Critical review

Spaces of enclosure

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A B S T R A C T

Building on recent critical scholarship by authors including Retort [Retort, 2005. Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War. Verso, London] and Ferguson [Ferguson, J., 2006. Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order. Duke University Press, Durham, NC], this critical review will explore the inter-articulation of neoliberal norms and a resurgent and violent form of geo-politics through the rubric of 'enclosure'. We believe that 'enclosure' serves as an appropriately flexible concept that speaks not only to the vagaries of primitive accumulation but also to the recent recrudescence of an aggrandized mode of statist violence. We argue that enclosure operates contingently, provisionally, and violently across a range of scales, sites, and networks and sketch four preliminary axes of investigation: subjectification, legal violence, the colonial present, and the politics of representation. The review goes on to suggest a set of markers through which to widen the conceptual and political purchase of enclosure through the geoeconomic, geopolitical and biopolitical, and highlights distinct spatial formations, modes of subjectification, and technologies of power through which enclosure variously operates.

The mores

[…]
Is faded all - a hope that blossomed free,
And hath been once, no more shall ever be
Inclosure came and trampled on the grave
Of labour's rights and left the poor a slave
And memory's pride ere want to wealth did bow
Is both the shadow and the substance now
[…]
But paths to freedom and to childhood dear
A board sticks up to notice 'no road here'
And on the tree with ivy overhung
The hated sign by vulgar taste is hung
As tho' the very birds should learn to know
When they go there they must no further go
Thus, with the poor, scared freedom bade goodbye
And much they feel it in the smothered sigh
And birds and trees and flowers without a name
All sighed when lawless law's enclosure came
And dreams of plunder in such rebel schemes
Have found too truly that they were but dreams.
(John Clare, 2004 [1821–1824]: 168–169)

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It is perhaps not surprising that we begin with the words of John Clare. As one of England's most important "poets of place" (Helsinger, 1987: 509), his writings have often been singled out for their deeply sedimented attachment to a particular rural locale – in this case the Northamptonshire of the early 19th century (see Barrell, 1972; Robinson, 2000; Bate, 2004; Houghton, 2006). If scenes of social stability and rural harmony were commonplace in the art and literature of the 1820s and 1830s (Barrell, 1980; Helsinger, 1987), Clare's poetry differs by virtue of its sensitivity to the pain of displacement and the violence of dispossession, ascribed to and figured as enclosure itself. Indeed, a poem like "The Mores" articulates nothing less than an alternative 'way of seeing' that differs – both in form and content – from the "heedless gaze" of the picturesque viewer concerned with framing rural landscapes and placing its inhabitants within those strict and definite limits (Helsinger, 1987: 509, 514). Spaces of constructed visibility were, for Clare, spaces of *constricted* visibility (see Barrell, 1980) and his own experiences of enclosure in rural Northamptonshire testified to a form of deprivation "at once aesthetic and political" (Helsinger, 1987: 515). By 'enclosure', we are, of course, referring to the transformation of commonable lands into exclusively owned plots and the concomitant extinction of long-standing common rights to soil, firewood, timber, and, most importantly, pasture (Blomley, 2007: 2). While enclosure was hardly a new practice in 18th and 19th century England, it not only took on a qualitatively new scale but was increasingly marked by the violent predations of capitalist accumulation. For Thompson (1963: 237), enclosure was a "plain enough

case of class robbery" while Marx (1976: 875) wrote of its history as one "written in letters of blood and fire", arguing that without land, "the 'producing' of someone else's unpaid labour would thus become impossible and this would put an end to capitalist production altogether" (Marx, 1968: 43–44).

The prescience of these phrases is, we believe, noteworthy and in what follows we seek to reinterpret the concept of enclosure as a way of attending to the forms and processes of contemporary neoliberalism. Enclosure has been the subject of long-standing scrutiny (see Blomley, 2007; Charlesworth, 1983; Thompson, 1991) and it is not our objective to add to the various debates and disagreements over its evidential particulars (see Neeson, 1993; see also Chambers, 1953; Chambers and Mingay, 1966). Our own intentions are both historical and heuristic drawing particular inspiration from recent comments made by the Retort collective. "Right at the heart of capitalist modernity", they note, "has been a process of endless enclosure" (2005: 193), a process "rooted in the continual disembedding of basic elements of the species lifeworld from the extraordinary matrix of social relations – constraints, understandings, checks and balances, rules of succession [and] kinds of communal sanction against the exploiter" (2005: 194).[1]

That this process of disembedding was ultimately nothing more than a form of social violence was certainly not lost on John Clare and many others whose horizon of experiences was increasingly shaped and structured by the disagreeable materialities of dispossession, displacement, and discipline. If Retort's comments are, in this context, largely impressionistic, we believe that it is now time to systematically revisit the study of enclosure as historically rich, locally varied, and often contradictory. But more than this, we also wish to recognize its continued salience in our own "poisonous epoch" (Retort, 2005: 17). In particular, we seek to rethink the inter-articulation of neoliberal norms and a resurgent and violent form of geo-politics through the rubric of 'enclosure' itself. Where traditional accounts of enclosure have often traded in a rigid and narrow coupling of 'enclosure' versus 'the commons', we propose a more labile historico-geographical formation – a complex set of logics of inclusion and exclusion operating through a variety of spatial territories and networks– through which the tensions of enclosure are themselves dialectically counterposed. In this way, enclosure speaks not only, to the vagaries of primitive accumulation or the recent recrudescence of an aggrandized mode of statist and para-statist violence, but also, we argue, to a messy, practical, and highly conflicted reclaming of the 'commons'.

We see enclosure operating across a number of scales, sites, and practices, from accumulation by dispossession to new forms of bodily manipulation, such as the use of biometrics managing returnees following the search-and-destroy missions in Fallujah in 2004. This is a necessarily expansive notion of enclosure that seeks to uncover how spatialities of inclusion and exclusion operate across networks and territories, and that requires connecting logics and processes of neoliberal restructuring, military violence, and modes of appropriation, manipulation and exploitation at different scales, including the corporeal. Retort articulate this confluence between violence and accumulation through the term "military neoliberalism" (2005: 15), and in doing so analyze war and neoliberalism *together*. This coupling is crucial for their argument that the US-led invasion of Iraq was not simply about staking claim

to Iraq's oil reserves, but a deliberate project of neoliberal restructuring more generally. In making this argument, Retort place oil on a larger albeit fractured capitalist landscape, where the war sought to pave the way for new rounds of American-led dispossession and capital accumulation (from construction and reconstruction, to finance, media and retail), operating through a diverse set of spatial logics, registers, and imaginaries.

A number of geographers have similarly argued that primitive accumulation is an "ongoing feature of capitalism rather than simply a precapitalist phenomenon" (Hartsock, 2006: 177; see Glassman, 2005, 2006; Hart, 2006; McCarthy, 2001, 2005; Prudham, 2007; Wolford, 2007). David Harvey has suggested, for example, that contemporary forms of globalization have in fact been characterised by "wholly new mechanisms of dispossession" (Harvey, 2003: 147). Unlike Marx whose teleological account of primitive accumulation focused on the often violent erasure of noncapitalist forms of economic activity and the emergence of wage-labour as the dominant modality of the capitalist economy, Harvey shifts attention back to the *contemporaneity* of primitive accumulation as an incomplete and recurring process. While we are in broad agreement with these prognostications and the form of "disaster capitalism" (Klein, 2005, 2007) that they systematically impugn, we are less interested than Harvey in addressing the "chronic problems of overaccumulation arising within expanded reproduction" (2003: 156). If anything, we seek to broaden the "circle of geographical reference" (Gregory, 2006a: 21) and focus attention on the multiple ways in which 'enclosure' has been and continues to be implemented and resisted (see also Jeffrey et al., 2007).

In order to do so, we sketch four preliminary axes of investigation of the geographies of enclosure: *subjectification*, *legal violence*, the *colonial present*, and the *politics of representation*. Our point of departure is the seizure of the commons by different actors through time, and here the commons is conceived expansively, from land and primitive accumulation to bodies and biometrics. Following Boal (2001), we identify enclosure as a variegated project operating across scales, from the global to the corporeal. It is not our intention, however, to offer 'enclosure' as a master signifier or theoretical placeholder capable of bringing into focus the whole shape and logic of our present age. More modestly, we believe that enclosure operates – contingently, provisionally, and violently – across a range of scales, sites, and networks:

(1) *Enclosure and Subjectification*: Numerous scholars have already drawn attention to primitive accumulation in general and enclosure in particular as a "process which divorces the worker from the ownership of the conditions of his [sic] own labour" (Marx, 1976: 874; see Linebaugh, 2006; Perelman, 2000). We build on these intercessions by advocating a further rapprochement between Marx and Foucault (Moore, 2005: 146) which acknowledges their shared insistence on forms of subjection as *forms of subjectification*. What, we ask, are the relations among subjects, territories, and modes of subordination produced through historically-specific forms of enclosure? How do narratives of enclosure help us to illuminate (and challenge) forms of coercion and submission? In order to answer these questions, we draw on recent approaches to neoliberalism which consider it not only as a form of predatory capitalism but, more importantly, as a "new mode of political optimization" (Ong, 2006: 3; see Rose, 1999; Harvey, 2005). As Aihwa Ong and many others have persuasively suggested, neoliberalism is "reconfiguring relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality" (2006: 3). The emergence of differential forms of neoliberal calculation and governance is, we argue, a historical process that unevenly produces and regulates situated political con-

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[1] Retort is a collective based for the past two decades in the San Francisco Bay Area comprising Iain Boal, T.J. Clark, Joseph Matthews, and Michael Watts. In *Afflicted Powers*, Retort draw on the work of Guy Debord and the Situationist International to argue that "the present condition of politics does not make sense unless it is approached from a dual perspective – seen as a crude struggle for material dominance, but also (threaded ever closer into that struggle) as a battle to control appearances" (Retort, 2005: 31).

stellations, spatialities, and subjectivities. With this in mind, we are particularly interested in charting the alignments between various political sovereignties, economic norms, and modes of citizenship. What are the contingent outcomes of these processes? How are certain forms of subjectification articulated alongside new axes of labour regulation, discipline, and incarceration? How might resistance emerge in the interstices between sovereignty and subjectification? And how does such resistance speak to what Polanyi (1946) once felicitously described as the "double movement" of modernity, whereby processes of enclosure *necessarily* produce forms of resistance against enclosure? What are the vocabularies of dissensus and the forms of "revolutionary subjectivity" (Foucault, 2005: 208) that produce and represent alternatives to enclosure? In posing these questions, it is important to trace the differential consequences of enclosure for different social groups. This can lead to a more sustained engagement with the politics of enclosure and the means through which, for example, consent is produced, proletarianization is lived, or resistance configured. Substantively, the differential consequences of enclosure through, for instance, class, gender, race or ethnicity, reveal the changing nature and geographies of citizenship as particular modes of subjectification. Here we are particularly mindful of Retort's (2005) contention that contemporary Anglo-North American citizenship is increasingly manifested as consumer-oriented social relations (Katz, 2008; and see Mazumdar, 2007, on contemporary urban India).

(2) *Enclosure and Legal Violence*: Legal sanctions, we believe, remain one of the key instruments through which enclosures have been legitimised and customary rights criminalised. There is, to paraphrase Nicholas Blomley, an intrinsic and consequential geography to law's violence as it relates to enclosure and we seek to remain alert to the plural spatialities and material technologies through which the violences of state law are produced, sustained, and contested (Blomley, 2003: 121). Indeed, the historical geography of legal violence has in recent years come under growing critical scrutiny (Gregory, 2004, 2006b) and we wish to highlight three areas in particular in which law interests us. First, international law increasingly matters, especially in the production of a global environment of legal norms that is conducive to the creation of internationally owned property and resources. Recent important and high-profile debates range from those around capture, torture, and prosecution, to intellectual trade and property rights – including the marketisation of indigenous knowledges – to debates on security of tenure (see Boyle, 2003).

Second, this latter relationship between law, land, and housing is one that seems particularly pertinent to us, especially in relation to informal settlements, housing and occupation. To take one stark example, in a disturbing history of Palestinian dispossession, Weizman (2007) lays bare the logic of Israeli land seizure, rooted in a complex fabric of laws, regulation, militarization, and invasive settlement. On a different register, the weight of capitalist restructuring in the global South, driven by changing geographies of capital accumulation and global connection and disconnection, has led to a splintering of the urban fabric, including land, housing, and infrastructure (Chatterjee, 2004; Davis, 2006; Graham and Marvin, 2001). What Verma (2002), writing in reference to urban India, has referred to as the 'great terrain robbery' has resulted in mass slumming, the cramming of the informal economy's toilers into slithers of peripheral land, a warehousing of the poor in a sprawling "planet of slums"

(Davis, 2006). While debates on land and housing tend to focus on legalising informal housing and on bringing informal housing into the formal market (De Soto, 2001), there is often less consideration of what is at stake in legalising informality in different empirical contexts (although see UN Habitat, 2003). As Neuwirth (2006) cautions, legal title deeds – individual or collective – are far from straightforward goods, and can have the consequence of raising land and housing prices to the point where the poor are priced out. In making an argument for squatters' rights based on possession rather than property, he invokes the Roman notion of *usucapio* and points to specific instances where it has had some success – if slow and fractured – such as in its provision in the 1988 Brazilian constitution.

Third, law has a complex relationship to *resistance* to enclosure. We are reminded here of the Midnight Notes Collective's (2001: 15) invocation of 'jubilee' as the long durée of struggle against slavery and land grab, a struggle often fought in relation to the rule of law. Notwithstanding the relative success of the Jubilee 2000 international debt cancellation campaign, the prospect of jubilee as the abolition of slavery, debt, and the return of common land, looks bleak indeed from children living in economic serfdom in urban South Asia to the commercialization and militarization of common land, housing, and infrastructure (Davis, 2006). Weizman's (2007: 171–173) account of legal challenges to the construction of the Israeli Wall around Palestinian areas of the West Bank highlights the ambiguity of legal instruments in resisting acts of enclosure. Though the Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ) ruled in 2004 that a 30 km stretch of the Wall should be dismantled since it was constructed on land belonging to Palestinian farmers, the ruling did not question the broader moral and judicial legitimacy of the Wall. Weizman argues that we need to be more attentive to the symbolism of such cases, where the specifics of the result can mask underlying support for acts of enclosure. This case also unsettles the conventional geometry of enclosure, since it involves the seizure of land from private Palestinian owners by the Israeli state, and underlines the need to be mindful of state-sanctioned enclosure, where exclusion and dispossession serve to deracinate populations.

(3) *Enclosure and the Colonial Present*: Marx himself conceived of primitive accumulation and its patterns as "extending to the colonies" (Moore, 2005: 147). Although there have been important attempts to write an historical anthropology of colonial enclosure, from the effort by various 'dependency theorists' to theorise under-development in relation to colonialism and neo-colonialism (e.g. Amin, 1974, 1977, 2003), as well as scholars of colonization and decolonization (including Fanon, 2001[1961], and the subaltern studies school, such as Guha and Spivak, 1988), there have been precious few recent interventions building on these efforts. We see value in addressing this omission by retracing the multiple ways in which the violence of colonial and neo-colonial enclosure have come to be registered within "the integuments of everyday life" (Gregory, 2006a: 23). We are also building, in this context, on what Ann Laura Stoler has recently described as "the fulsome entry of the history of US sovereignty into the analytic and political fray of imperial studies" (2006b: 8). The now familiar shape of an emboldened American *Imperium* has raised new questions about the nature of our 'colonial present' (Gregory, 2004) and the perceived 'exceptionalism' of US imperialism. While the singularity of 'American Empire' is an issue for some, we seek, in contrast, to recognize the value of "looking comparatively" at the technologies of enclosure that are both

particular to a time and space and "resonant with practices in a wider global field" (Stoler, 2006c, 23, 24). James Ferguson's work has pointed, for example, to a contemporary instance of enclave capitalism through privatised, global mineral extraction in various areas of southern Africa (Ferguson, 2006). The securitisation of mineral extraction, often replacing the thick sociality of copper belt mineral towns with a locally disconnected, thin sociality, is increasingly driven by state-assisted Chinese imperialism. This serves as a reminder that, in the focus on US imperialism, we need to be fully attentive to different historic and contemporary instances of imperial enclosure, and to work towards a *comparative* understanding of empire capable of grappling with different degrees of imperial sovereignty (Stoler, 2006a; Mawdsley, 2007). To what extent do such fractured spaces of experience speak to an understanding of 'enclosure' as a contingent and unstable set of practices whose efficacy is subject to various forms of resistance?

Responding to this, as Stoler indicates, entails comparative thinking on both spatial and temporal registers. For instance, colonial historiography has underlined the importance of land tenure, debt, labour, and capital in the production and contestation of social differentiation, and conceived peasant history as a multiple and relational social form, from tribal politics and traditional resistance to the disparate elite-subaltern formations that constituted nationalist movements (Bose and Jalal, 1997; Rao, 2001). This reveals a complex spatiality that complicates both conventional readings of enclosure and its relation to the commons, and the links between enclosure and resistance. For instance, anti-colonial nationalist parties such as the Indian Congress Party supported villagers on issues of land ownership, rent, revenue, debt, crop valuations, irrigation, grazing fees and so on, but on occasion backed away from calling for abolition of, for instance, forced peasant labour, and opted instead for reform in order to maintain relations with colonial authorities (see Krishnan, 2005, on anti-colonial mobilization in western India). The contemporary and historical colonial record allows investigation of why and how different forms of mobilization and resistance emerge in different areas. A key question for us is how might an historical geographical comparative approach help conceptualize contemporary relations between enclosure, resistance, and the commons?

(4) *Enclosure and the Politics of Representation*: We are deliberately invoking (or even resuscitating) a familiar catchphrase in order to query the often simplistic and rigid division of labour between the 'aesthetic' and the 'political' (see Jeffrey et al., 2008; see Clark, 2006). While enclosure is rightly seen as a technology of dispossession and subjection, it also speaks, we believe, to the foreclosure of alternative forms of 'sociality' that strive to imagine and represent that which is ultimately *common*. We still hold on to the belief that politics and aesthetics can occupy a common terrain, one that differentiates both art and politics "from the rising tide of 'ethical' thought that has threatened to subsume both at once" (Ross, 2007: 255). The emancipatory moment remains for us one of *nonidentification* with one's supposed being or condition, a refusal to be contained by the strict confines of what a worker, for example, is, should be, do, or say. At the same time, we also need to construct political subjectivities, as Simon Critchley has recently argued, "that are not arbitrary or relativistic, but which are articulations of a [different] ethical demand whose scope is universal and whose evidence is faced in a concrete situation" (2007: 132). The subaltern struggle to 'speak for oneself' cannot be separated, as Spivak has rightly noted, from "a history of being spoken

for", from the very struggle to speak and be seen and heard (Shohat, 1995: 173; see Spivak, 1988, 1999). Focusing on the politics of representation necessarily entails questions of voice, audience, and the democratic imperative. For this reason, we are interested in exploring the relationships between enclosure and discourses of democratisation, in a range of geographical settings. Specifically, we seek to explore how democratic rhetoric has been utilized to legitimate acts of enclosure, and to subsequently trace how individuals have been excluded from political rights and responsibilities that are often assumed to be 'common'. Similarly, at stake here are attempts to represent local and transnational struggle for the commons, such as those debates around the 'multitude' (Hardt and Negri, 2004), 'new social movements' (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991), 'global civil society' (Kaldor, 2003; Keck and Sikkink, 1998), and 'post-capitalist politics' (Gibson-Graham, 2006). How is struggle and the agents of struggle defined? What new solidarities are emerging through processes of enclosure? Is there a universal to 'the commons'? How do ideas of global citizenship and democracy (such as Archibugi, 2003; Held and Archibugi, 1995) obscure a shift in political rights from the many to the few?

These are, we realize, pressing questions and the primary aim of these comments has been to offer a series of critical signposts around which a new inquiry into the historical trajectory of enclosure may plausibly be organized. Excepting a few noteworthy exemplars (for example, see Harvey, 2005), we are still lacking spatial histories of neoliberalism that take due consideration of the broader politico-economic canvas that we have outlined here. This is not, as we have already stressed, a call for a conception of enclosure that is itself totalizing; it will always be necessary to explore the complex figurations through which enclosure and neoliberalism are intertwined. What, for example, is the historical specificity of neoliberalism in respect to militarization and securitisation? What is the specific relation between neoliberalism and enclosure? In what ways might enclosure relate to disclosure, resistance, and alterity? How do we characterise new technologies of enclosure, from specific uses of the Internet to genetic modification and biometrics? With this in mind, we have drawn up the following table (Fig. 1) as a first stab at what we take to be the contemporary landscape of enclosure. This sketch places various articulations of enclosure within a matrix of spatial formations, subject

Enclosure	Spatial Formation	Mode of Subjectification	Type of Power
Geoeconomic	Special Economic Zone Extractive Enclave	Proletarianization	Governmentality
Geopolitical	Elastic 'territories'; Global War prison; 'Camp'	Subjection; 'De-humanization'	Sovereignty
Biopolitical	'Population'; The 'Body'	Normalization	Biopower

Fig. 1. The new landscape of enclosure.

'effects', and power relations. It is a representation aimed at provisionally responding to what we see as the need for an expansive conceptualization of enclosure adequate to the task of encountering the contemporary moment. This task requires a notion of enclosure that encompasses a complex set of sometimes overlapping, sometimes distinct set of *spatialities* of inclusion and exclusion, *modes of subjectification*, and *technologies of power* driven by economic, political and biopolitical logics and processes.

This table is, of course, designed primarily as a heuristic device, and it is often the case that different forms of enclosure overlap. For example, the geoeconomic and geopolitical intersect at particular sites, such as in new security measures at airports or shipping ports, or in the selling of arms, or in new rounds of international trade regulation. Indeed, the purchase of enclosure as we have set it out lies precisely in tracing the intersections and tense relations between different forms and processes. We are acutely aware here that we have not fully resolved important questions about the conceptual limits of enclosure as a constellation of political rationalities that are themselves differentially produced. But we should not shirk from this challenge. We believe that there is an urgent need to map the conditions of our contemporary world, even though, as Retort (2008) have recently written, these mappings must always be "provisional, hypothetical, [and] necessarily incomplete".

Acknowledgement

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