties of the War on Woke seem to be taking over from the bi-partisan War on Terror; and Ron DeSantis has decreed that children in Florida will now be taught that slavery operated to the benefit of enslaved people. In the present conjuncture, the need for transnational organising along the lines of earlier movements has never been greater. It is in relation to such imperatives that those of us who see ourselves as critical knowledge workers need to take very seriously the challenge of what new forms of knowledge would enable seeing the present differently in order to change it.

Acknowledgements

My deep appreciation to Alex Loftus for encouraging me to write this essay; for supportive comments that kept me going; and for managing an incredibly helpful set of reviews that led to a major overhaul. Andy Kent has also been extremely helpful. Along the way I have incurred debts of gratitude to many friends and colleagues, including Jordan Camp, John Clarke, Mark Hunter, Karin Kapadia, Bridget Kenny, Stefan Kipfer, Jean Lave, Zach Levenson, Ayyaz Mallick, Donald Moore, and Ahmed Veriava. Thanks also to Carter Beale, Natalia Brusco, Bennett Fees, and Priya Roy for excellent research assistance. David Szanton has endured and contributed to this essay for longer than it takes to gestate a baby elephant, and borne up valiantly as always.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing not applicable since no new data generated.

Endnotes

[1] For example, Camp (2016), Chari (2015), Gilmore (2007), Hart (2002) and Li (2014). Recent books on conjunctural analysis by co-authors of *Policing the Crisis* are Clarke (2023) and Jefferson (2021).

[2] In addition to Clarke (2023) and Jefferson (2021), see for example the special issue of *New Formations* (Gilbert 2019) and the collection edited by Henriques and Morley (2017). Work in urban studies includes Peck (2015, 2017, 2023), Leitner, Peck and Sheppard (2020), and Leitner and Sheppard (2020), and a critique by Robinson (2022). Camp and Greenburg (2020) demonstrate the contemporary relevance of Gramsci's conjunctural analysis; see also the web series and podcast "Conjuncture" curated and co-hosted by Jordan

Camp and Christina Heatherton: https://socialjusticeinitiative.domains.trincoll.edu/conjuncture/ (last accessed 24 July 2023). Kipfer and Mallick (2022) situate Gramsci's conjunctural analysis in relation to Fanon. Recent work underscores the importance of conjunctural analysis in the study of racial capitalism (Clarno and Vally 2023; Levenson and Paret 2023; see also, for references to Hall, Kenny 2022; Kundnani 2023; Veriava and Naidoo 2023). My own efforts to combine relational comparison and conjunctural analysis include Hart (2018, 2020, 2023) and a forthcoming book.

[3] In this essay I am referring to the Althusser of *For Marx* (2005) and *Reading Capital* (Althusser and Balibar 1970) on which Hall drew, and only engage Althusser's later work obliquely in notes below.

[4] See Althusser and Balibar (1970:98–102).

[5] Crézégut (2020) argues that Althusser's accusations were driven not only by an inadequate understanding of Gramsci's work, but also by his own political imperatives.

[6] Thomas is quoting here from the reference to Tosel (1995).

[7] See Lahtinen (2011) for a fuller exposition of this argument in the context of Althusser's later work on aleatory materialism. In addition, according to Thomas (2013:145), "while developing his self-critique, Althusser does not explicitly revisit or retract the critique of Gramsci … [Instead he] shifts his objections from the directly philosophical ('historicism') to the political terrain (the theory of the state [problematically] presented as 'Gramscian' by Italian Eurocommunists in the period in particular)".

[8] See for example Mouffe's (1979:199) comment that "the conceptual tools which he [Gramsci] had to use have been completely superseded, and nowadays we are equipped to deal with the problem of ideology in a far more rigorous fashion [via Althusser] thanks to the development of disciplines such as linguistics and psycho-analysis". This formulation attends neither to Gramsci's focus on language and translation, nor to his relational conception of "the person"; the same oversights recur in Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (see Hart 2013). For a discussion of Hall's participation in the "Hegemony" reading group convened by Laclau and Mouffe in the early 1980s, see Karayiannides (2022:23).

[9] For example, Hall (1985) distinguishes his position from that of Althusser, as well as from the poststructuralists—those like Foucault who broke with structuralist theory by insisting on radical contingency. The Introduction to *The Hard Road to Renewal* (Hall 1988a) makes no mention of Althusser while drawing heavily on Gramsci; see also Hall (1988b).

[10] Published as *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* (Hall 2017).

[11] I discuss this point more fully in Hart (2023).

[12] For a comprehensive discussion of literature on AMP at the time, see Foster-Carter (1978).

[13] This innovation was made not only by Laclau, as is often asserted, but more vividly by Ken Post in *Arise Ye Starvelings* (1978) on the labour rebellion in Jamaica in 1938.

[14] These points are developed more fully by Ekers, Kipfer and Loftus (2022) and Levenson (2022).

[15] Kenny (2022) and O'Laughlin (2022) provide useful summaries and extensions of these arguments.

[16] In trying to come to grips with the spread of labour-tying arrangements in rice production in Java in the early 1980s, I found Banaji's work infinitely more useful than articulation of modes of production (Hart 1986; see also Chari 2022).

[17] In addition to Morera (1990), key references include Kipfer (2002, 2013), Frosini (2014, 2018, 2020) and Thomas (2009, 2017, 2018). Filippini's (2017) chapter on "Temporality" offers useful insights into Gramsci's multiple temporalities but does not engage questions of spatiality. Morfino (2021:54–55), in contrast, recognises that the plurality of temporalities in Gramsci's work "of course also affects spatiality … whatever the level of observation we are facing: individual, social group, nation, international scene".

[18] The citation here is from an English translation of the first chapter of Frosini (2010) that the author has kindly provided me (Frosini 2021). Two essays by Frosini (2018, 2020) elaborate these arguments in relation to space-time.

[19] The following discussion draws on Hart (2014:191–193). See Maccaferri (2022) for a recent reading of Hall against Anderson.

[20] The quotation is from Frosini cited by Thomas (2017:298). Thomas carefully distinguishes prevision from both prediction and foresight. He also suggests the reasons why Althusser was unable to elaborate fully the implications of multiple temporalities for a theory of revolutionary politics in *Reading Capital* as well as his later work.
[21] See also Thomas (2009:456) for the reference to Badaloni (1981).
[22] Kipfer and I made this point, suggesting that the Haitian Revolution and the decolonisation of Latin America would also have spoken to his concept of passive revolution (Kipfer and Hart 2013:335; see also Hart 2014:223).
[23] See Banaji's sympathetic but incisive review: https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/book-review/globalizing-history-capital-ways-forward (last accessed 24 July 2023).

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