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**Blood, Strawberries:**  
**Accumulation by Dispossession and Austere Violence against Migrant Workers in Greece**  
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**Abstract:** Rendered vulnerable to hyper-exploitation through the process of precarious migration, migrant workers are coerced and disciplined by systemically violent means by the state, the para-state, and capital. However, the conditions facing migrant workers are mystified by racist discourses that structure commonly held perceptions of the relationships among migration, crisis, and austerity. Migrants are often blamed by the Greek public for contributing to Greek unemployment and draining domestic resources, particularly in a period of “crisis.” Greek impoverishment has been widely used to justify the rise in racist attitudes and the political ascent of Golden Dawn. But the crisis did not generate racism in Greek society—even if it did supply a justifying discourse to naturalise it. Moreover, austerity politics targets migrants and other marginalised groups in ways that routinely go unexamined through a methodologically nationalist frame that constructs Greek citizens as the “authentic” victims of crisis and of austerity measures. In this essay, I examine how institutionalised violence against migrant workers, enabled by their precarisation and social death, is an integral part of the valorisation process in austere capitalism, securing “accumulation by dispossession.” My point of departure in this essay is the violent attack in Nea Manolada on 17 April 2013, during which foremen of a strawberry farm aimed hunting rifles and opened fire on over 200 migrant fruit pickers who were demanding the pay owed to them (approximately €200,000), injuring at least 35 people. Two of the four accused assailants—including the owner of the agricultural operation Vangelatos SA—were exonerated by the court, while the other two received relatively “light” sentences for reduced charges. I examine the ways in which the state, supranational institutions, and capital collude in the exploitation and disciplining of migrant workers under conditions of crisis, austerity, and a global war on migration.

**Keywords:** violence, migration, imperialism, austerity, capitalism, accumulation by dispossession

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*Introduction*

The construction of the Troika’s structural adjustment programme for Greece as “austerity” measures necessitated by a national fiscal crisis has occluded many foundational dimensions of that programme; in particular, its functional role in generating tremendous profit through dispossession and in restructuring public expectations of life under capitalism. Moreover, the construction of austerity’s efficient cause as the “Greek sovereign debt crisis,” parsed in the public discourse as a “national problem,” has directly contributed to obscuring the dire effects of austerity on migrants within Greece’s territorial borders. The nationalism of pro- and anti-austerity discourses has served to normalise violence against migrants, and has contributed to the occlusion of the relationship between an emergent authoritarian capitalism and a global war on migration, reflected in the intensification of border security, detention, and deportation practices that have earned the continent the title of “Fortress Europe.” While some attention has been focused on state and para-state

violence carried out against racialised migrants by Golden Dawn assault battalions and Hellenic Police alike, less notice has been paid to the ways in which violence has been used by capital as an integral part of labour-capital relations in the austere Greek context. Migrant workers are coerced and disciplined by systemically violent means; yet, the conditions facing migrant workers are mystified by racist discourses that increasingly have come to structure commonly held perceptions, affective orientations, and ideologies. Across the political spectrum, migrants are blamed by the Greek public for contributing to Greek unemployment and draining “scarce” domestic resources. Greek impoverishment has been used to justify the “rise” in racist attitudes, the institutionalisation of racism by the New Democracy-PASOK coalition government, and the political legitimisation of the fascist party Golden Dawn. The notion that economic crisis precipitates racist ideologies mystifies the fact that it is the ostensible solution to crisis, austerity, which accelerates the circulation of hostile affects constituting the embattled nation (Carastathis, forthcoming). This process is naturalised in the commonplace, “‘We’ do not have enough to be generous to ‘them’”; the “nation must take care of itself before it can be generous to others” (Ahmed, 2004, 190n6). Austerity targets racialised groups in ways that routinely go unexamined through a nationalist frame that constructs Greek citizens as the “authentic” victims of the economic crisis, and its impact on migrants’ lives as collateral damage. Because their very presence in Greek territory is deemed illegitimate or illegal (as reflected in the deceptive trafficking of the concept of the “illegal immigrant,” or «τον λαθρομετανάστη»), migrants’ precarity is taken for granted. In anti-austerity discourses on the right and the left, references to migrants often function as a rhetorical litmus test for just how bad things have gotten for the “true” victims of the crisis, that is, for (dis)entitled Greek nationals (Carastathis, forthcoming).

But if the nation-state is not presupposed as the basic economic form—that is, if we contest the methodological nationalism that trickles down to these popular perceptions of the “national” economic crisis and its (dis)entitled citizen-victims—we can begin to analyse the “multiscalar processes within state-delimited territorial boundaries” and even “provide a sociohistorical account of [the] constitution of [...] such nationalist categories of practice as a national economy and a national space” (Goswami, 2004, 20). Specifically, I am interested in how the socio-legal construction of migrant workers materially reproduces national space and the (dis)entitled citizen, while valorising capital through what are often viewed as non-capitalist social relations. In this connection, I draw on David Harvey’s concept of “accumulation by dispossession” to theorise how physical violence as integral to the economic exploitation of migrant workers functions to secure the neoliberal politics of austerity (2003). On a theoretical level, I contest the tendency in both liberal and marxian political economy to view violence as an anomaly in late capitalist relations of production. As a critical adaptation of Marx’s concept of “primitive accumulation,” “accumulation by dispossession” enables us to view violence as an integral part of the valorisation process, and as a crucial dimension of the reorganisation of capital in response to its crises.

The title of my paper references the violent attack on 17 April 2013 by Greek foremen on migrant fruit pickers (most of whom are from Bangladesh) who were demanding the six months’ pay owed to them, in Nea Manolada (Ilias), an agricultural village in the fertile Peloponnese region of Greece. Three of four accused assailants, foremen who aimed and fired hunting rifles at over 200 workers, injuring at least 35 people, were initially facing charges of attempted murder which were reduced to intent to cause grievous bodily harm; the fourth accused, Nikos Vangelatos, the owner of the agricultural operation (Vangelatos SA [Βαγγελάτος Α.Ε.]) and alleged instigator («ηθικός αυτουργός») who was absent during the incident, was exonerated of all charges, including human trafficking (Nodaros, 2014a). Only two foremen were found guilty and sentenced to comparatively “light” prison terms (fourteen years and seven months, and eight years and seven months respectively) for the lesser charges of aggravated assault and illegal weapons’ possession (Smith,

2014a, 2014b). The scale of the attack and the anticipated impunity with which the assailants acted drew international media attention to the incident, prompting a boycott of the “blood strawberries” (τις «ματωμένες φράουλες») of Manolada. The incidents in Manolada cannot be dismissed as the aberrant acts of violent individuals (although the particular actors involved certainly have records of shocking violence against “unruly” migrant workers). When placed in their institutional and sociopolitical context, “Manolada” serves as my point of entry into a discussion of how the institutionalised hostility generated by austerity capitalism converges with necropolitical sovereignty (Mbembe, 2003) to open devalued, peripheral markets and render precarious workers vulnerable to hyper-exploitation by “foreign” and “domestic” capital.

In what follows, I examine the way in which the state, supranational institutions, and capital exploit and discipline migrant workers under conditions of crisis, austerity, and a global war on migration. I argue that the social crisis unfolding in an increasingly inegalitarian Greek society is reflected in institutional and popular responses to migration; migrants, along with sexual and gender minorities, have experienced the brutal ascent of fascism, the exponents of which have been targeting marginalised groups with impunity for years. Subjected to what can be described as a kind of social death, migrant workers experience an institutionalised precarity exonerating routine and extreme violence against them, as the “shameful” decision of the court in the Manolada case demonstrates (Nodaros, 2014). First, I discuss the concept of accumulation by dispossession, showing how it builds upon and critically revises Marx’s notion of “primitive accumulation,” and relating it to austerity politics and the “border imperialism” of western or western-aspirant states. Next, I examine how, quite literally, migrant workers’ blood is extracted in the context of a necropolitical regime to valorise Greek strawberries in the capitalist process of commodity production. Finally, by way of conclusion, I offer a brief critique of the legislative response to racist violence in the so-called “antiracist” law enacted recently by the Greek parliament.

### *Accumulation by Dispossession*

Insisting on the axiom that labour had to become juridically “free” in order for its bearer to be exploited by capital, Marx typically locates relations of production structured by violence in the pre-capitalist category of “primitive accumulation.” Capitalism as such is defined by Marxists as “commodity production at its highest stage of development, when labour-power itself becomes a commodity” (Lenin, [1917] 2005, 240). Marx borrows the concept of “primitive accumulation” from classical political economy: Adam Smith referred to it as “previous accumulation” (Marx, [1867] 1976, 873). Marx translated this to *ursprüngliche Akkumulation*, “original accumulation,” which was translated back into English (and into French) as “primitive accumulation”; this is the term that “stuck” among anglophone and francophone Marxists (Batou, 2012). Arguably, the racialisation of this concept, its resonance with the nineteenth- and twentieth-century European colonial discourse of “primitivism,” is not merely an accident of translation, but rather a function of the dehistoricisation of colonial accumulation processes through their construction as the “prehistory” of capitalism (Carastathis, n.d.). While locating colonial plunder in the “prehistory” of capitalism, colonial relations of production—indentured, coerced, and enslaved labour—that is, those which involve licit physical violence, and which (re)produce ideologies, technologies, and socio-economic formations based on gendered-racialised distinctions, are constructed as external to capitalism as such. If they happen to coincide temporally with capitalist relations, Marx considers that they have been formally subsumed by the predominant wage-labour form, which is indifferent to “race,” gender, and age, and exploits workers equitably (under the “historical and moral conditions” prevailing in a given national socio-economy). Indeed, such “status” distinctions are expected to fade away as capitalism expands and progresses, or are accorded an epiphenomenal, ideological role in the reproduction of capitalist social relations (for instance, racist or nationalist

ideologies are seen as dividing an international proletarian class, masking their shared, collective interest). Moreover, subsumed relations of production are expected eventually to disappear as class antagonisms are simplified into the quintessential binary relation of bourgeoisie to proletariat. However, this raises a problem for marxian accounts of contemporary capitalism inasmuch as the racial ordering of the globalised economy of late capitalism appears to be not merely vestigial of historical forms of accumulation; rather, “contemporary processes of globalisation and racialization are drawing new and further exacerbating preexisting forms of disenfranchisement, thereby generating new forms of dispossession” (Clarke and Thomas, 2006, 32). Observing the rise of authoritarian capitalism in financially (re)colonised global peripheries as well as in the internal peripheries of core capitalist nations, we have cause to deconstruct the distinction between capitalist and precapitalist social relations of production, and the notion that they can be neatly historically periodised in what Gayatri Spivak calls the “mode of production narrative” (Spivak, 1985). Serious difficulties arise for the Marxist, but also for the liberal political economist, when we attempt to account for the proliferation and historical persistence of coerced labour *under* capitalism, which is secured through the suspension of democratic rights, and disciplined using violence. If these social relations belong to the pre-capitalist phase of “primitive accumulation,” what explains their persistence and proliferation in late capitalism?

It is important to notice that primitive accumulation is an *assumption* introduced to solve the circularity that arises when attempting to explain the origin of capital; specifically, in the causal relation of the commodity to capital. On the one hand, commodities are “depositories of capital”; as such, they are the products of capitalism: “the first result of the immediate process of capitalist production” (Marx, [1867] 1976, 974-975). Yet, Marx insists that commodities are also the *precondition* or *premise* of capitalism (Marx, [1867] 1976, 949). How can the commodity be *both* the precondition *and* the product of capitalism? This seems viciously circular, but Marx argues the paradox “corresponds to the *historical development* of capital”:<sup>1</sup>

“The whole movement [of the reproduction of capital] seems to turn around in a never-ending circle, which we can only get out of by assuming primitive accumulation [...] which precedes capitalist accumulation; an accumulation which is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but its point of departure” (Marx, [1867] 1976, 873).

David Harvey has argued that the assumption of “primitive accumulation” is problematic insofar as it relegates “violence to an ‘original stage’ that is considered no longer relevant or [...] as being somehow ‘outside’ of capitalism as a closed system” (Harvey, 2003, 144). Of course, Marx is critical of the mystifying way in which classical economists invoke the concept of primitive accumulation to conceal the conditions of possibility of capitalism, namely, genocide, colonial expropriation and slavery, which Marx states “are the chief moments of primitive accumulation” (Marx, [1867] 1976, 873-874, 915). Nevertheless, like liberal economists, Marx also locates violent mechanisms of primitive accumulation outside capital social relations.

Harvey proposes “a general reevaluation of the continuous role and persistence of the predatory practices of ‘primitive’ or ‘original’ accumulation within the long historical geography of capital accumulation” (Harvey, 2003, 144). But since he rightly views it as an ongoing process, he

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<sup>1</sup> “Capital is predicated on the *exchange of commodities, trade in commodities*, but it may be formed at various stages of production, common to all of which is the fact that capitalist production does not yet exist, or only exists sporadically. On the other hand, a highly developed commodity exchange and the *form of the commodity* as the universally necessary social form of the product can only emerge as the *consequence of the capitalist mode of production*. [...] [I]f we consider societies where *capitalist production* is *highly developed*, we find that the commodity is both the constant elementary premiss (precondition) of capital and also the immediate result of the capitalist process of production” (Marx, [1867] 1976, 949)

substitutes the terms “primitive” or “original” with the concept of “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey, 2003, 144). He defines accumulation by dispossession as a transhistorical phenomenon comprising heterogeneous and multiple processes, including: (1) the commodification and privatisation of land and the forcible expulsion of peasants; (2) the supplanting of competing concepts of property (such as common or collective property and state property) by exclusive private property; (3) the enclosure of and suppression of rights to the commons; (4) the marginalisation of indigenous forms of production and consumption and the commodification of labour power; (5) regimes of colonial, neocolonial and imperial expropriation; (6) the institution of transatlantic, plantation, and colonial slavery; (7) the creation of national debts; and (8) the innovation of the credit system (Harvey, 2003, 145). “The state, with its monopoly of violence and definitions of legality, plays a crucial role in both backing and promoting these processes,” explains Harvey (Harvey, 2003, 145).

What is significant is that some of these techniques or mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession “play an even stronger role now than in the past,” such as credit, while “[w]holly new mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession have also opened up,” such as the patenting of genetic sequences of biological life (Harvey 147-148). Indeed, the role of the state in accumulation by dispossession was rethought with the entrenchment of neoliberalism as the new political orthodoxy, and with the attendant enactment of privatisation and austerity measures in the capitalist core by elected governments (e.g., Thatcher, Reagan) and by coercive transnational financial institutions or direct US military intervention in the economically peripheral countries (156).

#### *Crisis and Austerity—or Austerity and Crisis?*

The concept of accumulation by dispossession enables us to see past the rhetoric of fiscal discipline and contraction, to make visible how the politics of austerity accelerates what bourgeois economists term “economic growth.” The dyadic arrangement of “crisis and austerity” (in that order) implies “crisis” has temporal and causal priority to “austerity.” The catalyst of “crisis” in neoliberal austerity discourses is represented as an over-inflated national debt resulting from the over-indulgent, inefficient and even corrupt spending of the welfare state. Austerity, framed as the radical contraction and privatisation of the state’s social welfare functions is then represented as the remedy to crisis. Inverting the inversion implied in “crisis and austerity,” we should instead view austerity—the imposition of neoliberal governance—as generative of humanitarian crisis. This social crisis is inherently tied to the servicing and the amassing of public debt in the guise of welfare state contraction, by edict of supranational financial institutions, through the profligate transfer of public funds, services, and natural resources to corporate capital. From the 1980s onward, debt to supranational financial institutions which impose austere structural adjustment policies, centrally featuring privatisation, in order to disburse loans, is increasingly used to (re)colonise newly independent and/or economically peripheral nations. Harvey argues debt crises are “used to reorganize internal social relations of production in each country [...] to favour the penetration of external capitals” (Harvey, 2004, 78). Indeed, around the world, accumulation by dispossession has become “a much more central feature within global capitalism” (Harvey, 2004, 78).

The Greek case is an instructive example. Greece has the dubious distinction of being the country that allocated the highest amount, proportionately to its GDP, of public funds to rescue the banking sector and restore its profit margins (Panagiotou, 2012; Pentaraki, 2013, 704). Of the nearly

€207 billion disbursed in first three years of the “Troika bail-out,”<sup>2</sup> 77% went to the financial sector (ATTAC, 2013). In 2008, the Greek government had donated €28 billion to the banking sector to offset the ripple effects of the Wall Street crash (Kaplanis, 2011, 216). Greece taxes corporations at one of the lowest rates in the EU, facilitating an increase of 40% in corporate profits from 1995 to 2010 (Pentaraki, 2013, 704). Proportionally, Greece has one of the twenty highest military budgets in the world, and one of the highest rates of income inequality among the twenty-eight EU countries (Pentaraki, 2013, 704). Yet in hegemonic representations, the new millennium was full of promise: entering the European Monetary Union in 2001, and converting its currency from the drachma to the euro in 2002, Greece’s “European” aspirations appeared to be materialising. In 2004, Greece hosted its first contemporary Olympic Games, and the first Games to be held post-September 11, 2001, with an extravagant budget of €11 billion, representing 6% of the GDP. To fund the construction of Olympics infrastructure, €1.5 billion was borrowed from the European Investment Bank (Kretsos, 2011, 31). By 2008, when the financial crisis struck Wall Street and began to reverberate around the world, “the Greek economy was generally perceived as performing well, with rates of growth above the EU average [4.2% in 1998-2007] and declining rates of unemployment [from 12% to 8% in the same period]” (Kaplanis, 2011, 216-217).

But these triumphant statistics conceal a “pre-crisis” decade marked by gross income inequality, the planned casualisation of the workforce and the gradual dismantling of labour rights (affecting, initially, young people and especially women of all ages), the hyper-exploitation of migrant workers, and the emergence of the “€700 generation” (which has now, post-austerity, become the “€300 generation”). If the crisis has been narrowly defined as a function of “sovereign debt,” as Dimitris Dalakoglou argues, the “social character of the current crisis has been taking shape for some time” as a direct consequence of the neoliberal governance (Dalakoglou, 2012, 24), although the structural adjustment of the economy since the Troika has landed in Athens has, of course, had dramatic effects. Between 1989 and 1993, three governments undertook “an openly neoliberal restructuring of the Greek economy and society,” marking what Christos Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou characterise as “the end of *metapolitefsi*”<sup>3</sup> and the beginning of the economic “modernisation” and social “catharsis” of Greece, the primary targets of which, according to the authors, were militant students, unionised workers, and “any organized social agency” resisting the imposition of neoliberalism (Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou, 2011, 98-99). In 2006, before any “crisis” had been declared, 21% of the Greek population lived below the poverty line, and 14% were categorised as working poor (Kaplanis, 2011, 221). In 2010, at the “start” of the crisis, more than 3 million people (27% of the population) were “already on the edge of poverty” (Theodorikakou et al., 2012). In 2014, after four years of austerity measures, the country was ranked last among European Union nations on a social justice index measuring poverty prevention, equitable education, labour market inclusion, social cohesion and non discrimination,

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<sup>2</sup> In 2010, the Greek government accepted the first national “bail-out” in European Monetary Union history, and the largest loan a country had ever taken (€110 billion) from the “Troika” of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU), and the European Central Bank (ECB); in 2012, Greece was compelled to borrow another €130 billion.

<sup>3</sup> «Μεταπολίτευση» (regime change) refers to the post-dictatorial period after the fall of the U.S.-supported Greek military junta (1967-1974), which involved legislative elections, the legalisation of the Communist Party of Greece, the freeing of all political prisoners, and the arrest, trial and imprisonment of junta members. Critics argue that *metapolitefsi* represents an unfinished political project, the beneficiaries of which are “those who belong exclusively in the majority group of white, heterosexual, greek-speaking, orthodox Christian, ethnic Greeks. All of us who differ in our sexual orientations, gender identities, mother tongues, religious beliefs (or lack thereof), ethnic identities and citizenships are still waiting for the regime change which will lead to a democracy without discrimination” (Eliza Barmaxizoglou-Goroya quoted in Thanopoulos, 2014). Any gains made by social democracy have largely been reversed since the rise of neoliberalism in the 1990s, and the intensification of austerity politics since 2010.

health, and intergenerational justice (Schraad-Tischler and Kroll, 2014). Statistics reveal that one-third of Greeks live in poverty; the unemployment rate has reached 27.6%: 31.6% for Greek women, 40.3% for migrants,<sup>4</sup> and 64.9% for Greeks under 25 (Frangakis, 2013; Drettakis, 2013). In the absence of official or systematic studies, it is estimated that more than 20,000 people are homeless (Klimaka, 2011, 2). Nongovernmental organisations have declared a humanitarian crisis with severe mental, physical and public health consequences (Kentikelenis et al., 2014).

In Greece, austerity was presented as the only alternative to the “sovereign debt crisis”; three successive governments assented to the conditions of the Memorandum of Agreement to the *Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece* tied to Troika loans (EC, 2010; EC, 2012). But the professed aims of the programme and its effects both on debt and on sovereignty are stated in plain sight. In order to “improve competitiveness and alter the economy’s structure towards a more investment- and export-led growth model” (EC, 2010, 10) the *Programme* prescribes “a very large macroeconomic adjustment, especially in the public sector,” entailing “large cuts in public wages and pensions” (EC, 2010, 13, 15). The implementation of a “privatisation programme with the aim of collecting €50 billion” is well underway, selling undervalued state assets and eliminating national monopolies in transport, public infrastructure and utilities;<sup>5</sup> as is the reduction of public sector wages by €205 million, and the dismissal of 150,000 public employees.<sup>6</sup> We can also read between the lines, having paid witness to recent developments, to glean in what, precisely, the “ambitious reforming” of the pension and judicial systems, the “modernisation” of the health care system, and the “upgrading of the education system” consist. Significantly, the structural adjustment programme also requires the reduction of the national minimum wage by 22%, and by 32% for “young” workers under 25; the implementation of the “Business-Friendly Greece Action Plan”; and mandates constitutional change: specifically, the insertion in the Constitution of “a provision ensuring that priority is granted to debt servicing payments” (EC, 2012, 123-185). Perhaps the most succinct formulation is embodied in the *Programme’s* decree, “[t]he Government will neither propose nor implement measures which may infringe the rules on the free movement of capital” (EC, 2012, 126).

In austere times, however, the movement of people has been rendered markedly less free than that of capital. Although the *Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece* makes no mention of migration, concurrently with the imposition of austerity measures that have most severely impacted marginalised social groups, among which are migrant workers, the Greek state in collaboration with the EU has undertaken a veritable war on migration, expressed in the EU-funded expansion of its border control, detention, and deportation powers (Carastathis, forthcoming). Between 2011 and 2013, the European Commission gave Greece €227.6 million to bolster border controls and expand detention facilities, while allocating a mere €12.2 million to support the country in integrating refugees (AI, 2014a, 7). This “fortressing” of Europe’s external borders is occurring in the global context of violent processes of accumulation by dispossession, which have resulted in mass migration of people displaced by war, expropriation, predatory trade agreements, privatisation,

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<sup>4</sup> Unemployment and poverty rates among migrants are not well documented and rarely cited; one researcher indicates that in absolute numbers, unemployed migrants came to exceed employed migrants in the period 2009-2011 (Maroukis, 2012b, 2; see also Maroukis, 2012a).

<sup>5</sup> The Memorandum directs the Greek state to “offer for sale its remaining stakes in state-owned enterprises, if necessary in order to reach the privatization objectives. Public control will be limited only to cases of critical network infrastructure” (EC, 2012, 53).

<sup>6</sup> Ostensibly to achieve this benchmark, on 11 June 2013, the Greek government overnight closed the public broadcaster, ERT (Ελληνική Ραδιοφωνία-Τηλεόραση), which, over a year later, continues to broadcast from the internet at [www.ertopen.com](http://www.ertopen.com), as an autonomous collective operated by some of its former employees.

environmental destruction, debt, unemployment, and political persecution.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in 2013, according to Amnesty International, 48% of undocumented people entering Europe, and 63% of those arriving by sea, were from Afghanistan (now in its thirteenth year of NATO war and occupation), Syria (the US' next declared front in its "War on/of Terror"), Eritrea, and Somalia (AI, 2014b, 6). Neni Panourgia urges us to view "the global 'war on terror' as really a global 'war on migration'"; "a biopolitics that seeks to regulate human movement only on the basis of the hypervalue that can be extracted from it" (Panourgia, 2014).

### *Border Imperialism*

Of course, coerced migration is arguably not only the *consequence* of accumulation by dispossession, but one of its contemporary mechanisms. People from the peripheries of the capitalist world system are rendered vulnerable to hyper-exploitation in their "host" nation-states through the process of precarious migration. While proponents and opponents of fortified borders often tend to focus on the exclusionary functions of borders—that is, their role in keeping people out—their (im)porosity also serves to hem migrants in, in state-mediated arrangements of dispossession and exploitation by capital. Harsha Walia coined the term "border imperialism" to describe "the processes by which the violences and precarities of displacement and migration are *structurally* created as well as maintained" (Walia, 2013, 15). Border imperialism

"encapsulates four overlapping and concurrent structurings: first, the mass displacement of impoverished and colonized communities resulting from asymmetrical relations of global power, and the simultaneous securitization of the border against those migrants whom capitalism and empire have displaced; second, the criminalization of migration with severe punishment and discipline of those deemed 'alien' or 'illegal'; third, the entrenchment of a racialized hierarchy of citizenship by arbitrating who legitimately constitutes the nation-state; and fourth, the state-mediated exploitation of migrant labor, akin to conditions of slavery and servitude, by capitalist interests" (Walia, 2013, 15).

Borders are routinely naturalised as geophysical boundaries demarcating territory occupied spatially and historically by an autochthonous nation, ethnic membership in which is seen to automatically confer citizenship. On this view, migrants are constructed as foreign supplicants or foreign threats, to be variously included, assimilated, repelled or expelled from the "original" social body of the "host" nation. In the context of settler colonial states, such as the United States, Canada, Australia and Israel, this construction of the hegemonic settler society as "original" in relation to "newcomer" migrants elides the ongoing colonial dispossession of Indigenous peoples. However, the analytic framework of border imperialism denaturalises borders and "reorients the gaze squarely on the processes of displacement and migration within the global political economy of capitalism and colonialism" (Sharma, 2005, 89). This transnational political economy regulates the socio-legal conferral and recognition of citizenship rights—a system that Nandita Sharma characterises as "global apartheid," whereby "differential legal regimes are organised within nationalised space: one for 'citizens' and another far more regressive one for those, such as people categorised as 'illegal' who are denied a permanent legal status within the nation space" (Sharma, 2005, 89). Walia's concept of border imperialism constitutes a two-fold critique of "state building within global empire": on the one hand it helps us trace "the role of Western imperialism in dispossessing communities in order to secure land and resources for state and capitalist interests"; on the other, it reveals that the "deliberately limited inclusion of migrant bodies into Western states through

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<sup>7</sup> Harvey does not discuss migration at length in *The New Imperialism*, but includes it in a list of "the molecular processes of capital accumulation in space and time" through which "economic power flows across and through continuous space, towards or away from territorial entities (such as states or regional power blocs)" (Harvey, 2003, 26).



processes of criminalization and racialization” serves to justify their ongoing dispossession and hyper-exploitation as captive labour (Walia, 2013, 44). Sharma has shown how socio-legal constructs such as “temporary foreign worker” and “illegal immigrant” ideologically and materially differentiate migrants from citizens (Sharma, 2001). Indeed, “categorizing a person a citizen or a migrant worker is an ideological practice, for the exploitation of migrant workers is concealed and reproduced through the notion that citizens can expect certain rights and entitlements that non-citizens cannot and that this expectation is perfectly ‘normal’” (Sharma, 2001, 435; see also Sharma, 2006).

In the context of austerity, which reorganises public expectations of what is “normal” under capitalism, the binary citizen/migrant articulates a distinction in kind between two classes of workers which stand in a differential relation to capital. This differential relation is marked by violence. When news of the violent attack on migrant workers broke, the conditions in which strawberry pickers labour in Nea Manolada were likened to “scenes of the American deep South,” to the “wild West” and to “South African apartheid” (Galani, 2013; Zotou and Venizelos, 2013; Tsimitakis, 2013). These analogies may have been intended to rhetorically demonstrate the extreme conditions of exploitation and dispossession facing migrant workers in Manolada, and more generally, in Greece. However, they tend to dehistoricise the specific conditions of austere racism prevailing in Greece, locating racialised dispossession in a series of remote “elsewheres”—echoing Minister of Public Order Nikos Dendias’ claim that the racist attack in Manolada “is foreign to our culture” (quoted in Kitsantonis, 2013)—when the point is that accumulation through racialised dispossession is proceeding in the “here and now,” not as the trace of an antiquated set of social relations, but as a crucial aspect of contemporary austerity capitalism.

### *Blood, Strawberries*

The attack against Bangladeshi and Pakistani migrant workers in the strawberry fields of Manolada is a horrifying eruption of, but not an exception to the atmosphere of violence which structures labour-capital relations in the region (Galani, 2013). In April 2008, after violent retaliation by management for a four-day strike by migrant fruit-pickers demanding a wage increase to daily rate of €26 (that still fell 4 euro short of the national minimum daily wage for “unskilled” labourers), a series of vicious attacks on migrants were reported. Mahmoud, a 22-year old Egyptian worker, in August 2012, was tortured allegedly by two of the same individuals who were charged in the latest Manolada case, Theodoros Apostopoulos and Yiorgos Chaloulos. According to Mahmoud, when he approached the two foremen asking after a summer’s worth of unpaid wages, they dragged him for over a kilometre with their car, striking his head and hands with a hammer to prevent him from fighting back or getting free. When Mahmoud reported the assault to the police, authorities detained him and issued a deportation order (Ethnos, 2013). The two hundred workers who were assaulted in 2013 for demanding over €200,000 owed to them in unpaid wages were similarly interrogated by police about their immigration status while they were receiving treatment in hospital. This reveals that the anticipated impunity with which the foremen conducted the attack is based on the institutionalised criminalisation of migrant workers, particularly those without residence permits or who are awaiting the resolution of their asylum applications.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the court’s sentences of two of the four accused, and the exoneration of the other two, including Vangelatos, was criticised by the Official Opposition as “not merely being biased in favour of the perpetrators, but opening a space for new victims”; for “new Manolades” (Vasiliki Katrivanou quoted in Enet, 2014). They argued the decision endangers migrant workers throughout Greece

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<sup>8</sup> “It is indicative that the large majority of victims who were recorded by the [Racist Violence Reporting] Network in 2013 does not wish to make a complaint due to fears related to the lack of immigration documents” (RVRN, 2013, 12).

who, like those in Skala Lakonias, are organising for their rights in the face of organised retaliations by capital, local administrators (including the mayor) and police (Maragidou, 2014a). In fact, during the Manolada trial, supporters of Vangelatos revictimised Tipu Chowdhury, a key witness (the victims of the attack were not given police protection for their testimony): Vangelatos' sister kicked him just outside the courtroom, and as retribution for reporting the incident to authorities, six others beat him outside of his home, threatening to kill him should he ever return to Manolada (Maragidou, 2014b).

In the wake of the Manolada shooting, headlines and opposition parties alike denounced the “strawberry mafia” behind the violence. The fact is, the larger region of Ilia, which accounts for 90% of the country's strawberry production, has, for almost a decade, manifested something of an “economic miracle”: in the three years between 2005-2008, when agricultural production was on the decline in the rest of Greece, agribusinesses in Ilia saw a 30% annual increase in profits (Daskalopoulou and Nodaros, 2008). This wealth is visible in the village of Manolada, composed of 2,000 Greek residents and between 1,500-3,000 migrant residents, most of whom live on the outskirts of the village, in overcrowded shanty towns and in temporary shelters resembling greenhouses built on fields rented from agri-capitalists (Daskalopoulou and Nodaros, 2008). A police investigation in 2007 revealed that municipal officials were issuing falsified permits to migrant workers; after the three-month summer harvest, bosses would report migrants to local police officers for their immigration status, which in turn would initiate deportation proceedings; workers would be detained and/or deported without receiving their meagre earnings. With this widespread practice involving city bureaucrats, local police, and overseers, labour costs effectively evaporate, resulting in super-profits—“red gold”—for strawberry magnates (Daskalopoulou and Nodaros, 2008).

The commodification of dispossessed labour in bloody strawberries is generative of super-profits for capital. What I wish to emphasise, is that these local practices of capital accumulation could not proceed except through the institutionalisation of macro-practices of dispossession, and the intensification of borders, external and internal, which regulate biopolitical and necropolitical sovereignty. The border is not just a geopolitical barrier indicative of the limits of a sovereign nation, or of a fortified continent, but a technology of the regulation of difference that diffuses the entire social body and its economic metabolism. Moreover, the (im)porosity of borders, the influx of immigrants deemed “illegal,” the (il)licit violence perpetrated against them, and the strawberries valorised (“reddened”) quite literally by their blood, must be read as a technology of racialisation in the context of austerity politics.

### *Institutionalised (Anti)Racisms*

In this respect, the analysis of racism advanced by Michel Foucault as the “basic mechanism” which, in a biopolitical age, resurrects the “power of sovereignty,” introducing a “break between what must live and what must die” is crucial to understanding the relationship of violence to valorisation and accumulation processes (Foucault, [1976/1997] 2003, 254, 265). Arguing that Foucault's theory of “biopower” must be supplemented by a concept of “necropower,” Achille Mbembe defines necropolitical sovereignty as the state's capacity to determine “who is *disposable* and who is not” (Mbembe, 2003, 27). The necropolitical state produces what he calls “death worlds”: “forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*” (Mbembe, 2003, 40). Rejecting liberal philosophical views of sovereignty as self-institution and self-limitation, Mbembe theorises sovereignty as “the generalised instrumentalisation of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations” (Mbembe, 2003, 14). “In the economy of biopower,” as theorised by Foucault, “the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death and to make possible the

murderous functions of the state” (Mbembe, 2003, 17). Mbembe’s paradigm is slavery, “which could be considered one of the first instances of biopolitical experimentation,” since, “[i]n many respects, the very structure of the plantation system and its aftermath manifests the emblematic and paradoxical figure of the state of exception,” as theorised by Giorgio Agamben (Agamben, [1995] 1998; Mbembe, 2003, 21). A “triple loss” is productive of the socio-legal “slave condition”: “loss of a home, loss of rights over his or her body, and loss of political status”; in other words, “natal alienation,” “absolute domination,” and “social death” (Mbembe, 2003, 21).

It is these losses of home, rights, and status that border imperialist regimes in collusion with authoritarian capitalism attempt to inflict on migrant workers. If the political economy of Manolada corresponds to any degree to what has been termed “modern day slavery,” it is because it institutes austere forms of dispossession. These socio-economic forms replicate the territorialisation inherent in the colonial seizure, delimitation, and control over geographical areas, on the “mobile” spatiality of migrant workers’ bodies (Mbembe, 2003, 25-6). The sovereignties of late capitalist democracies operate through the coloniality of territorialisation, even if this process is conducted within their own fortified borders, and is therefore mystified by the ethno-nationalist claim of property over “original,” “natural” homelands. We might characterise this as the (re)colonisation of displaced, dispossessed migrant populations who, labouring *within* “western” democracies, but excluded from the protections and rights that states extend to their citizens, experience colonial indenture precisely *through* western law.

If this is true, then legislative responses to racist violence are bound to fall short of their professed aim to eliminate such violence and protect its victims, because such violence inscribes the very category of “migrant worker” in the political economy of austere capitalism. For instance, the so-called “antiracist law” recently enacted by the Greek Parliament (Hellenic Parliament, 2014) will likely fail to protect victims of hate crimes, but not only in the ways already identified in critiques issuing from left opposition parties and civil society. For, if what differentiates migrants from nationals is a racial distinction mobilising the necropower of the state, and enabling capital accumulation through dispossession, then racialised violence is internal to the very same executive, juridical, and enforcement mechanisms that would pretend to regulate, ban, and punish it. Racist violence has a functional role in the accumulation process, and is not just “caused” by ultranationalist, fascist ideologies—although the latter certainly have accelerated and legitimised institutional violence and everyday racisms.<sup>9</sup> Arguably, one effect of the enacted legislation is that it will further mystify the relationship between judicial and extrajudicial violence—between institutionalised racisms condoned and enacted by state mechanisms, and those prohibited and punished by the state. The equation of racist violence as an aberrant, criminalised act of “hateful” individuals, potentially occludes its licit and naturalised role in the capital accumulation process.

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<sup>9</sup> It is, arguably, not accidental that the legislation lacks frameworks to cognise the “mixture” of motives behind violence. In at least 20 incidents recorded by the Racist Violence Reporting Network, victims were targeted due to racism in combination with other motives, which the Network describes as “hate crimes of ‘mixed motives’” (RVRN, 2013, 6). Notably, these concerned either “racist attacks emanating from and in conjunction with labour exploitation (the most emblematic case is that of New Manolada), or racist violence followed by theft of personal property (such as mobile telephones, money, and/or legal residence permits)” (RVRN, 2013, 6).

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