What does the development of a truly robust contemporary theory of domination require? Ashley J. Bohrer argues that it is only by considering all of the dimensions of race, gender, sexuality, and class within the structures of capitalism and imperialism that we can understand power relations as we find them nowadays. Bohrer explains how many of the purported incompatibilities between Marxism and intersectionality arise more from miscommunication rather than a fundamental conceptual antagonism. As the first monograph entirely devoted to this issue, »Marxism and Intersectionality« serves as a tool to activists and academics working against multiple systems of domination, exploitation, and oppression.

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I want to begin by speaking about two moments, themselves rather far apart chronologically, that motivated me to write this book. I was at a conference a few years ago in which three leading Marxist scholars spoke on a panel about intersectionality. The room was packed. I watched one of the scholars begin their talk by confessing that they had never heard of intersectionality until one month before the event. Unsurprisingly, the talk proceeded to be riddled with errors, caricatures, and hubristic pronouncements about a large and varied body of literature that the speaker admitted to knowing nearly nothing about. The second scholar continued the trend of bombastic but ungrounded critique, declaring toward the end of their talk that the problem with intersectionality was that it had no account of how oppressions “interacted”; they seem to “bounce off one another like billiard balls” but without any conceptual explanation. This remark was met by a room full of self-satisfied chuckles of derision. The third speaker rattled off a series of criticisms that, while articulated with less derision, were no more accurate; I deal with many of this person’s critiques throughout the manuscript that follows. All three speakers were white, well-respected, and were speaking far outside of their areas of expertise. It showed. The Q&A that followed this panel was itself almost comically bad; the moderator proceeded to call on nearly every white man over 40 in the crowd, while ignoring the hands of the many young people, people of color, and women in the room, some of whom were visibly fuming at the spectacle they had witnessed.

A few years before this conference, I was sitting in a seminar classroom in graduate school, discussing the work of a prominent non-white scholar who was very highly regarded in the post-colonial cannon. In many of the discussions I had witnessed about this person’s work, their Marxist politics, and their deep commitment to a critique of capitalism had been overlooked, which I raised in the discussion. A colleague responded, “But why does it have to be Marxist?” Their exasperation was clear; to them it seemed as though a white anti-capitalist was imposing Marxism (assumed itself to be Eurocentric, teleological, and ultimately fascist) on the thought and activism of a person of color,
who, as an anti-colonial revolutionary, seemingly couldn’t also employ the work of a dead white man to these ends. The fact that numerous militant decolonial and feminist struggles had made use of Marxism was either unknown or discounted in the subtext of this pointed and rhetorical question.

I point to these two moments, years apart, because they, more or less, characterize much of the ‘conversation’ that has surrounded intersectionality and Marxism in recent years. Rife with derision, I have found most engagements between these two perspectives to be grounded more in caricature than in close reading, often discounting in advance that anything useful could come from one or the other framework. And so, after years of defending intersectionality in Marxist circles, and of defending historical materialism in intersectional ones, I became convinced that these conversations would continue to stall without a piece of scholarship that placed the two into actual conversation, leaving behind the various straw persons and scarecrows that too often form a barricade between these two perspectives. This book is thus, in one way, a rather long response to both of these moments and an articulation of how and why each of these modes of engagement are ultimately insufficient, not only for capturing the breadth and profundity of their concepts, but also for the project of uprooting the systems of domination that structure our world. If we are really to intervene against racism, cis/sexism, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism—and it is one of the arguments of this book that if we are to destroy one, we must destroy them all—then we must move beyond this intra-left stalemate. Rather than fighting each other, we must find modes of engagement that do justice to the insights of multiple traditions, multiple experiences, and multiple positions.

Setting the Terms

In order to engage in a project such as this, I must begin by clarifying three of the central terms in the title of this book: capitalism, intersectionality, and Marxism. It is only through doing so that, in the rest of this book, we might some to some kind of understanding about what the other terms—race, gender, sexuality, and class—mean.

Capitalism

Capitalism is the grammar of our world. But for all of its ubiquity, it is a concept and system that is rarely understood. While often capitalism is taken to refer to a purely economic system, marked by markets and exchange, this characterization only begins to scratch the surface. Capitalism is an economic system, one that continually uses violence, brutality, and exclusion to ensure that the relatively few live off the endless labors of the many. But it is much more than this: capitalism is also a series of connected narratives and social practices, it
is a system that produces and reproduces inequalities at every turn, not only in the economic realm, but in the political, social, academic, intimate, educational, and imaginative dimensions of contemporary life. And this system, which is overall based in the justification of domination and dominion, came into being and continues to exist, in and through a whole series of oppressive practices and discourses. Far from being a single, univocal operation of power, capitalism is a web of institutions, inherited histories, modes of access, strategies of confinement, and tactics of accumulation, with different and varying configurations across history and across the world. In this sense, I follow the analysis of Silvia Federici, who argues that capitalism “has been above all an accumulation of differences, inequalities, hierarchies, divisions, which have alienated workers from each other and even from themselves.”1

This “accumulation of differences” in conjunction with the accumulation of power and wealth together is the system of capitalism. In this sense, capitalism, far from being a purely economic system, cannot operate outside of the complicated dynamics of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality. Anievas and Nisancioglu reinforce this point, asserting that capitalism utilises exploitation and oppression—beyond the formally free exchange of labour-power for wages—as (re)sources for its reproduction. The violence that inheres in forms of exploitation such as slavery, debt peonage and domestic labour, practices such as state coercion, ‘just wars’ and territorial divisions, and structures of racism and patriarchy is not external to capitalism as a mode of production, but constitutive of its very ontology. When tied to the critique of Eurocentrism, we should thus be wary of any account of the origins of capitalism that posits Europeans or Westerners as harbingers of a normatively and developmentally privileged ‘civilization’—an exceptionally ‘enlightened’ group that dragged the world out of ‘savagery’. The history of violence upon which the social relations of capitalism were built should lead us to question the idealised self-image of capitalism as a world of expanding fulfilment and freedom, achieved through the abstract mechanisms of exchange. The invisible hand of the market has always been undergirded by the iron fist of the state, and an array of systemic separations between the subjugated and exploited—patriarchy, ‘race’, class and so on.2

In capitalism, we find a whole host of exploitative and oppressive practices, ones wholly structured through the inter-relations not only of class, but of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality. Let me be clear: I do not argue in this book that capitalism is itself sufficient in explaining the entire phenomena

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of racism, colonization, heteropatriarchy, and/or sexism. These systems are complex, complicated, and changing; they mobilize pre-existing discourses, emergent practices, and even resistances to them in the continual innovation that has made them so difficult to uproot. Rather this book argues that capitalism was and still is deeply complicit in and structured by the particular shape of multiple, interlocked oppressions at the political, economic, social, and ideological levels. As I am sure will be clear to readers, I maintain the conviction that a systematic analysis of capitalism as a structure is urgently relevant to combatting these systems as they persist today. But unlike many class-reductionist Marxists, I argue that race, class, sexuality, and gender are completely inseparable systems. In this sense, I do not endorse the idea that racism, colonialism, or heterosexism are themselves reducible to capitalism’s specific class relations; rather I argue that capitalism is a necessary element to an analysis of race, gender, sexuality, and class, just as an analysis of these latter is crucial to understanding the ideology, historical practice, and logical structure of capitalism.

**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a term that used in a whole variety of mobile ways and deployed to many different ends. While I undertake a systematic analysis of many of the key touchstone texts of intersectionality in Chapter One, throughout most of the book I use the term the intersectional tradition in order to highlight that intersectionality operates in two ways at once: intersectionality is both a definite, specific concept, named and elaborated by particular people and at a particular moment and it is something that is much broader than this. Especially from the present vantage point, in which the specific boundaries of intersectionality have become slippery, plastic, and quickly expanding, it may be more helpful to speak about an intersectional tradition: a group of texts and activist practices that gave rise to the discrete concept of intersectionality, are and were in dialogue with it, and who have been influenced by it. Thinking about intersectionality as both a concept and a tradition is my way of staking out a space to write this text amidst significant debate within scholars who call their work intersectional, about exactly who ‘founded’ intersectionality, exactly what ‘work is does’, and exactly to whom it is (and should be) available and accessible.

Thinking about the intersectional tradition allows us to really think about the constellation of concepts and theories and questions and concerns that are deeply related to the particular conceptual arrangement of intersectionality, while still marking a difference between them. Hence, in order to understand the moment, the theory, and the history of intersectionality as a concept, one must also understand the variety of names and concepts that feminist women of color had been using to try to address some of the very same issues that today
are more likely to be investigated through/under/with/by intersectionality. Thus, it is quite clear that Patricia Hill Collins’ “matrix of oppression,” Deborah King’s “multiple jeopardy,” and even bell hooks’ “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” are certainly part of the intersectional tradition even if they are not the same as Kimberlé Crenshaw’s particular conceptual formation of “intersectionality.” Any account of what intersectionality means to Crenshaw, the explosion in the use of it, the resistance it initially faced (and still sometimes faces, despite its widespread currency on the contemporary left) would be woefully incomplete without the context of struggle, organizing, and theorizing given by these figures and many others besides. It is in this sense that I refer to “the intersectional tradition” as a group of histories, texts, theories, organizing strategies, and struggles that form an internally heterogeneous and non-uniform set. It is crucial to think both about the differences and the similarities between articulations of the structures, experiences, identities, and oppressions that all of these figures were trying to name and analyze.

In addition to debates about what intersectionality is, whether the intersectional tradition is itself the exclusive domain of black women is an equally contentious aspect of the histories of intersectionality. There are clear dangers in asserting that intersectionality was itself a multi-racial tradition from its origin; the threat of “whitening intersectionality” could contribute to the continual underestimation of black women’s theoretical ingenuity, therefore alienating black women from the products of their own intellectual production. However, centering black women in this history does not need to entail erasing the historical fact that many of the theorists of the intersectional tradition were themselves engaged in organizing and theorizing with a multi-racial group of women, who were themselves involved in the production of this tradition. Latinas Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, the editors of the volume *This Bridge Called My Back*, were centrally important in the development and facilitation of the spread and connection between the thinkers and ideas that would come to be called intersectionality. Elizabeth “Betita” Martínez was a central organizer in the black liberation struggle and influenced many of the black feminist scholars in the intersectional tradition. Argentine-born philosopher María Lugones is also often cited in histories of intersectionality, as is Chela Sandoval, Chandra Mohanty, Urvashi Vaid, and others. The Third World Women’s Alliance, whose importance to the development of the intersectional tradition will be discussed below, was composed of black, indigenous, latinx, and Asian-American feminists. The intersectional tradition, especially as it took hold within the field of legal studies, was impacted through not only Crenshaw’s powerful articu-

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lation, but through her conversations and collaborations with Mari Matsuda, Trina Grillo and others. Equally important to not overlook, many of the women involved in all of these projects were themselves biracial and multiracial. The best way to honor the women of color who are the foundational thinkers of intersectionality is to recognize them in their complexities: Crenshaw, Collins, Thornton Dill, and the many others who have been variously crowned as the originators of intersectionality were themselves engaged in activism, conversation, coalition, and collaboration with many activists, academics, and thinkers, some of whom were non-black women of color. The narrative that intersectionality was or is only about black women reduces the plurality, expansiveness, and coalitional work that these black women were engaged in. Indeed, Ange-Marie Hancock explains that it is essential both to pluralize the foundational narrative of intersectionality and to think about the ways in which non-black women of color were specifically integral parts of these conversations.

Marxism

I treat intersectionality as the name for a tradition in much the same way that I treat Marxism in a rather heterodox fashion, as a group of texts, thinkers, and organizing histories that are widely heterogeneous and often internally conflictual. While it would be wrong to collapse all thinkers or organizers who call themselves “Marxist” into the same set of positions—indeed, I argue against doing precisely this in much of this book—there is some manner of internal relatedness to the group of texts, positions, ideas, thinkers, and organizations grouped under this heading; while I have included mostly only those self-identified as Marxists, I have also included those who have called themselves “socialist” or “communist”. In the same sense in which I speak of an intersectional tradition, I am also interested not only in Marxist thinkers, but in Marxish thinkers—academics and activists who use, deploy, work, and rework concepts from Marx or the Marxist tradition in order to explore new problems, expose different arrangements of exploitation, and excavate the vast and varied topography of capitalism. While in the literature on left feminism one often

4 | Jennifer Nash has repeatedly highlighted this point in her analysis of intersectionality: “intersectionality is not the exclusive terrain of black feminism, though black feminists have long been invested in examining how structures of domination collide to produce experiences of oppression and identity. Scholar-activists like Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, among others, have organized their theory and politics around the intimate connections between race, ethnicity, and gender. Moreover, many of the organizations... including the Third World Women’s Alliance, were explicitly interested in “third world women” coalition building” (Nash, “Home Truths,” 451).

finds a distinction between ‘Marxist feminism’ and ‘socialist feminism’, I have not found the uses of these terms to be so consistent as to mark a useful division. They thus appear interchangeably in this text, as they appear interchangeably in the texts I analyze.

Those who are looking for a deep or systematic account of the writings of Marx or his collaborator Engels are bound to be disappointed by the approach I take here. While I do believe that Marx’s own writings still contain many helpful tools, this book is quite a far cry from an exhaustive inventory of Marx’s writings on many of the issues that I raise here. There are quite excellent books that already exist about Marx’s own perspectives on gender, the family, slavery, colonization, and the like, and while many of these questions appear at points in the text, the focus of this book is elsewhere.6

**Intersectionality and Marxism**

As two traditions on the left, each deeply committed to thinking about the structure of injustice in the world, it is not surprising that these traditions should themselves share figures, texts, conceptualizations, or that the traditions themselves intersect and interact, that they read and respond to each other, and that at many points, they diverge from one another. In places where I speak of shared figures of these traditions, this is not to suggest that these figures have been taken up in the same ways by both traditions; indeed, in many cases, these traditions themselves, at least in their internal self-narratives, have often overlooked the existence of any shared conceptualizations or figures in such traditions.

As such, the terms and divisions at issue in this book—Marxism and intersectionality—sometimes become blurry and difficult to parse. Part of this is because, I argue, there has been a significant strand of intellectual and activist work that influences each of these perspectives and another significant strand that attempts to blend them. If an intersectional author is deeply influenced by Marxist texts or if a self-identified Marxist defines her ideas in and through dialogue with intersectionality, it is very difficult sometimes to say in which chapter or camp that author belongs, as the truth is in this case, as it is for most of us, that we are influenced and hence ‘belong’ to multiple traditions, multiple perspectives, and multiple camps. When we feel the need to separate clearly, to draw lines, to have arguments about whether or not an author *really* is Marxist enough or intersectional enough to be considered part of that tradition, often those conversations say more about the politics and objectives of those

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engaged in the conversation than they do about the work of the authors under discussion. Those conversations may sometimes be important and necessary, but they are not the subject of this book.

Delimiting terms in order to complete this project was particularly challenging. Both Marxism and intersectionality are internally heterogenous and dynamic bodies of literature. There are significant internal debates and disputes about the boundaries, core principles, and political commitments of each perspective. I decided not to intervene in these debates or to contribute to policing the boundaries of Marxism or intersectionality. I am not sure how useful my voice would or could be in such debates, and in any case, intervening felt like it would have taken this project in a different direction.

Initially, I was very invested in proving to Marxists that the reductive notion that many of them have of post-structural identity politics is not intersectionality. I was also rather invested in proving to intersectionality theorists that Marxism is not the kind of economically-reductive, oppression-blind theory of so many left caricatures. But in order to make those arguments, to show that something is or is not intersectionality and is or is not Marxism, I would have had to narrow and circumscribe both fields significantly, cutting off many strands, traditions, and uses of each theory.

I think the real truth of the matter is that there is a certain affinity between the best versions of both schools of thought reflected in their theories and the worst, reflected in their caricatures. There are structural conditions that lead Marxism into being taken as a self-righteous, Eurocentric bludgeon for white men to use in organizing spaces, and there are structural conditions that lead intersectionality into being used as a merely descriptive, hyper-fragmentary, essentialized notion of multiply-oppressed identity. To be clear, I don’t think that these caricatures are the best version of either of those theories. But rather than treating the caricatures as just a simply errancy, I wanted to treat the caricatures as themselves symptomatic of something broader and pressing: the dangers of the theories themselves, the structural and historical conditions of their elaboration, the lack of translation of increasingly insular and self-referential terminology, the institutionalized uses of them that were specifically intended to make them less dangerous. In other words, I found there was something theoretically interesting in the misunderstandings of these theories and moreover, something urgent to think through.

So rather than trying to circumscribe some parts of Marxism as the “real Marxism” and some parts of intersectionality as “the real intersectionality”, I decided rather to distinguish between multiple forms of intersectionality and multiple forms of Marxism. In what follows, I show how much of the contemporary antipathy between Marxism and intersectionality is derived from what we might call a “synecdochal straw person fallacy”: substituting the weakest part for the whole and dismissing the rest.
Theories and practices of social justice and liberation need to be aware of their own caricatures, of their own worst versions, of the dangers of what they propose and of the vision of the just world they strive for. It does no one any good to pretend that we, all of us, built and shaped as we were in a world of white supremacist, patriarchal, settler colonial capitalism, somehow escaped it with a pure and perfect vision for a world made otherwise, as if by sheer force of will we could wipe clean the deep processes that made us in its image. It is important to proceed with caution and self-reflection, with deep self-criticism and self-skepticism with visions, plans, actions, and campaigns that are expansive, transformative, and world re-making.

Sources and Other Citational Politics

Marxism and intersectionality are intellectual currents or conceptual frameworks that are ultimately oriented toward activism, agitation, and transformational practice. This means that questions of strategy are always central. As Nancy Hartsock reminds us, “Marxism is fundamentally about building movements for social change, movements that recognize that injustice and domination are systematic. These movements need both political organizing and theoretical analysis to do the work of supporting the insights as well as the struggles of the many who are oppressed, exploited, and marginalized.” The same is true for intersectionality, and as the book unfolds it will be clearer and clearer that speaking about the intersectional tradition in the absence of deep understanding of its relationship to social movement work and activism will lead only to confusions and mischaracterizations. Both of these theories are, first and foremost, ways of reading, understanding, thinking, and dreaming beyond the deep structures of exploitation and oppression that frame our world. Thus, for a book about theory, actual struggles, organizations, and movements appear, not only as phenomena to be interpreted, but as the sources and sites of theoretical production; words, ideas, concepts, and arguments produced in the street are no less theoretical than those produced in the academy, and the former often speak with more clarity and precision. I thus take the positions, pamphlets, movement newspapers, flyers, and other movement sources as equally important for understanding what both traditions are about, and what they mean in practice, in the world. I take it as a matter of principle, moreover, to refuse the artificial distinctions between activism and academia that posit the former as the agents of political change and the latter as the guardians of theoretical discourse; both the Marxist and the intersectional traditions have their own critiques of this separation.

In addition to including ‘movement sources’ in this largely theoretical work, I approached this project with a deep commitment to an emancipatory politics of citation. As Vivian May argues, “Citational practices in intersectional work are thus especially important: they offer a way to make collectivity, delineate historical precedence, and claim legacies of struggle.” Especially in current conditions, when more and more work claiming to be intersectional engages little or not at all with the texts, groups, and practices that ground it, I remain committed to close readings and deep investigations, tracing the development of concepts and their lines of inheritance. Perhaps that has led to more citations than strictly necessary, but in a world in which oppressed people have less access to academic spaces, in which their ideas continue to be taken less seriously, and in which political work is constantly derided as ‘not theoretical enough’, fidelity to citations is itself a political choice. This remains true in the Marxist tradition as well, where despite decades of deep and exciting analysis by queer, feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, and Global South Marxisms, these voices and their ideas are nearly everywhere buried by more visible and notable Marxists. We must remember that academic and theoretical production happens inside systems of marginalization, silencing, and structural ignorance to the concerns and ideas of oppressed people; the absolute least we can do is engage, deeply, generously, and thoughtfully with these bodies of literature. It is in this vein that I engage with the theories, ideas, authors, and voices cited here. Jennifer Nash, Tricia Rose, and Anna Carastathis have all used the term “loving critique” to explain a mode of engaging with debates and disagreements in generous and open ways. Carastathis figures her own critical engagement with intersectionality in the following terms:

In adducing these critiques, I do not assume[...]that their intent is always to undermine the project of critiquing insubordination or even intersectionality as such. Indeed, I grant the possibility[...]of immanent critiques, and indeed—to use Jennifer Nash’s and Tricia Rose’s formulation—of ‘loving critiques.’ Conversely, the apparent absence of critical engagement in celebratory invocations or operationalizations of intersectionality does not demonstrate any greater ‘fidelity’ or attention to the concept and may be just as (if not more) ‘careless.’

While my engagement with many thinkers in both traditions is at times critical, it is always loving, grounding in the fundamental commitment that questioning, stretching, and pushing each of these theories is the highest incarna-

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8 | Vivian May, Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries (New York: Routledge, 2015), 55.
9 | Anna Carastathis, Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 127.
tion of respect an academic can offer. This book is just such an offering, a hope that by bringing together and deeply engaging with these modes of thinking, that we may find new, exciting, and world opening possibilities for building the world in a more just and liberated image.

Over these past months and years, as I have spoken to many people about this project, they have, in more and less subtle ways, posed the question “but in the end, which perspective wins?” as a way, I think, of interrogating my position. I find this question now somewhat comical, as if the only way to bring two lines of thought into conversation is to vanquish one and declare the other the victor. As I hope becomes clear throughout this text, approaching these traditions through the framework of either Marxism or intersectionality, would vanquish the revolutionary and revelatory potential of their conjunction.

But refusing to choose between these frameworks does not necessarily entail their integration into one, unified whole perspective. It is not my position that intersectionality can or should absorb anything ‘useful’ from Marxism, nor that Marxism should cannibalize the ‘best’ from intersectionality, ultimately jettisoning one framework or the other to the dustbin of theories that once were helpful. What I have thus attempted to stage in this project is not the unproblematic unification of intersectionality and Marxism into one uber-theory; the erasure of differences in these approaches would forestall the creative and dynamic tensions between them. Fredric Jameson, speaking of an altogether different set of concerns, nonetheless illuminates what different theoretical perspectives can bring to the fore if a truly dialectical analysis is embraced\(^{10}\): “the two codes must criticize each other, must systematically be translated back and forth into one another in a ceaseless alternation, which foregrounds what each code cannot fully say as much as what it can.”\(^{11}\) This is, I think, the position I take in regards to the relationship between Marxism and intersectionality: it is not about unifying these perspectives as an unproblematic whole, of excising that which is foreign to the other tradition in order to ground a lowest common denominator of their similarity. What I am seeking rather to do is to ground the basis for what we might call a theoretical coalition between perspectives, in which the strengths of each perspective are preserved.\(^{12}\) We can, thus, embrace a “both/and” perspective without eliminating the need for this conjunction.

A concluding remark: In some of the historical references at issue in this book, some of the terminology might strike the reader as anachronistic or imprecise. In speaking of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commu-

\(^{10}\) For those who view the term ‘dialectics’ as a specifically Marxist figure, I argue against this position in Chapter 6.


\(^{12}\) For more about what I mean by coalition, see Chapter 7.
nlist women of color I often take their analyses and critiques of capitalism under the banner of Marxism, even when they more often used the terms “socialist” and “communist”; some of them, like Lucy Parsons, might even have called themselves anarchists. Throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these terms did not hold or have the same kind of sharp analytical distinctions that they do now, and many of the historical sources under discussion used the terms interchangeably and complementarily. I have used contemporary terms in order to interpret the identities of those in the past, even when the people under discussion might not have used terms like ‘intersectional’ or ‘woman of color’ to refer to themselves.

Plan of the Book
While in philosophy, my home discipline, there is often a premium put on figuring out what exactly it is an author said or meant to say, I take a rather different approach in this book. While some of the book, especially the chapters in Parts One and Two are interested in portraying with greater fidelity what authors from both traditions have said and are saying—much of the contemporary debate between these traditions arises out of a mutual dismissal based on not reading or not understanding what is read—the rest of the book engages with what Hancock has called “guerilla readings” of texts. Guerilla readings, a hallmark of the intersectional tradition, emerge when we read authors’ texts beyond or even against their stated goals or intentions, mining them for strategic openings of thought and action. The third part of this book is engaged in precisely such a set of readings, searching for openings not only that can bridge the gap between traditions of liberatory thinking. The term “guerilla reading” is a particularly apt descriptor for this project. The guerilla is the small, insurgent phalanx, a form of popular militancy, often the incarnation of the diversity of tactics, with environmentally-dependent strategies. It was the chosen form of many anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles for liberation. It is in a series of these readings that I hope new possibilities for thought and for action will emerge.

This book is divided into three parts. The first part “Histories” comprises one chapter that looks at the relationship between the Marxist tradition and the intersectional tradition, concentrating on the decades and centuries before intersectionality emerged as a specific name for a specific theory. This chapter looks at the touchstone figures of intersectionality’s history in the nineteenth and twentieth century, examining how black women conceived of the relationship between gender, race, class, and capitalism from Anna Julia Cooper to intersectionality’s founding. It specifically probes the vast and dynamic organizing and writing of black communist women throughout this time period.

13 Hancock, Intersectionality, 2.
I begin here because, if we are to refuse the assumption that intersectionality and Marxism share no common ground, we must first recognize what historical common ground already exists, what figures these traditions share and what experiences and perspectives, both theoretical and political, framed the pre-history of this rather acrimonious divergence. This is “Chapter Zero” because it is the preparatory work and baseline understanding necessary in order to really approach the differences, debates, and critiques between the two traditions with historical accuracy and theoretical generosity. In that spirit, this chapter also differentiates intersectionality from many of the theories with which it is often conflated: double and triple jeopardy, standpoint theory, and others. McDuffie, for his part, offers a historical explanation for the obscurity of black left feminism the political repression of communism throughout the Cold War (and, indeed, in its aftermath) led to the broader repression of leftist political ideas, histories, and legacies. In addition, the general marginalization of black women from the dominant interpretation of the history of anti-racist and black liberationist struggle meant that the long and vibrant history and ideas of black women on the left have not attracted anywhere near the time, care, and attention that their innovation, clarity, and profundity demand.\textsuperscript{14}

Part Two of this text dives deeply into Marxism and intersectionality and the debates between them. Explaining the basic contours of Marxist and intersectional traditions each comprises an independent chapter. In each of these chapters, I have sought to thematize both the continuities within these traditions, as well as the ongoing differences, divergences, and debates within each framework. Having spent a large part of Chapter Zero explaining conceptualizations of race and gender that are not quite intersectionality, Chapter One fleshes out a fuller understanding of what the term means and what unique theoretical contributions it has made to the long traditions of black feminist and womanist critique. Chapter Three looks at the Marxist tradition, specifically highlighting the work of queer, feminist, and anti-racist Marxisms that seek to thematize the ways in which capitalism, gender, race, and sexuality are tied together. It thus principally engages with many lesser-known and under-studied Marxist figures, forgoing discussions of many of the most famous figures in that tradition.

Part Two also comprises two chapters that focus specifically on points of contention and critique between these traditions. Chapter Two explains Marxist critiques of intersectionality and Chapter Four looks at intersectional critiques of Marxism. In both of these ‘critique’ chapters, I have included a wide array of points, all of which are organized thematically. These critique chapters address both potent and helpful concerns as well as blatant misreadings. I thus see

these ‘critique’ chapters as helping us to simultaneously clarify the places in which further work in each of these traditions is necessary, and to allow us to move beyond some of the hackneyed stereotypes that prevent real engagement across traditions.

Part Three charts new possible directions, for both theory and for organizing, that might emerge by allowing intersectionality and Marxism to really engage in deep conversation and cross-pollination. Chapter Five asks how we might approach the question of the relationship between exploitation and oppression if we worked between the intersectional and Marxist traditions. In that chapter, I consider the various ways that figures from both traditions have thought through this relationship, and, finding them lacking, attempt to chart the contours for a new conception, one that integrates insights from both Marxism and intersectionality.

Chapter Six considers the question of contradiction, binaries, and dialectics from a similar perspective. While dialectics is often associated with Marxism, a close reading of many intersectional texts shows that contradiction and dialectics are frequent figures in that tradition as well. Mobilizing insights from both frameworks, I approach the question of how to think difference and structure at one and the same time; ultimately, I argue that both Marxism and intersectionality provide the foundation for thinking difference dialectically in ways that can be mobilized particularly powerfully against contemporary structures of capitalist domination.

In light of this, Chapter Seven meditates on the question of solidarity, what it means, and what happens when it goes dangerously awry. I diagnose in contemporary organizing a tendency to think about solidarity as constituted through some sort of shared condition or a recognition of sameness despite different circumstances. Explaining the ways in which this produces a politics of the “lowest common denominator”, I articulate an alternative conception of solidarity, one grounded in differences and relations rather than sameness. Rather than organizing from the lowest common denominator, I argue that revisiting the question of coalitions can provide us with a way of organizing towards our highest and most expansive goals, even when, indeed, especially when, we might need differential demands in order to do so.

As Iris Marion Young wrote in the introduction to her own volume on difference, social movements, and theories of social transformation, “I cannot claim to speak for radical movements of Blacks, Latinos, American Indians, poor people, lesbians, old people, or the disabled. But the political commitment to social justice which motivates my philosophical reflection tells me that I also cannot speak without them.” 15 I think of my work in this book, not as speaking

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for either Marxism or intersectionality, but rather as speaking with, of trying to find a way of clearing the space for deeper, more productive conversations, for thinking new horizons, for organizing stronger and more resilient movements, for being more open and more accountable for the deep criticism and reflection that changing the world requires. The work of changing this world will have to be done in conversation with both of these theories.