

Introduction

*“I Have a Thousand More Things I Want to Say to You”: An Introduction to Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg*¹

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CREOLIZE ROSA?

There is no question that Rosa Luxemburg was a radiant star. The clarity of her vision lit up a widened horizon of possibility; her boldness offered direction. The aim of our volume is to revisit her prescient insights through the lens of creolizing theory to illustrate how timely they are right now.

Creolizing as an approach to political theory draws insight and orientation from creolizing processes in and beyond the Caribbean. In creolized elements of life—whether speech or food, reasoning or music—forms of activity tied to groups of people who were supposed to be radically unequal and separated through Manichean social orderings in fact combined in ways that were unpredictable and surprising, yet recognizable. Used as an approach to ideas, creolizing takes two primary forms. The first is historical and reconstructive, aiming to identify relations of influence and indebtedness that have been hidden or obscured. In its constructive mode, creolizing stages conversations that could not have taken place historically but that would have been and still remain generative. The creolizing endeavor is not undertaken randomly. The

¹ This title was inspired by the “Rosa Luxemburg: A Thousand More Things” exhibit, organized by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung-New York Office in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut New York. The phrase comes from “Letter to Hans Diefenbach, Wronki in Posen, March 5, 1917,” in *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 380.

² We are grateful to Peter Hudis for sharing his extensive knowledge of Rosa Luxemburg’s life and work with us as we prepared this introduction.

aim is to put different, previously sequestered sides of a shared political situation together to explore the results.

Rosa Luxemburg as a person, thinker, and revolutionary is particularly amenable to creolizing. This is in part because she was self-creolizing, even if she never would have used that language. In her own life, she repeatedly demonstrated an appreciation that it was not only people and sites with recognized institutional authority that offered perspectives that were indispensable. In her research, she followed where the questions led, not stopping where the conventions of any given political or scholarly community might have suggested was appropriate. Indeed, in her engagements with the past and her present, she went where she thought fundamental social transformation was underway—whether or not doing so was safe or sanctioned. She brought into the historical record human struggle that she worried had been forgotten and remained open to being disproven about her expectations (for instance, that Russia and Eastern Europe would be in advance, in revolutionary terms, of Germany).

Hannah Arendt (1995) observed that, as an Eastern European, Rosa had to master a range of languages that made the concrete practice of internationalism possible. She also traced increasingly global circuits that were already evident in local ways, if one were only willing to look. For example, she argued that Russia's development of industry in Poland already connected both places, in different ways, to Africa and to Asia with implications for the kinds of relationships of revolutionary solidarity that thereby became necessary. When she explored enslavement, a relationship that she saw as decisively introducing the divide between mental and menial labor or between those who controlled societies and those who labored for them, she looked as readily at the history of Europe and Asia and Africa as she did across the Americas. She emphasized that capitalism was dependent upon and indebted to ongoing versions of colonization and imperialism. This meant that, to understand Europe with any rigor, one needed to put into relation so-called pre-capitalist and capitalist spheres, refusing the distancing of the European self-image from its actual enmeshment with what would emerge as the Global South. Finally, in ways unusual for a thinker based in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, she connected human and ecological exploitation, framing the suffering of human and other-than-human animals as essentially related. As Jon Nixon put it in ways that resonate with the writings of Enrique Dussel:

As Luxemburg illustrated, it is sometimes—under certain circumstances—revolutionary to attend to the plight of a frozen bumblebee. Revolution resides in . . . the quality of our attention to the specificity of suffering. The crucial point is to understand the ostensible world from the perspective of its often hidden

underside and, in so doing, stand alongside those who constitute that underside. (2018: 102)

For Rosa, critical consciousness “involve[d] an understanding of the inter-connectivity of things: then and now, here and there, us and them, I and you” (Nixon, 2018: 161).

This understanding was reflected in Rosa’s approach to politics which, for her, was “enacted on the street and in the head, on the campaign trail and at the desk, on the political platform and in her private letters to friends and associates” (Ibid). She always sought to put her “intellect unconditionally at the disposal of what she saw as the common good” (Ibid). But the actual nature of this public good could not be articulated in one center that simply emanated outward.

Workers, whom she always understood broadly, to include army and naval personnel, railroad and postal workers, and those working in and outside the industrial sector, did not only have to engage in struggle to deepen their maturity as revolutionary subjects. Their doing so produced ideas and strategies that would not otherwise have emerged. For her, as Nixon puts it, revolutionary action “is an act of faith . . . in the human capacity to cope with and carry forward the unfinished business that such action inevitably brings” (Nixon, 2018: 141). It requires collective becoming.

This was why any developing socialism had to be ever more democratic and participatory or permanently and perpetually open. Still, maintaining such an orientation required a willingness and ability to remain creative and experimental in the face of what was new. As an example, Arendt considered Luxemburg’s account of collective action exercised through the workers’ and soldiers’ councils as what alone could have averted the petrification of the Russian Revolution. Stressing the necessity of their being geographically inclusive, so as to include agricultural workers, Rosa’s councils aimed to bring together disparate working people of different parties and occupations to work out ways of determining their shared future.

None of this is to say that Rosa offered us divine tablets. Suggesting that she did would contradict her approach to thought and action. Instead, together with the contributors of this volume, as we detail in greater length in the third section of this introduction, we contend that figures like African Americans W.E.B. Du Bois and Lorraine Hansberry, Martinican Frantz Fanon, and Trinidadians C.L.R. James and Claudia Jones extended many of Rosa’s fundamental insights by revisiting them through the lens and lessons of Global Southern contexts. Rosa could not have asked whether human caravans crossing the Americas were engaged in what she would have called a “mass strike.” But this is not an indictment. Rather we see ourselves as underscoring the immense value of Rosa’s work by putting it into relationship with people, ideas, and contexts that her writing suggests would have interested her but that she herself could not have encountered directly. In

so doing, we see ourselves as responding to her invitation to carry her spirit and intellectual project forward.³

Doing so is not a mere historical curiosity for those already interested in Marxism or the history of women political thinkers. Especially since Marx's *Ethnographic Writings* were not published until after Rosa's death (they would only be transcribed and published in 1972), we see her analyses as fundamentally opening the grammar and questions that were not yet offered through European Marxism and that would blossom into some of the most important political concepts of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These include the ingredients to develop a full-fledged account of racial capitalism, a genuinely open dialectic regarding from whom and where not just historic suffering but revolutionary transformation would emerge, and her delineating of the specific character of Euromodern colonial capitalism as fundamentally dispossessing in ways that connect human and ecological expropriation.

While they are not explicitly engaged by our contributors, her challenge to undialectical reformism and her account of the necessary relationship of socialism and democracy could also not be more timely. With the latter, Rosa agreed with Marx that "Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it" (*Critique of the Gotha Programme IV*). In other words, if, for her, what was exciting about the method of Marx was that no principle was treated as unchanging, and every idea had to be reactivated through radical questioning, the same was true for institutions and organizations that could claim to be socialist, democratic, or both.

"LIKE A CLAP OF THUNDER"

You often come out of a page I'm reading—and sometimes out of a page I'm trying to write—come out to join me with a toss of your head and a smile. No single page and none of the prison cells they repeatedly put you in could ever contain you.

—John Berger (2018: 87)

³ In this sense, our book has much in common with Adrienne Rich's depiction of Raya Dunayevskaya's *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution* (1985), engaged in this volume by Nigel C. Gibson. Rich writes, "In Luxemburg, Dunayevskaya portrays a brilliant, brave, and independent woman, passionately internationalist and antiwar, a believer in the people's 'spontaneity' in the cause of freedom; a woman who saw herself as Marx's philosophical heir; who refused the efforts of her lovers and other men to discourage her from full participation in 'making history' because she was a woman. But the biography does not stop here . . . Luxemburg's life and thought become a kind of jumping-off point into the present and future—what she saw and didn't see, her limitations as well as her understanding. We can learn from her mistakes, says Dunayevskaya" (2001: 91–92).

Although many readers of this book will be familiar with Luxemburg's intellectual biography, we here offer a brief introduction for those who may be encountering her thought for the first time.

To begin, the reader will notice that we refer to Luxemburg throughout this introduction as "Rosa." If you are in the academy, you may well have been lectured about the importance of calling women by their last names, even if these last names are only and inevitably their father's or husband's. Are we trivializing Rosa when we call her by her first name? If we thought so, we obviously would not do it. We identify Rosa as Rosa to express a fondness shared by the masses of people in Germany who, during her endless participation in popular movements, also called her Rosa. They saw in her a counter to what she criticized in the Bolshevik Revolution and in democratic centralism itself. Specifically, she rejected the desire for a great phallic leader who could complete his followers by offering all of the answers and by promising an impossible certainty. For Rosa, this was nothing but a fantasy, and a dangerously anti-socialist and anti-revolutionary one at that.

In a letter to Leo Jogiches penned in 1899 in Berlin, Rosa wrote, "I want to affect people like a clap of thunder, to inflame their minds not by speechifying but with the breadth of my vision, the strength of my conviction and the power of my expression" (2004: 892). A profound theorist as well as a courageous and committed revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg is as challenging in death as in life.

Born in 1871 into a family of fluctuating financial circumstances, Rozalia or Róża Luksenburg always manifested a combination of unusual brains, curiosity, and marginal status. Although her grandfather was a rabbi, her parents embraced the cosmopolitan attitudes of "enlightened" Jewry. When moving from Zamosc to Warsaw in 1873, they chose a neighborhood that put them at a distance from the majority of poorer and more orthodox Jews (Kaiser, 2008: 121). Róża, herself, was not moved by specifically religious faith, but this was largely irrelevant to Tsarist authorities who confined "Poles of the Mosaic faith" to ghettos and shtetls (Evans, 2015: 14).⁴ One consequence was that Jewish girls did not have access to academically serious schools which were reserved for Russians. Róża was still able to attend a Polish school on a scholarship. Only a few spots were allowed for Jews, however, and they were held to a higher

⁴ O'Kane observed that in biographies of intellectual women, there is a tendency to over-emphasize personal details. With Rosa, in O'Kane's account, this is evident in undue attention to her romantic relationships and the repetition of her being "born into a Jewish family in Russian-occupied Poland." O'Kane continues, "Given that her family, although very supportive of her, were not themselves involved in politics and that Rosa, having left Poland at the age of eighteen, did not

standard of admission. Despite her remarkable academic achievements, the highest medal was withheld from Róża because of her already identified “rebellious spirit.”

Róża consistently sought and found educative experiences outside of formal institutions of learning. Unusually small, with one misshapen leg, when Róża was five, her already recalcitrant limp was misdiagnosed. Homebound in a heavy cast for a full year, she was surrounded by her mother and brothers’ love of learning and ideas. Enveloped in this culturally rich and creative environment, by ten Rosa spoke Russian, the language of the occupying powers; Polish, the language of her country; and German, the language, along with Latin, of higher learning at the time.⁵ Similarly, on completing the Second Gymnasium as a fifteen-year-old girl in Poland, there were no formal, advanced educational opportunities available to her. She again sought to continue her education through other means, this time through becoming active with *Proletart*, the first Polish Socialist Party founded underground in 1882. The issues that were their focus were vivid to Rosa who, living at the center of industry of the Russian empire, concretely witnessed the close proximity of people living with exorbitant wealth and in extreme poverty. Hostility to socialist ideas was also clear and pronounced. One year earlier, four leading members of *Proletart* were hanged in the Warsaw Citadel while others were imprisoned. The founder was sentenced to sixteen years of hard labor but died in custody. After two years, the police became interested in Róża’s participation. Others could cloak their identities, but there was no way to hide hers.

Smuggled across the Polish–German border at seventeen when *Proletart* was crushed by government forces, Róża enrolled in the University of Zurich. It was there that she registered as Rosa Luxemburg, the spelling of her name on which she insisted from then on (O’Kane, 2015: 23). She first took classes in botany and zoology, which remained life-long loves to which she would later return when she became disenchanted with the SPD (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, the Social Democratic Party of Germany) and during her imprisonment in Wronki Fortress. But in Switzerland, she ultimately switched to law, which included the social sciences, and her primary focus of economics. Zurich and Paris had also become homes to much of the Russian and Polish socialist leadership living in exile.

herself practice the religion into which she was born and later refused to join the Bund (General Jewish Workers’ Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), it is doubtful that these particular aspects of her early life deserve very much emphasis, and it could be seen as a legacy of her vilification as a “Bolshevik Jew” (2015: xiii). We include Rosa’s Jewishness first because, as was true of many other non-religious Jews, we understand many elements of Rosa’s internationalism and socialism as an expression of a secular Jewishness. In addition, for the Jewish co-editor of this volume, Rosa’s Jewishness is a point of Jewish pride.

⁵ O’Kane adds that she would later build on these existing language skills to become fluent in French and “pretty good” in English and Italian.

As she pursued her doctorate (1889–1897), Rosa also developed her skills as an orator and activist intellectual. Her aims in her formal intellectual work were always to make a contribution to Polish Marxism. Traveling regularly between Zurich and Paris, she researched in Polish libraries, oversaw the publication of *The Workers' Cause*, and remained an active member of, and speaker in, Polish émigré circles. A year into her studies, she met Leo Jogiches, a Lithuanian Jew, who would be a comrade and lover for seventeen years and a colleague until the end of her life. He had joined the socialist movement in Vilna in 1885 and was considered an outstanding strategist and socialist leader. While he published little under his own name, he offered commentary on most of Rosa's early articles and essay drafts, propagating their ideas in underground organizational work, and remained one of Rosa's most trusted interlocutors on political matters.

Like Rosa, Jogiches ascribed to a dissenting position on the question of nationalist independence for Poland. The recently founded Polish Socialist Party followed the stances of Georgi Plekhanov (who was widely, if regrettably, considered to be the founder of Russian Marxism) and of Marx and Friedrich Engels who, in the culminating pages of their *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, had called for the national independence of this occupied country.⁶

Rosa thought otherwise. Her experiences of Warsaw, conversation with Poles in and outside the country, and her detailed studies of economic statistics made it clear that Poland was no longer a primarily agricultural economy. "Unlike Marx and Engels, Rosa Luxemburg was looking back not to 1772 and to the lessons of 1830, 1848 and 1863 . . . but seeking to apply Marx's analysis to the Poland of the day" (O'Kane, 2015: 22). It had an emerging proletariat in its own right and the territory's industrial development meant that it was already embedded in a global economy, reliant particularly on Asia and Africa for raw materials. Winning independence as a Polish nation would embolden the budding brood of the local bourgeoisie. It would not increase the power of its poor. They would do better allying with the Russian proletariat in ways that could expand into a wider and deeper internationalism.⁷ When Rosa insisted at the Third and Fourth Congress of the Second International and through the founding (with Jogiches) of the Social Democracy and the

⁶ Even after they fell out over organizational issues in 1902 and fully broke off relations by 1912, Lenin continued to encourage Russian youth to read Plekhanov's works. Plekhanov and Rosa detested each other from their first meeting. In 1907, he would accuse her of being "a Madonna reclining in the clouds." She said nothing positive about his written works, which included the introduction of the term "dialectical materialism."

⁷ As Stephen J. Bronner put it "socialism [had to] offer a *qualitative* alternative" (1997: 17) to the bourgeois model of nationalism. If one were to charge that Rosa failed to comprehend the strategic idea that national revolution could serve as an opening to the permanent international revolution, this was, in "a certain sense . . . beside the point" (1997: 18).

Kingdom of Poland (SKDP, which later expanded to include Lithuania) on a strict internationalism, she was engaging in relentless self-criticism: was what had emerged as a point of dogma still the freshest strategy and most adequate theoretical answer to the central questions of socialism?

Rosa's *The Industrial Development of Poland* met with the rare honor of being accepted as a dissertation and being immediately published as a book. One of the first studies of its kind, it shared much with the distinctive tradition of dependency theory in the political economy of the Caribbean, including the sociologist, political economist, and philosopher Paget Henry's dissertation-turned-book on *Peripheral Capitalism and Development in Antigua* (1985). Like that work, it centers on a supposedly marginal or minor territory to illuminate the local expressions of global political-economic relations.

Rosa's commitment to revolutionary struggle led her to Berlin. The city sustained ninety different socialist dailies. It was also home to the SPD, which, as the leading party of the Second International, claimed 100,000 members.⁸ To secure permanent residency in Germany, Rosa married a man she had never met. They parted immediately after they had been legally joined and would let the marriage dissolve five years later. Her first charge was to campaign for the SPD with Polish workers in Upper Silesia. She was surprised by how much she enjoyed this work, by how effective she was at it, and by how open Polish workers were to a socialist message.

But within the SPD itself, Rosa quickly became a controversial figure. This began with her direct challenge to one of its leaders, Eduard Bernstein, who Friedrich Engels had made Marx's literary executor. For his part, Bernstein was developing a decidedly un-Marxist view. Capitalism, he argued, develops mechanisms, like credit, to iron out its instabilities. With the growth of trade unions, the proletariat were able to secure higher wages, thereby addressing exploitation. And SPD's growing electoral power seemed to demonstrate that capitalism could be reformed through legal and parliamentary measures.

For Rosa, as she would articulate in speeches, articles, and essays, capitalism was ridden with crises. It moved with predictable unpredictability from boom to bust. Credit was an incredibly ambivalent tool because, if adopted to overcome the inevitable crises of overproduction to allow the proletariat to buy goods they could not afford, it could not play the role assigned to it by Eduard Bernstein as a "savior" from capitalist crises. Rosa agreed that extending democratic rights through legal means was necessary, but full democracy could not be achieved under capitalism because participatory democracy required mechanisms for transforming economic and social

⁸ As Bronner puts it, "[t]he revolutions of 1848 had failed, the Paris Commune had been crushed and the First International lay in ruins. The Second International had arisen from the ashes and the SPD stood at its forefront" (1997: 24).

inequality. The larger aim of socialism therefore had to orient any and every fight for social transformation, keeping the relationship between reform and revolution in a living dialectic. Revolutionaries did have to involve themselves in reform struggles—over the right to unionize, the right of women to vote, and the democratization of voting itself. But all reforms had to be indexed according to their larger role in the achievement of a totally changed society. This included whether the struggle for them itself played a role in educating the working class.

Most in the SPD recognized that Rosa's intellectual entrance marked the arrival of a serious theoretical voice. In response, some, including Clara Zetkin, who was editor of SPD's newspaper for women and head of its Women's Office, supported her against Bernstein, forming the emerging far-left wing of the party and becoming Rosa's life-long friend. For others, Rosa's self-confidence was interpreted as rudeness and arrogance. She would be referred to as the "guest who comes to us and spits in our parlor" (quoted in Anderson and Hudis, 2004: 9).⁹

Rosa soon published what would be her first critique of Lenin's centralist party organization. In it, she accused Lenin's "uncompromising centralism," through which he imposed strict and direct discipline of central authority on local organizations, of wrenching "active revolutionaries from their, albeit unorganized, revolutionary activist milieu" (2004b: 250). In her words, his approach was primarily concerned with "control of party activity and not with its fertilization, with *narrowing* and not with *broadening*, with *tying the movement up* and not with *drawing it together*" (2004b: 256, emphasis in original). In its place she argued for "a completely new notion of the mutual relationship between organization and struggle" (2004b: 251), through which those actively engaged in struggle develop, as an expression and means of extending their raised consciousness, new ways of organizing collective action. Understood this way, "organization, enlightenment, and struggle" are "different facets of the same process" (2004b: 252). The precise relationship among them is not "ready-made" or "predetermined" in ways that the Central Committee could determine and seek to "drill into the social democratic membership" (Ibid).

These criticisms were not personal. Indeed, despite her sharp criticisms of Lenin and differences between them on matters of organization and leadership, Rosa was a militant supporter of the Bolshevik seizure of power and would remain in close touch with Lenin for the rest of her life. At stake were competing conceptions of power and the desperate need for democratic institutions under socialism.

⁹ Richard Fischer, the managing editor of the SPD's main publication, *Vorwärts*, used this phrase. See *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, September 22-28, 1901* (Berlin: SPD, 1901), p. 191.

In January 1905, a mass uprising spread through vast areas of the Russian Empire and Russian-partitioned Poland. When 200,000 people marched to the Winter Palace to petition the Tsar, troops opened fire and hundreds were killed. News spread and anger mounted: students shut down the universities, sailors mutinied, soldiers turned against their officers, and half of all paid laborers in European Russia went on what was called *the mass strike*. Given the sweep of the revolutionary struggle—*this, surely, was the revolution about which socialists were constantly speaking and strategizing*—Rosa was sickened by the lukewarm responses of her fellow socialists in Germany.

She snuck into Cracow, where Jogiches was organizing, and wrote and had illegal newspapers printed. The two were caught, arrested, and slated for execution. One of Rosa's brothers intervened and generously bribed the authorities who claimed to let her go on grounds of ill health. Jogiches remained imprisoned and, though he would escape, was sentenced to hard labor in Siberia. On release, Rosa traveled to Finland, where she spent time with Lenin and the Bolshevik circle, publishing *The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions* as a pamphlet in Hamburg.

As she explored, the aim of a mass strike is to make the relevant political situation ungovernable. Workers are typically at the center, but the resultant action is not exclusively theirs as the mass strike blurs the line between economic and political struggle. The economic struggle, demanding the dignity of workers, often becomes the platform for a much greater political demand for democracy. In like manner, the demand for democracy could also spur mass movements to challenge economic hardships. One cannot know in advance whether a particular mass strike will lead to the overthrow of a repressive regime. For instance, it could be argued that the end of apartheid in South Africa was not primarily the result of armed struggle. It was due to what Luxemburg would call a mass strike. The United Democratic Front in South Africa adopted the slogan of making the country ungovernable, which led to the uprising of the Black population. It was those mass movements that played the major role in the collapse of apartheid.

While the SPD would publish Rosa's work on mass action, spontaneity, and organization, the dissemination of this writing was blocked by the SPD leadership who, at best, were willing to accept the mass strike as a defensive strategy. When she returned to Germany, Rosa stood trial for her remarks and was sentenced to two months in prison. In the face of a powerful surge of strikes, demonstrations, and conflicts with the police as part of the press for general suffrage, the party sought to refocus its energy in the electoral domain. This led to public breaks and to the isolating of Rosa in SPD settings. Rationalizations of her treatment became more pronounced in their sexism with those who said that she was as clever as a monkey but a bitch who could

do a lot of damage or who charged her with flying off the handle when her vanity came into question (Nettl, 1966: 291; Dunayevskaya, 1991: 27).¹⁰

Against Marxists who spoke incessantly of the proletariat but who thought their consciousness was reductively determined by material conditions, Rosa believed strongly in popular political education both through the collective organizing that we have already mentioned and in the classroom. Every winter from 1906 until the outbreak of World War I, district organizations chose party and trade union members to participate in the SPD Party School in Berlin. From 1907, Rosa became the only female lecturer, teaching courses on economics while working on her *Introduction to Political Economy*. As one would expect from what we have already seen, according to her contemporary and collaborator Paul Frölich, Rosa “proved an outstanding teacher . . . She never lectured at [the students] and promised no ready-made answers, compelling them to work out their own ideas and conclusions” (2010 [1939]: 146–147). When the Party School was criticized for failing to raise the general level of education of workers and doing a poor job of training SPD activists, Luxemburg offered a response. She argued against both a superficial curriculum aimed at general, comprehensive literacy and a narrow training focused on highly specific issues relevant only to immediate organizing. Students needed to develop practical and theoretical forms of reasoning together over the course of a life of learning. The Party School’s role was to encourage such learning and offer a grounding of “how—from a Marxist perspective—the political economy works” (J. Nixon, 2018: 26).

Rosa’s magnum opus, which has stirred up controversy as well as admiration, was *The Accumulation of Capital*. It extended her criticisms of the revolutionary potential of nationalism and of centralized forms of organization and control to argue for the fundamental relationship between capitalism and imperialism. In ways that foresaw what are now called globalization, on the one hand, and the military-industrial complex, on the other, its critical revisiting of Marx’s concept of primitive accumulation is her most significant intellectual contribution. She argued that primitive

¹⁰ Victor Adler wrote to August Bebel on August 5, 1910: “It really is too bad—the poisonous bitch will yet do a lot of damage, all the more so because she is as clever as a monkey while on the other hand her sense of responsibility is totally lacking and her only motive is an almost perverse desire for self-justification. Imagine! . . . Clara [Zetkin] already equipped with a mandate and sitting with Rosa in the Reichstag! That would give you something to laugh about, compared to which the goings on in Baden would look like a pleasure outing.” It is worth noting that in Bebel’s reply to Adler of August 16, 1910, he stated, “With all the wretched female’s squirts of poison I wouldn’t have the party without her.” On the same day, Bebel wrote to Karl Kautsky, “It’s an odd thing about women. If their partialities or passions or vanities come anywhere into question and are not given consideration, or, let alone, are injured, then even the most intelligent of them flies of the handle and becomes hostile to the point of absurdity.”

accumulation would remain inevitable to the attempted resolution of the crisis of industrial capitalism in the so-called industrial states with the implication that such crises could only be resolved through fresh bouts of intensified violence.

When the SPD won an unprecedented number of parliamentary seats, Rosa doubled down in her determination that they should challenge the impending World War I as imperial and essentially antipathetic to the cause of internationalism. Her mobilization efforts brought her into court for a sentencing hearing that she used to put army abuses on trial. The findings led to her dismissal but what followed was crushing: The SPD members in parliament voted unanimously for the war. As it broke out, Rosa served her sentence in the women's prison in Berlin, where she authored *The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in German Democracy*. While it is not an explicit focus of any of the chapters in this volume, Rosa's arguments made her "among the most important antimilitarist figures in European history" (Hudis and Anderson, 2004: 7). Indeed, as recently as 2003, 100,000 people attended a rally in the Berlin suburb of Friedrichsfelde to commemorate Rosa's life and legacy. They did so "in the midst of growing opposition around the world to the new stage of military intervention signaled by the impending U.S. invasion of Iraq" (Ibid). For them, Rosa was "a rallying point amid the challenges of imperialist war and terror" (Ibid).

When Rosa was released from prison in Berlin, she was promptly rearrested and transferred to a prison in Poland. While there, the Bolsheviks came to power. She interpreted their seizure of power as daring and courageous, but her essay "The Russian Revolution" still offered a searing critique. To be fair, she believed that the wealthy might have to have their property expropriated without anything like just compensation. She even accepted, with Lenin, that the elite classes might have to be denied their right to participate in democratic institutions, at least for a time. Ultimately, her critique of Lenin was that he confused necessity with what socialism could be.

A revolutionary uprising of soldiers and workers led the German Imperial Government to hand power over to the SPD. Briefly, there was a new chancellor of Germany who was one of Rosa's former students. He immediately declared Germany a republic.

As soon as Rosa was released, she traveled directly to Berlin. Karl Liebknecht and the Spartacus League had declared the Socialist Republic of Germany. Rosa immediately joined them in fighting for an effective seizure of state power. Among the League's demands were to impound food and distribute it to the starving; confiscate weapons and arms and create a workers' militia from the adult working population, selecting their officers by election; put generals on trial for war crimes; abolish all private wealth above a certain level; nationalize the banks and heavy industry; divide up

large landed estates so they could be farmed collectively. This was to be achieved through elected worker and soldier councils that would meet every three months. And there had to be complete legal equality of the sexes.

Although other founding members of the German Communist Party (KPD) and Rosa spoke publicly about a full vision of socialist democracy, most members of the SPD were satisfied with their party, with one man one vote, and an eight-hour day. Some of her critics said that Rosa's support of the Spartacus League was clear evidence that she had become unhinged by her long imprisonment and isolation. They misunderstood one of Rosa's central positions: that there was no such thing as premature revolutionary activity. When Rosa framed capitalism as a continued problem, she was accused by some as a Russian spy seeking simply to bring Germany into Russia's project. The irony was that she was increasingly in trouble in Russia since she made known her disappointment in the absence of freedom of the press and assembly under Lenin. He was using terror which she thought was not necessary to a proletarian revolution.

Some of Germany's new leaders wanted to use terror as well. They claimed that Germany had not lost the war but had been betrayed, especially by socialists and by Jews. Demonstrators were shot and propaganda circulated widely. When the SPD voted their powers away and revolutionary momentum faltered, the party's right-wing leaders called in the Freikorps (or mercenary or volunteer private armies), who would become core members of the Nazi Party. Gustav Noske indirectly called for Rosa's assassination, directly empowering the Freikorps that would kill her (Gietinger, 2019).

In January 1919, Rosa was brutally murdered. Her body was thrown into the Landwehr canal. When her body washed up and was identified, her funeral was held at Friedrichsfelde Cemetery. She was 47.

Rosa's life and politics were remarkably unscripted. Dominated by her unflagging commitment to revolutionary theory and action as both possible and necessary, she imitated no existing model. As one of the earliest and most forceful resisters against what would become mainstream, widespread orthodox Marxism, she believed that Marxist commitments and methods required not just application but thinking and acting anew. As such, she believed that socialist democracy was not a closed project. This is precisely why Rosa was engaged in her own version of adaptive thinking and why she lends herself so amenable to the project of this book.

CREOLIZING ROSA

In an effort to reflect the multifaceted nature of Rosa's many contributions, the book that follows is divided into five thematic sections.

The first, “Debating Nationalism,” critically revisits debates over the potential revolutionary value of nationalism. Peter Hudis sets the stage for the creolizing work by tracing the historical stages of the Global Southern reception of Rosa. He explains that before 1929, Rosa was a figure whose thoroughgoing internationalism, opposition to all forms of imperialism, and unique personality—of not just preaching but *living* her ideas—inspired founders of the communist movements in China, Indonesia, India, Lebanon, Mexico, and Syria and the reprinting of her works in Peru and Brazil. However, by the 1930s, she was actively written out of the communist movement by Stalin and Mao. At the same time, this was not only *their* doing. Interpretations of Rosa’s virulent criticisms of Lenin’s single-party state following the 1917 Russian Revolution and her persistent opposition to national independence did not endear her to independence leaders seeking to replace colonialism with their own single-party states or to movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that sought self-determination in primarily nationalist terms. More recently, in the face of tenacious forms of neo-colonialism, there is a growing appreciation for the prescience of Rosa’s insights. Many seek to articulate and build an explicitly anti-imperial internationalism since, they have concluded, each national proletariat is largely powerless when fighting in isolation against a bourgeoisie that functions transnationally (Anuja Bose, 2019; Inéz Valdez, 2019).

The explicit work of creolizing Rosa begins with Drucilla Cornell returning readers to the historical context in which Rosa criticized the project of national liberation. She reminds us that Rosa feared that “liberation” of territories surrounding Russia would simply empower their respective ruling classes to ally against the Bolsheviks, endangering the project of the Soviet Union. Effectively resisting capitalism, then and now, Rosa and Cornell insist, therefore had to take transnational forms. Cornell underscores this argument through reading Luxemburg with Frantz Fanon’s critique of the hijacking of the Algerian Revolution by that country’s national bourgeoisie and his warnings about the dangers of separating the project of national liberation from the struggle against the global accumulation of capital. Cornell emphasizes that Rosa clearly opposed the oppression of one nation by another; however, she always connected the question of nationalism to the larger aim of a thoroughgoing transformation of capitalism. This insight is deepened when considered through Fanon’s dialectical treatment of nationalism as both a necessary resource for anticolonial revolution and one that had to be remade and transcended if the aims of turning the world upside down were to be achieved.

Closing this section, Alyssa Adamson suggests that the failures to read Luxemburg as part of the tradition of decolonial political economy—in which Adamson thinks Rosa rightly belongs—has much to do with the history of

response to her challenges to nationalism outlined by Hudis. For Adamson, Rosa's distinct theory of revolution and democracy in political organizing—to which many in the Global South are now returning for their vision of a *process* that must, in its means and strategies, exemplify the goals it aspires to achieve—remain relevant for ongoing decolonial praxis. Still they would be yet more effective if read back through the insights of C.L.R. James into the indispensability of national liberation struggles to the larger process of class warfare.

One could object to Rosa's criticisms of the democratic centralism and single party of Lenin that he—unlike Rosa—was faced with seizing and maintaining state power. The question of what it means to act as a revolutionary subject is the focus of the second section of the book. Robin D. G. Kelley begins it by revisiting the radical African historian and Guyanese revolutionary Walter Rodney's seminar on "Historians and Revolutions" taught at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1971. At its center was a study of Russia as home to the first successful socialist revolution. When considering the question of democracy, Rodney offers an ambivalent account of Rosa. In it, he charges her with abandoning an analysis of Russian historical conditions and succumbing to bourgeois democracy when insisting on the full franchise for all, the restoration of the Constituent Assembly, and the preservation of a free press. While Kelley argues that Rosa seemed to be anticipating the Stalinist bureaucratic state-in-the-making, Rodney read her as failing to realize that the class opponent was a mortal enemy and even suggested that, in her own context of Germany, it had been her miscalculation of that effort to seize state power that led to her murder. Kelley considers Rodney's misinterpretations of Rosa's positions while also reflecting on how Rodney's own understanding of socialist transformation in the Third World would have been enriched by reading Rosa's *The Accumulation of Capital*. Kelley concludes with pointing out the irony that C.L.R. James would later claim that Rodney's state-sponsored assassination resulted from Rodney's failure to understand the concrete conditions and power dynamics in Guyana.

Jane Anna Gordon continues consideration of Rosa through New World Black resources by turning to Luxemburg's remarkable analysis of enslavement. Framing slavery as introducing defining problems with which socialism had to grapple, Rosa argued that enslavement created and normalized a fundamental division between those who labored and those who made consequential political decisions, the division that gave rise to the emergence of the state as a coercive power of the ruling classes. At the same time, Gordon argues that, in her writings explicitly focused on enslavement, Luxemburg mistakes the ideological account of the separation of physical from mental labor for its historical realization. Relatedly, while Luxemburg celebrates the ways the enslaved frequently resisted their exploitation, she calls the results

of their actions ultimately futile, as seeking little more than a return to pre-slavery circumstances. Putting Rosa in conversation with eighteenth-century abolitionist, anti-imperialist, and natural rights philosopher Ottobah Cugoano and with C.L.R. James, Gordon argues, in a similar spirit to Adamson, that reworking Rosa's claims through insights in the Black radical tradition would enable a creolizing of the dialectic at the center of Marxist thinking in ways that are immanent in her much disputed *The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to an Economic Explanation of Imperialism*.

Appreciating how Rosa was one of the few socialists from Europe who supported neither side of the South African Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902, Gunnett Kaaf observes how when many of her contemporaries sided with Britain as an advanced capitalist country that would help South Africa on the path of capitalist development, she rejected the trap of this socialist strategy. She did not agree with the dogma that countries must first undergo capitalist development before they proceed to the socialist stage of revolution. Similarly, her accumulation theory made her a pioneering theorist of capitalism as a global system in ways that would later be advanced by Paul Baran, Samir Amin, and Immanuel Wallerstein. Kaaf centers Rosa's challenge to restricting democratic mass participation and to bourgeois reformism—which he sees as having been vindicated by the failure of left centralized parties—when turning to the crucial guides Rosa offers for addressing contemporary South African political crises.

Turning to the relevance of Rosa's work for prison justice advocacy in the present, Maria Theresa Starzmann reads Rosa's political ideas against the backdrop of two crucial experiences in her life: her relationship to the natural world and her imprisonment. In addition to being a talented political theorist, Rosa was also an avid collector of plants. Between 1913 and 1918, which included her years spent in prison, she produced a herbarium spanning seventeen notebooks. Starzmann traces how the deprivation of imprisonment intensified Rosa's love for nature and fueled her search for radical social change. Given that incarceration remains a central technique of political violence globally, Starzmann suggests that Rosa's engagement with plants and animals offer creative ways of resisting the “necropolitics” of the contemporary prison.

Each of these chapters turns to Rosa as an indispensable resource whose ideas can be re-enlivened and extended by their consideration in contexts that were not her primary theoretical focus. This orientation continues in the third section, which focuses on Rosa's formulation of the mass strike. Often misread as a narrowly economic phenomenon, Rosa understood general strikes as harbingers of the revolution to come. The authors in this section reposition her analysis in the three different contexts of the United States Civil War, the Arab Spring, and the twenty-first-century migrations northward through the American hemisphere.

Beginning by pointing out that they were contemporaries, Rafael Khachaturian's chapter revisits the central arguments of Rosa's 1906 work *The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions* by placing it alongside W. E. B. Du Bois's chapter on "The General Strike" in his magisterial 1935 book *Black Reconstruction*. There he made the novel argument that slaves were a "black proletariat" whose refusal to work was a crucial catalyst in both the outcomes of the U.S. Civil War and the attempted social revolution of Reconstruction. While Luxemburg and Du Bois shared an interest in the strike as illuminating working-class subjectivity, self-organization, and spontaneity, reading them together enables us to consider how Du Bois's analysis could have enabled Rosa to further explore the way racialized social structures problematized the organization of the proletariat. Luxemburg, in turn, raises questions for Du Bois about whether the slaves' self-organization could map on to her treatment of revolutionary politics from the standpoint of the party form and whether these actions could be considered a general strike despite occurring within the specific, enslaved fraction of the working class. More generally, considering the strike from within different social formations of the shared temporality of capitalist modernity helps illuminate the numerous fault lines within class struggles across the unevenness of capitalist development.

Sami Zemni, Brecht De Smet, and Koenraad Boegaert insert Rosa's 1906 pamphlet in the context of the Arab Spring of 2011, which came to symbolize Arab political life as more complex than the false choice between authoritarian rule or Islamist oppositions. Using her writings as their guide, they offer a historical reading of the decade of political organizing that culminated in popular uprisings that witnessed the emergence of "the Arab peoples" as political actors who toppled entrenched authoritarian leaders by challenging repressive regimes and their brutal security apparatuses. Re-reading the revolutionary events in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco through Rosa's resources, they illustrate how the economic and the political, on the one hand, and the local and the national (and the global), on the other, are indissoluble yet separate elements of the same process. For revolutionary actors in Tunisia and Egypt, the authors argue, the challenge lies in the connecting, organizing, and fusing of these dispersed moments and spaces of struggle into a politicized whole. Conversely, they hope that understanding the reciprocity between revolutionary change and the mass strike will allow activists in Morocco to recognize the workers' movement as a potentially powerful actor of change and enable trade unionists to incorporate the political in their economic mobilizations. The authors ultimately read the workers' protests in Tunisia and Egypt as anticipations of the mass strike during the revolution and frame the mass strike as the specific mode in which workers participate as a class in the revolutionary process.

Josué Ricardo López keeps Rosa in the twenty-first century to argue that migrant caravans traveling north through the Americas can be understood as an instance of what Rosa understood as a mass strike, with implications for projects of popular education. Specifically, López asks, how might we understand the revolutionary significance of the migrant caravans traversing the Western Hemisphere now? What kind of political education can address the transnational economic and political crisis which contributes to mass mobility as a tool of survival? Luxemburg lends herself to such engagement because she offered a rich examination of the revolutionary nature of the spontaneous mass strike in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century and her analysis also accounted for the role of political education not as a cause for the spontaneous mass strike but rather as a complementary dimension of revolutionary political leadership from those working in solidarity with the masses. Rather than a paternalistic teacher–student relationship, Luxemburg understood that the pedagogical relationship needed for political education was based in recognizing the political power of the educated masses and believing in their capacity as agents of change.

The fourth and largest section of our book is devoted to engaging with Rosa’s pivotal reworking of the concept of primitive accumulation. This begins with Robert Nichols’s consideration of the range of interpreters, including Rosa, who challenged the sense given in Marx’s *Capital* that primitive accumulation was a historical stage supplanted by the general law of capitalist accumulation. Nichols traces how the rejection of this historical periodization and the corresponding idea that overt extra-economic violence was transformed into the silent compulsion of exploitation informed the emergence of an entire tradition of postcolonial Marxism. Nichols explores how the burgeoning use of the concept led to its multiplication into a range of “ambiguously related companion concepts” that emphasize, respectively, a spatial framework through which “outsides” of capitalism are incorporated within it, one that emphasizes the ongoing use of extra-economic means, and one that emphasizes what is appropriated as most essentially land. Returning to the centrality of the separation of the bulk of humanity from the productive power of nature in Marx’s classic conceptualization of so-called primitive accumulation, Nichols argues that, if naming a distinct logic of capitalist development grounded in converting the planet into a homogeneous and universal means of production in ways that order social pathologies related to dislocation, class stratification, and/or exploitation, the dispossession of primitive accumulation can be understood as constitutive and contemporary as argued by Rosa and evidenced in ongoing Indigenous resistance.

This is followed by three pieces that explore Rosa in the historical and contemporary contexts of South Africa. In the first, Jeff Guy revisits Luxemburg’s central theoretical point that capitalist forms of production

continuously interact with non-capitalist societies and forms of production as necessary to capitalist accumulation. He reminds us that, although Luxemburg's reliance on the idea of a natural economy was not historically rich enough to describe different kinds of non-capitalist societies and economies, her central insight was that these economies were directed to what Guy calls the production of labor power and not the circulation of commodities. Guy draws on Harold Wolpe, who also relies on Luxemburg, to claim that there is an articulation of a particular form of South African capitalism with African pre-capitalist modes. Without idealizing pre-capitalist modes of production, Guy shows that, although unquestionably patriarchal, Zulu economy—which existed both prior to colonial invasion and later in an interaction with its consequences—was focused on the reproduction of labor power, and therefore the economy was organized to serve people and not things. Guy's article concludes with a provocative discussion of ideals, such as Ubuntu, and argues that, although rooted in pre-capitalist modes of production that have been either destroyed or effectively undermined by colonization, they still play an important role in anticolonial struggle and the aspiration to salvage African intellectual and ethical heritage from their obliteration.

Pointing out Rosa's prescience in grappling with the theory and practice of capitalist/non-capitalist relations that now characterize both Western multinational corporate extraction and firms from several contemporary "emerging" economies, Patrick Bond explores how, after 1994, South African capitalism's rates of exploitation rose and racially biased, gendered super-exploitation was given renewed legitimacy. Drawing from Rosa's tradition of analysis, Bond explores "unequal ecological exchange" or new understandings of value transfers from Africa based on natural resource depletion and the ways that imperial and sub-imperial national powers collaborate in Africa's continued impoverishment. Bond calls for the need to develop new solidarities out of protest, drawing on eco-socialist ideas.

In ways that illuminate societies increasingly characterized by the permanence of a surplus population, Ahmed Veriava puts a number of writers who have returned to Marx's concept of primitive accumulation (in ways outlined by Nichols) into conversation with the rich literature on South Africa's neo-liberal transition into the post-apartheid present. He considers how to draw on Marx and Luxemburg to argue that government practices targeting the poor in a society without work enact their own forms of primitive accumulation. Even as such policies are resisted, Veriava contends, their aim is to enclose social wealth and forms of life that have thus far resisted integration into newly marketized frameworks.

Suggesting that Luxemburg's distinctive reworking of the concept of primitive accumulation was a provocation to make the concept "travel" to

other domains while maintaining its rootedness in an emancipatory critique of capitalism, Siddhant Issar, Rachel H. Brown, and John McMahon interweave it with analyses of racial capitalism, the logic of global coloniality, and race-making in medieval Europe. Examining her concept in the context of the racialized consolidation of difference, they argue that the forging of a collective, pre-imperial, and “white,” Christian European subject amounted to a primitive accumulation of whiteness. This constitution of *homo europaeus* became an essential condition of possibility for processes of imperialism-qua-primitive accumulation that Rosa theorized. Ultimately, the authors suggest that this engagement with Luxemburg and medieval race-making is a necessary element of challenging racial capitalism and contemporary coloniality in theory and practice. Bridging the fourth and final section of the book, Ankica Čakardić’s argues that, although Rosa rarely addressed the “woman question” explicitly, her strong emphasis on the vital dynamics between capitalist and non-capitalist spaces coupled with her critique of bourgeois feminism can be resources in the development of a contemporary, global feminist theory of the commodification of women’s reproductive labor.

The book closes with the staging of conversations between Rosa and other revolutionary women with whom she could not have spoken. Nigel C. Gibson begins the section with the fellow Eastern European, Marxist Humanist Raya Dunayevskaya, who revisited Rosa’s writing repeatedly over the course of her life, each time with renewed and deepened appreciation. On the one hand, Dunayevskaya found Rosa’s vigilant detailing of conquest and extermination—including the violence and brutality of French colonialism in Algeria and British colonialism in India and South Africa—compelling. On the other, bearing in mind the context of the Maji Maji revolt and the Zulu rebellion, she could not understand why Rosa had not drawn any conclusions about Africans being a revolutionary force, especially since, for Dunayevskaya, they were clearly a key, new source for a philosophy of revolution. Still, for Dunayevskaya, who, like Rosa, engaged in ongoing work of translating revolutionary ideas, Rosa’s passionate, interwoven commitments to revolution and “staying human,” or to a place for the “‘inner world’ of human feelings, emotions, and affections” in revolutionary struggle (see Hudis in this volume), as explored most fully in her personal correspondences, foreshadowed key developments of the Women’s Liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Mediated through an engagement with Jamaican writer and theorist Sylvia Wynter, Paget Henry couples Rosa with Claudia Jones, who migrated to the United States in 1924, where she graduated from Wadleigh High School in Harlem, went to work in a laundry, and joined the Communist Party USA,

becoming deeply involved in its theoretical and practical life. Centering the similarities of these women as committed revolutionaries fighting actively for the liberation of the working class and suffering greatly for this cause, Henry focuses on the differences in the ways in which Jones and Luxemburg contributed to the rethinking of the Marxist project. Jones is remembered for her re-articulation of the dialectic between class, race, and gender within the daily life of the Communist Party USA, her intense focus on the “super-exploitation” of Black female domestic workers, and for her making culture into a site of political resistance, particularly after her deportation to England. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the extent to which it is possible to suggest that Jones’s contribution to Marxism includes a creolizing of Rosa Luxemburg.

Closing our volume is LaRose T. Parris’s reading of Luxemburg’s writings, speeches, and letters with and through those of Lorraine Hansberry. Highlighting Luxemburg’s shared theoretical allegiance to core emancipatory dimensions of what came to be understood as the Black radical and Black feminist traditions, Parris explores the women’s shared decisions to privilege a life of intellectual pursuit, political agitation, and commitment to advancing an authentic humanism. Rooted in persistent socio-political problems of racial, socio-economic, and gender-based exploitation and oppression, they culled insights from a range of disciplines, producing work that illuminated late nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideological and geo-political developments that defined their overlapping historical eras. These included the late nineteenth-century First Wave, white bourgeois feminism; Second Wave European imperialism; and European socialist revolution, all of which preceded mid-twentieth-century Third World decolonization, and the related African American Civil Rights and Women’s Liberation movements. Parris shows how these two historic women thinkers utilized their platforms to envision *and* fight for a more human world for all.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FIGHT?

What does it mean to learn about how to fight from a woman murdered at 47 in 1919 as part of a struggle that did not successfully seize state power and that therefore was seen by many as not only beaten but discredited?

Rosa had a profoundly pedagogical understanding of what it meant to be (even brutally) defeated. When grappling with historical setbacks in particular struggles, including the attempt to establish a socialist republic in Germany, her first question was what lessons the losses offered. As she wrote: “What was this recent ‘Spartacus Week’ in Berlin? What has it brought? What does

it teach us?" (2004c: 375). This was no celebration of weakness or fear of successfully winning power. It was an expression of her conception of revolutionary struggle and her commitment to all of it, including the attendant and inevitable difficulties.

For Luxemburg, the lesson of the so-called "failure" of the 1905 Russian Revolution was not that the masses of people needed strong leaders to tell them what to do, but instead that the people needed to think through *how* they might seize power differently. As we have seen, Lenin advocated a democratic centralist party, in which, to paraphrase his formulation, the brains were in the Central Committee and the arms and legs of the party were the cadre. For Luxemburg, the only real school of revolution was in struggle. As she wrote in criticism of Lenin in 1904:

"The working class demands the right to make its mistakes and learn in the dialectic of history. Let us speak plainly. Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee" (1970: 108).

Rosa understood that revolutionary struggles would take place over a long period of time and that the ultimate goal of seizing state power and overthrowing capitalism would involve series of partial victories and partial setbacks. This offered an important reminder that radically transforming the world is not an easy undertaking. As she writes: "The socialist transformation presupposes a long and stubborn struggle in the course of which, quite probably, the proletariat will be repulsed more than once" (2004d: 159). But crucially, steps forward were enabled by, literally made upon, previous defeats which were indispensable in nurturing collective "strength and clarity of purpose" (2004c: 377).

In addition to having a highly constructive approach to defeat, which always contextualized individual instances of failure in the much larger horizon of collective transformation, many have rightly emphasized Rosa's bravery. It was as evident in her many life decisions, some of which we have recounted here, as it was in her readiness to think and step into the unknown. At the very heart of her many disagreements with supposed comrades was the point that we do not and cannot know what socialism is in advance. This is in part because we have been inculcated by exploitative relationships out of which we cannot just imagine our way out.

Unlike many who invoke it, Rosa was actually comfortable with the possibility of enacting her freedom and seeking, with others, to birth the new. When doing so, she did not deny her intellectual or political indebtedness to those who came before her. Instead she saw her actions as the extension

of what it meant to continue the project inaugurated by Marx, even as she debated Marx himself. She would repeatedly call out even the most esteemed in her circles. This was neither oedipal nor done for the sake of being irreverent. Being a comrade meant pushing one's comrades not to be lazy in their thinking or in their actions.

Rosa insisted that socialism and freedom were compatible, and that the protection of basic freedoms was necessary for the imagination of and struggle to build new socialist relations. She once wrote that "Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently" (1970: 69). This was her recognizing that the one who thinks differently might be just the dreamer we need, the artist who makes us see differently, the poet who beckons us to another world, the housewife who insists that domestic chores must be shared. This was not, then, an empty liberal maxim so much as a call to open avenues to reconsider how we can radically transform the ways we live together.

Rosa brought to the fight a sober assessment of what she uniquely could contribute. In her case, this was her intellect, imagination, capacity for human relations, and ferocious energy. She also had an understanding, if abbreviated by her murder, that one had, in the face of individual instances of suffering, such as imprisonment and torture, to sustain and work at maintaining life-affirming vitality and joy through varieties of forms of intimacy or ways of connecting with human and other-than-human others.

It is easy to sit on the sidelines and despair. That is and has always been true. Perhaps, at moments when our ability to change the exploitative relationships of capitalism and imperialism seems small, Rosa's message to all of us is that we cannot know of defeat in advance. We cannot know what possibilities any particular struggle will yield. We do not struggle only because we think we can win or even that we can hope to win. We struggle because we want to live more human lives by investing in and with others to build a new world. From such a vantage point, pessimism is not only irrelevant. The pessimists throw themselves on the wrong side of history.

We read Rosa today because she calls on us to rethink her ideas by creolizing them so that she can continue to speak to the most burning issues of our time.

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