Forthcoming in Social Research: an International Quarterly. Vol. 90. No. 4 (Winter 2023).

Mai Taha[*]

Thinking through the home: work, rent and the reproduction of society

> Capitalism is a system of relationships, which go from inside to out, from outside to in, from above to below, and from below to above. . . . Capitalism is a condition both of the world and of the soul.
>
> —Franz Kafka (in Janouch 1953, 86)

[COMP: Please set the first line in small caps]

"All our unbounded needs came out in concrete aims. . . . So the struggle wasn't just a struggle in the factory. . . . It was a huge struggle not just because it involved this great mass of workers. Because the content of these struggles, the things the workers wanted, weren't the things that the unions said: the work rates are too high, let's lower the rates. Work is harmful, let's try to remove the harm, all this bullshit. They didn't want to be part of it anymore. They discovered, the workers, that they wanted power outside. Ok, in the factory we manage to fight, to hold up production when we want. But outside what do we do. Outside we have to pay rent, we have to eat. We have all of these needs. They discovered that they didn't have any power, the State fucked them over at every level. . . . In this system of continuous exploitation, they were workers outside as well. To live as workers outside too, to be exploited as workers outside too." (Balestrini [1971] 2022, 129)</ext>

This is the voice of a worker in 1960s Italy, the unnamed narrator of Nanni Balestrini's novel about the workerist movement in Italy. The worker is speaking about how labor structures his entire life. In the moments he is able to escape work by taking leave or faking a medical excuse, he is still unable to spend his time idly or leisurely because work permeates his sense of time and his ability to enjoy the freedom of being away from work. A few lines later, he declares *Vogliamo tutto* (We want everything), which Balestrini took to be the title of the

[*] I am incredibly grateful to friends and colleagues who gave me an insight and suggested literature on the topic. I thank Ayça Çubukçu, Ali El Adawy, Mahvish Ahmed, Suzanne Hall, Omnia Khalil, David Madden, and Sara Salem. I am especially grateful to Nader Andrawos, Mohammed Said Ezzeldin, and Robert Knox for our long conversations on some of the themes of this piece. I thank them for their generosity, patience, and for thinking with me about difficult questions. All errors are mine.

novel. Workers have "had it up to here, they wanted to fight not because of work, not because the boss is bad, but because the boss and work exist" (129).

Written in fragments, or in the form of epic poetry, as Rachel Kushner puts it in her introduction to the novel, there is a certain oral quality in the everyday thoughts of this Italian worker. But epic poetry often resorts to myth, gods, and the transcendental. Here, the worker speaks about the harsh material conditions of the working class in Italy during those tumultuous years. Readers of the novel learn that the struggle is beyond the factory. It is, for this worker, a struggle against work as such, against the wage-relation that creates the figure of the boss. He speaks of the leaflets that came out of the autonomous organizing in the factories: "workers took these leaflets home. Showed them to friends who worked on building sites or other places, and so they ended up all over the place. They often went to distribute them in the neighborhoods, too" (130). He speaks of the occupation of a neighborhood town hall housing: "the rents were too high, they couldn't afford them. A leaflet was made that said: Rent—theft of salary. And they didn't pay any more" (131).

In this story, there is a direct line from resisting labor exploitation in the factory to housing struggles. This is one of many great historical moments when withdrawing labor is extended to make other social demands beyond the workplace. On one level, this gestures toward a conception of capitalism that structures not only relations of production but also broader social relations that might not neatly fit in the value-form. These moments populate global history, reminding us of the power of the strike. In the 1930s, Egyptian workers demanded lower rents in working-class neighborhoods (Butler 1932, 3). A few years earlier, general strikes had moved across the country demanding the end of British colonial occupation. Palestinian workers in the 1930s also went on general strikes against the British Mandate and its settler colonial project (Kanafani [1988] 2023). In 1940s India, after a general strike in 1946, dock workers went on strike against British colonialism (Agarwal 2023). And the list goes on. The strike has been historically extended to attend to anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles, housing injustices, and other social issues. Indeed, as David McNally puts it, "working-class struggles are never merely technical-economic conflicts, however much bourgeois legality and professional trade unionism may aspire to treat them so" (2004, 202).

But this line from exploitation to other social struggles is not always a straight one, nor necessarily visible or even directly present. While there are many historical examples that show how workers have stretched their strike to make broader social demands on health care, housing, and education, there is nothing automatic about this transition from workplace

struggles to broader ones. What happens when we can't see that line from the boss to the landlord? One option would be that the question of organization remains within the realm of trade unions or autonomist workers' organizations, focusing on the capital-labor relation, the production of value, and the power of withdrawing one's labor. Another option would be to disavow the value-form as economistic Marxist orthodoxy that should be discarded and focus only on other social relations that are also structured by capitalism, such as the landlord-tenant relationship or the colonizer-colonized relationship. The problem with both those options is that neither takes seriously capitalism as a totality that—while defined by relations of exploitation—encompasses broader social processes than simply production. Capitalist social relations structure circulation, consumption, rent, and debt, all elements that bring in colonialism, access to housing, financial markets, migration, and social reproduction as central tenants in the functioning of capitalism.

In this essay, I explore the tensions between those two options to think through a third account that tries to capture the reach and open-endedness of capitalism, and in the process, reimagine a more expansive conception of revolutionary subjectivity. Accounting for the vastness of capitalism's reach entails thinking with and beyond the production of value. It entails thinking about the preconditions that make the wage-relation possible, for example, through capitalism's reliance on unpaid housework (Bhattacharya 2017a, 2017b). But these preconditions could be conceived of as something wider than paid and unpaid labor, literally through the reproduction of society as a whole, which not only encompasses reproductive labor, but implicates broader gender and race relations through housework, night work, precarity and the gig economy, as well as struggles over homes and housing, education, health care, and border crossing. Nancy Fraser reminds us of the epistemic shifts that take place in volume 1 of Karl Marx's *Capital*, one of which is the shift from accumulation through exploitation, sanctioned by the labor contract, to accumulation through expropriation via crude violence and "no pretense of equal exchange" (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 34). The latter form of accumulation, or what Marx called primitive accumulation, made and continues to make the former possible (Harvey 2003). Focusing on Marx's method, Fraser explains that "market exchange loses its innocence once we see that it rests on the dirty secret of exploitation." Similarly, the coercion of wage labor appears even more unjust "when we see that it rests on the even dirtier secret of overt violence and outright theft." Importantly, therefore, fixation over the value-form that dominates volume I of *Capital* "is not the last word . . . it rests on another level of social reality, in effect—an abode behind the abode" (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 34). Indeed, Marx didn't end *Capital* with a discussion of value, but

with a much more expansive account of the reach of capitalism (which he developed in volumes 2 and 3), addressing questions of consumption, circulation, and rent.[†] The "abode behind the abode" today manifests most prominently in the reproduction of society, broadly understood. And this wider conception of social reproduction, I argue, does not dismiss value and capital accumulation, but provides for a more expansive notion of what counts as anti-capitalist struggle. In what follows, I first explore this wider conception of social reproduction and the ways it connects different struggles. I then look into the question of organization, seeking examples from the past and the present to think about what it means to organize today, and suggesting that social reproduction, broadly conceived, should be central to capitalism studies today.

<A>THE REPRODUCTION OF SOCIETY

In 1946 and 1947, feminist artist Louise Bourgeois produced her canonical series of paintings, *Femme Maison*. In those paintings, she tells stories about architectural forms that grow from and hide parts of the female body. The woman is an extension of the home, which is a space of contestation, power, violence, love, and labor. The home—a refuge and a trap—embodies those tensions as both a nurturing shelter and a claustrophobic prison of gendered division of labor. As a lease, it is a space of possibility and radicality (think the rent strike), but it is also a space of extraction (think rent), another form of legal wage theft, as the protagonist of Balestrini's novel reminds us.

Almost 50 years later, in her *Sainte Sébastienne* piece, Bourgeois feminizes the figure of Saint Sebastian into that of a woman who literally loses her head as she embodies and experiences different forms of physical, emotional, and symbolic violence. Virtually piercing the body marked by tree rings, the arrows direct the viewer to the various areas or zones of pain. These are the zones that mark the time over a body consumed by exhaustion. *Femme Maison* and *Sainte Sébastienne* together draw a picture that Bourgeois didn't directly paint. But those works together speak to the complexity of social relations that live in and outside the home, as well as the ways in which time exhausts and consumes the body. Together, they paint a picture of the material and symbolic reach of capitalism through and beyond the production of value.

[†] Special thanks to Robert Knox for emphasizing the importance of engaging with all of Marx's *Capital*, not just volume 1.

Homes are also spaces for the nurturing of everyday sociality. bell hooks has written about how the homeplace has been a space for care and refuge from the harsh violence of White supremacy and patriarchy. Indeed, Black people in the United States, for example, believed that the homeplace, regardless of its tenuousness and fragility, had "a radical political dimension," because it provided a breathing space for Black sociality (hooks 1990, 384). Carrie Mae Weems's powerful *Kitchen Table Series*[‡] approaches the intimate space of the kitchen table as one that witnesses the meetings of lovers, children's homework, solitude, conversations with friends, games, meals, and cigarettes—all ephemeral everyday events, yet they have an afterlife: they partake in the reproduction of society, from the day-to-day materiality of eating and studying to the intimacy of sexual relations and even the pleasures of solitude with a cigarette. As such, the photo series engages with social reproduction on the levels of the material, intimate, affective, and psychoanalytic. Here, social reproduction is not confined to reproductive labor and housework. It is a node of the intimate, the political, and the unconscious. It encompasses the perpetual reproduction of the conditions of life, and those are vast.

While there is so much that could fall under this conception of social reproduction, I focus here on the home as a nexus of struggles over labor and struggles over housing—the home as a lease, as a mortgage, as shelter, as a stop in a food delivery app, and as paid and unpaid work. As David Madden and Peter Marcuse have put it, the home is "the precondition both for work and for leisure. Controlling one's housing is a way to control one's labor as well as one's free time, which is why struggles over housing are always, in part, struggles over autonomy. . . . No other modern commodity is as important for organizing citizenship, work, identities, solidarities, and politics" (2016, 11).

The home from this perspective is both a space and a stop. It is a space of shelter and nurture; it is a site that witnesses all the activities necessary for the reproduction of society. Here, the home and access to housing become also questions of social reproduction. It is not surprising that some of the most important rent strikes in history were led by women.[§] The home is the domain that makes all those other activities possible, and women have historically carried out that burden (Mies [1980] 2014). From the *conventillos* in Buenos Aires to the tenements in New York City, there has always been an overwhelming presence of women in housing struggles (Poy 2021, 139). In the early twentieth century *conventillos*,

---

[‡] See the *Kitchen Table Series* photos here: http://carriemaeweems.net/galleries/kitchen-table.html.

[§] One example is the 1915 Glasgow rent strike and the Glasgow Women's Housing Association.

when people were evicted and their furniture thrown in the courtyard, the women of the neighborhood would move back the furniture to the room within an hour, since those evictions would often take place during factory working hours when all the men would be at their workplaces (139). In fact, the 1907 Buenos Aires rent strikes were known as the "broom strikes" because they were led by women who 'swept' the rent hikes away from their homes by refusing to pay higher rents to their landlords" (Guzmán and Ill-Raga 2023, 7). The active presence of women in housing struggles is also seen in the East London mothers group Focus E15, which organized eviction watches and protests and occupied a public housing complex in 2014 (Madden and Marcuse 2016, 110). The struggle over housing has always been a class issue, but it is also a way to organize around reproductive demands and a way to rethink the question of organization with and beyond the production process. If the labor strike threatens production and the accumulation of capital, then the rent strike threatens consumption processes and property relations that rely on the constant expropriation of tenants.

The home is also a stop within the circuit of circulation and replenishment. The food-delivery worker starts the day from the home and goes to another job, then goes back home to replenish, then goes off to carry out more deliveries, then checks the app, then makes more deliveries, again checks the app, then parks the moped or bicycle before returning home, and the cycle continues. In this precarious life, the home becomes a quick stop for sleep and replenishment rather than a space for nurture, rest, and leisure. In the past decade, many housework activities have been outsourced to the market, specifically in the poorly paid sector of platform workers at Uber Eats, DoorDash, and Deliveroo, among others. Those companies are now building "dark kitchens" around cities to service the delivery market, as more cooking is displaced from home kitchens to industrial food production (Hester and Srnicek 2023, 38). Night workers also face similar challenges. In 2017, Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, announced his vision to turn the city into "a leading 24-hour global city," barely mentioning the workers who would carry out this vision during the hours of the night (Kolioulis et al. 2021, 11). In an important report, Alessio Kolioulis and colleagues argue that night workers in the gig economy are essential for the reproduction of the city in that they both allow for the circulation of commodities at night and "maintain the city by recharging it: night workers recharge the stock of electric bicycles, scooters and cars present in the city." It is the domestic care workers, taxi drivers, delivery and courier workers in the gig economy who bear the brunt of this night shift work, and in the process, they reproduce the city (18).

This expansive conception of social reproduction allows us to think through the ways the processes of class formations are always already racialized and gendered. If this is not

clear from the racial makeup of workers in the care sector and the gig economy, then consider the figure of the migrant worker. By the time a typical worker arrives in the receiving country, they have already passed through a life of training, education, health care, and other costs of social reproduction in their home country. The new country effectively outsources all this labor from the worker's home country, and they arrive ready to expend their labor power in the market (Ziadah and Hanieh 2023). In this sense, capitalist economies in the Global North "free ride" on the care work put into the production of labor power primarily in the Global South, yet "accords them no monetized value and treats them as if they were free" (Fraser 2016, 101). This process of course continues in the receiving country through the various ways society continues to be reproduced by paid and unpaid—and often racialized—workers. But here social reproduction is understood to encompass these wider processes that show how race, racialization, and borders are already implicated in the question of social reproduction.

This also speaks to the internal contradiction and care crisis within capitalism. While social reproduction is a necessary condition for constant capital accumulation, this desire for boundless accumulation tends to unsettle the same processes needed for the reproduction of society, including, for example, anti-migrant policies. This, Fraser argues, is "the social-reproductive contradiction of capitalism [that] lies at the root of the so-called crisis of care" (2016, 100). This became clear during the COVID-19 pandemic when many health care and care workers were celebrated as essential workers, but none of those celebrations manifested in material recognition of their labor. Most workers in the care sector are underpaid and overworked and have disproportionately taken the brunt of the pandemic. In the last wave of strike action in the UK in 2023, for example, nurses were given pay offers that effectively amounted to a slightly smaller pay cut given the rising rates of inflation in the country. This hierarchy of skills and pay lies within the logic of capitalism itself rather than a reflection of those jobs (Farris and Bergfeld 2022, 354). Care work also has a certain specificity in that it requires human contact: tactile, affective, and emotional. While technology has automated many of the activities needed for care work—the washing machine, the vacuum cleaner, the microwave, all time-saving devices—none of those devices could attend to the care of children or the elderly, a form of work that needs tremendous amounts of emotional, physical, and intellectual labor. Remarking on the robotization of households and care work, through "nursebots," for example, Silvia Federici asks: "But is this the society we want?" (Vishmidt 2013). If this is not the society we want, then anti-capitalist struggle today must encompass struggles over social reproduction.

Importantly also, social reproduction provides a lens from which to rethink the question of organization. Rather than approaching resistance through discrete struggles, organizing around social reproduction could allow for a more expansive conception of revolutionary subjectivity, freed from the debate on value. What is at stake is not a simple sidestepping of the production process, but rather a more expansive conception of the ways in which capitalism structures class formation through and beyond the labor process.

<A>ORGANIZATION THROUGH AND BEYOND WORK

Youssef Chahine's acclaimed 1958 film *Cairo Station*, filmed in the actual train station, tells the story of those living under and around the train tracks—the porters, the soda vendors, and the newspaper sellers—as the bustling station witnesses love, separation, and struggle. In the film, Chahine characteristically plays with form through fast montage shots to overwhelm the viewer with all the societal contradictions in this postcolonial moment, from the struggles over unionization, to the reigning masculinity of workers' relations in the workplace, to questions of disability and gender relations, to repressed sexuality not only affecting the main protagonist, but also acting as a specter that haunts all the characters of the film and the city. While fundamentally political, the film moves away from some of the didacticism that dominates revolution cinema. It is not simply about the success story of a union recognized; it is a complex commentary on the libidinal and the psychoanalytic. In films depicting different forms of labor, there is often a certain play with time that extends the life of every shot as if by watching the film you "do time" as workers "do their time" in the workplace and at home, the latter depicted brilliantly in Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), where viewers witness the monotony of a three-minute long shot of Jeanne peeling potatoes at her kitchen table. But in his film, Chahine uses speed because he is interested in depicting not only the "petty pilfering of minutes" (Marx [1867] 1992, 352) or the labor struggle as time is slowly snatched from the worker, but also the complexities, the contradictions, and the social life in and around the struggle.

If in the postcolonial moment of the late 1950s the social life in and around labor struggles was important, today it is arguably even more so, as labor no longer lives in the factory or the workplace. Labor lives in the social world. It permeates life. Mario Tronti's famous idea of the "social factory" reflected some of this in the early 1960s:

> <ext>Capital is able to capture, it in its own way, the unity of the labour process with the process of valorization; and captures it in an ever greater manner the more that

capitalist production develops and the more that the capitalist form of production grasps all the other spheres of society, invading the whole network of social relations. ([1962] 2019a) </ext>

The factory logic seeps into everyday life in and around the workplace. This idea was taken on in the 1970s by Marxist feminists, whose groundbreaking work on social reproduction continues to be as relevant and as urgent now as it was then (Mies [1980] 2014; Federici 2012). Today, labor traverses space in the virtual world of email, applications, and social media. Labor no longer has a home. Even the eight-hour working day that Marx spent pages and pages writing about, is now disrupted by the 24-hour access to work through new technological advances in communication. Instead of estrangement, work permeates every aspect of life, or as Franco "Bifo" Berardi put it, "the soul at work." Approaching the soul from a materialist perspective, Berardi argues that "the soul is not simply the seat of intellectual operations, but the affective and libidinal forces that weave together a world: attentiveness, the ability to address, care for and appeal to others" ([2007] 2009, 10). Indeed, capitalism has invaded all social relations today: body and soul.

Even during the working class struggles of 1960s Italy, from where Mario Tronti was writing, workers not only organized autonomously, but also took this spirit to rent strikes and organized squatting of buildings in Rome, Milan, and Turin. As one article in *Lotta Continua* reported:

<ext>The rent strikes have developed, not as symbolic acts of protest against government policies, but as a direct response to the tyranny of rent. . . . The strikes are organized block by block, staircase by staircase, with regular meetings, newsletters, wall newspapers, leaflets, and demonstrations. In the course of the struggle people begin to take control of their project or building, asking themselves why they should pay rent, how much they should pay, if any, and what it should be used for. At the same time they make sure that the rent collector and the police can't carry out their jobs. Anti-eviction squads are set up, and contacts are established with workers in nearby factories who can be brought out immediately. Women play an essential role in the organization of the rent strike. During the day, along with their kids, they guard the project against the police. . . . In the course of the struggle new, collective ways of living—day-care centers, communal kitchens, peoples' health centers—are developed. (1973, 80) </ext>

The journal also reported that people saw occupations and rent strikes as part of the same struggle. A common slogan during this time was “A house is a right—don’t pay rent!” (81). Starting from the home, the struggle over housing was a precondition for the extension of the struggle to public transport, health care, and rising prices. Importantly, as this 1960s coverage shows, women were central to the organizing; they organically repurposed their everyday reproductive labor and care work as struggle.

But Tronti and the early autonomists don’t quite take us conceptually to the ways in which capitalism invades all social relations. In his classic text “The Strategy of Refusal,” Tronti argues that the labor strike

> <ext>implies a refusal of the command of capital as the organizer of production: it is a way of saying “No” at a particular point in the process and a refusal of the concrete labor which is being offered; it is a momentary blockage of the work-process and it appears as a recurring threat which derives its content from the process of value creation. ([1965] 2019b)</ext>

One could take his point on the role of the strike as refusal and the idea of the social factory together and do an expansive reading of the autonomists’ intervention on the question of revolutionary subjectivity beyond the production of value. Still, the logic of the argument rests on the notion that the social world becomes an extension of the factory under capitalism—the social factory—which it is, to a large extent. But what about the ways in which capitalism also sustains its class formations through other cunning means beyond the factory and its logics? This question also comes from doubts about the left’s historical privileging of labor struggles over housing ones, starting from Frederick Engels’s *Housing Question* and continuing today (Engels [1872] 2021; Madden and Marcuse 2016). This harks back to the discussion about who is the revolutionary subject and whether this subjectivity is necessarily created through the production of value needed for the further accumulation of capital. The limits of this argument appear as soon as we approach the home as a site of consumption, production, and social reproduction. This historical privileging of labor struggles also ignores the significant role of real estate today and “offers an impoverished vision of political resistance” (Madden and Marcuse 2016, 105). The choice of tactics used and the variant spaces of resistance against capital should be rooted in material struggles that constantly shape and reshape theoretical conceptions of revolutionary subjectivity. Instead of

theory being detached from practice—from all the variant ways capitalism structures social relations—it becomes constantly shaped and reshaped by it with the movement of time. This is not argument on the primacy of practice, either. Following Marx and Theodor Adorno here, it is the movement we get through the constant co-constitution of theory and practice, moving together in a dialectical relationship (Adorno [1966] 2007, 244, 245). Perhaps anti-capitalist struggle today should entail wider actions than what traditional Marxism has so far stipulated in theory and practice. There is a backstage to the theater of capital. All the background conditions required for the accumulation of capital could be mobilized if one looks at what lies behind the production process, or what Fraser called "boundary struggles over gender domination, ecology, imperialism, and democracy. But, equally important, the latter now appear in another light—as struggles in, around, and, in some cases, against capitalism itself" (2017, 158).

Housing, for example, could be considered as a space of conflict that harbors a budding movement against the commodification and financialization of homes (Guzmán and Ill-Raga 2023, 1). Unlike labor strikes, rent strikes are mostly illegal in countries around the world. They are considered an aberration on the sanctity of property ownership, yet they embody an important antagonism that could be used to bargain for gains in the sphere of social reproduction. Rent strikes could be understood as refusals, as negative forms of collective action that produce new processes of living, from collective learning and mutual aid to shared or collectivized reproductive labor.

In a pamphlet introduced by feminist activist Selma James and published by the Notting Hill[**] Women's Liberation Workshop group in 1972, we see the ways in which women have historically tried to organize in and around the home and the workplace:

> <ext>We can organize women where they work for wages, where they shop, where they live and work. Women from many industrial estates have shopping areas very near where they shop in the dinner house. They often live close by. We can begin by leafletting in all three places, aiming to organize for their most pressing problems which are hours of work, wages, inflation, child care and slavery. . . . *we need not wait for the men to strike*, we can ask them to strike to support what *we* are doing (James 1973, 69–70; emphasis in original).</ext>

[**] Notting Hill was then a working-class neighborhood of London that hosted, as it still does, the historic Caribbean Notting Hill Carnival.

Here, women were already trying to organize outside the traditional spaces of organizing and making demands in the reproductive sphere. Instead of organizing in the factory, they organize in the shops women frequent to buy commodities needed for cooking and cleaning. The pamphlet even continues to argue that women's experiences of work shouldn't be confined to the "secondhand politics of 'trade union consciousness,' which has been presented to us as the only viable alternative." Approximately 20 percent of the women working in a primarily women's factory don't show up at work on Monday because of the carried over burden of social reproduction. Women's experience meant that they had to move beyond the trade union struggle and not simply fight for better working conditions but to fight against "exploitation, against work itself" (James 1973, 69–70). Whether one endorses this trade union skepticism to the full or not, the point is that women's experiences of work, including care work, is not reflected in traditional workplace demands. And importantly, struggles confined to what is permitted or legal within the trade union still reproduce the same relations of exploitation with every new contract negotiated, even if there are material gains (Benjamin [1917] 2002).

Women's experience of work under capitalism has meant that they often needed to resort to other forms of organizing that might not always overlap with trade union politics or the party. One important contemporary example is the ways in which domestic workers have organized. In an interview that Sarah Jaffe conducted with a nanny active in organizing domestic workers in New York, she said:

> <ext>Being a domestic worker, most times there is just one of you in the house. If you do live up in the suburbs or somewhere, you hardly see another domestic worker or nanny. We try to get them to come at least once a month and we can talk about whatever is going on, how to organize, and how they can negotiate their contract for their working conditions. (2021, 88)</ext>

The challenges of organizing domestic workers meant that they had to think about other spaces where nannies assemble, primarily in public parks. Indeed, the National Domestic Workers Alliance and its New York chapter were able to fight the first Domestic Worker Bill of Rights, which gave them a right to overtime, minimum wage protections, at least one day of rest a week, a right to paid time off after three years of work, and protections

against arbitrary deductions of wages (Jaffe 2021, 86). Despite the difficulties of organizing across different homes, the nannies were able to get some protections.

The same problem of organization is faced by workers in the platform economy. They work without having one workplace, the traditional space of assembly for workers' organization. Labor researcher Jamie Woodcock followed Tim, a Deliveroo worker in London who wanted to start organizing other workers. While Tim had found other people interested in organizing, he wanted to find drivers from other zones of the city to slowly build a network of workers who can organize collectively. Woodcock describes their meeting as follows:

> <ext>We met on a sunny afternoon in central London and set off to find the meeting points for other zones. . . . Along this walk there are many . . . independent restaurants and franchised chains such as Nando's, Wagamama, and Pizza Express. We stopped at one meeting point. It had a range of restaurants and space to park mopeds. Over a couple of hours there was a steady stream of moped riders who passed through. Unlike Tim, most of these workers were migrants, and particularly Brazilians. . . . Far from coming across as "unorganisable," these workers were already in contact with each other. There were networks across the zone. . . . He explained that workers used [WhatsApp groups] to share information: the best places to wait, the busiest restaurants to get orders from, warnings about traffic or the police, as well as general information about the work. (2021, 2)</ext>

The desire to connect and create networks among themselves is indicative of the fact that workers in the platform economy are eager to organize collectively, whether in the form of a trade union or other autonomous organizations. This is the case in the UK—and elsewhere. For example, wildcat strikes in the platform economy in Bangalore won workers significant concessions on wages (Woodcock 2021, 4). While food delivery workers, whose peak hours are often at night, do not do the same kind of work that, say, domestic workers or nurses do in terms of caring responsibilities, they effectively contribute to the reproduction of the city during the hours of the night, when there are limited services and infrastructure (Kolioulis et al. 2021, 10). Platform workers, like domestic workers and nurses, have both productive and reproductive aspects of their work. The question is how to think about organization in a way that takes seriously workplace demands, as well as reproductive ones, including struggles over homes and housing.

<A>CONCLUSION

I want to conclude by thinking about the ways social reproduction could extend some of the conversations developed initially in the autonomist tradition to rethink the scope of revolutionary subjectivity. Mario Tronti and others within the workerist tradition made an important critique of orthodox Marxism. Instead of starting from capitalist domination, they started from working class struggles. John Holloway, using Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, distinguishes between what he calls positive autonomism and negative autonomism. In the positive version, the working class replaces capital as the driving force of capitalism, and the working class recomposes itself with each wave of struggle. This version "only goes halfway, for it is not accompanied by a conceptual revolution" (Holloway 2009, 96). In its negative iteration, autonomism's starting point is not only the working class instead of capital, but also negativity. Negative autonomism starts from refusal, and here the working class is conceived as a negative subject, not a positive one. This negativity is to negate that which creates capital: abstract labor (97). To take this argument further, the realm of abstract labor is itself produced by the background conditions created in the reproductive sphere, so what would it meant to also negate those background conditions? Even if the sphere of social reproduction doesn't directly create capital, it is a necessary precondition for it. In that sense, one could conceive of reproductive demands—such as the withdrawal of rent or demands for "wages for housework"—as acts of refusal, just as the labor strike is also considered an act of refusal, both of which need to be mediated for any revolutionary transformation. It is true that "there is no capitalist mode of production without labor power as a source of value," but perhaps anti-capitalist struggle today should work toward a "new subjectivity that no longer depends on the abstract universality of the value form" (Tomšič 2015, 5). Maybe, instead of working toward the liberation of labor from capital, like the autonomists did, the goal should be to abolish not only labor and capital (Vishmidt [2018] 2019, 80), but also the unequal background conditions required for both.

Through the lens of social reproduction, I have tried to bring together the vastness of the reach of capitalism and the possibilities created by expanding the notion of revolutionary subjectivity beyond the production of value in terms of what counts as anti-capitalist struggle today. Importantly, this comes from a certain historical conception of capitalism where social relations do not constitute discrete and autonomous categories that simply intersect with one another, but come into being "in and through each other" (Bannerji 1995, 30). Class cannot be articulated independently from race or gender, otherwise it becomes solely an abstraction,

hence radically incomplete. This historical understanding of social relations, along with an expansive conception of social reproduction that includes those background conditions as part of the totality of capitalism's reach, brings into the purview questions of race, class, and gender through specific struggles in and around the home and the city, not only the factory. If social reproduction and the home are central nodes that connect between labor, housing, and precarity, then any serious discussion within capitalism studies today must account for their centrality both to the functioning of capitalism and to resistance against it.

<A>NOTES

[COMP: please insert appropriately numbered notes here]

<A>REFERENCES

Adorno, Theodor. [1966] 2007. *Negative Dialectics*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Agarwal, Prerna. 2023. "'Workers' Way': Moments of Labor in Late 1940s." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 102 (Fall): 225–47.

Balestrini, Nanni. [1971] 2022. *We Want Everything*. New York: Verso.

Bannerji, Himani. 1995. *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism and Anti-Racism*. Toronto: Women's Press.

Benjamin, Walter. [1917] 2002. "The Critique of Violence." In *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 1913–1926, ed. Marcus Bullok and Michael W. Jennings, 236–52. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press.

Berardi, Franco "Bifo." [2007] 2009. *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Bhattacharya, Tithi. 2017a. "Introduction." In *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, ed. Tithi Bhattacharya, TK–TK. London: Pluto Press.

Bhattacharya, Tithi. 2017b. "Skipping Class." In *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, ed. Tithi Bhattacharya, TK–TK. London: Pluto Press.

Butler, Harold. 1932. "Report on Labour Conditions in Egypt with Suggestions for Future Social Legislation: The Employment of Women. Cairo: International Labour Office." Geneva: International Labor Organization (ILO) Archives.

Engels, Frederick. *The Housing Question*. [1872] 2021. International Publishers.

Farris, Sara R., and Mark Bergfeld. 2022. “Low-Skill No More! Essential Workers, Social Reproduction and the Legitimacy-Crisis of Division of Labour.” *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory* 23 (2–3): 342–58.

Federici, Silvia. 2012. *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.

Fraser, Nancy. 2016. “Contradictions of Capital and Care.” *New Left Review*, July/Aug.

Fraser, Nancy. 2017. “Behind Marx’s Hidden Abode: For an Expanded Conception of Capitalism.” In *Critical Theory in Critical Times: Transforming the Global Political and Economic Order*, ed. Penelope Deutscher and Christina Lafont, TK–TK. New York: Columbia U. Press.

Guzmán, Jordi G., and Marta Ill-Raga. 2023. “Rent Strikes: Revolutions at Point Zero.” *Socialism and Democracy*. https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2022.2170681.

Harvey, David. 2003. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford U. Press.

Hester, Helen, and Nick Srnicek. 2023. *After Work: A History of the Home and the Fight for Free Time*. London: Verso.

Holloway, John. 2009. “Negative and Positive Autonomism. Or Why Adorno?” In *Negativity and Revolution: Adorno and Political Activism*, ed. John Holloway, Fernando Matamoros, and Sergio Tischler, TK–TK. London: Pluto Press.

hooks, bell. 1990. “The Homeplace (as a Site of Resistance).” In *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, TK–TK. Boston: South End Press.

Jaffe, Sarah. 2021. *Work Won’t Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted and Alone*. London: Hurst & Co.

James, Selma. 1973. “Women, the Unions, and Work, Or . . . What Is Not to Be Done?” *Radical America* 7 (4–5): 51–72.

Janouch, Gustav. 1953. *Conversations with Kafka: Notes and Reminiscences*. London: Derek Verschoyle.

Kanafani, Ghassan. [1988] 2023. *The Revolution of 1936–1939 in Palestine: Background, Details, and Analysis*. Trans. Hazem Jamjoum. New York: 1804 Books.

Kolioulis, Alessio, Julian Siravo, Paul Apostolidis, Camille Kummer-Buléon, Louis Matheou, and Cosimo Campani. 2021. *Working Nights: Municipal Strategies for Nocturnal Workers*. Crookham Village, UK: Autonomy.

Lotta Continua. 1973. “Take Over the City.” Trans. and ed. Ernest Dowson. *Radical America* 7 (2): 79–112.

Madden, David, and Peter Marcuse. 2016. *In Defense of Housing*. London: Verso.

Marx, Karl. [1867] 1992. *Capital*. Vol.1, *A Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin Classics.

McAllister, Clark. 2022. "Karl Marx's Workers' Inquiry: International History Reception, and Responses." *Notes from Below*, July 19. https://notesfrombelow.org/issue/karl-marxs-workers-inquiry.

McNally, David. 2004. "The Dual Form of Labour in Capitalist Society and the Struggle over Meaning: Comments on Postone." *Historical Materialism Journal* 12 (3): 189–208.

Mies, Maria. [1980] 2014. *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. London: Zed Books.

Poy, Lucas. 2021. "A take of two cities: The tenants' strike of 1907-1908 in Buenos Aires and New York." *Radical Housing Journal* 3(1): 131-147.

Tomšič, Samo. 2015. *The Capitalist Unconscious*. London: Verso.

Tronti, Mario. [1962] 2019a. "Factory and Society." In *Workers and Capital*, TK–TK. London: Verso.

Tronti, Mario. [1962] 2019b. "The Strategy of Refusal." In *Workers and Capital*, TK–TK. London: Verso.

Vishmidt, Marina. 2013. "Permanent Reproductive Crisis: An Interview with Silvia Federici." *Mute*, March. https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/permanent-reproductive-crisis-interview-silvia-federici.

Vishmidt, Marina. [2018] 2019. *Speculation as a Mode of Production: Forms of Value Subjectivity in Art and Capital*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Woodcock, Jamie. 2021. *The Fight against Platform Capitalism: An Inquiry into the Global Struggles of the Gig Economy*. London: U. Westminster Press.

Ziadah, Rafeef, and Adam Hanieh. 2023. "Misperceptions of the Border: Migration, Race, and Class Today." *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory*. https://www.historicalmaterialism.org/articles/misperceptions-border.